Early Warning and

Early Response:

Conceptual and

Empirical Dilemmas

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GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

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ABOUT THIS ISSUES PAPER

This paper is the first in the series of studies into issues in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by civil society by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). It is based on a literature review, the author's experiences as a practitioner and discussions held at the workshop with WANEP in Accra in February 2006. The report is significantly enriched by the discussion during the GPPAC Early Warning and Early Response Expert Group meeting in Soesterberg in April 2006.

The purpose of this research is to close some gaps in methodological questions and to highlight practical dilemmas involved in early warning / response initiatives, extracting general lessons and points for reflection. This research is part of the Mobilizing Early Warning and Early Response programme of the Global Partnership and builds on the experiences and material offered by GPPAC members and other civil society organisations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South Asian Nations	IASC	UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee
AU	African Union	IDEA	Integrated Data for Event Analysis
CBO	community-based organisation		
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism at IGAD	IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
Clingendael	The Netherlands Institute of Internal Relations	IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network
CSO	civil society organisation	ISS	Institute for Security Studies, South Africa
EAWARN	Network of Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflicts, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology	JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
		OAS	Organisation of American States
ECCP	European Centre for Conflict Prevention	OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	PC	UN Secretary General's Policy Committee
ECPS	United Nations Executive Committee on Peace and Security	SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
EMU	Early Warning Unit at OCHA	Framework Team	UN Inter-Departmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action
FAST	Early Recognition of Tensions and Fact Finding (*Fruhanalyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung*), Swisspeace		
		UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FCE	Foundation for Co-Existence	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees
FEWER	Forum on Early Warning and Early Response	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
FTI	Foundation for Tolerance International		
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict	UNSC	United Nations Staff College
		WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding
HCNM	OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities		
IA	International Alert		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whereas a rich literature exists on how early warning/response should be carried out, very little is known about how early warning actually happens, especially in field-based systems. Consequently there is some scepticism about the entire concept of early warning among outsiders. The primary conceptual challenges revolve around the central issue that the added value of early warning is still unproven. This is due to two facts: that predictions have not been accurate in the past (or important events were not foreseen), and that operational responses have been inadequately linked to warnings. Moreover, early warning methods have not demonstrated how they can engage with current high-profile threats, i.e. organised crime, drugs or terrorism.

From a civil society perspective, early warning/response presents a number of challenges. Firstly, attracting attention to low-profile conflicts is problematic. Secondly, shifting from macro-level political early warning to micro citizen-based warning and response systems has been too slow. Thirdly, civil society organisations at times find themselves in a position of both 'warners' and implementers of response measures which can create tensions and pose questions with regards to the legitimacy of their mandates.

The Paper groups the challenge of early warning in three broad categories: data collection and analysis (the *product* of early warning and early response), early warning message (the *process* of warning), and early response, i.e. (the ultimate *output* of early warning and early response systems). It is based upon the premise that there is no single 'correct' method in early warning/response field; instead a variety of practices make the discipline diverse and context-specific.

The data collection and analysis section discusses conceptual matters of quantitative and qualitative approaches to gathering and processing information. Quantitative data sets might be useful for outcomes intended to be a summarising in nature, providing visualised outputs and standardisation. Qualitative data has the asset of providing in-depth, context- and actor-sensitive, and typically narrative-driven information. However, categorisation of quantitative data can be

problematic and often political, while decisions made on categorisation may influence the prediction itself. As a result, early warning projects might opt to refrain from quantification. Although quantitative methods present a semblance of 'objectivity', scientific and objectively verifiable evidence of impending conflict does not exist. The best that can be achieved is a 'good enough' analysis that enables timely prevention. Qualitative methods run the danger that they can potentially be influenced by a certain line of thinking, e.g. an exclusive focus on a particular issue, or a political ideology. While all systems aspire to 'objectivity' irrespective of the methods they use, it should not be assumed that early warning analysis necessarily has it as a standard practice.

Operational matters present many dilemmas, such as quality versus operability, building a comprehensive picture versus concentration on those issues upon which Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can act, courage in breaking taboos and exposing unwritten conventions versus a danger of appearing unprofessional. Experience shows that the burden of responsibility on primary data collectors is great. They need to become 'local analysts' to observe, interpret and present what they regard as important details, and to be trained accordingly. There can be a fine line between intelligence-gathering and early warning, especially for suspicious outsiders. What passes as 'early warning' for civil society actors, may appear in a different light to security agencies. The most difficult challenge is how to make them convey local practical and cultural knowledge they take for granted in a formal early warning and early response system. At all times early warning projects should act responsibly in dealing with the safety of their sources.

The process of early warning involves developing recommendations and sharing the warning message. How this is done depends on whether the purpose is to effect structural or operational prevention. In general, the process of elaborating recommendations is not as simple as is often assumed, and requires a good insight into the capacities and constraints of the target agencies. It may be that the role of civil society lies mostly in drawing conclusions from warning information and the

development of recommendations for further action rather than gathering information *per se*.

Although a widespread aspiration is that early warning information should be publicly available, in reality this may not be always possible or desirable. For some, the early warning activity is largely about awareness raising and generating political will towards action. For others who are involved in operational prevention, there is an inverse relationship between information sharing and the ability to generate response: the broader the circle of sharing, the more diluted the message becomes, since it has to be adapted to a wider audience. The 'Do No Harm' principle is also a vital consideration in the dissemination of early warning.

Different early warning systems - from local to global - can deliver different levels and types of analysis and recommendations. Each system is valuable, but is best at fulfilling its own task without seeking to substitute what the others do better. Outsiders have to keep realistic expectations on what a particular system can deliver.

It is a myth that early warning is apolitical. 'Who is warning whom and for what purpose' is a question that has not been sufficiently asked let alone answered. Pre-determined political positions can influence warning, as facts can be assembled when moral arguments prevail. In many cases, political considerations also determine whether a warning will be heard by governments and international actors.

The ultimate goal of early warning is not to predict conflicts, but rather to prevent them or to facilitate their prevention by others. The record on this score so far has not been very promising. Early warning actors should either become better at prediction or redefine the rules of the game and put more emphasis on early action. Civil society needs to think through what kind of

conflicts it is trying to act upon and take up the tasks it can shoulder, rather than claiming a role it is unable to fulfil. Prevention requires both capacity and the local credibility of any intervening organisation which provides it with a mandate to act. The strengths of civil society-based early warning are considerable, however, it is vital to be realistic about the remit of civil society whose capacities for action are exaggerated at times and vary greatly from region to region. Recognition of the need to build civil society organisations capacities for response is already a step forward.

Building alliances with governments, the United Nations, regional organisations and global civil society can help to bridge strategic weaknesses and create enough critical mass to make an operational 'warning - response' link a reality. However, organisational cultures pose important constraints on the formation of partnerships in early warning and early response. Firstly, the United Nations does not easily absorb controversial information. Secondly, even when different actors agree on the analysis, they are not necessarily prepared to adopt the same public stance on issues. Thirdly, it tends to be true that the broader an alliance, the slower its response. Nevertheless, partnerships with governments need to be established, as it would be counterproductive to present civil society as an alternative to the national authorities. Instead, local civil society can play a critical and supporting role in government-driven peace initiatives.

Lastly, there is a vital role to be played by global civil society: it can convey a power of solidarity across countries and regions, make a contribution to ethical norms and professional standards' setting and engage in more rigorous research to reflect upon lessons from the field. In conclusion, the paper calls for a community of practice where these issues and dilemmas can be refined further, experiences shared and empirical theory built from practice.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2001 the United Nations (UN) Secretary General issued his Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Central to the report was the argument that 'prevention should be initiated at the earliest possible stage of a conflict cycle in order to be most effective'. However, despite the existing wealth of information and analysis on the issues of conflict, there is still a need to make early warning and conflict prevention operational. Meanwhile, July 2006 was the grimmest month for conflict prevention around the world in three years. The *International Crisis Group* (ICG) noted that in 36 months of publishing *CrisisWatch*, it had not recorded such a severe deterioration in so many conflict situations as in July 2006, and several of these had significant regional and global implications.[1]

Early warning and early response (EW/R) is considered one of the pillars of operational conflict prevention. Practiced by international organisations, research institutes and NGOs, EW/R has advanced our knowledge of conflicts and our strategies to address them. Yet, substantial gaps remain in this pioneering and experimental field necessitating further research and debate.

The current paper approaches early warning/ response from a civil society perspective and the contribution that it makes to the field. It takes a critical view of conceptual and practical dilemmas which arise in early warning/ early response in an effort to move from 'story- telling' to the extrapolation of lessons learnt. Its argument is threefold:

- Scientific, 'objective' and apolitical evidence of impending conflict is a myth, nor does a faultless capacity to forecast conflict and crisis exist. The best that can be achieved is a 'good enough' analysis which enables timely prevention;
- There is no single 'correct' method in warning/ response strategy; instead a variety of practices make the field diverse and context-specific. The task is not to unify the methodology, but to build an empirical theory from practice;
- There is a need to engage local actors from within the conflict areas in response actions, but often their capacities are overestimated both on the government

and civil society side. Thus, one has to be realistic about what can be achieved and the extent to which local capacities have to be strengthened.

The Paper does not seek to provide definitive answers or come up with a 'correct' strategy. Rather it reflects on known experiences and identifies gaps and points of reflection for further debate within a community of practice.

The term *early warning system* will be used as in the *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation* to mean any initiative that focuses on systematic data collection, analysis and/ or formulation of recommendations, including risk assessment and information sharing. Early response will refer to any initiative that occurs in the latent stages of a perceived potential armed conflict with the aim of reduction, resolution or transformation.[2]

Background to Early Warning / Early Response 'Systems'

The origins of 'early warning systems' lie in two main sources - disaster preparedness, where the systematic collection of information was expected to shed light on the causes of natural calamities, and the gathering of military intelligence. In the 1950s a connection was made between the efforts to predict environmental disasters, such as drought and famine, and attempts to foresee crises arising out of political causes. The period from the 1960sto the 1970s was characterised by a firm belief in the value of information technology and faith in the wonders of statistical analysis. Granted large budgets by the governments, projects were constructed which used event data-coding and sought to build models for understanding political behaviour.[3] These started to fall out of favour in the mid-1980s.

The initial early warning systems were largely based on the analysis and processing of information from open sources, such as news reports and readily available

1   *CrisisWatch* no. 36, 1 August 2006, International Crisis Group.
2   Alexander Austin, 'Early Warning and the Field: a Cargo Cult Science?', Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, (Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin: 2003).

statistics. These methods, however, proved inadequate to the complexities of deeply-rooted conflicts and remote local situations about which little public information existed. Simultaneously, a discourse emerged on the need to connect early warning with response measures, and the specific recommendations for target groups. Throughout the 1990s practitioner organisations, both local and international, became more interested in getting early warning information and analysis to serve as a basis for their programming. Such thinking gave rise to the emergence of various early warning systems around the world, some of them were integrated with a capacity for early response, others with a mission to provide analysis and recommendations for other actors. Kumar Rupesinghe identifies 'three generations' of early warning systems:

> The first generation early warning systems were the systems where the entire early warning mechanism (including conflict monitoring) was based outside the conflict region (namely, in the West). The second generation amended this approach by basing the monitoring mechanism in the conflict zones, namely by having the field monitors to gather primary event data. The analysis, however, continued to be conducted outside the conflict region. The third generation early warning systems are entirely located in the conflict regions. They integrate early warning and early response together as simultaneous processes.[4]

Austin divides the existing 'systems' into four methodological categories: quantitative, qualitative, a mix of the two and networks.[5] The best-known current 'systems' with a wide international coverage include *FAST International* and the *International Crisis Group*. International organisations, such as the UN and the EU, have their own 'watchlists' or 'global alerts', but these are not publicly accessible. The UNHCR has a system operated via Writenet to help the agency to respond to potential refugee flows. Bilateral and multilateral agencies have developed their own structures for internal use, not always termed 'early warning', but with the same concept in mind. The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), for example,

has a 'system' of local security analysts who provide regular in-country briefings.

The UK-based Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), set up on the initiative of International Alert in 1997, played a prominent role until it went bankrupt in 2004. However, FEWER provided impetus for the emergence of a number of NGOs in conflict regions, such as the Foundation for Co-Existence (Sri Lanka) and FEWER Eurasia (Russia) which survived FEWER's demise. Presently, a variety of early warning initiatives can be found at regional or country levels, some have been developed in conjunction with intergovernmental regional organisations, some are entirely civil society-based.

Networks, strictly speaking, are not some 'new form' of early warning, but rather play a contributory role in both information gathering and the dissemination of warning information. Being loose structures, they still require central coordination and moderation of website submissions. Networks unite different constituencies, such as international organisations, civil society and the private sector.

Although these initiatives have the same unifying goal, i.e. to warn of, and, if possible, prevent emerging conflicts, not all present themselves as 'early warning'. For example, the ICG rarely uses the term explicitly, although the idea is present. Its *CrisisWatch* monthly briefings are intended as a 'rough guide' to early warning with its possible conflict categories, and countries going up or down on the scale of alert. *CrisisWatch* indicators - up and down arrows, conflict risk alerts, and conflict resolution opportunities - are meant to reflect changes within countries or situations from one month to another. For example, no 'conflict risk alert' is given for a country where violence has been

3   The most influential was E. Azar's The Codebook of the Conflict and Peace Data Bank, (Center for International Development, University of Maryland at College Park: 1982).

4   Kumar Rupesinghe, 'A New Generation of Conflict Prevention: Early Warning, Early Action and Human Security', paper presented at the Global Conference on the 'Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding', New York, July 2005.

5   Austin, Ibid., p. 4.

occurring and is expected to continue in the coming month: such an indicator is given where new or significantly escalated violence is feared.[6]

Framing the Issues: Approaches and Expectations

There are a variety of theoretical and practical approaches to early warning/ response. A consensus seems to be that in order to identify the causes of conflict, predict the outbreak of violence and mitigate the conflict, an early warning system should contain six core mechanisms:[7]

1. data collection
2. data analysis
3. assessment for warning or identification of different scenarios
4. formulation of action proposals
5. transmission of recommendations
6. assessment of early response.

However, there are reservations about whether such an ideal model is attainable. Despite decades of research and practice, the record of success has been uncertain and the added value of early warning has not been obvious. Increasingly, donors are keen to see proof that early warning has been responsible for averting crises. However, relatively few evaluations of early warning are available. Papers have appeared calling for more early warning and giving instructions on how it should be implemented, but very little has been published on lessons learnt, or common traps and pitfalls. Moreover, it is unclear which standards should be used in assessment: taking an absence of conflict as the measure imposes a supra human measure of success.

Scepticism is not an uncommon reaction. Criticism of early warning revolves around a number of arguments, such as:

• Early warning systems have been largely unable to predict crises beyond the obvious trends which can be picked up by analysis provided by regional experts';
• It provides a semblance of objectivity, but in reality is

as biased as reports produced by conventional methods;
• Warning produces few 'actionable' recommendations and seldom generates timely response;
• Governments and international organisations are extremely reluctant to react to warnings which may prove false;
• Lack of political will and/ or resources often makes the whole exercise redundant even when the need for response is obvious;
• These systems are considerably more expensive than a more traditional use of academics and consultants, when and as needed;
• Early warning systems do not keep the interests, capacity and institutional constraints of the end user in mind when being developed.

There is, thus, a constituency which needs to be convinced that new and better quality results can be achieved by the laborious and expensive methods entailed by early warning systems. Some donor scepticism is attributable to discouragement from early warning failures. Positive examples on how early warning led to early action to reduce conflict are required to make the case more solid. It is the responsibility of civil society actors to convince the donors that what they propose has a chance of success.

