

Activist/Itu). There are similar situations in Mbo, Oron, Udung Uko, and Urue-Offong/Oruko Local Government Area where, in August 2019, residents in the fishing communities staged a protest over the incessant attacks and killings of fishermen and boat owners on waterways by sea pirates (Umo, 2019). Criminal activities by pirates in Mbo LGA led to the kidnapping of five ExxonMobil employees by unidentified gunmen in 2013. This resulted to a gun battle between the navy and the pirates, causing the death of six pirates and heightening the bad security situation. In September 2019, piracy attacks accounted for the deaths of two naval officers. Narrating this ordeal, the clan head of Idua, His Royal Highness Etinyin Edet Nyong Ekeng states thus:

This problem of insecurity in our waterways has cost us so many lives, even the fishermen boats and engines are seized by the pirates. A week ago, a boat was seized and everything in the boat was carted away. We have made reports to the government agencies at various times. The sea pirates even attacked the state marine office and looted everything there, killing two security operatives, yet the government has not done anything. (KII/Male/Clan Head/Idua)

The activities of these pirates affect the economic fortunes of the residents of the fishing communities and also impact the economy of the state and the nation at large. Essien & Al note that “the frequent attacks on the fishing activities led to the reduction of the number of fishing trawlers from 205 to 150, That poses a significant challenge and enormous cost on the local fishing economies.” (2015).

Also, incidents of piracy and incessant harassment of fishermen and others engaging in economic activities, orchestrated in the Nigerian waterways are recorded in Ibeno, Ikot Abasi, Okobo, and Uruan, leading to the soaring cost of fish and seafood. An account of sea piracy in Ibeno relates that in November 2019:

The dare-devil pirates attacked fishermen in Ibeno, stealing over 40 boat engines in 2018. In some instances, the pirates demanded a ransom of N150,000 to N200,000 to recover each engine stolen from the fishermen, who are afraid their source of livelihood is under threat. For instance, fishermen in Okoroitak, a mangrove swamp in Ibeno lost 20 boat engines ranging from 15 horsepower, 25 horsepower to 40 horsepower worth about N550,000 and more between November and