

# NIGER DELTA WATCH 2019

## *A citizen-led election observation project*

Report: Niger Delta Watch 2019 #8

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## Summary

This is the eighth edition of Niger Delta Watch 2019.

This week's report includes a thematic analysis of cult-related incidents that have occurred since the start of the project in November 2018.

In Rivers, over the last week, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) have continued their campaigning activities including setting up campaign committees. We received a report of financial bribery towards community members at a PDP campaign rally in Ahoada-East Local Government Area (LGA). There were no reports of violence this week. However, in Port Harcourt, the PDP National Chairman reportedly issued a threat of war if APC rigs the election.

In Bayelsa, the campaigns have generally been peaceful with a lot of lobbying by the leading political parties. While there was a reported reduction of violence in the State, there continues to be many incidents of electoral fraud, involving the APC, PDP and African Democratic Congress (ADC). There appears to be a concerted effort by the different political parties in Bayelsa State to capture Southern Ijaw LGA.

In Delta State, there have been many incidents of bribery involving the PDP in the last week. Women and young people in particular seem to be the primary targets of these politicians in the State. Incidents this week saw market women, widows and young people offered money and gifts in exchange for their votes. The link between vote buying and violence, a trend that was reported in last week's report, became apparent when a fight broke out allegedly over money shared during a campaign in Sapele. Agents of various political parties have taken to door-to-door campaigning and promised financial rewards to the electorate.

In Akwa Ibom, a fight broke out at Mkpatt Enin, reportedly as a result of vote buying. Money giving during campaigns often leads to fighting among younger voters. Gift giving to traditional leaders also influences partisan behaviour, as identified this week in Udung Uko. This is a direct contradiction of the non-partisan role traditional leaders are expected to play during elections.

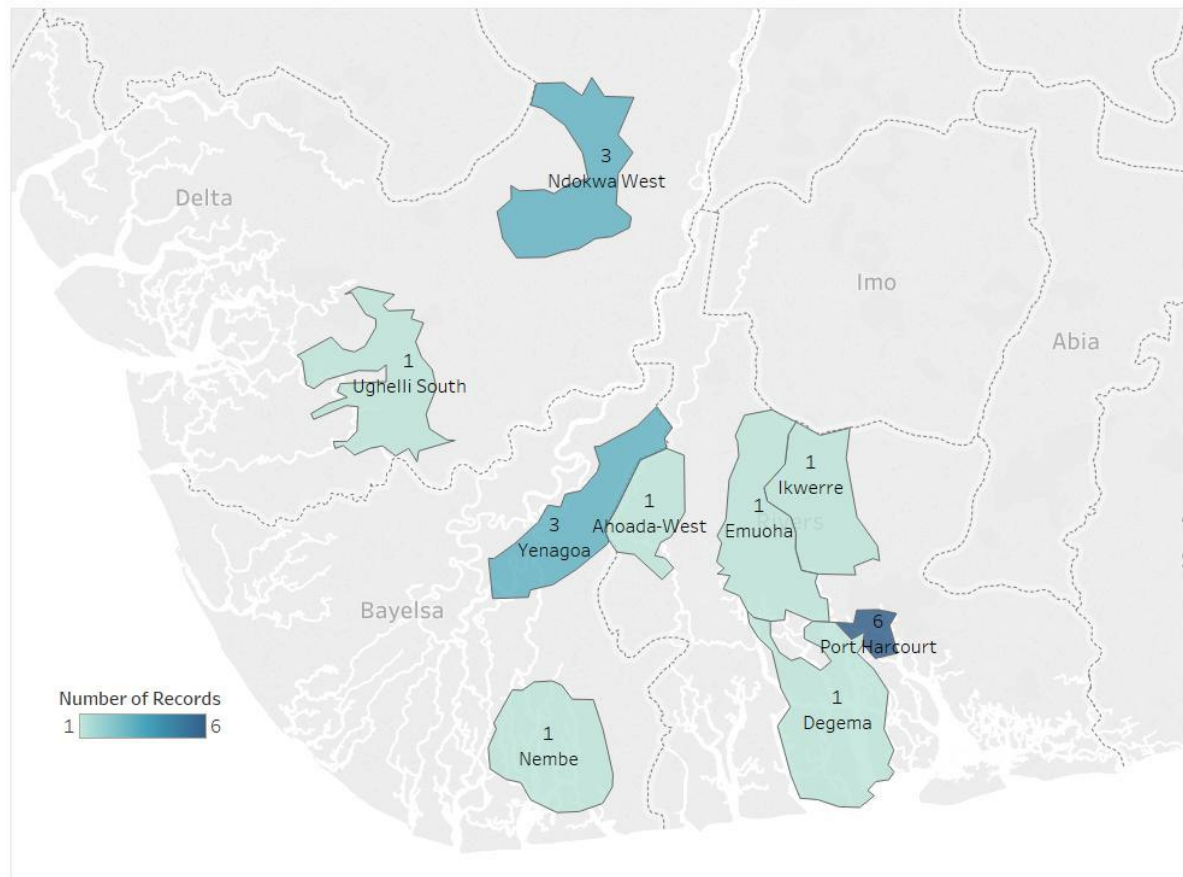
On social media, there is a lot of talk of election rigging. The electoral bill is still a key topic of discussion, particularly in relation to election rigging. Sponsored ads continue to target certain groups of society in an attempt to influence public opinion. Images of EU election observers were used in a post by an APC member to generate a certain narrative around the elections.

