



**Public Perceptions of Security Dynamics
and Stabilisation Interventions in the Niger Delta**
October 2017 - March 2018

Summary

This report presents the results of a public perceptions survey, carried out by Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states. It focuses on citizens' perceptions of the current security situation in the Niger Delta, and views on the actors and interventions aiming to address the problem of instability and insecurity in the region. The survey was conducted at the end of March 2018, and captures perceptions for the six-month period preceding that (October 2017 to March 2018).

Key Messages

- The perception is that the security situation in the Niger Delta worsened during the surveyed period, from October 2017 to March 2018, and is expected to worsen further over the six months following due to the upcoming 2019 elections.
- The biggest security concerns included cultism, herder attacks, militancy, and gang related activities such as kidnapping. Herders attacks were perceived as one of the fastest growing threats to stability, and was consistently mentioned across the three states under review.
- Cultism remained the biggest perceived security threat across the three states. Cultists have increasingly been involved in armed criminal activities, including arms proliferation, theft, pipeline vandalism, and political violence. The public anticipate political violence, in particular, will worsen over coming months with the 2019 presidential and governorship elections.
- Women tended to have a more negative view on the security situation, highlighting clashes with herders as a major concern, with a higher percentage feeling that the situation had worsened over the period, compared with men.
- The awareness of the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), and its activities, drastically decreased over the past six months. Although a number of respondents agreed that PANDEF had a role to play in the current security stabilisation in their state, the body's credibility is being questioned as there is a feeling that PANDEF is no longer the right body to represent the region's interests in discussions with the Federal Government.
- Across the states, respondents' two biggest concerns about PANDEF revolved around self-interest and lack of understanding of people's problems, but strongly recommended the body to consult and engage the public and wider stakeholder groups in decision making, and improve communication of their activities especially in dealings with the Federal Government.
- The current Federal Government policies and strategies for development and stabilisation in the region have very limited visibility. The Strategic Implementation Work Plan (SIWP) was known by only 1.5%. The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on the Niger Delta established to coordinate development interventions in the SIWP was known by only 4% surveyed. The public-facing arm of this strategy – the Niger Delta New Vision – by only 2%, and nobody in the survey sample was aware of the Ministry of Petroleum's '7-Big Wins'. However, the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) remains the most visible intervention, is seen as the most effective, and an extension is desired by citizens in the region, in the absence of a long term solution.

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1. Introduction

This report focuses on the perceptions of citizens on the current security situation and conflict dynamics in the region, how this has changed in the six months since the first survey in this series, and any new dimensions to the situation in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states.

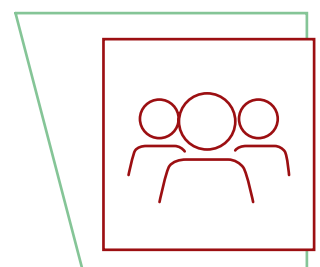
This public perceptions survey is the second in a series of bi-annual reports carried out by SDN. This report provides a comparison between the six-month period (October 2017-March 2018) and the preceding period (March-September 2017).

It is important to note that this report does not present an empirical analysis, for example, of the instance of violent threats (such as cult-related violence) – it presents the perceptions of the public across the region. This is important and valuable because it provides an indication of how citizens in the Niger Delta feel about the current situation, which is useful to guide interventions, programmes, and policies. Where possible, empirical data has been included to compare recorded events of conflict with the way that instability is experienced and perceived by the public.

Conducting the first survey has allowed us to refine the methodology further, for example, by adding new response categories to more accurately capture people's perception of the actors posing the biggest threats to security in the Niger Delta.

Limitations:

The sample of respondents is not representative across the selected states or at the state-level. The challenges of travel within the Niger delta, coupled with the available resources, means certain trade-offs have been made to practically implement the survey and ensure it can take place on a regular basis. However, our surveys are complimented by focus group discussions, validation with key experts, and the knowledge of our local research team, which provide us with a good level of confidence in the validity of the findings.



2. Key Contextual Dynamics in the six-month Period (October 2017 – March 2018)

Militancy and Gangs

In October 2017, four British missionaries were kidnapped in Delta state, and a full blown military manhunt led to the killing of fearsome gang leader Karowei¹. This eliminated a gang terrorising the public, but the approach of the military instilled fear, as it created a lot of collateral damage to communities during the pursuit through Delta and Bayelsa state. In a similar chain of events, a gang leader in Rivers state was killed in January 2018, following a massacre at a church in Rivers state on New Year's Day. The gang had previously accepted amnesty from the state governor, so this sharpened the issue of mistrust with government interventions. Whilst many threats were issued by militant groups during this period, few were followed through – including threats by the Niger Delta Avengers relating to limited action by the Federal Government in the region, and by other agitator groups in relation to delayed amnesty payments.

Government Interventions

In October 2017, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Niger Delta (IMC) developed a Strategic Implementation Work Plan (SIWP) which included the development points in the PANDEF Agenda, Federal Government's 20 Point Agenda, and also outlined planned and existing development and stabilisation projects that various federal ministries, departments, and agencies, plan to implement in the Niger Delta over a short to long term period. The plan includes the planned Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) initiatives of the International Oil Companies (IOCs) operating in the region. In November 2017 they entered a period of consultation, with meetings in three states (Edo, Imo, and Delta), to get feedback from key stakeholders. The plan was reviewed and submitted to the Federal Government in December 2018 for sign-off at the Federal Executive Council, but this was not signed off by the end of the period.

Simultaneously, the Federal Government launched the Niger Delta New Vision – a public facing strategy for their response to militant threats and demands for development in the region. Under this vision, the Vice President announced that two modular refineries would be installed in Rivers state and there would be take-off funding for the Nigerian Maritime University in Delta state. These were two high priority demands of militants and other stakeholder groups, and appears to have bought the government some respite. By the end of the period, however, there were no modular refineries on the ground, and funding for the University was plunged into uncertainty, as the proposed budget was cut significantly.