Some starting points already exist. Firstly, the field should be approached with sober expectations: early warning is not prophecy. Rather, it is a political tool for engagement, and ultimately its value lies in the extent to which it helps to prevent or mitigate conflict.

Secondly, field-based systems have a great advantage as they employ and present local knowledge which is only available on the ground. Generic methods of conflict analysis are useful in this respect, even if they have not been developed explicitly for this purpose. They are crucial in utilising and conceptualising the intuitive knowledge, often available within civil society, but seldom captured by the formal 'systems'.

Thirdly, there is a strong case for building early warning/ response systems 'back-to-front', i.e. by

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6 www.crisisgroup.org
7 Austin, Ibid., p. 11.

envisaging a response capacity for which warning is intended.[8] Rather than developing in isolation, 'systems' have to engage the support and capacity of those who can intervene, be it civil-society or decision-makers.

This Paper is structured in the following way. It firstly deals with methodological questions of data collection and analysis, and of producing high-quality early warning 'products'. Secondly, it discusses the 'process' of warning, e.g. with whom and how information is shared, how recommendations are developed and where politics comes into play. It then outlines the challenges and opportunities of early response, including capacities and limitations of civil society. The Paper proceeds to explore options for partnerships with governments and

international organisations, noting their relative strengths and weaknesses. It concludes with an outline of future challenges. A list of available resources can be found at the end. The Paper abstains from venturing deeply into the methodology of conflict analysis *per se*, since the subject is extensively covered in academic literature.

The Paper is the first in a Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) series published by ECCP. It is based on a literature review, the author's own experience with International Alert, FEWER and UNDP, discussions held at the workshop with WANEP in Accra in February 2006 and during the EW/ ER Expert Group meeting in Soesterberg within the framework of GPPAC in April 2006. The Paper makes extensive use of the empirical examples furnished by GPPAC member organisations and other practitioners in the field.

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8 Argued by Luc van de Goor and Suzanne Verstegen, 'Conflict Prognosis: a Conflict and Policy Assessment Framework', part 2, (Conflict Research Unit, 'Clingendael' Netherlands Institute of International Relations: June 2000).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Conceptual Matters

Early warning systems can be distinguished by whether they adhere mainly to a quantitative or to a qualitative methodological perspective, or whether they use an explicit methodology at all. Some systems, which started as mainly quantitative, grew to incorporate a fair measure of narrative analysis. Quantitative systems try to ascertain the preceding contextual structures, events and processes that caused the outbreak of violence from empirical evidence. They are classified into five main models: structural, accelerator, threshold, conjunctural and response.[9] The question is how much new information these methods generate which would otherwise not be available.

FAST (Early Recognition of Tensions and Fact Finding - Fruhanalyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung) at Swisspeace[10] is the organisation which has most consistently applied quantitative methods in data collection and analysis out of which it generates graphs of conflict and cooperation trends. The methodology is based on analysis of events and extrapolation of the trends which derive from the past over future escalation and crisis. The strength of the system lies in the depth of its coverage over time (it has monitored some regions since 2000) and space, as it covers conflicts in 24 countries or regions in Africa, Asia and Europe, concentrating on the areas neglected by international attention. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to graphically view the shape of conflicts, i.e. recurring, cyclical or sudden peaks of extreme violence against the backdrop of stability, and draw comparisons on this basis.

All events that are considered relevant are assigned a certain numeric value according to a distinct conflict scale. These values are then added up and displayed in a graph for specific combinations of indicators and for specific periods of time. Events are coded by Country Coordinators based on the IDEA (Integrated Data for Event Analysis), a standardised coding scheme, a method originally developed by Virtual Research Associates (VRA), a company based in Boston. FAST also conducts research in the field of quantitative forecasting, with a focus on forecasting models, risk maps and actors' network analyses to predict a risk of political crises.

In every country it monitors, FAST establishes Local Information Networks (LINs) responsible for tracking and reporting relevant information in accordance with a specific set of questions or properties related to the political salience of a conflictual or cooperative event. Each LIN consists of one Country Coordinator and two to six Field Monitors. FAST provides Country Coordinators with training in conflict analysis and event data methodology. Their information feeds into an event archive that can be searched for specific indicators and issues. Data analysis is supplemented by collaboration with in-house desk officers with regional expertise and internationally renowned country experts.

However, events' analysis poses limitations. What should be reported/ analysed if there are too few 'conflict-related' events, or if episodes of violence are not directly related to a potential conflict?[11] For example, it was unable to predict the events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, in May 2005 when Islamist-instigated violence and brutal state repression led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians. The analysis after the event was provided by an international expert used by FAST and was based on her own - fairly controversial - interpretation of the events rather than objectively-verifiable indicators. While it is to FAST's credit that it did not turn away from controversy and was prepared to give a voice to an unorthodox opinion, it is nevertheless unclear what was the 'added value' of using an events-based approach, as the overall impression left was of a highly subjective picture.

Generic reservations with regards to the use of quantitative methods include:

9   Austin in Ibid. referring to Ted Gurr's typology (1998).
10 www.swisspeace.org
11 Author's interview with a former FAST local analyst, Tajikistan, 2004. One example given was that a wedding was suddenly called off. This would not match any of FAST indicators, but was a significant 'event', as the wedding was between two powerful clans and the fact that they decided to break an engagement just before the wedding day indicated a huge fall out between the two groupings.

- Collection of quantitative data by itself can prove too comprehensive to be operational.
- Data tends not to be available from open sources for the most important conflict indicators (e.g. how many times Albanian UCK fighters crossed from Kosovo into Macedonia? How many weapons have been transferred? How many new fighters have been recruited?).
- The danger is that the data availability can itself lead to a one-sided approach: normally it is easier to obtain reliable information about the actions of a government side in a conflict than those of the rebel/ opposition side. Consequently there is a tendency to picture the government as the main actor behind violence and lose out on a more balanced assessment.
- The same conflict indicators can have very different meanings in different contexts: in some contexts, protest demonstrations would reflect normal political behaviour while in others indicate a possibility of regime change or major violence.
- Different concepts lying at the heart of data collection can produce vastly different conclusions from the same set of data.

One drawback of existing quantitative approaches is their reliance on the use of security incident reports. Typically, violent incidents (or even "events" more broadly defined as including both cooperation and conflict) have driven most early warning efforts to date. With this common approach an under reporting of signs of local cooperation tends to happen because it is easier to document violent incidents given their higher visibility and certainty with respect to their threshold of inclusion as an event. This threshold has generally been restricted to the national level, thus barring a bottom-up approach to early warning and adding to the challenge of distinguishing between nationally significant and non-significant events.

This methodological constraint is not fully mitigated by monitoring both conflict and cooperation incidents; the preconditions for peace and precursors to humanitarian crises can get overlooked when the focus is chiefly on interactions or "events" that must be defended as significant at the national level. A singular focus on

events also favours quantitative information at the expense of narrative, background and contextual stories.

Quantitative data in order to be operational has to support certain hypotheses about potential for conflict which can be proven right or wrong. This would provide a clear rationale why certain questions are relevant for a country/ region. The reality is however that empirical evidence seldom corrects a false hypothesis. Austin argues that quantitative early warning systems are ill-suited to identify the causes of conflict:

> QnEWS cannot identify the origins of conflict because they are based on empirical causal relationships. Empirical evidence is insufficient because the issues remain conceptual... Conflict analysis is where the researcher must draw the line himself, and the consequences of this can be seen in the vividly different datasets. The origins of conflict do not lie in causal relationships outside of the individual, but rather as reasons within the perception of the individual or group. These reasons cannot be ascertained through empirical evidence.[12]

It can be concluded that due to the nature of conflict and grievance, it is not possible to empirically quantify data and draw causal relations on this basis. Grievance is not a static quota given equally to all, but rather an ever-changing force where there are as many grievance tolerance levels as there are people. There is an important difference between cause and reason, and preceding events may or may not serve as a basis for predicting subsequent political behaviour, and indicate only what may be probable or sensible steps to take in the circumstances.[13]

Qualitative 'systems' are characterised by having a core *watch group*, such as Human Rights Watch or ICG. They employ field-based analysts, typically posted within the region in question to conduct in-depth research. Reliance on qualitative data has its own downside, i.e. the potential for subjectivity and interference of political

12 Austin, Ibid., p. 16
13 Austin, Ibid., p. 17.

ideology. Some reservations are derived from the reputation of advocacy organisations which adhere to these methods, such as *ICG* or *Human Rights Watch* and the hard-line approach they take on occasion. Thus, reports can be geared to support a certain political argument rather than assess the situation as it is.

Presuppositions about the causes of a particular conflict can greatly influence the collection and analysis of field data. The appeal of quantitative methods has been partly rooted in a belief that conflicts can be explained by economic and social conditions and therefore analysis of such indicators can provide a basis for prediction. Traditionally, such notions have been popular among the development community which tended to see the causes for conflict in social and economic conditions ('development challenges') and in political economy. Thus, statistical methods are utilised to capture the social-economic dynamics.

The UN OCHA's early warning methodology calls for a combination of quantitative and 'assessment-based' (qualitative) methods. However, the relevance of many of OCHA's indicators is far less obvious for Asia or Europe where development statistics are not too worrisome. Moreover, areas where conflicts unfolded (Serbia/ Croatia) have not been economically worse off than regional neighbours (Romania) which remained peaceful.

Thus, an assumption that conflicts are caused by economic and social circumstances ('root causes'), rather than power, identity and ideology, led to a search for 'objective reasons'. On occasion, they gained pride of place at the expense of less tangible issues, such as the ideology of nationalism or religious hatred, the political behaviour of a leadership group, cultural factors etc. As a result, analysis of social and economic indicators often failed to explain why conflict occurred in one country but not in another with similar developmental problems.

By emphasising its scientific character and devoting attention to 'objective' or 'structural' causes, early warning arguably moved too far away from scrutinising the behaviour of leadership groups and the role of

personalities in politics. Journalists speculate about such matters, but somehow it is not 'politically correct' for early warners to take them into account.

The nature of a state and/ or political regime needs to be taken into account when discussing an appropriate methodology. Perhaps the lesson is that statistical and events-based methods are more suited to conflict situations in weak states with relative openness, high levels of violence and rich data availability. By contrast, in stronger and more authoritarian states 'events' may not transpire and statistics would paint an unrealistic picture, allowing only indirect - and subjective - emerging trends could be traced and interpreted.

In more open states it may also be easier to identify stakeholders than in authoritarian ones. In West Africa, according to WANEP, this is not a major problem. When issues of conflict are already in the open and violence has broken out, it is easier to see who has a stake in conflict or peace. Moreover, the nature of the societies is such that it is not difficult to observe who is connected to whom and why. In more 'closed' systems this may be less obvious.

Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), for example, has followed a middle route: it also logs events, i.e. episodes of protest and violence, but does not attempt to quantify or fit them into a theoretical model. Its analysts summarise the most important events and developing trends in bi-weekly bulletins. The system builds a comprehensive picture across the country of what is happening and why. However, information on the possibility of future violence/ conflict (based on field reports) does not enter the bulletins as it is too controversial. As such, bulletins are good at explaining the past, but do not cross a threshold of predicting the future in great detail, only as a general projection of trends.

The GPPAC Expert Group meeting discussions concluded that quantitative data sets might be useful for outcomes intended to be summarising in nature, providing visualised outputs, correlations and standardisation. At the same time, qualitative data has

the asset of providing in-depth, context- and actor-sensitive, and typically narrative information. The problem with quantitative data concerns its categorization which is difficult and often politically sensitive, and decisions made on categorisation influence the prediction. Consequently, early warning projects might choose to refrain from quantification. However, both quantitative and qualitative data are prone to subjective interpretation.

Practical Matters

How much to collect?
The rule of thumb is that the fewer categories the data covers, the more operational the 'product' of early warning can be. Extensive lists of indicators either bring out plenty of material of little direct bearing on conflict, or make processing laborious and time-consuming. One way of getting around this problem has been developed by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (EAWARN) of the Russian Academy of Sciences. At one stage of the project, the lead analysts were tasked to compile 'portraits' of the regions they covered, according to an extensive set of criteria/ indicators. This resulted in short monographs ('baseline surveys') written alongside a mutually comparable format which introduced the regions being monitored. The later 'early warning' reports published on a bi-monthly basis present only the most significant changes against the baseline surveys without going through the full criteria each time. The same approach has been taken by IGAD.

Which data to ignore?
The dilemma here is whether civil society organisations should collect only such data and explore only those dimensions of a conflict situation upon which they have an opportunity and capacity to act and ignore the rest? For instance, criminality, narcotrafficking and mafia wars can be sources of conflict, but there is little civil society organisations can do about them. Should they still collect such information, even when it puts them at risk, or should they ignore these realities?

In practice, organisations tend to follow the former route and abstain from collecting and reporting on 'risky'

issues, despite the fact that as individuals on the ground they see the whole picture. Thus, 'criminal' aspects of a potential conflict situation often go unreported, leading the outsiders to conclude that CSOs and internationals only see what they choose to see rather than assess the situation in its full complexity.

Should we call a spade a spade?
Every society has certain notions and conventions of which local people are keenly aware, but whose entry into public discourse can offend notions of 'political correctness'. Cleavages exist along ethnic or tribal lines, which can be an important, but seldom publicly acknowledged feature. For example, citizens may vote for an unsuitable president in full knowledge of his flaws, but still regard him as the best protector of their tribe/ ethnic group. Such social connections are seldom captured by outside reporters, but come into sway when real political action is taken. The dilemma is whether CSOs should venture into these unorthodox territories. Is it possible and desirable for civil society to start breaking taboos and talk about the existence of uncomfortable social conventions?

How broad a circle?
There is an argument that 'people-oriented' early warning that adheres to a 'human security' concept should be characterised by a high degree of decentralisation, transparency and should involve as many partners as possible.[14] The reservation is that the more diluted the process of data gathering is, the more difficult it is for those responsible for a final outcome to maintain quality control. Moreover, on-going 'warning' involving many actors may instil an atmosphere of alarm among the affected communities which would encourage the expectation that events will turn out badly. Sometimes, in a potential conflict situation, a responsible strategy may be to talk people down, not up.

Who collects?
Most projects use local people to collect primary information, calling them 'field monitors', 'local

14 Susanne Schmeidl, presentation at GPPAC Expert Group meeting, April 2006.

reporters', 'correspondents' etc. The responsibility placed upon them is considerable, as their task is not to register scientifically-observed facts, but to monitor certain characteristics of a complex social process. Typically, 'field monitors' receive some training. FEWER and its partners have dedicated much time and effort to development and delivery of EW training.[15] And yet, there are questions about how much training the trainees can absorb and who can become a good monitor/reporter. One argument is that individuals should already be conflict analysts or practitioners; in this case it is possible to teach them to use a certain methodology to make their reports structured and mutually compatible. The counterargument is that it is harder to train those who already have fixed ideas about conflicts ('they are all about resources') or are so 'over-trained' that they tend to see potential for escalation and crisis everywhere.

In practice, a one-off training session can only provide an introduction, giving trainees a flavour of what is needed. It is important not to overburden people with comprehensive information and analysis, but to concentrate on examples close at hand. After the new monitors try their hand in collecting and reporting, they will be more ready for an in-depth follow-up. Coaching, periodic re-training and on-the-job support and feedback is as important as specific training done by consultants. The higher echelon should be mindful that at times field monitors can feel isolated and unsure of themselves if they are not aware whether their information was satisfactory or used at all.

Thriving for Objectivity

Quantitative, or statistical methods have as an important asset their power in terms of presentation: they convey a sense of objectivity, even if on closer examination it is apparent that data is collected from a certain political perspective. Striving for objectivity is an important aspiration in the early-warning field, but in practice one has to acknowledge that all types of data are prone to subjective interpretation.

