

PODIUM...

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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Herdsman go haywire in Delta communities

- * Maim, rape, kill
- * Govt sets up task force
- * Police working for peace—PPRO

UGHELLI- AT the last check, no fewer than 12 persons have reportedly lost their lives, over 20 shot, injured and raped by Fulani herdsmen, who have run amuck at several communities in Ughelli and Isoko areas of the state in the last four months.

Residents of affected communities, including Assah, Uto, Etefe, Omafuvwe, Edjekuo, Ewu, Uwheru and Ewen, have cried out to the government and security agencies to come to their rescue.

But, what is quite disturbing to the Uto Federated Community, predominantly farmers, is that the police were not providing adequate security for people even when reports of the attacks and destruction of the farmlands by grazing cattle were made.

The governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, while commissioning a network of nine internal road projects at Ovwor-Olomu in Ughelli South council area, recently, reaffirmed that his administration would not tolerate situations where herdsmen would continue to make farmlands unsafe for farmers, saying government was doing a lot to secure the lives of all residents, especially farmers in the state.

Community discover remains of 2 youths

President General of Uto Federated community, Pastor Edewor Egedegbe told *Niger Delta Voice* that the remains of two male youths identified as Power Ekpejuku and Gideon from the community were recently discovered in their farmlands with a third person simply identified as Amacka still missing.

Lamenting neglect by the state government, Egedegbe stated that the communities had on numerous occasions sought assistance from the government and the state Police Command, but to no avail.

Ewu community writes govt

President-general of Ewu Clan Development Union, Sir Sunny Ziregbe, in a letter to the governor bemoaning the activities of Fulani herdsmen in the area, said, "We have several instances and proofs where these cattle rustlers raped our girls with impunity and are ready to visit terror on anyone who dares question them. Threatening our source of livelihood while wielding assault rifles and other dangerous weapons,

... they come to the town, break into stores and make away with goods and valuable items. This recent one was severe. It is even by God's grace that we rescued a lot of persons



A victim attacked in Ewu community by herdsmen.



Pastor Edewor Egedegbe.

they lead their cattle into farmlands, destroying crops, molesting women and attacking others who dare stand across their paths," the community said.

In neighbouring Uwheru community and its environs in Ughelli North local government area, the same scenario is playing as farmers in the agrarian community have abandoned their farmstead for fear of Fulani herdsmen.

They came like armed robbers—VICTIM

Narrating his ordeal to one of our correspondents, Mr. Alex Ughelicha, who is at a private hospital, said, "The herdsmen stormed our community on Friday, 16 January, 2015 like armed robbers and started chasing the people away."

Community leaders, Mr. Orotu Itule, Mr. Sunday Ogagamre and Mr. Arthur Umukoro who spoke on behalf of Etefe, Edjekuo and Omafuvwe communities respectively, described the incident as shocking, saying the herdsmen took the unsuspecting villagers unawares.

They steal our goods

According to Ogagamre, "they (the herdsmen) have been causing a lot of problems in our community for a long

time now. They rape our women in the bush and destroy their crops.

"Apart from that, they come to the town to break into stores and make away with goods and valuable items. This recent one was severe. It is even by God's grace that we rescued a lot of persons."

The Niger-Delta Youth Council after a recent unprovoked attack by herdsmen on Ewen village, Isoko South local government area, which left one dead and seven others critically injured, called on the federal government to do everything possible to stop the spate of incessant attacks by Fulani herdsmen on Niger Delta communities or risk a reprisal attack on Fulani settlements across the region.

The group in a statement by Comrade Jator Abido, said they would no longer fold their hands and watch their people killed and communities destroyed, adding that at least 10 farmers lost their lives in Ewen community alone following bloody attack by Fulani herdsmen.

Council boss intervenes

Chairman of the Ughelli South Local Government council, Hon Paul Etaga, said he had reached out to the



Edefe, another victim from Assah community, in hospital after attack by herdsmen.

BELOW: A female attacked by herdsmen at Assah.



Chairman of the Delta State Cattle Dealers, saying the feuding parties would meet to look at the complaints.

"If the arrangement we are trying to put in place with the Chairman of the Delta State Cattle Dealers is able to materialize, we will ensure that they order their people to evacuate from those communities totally. What we want is peace in our communities."

He disclosed that vigilance teams had been put in place to assist security agencies to maintain peace and order in the communities.

Govt task force

To combat activities of herdsmen, Delta state government, April last year, set up a high-powered security committee to control the movement of cattle in the state, as a pre-emptive measure aimed at curtailing the menace by herdsmen.

The task-force which is headed by the State Commissioner of Police includes two members of the State House of Assembly, two commissioners and representatives of security agencies, traditional rulers, council chairmen and representative of the Hausa community.

Policemen on ground- PPRO

Contrary to the verdict of the people, Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Delta State Command, DSP Celestina Kalu, stated that the task force through the police has achieved a lot in bringing respite to these communities.

She said: "Our policemen are on ground and are working tirelessly towards bringing respite to these affected communities. All hands are on deck in trying to help the police as regards information gathering."

"Of late, there have not been any form of crisis between any of these communities and herdsmen, this is because the police are very visible in these communities where Fulani herdsmen are operating and the state police command is doing everything within its power to ensure that peace is maintained in all parts of the state."