

the LGA, no other LGA visited indexed a particular cult group. Every other local governments visited asserted that no cult group had strongholds in their community and that they experienced violence and restiveness from different groups appearing in different and varying attires, such that it is almost impossible to tell which groups operated at a given time. For us, this is the reason for the incessant cult clashes noticed in Akwa Ibom. The entire communities in the local government areas have become a battlespace where these cult groups metamorphose into smaller factions, engage in cult clash, restiveness, and all forms of violence in the bid to display superiority.

3.3.3 Communal and Inter-State Land Disputes

A trend of violent communal conflicts spreading through Akwa Ibom State in recent years has intensified in the past months, leaving hundreds of people dead and thousands displaced. Land disputes is one of the main causes of communal conflict in Akwa Ibom State (Akpaeti, 2005). A release from the Department of State Service (DSS) cited by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR, 2002) notes that since the creation of Akwa Ibom State from Cross River State in 1987, several bloody communal clashes have occurred. For instance, Oku Iboku and Ikot Offiong, Mbiakong and Ifianyong Usuk in 2003, Ngwa and Ikot Umo Essien in 1996 to 1997, Ikporom communal conflicts in Ini Local Government Area and Edem Aban in Abia State. These conflicts have impacted negatively on the land and other environmental resources, thereby reducing the livelihood and development potential of the natural resource base of the people.

On May 21, 2019, 10 people (including fishermen) were reportedly killed with several others declared missing in a renewed violence between Oku-Iboku community in Itu Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa Ibom State and Ikot-Offiong community in Odukpani LGA of Cross River State (WANEP, 2019). Suspected gunmen from Ikot Offiong community were alleged to have carried out the armed attack on Ikot Adakpan fishing community in Itu LGA. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the gunmen stormed the waterways in speedboats shooting and killing victims who are indigenes of Oku Iboku on a fishing expedition in the disputed area. Consequent upon the renewed hostilities, operatives of the Nigerian Army assigned to the Calabar-Itu Bridge bordering both states halted an attempted reprisal attack on the people of