One view[16] on how to achieve objectivity is to outsource data analysis to an external team / agency which will deal with raw data in a standardised form. Separation of data from analysis is a tool akin to the methods used by natural sciences. In this case field monitors act as primary data collectors and report events, their reporting is formalised and divorced from the process of interpretation.

The other view is that 'objectivity' does not exist and that one should not expect a standard of 'objectivity' from early warning systems higher than from a conventional expert analysis. Rather, early warning's merits lie in sustainability of monitoring the local dynamic over a period of time and ability to effect/influence prevention. To this end, warning should be based on solid evidence, but not on statistical probability.

In practice analysts who process reports from the field complain that monitors tend to provide a mass of raw data with little analysis or conclusion. This is how monitors perceive 'objectivity', i.e. that facts speak for themselves and that one can draw one's own conclusions. Because of time pressure, analysts tend to dismiss any data which is difficult to classify or interpret.

In many 'real life' circumstances early warning lies in capturing the local, often obscure trends and picking up tensions which are not apparent to outsiders. Only local respondents can evaluate the significance of these clues, as they have an insight into a community life and would know what is culturally or symbolically meaningful. Thus, they need to become 'local analysts' to observe, interpret and present what they regard as important. To do this, they have to be trained in how to analyse conflict trends at a local level, rather than merely report 'events'.

However, this brings about problems of normative (mis)-representation (tendency to present a practice of conflict as how things should be rather than how they

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15 See, for example, Developing Capacity for Conflict Analysis and Early Response: a Training Manual, FEWER/ WANEP/ UN DESA, 2002.
16 Suzanne Schmeidl in remarks at GPPAC meeting.

really are), confusion of local perception of a conflict process with the process itself (the politics of conflict) and the danger of *missing the obvious*, i.e. the significance of unwritten conventions and routines which local people consider self-evident.[17]

Practical and cultural knowledge will never become 'science', but its importance should not be overlooked. The challenge is how to make it work in a formal system. The issue is to capture the local dynamic by using intuitive knowledge of people on the ground, and enable them to produce reports on this basis. This can be done by training which is sufficiently contextualised.

Another attempt to reach a more objective picture is to explicitly monitor not only negative, but also positive dynamics. 'Indicators of cooperation' have been developed, for instance, by FAST; FEWER also sought to identify similar 'opportunities for peace'. However, empirical evidence suggests that indicators of 'cooperation' do not necessarily point to diminishing violence or opportunity for peace: areas which are characterised by a high indication of cooperation, can also witness a high level of conflict.[18] Likewise, levels of violence and a high body count (such as New York City) do not in themselves necessarily imply a prospect for socio-political conflict. Ironically, most early warning initiatives that adopt a quantitative approach do not use their own data to confirm whether the indicators they monitor are indeed triggers to conflict or mitigating factors. This is problematic since indicators are generally based on conceptual assumptions that are too often taken as fact once the information collection process begins.

When the views of analysts within the same organisation have widely differing views the issue may arise of how to combine their different perspectives in one report. Should one try to reconcile them into a mutually acceptable compromise or acknowledge difference of opinions among experts? It is also unclear who holds the intellectual ownership of early warning: to what extent a final report is a product of one brilliant mind, or a result of an evolving collective wisdom?

Finally, the objectivity of a local NGO can be undermined by the reputation of an international donor that provides it with funding, creating a perception of influence attached to aid. Trust in donors is important for the legitimacy of the whole operation. The donor has to be perceived as non-biased and not solely driven by self-interest or geopolitical considerations.

Early Warning versus Intelligence Gathering

Schmeidl and Okumu note a fine line between early warning and intelligence gathering, dubbing early warning a 'disinterested' intelligence system and pointing to cross-fertilisation of approaches.[19] Indeed, the distinction between the two is not always clear, especially for suspicious outsiders. What passes as 'early warning' for civil society actors, may appear differently to security agencies. Moreover, intelligence services can also be interested in early warning information and analysis for their own purposes, for instance, to use it to hunt down potential terrorists. Should CSOs cooperate in such undertakings? Should civil society go about exposing terrorists?

There is a dilemma for CSOs on how to act if they come into possession of genuine intelligence information: should or could they act upon it or is it safer to walk away from trouble? WANEP decided that it should not shy away from difficult choices and established a hot line - a publicly available email address, - to which people can write with information on a condition of anonymity. The hotline has actually been used for such purpose.

All early warning networks strive to use open sources where possible, partly to avoid a 'spy image'. In West Africa WANEP[20] seeks to use information collected from open sources. For instance, radio programmes in

17 Jan Koehler and Christoph Zuercher, *Conflict and the State of the State in the Caucasus and Central Asia: an Empirical Research Challenge.* Osteuropa-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin, Arbeitspapiere des Bereichs Politik und Gesellschaft, p. 58.
18 Patrick Meier, presentation at GPPAC Expert Group meeting.
19 Susanne Schmeidl and Wafula Okumu, 'Issues in Data Collection and Analysis', Presentation at the GPPAC Expert Group meeting, April 2006.

local languages can provide a wealth of information, as Rwanda's case dramatically underscored. However, there is often a scarcity of information in certain areas, it can be misleading or miss important developments and processes at work. In many 'hotspots', such as Afghanistan, public sources are scarce, valuable information is seldom reported, but is more likely to be available among international NGO staff and local communities.

The expert community has to bear in mind that the value of information from open sources needs to be qualified. When a country is relatively liberal, more negative information is available through media and news agencies than in 'closed' authoritarian countries where freedom of speech is at stake (Ghana versus Togo in West Africa). Peace and conflict indicators should reflect this and make the necessary adjustments. Those who deal with public perceptions of corruption, will be familiar with this problem.

Confidentiality and security of primary data collectors
Transparency is a sensitive point in discussion of early warning. Security of data collectors and local analysts has to be considered in the methodology employed and is dependent on the context of the conflict. The question which frequently arises during training and selection of field monitors is whether they should work openly, i.e. declare that they are serving as monitors for an Early Warning System and have credentials to confirm it, or should their identities be kept low-key.

There are advantages and disadvantages in both approaches. If an organisation provides monitors with an official capacity, it has to take responsibility for their security vis-à-vis governmental agencies who may become suspicious. Some argue that 'the names of the expert users who enter survey answers [have to be] kept secret. Reporting information about the situation in politically unstable countries is often a dangerous task as information about negative developments can sometimes be considered as criticism of the current regime or of a specific ethnical group.'[21] However, the advantage is that if they operate openly, there is more opportunity to conduct interviews with representatives

of local authorities, police chiefs, get access to available statistics etc. At all times early warning projects should be responsible in dealing with the safety of its sources.

WANEP noted that there is a sense of caution among the communities about how the information which they supply would be used. If local people are confident that it would be used wisely and for the benefit of a community, they are prepared to share more and take risks. They need to be reassured that the information will not be misused, otherwise this may undermine a community's trust.

Gender Early Warning

There have been efforts to develop specific themes in early warning, such as environment or gender. Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez argue for a gender-sensitive focus in order to better understand factors that lead up to armed conflict in a Report for International Alert.[22] Such focus is needed to improve early analysis and the formulation of response options. The rationale behind introducing gender into early warning rests upon the argument that the use of a gender-lens enriches early warning analysis and allows for more appropriate response options. 'The process of engendering early warning - and by this we mean integrating a gender perspective into all the stages of early warning, at all levels and not confining gender issues to a single process - ensures that the concerns of men and women are equally considered.'[23] The study suggests that the integration of a gender perspective can improve existing models. It is based on three hypotheses:

1. Incorporating gender-sensitive indicators into the collection and analysis processes makes existing models more comprehensive and allows for

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20 The section below is based on the author's discussions with WANEP at early warning/ early response workshop in Accra, February 2006.

21 Henrik Lundin, 'Crisis and conflict prevention with an Internet-based early warning system', 'An Internet-Based Early Warning Indicators System for Preventive Policy' Project Working Paper no. 2, SIPRI, August 2004, p.33.

22 'Gender And Conflict Early Warning: A Framework For Action', Susanne Schmeidl with Eugenia Piza-Lopez, (London: International Alert, June 2002).

23 'Gender and Conflict', p. 2.

Risk Factors related to Women

Social and Economic Issues

- Access to resources: does resource competition between the communities across the border affect men and women differently?
- Access to land and property rights: do women lose out in land distribution? If so, are they likely to stand for their rights? Is customary law in operation? Does it supercede the formal law? Can the clash between the two lead to conflict?
- Is there a community pressure not to allocate resources, such as microcredits, to women, especially if women head households and there is no man present?

Migration

- How did labour migration change traditional gender roles?
- Labour migration of (mostly) men to Russia and other destinations - is it a factor of stability or tension?
- Are there migration issues (seasonal migration within the Ferghana valley region, movement of women shuttle traders) which are likely to cause tensions?
- What is the role of women in a 'creeping migration' process, i.e. Tajik families seeking to settle on the Kyrgyz territory (for instance, when men come alone, they are unlikely to stay, when they come with their wives, they intend to settle?)

Women as Actors in Conflict (Security)

- Are women being abused by the law-enforcement agencies? Do they suffer more than men? If men find out that their women are abused by 'power structures', how do they tend to react? Do they come to their defence, and thus clash with the representatives of the power structures?
- At the border - if women are abused while crossing the border, do they pressurize male relatives to take revenge, extract retribution?
- Are women more likely than men to protest against the social-economic hardship? Are they inspired by men to protest in a hope that police would be less brutal against women-demonstrators?

anticipating macro-level conflict through micro-level events.

2. An incorporation of micro-level changes, fine-tunes the response to address the specific vulnerabilities of men and women and ensures non-discrimination.
3. Early warning and preventive activities can be made more effective by utilising the potential of women and women's organisations as actors for peace.

In the view of the current author, the reality is not as straightforward. In many conflicts gender played no more of a role than other social differences. Women have proven not only capable of peace-making, but of acting as suicide bombers or leaders in nationalist hysteria. However, certain circumstances, such as resurgent Islamism and a clash between secular and religious ways of life, can bring the issues of 'gender and conflict' into the forefront of early warning. Thus,

the task for early warners is not to look for gender indicators everywhere, but to recognise those situations where gender is a conflict issue at stake.

One also has to acknowledge that 'gender awareness' suffers from negative stereotyping among segments of the policy-making constituency. Thus, CSOs should be prudent not to overburden the political level with a focus on gender unless there is a sound rationale for its inclusion.

Below is the 'format' (clusters of factors and indicators detailing each factor) developed by the current author for a 'gender and conflict' analysis in the Ferghana Valley.[24]

24 Please note that the format was not empirically tested.

- Do women participate in the radical religious groups? Are there women among arrested *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* activists?

Conflict around Women's Issues due to Revival of Religion and Traditional Values

- *Access to education*: is there a drive to introduce single-sex education? Are girls encouraged to remain at school to achieve a full secondary education? Do women strive for higher education and to obtain professional jobs?
- Is there a *tension between activities of the women's groups* (NGOs set up by women etc.) and religious conservatives? Are there signs that such pressure makes women's groups more vulnerable?
- *Dress code*: is there pressure to conform to a traditional dress code (wearing trousers or headscarf?) or to Iranian-style dress? Do most women wear such clothes voluntary or under pressure? Where such pressure comes from - the women's family, her husband's family or a wider community? Are there different views on the subject of dress code? Is there tension between them?
- *Rapid Changes in Social Norms and Behaviour*: is there more pressure in this sphere as compared to the Soviet days (women can't go out on their own, marriage age is lowered, polygamy spreading, arranged marriages become more common)? Does this generate fault lines in the community, or is there a consensus on social norms related to women?
- *Are there conflicts* related to different notions of women's honour? Do 'honour killings' (killings by one's own family) occur and what is the reaction of the community?
- *Pressure to have more babies*: do women experience more pressure to bear more children? How does it differ among different ethnic groups, i.e. Tajik and Kyrgyz? Is this a source of tension within families or between groups (differences in population growth?)
- *Can conflicts about women* (for example, bride kidnapping - if representatives of one group kidnapped a girl from the other side) *affect cross-border relations between ethnic groups?*

To sum up

Conflicts do not occur alongside statistical probability and a 'golden truth' of when and where a conflict could break out will most probably never be found. However, an important challenge for early warners is to highlight neglected trends and overlooked factors beyond the obvious. To make early warning less subjective and more acceptable to governments and policy-makers, it has to be based on a rigorous collection of local information. What distinguishes early warning from analytical journalism is that it has certain structural parameters against which information is collected and analysed, and involves vigorous system of cross-checking and quality control. In short, it has to ask predefined questions, even the early warners may wish to avoid them. Journalists, by contrast, can pick and choose what they report.

The variety of schools and methods is key to the maturity of the field. They do not have to be simplified into one 'correct' method. Rather, data collection and analysis has to be more tightly related to its intended use. The end product is most important to keep in mind. Sophistication of the methodology should be balanced against efficiency, allowing time to be spent on formulating good policy response options. Simplicity and effectiveness are the key words in early warning.

EARLY WARNING MESSAGE

Early warning assessments can be used by different constituencies for a better understanding of conflict, anticipation of likely turn of events ('disaster preparedness') and/ or intervention. Early warning involves not only the creation of a high-quality 'product' - a report, briefing, alert etc., - but also the 'process' of warning. This latter dimension is equally important, but tends to be neglected in expert discourse.

Public versus Restricted Access

A majority opinion among the community of practice is that in theory early warning information and analysis should be publicly available. In reality this may not always be possible or desirable. There is an inverse relationship between information sharing and the ability to generate response. The broader the circle of those who receive the early warning 'products', the more diluted the message becomes, since it has to be adapted to a wider audience to make it acceptable. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) dealt with the dilemma in the following way: it has produced a report which the government accepted, but deemed too sensitive to make public. It has agreed to publish the conclusions and recommendations of the report and committed itself to make the full report public at a later stage after its recommendations have been implemented.

Several strategies to deal with the dilemmas of public or confidential reporting were identified at the Expert Group meeting:
- *Balancing* requires constant evaluation of what is most important: to operate in a broad context or to stimulate action?
- *Channelling* information to other actors which an organisation (such as the UN) cannot make public. This is done to raise awareness of an issue without taking responsibility for it.
- *Targeting* selected policy-makers on a case-by-case basis. This requires a good knowledge of and contacts within the target audience which has to be a feature of an early warning project anyhow.
- *Packaging* refers to the language in which the early warning message is being sent out. Sometimes changing the title of a project/ initiative can achieve

the desired effect, even if this means downplaying the message to make it more acceptable.

Early Warning (EW) jargon can be a liability for report sharing, as it can produce an effect of 'spying' or raise undue expectations that conflicts would be 'forecasted'. WANEP notes that since its WARN programme has become known, they have started to receive requests for forecasts on all possible conflicts in West Africa. Terms such as 'triggers', 'accelerators' and 'early warning' often sound worse in other languages than in English. WANEP's suggestion was to speak instead of 'Peace Monitoring' as a more inviting title. In general, more encouraging language may need to be adopted, such as 'opportunities for a positive change'.

For some organisations, the early warning activity largely concerns awareness raising and generating political will towards action. Public availability and openness of information is crucial for this type of activity, as the message needs to be circulated as widely as possible. Others tend to adopt a more cautious approach: public early warning is perceived as too risky due to faulty predictions in the past, or predictions which identified the wrong time frame (for example, came true later than was expected).

