

# Policyweekly

## Deepening Non-Conflict Interventions for De-Escalation of Violent Conflict:

Exploring other Steps to Peace in Anambra State, Nigeria

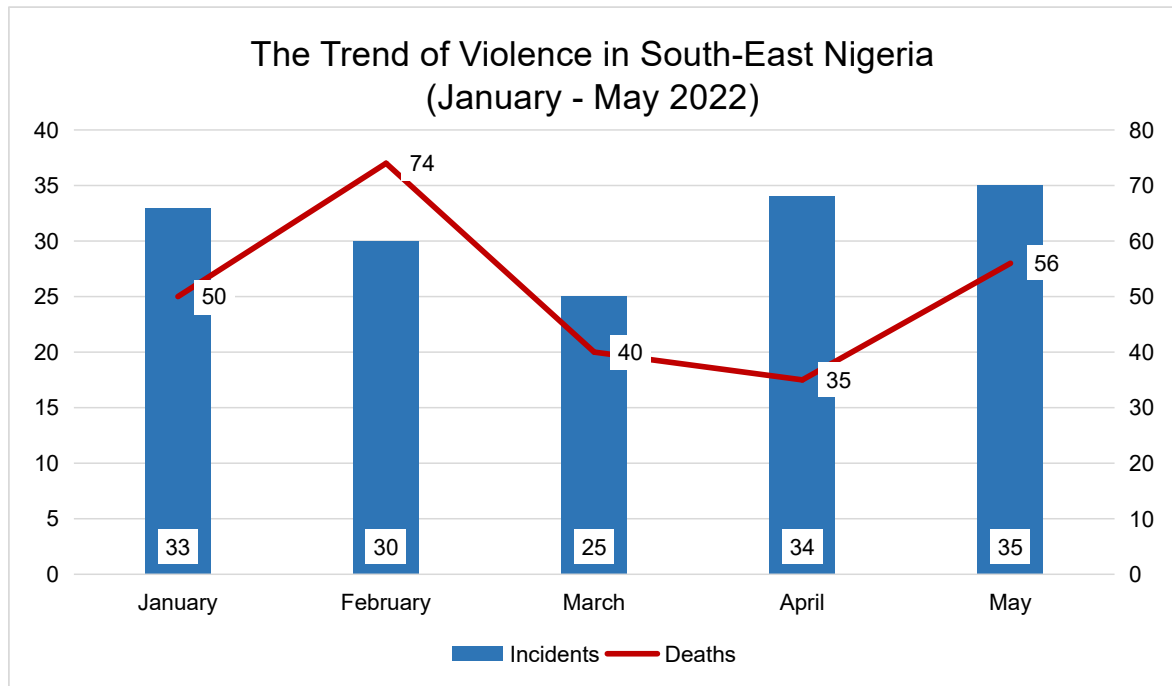


### Policy Recommendations

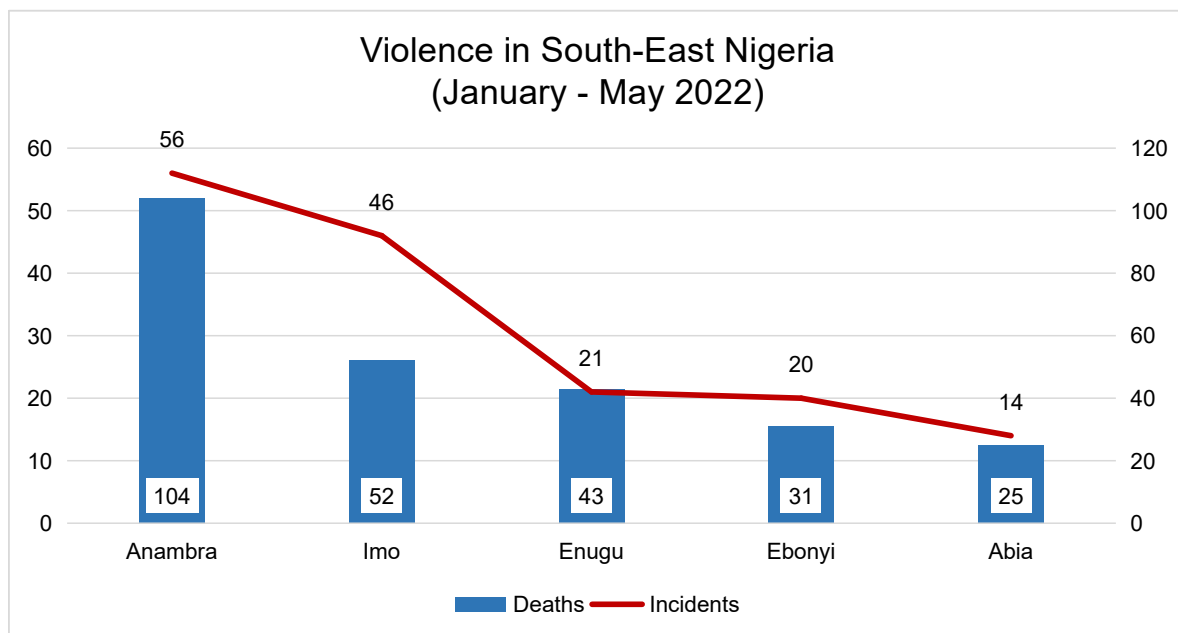
- 1** The state government should partner with the private sector to commence human capacity development programmes.
- 2** The community Choose-your-Project initiative should be upgraded not just to deliver one-stop projects to communities.
- 3** The state government should partner with the private sector and development agencies in establishing a dashboard that monitors peace and security progress in the state.
- 4** The state government should sustain its efforts to upgrade infrastructure in the state by rehabilitating roads and street lights.
- 5** The State government to deepen collaboration with other states in the South-East in the conceptualisation and implementation of programmes targeted at addressing the rising violence in the region.

