

Ekpemupolo and Late General John Togo. The analysis of actors reveals that most militant actors are young men between the ages of 17 to 35. It is not clear if these actors are linked or connected with the mainstream cult groups operating across Bayelsa State. Unlike the cult groups that are structurally organized with membership base spanning across communities and even states, the militant groups have no clear organizational structure beyond their leader. Yet militant groups happen to be more deadly, powerful and have stronger financial resources and arms than the cult groups. They are most times referred to as the 'River-Men'.

## **ii. Military Raids/Invasion on Communities**

Related to the activities of militants in the area is the issue of recurrent raids/invasion of communities along the River Dodo by men of the Nigerian military. These military raids/invasions are often carried out as reprisals to militant attacks on soldiers and key oil infrastructure in the area. Respondents noted that the Nigerian military raid communities along the waterways whenever militants attack in that area. Participants in this study reported that the military engage in indiscriminate destruction of houses, sporadic shootings, mass arrests, and extra-judicial killing during these reprisal attacks. This situation has led many community residents to flee their communities thereby constituting an increasing trend in the number of internally displaced persons in places such as Azagbene, Letugbene, and Bilabiri. Respondents noted that military raids have become a recurring event in the area. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020, soldiers invaded Ezetu community in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, killing two, following the burning of a military houseboat in Azagbene community. On February 16, 2020, men of the Nigerian army raided/invaded Letugbene community following the killing of four soldiers and a civilian captain on board a tugboat towing a barge carrying two cranes to Shell location in Tunu. Similarly, on January 17, 2020, men of the Nigerian army invaded Bilabiri community following the killing of four naval officers and the abduction of two foreigners at Agge waterway. The raid led to the burning of houses and displacement of community residents. On July, 23, 2019, troops of the 16 Brigade of the Nigerian army invaded Azagbene community following the killing of two soldiers guarding a crude oil facility in the area.