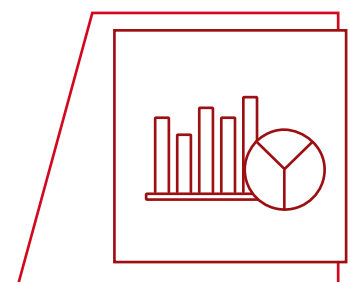
¹ *The Guardian* (2017) *Four British Missionaries Kidnapped in Nigeria*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/18/four-british-missionaries-kidnapped-in-nigeria-delta>

At the start of the period the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) appointed a management consulting firm to handle the Ogoni clean-up, but thereafter did not make any visible progress. Towards the end of the period, news emerged that there were oil companies bidding to recommence oil production in Ogoniland, despite the fact the clean-up had not started. This was quickly rebuked by civil society groups and the public.

Overall there were quick responses by the Federal Government to threats, but lack of engagement in mid to long-term development projects reinforced the dynamic that violence is the only successful mode for attention.

Other Issues

Other security concerns during this period included herders and community clashes in Bayelsa state, and several other deaths and reprisal killings in December, following similar clashes in Delta state. An online campaign targeting the Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) gained traction, and the public recounted their stories of poor treatment and extrajudicial treatment. Other issues were related to the local government elections conducted in January, in Delta state, which witnessed some violence, and all seats were won by the People's Democratic Party (PDP).



3. Findings

3.1 Perceptions of the current security situation

The biggest threats to security across the states

Which actor or group do you believe is the biggest threat to security in the Niger Delta region at the moment?

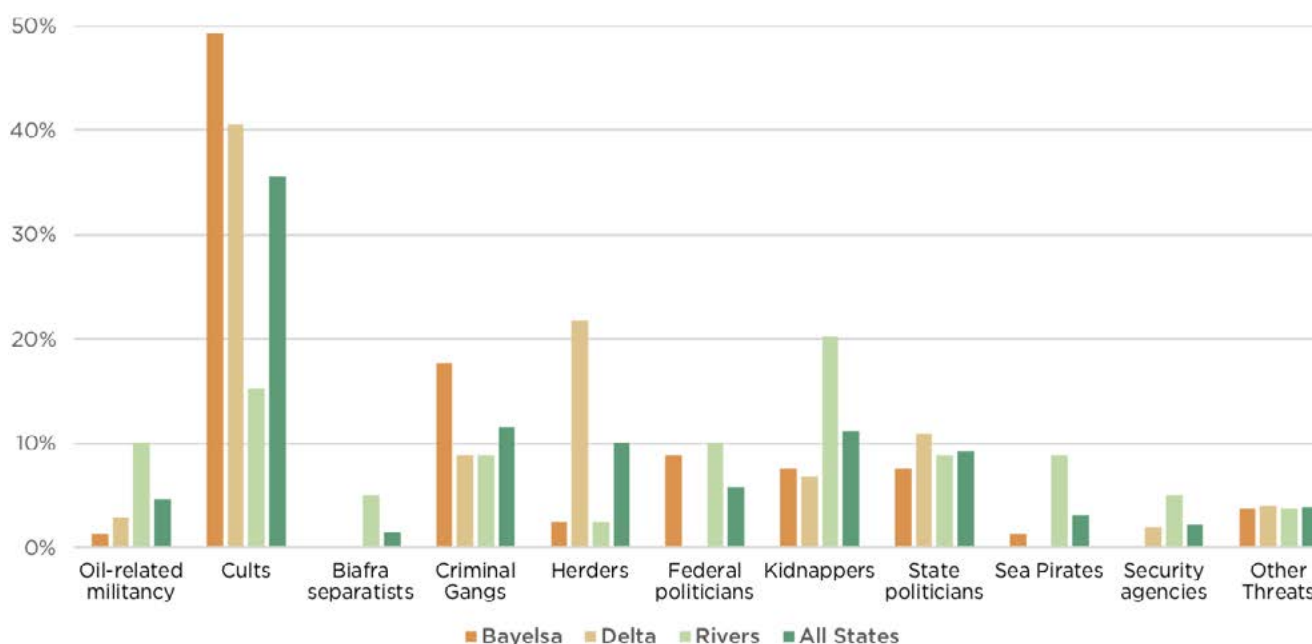


Fig. 1: Percentage of survey participants selecting given options for biggest threat to security in the Niger Delta

Cultism

Cultism remains the single biggest perceived security threat overall, particularly in Delta and Bayelsa State. 36% of respondents identified cults as the biggest threat to security, compared to 47% in the previous survey (September 2017). This drop is likely to be a result of the addition of new response options in the survey, which has allowed respondents to provide more specific responses, such as “kidnappers”, rather than a drop in the level of concern over cult activities. This continued concern is attributable to the inability of the federal and the state government to curb criminal activities in the region, provide rehabilitation programmes, and ensure that cult members are prosecuted by relevant authorities, as highlighted in the last report.

Threats from militancy still remain a concern, but as a participant from Udu community in Delta state asserts, militants are few in many communities, but cult activities are rampant everywhere.

“Cultists are now everywhere and so bold. Once you listen to news, radio, TV, paper, the only thing you hear is killing here and there across the country - one killing or another and the situation is getting bad every day.”

The indiscriminate and particularly violent activities of cult groups in the tussle for supremacy continue to be a major concern for citizens. Male respondents (37%) and female respondents (35%) both identified cults as the biggest security threats. Community members who live with cult members within their midst are hesitant to report them to security officials, as they fear reprisal attacks from these groups, so curbing their activities has proved challenging.

Electioneering

Across the states the threat to stabilisation from politicians resonated with the public as seen in the previous survey, and this time remained a concern in anticipation of election preparations. This is likely to be the cause in the perceived upsurge in cult related activities, with elections fast approaching. Politicians have traditionally funded cult gangs as thugs to circumvent electoral processes, campaigns, and for rigging elections in favour of financial gains or future political rewards. For instance, ex-cultists have been known to occupy government positions in some of the states as a reward for services rendered. In January, an ad hoc staff member of the Delta State Independent Electoral Commission (DSIEC) was reportedly killed by political thugs during local government council elections in Ughelli North². The die-hard attitude of politicians has continued to fuel insecurity in the region, and their capacity to perpetuate violence is often regarded as an effective mechanism to become incorporated into the political fold.