### Introduction

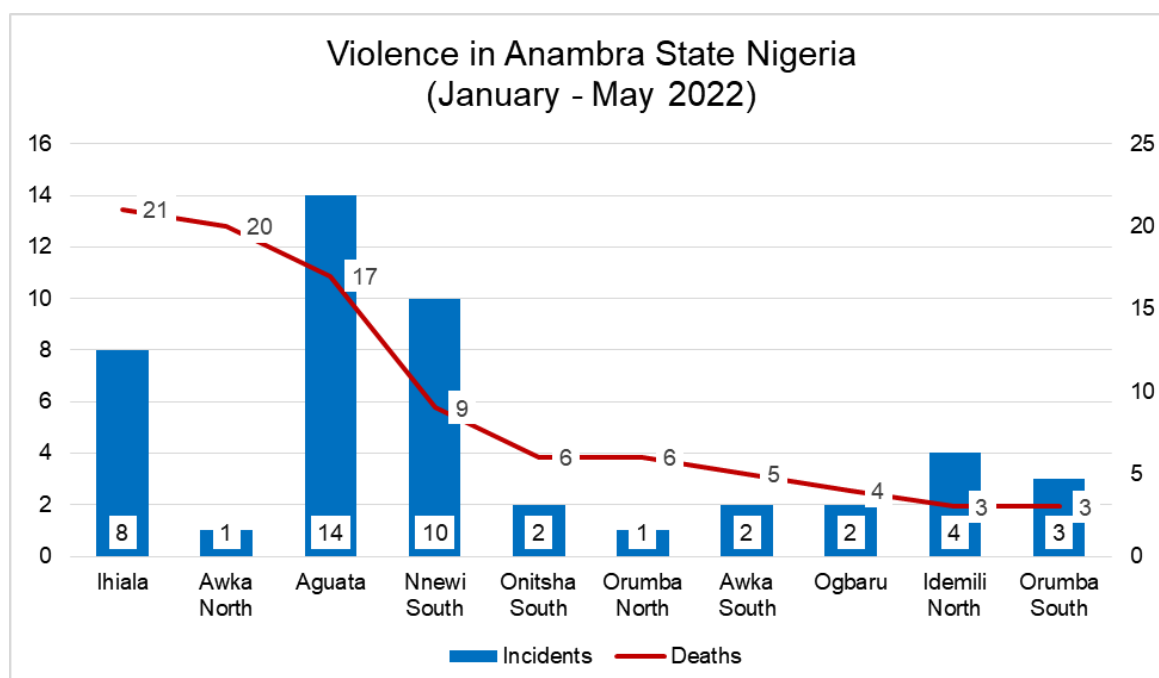
There has been a rise in violent incidents and deaths arising from non-state armed groups (NSAGs) activities in the South-East and Anambra State. Data from the Nextier SPD Violent Conflict Database shows that there were 255 deaths and 157 incidents of violence (See Figures 1 and 2) involving non-state armed groups (NSAGs) between January and May 2022. Anambra State accounted for 37 per cent of violent incidents and 41 per cent of deaths in the South-East (See Figure 3) during the period under review. The state government has demonstrated efforts to stem the tide through kinetic interventions such as destroying criminal hideouts, launching the Anambra State Security Trust Fund (ASSTF), etc. In addition, efforts were made to boost security agencies' operational effectiveness [by implementing curfews in some locations](#) within the state. However, while these kinetic interventions have yielded results, they tend to suppress the conflicts without necessarily addressing their root causes.