Please continue to check <http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/elections2019/> for news and updates.

## Thematic Analysis

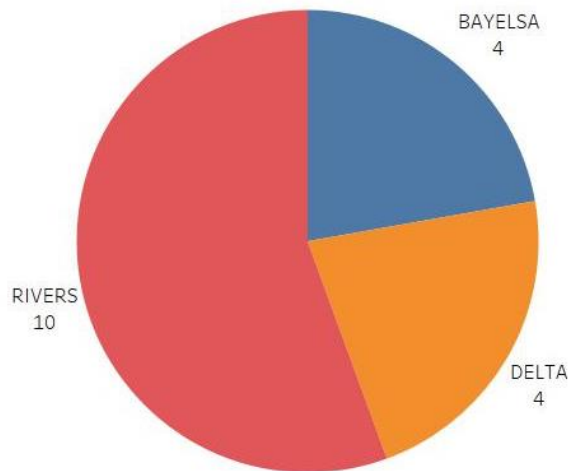
This week we analysed incidents relating to cult groups. It is common for politicians to affiliate themselves with cult groups, paying them to help enforce their political mandate – sometimes violently. This can also lead to clashes between cults as a result of rivalry over control of areas that make them relevant to politicians. The map below shows all reported cult-related incidents since the start of the project. There are three LGAs that stand out: Port Harcourt in Rivers, Ndokwa West in Delta, and Yenagoa in Bayelsa.

Cult-related incidents (November 2018 - January 2019)



The incidents in Port Harcourt all occurred within a one-month period, from 06 December to 06 January. Reported cult groups in Port Harcourt include the Icelanders, Greenlanders, and Degbam. Three of these incidents involved battles, two involved violence against civilians and one involved destruction or raids against property. For example, on the evening of 17 December in Rumuochakara community, Port Harcourt, there was a shootout between the Degbam and Icelanders cult groups. The incident was believed to have been linked to political rivalry as some key PDP members in Rumuochakara, which is traditionally a Degbam and PDP controlled area, recently defected to the APC, which is suggested to have led the Icelanders to attempt to take over the community. The incident reportedly resulted in one death, however the clashes have been an ongoing occurrence in Rumuochakara with many more lives taken in separate events. All three reported incidents in Ndokwa West occurred in Kwale Town between 05 and 19 December (see following page for more information).