Kidnapping

Aside from cultism, the twin-issue of kidnapping and criminal gang networks were major concerns for the public across the three states, especially in Rivers State where one in five respondents highlighted this. The survey also shows that kidnapping of citizens is fast becoming worrisome in both urban and rural communities, especially along waterways. For example, in Nembe and Brass Local Government Areas (LGAs), Bayelsa state, criminal activities and kidnappings have gone unchecked despite military presence. It is worth noting that the military have also been victims in clashes.³

Herders

Herders were seen as the biggest threat amongst female respondents, as clashes with herders tend to occur at farms, which are predominantly tended to by women and girls.⁴ However, whilst there is large scale violence, this is mainly concentrated in the middle belt at present, with traction gained from extensive media coverage fuelling tension and fear.⁵

In Delta State, 22% of respondents claimed herder threats were the biggest threat to stabilisation, following displacement of community members in the Ughelli north LGA⁶.

² Niger Delta quarterly conflict, January-March 2018. <http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Niger-Delta-Conflict-Tracker-2018-Q1.pdf>

³ Conflict incident monthly tracker, Bayelsa State (December-January, 2018). <https://pindfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Bayelsa-Conflict-Tracker-January-2018.pdf>

Vanguard (2018) suspected sea pirates kill two policemen in Bayelsa. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/01/breaking-suspected-sea-pirates-kill-2-policemen-bayelsa/>

⁴ An earlier protest highlights this - Agency Report (2016) 3,000 women farmers protest against herders. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/210189-3000-women-farmers-protest-herders.html>

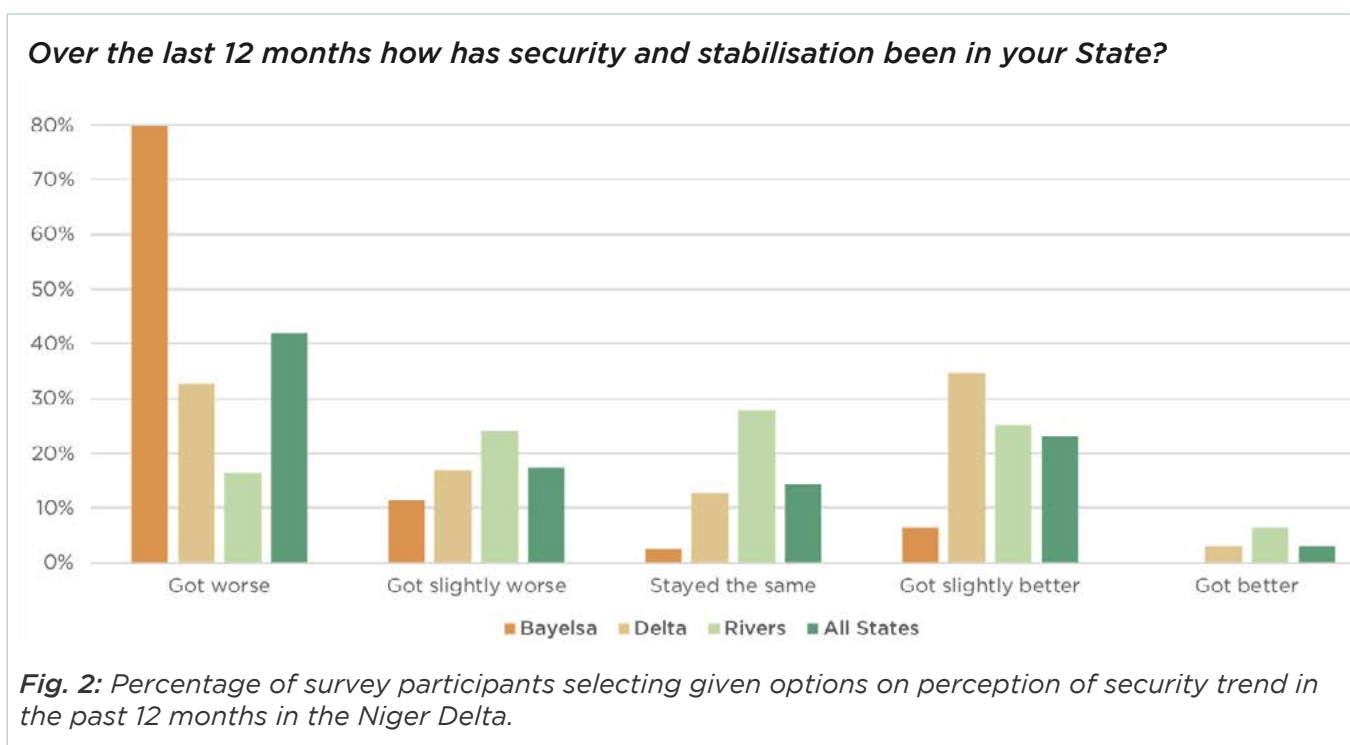
⁵ Chima Obinna (2018) 901 Killed in Middle Belt Since January. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/04/30/901-killed-in-middle-belt-since-january/>

⁶ Perez Brisibe (2018), Herders kill Four In Delta Community; behead one, Vanguard Newspaper, March 20, 2018. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/herders-kill-4-delta-community-behead-another/>

The underlying factors contributing to the herder-farmer conflict are complex, and include lack of clarity over land rights, loss (and expansion) of traditional pasture and farm lands, a weak security response to conflict, and lack of political attention. However, many prominent narratives on the conflict (found in local media, put forward by politics and other prominent individuals) focus on ethnicity, religion, and alleged political motives, which risk further inflaming inter-ethnic and religious tensions. A response from one respondent in Patani is indicative:

“The killings by Fulani herders are now everywhere. In Patani here we have had incidences that would have led to serious problems if we were not careful. The President seems to be handling the issue with kid gloves mainly because the Fulani herders are also members of his ethnic group and he is not serious over it. If for anything, the way President Buhari has been dealing this issue has made it worse in the country. The country has never been this divided. I only hope that things will not get worse the way they already are because the President is not doing anything. If he had addressed the herders problem the way he did with the Niger Delta militancy because of our oil maybe these killings would have reduced. He is instead thinking more about re-election!”.