The 'do no harm' principle is vital for the dissemination of early warning. Firstly, there is a danger that 'warning' could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Secondly, a warning may turn out to be wrong and create a 'crying wolf' syndrome, leading to a loss of credibility. Thirdly, a warning message may give a threatened/ opposition group the idea that danger is imminent and that the best defence tactic is to attack first. These considerations make governments and international organisations extremely reluctant to publicise early warning information, even when they are in possession of such information.

Safeguards need to be kept in mind while sharing early warning analysis with media - such analysis can influence prevention by instigating government action, but it can also instigate conflict. Lund observes that 'popularisation of an awareness of conflicts and of the

promise of conflict prevention could worsen policy decisions, just as responding to public sentiment in some instances has led to unwise choices during humanitarian crisis interventions.'[25] Civil society organisations have to be mindful of such dangers and walk a fine line to convey a meaningful message and to avoid generating tensions as a result of 'warning'. More focus is needed on a set of ethics based on the 'do no harm' principle to give guidance and a frame of reference to 'early warners'.

Third party intervention in conflicts and empowering non-state actors is not a straightforward exercise. It carries certain risks, such as widening divisions instead of promoting conciliation. Production of early warning reports can turn into a liability for a practitioner organisation, engaged in conflict prevention/ resolution on the ground. This occurred, for instance, when FEWER was a part of International Alert, International Alert's field programme operatives feared that FEWER's 'warnings' would jeopardise their carefully crafted interactive peace dialogues. This tension was resolved by devolving FEWER into a separate organisation.

It may be the case that sharing reports is best done on a 'need to know' basis and reports be given different formats and levels of access. Executive summary, full report and recommendations can exist as separate documents and be shared with different constituencies as needed.

The product of early warning need not always take the form of a report, at least not a formal one. Analysis can be shared in oral briefings by civil society representatives who are strategically positioned close to decision-makers and can inform the relevant officials on the spot. This is the case for instance, with WANEP in relation to ECOWAS. Such a mode of operation may be efficient, because politicians are often better able to assimilate the spoken than the written word, and because it allows them to act quickly. The downside is that it is difficult to verify what has been communicated.

Early warning can fulfil an internal function within CSOs, serving as a basis for programme development,

or an aspect of one's own operations. In WANEP EW is an issue that cuts across everything that the organisation does and influences all its programme interventions. For example, it is connected with its Women's Programme, in which women are trained as monitors and analysts. Overall, it serves as an intellectual basis for programming, creating an 'early warning consciousness' throughout the whole organisation.

Advances in information technology pose new opportunities for early warning. As modern methods of communication are being developed, they may be increasingly utilised for spreading warning messages. In this respect the potential avenues to explore are, for instance, how to integrate global information sharing systems with local databases, and how to use mobile phone text messages for early warning.

Levels and Types of EW / ER

The remit of EW/ ER embraces all levels from local to global. At times, there is a quest to develop such systems on a regional/ sub-regional/ cross-border basis rather than on a country level. The rationale behind this is that the present state structures of the countries are often too weak, borders are arbitrary and solidarity may transcend national borders. Thus, a regional approach is required.

Yet early warning reporting at the regional level has proven more elusive. The necessity of reconciling too many perspectives in order to develop a joint product and to make reports acceptable to all national sides can make regional reports too bland or too slow to be meaningful for prevention. For example, a UNDP regional EW system in South-Eastern Europe has proven too cumbersome to be operational, while individual country reports went ahead more successfully. The experience in Central Asia was similar.

25 Michael Lund, presentation at 'Preventing Violent Conflict: the Search for Political Will, Strategies and Effective Tools' Krusenberg Seminar, organised by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 19-20 June 2000, at http://editors.sipri.org/pdf/PVC.pdf p. 30.

Cross-Border Conflict Dimension

In November 2000 the Khartoum Declaration of the 8th Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) summit endorsed the establishment of a conflict early warning system. In June 2003 the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) office was officially opened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the Protocol Agreement of the IGAD member states. CEWARN has become a successful example of how to address the cross-border conflict dimension, having found its entry points into early warning through engagement with pastoral conflicts. This pilot mechanism was used to build confidence both among different governments, and between governments and NGOs, and to create an infrastructure for dealing with more politically sensitive conflicts. It deals with cross-border, or 'clusters' of conflicts in the IGAD region which comprises Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. The intensity and prevalence of these conflicts is fuelled by the availability of small arms. Cross-border conflicts include two pilot clusters (three countries each):

- Karamoja (Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia)
- Somali (Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya)

The CEWARN example illustrates the need for a process of building trust between different institutions and planning an early warning project accordingly. Initially the IGAD governments did not consider the pastoral conflicts as serious, until CEWARN presented facts and figures on the numbers of casualties and destruction of property resulting from such conflicts. This underscored their magnitude and intensity and forced the governments to acknowledge that the cumulative effect of pastoral conflicts is considerable. It is worth noting that the conflict in Darfur (Sudan) started as a pastoral conflict. Achievements of CEWARN include putting the pastoral conflicts on the governments' agenda, the inclusion of pastoral areas in the national budgets, training and capacity building of national research institutes in four IGAD member states, measures in disarmament and the creation of linkages between CSOs and governmental institutions, as well as cross-country cooperation.

The challenge for CEWARN is how to make the step to a new quality. Political conflicts so far have been deemed too sensitive for a civil society organisation to get involved. It feels that more confidence needs to be built before moving forward into the political sphere in the next two - three years.

CEWARN is currently developing its strategy for the future. The challenges are whether and how to expand the type of conflicts dealt with, how to convince member states to do so and how to deal with more politically sensitive topics in general. Acute political conflicts can pose serious obstacles to cooperation between organisations across a conflict divide. However, sensitive issues could be outsourced to other levels, such as the African Union or the UN. As CEWARN has shown, even the documentation of facts and figures can push towards change and indirectly contribute to conflict prevention as it makes it harder for governments to ignore problems.

Yet the challenge involved does not diminish the need for regional reporting. In these circumstances it may be more appropriate to limit a 'regional approach' to some manageable tasks rather than make it fully comprehensive. Two dimensions are worthy of attention: conflicts resulting from cross-border interaction and conflictual effects of major shocks or ideological shifts upon a wider region.

Wars, political turbulence or ideological influences originating in one area can produce major implications for a region which is united by ethnicity, geographical

Central Asia: Ferghana Valley

A number of early warning networks were established in Central Asia in the early 2000s. Most of them concentrated their attention on the Ferghana Valley where the borders of three states - Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - meet. Presently, FAST and ICG are the main publicly-available sources. The UNDP has an early warning system established within the Preventive Development Programme and Cross-Border Conflict Prevention Project between northern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan. The UN Framework Team in New York compiled early warning reports on the Ferghana Valley, they are for restricted use. Other UN early warning projects concerning the Ferghana Valley included UNIFEM on gender and conflict, and 'Environment and Security Initiative' implemented jointly by OSCE/ UNEP/ UNDP. The OSCE

High Commissioner on National Minorities had an early warning programme in southern Kyrgyzstan which concentrated on inter-ethnic tensions. The latter reports have been shared with the Foreign Ministry of Kyrgyzstan and selected list of international actors and national NGOs.

One widespread criticism of these systems was that they were unable to predict the crises in Kyrgyzstan and in Uzbekistan in 2005. Funders have not been pleased that despite the expense of establishing the 'systems', no real warnings have been issued. The counterargument has been that the turn of events in Kyrgyzstan was not predictable, because it was impossible to foresee what the then president Askar Akayev would do when seriously challenged. The crisis - when the president fled under pressure from popular protests -

was triggered by a failure to manage succession and by the activity of mafia/ criminal groups who saw their chance in politics. At the time, as the post-electoral turmoil began, it seemed very unlikely that he would chose to flee than either use force or try to resolve the crisis through peaceful means.

With hindsight, it is apparent that these systems were mostly designed to analyse different types of tension and conflictual issues from those that actually came into play: the OSCE HCNM system dealt with relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, 'Environment and Security' addressed natural disasters etc. It was hardly realistic to expect them to pick up information on the role of crime in politics, just as it is unrealistic to expect a dancer to sing well, even if both are categorised as 'performance artists'.

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proximity or shared past. For example, the 'regional dimension' in the Middle East, i.e. political implications of the war in Iraq or Israel's strikes against Hezbollah in Lebanon, can become conflict triggers. Thus, early warning reporting has to register these mutual influences, even if they are less tangible than cross-border developments. A 'regional approach' is, for example, required in Latin America in order to cope with a domino effect of potential shocks. One such event would be an imminent death of Cuba's leader Fidel Castro and its after-affects, e.g. a potentially increased US role. Latin American NGOs feel that they need a stronger regional network to be effective in acting upon the regional issues.[26] Another example is

the effect of 'coloured revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan upon the other post-Soviet countries, or the potential implications of Kosovo's independence for separatist conflicts elsewhere.

Types of EW / ER
There are good grounds for both EW and ER to function on different levels: local/ cross-border and regional/ international, as one size cannot fit all. Certain early warning reports can be prepared for local consumption, e.g. for CSOs, authorities and humanitarian agencies to act upon. Others would need a vehicle of international

26 Andre Serbin, presentation at the GPPAC Expert Group meeting, April 2006.

advocacy and solidarity to influence change, such as 'shaming of African leaders at the EU'. The Clingendael study notes that an approach should be chosen that prioritises certain conflict factors and indicators.[27]

Likewise, content and presentation of information and analysis needs to be mindful of its target audiences. It is important to distinguish between the different constituencies to which early warning is addressed. This would help to avoid tarnishing all early warning systems by the same broad brush and keep realistic expectations on what each can deliver. Each level of early warning is valuable, but is best at fulfilling its own task without seeking to substitute what the others do better.

It appears that there is a need for two kinds of mutually complimentary 'early warning' systems. One is better suited for 'structural prevention' and for targeting development agencies, NGOs and relevant government departments, the other can be aimed at 'operational prevention' and be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

A system of information and analysis of local developments to expose tensions (such as land and water use, the functioning of local administration, centre-periphery relations), identify conflict prevention needs on the ground and undertake local response measures. Such systems may be shared with the authorities, civil society actors and development agencies in the country. It can involve them in joint elaboration of recommendations and serve as a tool for monitoring of a situation as events unfold. For international agencies it can be important to learn how the emerging trends may affect their development operations. Such systems can also serve as an educational tool to enhance capacities of the local authorities and communities to assess and respond to contentious issues. However, it is unrealistic to expect that a network of this type would be able to predict serious escalation and political conflict for the following reasons:

- If information becomes publicly available or is shared with many actors, those who prepare the reports tend to exclude the most contentious issues such as drugs,

criminality, religious radicalism or political competition. They tend to concentrate on important, but less 'risky' issues, such as disputes over resource sharing.
- When many people are involved in analysis, the final product is achieved by building a consensus among them, so that everybody agrees on the analysis and the projected message. This process tends to tone down the alarm bells.
- Such 'systems' can be too comprehensive as they often tend to cover wider social and economic issues (such as poverty) and may not concentrate narrowly on conflict escalation *per se*.

There are good grounds to support development of such networks in future, urging better integration between the existing ones. However, expectations of what they can deliver need to be adjusted.

Analytical reporting on trends towards escalation and crisis. Such analysis has to be distributed on a restricted basis for the senior leadership among civil society and the international community - and for the government where possible - to be prepared for possible calamities and for crisis response. The final product has to be put together by one analyst who would rely on a network of local contacts. The value of such reports would be that contentious issues can be exposed and discussed in earnest. For instance, in the run-up to the events in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 a number of opposition politicians were forging unholy alliances with criminal bosses who were behind much of the unrest. Such alliances became a major liability after the power change. NGO leaders had insights at an early stage into what was really going on, but these were not shared with the international agencies. Had such information been available to the international community, it could have conveyed the message to the politicians in question and have warned them of the dangers of such practices and of possible ramifications.

27 Goor & Verstegen, p. 5.

Recommendations for Early Action

Generally, actors within the international agencies feel that they are sufficiently aware of the state of affairs in potential trouble areas. Policy-makers complain that scholarly endeavours often result in warnings that are too refined and too late and given without indication of how to address crises. In the words of one UN staff member, 'we don't need an information overload, we are already drowning in it - but please give us some good ideas on how to respond'. The same is true for the donor governments. From the civil society viewpoint, CSOs do not lack ideas, but are often met with international actors' reluctance to act upon them either out of fear of responding to a false warning, or because of their institutional constraints.

The crucial value of early warning both for policy-makers and for organisations on the ground is a choice of recommendations on how to act. Yet, the process by which recommendations are developed is not straightforward. It has been relatively under-studied as compared to research into methods of data collection and analysis. Inquiries with 'early warners' suggest that a fairly typical option is to ask the field monitors/ analysts themselves what, in their view, should be done. Monitors are supposed to generate alternative options and recommendations for response. In the author's experience, this can result in suggestions which are too grand or unworkable ('build a law-governed state' or 'establish a market economy').

Some examples:

At ICG, the policy recommendations are essentially made by the team in the field. However, there are other influences. Very occasionally members of the Board make suggestions, but these tend to be for politically visible areas. Regional programme directors, the President and occasionally vice-presidents have some input as well, particularly where they have some special knowledge, e.g. on the US legislative processes. But the recommendations come back to the field office, which usually has a final say and negotiates the exact wording.[28]

In the FTI experience, recommendations are developed in different ways. Normally, field monitors ask stakeholders for their suggestions and include their own ideas in their reports. These are discussed within the Early Warning Centre (the two analysts and the project director) and are used as a basis for the recommendations that get into the bi-weekly bulletin, as well as their own proposals. It is envisaged that in the future representatives of the government, police and other agencies would become involved in jointly developing recommendations to make them more accurate and to facilitate their implementation.[29]

Early warning manuals[30] suggest using scenario-building for the development of recommendations, with an outline of implications of each scenario for the in-country situations. Scenarios are hypothetical plots of the future and help to elevate the observer above immediate needs and considerations to view a bigger picture, i.e. which way a situation might develop if the current trends continue. Scenarios are developed by assessing trends in key conflict/ peace indicators, as well as among stakeholders. 'Weighting up' of conflict and peace indicators, and stakeholder analysis would lead to elaboration of the best, middle and worst-case scenarios, which are assessed for their possible likelihood and timeframe. After that a review of conflict synergies and peacebuilding gaps needs to take place, also looking at the 'strategic issues'. The process results in filling-in a matrix which has six rows and five columns of categories.

The difficulty with such design is that it is very comprehensive, not easy to digest for an uninitiated audience and requires a great deal of time which busy practitioners would not be able to spare. In the author's observation, attempts to take this route with senior decision-makers may simply inculcate resentment towards the entire idea. A typical outcome can be that

28 author's interview with ICG.
29 Author's interview with FTI.
30 See, for example, Early Warning and Early Response Handbook of the Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Network, version 2, July 2004.

only junior staff attends the sessions, be it international agencies, governments or NGOs.

In fact, scenario-building was fashionable in the 1980s and 1990s and was used in different quarters from the military-intelligence community to big business (the author took part in such exercises at different agencies). Subsequently, their popularity has diminished, as their added value was not apparent. Moreover, in a situation of a new rather than a recurring conflict it was often a minority opinion or the least likely scenario which proved right (the most dramatic of course has been the Taliban - al-Qaeda - attacks on America).

The Clingendael study (referring to the requirements of its target Foreign Ministry) outlines the process of gearing the agency into preventive action in terms of establishment of key linkages:
- A conflict trend projection;
- Identification of problem areas (aspects of conflict that may worsen or escalate the situation);
- Identification of the main policy fields;
- Discerning the relevant policy instruments;
- Assessment of the opportunities to apply the recommended strategy;
- Search for partnerships and coalitions.