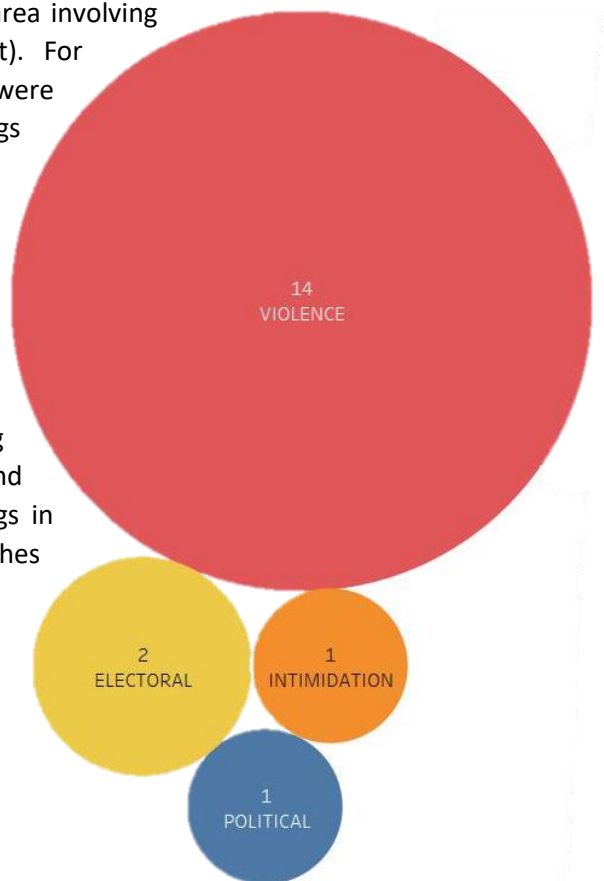
The graph below shows that most incidents to date have taken place in Rivers State, compared with Bayelsa and Delta. Aside from Port Harcourt, other incidents in Rivers have included:



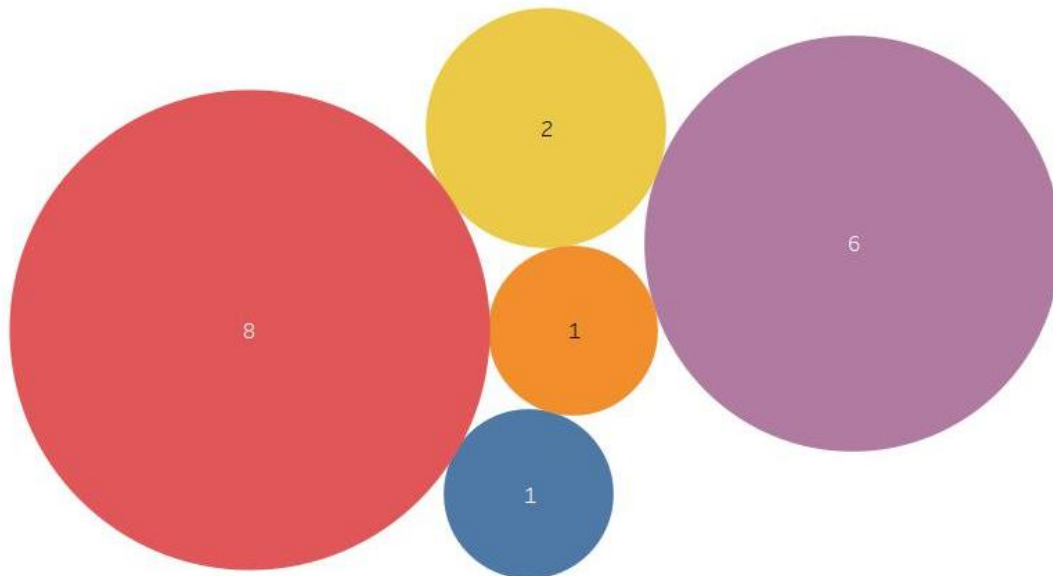
- ❖ During a PDP campaign in Akinima in Ahoada-West last week, there was heavy presence of both the Icelanders and Greenlanders cult groups as they served as improvised security around the campaign podium (one of these groups allegedly works for a frontline politician in Ahoada-West LGA).
- ❖ In Soku Town, Degema, on 1 December, there was a fight between young people belonging to different cult factions who are also loyalists to the APC and PDP.
- ❖ In Emuoha, special vigilante group “Bakassi” were invited Egbeda Town over the Christmas period to ensure security against the political

and related secret cult crises that engulfed the town during the year.