Change to the security situation over the last 12 months



Across the three states, the majority of citizens feel that the security situation worsened over the preceding 12 months. There was a marked difference between states, with 80% of citizens in Bayelsa state reporting they felt the security and stabilisation got much worse over the preceding 12-month period, with sea piracy, cultism, artisanal refining, and political party clashes reported daily. Women tended to have a more negative view on the security situation, highlighting clashes with herders as a major concern, with a higher percentage (65%) feeling that the situation had worsened over the period in comparison to men (56%).

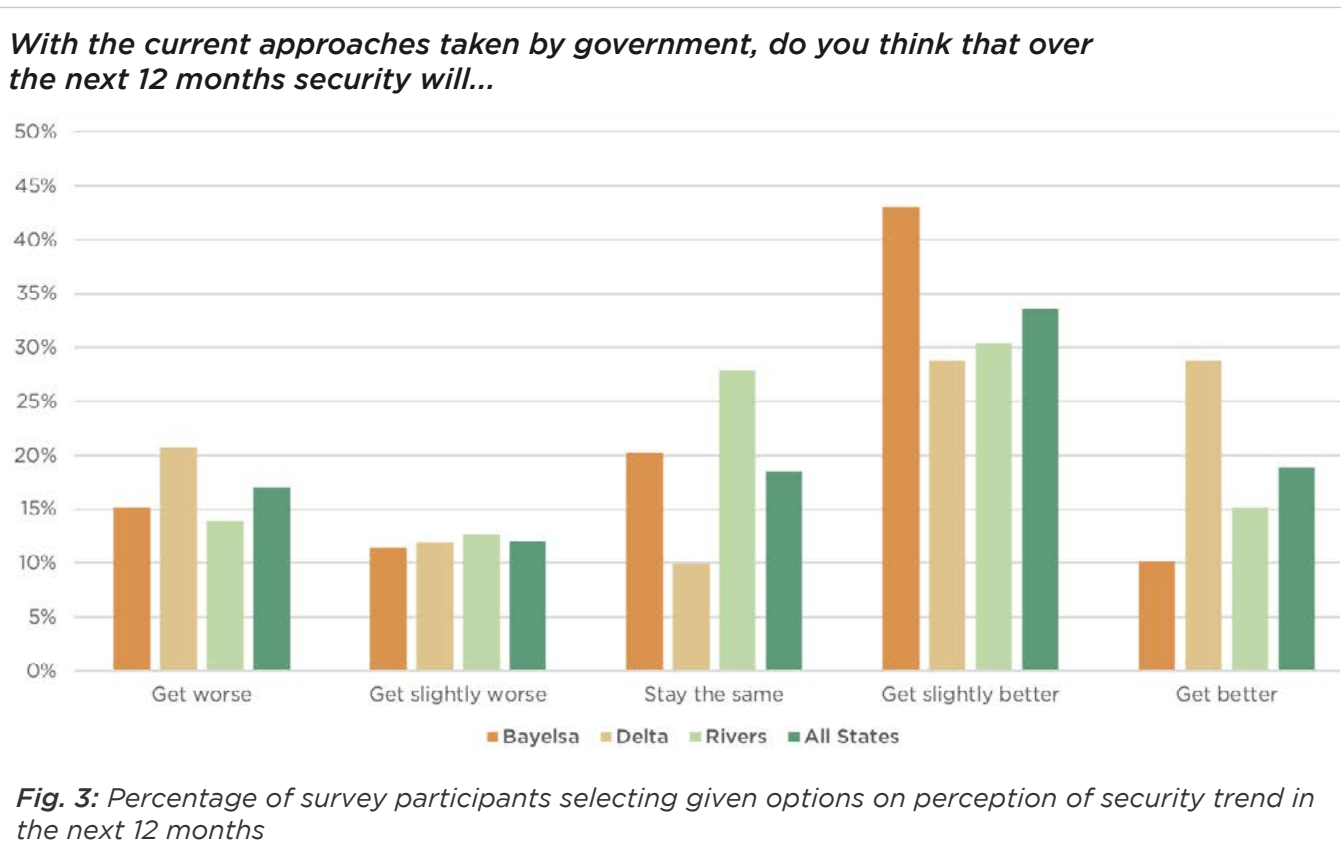
As highlighted above, the fast approaching elections have engrossed fears amongst various communities in all three states. They fear that the latent conflicts will snowball into bigger conflicts when politicians start dispersing funds in the build-up to the 2019

general elections. For instance, in February, a young man was reportedly killed, and several others injured, during a clash between young people in Okpoama, Brass LGA. The clash was believed to have occurred between young people belonging to two different political parties in the area⁷.

The issue of militarisation of the region as a possible trigger to conflict was again captured in this survey, contributing to the confrontational stance of young populations. This view is shared by a few respondents who believe that continued occupation of the region by military forces does not stop the acts of defiance to laws and regulations.

“Insecurity in our State and region cannot be addressed by the conventional security apparatuses but can be overcome when means of livelihood are created for the citizens to sustain themselves and dependants. No amount of military occupation can stop the rising spate of crime in the region. Socio-economic and political empowerment is the only option.”