One idea can be to divorce the process of information and analysis from development of recommendations. In such a case, a small team of practitioners can brainstorm on the analysis and produce a few possible avenues for action which would then be debated with a wider group, including the analysts. It may be that the role of civil society is not as much in processing and collection of information, but more in drawing conclusions from the material and developing recommendations on how to respond.

Recommendations to governments and international agencies have to be a product of a 'feasibility analysis', which entails identification of the response actions a given situation requires and the political and institutional constraints upon taking such action. 'Feasibility analysis' would require sufficient knowledge of how the target agencies function in order

to provide them with what they may consider useful. At the same time, bureaucratic ineptitude should not serve as an excuse, as the case of Rwanda genocide has underscored. As noted by WANEP, it is worth pointing out to the existence of the most straightforward solution, even flag those options which would not be accepted for political reasons. This is needed to show that in fact simpler ways to settle disputes and resolve conflicts exist, but political obstacles prevent them from being implemented. In such cases, at least it would be obvious why problems were not being solved.

While considering recommendations, it is crucial for interveners to assess the possible impact of their own actions. As early warning/ early response is a cyclical process, an assessment should be made whether previous recommendations were fulfilled and whether the objectives of intervention were reached, and if not why. In such a cycle, an impact assessment monitoring includes linkages to the previous stages of warning and response.

A Question of Politics: Who is warning whom and to what end?

The question 'early warning for who?' is rarely raised let alone answered. Many operational early warning systems are Western-based initiatives that serve to warn the West about developments in the Global South. Meanwhile, examples multiply of spectacular disasters where warning information was available, but for political reasons no action was taken. The US-led military operation in Iraq is a glaring example of a conflict prevention failure. There was no shortage of early warning about the dangers of unleashing a militant *jihadi* movement which would acquire a new theatre of action. Nevertheless, advocacy by the international civil society to prevent use of force in the run-up to the intervention in Iraq in 2003 was fruitless.

Since early warning often deals with life and death issues, there is an argument for attention to ethical dilemmas, and that 'science' should give way to politics.

31 As a consultant to WANEP advised: 'WANEP: analyse, don't moralise'.

This forces the 'early warners' to relinquish their 'objectivity' and take sides against the 'forces of evil'. When moral arguments prevail,[31] it is possible to assemble the facts that would prove the notions already formed rather than construct a message based on the actual evidence. For example, when information was available that the 'good rebels' (Kosovo Albanians) would attack the 'bad government' (Serbs), how often were such warnings publicised and diligently reported?

It is not uncommon for those engaged in early warning to adhere to certain ideologies and take positions on issues such as human rights or stances of particular governments vis-à-vis the West. There is nothing wrong with taking political positions, but it would be better to acknowledge the agenda behind such early warning rather than regard it as 'scientific' and 'apolitical'.

The other political issue is that the role of donors is not perceived locally as unbiased and objective. In some parts of the world US sponsorship automatically destroys any belief that warning would be devoid of self-interest. For example, the US State Department's

travel alerts have given rise to claims of bias in some quarters - it did not warn against travel to Israel despite an on-going *intifada*, but warns against travelling to other countries which are dependent on tourism. The argument goes that such selective advice can be detrimental to the tourist industry and contribute to poverty, and punishes some countries while being lenient on others.

To sum up

As 'scientific' and 'objective' systems do not exist, the 'political' nature of early warning has to be acknowledged. A link between systematic, on-going analysis over a protracted period and a choice of realistic recommendations may be the best output of EW. It is sufficient to achieve a 'good enough' analysis which would allow prevention. John Clarke notes that 'this probabilistic account is sufficient as our contingency planning, preparedness and preventive efforts should be on a relatively loose trigger.'[32]

32 John N. Clarke, 'Early Warning for Humanitarian Preparedness and Conflict Prevention', Journal of Humanitarian Assistance, www.jha.ac/articles/a146.pdf, posted 24 January 2004, p. 3.

EARLY RESPONSE: MECHANISMS AND CAPACITIES

The ultimate goal of early warning is not to predict conflicts, but rather to prevent them.[33] In this regard, the credibility of early warning is at stake: the early warning actors should either become much better at prediction (the record has not been impressive so far) or redefine the rules of the game and put more emphasis on early action. Austin argues that unless the early warning system has a mechanism to mitigate conflict, there is little utility to be gained in refining the accuracy of current models.[34] Meanwhile, as Lund notes, 'the disparate and purely voluntary conflict prevention efforts that are carried out often overlook potential trouble spots, still respond belatedly rather than proactively, and are sometimes overly duplicative because they follow the flow of funds (e.g., few NGOs have actually preceded governments into potential trouble spots).[35]

'Early Response' consists of three components: receiving, believing and acting upon the warning. None of these three main stages can be taken for granted. How the early warning signals are processed by the receiving side depends on who listens and which ideological factors condition their reception. There exists a culture in international politics whereby non-action is safer that acting and running the risk of making a mistake and losing face. Meier observes that early warning methodologies are not geared towards the existing realities of political decision-making structures.[36]

It is important not to look at warning and response as separate actions, but as two sides of one coin. While early response is the goal, early warning is a tool to achieve it. Therefore, the value of early warning lies in the response capacity, i.e. in generating tangible recommendations and for them reaching the right groups and individuals.

Why Response Does or Does not Occur

Despite a decade of debate, it is uncertain where and with whom the responsibility to prevent conflicts lies.[37] The UN claims such a role, but its institutional capacity and political constraints are too severe for early action and its record so far has not been promising. Thus, there

is a paradox: those who want to intervene (civil society or regional organisations), have no capacity to do so, while those with capacity are seldom interested in early intervention. Governments sometimes claim that NGOs have no role in resolving violent conflicts and see questions of peace and security as their own exclusive domain. NGOs themselves often do not perceive conflict intervention as their responsibility, or their capacity for prevention activities is dismal. A realisation that it is everybody's responsibility to protect themselves and others is important, but it only has a chance to work if it is locally owned and supported.

International response is normally produced by fairly straightforward factors: media coverage (the 'CNN effect'), proximity to the EU and the US (more likely in South-Eastern Europe) and degree of security threat to the West (Afghanistan). Outside of these situations, response is typically late, inadequate or non-existent. It is limited to what the local and national civil society actors can do on their own when a violent conflict unfolds (Israel/ Lebanon in summer 2006), unless they are reinforced by international efforts.

International assumptions about a country and its regime are important for a likelihood of a response. For example, in 1993 International Alert undertook a fact-finding mission to Chechnya, the Russian Federation, and prepared a report on its basis, warning of dangers of a possible secession crisis. The Report made virtually no impact at the time, since the international community firmly believed in democratic credentials of the Russian President Boris Yeltsin and was not prepared to accommodate the premise that the regime could resort to a military intervention. Only in December 1994 when the Russian federal troops advanced on the republic, did the UK officials request twenty copies of the Report.[38]

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33 'savoir pour prevoir, prevoir pour prevenir', Patrick Meier, 'Early Warning Democracy', presentation at GPPAC Expert Group meeting.
34 www.berghof-handbook.net/austin/text.htm
35 Lund, SIPRI, Ibid., p. 25.
36 GPPAC Background reader for the Expert Group meeting, p. 45.
37 Discussion see in Michael Lund, 'Creeping institutionalisation of the culture of prevention?', http://editors.sipri.org/pdf/PVC.pdf Lund notes that' if everyone is to do prevention, then no one has to' p. 25.

Often, although information is generally available, it is not presented in a 'digestible' form. Clarke observes that 'the challenge lies in organising and interpreting that information for action in an accelerated decision-making process where only small windows of opportunity exist'.[39] Strategically-placed early warning signals, reinforced by a strong lobbying capacity, can make a difference in stirring the international community into action. Organisations such as the ICG seek to stimulate western political institutions who otherwise may chose not to act. Their strategy is to capture attention by sending out clear and strong signals without diluting the message.

Lund[40] and Adelman[41] outlined difficulties with moving from warning to response. These revolve around the role and motivation of the actioneer and include the pressure of on-going commitments, altruism versus egotism, the confusion of an intervention and 'noise', i.e. more pressing matters, such as an actual violent conflict. Levine also identifies socio-psychological factors, such as *by-stander* syndrome.[42] Austin notes that the reasons behind a lack of response or intervention remain an understudied domain in conflict management. Schmeidl[43] developed the following categories explaining obstacles to response or its late or incomplete nature:

- Situation dynamics (some regions are more interesting to outside actors, certain situations are more familiar than others, in some conflicts incentives are more ready at hand, i.e. the EU membership)
- Political Dynamics (constraints at home, overall relationship with a government in question, i.e. Russia with regards to the conflict in Chechnya)
- Human - psychological factors (cognitive structures that impair our perception and judgement, fear of failure, delayed learning)
- Institutional - Bureaucratic factors (the capacities and mandates of organisations, UN inertia which played a detrimental role in Rwanda genocide case)
- Analytical capacity (early warning needs to be unique to the situation, counterintuitive and draw attention to what could be done, while this is not always the case).

Van de Goor and Verstegen propose a 'Conflict and Policy Assessment Framework' (CPAF) model to move from prognosis *per se* and integrate conflict analysis and policy response with issues of institutional capacity and political priorities. It departs from developing models with a global reach, and concentrates on what is feasible in terms of available capacities for intervention. It however warns against the risk of compartmentalisation of conflict prevention, suggesting the existing capacity only be taken as a starting point and encouraging a search for cooperation with other actors. Characteristics of their CPAF are as follows:

- Response and end-user-oriented 'good enough' model
- Bottom-up approach which focuses on a specific institution, its preventive instruments, strengths and weaknesses
- Clarity on the needs, goals and capacities of the operational agency
- Shift from warning to indication of how to deploy available policy instruments. [44]

Challenges for CSOs

What kind of conflicts civil societies are trying to prevent needs to be defined in accordance with the regions' specifics. For example, in the IGAD region the CEWARN has been successful in acting upon pastoral conflicts, but the challenge is how to move from pastoral to political conflicts. Foundation for Co-Existence (FCE) acknowledges a similar dilemma: although it has been successful in action at the

38 David Jones, deputy Secretary-General of International Alert at the time, in interview with the author, London, 1996.
39 Clarke, Ibid., p. 4.
40 Michael Lund, Preventing Violent Conflict: a Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy, US Institute of Peace Press, 1996.
41 Howard Adelman and Suhrke, Astri, 'Early Warning and Conflict Management', vol. 2 of International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience, Copenhagen: DANIDA, 1996.
42 Levine, R.M, 'Rethinking bystander non-intervention: social categorisation and the evidence of witnesses at the James Bulger murder trial', *Human Relations* 52, pp. 1133 - 1155.
43 Susanne Schmeidl, 'Early Response and Integrated Response Development', *Romanian Journal of Political Science* 1 (2): 4-50.
44 Van de Goor & Verstegen's study has been commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is tailored to its needs; however, its intellectual content goes beyond the Ministry's requirements and has a wider relevance.

communities' level, it was not possible to identify and impact upon the militant groups in the Eastern Province who refuse intervention by civil society. In this context, the FCE system has not been able to stop the political killings.[45]

During the GPPAC Expert Group meeting it was suggested that civil society is best advised to take up the tasks it can shoulder, rather than claiming it can do everything. This would make its added value much clearer. Much interesting and useful work is being done by CSOs at the local level in areas often neglected by the international community. Their added value often lies in addressing micro-level disputes. However, such work is not a substitute for addressing larger political questions, e.g. leadership succession.

Some crises are more susceptible to being influenced by civil society action than others. For example, it is far from clear how civil society could act upon such factors as criminality and violent regime overthrow. It may have more role in mediation and conciliation in the aftermath of violence and in provision of advice on how to adjust development programmes in the light of a conflict situation.

After September 11th the idea emerged that Islamism in its *jihadi* form constitutes the most potent threat to global security. This has resulted in more attention being paid to threats from this source while pastoral or communal conflict resolution has not been considered worthy for international funding. But it is unclear how civil society can engage with militant *jihadi* ideology and kind of action it generates. One view is that *jihadists*, especially in the rural areas, live in their own communities and alongside other people who can influence them. These communities can be mobilised to prevent terrorism. However, the current author is not convinced. Investigation into July 7, 2005 attacks in London have revealed that parents and friends of the suicide bombers had no suspicion of their involvement in terrorism.

Rather, civil society-based early warning may be better placed to identify the causes and gain an understanding

of social and ideological drivers for terrorism. Schmeidl has an interesting argument that a 'War on Terror' age can give early warning a boost. Using the example of Afghanistan, she writes that 'rather than tracking the movement of the al-Qaeda terrorist network..., early warners focusing on Afghanistan had long been documenting the dangerous impact of sanctions and political isolation on the Taliban regime. By isolating, and to some degree ignoring, the Taliban in Afghanistan, we may have contributed to an increased radicalisation of the movement, allowing it to be hijacked ...by the terrorist network'.[46]

Meier argues that from a *realpolitik* point of view it is far from evident that formal early warning makes any significant impact on preventive diplomacy and policy-making, since diplomats and high officials normally rely on a network of trusted advisers. This is reinforced by the fact that UNDP and some bilateral donors (such as Switzerland) started to deploy their own conflict prevention advisers in the field[47] - a sign that these agencies do not wish to rely on external early warning/ information and advocacy systems.

For early warning practice the question is 'who does the early response?' At a practical level, facilitation, negotiation and mediation skills are not sufficiently developed in civil society organisations. Should field monitors, i.e. those who collect and analyse information, intervene to prevent conflicts, for example, acting as local mediators, or is their role purely analytical? Where the monitors choose to act as mediators, they should receive appropriate training and be tested on their ability to perform the task at hand.

While inter-communal conflicts can be addressed by CBOs, it also needs to be asked what capacities exist to address regional conflicts? GPPAC has made some strides in this direction, but there is a clear need for more efforts.

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45 Kumar Rupesinghe, presentation at the UN Conference, p. 16.
46 Schmeidl, 'The Early Warning of Forced Migration: State of Human Security?', p. 150.
47 Titles vary, such as 'peace & development', 'human security', etc., but the idea is the same.

WANEP

WANEP has established a regional Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN) as a part of its Capacity Building Programme. Initially, the methodology and training were developed in cooperation with FEWER. In 1999 - 2005 a series of training sessions were provided for field monitors and trainers. The project focussed on the Mano River Basin countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea) and Cote d'Ivoire as pilot areas. The first WANEP - FEWER research and analysis report was compiled on Guinea Conakry, commissioned by the UN Framework Team through OCHA. Presently, WANEP produces policy briefs which are available on its Website. The briefs so far have been written on five countries. The latest one on Togo was published in February 2005.

WANEP's response to the early warning signals it receives consists of:
- Providing information and advice to a regional organisation.

WANEP's strong links with a regional organisation which provides it with direct access to and a capacity to influence decision-makers is one of its chief assets. A protocol on cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was signed in 1999. In 2002 the UN Regional Office for Africa in Addis Ababa entered an agreement with WANEP to strengthen the ECOWAS early warning system. In April 2003, a regional coordinator and liaison officer was placed in the ECOWAS secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria, and national correspondents have been identified, trained and coordinated.

- Playing a mediatory role in resolution of intercommunal disputes. Local monitors of WARN are based in the civil society organisations which are WANEP partners. They tap into the existing expertise, and address the issues from a peacebuilding perspective.

- Joint brainstorming with decision-makers on a course of action to take. Use of EW Reports as a basis for political debate has been tried and tested. A policy brief on Togo was used as a discussion text for different stakeholders to meet around the table and conduct a debate. Such debate concentrated on in-depth exploration of the problems and helped to build confidence between parties. This helped to move the debate from grievances and rivalries to thinking about the future of Togo.