The most frequently reported incidents by risk area involving cults are violence-related incidents (see right). For example, in Ndokwa West, all three incidents were violence-related and involved a spate of cult killings in Kwale Town in early December. On 5 December, there was a cult clash between the Eiye and Aye cult groups where a man known as ‘master’ was killed; on 14 December a man was murdered in his residence by unknown cultists; and another man was reportedly murdered by cultists on 19 December. In Yenagoa, all three reported incidents were also violence-related, occurring between 29 November and 17 December, and included multiple cult-related attacks and killings in Azikoro in late November, and violent cult clashes leading to further fatalities on 17 December.



The diagram below shows incidents by category. As part of the incident reporting methodology, each risk area is broken down into various categories. 'Battles' and 'violence against civilians' fall under the 'violence' risk area, while 'other election preparations incident' falls under the 'electoral preparations, procedures and standards' risk area. 'Destruction or raids on property' falls under 'voter, civil society



and other intimidation', and 'detention, intimidation or disappearance (of party candidates or supporters)' falls under 'political parties and campaign misconduct'. As you can see, most reported incidents involving cult groups are linked to battles, shortly followed by incidents involving violence against civilians. The most reported battles linked to cult groups have taken place in Rivers, all of which occurred in December. Reported cult-related incidents involving violence against civilians have been spread evenly across the three states.

To date, there have been no reported cult-related incidents where women have been specifically involved.

## Rivers

Over the last week in Rivers, the APC and PDP have continued their campaigning activities including setting up campaign committees. Money giving by political parties to communities was reported at a PDP campaign rally in Ahoada-East. We received no reports of violence this week. However, in Port Harcourt, the PDP National Chairman reportedly issued a threat of war if APC rigs the election.

The following events took place this week:

- ❖ **Port Harcourt LGA:** Governor Wike announced, as part of resolutions at the State Executive Council meeting on Friday 18 January, the termination of contracts/concessions of three subsidiary companies of Sahara Energy Limited, said to be used by the immediate past Rivers State Governor, Rotimi Amaechi, to acquire State assets. Sahara Energy Limited is owned by the Governorship candidate of APC, Tonye Cole. In a meeting last weekend of Rivers State Elders forum, the Elders accused Wike and his predecessor Amaechi of being the source of great pains to the state over the insecurity and trailing setbacks alleged to have been instigated by their persistent political conflicts. PDP National Chairman, Prince Uche Secondus, speaking in Port Harcourt during the week under review made a proclamation that, any attempt to rig the 2019 General elections will spell doom for the country, and said to Buhari, “you cannot rig the 2019 elections unless you want war in the country”. The embattled Tonye Cole, APC Governorship candidate, met with the Hausa community in Rivers State and assured them of level playing ground to do business in the State when APC wins the election and takes over Government house in May 2019.
- ❖ **Khana LGA:** The candidate for Accord Party for Khana/Gokana Federal Constituency visited the palace of all traditional rulers in Ogoni, to seek their support in the 2019 general election.
- ❖ **Emuoha LGA:** Special vigilante group ‘Bakassi’ were invited to Egbeda Town to ensure security in the town against the political and other related secret cult crises that engulfed the town over the last year. The LGA Party Chairman and LGA Campaign Coordinator of APC inaugurated the campaign committees in APC wards 14, 6, 11, 1 and 2. This happened just as PDP inaugurated 45 Ward 11 liaison officers for campaign activities.
- ❖ **Oyigbo LGA:** The PDP Campaign Committee led by Hon. John Ndubueze Nwachukwu, held her first general stakeholders meeting at the LGA Council. All heads of committees, wards and units were in attendance including the LGA Council Chairman. The meeting essentially was held to constitute committee to head Governor Wike’s LGA campaign.
- ❖ **Ahoada-East LGA:** The PDP held a mega rally during which Governor Barr. Wike asked all stakeholders to mobilise their units and ensure they deliver votes for the PDP on election day as well as appointing two new members of staff and making promises to complete ongoing projects. N 60,000 for transport and feeding was given to each unit in the LGA.