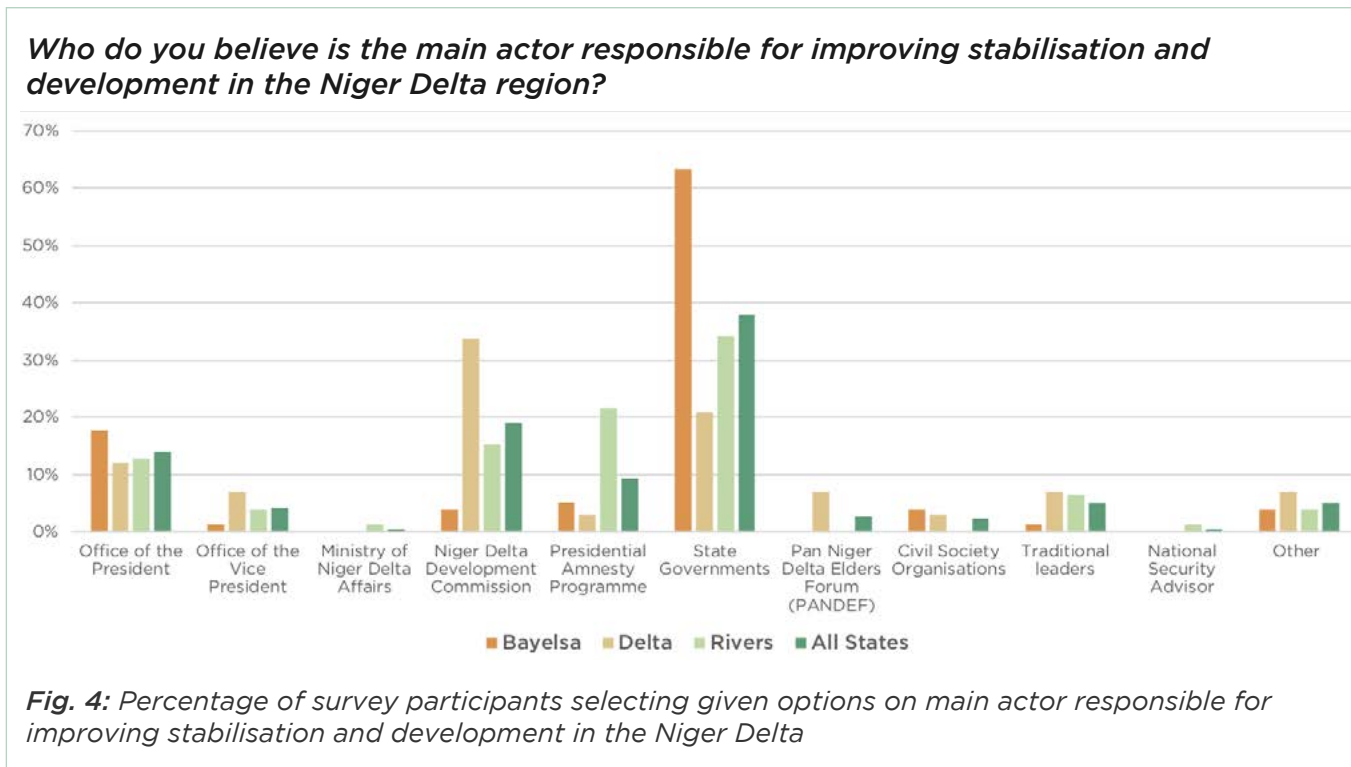
Impact of Current Government approach on security over the next 12 months



There is still some level of optimism by citizens on what the future holds. An aggregated 53% of the respondents believe security will get better in the next 12 months, representing an increase in optimism in Bayelsa and Rivers States compared with responses to the previous survey. Anecdotally, the increased level of optimism may be linked to the tenacity of Nigerians, even in the face of adversity. In the regional Pidgin, this is termed “e go better” - hope for what the future holds.

⁷ Niger Delta quarterly conflict, January-March 2018. <http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Niger-Delta-Conflict-Tracker-2018-Q1.pdf>

3.2 Perception of actors and interventions relating to security and stabilisation actors perceived to be responsible for security and stabilisation in the region



Overall, respondents identified a range of actors that they felt are responsible for development and security stabilisation in the region. State governments (38%), NDDC (19%) and the Office of the President (14%) were identified most frequently. Although perceptions of both male and female respondents were similar, responses varied slightly across the three states. 34% of respondents in Delta State identified NDDC as being the most responsible actor over the preceding 12 months, attributable to development projects implemented across some communities in Delta State as asserted by some respondents. In contrast, 63% in Bayelsa and 34% in Rivers States identified State governments as being the most responsible actors. The results in Bayelsa and Rivers States may be because of the narrative put forward by state governors, who often claim that federal security services are working against the interests of people in the state as a justification for the establishment of state-level security agencies.

Actors seen to be the most effective at addressing security and stabilisation

Which actor do you believe has been the most effective at addressing stabilisation and development in the Niger Delta over the past year?