**Figure 1: The Trend of Violence in South-East Nigeria (January - May 2022).** Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database



**Figure 2: Violence in South-East Nigeria (January - May 2022).** Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database



**Figure 3: Violence in Anambra State Nigeria (January - May 2022).** Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Kinetic interventions create imaginaries of the state government as a violent party in the conflict. This has implications for de-escalating the conflict and peacebuilding in the state. Thus, the government needs to do more in [non-conflict interventions \(NCIs\)](#) (Rao, 2022) to win people's support and attract the NSAGs to the negotiation table for sustainable peacebuilding. This edition of Nextier SPD Policy Weekly examines the travails of deploying NCIs in Anambra State and offers actionable strategies for deepening NCIs for effective peacebuilding in the State.

#### **Travails of non-conflict interventions by the current Prof. Soludo-led administration**

The Soludo-led administration has adopted various NCIs to address the growing violence and insecurity in the state. First, the administration [offered amnesty](#) to the NSAGs and promised to rehabilitate and offer skill acquisition training to those willing to surrender. Unfortunately, the amnesty offer is yet to be accepted by the NSAGs and other agitators targeted by the peace deal mainly because the group considers themselves more as people fighting against the marginalisation of the South-East and not criminals that should be offered amnesty. The governor's appeal for an end to the sit-at-home through prayer sessions in churches across the state was resisted NSAGs. At St. Joseph Catholic Cathedral in Ekwulobia, Aguata Local Government Area, where the governor participated in the prayer session and charged the people to embrace peace, to show rejection of the attempt to end the sit-at-home, gunmen visited the church at night. They shot sporadically in front of the church all through the night, leading to the death of at least one security guard due to gunshot injuries. (Personal Communication).

Additionally, the administration set up the [Anambra State Truth, Justice and Peace \(TJP\) Committee](#) to make recommendations for sustainable peace and security in Anambra State and the broader South-East region. While the report of the TJP Committee is being awaited, a recent [study by Nexter SPD](#) revealed some perceived threats to the TJP. The proposed amnesty to members of the NSAGs is the possibility of apathy of other critical stakeholders, such as other South-East governors, in accepting or implementing the recommendations of the TJP Committee. There is also the fear that victims of violence perpetrated by NSAGs may not accept the reintegration of the repentant perpetrators into their communities.

Furthermore, the current Soludo-led administration has [opened up windows to resume the community Choose-your-Project initiative](#) in which projects worth 25 million will be implemented in beneficiary communities. The community Choose-your-Project is being deployed as a [bottom-up approach](#) for improving infrastructures and providing social services and employment at the grassroots level. In this regard, the initiative, if properly implemented, has the potential for de-escalating violent conflicts, given that it can win the hearts and minds of the people and serve as a disincentive to some persons who participate in violent conflicts or provide tacit support to the NSAGs because of issues relating to their unemployment, poverty and dissatisfaction with the level of development in the state. This view is supported by Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2017, p. 3), who demonstrated how community-driven development programmes might reduce violent conflicts by reducing the extent to which the local population provides active and tacit support to NSAGs. However, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov also noted that using community-driven development programmes as NCIs may not be effective where some of the NSAGs are not embedded in the local population.

Thus, if the recent [claim](#) by Prof. Soludo that a significant number of perpetrators of the violence come from outside

Anambra is valid, then the community Choose-your-Project initiative in Anambra communities may not wholly address the current trend of violence by NSAGs in the state. This is given that the alleged external character of the perpetrators may not be impacted by the community Choose-your-Project but may resist the attempt by the government to win the people over through development programmes. Therefore, the NCIs adopted by the current administration require more efforts to make them fit for purpose by ensuring they are more inclusive at the drafting and implementation stages to impact both victims and perpetrators of violent conflicts by addressing the underlying drivers of violent conflict in sustainable ways.

#### **Getting it right through non-conflict interventions which impact victims and perpetrators**

Given the travails of the current administration in deploying NCIs toward addressing violent conflicts in the state, we suggest the following actionable strategies for deepening NCIs in the state and the entire South East region:

##### **1. Multi-sectoral human capacity development**

**programmes:** The state government should partner with the private sector to commence human capacity development programmes by establishing skill acquisition hubs across the state which will take in youths and provide them with skills in various areas. The skill acquisition should be integrated with the renowned [Igbo Apprenticeship System \(IAS\)](#) to ensure that those who want to learn the trade are linked with notable successful business people in the state for an agreed period, after which seed capital will be given to the apprentice in the form of loan to be paid back after some time. The human capacity development programme should not be limited to the informal sector but be extended to the formal sector. For example, the state can partner with private companies and academic institutions for students still in school to take up periodic internship programmes so that such individuals can acquire skills relevant to their course of study. There should also be start-up hubs where those who have just graduated from the capacity development programmes are provided with mentorship and possibly free spaces for a short period to navigate the challenges connected with starting up new businesses. Such a multi-sectoral human capacity development programme will reduce incentives by youths to join NSAGs or engage in other criminal activities.

