

Rivers Cult Clash Leaves Six Dead

By Odudu Okpongete
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT,
Port Harcourt

There was a mass exodus of people from some communities in Emohua local government area of Rivers State at the weekend, following a clash between rival cult groups that left six persons dead.

Sources told our correspondent on Sunday that most of the killings took place in Ogbakiri, a community which been en-

meshed in communal violence since 1999.

The fighting which reportedly started on Saturday came as a reprisal attack by a cult group known as Dewell against its major rival, the Degbam cult group.

The Dewell cult group was reportedly on a mission to avenge the killing of some of its members in the community in 2005 and successfully felled six members of the Degbam group Friday night.

The shootings that followed the clash immediately sent panic waves across the nearby communities, forcing many to flee to safe areas. Sources said even the deployment of policemen to the communities had not stopped the exodus of people.

The police image-maker in the state, Mrs. Ireju Barasua confirmed the incident Sunday but refused to give the casualty figures, assuring however that the situation

had been brought under control.

But some sources also claimed that the clash was politically motivated, insinuating that the killings was a result of a bitter struggle for power between two rival politicians in Ogbakiri.

In the last three months since the return of political activities, cult groups allegedly loyal to some politicians had stepped up its activities, and had regained control of areas which they were chased away from.