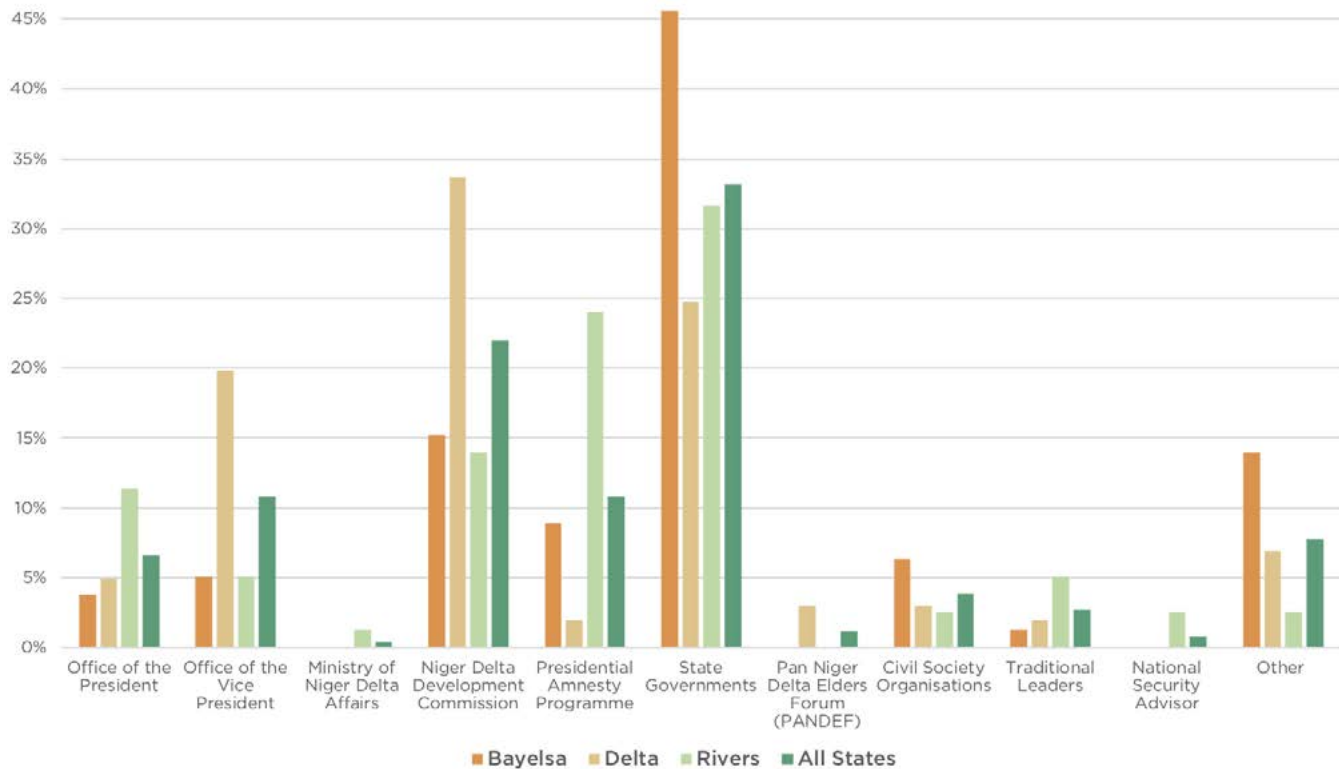
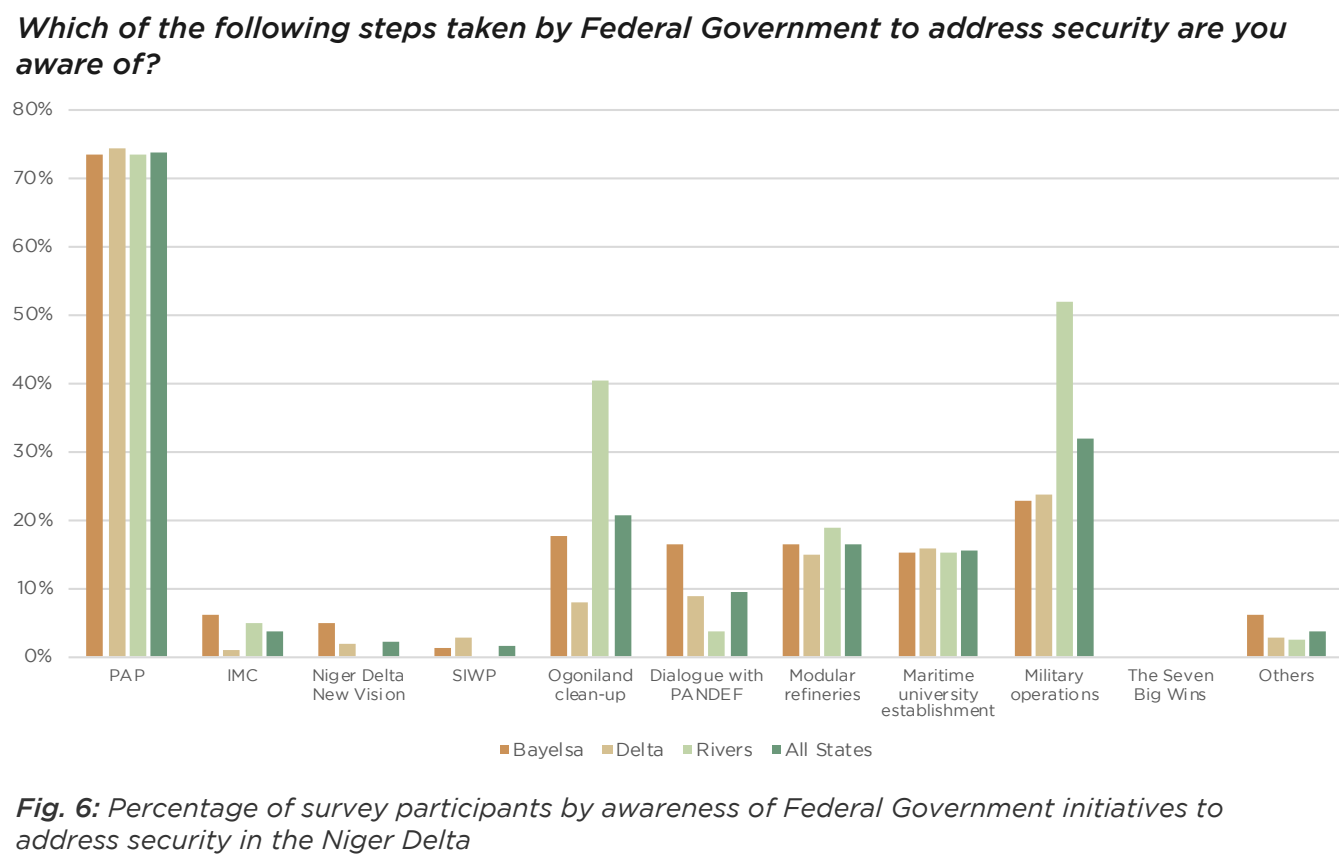


Fig. 5: Percentage of survey participants selecting given options on who they feel has been the most effective actor in addressing stabilisation and development in the Niger Delta

Perceptions of actors most effective in addressing stabilisation and development in the Niger Delta were generally similar to those seen as most responsible (see Fig. 4). Across the three states, the results show a convergent view that both the State government and NDDC were the most important actors in stabilisation and development in the region over the past 12 months. Conversely, the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA) is perceived to have been the least effective and responsible actor in addressing stabilisation and development across the three states in the past 12 months.

Respondents viewed the Office of the President as more effective (14%) than responsible (7%) but conversely viewed the Office of Vice President as less effective (4%) than responsible (11%) for stabilisation and development in the past year. This could be as a result of the delay in the fulfilments of the promises made by the Vice President a year ago, during his visits to the region to promote dialogue and concerted security and development interventions.

Awareness of Federal Government initiatives to address security and stability.



Overall, citizens indicated a general awareness of various components of development and security stabilisation initiatives of the Federal Government, but not any of the holistic plans under development. Awareness of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) ranks highest. This may be attributed to the duration of the programme, since 2009, and other factors that gained media coverage such as delayed payments to beneficiaries, increase in the number of beneficiaries, and allegations of misdemeanours and fraud levelled against Chairman Boroh (who was replaced shortly after the research ended in March 2018)⁸.