##### **2. Integrated community-driven development**

**programmes:** The community Choose-your-Project initiative should be upgraded to deliver one-stop projects to communities. This is to create much-needed employment opportunities and serve as sources of revenue generation for the communities and the state. To this end, while allowing communities to choose and implement their project should be continued, the government can facilitate partnership between the communities and experts/consultants in various fields so that the communities can be guided appropriately in project selection and implementation to ensure value for money. The community projects should also be designed in partnership with the state government to establish linkages in the projects across the different communities, thereby bringing about integrated development that will contribute to the actualisation of the mega-city vision of the state. More so, robust monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL) should be built into the community projects to ensure the sustainability of the projects beyond the state funds and also provide an opportunity for replicating and scaling up successful projects.

**Nextier SPD Policy Weekly** provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

**Nextier SPD (www.nextierspd.com)** is an international development consulting firm that uses evidence-based research to develop and build knowledge and skills to enhance human security, peace, and sustainable development as means to achieving stability and prosperity in Nigeria, and in the African region.

3. **Establishing a Peace and Security award:** As part of the effort to get the local sub-communities and towns involved in achieving sustainable peace and security in the state, the state should partner with the private sector and development agencies in establishing a dashboard that monitors peace and security progress in the state. This should contain activities such as the most peaceful town, the less violent community, and the town with the best intelligence and early warning system, among others. Furthermore, prizes and projects to be paid from a peace fund will be awarded to communities and towns that top in each category to encourage the communities and towns to do more for peace.
4. **Deepen Infrastructural development in the state:** The state government should sustain its efforts to upgrade infrastructure in the state through rehabilitation of roads and street lights, cleanup of slums, clearing of sewages and canals, and improving waste management. Good infrastructure will enable businesses to thrive and provide opportunities for the youths to be engaged in thriving businesses.
5. **Establish collaboration with other South-East states:** The activities of the NSAGs cut across the entire South-East, including perpetrators who operate and hibernate across the whole South-East. It is, therefore, needful for the Anambra State government to deepen collaboration with other states in the South-East in the conceptualisation and implementation of programmes targeted at addressing the rising violence in the region.

### Conclusion

The rise in violent incidents across the South East and Anambra State calls for concerted efforts to scale up the state's non-conflict interventions (NCIs). Drawing from the weakness of previous and existing NCIs, this brief offers actionable strategies for deploying multi-sectoral, integrated and sustainable NCIs that will positively impact the victims and perpetrators of violent conflicts. Consequently, it will contribute significantly to de-escalating conflict in Anambra State and the South East region.

### References

Beath, A., Christia, F., & Enikolopov, R. (2017). Can Development Programs Counter Insurgencies?: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 1809677). Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1809677>.

Rao, S. (2022). Impact of non-conflict interventions on de-escalation of conflict and acceptance of negotiations. K4D Helpdesk Report 1130. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. DOI 10.19088/K4D.2022.059

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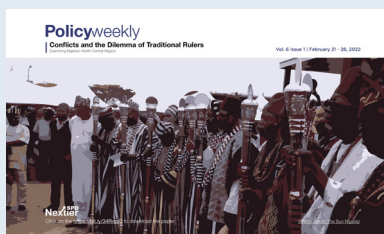
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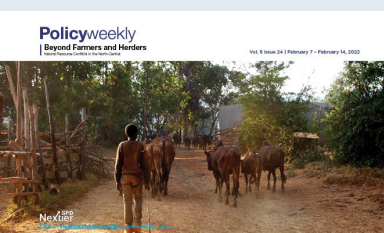
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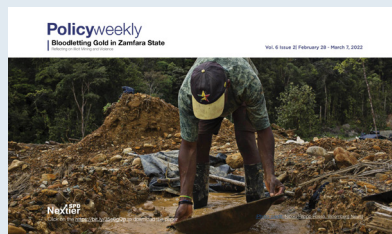
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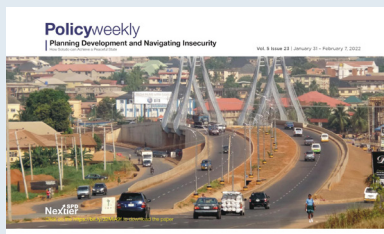
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