## Bayelsa

This reporting week in Bayelsa, the campaigns have been generally peaceful with a lot of lobbying by the leading political parties. Our sources have reported a reduction in violence in the State. However, there continues to be many incidents of electoral fraud, with the APC, PDP and African Democratic Congress (ADC) bribing community members on their campaign visits.

There appears to be a concerted effort by the different political parties in Bayelsa to capture Southern Ijaw LGA. This may be partly because the LGA is highly populated and therefore winning Southern Ijaw would largely determine the outcome of the elections. This is a similar situation to the last gubernatorial elections in December 2015, and which created tension in the LGA.

Key incidents reported over the week:

- ❖ On 21 January, the PDP campaign team, led by a Senate candidate and a House of Representatives candidate, visited Amatolo community in Southern Ijaw LGA where they were welcomed by the community. They met with the community chiefs and young people before giving speeches to the entire community. Campaign promises were made, without any inflammatory rhetoric.
- ❖ On 22 January, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) campaign team left Ekewe community for Ekianbiri Town for campaign activities. The team was led by a State House of Assembly candidate and welcomed into the community.
- ❖ On 25 January, an SDP campaign team, led by the State House of Assembly candidate, visited Olugbobiri Town and met with the community leadership. Everything was peaceful. There were neither hate speeches nor mention of other parties in their speeches.
- ❖ On 25 January, an APC senatorial candidate visited Opuama Town, Peremabiri and Igbomotoru communities. They met with all community leaders and discussed the forthcoming elections.
- ❖ In Southern Ijaw, the destruction of APC posters led to the subsequent destruction of PDP posters the following day. Separately, the APC campaign team gave money to community groups, chiefs, young people and women on concluding their campaign tour of Peremabiri Town.
- ❖ Elders, women and young people in Odi, Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA were given gifts including a lantern, a Bible and hot drinks by PDP Bayelsa State House of Assembly Member, Hon. Tonye Emmanuel Isenah, before declaring their support for him.
- ❖ The APC candidate for Sagbama/Ekeremor Federal Constituency paid an informal visit to Aleibiri Town in Ekeremor LGA where they promised better roads and living conditions to community members and shared monies, food and drinks to supporters. The APC team told the community that the PDP is planning to rig the elections, but promised that the APC is working to ensure that no party is able to rig the elections. Young PDP supporters also reportedly threatened young APC supporters that the incumbent member representing Sagbama/Ekeremor Federal Constituency will use his contacts in the Nigerian Navy to stop APC from campaigning in the community.



- ❖ Four reports of bribery came from Nembe LGA. APC stakeholders visited Bassambiri and Agrisaba communities, where they encourage people to vote for all APC candidates, conducted voters' education, and shared money to group leaders. ADC flag bearer for Bayelsa East Senatorial Seat and his team campaigned to community chiefs, elders, women and young people in Ogbolomaibiri, Owusegi and Polotiri towns and shared envelopes suspected to contain money with community members. Another ADC flag bearer, Chief Senator Nimi Barigha Amange, and his team visited Okoroama/Tereke Clan, giving gifts and money to all leaders in Ologuama, Akakumama, Oguama, Ekperiana and Ombukiri towns.