The results also highlighted that one in five respondents across the three states were aware of the Ogoniland clean-up exercise but on further enquiry, they were not sure about the level of progress made on the process of the clean-up, despite the public promises of President Buhari to complete the programme in the early days of his administration. This may pose a critical campaign issue as the 2019 general election approaches.

Awareness of key demands, such as the establishment of modular refineries and the maritime university, by key stakeholders were low – 17% and 15% respectively, despite being in high demand by militants, and the latter receiving a N2bn take off-grant. There was also a general sense of optimism that establishment of modular refineries was the right way to go:

“The damage done to the habitat can be managed by the proper licensing and regulation of the activities of illegal bunkers. If a framework is instituted to help improve what the boys in the bush are doing so that they do not end up damaging the environment and the lives of the people in the process, the Federal Government can then tax them and they will in turn create employment for the youths in the region thereby decreasing dependency on violence and crime as a means of livelihood.”

⁸ OSAPND: Federal Government Uncovers Fraud in the Amnesty Programme, <http://www.osapnd.gov.ng/mediacenter/news-press-release/289-Federal-Government-uncovers-fraud-in-amnesty-programme>

Some of the current Federal Government strategies for development, security, and stabilisation - such as the establishment of the IMC, the Niger Delta New Vision, SIWP, and 7 Big wins - had very limited or no visibility according to the survey results (IMC - 4%, Niger Delta New Vision - 2%, SIWP - 1.5%, 7-Big wins - 0%). Respondents did indicate an awareness of state governments' waterways security contracts, Bayelsa state anti-cultism law, and other activities like Operation Python Dance in the region.

3.3 Priorities for security and stabilization in the next 12 months

Priority interventions and perspectives on the Presidential Amnesty Programme

What should be the biggest priority for government to improve security and stabilisation in the region?