WANEP is a network organisation that unites NGOs and advocacy groups which focus on a particular issue, e.g. small arms or human trafficking. The process of early warning is a derivative of its networking capacity: 'whom you know' is key. WANEP can, on the one hand, collect thematic data from such groups, and on the other, use them for the dissemination of information.

Options and Mechanisms for Response

The objective of early warning is two-fold: to prevent conflicts and to influence prevention. However, it would be naïve to assume that achieving an early response is simply a matter of providing the right information at the right time to the right department or person.[48] Prevention requires both capacity and that the intervening organisation has sufficient local credibility

48 Austin, Ibid., p. 11.

to provide it with a mandate to act. WANEP's role as an actor on different levels in West Africa provides a case study of good practice

Possible preventative measures
The idea that early warning systems can mitigate conflict is based on two presuppositions: that conflicts can be mitigated and that one knows how to do it, - both highly contentious assumptions. Until there is more concrete information resulting from best practices and lessons learnt, early warning will continue to be faced

with major challenges on recommending what, when and by whom to respond.[49]

The section below outlines a number of strategies in conflict prevention used by civil society and other actors.

Short-term prevention
• Measures to prevent violence during elections;
• Crisis intervention groups by civil society actors, or groups combining representatives of the authorities and CSOs;
• Joint peace missions to conflict areas by representatives of different sides (The Caucasus Forum/ International Alert mission to Pankissi Gorge in Georgia in connection with spillover of conflict in Chechnya, 2000)
• Advocating for military deployment by an intergovernmental regional organisation (e.g. ECOWAS)
• Conducting mediation/ negotiations between conflicting parties - CSO can do so, if they have appropriate skills. However, this requires a certain degree of courage. For example, FTI has intervened in crisis situations in the south of Kyrgyzstan when protesters occupied the government's buildings.

Long-term conflict prevention/ resolution
Interactive Peace Dialogues to develop a process of interaction between stakeholders. They remind the governments that mechanisms to solve problems exist and should be used.

Problem-solving workshops where an early warning report is used as a discussion text for a problem-solving workshop among conflict stakeholders. The UNDP Cross-Border Project has successfully employed this method for a meeting between provincial authorities of southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan (November 2004).

Monitoring of Implementation of Peace Accords by civil society actors and community groups.

Cooperation with police and security agencies makes early warning more effective, but as police brutality and

corruption is often a problem, entering such cooperation has to be done with caution.

Addressing *weapons' proliferation* at national and community levels, especially in conjunction with dealing with youth problems

Advocacy and Lobbying A warning report can be a response in itself, if it is intended to trigger wider action. As reports can stimulate incentives to act, they can also create a mechanism of accountability, making it impossible for policy makers to ignore a problem. Such a position is taken by ICG, for example. The organisation however, does not directly engage with local CSOs, nor does it work to guide them into action. *It is important to get the right tools to influence the policy-relevant audience. Awareness of the forces at play is the only sensible strategy, especially as far as donor relations are concerned. Civil society should be warned that defence of local interests in the face of geopolitics may be an uphill struggle.*

Awareness raising and working with media. In situations when it is not possible to make a direct impact on policy-makers, it can be more feasible to influence media and wider civil society. This can generate attention and create pressure, forcing politicians to take notice.

Development for Peace. Maintaining an Emergency/ Rapid Reaction Fund to implement urgent development measures designed with a preventive aim in mind, is a typical practice, for instance, at UNDP. However, it needs to have a swift mechanism to disburse funds, otherwise it can defeat the purpose and in fact create tensions on the ground, as communities start suspecting that money has 'disappeared'. In FTI experience, such a Fund should pro-actively go out to the affected communities and help them to brainstorm on ideas for development projects to mitigate conflict potential rather than launch calls for proposals.

Addressing the *social and cultural dimension* (education/ cultural beliefs/ youth problems).

49 Austin, Ibid., p. 12.

Foundation for Co-Existence

FCE's early warning system in the Eastern Province of Sri-Lanka is mainly based on local information sources. At the bottom level lies a community-based network made up of co-existence committees, peace committees and zonal committees spread across the province and comprising representatives of different ethnic groups (Tamils, Muslims and Singhalese). The early warning information coming from the field is processed in the Information Centre at Colombo, the capital, and disseminated to key stakeholders through daily situation reports, monthly and quarterly risk assessment reports, and monthly human security roundtables. The objective of the latter is to discuss conflict-related issues and to engage decision-makers and other stakeholders in the formulation of future strategies.

An early response mechanism is implemented in parallel to early warning. Through this mechanism various stakeholders are brought together to work out and implement response strategies when tensions escalate. Many of these stakeholders are already involved in gathering and disseminating early warning information. Response consists of two components: rapid intervention to mitigate rising tensions and long-term peace-building.
Rapid reaction comprises the following steps:
- Situation assessment (assessment of conflict-related information, dispatchment of FCE monitors to the scene, analysis of media coverage and identification of risks);
- Identification of stakeholders
- Exploring available options for

action, based on multi-track diplomacy and stakeholder participation
- Intervention towards prevention/ resolution of an issue in question.
Longer-term peacebuilding strategy to minimise future conflict occurrence:
- Formalising interethnic associations based on volunteer Co-Existence Committees to function as an on-going mechanism for conflict prevention at a local level (18 such organisations are in the process of being established).
- Addressing development needs to promote co-existence. This involves a programme of reconstruction and rehabilitation of villages damaged by 2004 tsunami.

Employing *traditional mechanisms* - for example, in Afghanistan Ahmadzai tribal people approached the international community not for practical help, but for legitimisation of their traditional mechanisms to deal with issues of conflict: as they rid the community of unwanted people/ criminals themselves without resorting to foreign troops' assistance, and being proud of it, wanted the internationals to acknowledge the fact. However, use of traditional practices can be problematic, as they can involve human rights' violations, e.g. in the treatment of women.

Partnerships with business. Apart from working with/ lobbying governments, CSOs can also mobilise business communities in conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention practice needs to keep an attainable goal in mind. This can be to reach a level of 'sustainable security' rather than create a model liberal democracy. 'Sustainable security' involves reasonable functioning of four institutions: a competent domestic police force and correction system; efficient civil service or professional bureaucracy; judicial system that works under the rule of law and a disciplined military accountable to a civilian authority. These minimum conditions of institutional foundations place state-building at the heart of peace efforts in collapsed states.[50]

50 Baker and Weller, 'Fund for Peace Analytical Model of Internal Conflict and State Collapse,' p. 12, cited in van de Goor and Vest, Ibid., p. 11.

Interlinking Warning and Response

Before engaging, CSOs need to have a capacity and a strategy for intervention, and a notion of how strategic alliances can be built to facilitate a collaborative approach. Response measures could be thought of as:

- Early action/ crisis response capacity to extinguish fires before escalation;
- Long-term structural prevention.

Schmeidl notes that early warning does not always take into account its own impact while balancing short-term considerations with long-term goals. Short-term actions may lead to long-term difficulties, or long-term transformation may bring about turmoil in the short term.[51]

The Remit of Civil Society

Strengths of civil society-based early warning can be presented as follows:

- Civil society can address and act upon certain problems in which policy-makers cannot get involved because of political sensitivity.
- CSOs can capitalize on the strengths of individuals and groups already existent in society by using local knowledge and coping techniques to help prevent conflict or escalation. Since informal ways of dealing with problems are present in societies, CSOs can work to highlight these peaceful mechanisms and stimulate people to use them.
- CSOs can cross-fertilize expertise and experience from different regions, and bring peace-building knowledge from one conflict zone into the other.
- As CSOs are often able to talk to various local stakeholders in a conflict, they can use their access to facilitate dialogue between affected people and those with an immediate responsibility to protect.
- Another strength can be found in cooperation with governmental bodies. CSOs can serve as an accountability and supplementary mechanism to that of the government, as civil society reports can be compared and contrasted with the official information. They can also serve to elaborate joint strategies with the authorities.
- CSOs can act faster than formal actors as soon as

potential for conflict has been identified. Their lines to communities are short, and there are fewer obstacles to action as compared to international players.

- CSOs often have access at a micro-level to protagonists of the conflict, but also can reach out to macro-level actors, such as the UN and the World Bank and function as a link between actors on all levels.
- CSOs can work on awareness raising and train other actors in conflict sensitivity, such as local communities, media and governmental bodies.

Still, one has to be realistic with expectations. There is a conviction among the INGO/ donor governments' community that civil society is by definition 'good' and 'can do nothing wrong', and the only problem is how to propel it into a more prominent role. Yet, it is time to move away from a belief that 'civil society is the answer' and take a sober look at what it does to prevent conflicts and how. While arguing for a better response, it is vital to be realistic about the remit of civil society whose capacities for action are exaggerated at times and vary greatly from region to region. In Latin America civil society organisations are powerful, but often find themselves in competition with social movements which tend to concentrate on more tangible and immediate causes. In the Arab countries civil society is weak and is better suited to acting upon local community conflicts than taking on tough political challenges. In authoritarian Central Asian countries CSOs are struggling to survive under political pressure.

It has become fashionable to argue that since conflicts are mostly local, the people affected on the ground have the best knowledge of the negative trends. They are also best suited to execute response, press their governments into action, take responsibility for their own well-being etc. Locally-Led Advance Mobile Aid (LLAMA) has been proposed to help threatened populations to build local early warning networks of their own. The central thesis is that 'warning is wired in a wrong direction' (policy-makers and higher echelons of international

51 Schmeidl, 'Early Response', p. 19.

bureaucracies) and that 'warning that is meant to control groups which are causing harm is wired up and out - while warning meant to get innocents out of harm's way is wired along the ground'. Warning for people on the ground is physically actionable, while civilians need to save themselves, as they should assume that international warning and response networks might never save them. [52]

LLAMA proposes running early warning laterally, i.e. to send it to people when violence is approaching. When civilians are forewarned about a potential attack, they can better prepare their protection and relief. Teams of locals are to be recruited, trained, equipped and deployed back home to help them to mastermind basic defensive measures. Suggested measures include escorting survivors of violence to communities where violence has not happened, to tell their stories and to alert local communities to possibilities of a flight. The team can also help to recognise and support positive survival strategies the civilians are attempting. These measures are designed not to create panic, but to instil 'healthy fear' about an approaching threat.

There are doubts that empirical evidence would support such a plan. In the 2006 conflict in southern Lebanon it is not evident what additional measures civilians could have taken to protect themselves from Israeli air strikes even if they had been forewarned. Flight was not an option, since roads were mostly even more hazardous than the settlements. Moreover, should a large number of civilians in the Middle East be in a constant state of preparation for a disaster (Israeli air strikes?), this will never create an atmosphere conducive to peace. While residents of southern Lebanon may agree with the basic premise that outsiders cannot be relied upon to save them as they watch the UN and other agencies paralysed by inaction, they would still want to know that international politicians are concerned and engaged. There maybe more room for application of LLAMA for criminal-related violence at the inter-communal level, or in places where the states are too weak to maintain law and order and rogue armies roam around than in situations of political or international conflicts.

Who gives a mandate to civil society to do early warning and intervene in conflict is a further issue facing organisations that needs to be addressed. Otherwise, as CSOs are not elected bodies and it is not clear whom they represent, a question of legitimacy inevitably arises. In the Latin American context the initiative was taken to address this challenge. A platform of grass-roots organisations was created in October 2005 to give civil society some representational power. However, it only partially resolved the issue as many groups and organisations remained outside.

The capacity of civil society to act appears to be a generic problem. Civil society in theory has more capacity to respond to events quickly in comparison to the UN, since it is more flexible and is prepared to take on more risks. In reality, this does not happen often enough. Time and again organisations confront the fact that that local partners are not trained in early response and are not sure what to do when situations start to deteriorate. Absorption capacity and the ability of organisations to sustain training and capacity-building has been poor. Capable individuals often get recruited into governments or international organisations, undermining investment in training. Schmeidl, arguing for incorporation of civil society actors into alliances for response, still warns that 'the involvement of NGOs needs to be carefully considered, as it is clear that they lack the power to enforce sanctions and peace treaties (failure in Somalia)'.[53]

In WANEP's view, local civil society organisations should first gain a real constituency, respect and credibility, and only then can attempt to do EW/ ER. Such endeavours cannot be built in isolation based on brilliant ideas which solely originate from outside. Social assets in a country cannot be substituted and have to be built first, before any effective action can be undertaken.

52 Casey Barrs, 'Conflict Early Warning: Warning Who?', The Cuny Center.
53 Schmeidl, 'Early Response', p. 26.

Building Alliances

The limitations of early response within international community lie in two dimensions: in an ability to hear the warning signals, and in an institutional capacity to act. Often, early response necessitates building alliances and coalitions among groups and organisations of a different kind, but this can be easier said than done. Organisational culture poses important constraints for formation of alliances. Firstly, the UN, especially UNDP Country Offices which are the main UN bodies on the ground, do not easily absorb controversial information, if it runs contrary to a leadership's vision. Secondly, it cannot be expected that even if different international actors agree on the analysis, they would be prepared to take the same public stand on issues. UNDP, for example, is a risk-averse body and is typically reluctant to engage in controversy and venture into difficult political terrain. By contrast, the ICG and other human rights organisations thrive on controversy, as is their remit. However, their advocacy is not universally viewed as politically neutral.

Diversity in strengths and weaknesses can be an impediment to cooperation, but can also prove an asset. Exploration of how organizations can bring synergy into their actions and messages, and the way they frame the latter, can make partnerships more solid. However, the broader an alliance, the slower the response it generates may become. This was experienced by FTI which implemented its system in partnership with UNDP, OSCE and IFES.

Finally, while discussing funding and prospects for coalition-building, it has to be acknowledged that rivalries among civil society organisations are a fact of life.

Relationship with Governments

Schmeidl distinguishes between 'state' security and 'human' security, counterpoising the two. In such a dichotomy, 'state security' serves the interests of the regime, but not the people. Using an example of refugee early warning, Schmeidl suggests that 'state security'

interest would be to use early warning defensively, i.e. to block an entry/ exit for potential refugees, while 'human security' would be concerned with alleviation of human suffering.[54] Such an approach tends to overlook the fact that people mostly rely upon a state to provide security and that a situation is as likely to be the opposite: local people may be unwelcoming hosts and would rather not have refugees on their land, while a government may be more mindful of its international obligations or humanitarian considerations, and be prepared to accommodate refugees. It can therefore be more appropriate to distinguish between the 'security of a regime' (especially when it is the main actor behind an emerging conflict) and 'citizens' security'.

Many issues of conflict cannot be tackled without government help or at least a government's non-interference in order not to make the matters worse. Participants at the Expert Group meeting underscored that early warning should seek to engage governments, however 'bad' they might be, as ignoring the government would only make the situation worse. Some governments are positively interested in cooperating with civil society in EW/ ER measures. This presents a dilemma of how close to the governments civil society can and should be. For instance, a government offered an escort to a WANEP monitor when going to an unsafe area. Is it a positive sign of attention or an attempt at control? How should a CSO respond -should the offer be accepted?

It may be that the differences between political regimes in sub-regions are so great that it is not possible to provide universal answers. In West Africa, states seem to be too weak to impose coherent authoritarian regimes of the Asian type. This leaves room for relative liberalism and freedom of expression which allows collaboration with civil society. In some countries government officials feel threatened by NGO leaders, because they have a better capacity for analysis and response. In others, the best people often work at NGOs, embassies and the offices of international organisations

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54 Susanne Schmeidl, 'The Early Warning of Forced Migration: State of Human Security?', pp. 130 - 155.

and are paid by donors, leaving the government's bureaucracy weakened.