## Delta

Over the last week in Delta State, there have been many incidents of bribery involving the PDP. Women and young people in particular seem to be the primary targets of these politicians in the State. Incidents this week saw market women, widows and young people offered cash and other in-kind benefits. The link between vote buying and electoral violence, which was reported in last week's report, was evident this reporting week in Delta State when a fight broke out allegedly over money shared during a campaign in Sapele. Additionally, agents of the various political parties have taken to door-to-door campaigning and promised financial rewards to the electorate. There was also a report of PDP billboards being destroyed in Ndokwa East, and a violent clash in Ethiope East.

The week's incidents were as follows:

- ❖ **Bomadi LGA:** The Governor of Delta State, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, visited Bomadi Town to campaign for his second term in office. At Ogriagbene Town, the people complained that they were given N 1,500, instead of the initial arrangement of N 2,000, and blamed an individual for pocketing the rest. The crowd wanted their votes to be bought as they were heard shouting "No Money, No Vote!".
- ❖ **Burutu LGA:** Women and widows received N 10,000 each in the Governor Okowa's 'empowerment' scheme. At Ward 7, Ayakoromo community, 60 women received the Okowa 'empowerment' (money) with joy and celebration.
- ❖ **Ethiope East LGA:** The Ethiope East PDP campaign team visited Ward 11, at Otorho Agbon. The campaign committee visited His Royal Majesty Ogurime Rime, the Ovie Agbon Kingdom, Mike Omeru. At Okpara Inland, the PDP campaign train clashed with APC supporters and it resulted in serious fights; however, no casualties were recorded.
- ❖ **Ika North-East:** Political inducement continues to feature in campaigns. Firstly, Hon. Victor Nwokolo, member representing Ika constituency in the Federal House of Representatives, organized a rare three-day medical care programme at the Agbor General Hospital. Secondly, a PDP leader in Owerre-Olubor, Evangelist Isaac Emmanuel, offered N 200,000 to 38 indigent students of Owerre-Olubor secondary school as part of their West African Examination Council (WAEC) enrolment fee. He claimed to be contributing to the Governor's SMART agenda in education and urged the people to vote for all PDP candidates. In another incident, members of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Ika North-East chapter, endorsed the incumbent State Governor and other PDP candidates when the campaign train made a short stop at their secretariat.
- ❖ **Isoko North LGA:** the PDP faithful launched the "Door to Door Campaign", while the APC Governorship Candidate Great Ovedje Ogboru visited the palace of His Royal Majesty, Anthony Ogbogbo, Ebuka 1, Ovie of Ozoro kingdom, to seek blessings and support for the upcoming election.
- ❖ **Ndokwa East and West:** At Kwale Town, the PDP House of Assembly candidate, Hon. Charles Emetulu, gathered young people and women and shared cash gifts and wrappers with them. At Ashaka and Kwale towns, the State Deputy Speaker, while celebrating his triumph at the



Supreme Court ruling on 22 January over Emeke Ozegbe, promised to give out N 20,000 each to 100 people.

- ❖ **Sapele LGA:** A youth support group pledged total support for Dr. Ekpekurede, the Labour Party candidate for Okpe/Sapele/Uvwie Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives. Violence broke out among "Omo Boys" – a youth support group for the APC – at Awolowo Junction, Sapele Town, during a ward campaign. Sources claim they were fighting over money that was shared during the campaign. Also in Sapele Town, a Labour Party support group was denied access to a meeting spot owned by a PDP supporter.
- ❖ **Warri South LGA:** Ward to Ward PDP campaigns continued in the LGA, at Okumagba 1, Okumagba 2 and Pessu. In attendance were the Warri South PDP Ward Chairman, former Councillor representing Pessu Ward, the PDP leader of Warri South, and various aspirants. Food and N 2,000 each were shared by the Pessu Ward executives; this brought about rancour, which was immediately contained. At Ekurede Itsekiri, Chief Thomas Ereyitomi and his team organized a door to door campaign for the PDP House of Representatives candidate. Names and voters card numbers were taken down with the promise of sending cash rewards.
- ❖ **Warri South-West LGA:** There are reports alleging that the military has stationed two gunboats at Oporoza with plans to strike the traditional headquarters of Gbaramutu Kingdom and that military helicopters have been spotted flying over the community<sup>1</sup>. If true, this will create fear and tension among people in the community.
- ❖ **Ughelli South LGA:** At Agberegolor community, a group of young people prevented the PDP House of Representatives aspirant from entering the community, claiming they had agreed to vote for the SPD House of Representatives aspirant instead.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ndokwareporters.com/current-news/niger-delta-community-raise-alarm-of-possible-military-attack/>