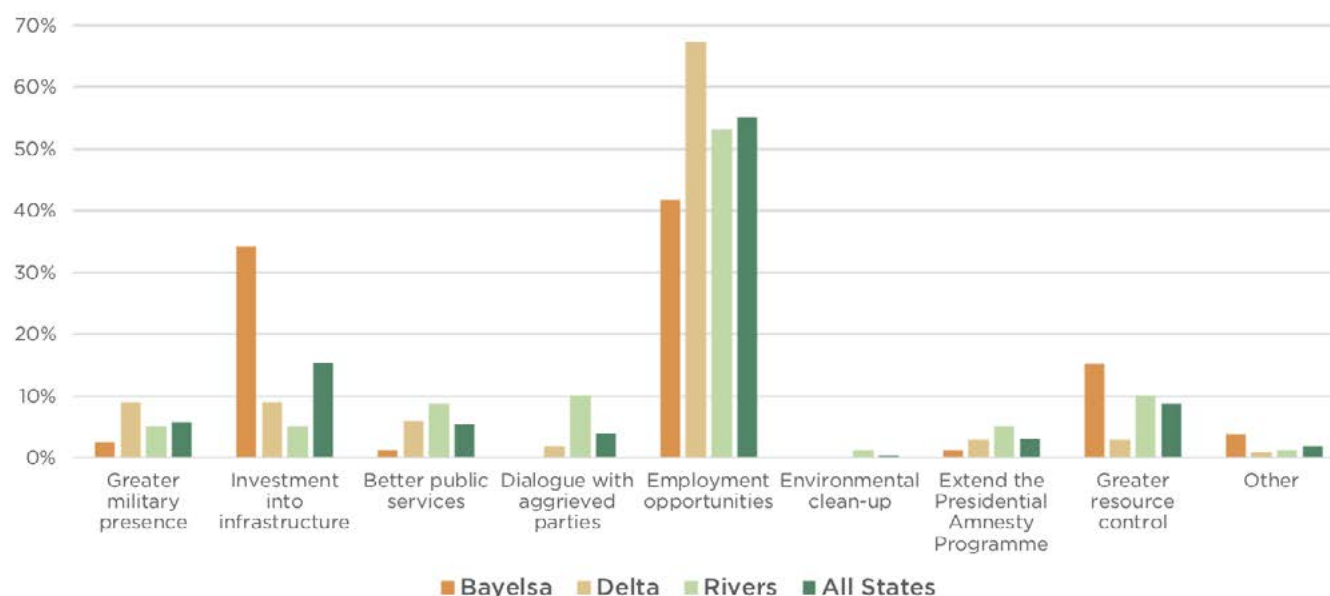


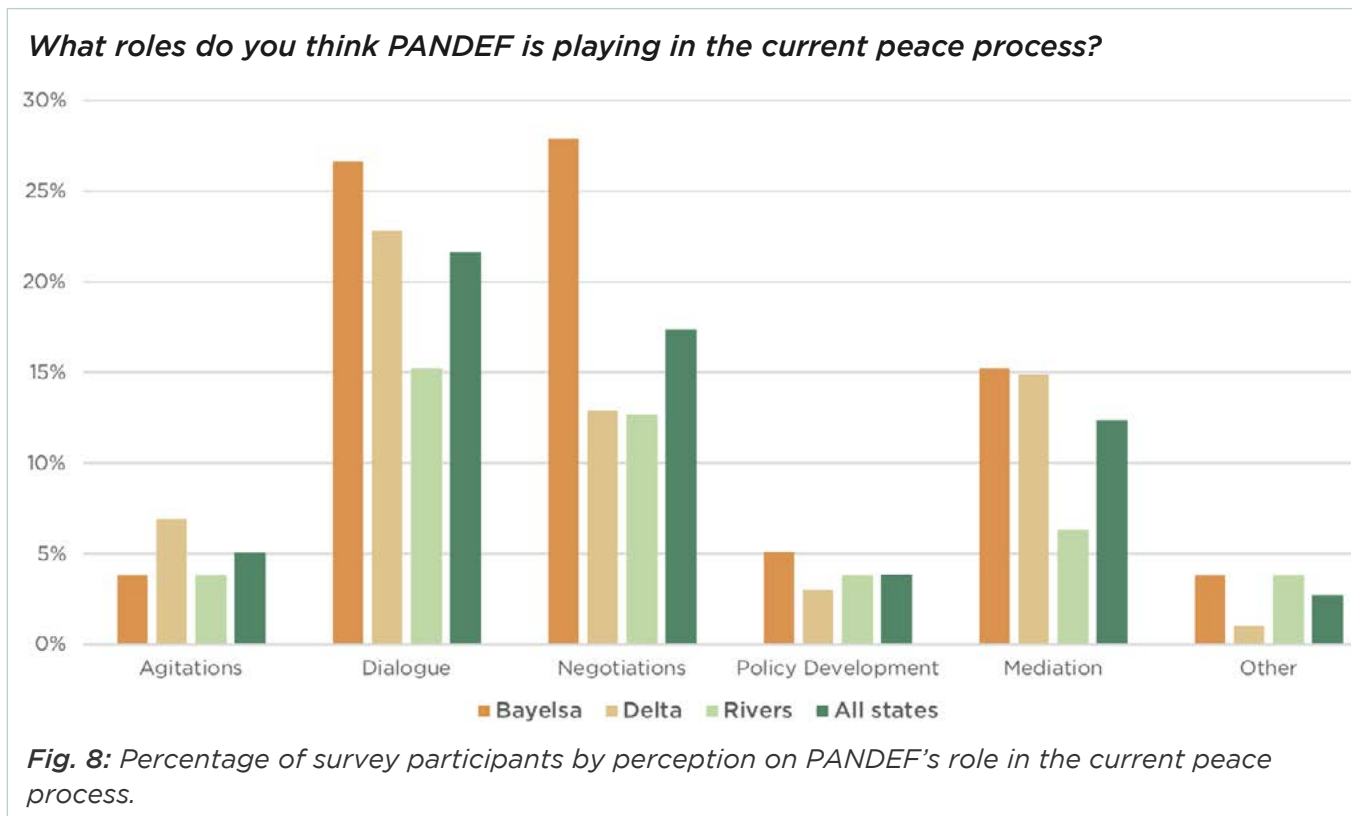
Fig. 7: Percentage of survey participants by main priority for improving security and stabilisation in the next 12 months.

Responses to this survey question were similar to the previous survey. Respondents identified employment opportunities (55%) and investment in infrastructure (15%) as the top two options for government to prioritise. Concerns about the increasing level of poverty and unemployment were emphasised in all three states, which were considered driving factors in perceptions of increasing crime levels by respondents, for example:

“There is increased hunger in the land since the coming into being of this government. If they listen to us and build factories it would engage youths. All these people trained [under Amnesty] if they remain unengaged they would go back to crime. How can you train someone and not engage them. Sharing of monies through the [Amnesty] programme is not really helping them. Fashion designing, building of factories and others are things I have said government should do, but nothing has happened. Today the best fabrics you see abroad are the Nigerian fabrics, yet the government does not develop on these. The youths have been told that they would be leaders, till date only the older generation are still in power.”

There was still little or no response to the option of environmental clean-up, as highlighted in the previous report, and although only a small number of respondents selected the extension of the PAP, in a separate part of the survey, 85% still express support for extension of the programme beyond 2018.

Perceptions of PANDEF's role in the peace process



In general, awareness of PANDEF drastically decreased. Only 29% of respondents were aware of PANDEF in contrast to 63% recorded in the previous survey (September 2017). However, of those aware, dialogue, negotiations, and mediation were seen as the PANDEF's main responsibilities. Furthermore, 73% of those aware agree that PANDEF had a role to play in the security stabilisation in their state but 53% of these, do not believe PANDEF is the right body to represent their interests and needs in discussions with the Federal Government. This indicates that PANDEF is slowly losing its credibility to represent the interests of the region.

Across the three states, awareness of PANDEF was greatest in Bayelsa state (37%) and lowest in Delta state (24%) – a reversal of the results in the previous survey (Delta 75%, Bayelsa 54%). The increase of awareness in Bayelsa may be down to a 'mega-rally' organised by PANDEF in Yenagoa in March, which gained traction, not because it was successful, but because major stakeholders in the state boycotted the event in an act of defiance against the leadership. Although awareness of PANDEF increased in Bayelsa state, it recorded the highest scepticism (67%) that the body was the right one to represent the region in discussions with the Federal Government. Delta state was the direct opposite with respondents having the highest vote of confidence in PANDEF even though its awareness decreased in the state.

Respondents noted their two biggest concerns about PANDEF as self-interest and lack of understanding of their problems. They highlighted that transparency, a more inclusive approach, dialogue with the public as well as militants and the Federal Government, and setting a clear agenda with measurable targets as areas of improvement for PANDEF.

Citizen Engagement

In addition to questions about security and stabilisation, respondents were asked whether the Federal Government consults enough with them on development and security stabilisation policies and programmes related to their states, and what their major source of information is on security and development in their region. 79% felt that citizens were not consulted enough. Radio (40%), internet (22%), TV (18%) were cited as the top three ways of accessing information. These responses were similar to the previous survey.

Appendix : Methodology

This research encompasses three states in the Niger Delta – Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states. A survey was administered by the SDN research team in various locations including communities and towns to provide a balanced view, split evenly between rural and urban areas. The study included areas captured in the previous survey to gauge negation or affirm perceptions recorded in the last survey. A stratified sampling method was employed to ensure a representative group of the general public was captured, including gender balance. New sets of questions were introduced to increase data accuracy and reliability as a reference for subsequent surveys. A total of 500 respondents were targeted and 259 completed the survey across 11 communities in two senatorial districts per state. The low turnout was due to logistical impediments, which will be addressed in future surveys.

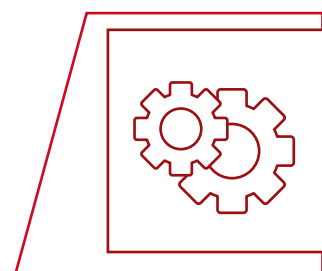
Respondents were drawn from ages ranging from 18 years and older.

The results were next analysed by SDN to highlight differences between states and to situate the findings in the contextual dynamics over the period under review.

Table 1: Number of Respondents per State and Gender

State	Male	Female	Total of respondents
Bayelsa	44	35	79
Delta	52	49	101
Rivers	52	26	79*
Total Number of Respondents per State	148	110	259*

* One respondent did not indicate a gender





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