At times, governments themselves are at a loss about what to do and seek ideas from civil society or academic experts. EW can be a tool for feeding in such ideas. Governments also suffer from a lack of capacity, especially when it comes to crisis intervention. In Kyrgyzstan the current government has preciously little capacity to act. It finds ICG recommendations largely irrelevant, because they don not know how to implement them in practice. The security sector agencies do not even receive the ICG reports because hard copies are not posted to them. Nor are Internet downloads an option, since most government ministries have no Internet access. In the FTI's view, for the recommendations to make an impact, seminars and roundtables with government officials should be organised. In such case it would be hard for them to claim ignorance and more pressure to act would be created. The FTI, for example, trains government officials in early response, but feels that its own capacity to deliver such training needs to be strengthened.

Sometimes NGOs find themselves in a *Catch 22* situation with the governments. On the one hand, the governments claim to have no capacity for response; on the other hand, if they do not receive early warning reports or are not invited to participate in response measures, they tend to get offended that their capacities are not used. Faced with such an attitude, the FCE shares information with the Sri Lankan government, but it normally reacts too late, while humanitarian agencies are more effective and flexible. FCE's strategy is to keep the government on board, so it cannot claim ignorance, but hold modest expectations of how much follow-up action it would generate.

On occasion civil society also faces the difficult problem of determining how it should act when the main source of conflict is the government's own actions. When collaborating with governments, CSOs always have to consider what a government may use early warning information for. In an interview with the author, one civil society actor admitted possessing early

warning information, but said they were unsure whether or not to share it with law-enforcement bodies. Likewise, Schmeidl observes in respect to refugee early warning that it can be used to prepare relief assistance, but also to build defences against flows of migrants. The idea of 'safe zones' or the 'right to remain' can be a way of keeping people within their countries or at least in the region they come from.[55]

To sum up, it would be counterproductive to present civil society as an alternative - or an opposition - to governments. At best, civil society can play a supporting role for government-driven peace initiatives and get mainstreamed into dialogue processes.

Regional Organisations

As recommended in the Secretary General's 2001 Report, regional organisations have taken on greater responsibility for conflict prevention which resulted in initiatives to establish early warning systems. In 2003 IGAD and in 2005 ECOWAS embarked on regional projects, while the African Union considered recommendations for a Continental Early Warning System. The Organisation of American States (OAS) discussed the creation of a formal structure and the Association of South Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a Plan of Action which includes a regional early warning system.

Increasingly, NGOs are becoming partners in such initiatives. The success of these partnerships depends upon the operational capacity of regional organisations and the strength of the latter's relationship with a particular CSO engaged in EW/ ER.

WANEP has a strong relationship with ECOWAS, but it took time to develop. ECOWAS used to recognise the importance of civil society in principle, but took no particular action to invite its engagement. However, as democratisation and openness in the ECOWAS system gained momentum, civil society got a chance to assert its prominence in peace building. It started to redefine

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55 Schmeidl, 'Early Warning of Forced Migration', p. 145.

its role, no longer positioning itself as an opponent, but more as an ally. Internal changes in ECOWAS created the momentum for inviting proposals from civil society organizations and the relationship with WANEP became institutionalised. Presently, for each country there is one desk officer responsible for early warning appointed by a government and one - by civil society from within the WANEP network. Two EW officers work in partnership, but maintain a distance. Each has his/ her own perspective: although in practice they tend to largely agree on the main drivers for conflict and conflict trends, they still attach different significance to the relative merits of conflict-generating factors. In 2006 ECOWAS conducted a sensitisation campaign to raise awareness of the significance of conflict prevention. This partnership also improved WANEP's standing vis-à-vis the national governments.

Dealing with regional organisations can yield different outcomes. In West Africa ECOWAS is a relatively strong organisation and can intervene militarily if the Nigerian government supports a decision. By contrast, the post-Communist states Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is a relatively weak body when it comes to operational conflict prevention, as it has to function on the basis of consensus among fifty-five member states. Robust intervention is outside its remit, while military action, such as in Kosovo, has been carried out by NATO in the OSCE region. Very little practical result came out of the OSCE HCNM early warning system in southern Kyrgyzstan.

The UN System

The UN system undertakes its own early warning activities and also relies upon systems developed by external actors. There are three headquarters-based early warning outlets: the Inter-Departmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action (The UN Framework Team, established in 1995, coordinates actions of 23 UN bodies), the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS, 1997) and the Secretary General's Policy Committee (2005). The Early Warning Unit (EMU) at OCHA prepares interagency-based early warning reports for the

Framework Team, based on questionnaires sent to the Country Offices and field missions. EMU produces Early Warning Analysis on emerging crises in countries in which OCHA is not present, while countries with OCHA's field presence are covered by the Coordination and Response Division.

The EMU is one of the primary contributors to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Early Warning - Early Action Report. It assigns risk levels to potential new crises and tracks rankings of countries with existing crises. The reports and the summary ranking of countries by grading an alert level is not an exact science, but a product of an inter-agency compromise. They seldom act as a guide for early action, but rather serve internal purposes. The format is as follows: a summary matrix identifies countries assessed as having a relatively higher risk of a complex emergency (y axis), as well as the likely scale of the resulting emergency (x axis). As such, it is not a forecast of expected emergencies, but an indication of those countries more susceptible to one in the coming 12 months. Estimates of potential staff deployments are placed in brackets adjacent to the country name. The matrix is colour-coded to reflect countries of potential concern (high risk, large scale emergency; medium/high risk, large scale emergency; high risk, medium scale emergency). Countries deemed to possess a medium-high or medium risk for destabilising crises and/or those with a high risk factor but smaller at-risk populations are analysed in a report on "secondary concern" countries, and are identified in orange in the matrix.

An accompanying note presents brief analyses and scenario forecasting for the countries deemed to be at serious risk of complex emergencies and humanitarian crises in the near future, focusing on those countries with neither a CAP nor an OCHA presence. The methodology used for the analysis is based on the Framework Team Early Warning Indicators and Methodology (December 2001)[56]. It consists of hundreds of data collection, assessment and projection questions covering all aspects of country/ regional situations typically included in UNDP Human Development Reports (water, sanitation, resource

management, environment, demography etc.) with additional questions on politics, justice and home affairs, and security sector.

In an effort to build its own capacities and to bridge the gap between warning and response, in 2005 the EMU initiated a project on defining 'Minimum Preparedness Actions' for OCHA. The UN Staff College had developed an 'Early Warning and Preventive Measures' (EWPM) project which carries out training workshops in conflict analysis for the UN staff and partners.

The generic problem is that it is difficult for the UN system to publicly 'own' early warning reports, even when it produces analysis of sufficiently high quality. Unlike the ICG, it cannot have an official list of 'countries at risk'. The same applies to the EU and OSCE. A partial solution is that the UN OCHA channels early warning through the ReliefWeb site, where it can make public information which the UN cannot put out in its name.

Despite much goodwill on efforts to improve the situation, each of the early warning undertakings within the UN system has run up against systemic challenges: a resistance to inter-agency information sharing, policy-makers' mistrust of quantitative data analysis and a fear by many member states that an internal UN 'intelligence system' would compromise their sovereignty.[57] The UN internal bureaucracy and its hierarchical structure have proven to be ill-suited to early response outside the circumstances of an emergency operation, such as international intervention in Afghanistan. There are few

incentives within the UN system - or bureaucracies at large - to make the difficult decisions that early response demands. According to Meier,[58] there is no UN decision-making body that focuses on rapid preventive actions or has the incentive to act upon urgent early warning. The net result of an attempt of the Framework Team and the ECPS to develop a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention by including development, humanitarian and political actors led to a reduction in their capacity to respond quickly. The recommended response is often limited to the lowest common denominator - the less risky action upon which all can agree to be involved.

Thus, the rapid response tools available to OCHA are more suited to natural disasters than to political conflict. It can, however, establish coordination centres in large-scale emergencies, as well as Humanitarian Information Centres (HIC). OCHA also manages several information services, the most well-known being ReliefWeb and the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN).

Some UN agencies have their own systems which concentrate on a particular aspect of concern. UNHCR has outsourced its early warning analysis to *Writenet*. It is based on monthly reporting by independent country experts alongside a set format, which is edited and checked by Writenet. A commercial agency normally used by the UN agencies is *Oxford Analytica*. However, even while consuming external early warning information, the UN system typically does not easily absorb controversial material especially when it is unsubstantiated by hard evidence.

Global Civil Society

Global civil society has an increasingly prominent role to play in early warning/ response. Having risen from a backwater of international politics to take centre stage in the debate on cutting-edge political and security issues, it can contribute in a number of respects. It can:

- Convey a power of solidarity across countries and regions, and by a sheer representational strength of the people, pressure Western governments to act;

56 The probability of a crisis was determined by means of the seven clusters used in more in-depth OCHA early warning reports: 1) Socio-economic conditions; 2) State and institutions; 3) Regional/international dimensions; 4) Security; 5) Public discourse, ideological factors, and elite behaviour; 6) Human rights and civil liberties; and 7) Actors - 'UN Framework Team Global Early Warning Risk Report.'

57 Susanna Campbell and Patrick Meier, 'Review of the capacity of the UN system for the prevention of armed conflict in the context of the secretary-general's report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict 2001 and the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 57/337: Prevention of Armed Conflict', Center for International Conflict Resolution, Columbia University, March 2006.

58 Submission to the Expert Group Meeting, GPPAC Background Reader, p. 45.

- Make a contribution to setting norms and standards. Help with the development of ethics and codes of conduct on how the community of practitioners intends to manage ethical issues, thereby contributing to the professionalisation of the field. Working on norms and standard setting can result in reviewing what are acceptable forms and mechanisms of applying pressure;
- Engage in more rigorous research to give an operational edge to conflict prevention and a sound meaning to 'toolboxes'.

While 'local ownership' is a dominant discourse, if stretched too far, it inevitably raises the question 'what is the role of external interveners and partners from the North?' If they are meant to act merely as a channel for donor money to the local NGOs, then a simpler funding mechanism can be found. At the same time, there has been a tendency on behalf of Western organisations to establish partnerships with CSOs from the developing world to add the necessary legitimacy to their own operations. However, in FEWER's case a transfer to a 'southern ownership' was activated too quickly to be sufficiently absorbed and not enough time and effort was spent on strengthening the capacities of organisations on the ground which constituted the FEWER network. As a result, no sufficient capacity of staff and partners was built.[59] In developing the North/South partnerships both sides need to recognise what assets the other party brings to the table and be appreciative of each other's qualities.

59 Susanne Schmeidl in the discussion at the Expert Group meeting, April 2006.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

This Paper has highlighted the multiple challenges facing early warning endeavour to play a greater role in conflict prevention. As the field is still in a pioneering and experimental phase, this is only to be expected. Practical issues and dilemmas have been discussed in the main body of the Report, while the conceptual challenges can be summarised as follows:

- The added value of early warning is yet to be proven
- Operational responses are insufficiently linked to warning
- Attracting attention to low-profile conflicts remains an issue
- Early warning methods have not shown how they can engage with current high-profile threats, i.e. serious crime, drugs or terrorism
- Transfer from macro-level political early warning to micro citizen-based warning and response systems is too slow.

Lessons from practice
The points below are not intended as a guide to action, but present a summary of reflections upon achievements and problems encountered by CSOs. They are meant to stimulate thinking and help practitioners to find their own answers suitable for their particular purposes and conditions.

The variety of schools and methods that exist is key to the maturity of the EW/ R field. They do not need to be simplified into one 'correct' method. Rather, an important challenge for early warners is to highlight neglected trends and overlooked factors beyond the obvious. Data collection and analysis has to be better related to its intended use. The end product and its usability needs always to be kept in mind. Sophistication of methodology should be balanced against efficiency, allowing time to be spent on formulating good policy response options. Simplicity and effectiveness are the key words in early warning.

Approaches to data collection and analysis
Whether quantitative or qualitative methods are used, they all have their own advantages and drawbacks.

Reservations with regards to the use of quantitative methods include:
- Collection of quantitative data by itself can prove too comprehensive to be operationally effective;
- It is unclear what to do if there are too few 'conflict-related' events that meet a particular definition, or if episodes of violence do not bear a relation to a potential conflict;
- The data availability can guide categorisation and overshadow a more balanced assessment;
- The same indicators can have a different meaning in different political contexts;
- Difference in concepts lying at the heart of data collection allows very different conclusions to be drawn from the same set of data.

Reliance on qualitative data has its own downside, such as the potential for subjectivity and the interference of political ideology.

Assumptions about the causes of conflicts can determine what kind of field data is collected and how it is analysed. The appeal of quantitative methods has been derived from an assumption that conflicts are caused by economic and social circumstances ('root causes'), rather than power, identity and ideology. This has led to a search for 'objective reasons' and statistical methods to describe them. On occasion, they gained pride of place at the expense of politics, ideologies of nationalism or religious hatred, or behaviour of groups in power.

All early warning networks strive to use open sources where possible, partly to avoid a 'spy image'. However, reliance on open sources can be misleading or miss important developments and processes at work. The nature of a political regime needs to be taken into account when choosing methodology. Statistical and events'-based methods could be more suited for use in weak states with relative openness and high levels of violence. By contrast, in stronger authoritarian states 'events' may not occur, and only indirect emerging trends can be traced and interpreted. In more open states it may be easier to identify stakeholders than in authoritarian ones, where it could be difficult to

ascertain who has a stake in conflict and why. The value of information from open sources needs to be qualified, depending on how liberal a country is, bearing in mind that in authoritarian countries negative information is often not available.

Perils of implementation

How much to collect? - The reports have to be operational and need to cover only the few selected categories, otherwise there is a danger of 'drowning' in the material. The dilemma is whether civil society organisations should only collect such data as they can act upon, or whether they should also include data on difficult and often dangerous issues to provide a more comprehensive assessment.

How many people to involve? - If a system involves too many parties, the process of data gathering can get diluted and it becomes difficult to maintain quality control.

What to do with intelligence information? CSOs can face a difficult decision of what to do if they come across genuine intelligence: act upon it, share it with governments or ignore it.

How many views can one report bear? - if views among analysts who are involved in the preparation of a report are very divergent, the dilemma is whether they should be reconciled into an 'institutional compromise' or whether differences of opinion should be accurately presented.

To how much risk should early warners be exposed? - The security of data collectors and local analysts has to be considered in the methodology and is dependent on the context of the conflict. At all times early warning projects should be responsible in dealing with the safety of its sources.

How objective is the picture? - In practice, all types of data are prone to subjective interpretation. This can be mitigated by sustainability of local monitoring over a period of time and solid evidence, but not for statistical probability. Objectivity can be undermined by the

reputation of a local NGO or of its international donor, given that perceptions of influence behind aid are widespread.

Regional or national? - While some argue that a regional approach in conflict-affected areas is required, success at this level has proven elusive for early warning reporting. The regional approach can be limited to manageable tasks rather than attempting to cover everything, such as in addressing cross-border conflicts or in forewarning of conflictual effects of major shocks upon a wider region.

Training and capacity building needs to be an on-going process. Feedback from the headquarters to the field staff is important for their professional development and moral support.

In order to be operational, early warning should take place at the appropriate level. It needs to be simple enough for CSOs in the field to be able to put it in practice, and not unnecessarily comprehensive and technically overburdened. So, a move away from highly quantitative/ technical systems is desirable.

Sharing of Early Warning Message

While much attention has been paid to issues of data gathering and the preparation of reports, the process of warning is equally important, but is often neglected in expert discourse. There is a potential dilemma concerning public or confidential access to reports. Among governments and international organisations there is an inverse relationship between information sharing and its ability to generate response. However, there are merits in involving a wider public, especially when early warning is based in civil society. Strategies to cope with political sensitivities of report sharing include balancing, channelling, targeting and packaging.