## Akwa Ibom

This week saw another incident of fighting over vote buying, at Mkpato Enin. This follows a trend observed in previous weeks of violence breaking out around the distribution of cash for votes, especially among younger voters. Gift giving to traditional leaders also influences partisan behaviour, as identified this week in Udung Uko. This is a direct contradiction of the non-partisan role traditional leaders are expected to play during elections.

Specific incidents reported this week include:

- ❖ In Onna LGA, PDP candidates reportedly shared money to community members on a ward by ward tour. In Awa and Ikot Akpan Eshiet, candidates contesting the Federal House of Representatives and State House of Assembly in Onna went on a campaign tour of all the villages in these wards. At each stop they paid courtesy calls to the village heads and elders, donating money to elders, young people and women, while soliciting support during the forthcoming election. The ongoing tour by both candidates is expected to cover all the wards in the local government area. Women and young people are following the candidates' trail in anticipation of more money, which has caused conflict with others.
- ❖ In Udung Uko Local Government Area, the Paramount Ruler of the area, Chief Bassey Etim Edet, refused to receive the APC flagbearer for Oron Federal Constituency, Hon. Victor Antai and other APC candidates in the State, who had called at his palace to pay customary homage to him in the course of their campaign tours. Our Observer was informed that the Paramount Ruler, who should be non-partisan by virtue of his traditional role, has been openly partisan and a strong supporter of the PDP in the area. His undisguised expression of displeasure towards the APC candidate may be connected with the recent donation of a Toyota Prado SUV to all paramount rulers in the state by the PDP governor, of which he was a beneficiary.
- ❖ On 25 January, approximately 15 people believed to be PDP supporters attacked the staff of an event planning company who were setting up the venue of an APC Governorship campaign rally billed for the following day at Odoro Ikpe, Ini LGA. Our Observer was informed by a reliable source that they were acting on the alleged orders of the Member representing Ini State Constituency in the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Hon Emmanuel Ekpenyong Bassey, who is popularly known as Iraq.
- ❖ In Ikot Itina, in Mkpato Enin, a fight broke out between different youth groups who were sharing campaign money donated by two PDP candidates. The money was donated to the young people by Rt. Hon. Francis Uduyok (the member representing Ikot Abasi/Mkpato Enin/Eastern Obolo Federal Constituency, at the House of Representatives) and Barr. Victor Ekere, the PDP candidate for the House of Assembly in the constituency. Many people sustained serious injuries.

## Social media

The major topic of discussion on social media over the last week was the decision of Buhari to suspend Chief Justice of Nigeria, Walter Onnoghen, over his refusal to disclose his owned assets, and to replace him with Supreme Court Judge, Tanko Mohammed, without due protocol. With only a few weeks to go until the election, Buhari's actions were widely condemned, as he received accusations of being 'tribalistic' and a 'tyrant', with the hashtag #TyrantBuhari trending on Twitter. This has been interpreted as a planned attempt to rig the elections in Buhari's favour. The story generated lots of reaction, comments and inflammatory speech, particularly on Facebook and Twitter.

Last week, we reported on a story surrounding speculation that Atiku Abubakar had been banned from entering the United States (which he disproved by flying to and entering the country). Now, Nigerian lawyer Festus Keyamo has said that Atiku paid money to a lobbying firm to obtain his travel visa into the States. The post<sup>2</sup> (below) generated mixed reactions, with many insults directed at Festus from party supporters.

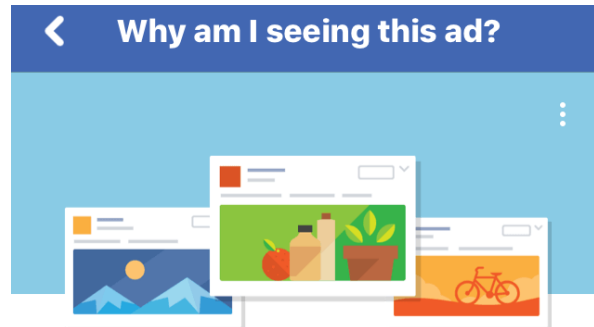


<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/fkeyamo/status/1087694170968547328>

There are discrediting campaigns circulating on social media from pages of which we do not know the origin. A sponsored ad (below) was discovered on Facebook posted by a community called 'Rivers State had enough'. This page has posted accusations against the incumbent Governor Nyesom Wike. The post is likely being promoted at this time close to the election in an attempt to tarnish his image and discourage voters to vote for him. At the time of reporting the post had received 21.4k views.



Dear Governor Nyesom wike is been almost 2years since u promised to help us medical students. We're still waiting, that means two years out of school.



You're seeing this ad because

**Rivers State had enough** wants to reach **people ages 18 and older who live or were recently in Rivers State.** This is information based on your Facebook profile and where you've connected to the internet.

Following the incidents reported around bribery and vote buying, social media discussions also bring the question of electoral fraud. Ever since the discussions around President Buhari not signing the Electoral Bill (which was a trending topic in early December with the hashtag #ElectoralBill, see image below left<sup>3</sup>), rumours of fraud have been spread on social media, with suspicions that the President's reason for not signing the Bill is so that the APC can rig the elections.

This is a question that we will be addressing in the coming weeks, since there has been increased tension about the fairness of the elections<sup>4</sup> and disinformation about such topics are common around the Election day. Social media users have been speculating whether the APC, party of the sitting president, will try to rig the elections, with the Electoral Bill being one of the strategies used by the party to do that. Earlier this week, APC supporters appeared to try to use the legitimacy of international observers to counter the narrative that the party will try to rig the elections (see image below right)<sup>5</sup>.



<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/bukolasaraki/status/1070393371523510273>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/308466-politicians-afraid-of-elections-want-to-write-poll-results-in-hotels-inec-commissioner.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/henry.e.duku/posts/10216328651622861>



## About Niger Delta Watch 2019

Niger Delta Watch 2019 is a citizen-led elections observation project reporting on the 2019 Nigerian presidential and governorship elections. The project focuses on the states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Akwa Ibom. It is a joint initiative of Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) and the Civil Society Situation Room (CSSR), and builds on previous election observation work carried out by SDN, including during the 2011 and 2015 election cycles.

The goal of Niger Delta Watch 2019 is to generate accurate information on the election campaign as it unfolds, for the benefit of the Nigerian government, its electoral agencies, and journalists, researchers, civil society organisations and others working to support democracy in Nigeria.

The project's reporting is based on information generated and analysed by approximately 100 citizen Election Observers, Data Analysts, and Social Media Analysts.

Please visit [www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/elections2019](http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/elections2019) for more information on all aspects of this project, including how the reports are produced. We are also keen to hear how the reports could be made more useful.

**Disclaimer:** *this report is produced as part of a Niger Delta elections observation project being led by SDN in partnership with the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room. The project is funded by the UK's Department for International Development. Please note that the information and analysis contained in the report do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the British government.*

*Note that the information and analysis contained in these reports do not represent the views of any one organisation. SDN and CSSR have made efforts to ensure that the information is accurate, but will aim to correct any errors or omissions as new information emerges.*

*The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) was consulted for training in data management and visualisation for this project. Democracy Reporting International led the training of Election Observers participating in this project.*