Civil society has to face the fact that early warning can do harm and be prudent about what is shared and with whom. The 'do no harm' principle is vital for dissemination. More focus is needed on a set of ethics based on the 'do no harm' principle to give guidance and a frame of reference to 'early warners'.

The development of recommendations is a crucial part of early warning where the role of civil society is not sufficiently utilised. It can do more in drawing conclusions from the analysis and putting forward ideas on how to act to prevent conflicts. Recommendations to governments and international agencies have to be a product of a 'feasibility analysis', combining strategies for response and the political and institutional constraints upon implementing them.

Early warning needs to be mindful of its target audiences, distinguishing between constituencies to whom the warning is addressed. Likewise, different EW/ R systems can perform different tasks. Outsiders have to keep realistic expectations about what each particular system can deliver. Each level of early warning - from local to global - is valuable, but is best at fulfilling its own task without seeking to substitute what the others do better.

Early warning for who is a question that has not been sufficiently asked let alone answered. Ideologies and political 'fashions' influence early warning the same as they do other aspects of conflict prevention/ peacebuilding work. It may be more honest to acknowledge that agendas behind early warning can exist rather than regard it as 'scientific' and 'apolitical'. Civil society has to be mindful of political influences and constraints.

Gearing into Response

The credibility of early warning is at stake: the early warning actors should either become much better at prediction or redefine the rules of the game and put more emphasis on early action. It is important to avoid the temptation to see warning and response as separate actions, but as two sides of one coin. While early response is the goal, early warning is a tool to achieve it. Response measures could be thought of as a two-fold process: early action/ crisis intervention (operational prevention) and long-term structural prevention.

Logic of response remains a mystery: in international politics response can happen to a non-credible warning (Iraq), while no preventive action is taken when abundant warning is available (Afghanistan under the Taliban). There is a paradox: those who want to intervene, often have no capacity to do so, while those with capacity are seldom interested in early intervention. Conflict prevention is political. Governments can claim that there is no role for NGOs to resolve violent conflicts, while NGOs themselves often do not perceive conflict intervention as their responsibility, or have no capacity for preventive action. Who gives a mandate to civil society to intervene into conflict is an issue that organisations are faced with and need to address.

What kind of conflicts civil society are trying to prevent depends on specifics of the region and upon their own capacities. Some crises are more conducive to action by civil society than others. At times, a role for civil society may be more in mediation and conciliation in the aftermath of violence than in crisis management.

In theory civil society has a greater capacity to respond to events quickly more than the UN, since it is more flexible and is prepared to take on greater risk. In reality, this does not happen often enough. The capacity of civil society to act appears to be a generic problem. Facilitation, negotiation and mediation skills are not sufficiently developed. Absorption and ability of organisations to sustain training and capacity-building has been insufficient. Before engaging, CSOs need to have a strategy for intervention, gain a real constituency, local respect and credibility, and only then attempt to do EW/ R. Social assets in a country cannot be substituted and have to be built first, before any effective action can be undertaken.

Civil society needs to be skilful in how to build strategic alliances to facilitate a collaborative approach. Diversity in strengths and weaknesses among partners can be an impediment to cooperation, but can also prove an asset. Exploration of how organizations can bring synergy into their actions and messages can make partnerships more solid. However, the broader an alliance, the slower can be the response it generates. In developing the North/ South civil society partnerships, both sides need to

recognise what assets the other party brings to the table and be appreciative of each other's qualities.

Lastly, it has to be admitted that early warning systems are expensive. Early warning projects must demonstrate a clear return on investment to donors. In this respect, more frequent, independent and transparent impact evaluations need to be carried out. Also, myth that civil society is based on volunteering needs to be dispelled. WARN at WANEP, for example, as a distinct programme has not secured funding, and its initiatives in 2004 have been *ad hoc*.[60] Donors have to take risks while funding early warning initiatives, while CSOs need to present some tangible successes to be convincing. The challenge for NGOs from the South is not to rely solely on the donor money. Otherwise NGOs would be ill-perceived as agents of foreign domination and suspected of fulfilling a donor agenda. In such circumstances it is hard to distance themselves from a

'spy image' and convince sceptics of their objectivity. It can be argued that many conflict-affected countries are not the poorest of the poor and should be able to find internal sources of funding for early warning and conflict prevention. Thus, one has to try not to rely solely on external support and start to search for opportunities within one's own country.

In conclusion, there is more to be done to improve early warning practice and to raise awareness of what it can deliver. Summaries of evaluations of early warning projects need to be made public to enable learning. Civil society has an important role to play, but it should be more confident in what it does well and more open in sharing lessons and best practices.

60 Takwa Zebulon Suifon, 'WARN: Building a Partnership between Civil Society and Inter-Governmental Organisations in Conflict Prevention', power point presentation in Background Reader, p. 91.

THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict is building a new international consensus and pursuing joint action to prevent violent conflict and promote peacebuilding, based on the *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. GPPAC maintains a global multi-stakeholder network of organisations committed to act to prevent the escalation of conflict into destructive violence at national, regional and global levels. This multi-stakeholder network includes civil society organisations, governments, regional organisations and the United Nations.

The primary function of the Global Partnership is to promote and support the implementation of the *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. For this purpose, GPPAC represents important regional concerns on the international level, enhances the functioning of the international systems for conflict prevention and uses its capacities to assist the implementation of key regional activities.

Sub-programmes are:

Promote acceptance of the ideas of conflict prevention
GPPAC supports regional efforts to raise awareness regarding the effectiveness of conflict prevention, and undertakes parallel efforts at the global level.

Promote policies and structures for conflict prevention
GPPAC generates ideas for improving policies, structures and practices involving interaction among civil society organisations, governments, regional organisations, and UN agencies for joint action for conflict prevention.

Build national and regional capacity for prevention
GPPAC strives to enhance the capacity of its regional networks and global mechanisms to undertake collective actions to prevent violent conflict.

Generate and share knowledge
GPPAC engages in a process of knowledge generation and sharing, by learning from the experience of regions

and developing mechanisms for regular communication/exchange of such information. GPPAC activities aim to improve our mutual understanding regarding important methodologies and mechanisms for action.

Mobilise civil society early response actions to prevent
GPPAC develops the capacity of civil society organisations to contribute to early warning systems and to intervene effectively in impending crises/conflicts. In response to regional requests, the global network will a) mobilise coordinated civil society responses, based on early warning of impending conflict escalation; and b) pressure governments, regional organisations, and the UN system to respond to early warning information.

GPPAC / International Secretariat www.gppac.net

Mobilise civil society early response actions to prevent

The early warning and response programme of the Global Partnership will contribute to the shift *from reaction to prevention* by providing vital information and analysis about emerging crisis situations and by establishing concrete mechanisms for action in the conflict regions and advocacy on the global level. The initiative is based on civil society involvement and relies on the social assets and respect build locally, thus giving a mandate for GPPAC to go ahead with its mission. The engagement of civil society is the greatest strength of the Global Partnership, which is to be fully utilised for the benefit of the early warning and response.

Overall goals of GPPAC's work in this field are that
a) *CSOs will be engaged in more formal, institutionalised and professional early response work in the several GPPAC regions, and*
b) *there will be institutionalised CSO working relations with UN agencies, regional organisations and governments on early warning and early response - including consultations and joint operations.*

Key activities are:

Create infrastructure to facilitate early response. Mechanisms will be developed, such as a website for channelling existing early warning information to network members and others where this information is compiled from existing sources of early warning information. Relevant contacts and cooperation / partnerships will be established with actors that have the potential to be catalysts for change: national, regional, UN and other international decision makers who can advocate for effective response. GPPAC will also develop a media strategy to publicly pressure the relevant local, regional and international actors to respond more quickly and effectively

Assist in the development of structures and systems for early warning and early response in at least seven GPPAC regions, through GPPAC regional partners. Regional and interregional knowledge-sharing meetings will be organised to a) adapt/share early warning / early response methodologies (including technical assistance, computer software, analysis tools, as well as training methods and tools), and b) create linkages to connect early warning / early response actors to GPPAC members including through inter-regional exchange visits between CSOs and government officials Mobilise GPPAC regional partners to share information and create linkages between relevant civil society actors involved in early warning / early response (universities, international NGOs) and provide training and capacity support to their constituencies. In regions where they are lacking, assistance will be given to develop locally-based early warning mechanisms through training, information sharing and creating linkages.

Play an active advocacy role, through GPPAC's regional partners, towards relevant actors who have the potential to be catalysts for change. Early response plans and specific tools will be developed at meetings involving CSOs, international, regional and local officials. The practice of joint NGO missions and rapid response teams will be improved and expanded. A Global Emergency Fund for CSO rapid response will be designed, and assistance will be provided to establish it in fact.

Collate and disseminate systematic principles and concepts for early response. GPPAC organises a process for ongoing analysis and information-gathering to capture lessons learned and best practices on early response in different regions. This will be conducted through a series of meetings, research and publications and other events involving CSOs, international, regional, national and local officials.

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Annex

Experience of Early Warning at UNDP
PDP and Cross-Border Project[1]

The methodology below attempts to integrate analytical and practical approaches to ensure that programme interventions are consistent with the local context and tackle the root causes of the problems.

The System of Early Warning was originally developed within the framework of the Preventive Development Programme (PDP) in the south of Kyrgyzstan, implemented by the UNDP CO in Kyrgyzstan. The Programme was started in 2000 in Batken province in response to the 1999 outbreak of violence related to the incursion of Islamist militants into the territory of Kyrgyzstan and fear of further destabilization. PDP has subsequently expanded to incorporate other southern provinces of Osh and Jalalabat.

In 2003 UNDP Kyrgyzstan and UNDP Tajikistan joined forces in starting a new initiative in the border areas between northern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, implemented together by Communities' Programme of UNDP Tajikistan and PDP. The Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCRP) has designed strategy for the Cross-Border project. The methodology below builds upon the Early Warning Indicators/Methodology developed by the UN OCHA Early Warning Unit Framework Team and adapts its approach for the operational requirements of the programmes.

The methodology outlined above exists in two slightly different but compatible formats, since it was adapted for the PDP and for the Cross-Border Project. The two formats use similar clusters of factors, i.e. broad areas of risk which are generic in Central Asia. Indicators vary depending on the context and are tailor-made for the local requirements.

Purpose and Objectives

The methodology seeks not only to predict escalation and crisis, but also identify local capacities in conflict prevention on behalf of the state (local and central authorities) and society (especially at the community level), and explore whether and how such capacities can be reinforced by programme interventions. Likewise, it analyses when segments of the state or society play the role of conflict generators.

More concretely, the objectives are:
- To form a basis for programmatic decisions on interventions being planned by the PDP and Cross-Border project;
- To predict as far as is feasible where conflicts are likely to flare up;
- To serve as an awareness tool for local and national authorities, and for other stakeholders aimed at reduction of conflict potential and evaluation of risk factors to assist them in making adequate response decisions.
- Raising awareness of the representatives of the international community and civil society in the region on development of conflict situations and elaboration of steps towards diffusion of tensions and resolution of conflicts;
- Establishment of a sustainable mechanism of monitoring and prevention of crisis situations which can be used by the local people and institutions when international assistance scales down.

Conflict Stage

The overall EW methodology should be viewed as a living tool and should be adapted to the situation on the ground and correspond to the assessment of the stage in conflict evolution. In this particular case, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are rather characterised by the emergence of conditions of structural instability, i.e. a situation where a multitude of tensions and local conflicts takes place

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1 Methodology was developed by Anna Matveeva together with national staff of Preventive Development Programme (UNDP Kyrgyzstan) and Communities' Programme (UNDP Tajikistan), 2004.

(none of them individually of particularly high risk of major violence), but together they create fertile ground for rapid escalation and violent change should conditions suddenly change and political openings appear. Tajikistan before the civil war was a good example, where 'structural instability' has been developing for years and eventually led to a civil war. In these circumstances, it would be counterproductive to seek to apply analytical tools used to describe a violent conflict and concentrate on triggers for open hostilities. Rather, the risk factors are identified with regards to the structural and proximate causes to the extent it is possible to distinguish between the two in real life circumstances. The indicators are also context-sensitive (not 'theory-driven', but rather emerge from the 'bottom-up') and are used to monitor trends and developments that may lead to conflict and the degradation of societies.

Factors and Indicators

The clusters of factors are designed to identify a crisis or conflict at a stage when preventive action and contingency planning are possible. These factors concentrate on the local level, incorporating national and regional developments only as far as they affect the local situation.

The methodology tends to limit factors and indicators to only those directly relevant to the situation and to conflict dynamics, i.e. which are subject to change. This is done to increase the system's operational effectiveness, i.e. to reduce the time lag between the analysis and its presentation to the decision-makers, and also to make it manageable, i.e. that those staff who process the reports from the field are able to concentrate only on the most important aspects of the local situation. Therefore, the analysis is comprehensive (in that UNDP staff and monitors work through all indicators rigorously), but is also selective in reporting and presenting only those indicators that are most relevant in assessment of the level of risk.

Each indicator is accompanied by guiding questions which seek to capture the trend the monitor is looking

for. The questions seek to ensure that the information is presented in a mutually compatible format to enable to quick comparisons across field reports. The field monitors are instructed to describe only those indicators they consider relevant, and use their common sense and report on issues which they regard as important.

Many indicators are considered not only as risk factors, but also as stability ones, i.e. their negative and positive significance is assessed. For instance, labour migration can be one such factor which plays a dual role. Monitors should use their judgement while choosing which indicators to focus upon. The most important thing is to be clear about why this or that indicator is considered relevant and why a monitor thinks it could lead to conflict.

For EWS to work effectively it is reliant on regular information collection, and timely analysis at all levels of EWS along with cooperation and communication within the Programme and with other relevant UN agencies and stakeholders. All Programme staff should take into account EWS and think creatively about recommendations and follow-up. The emphasis is on elaboration of practical and effective preventive measures.

Format for preventive development programme

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CLUSTER

Resource Competition

Land
• fair land distribution and preferential treatment
• existence of disputed land
• uneven land quality
• deficit of pasture lands
• distances between land for cultivation and places of habitat

Water
• shortage of drinking water
• shortage of irrigation water
• issue of water distribution in the border zone;

- energy Supply - lack of electricity transformers, rationing in electricity supply, lack of gas, rise in prices for fuel and lubricants.

Labour Migration

Can be a stabilizing factor since it creates a safety valve for areas with high unemployment and low earning opportunities. Remittances from abroad support extended families and prevent the emergence of dire poverty. However, this means that the citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are dependent on other states, mostly Russia, and makes them vulnerable to attempts to regulate migration. Migration can also be a negative factor - say why?

Seasonal Employment - irregular employment and long periods of unemployment create large groups of idle young people, especially in rural areas, who can be easily mobilised should a dispute or a conflict unfold.

Disruption of Communications within a country -

- disruption of borders (existence of enclaves)
- lack of roads, means of transport, mail, electricity transmission lines, TV and radio communications;
- impact of isolation on social tensions;
- measures taken by the local authorities to diffuse tensions and improve the situation.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL CLUSTER

Interethnic and Intergroup Relations

- Tensions over language of instruction in schools - for instance, Uzbek children are taught in Kyrgyz language in which they are not proficient, or Kyrgyz are instructed in Uzbek (where Uzbeks constitute a majority) since there is no school in Kyrgyz available.
- Representation in politically relevant appointments - those appointments and positions are meant which carry real political or economic clout in a province. There is little sense in monitoring all appointments and calculating percentages of minority representation: it is only worth taking into account those posts whose distribution is closely watched by the different communities.
- Representation in law-enforcement agencies and in the 'power block' - are minorities represented in these structures in a meaningful way (police, judges,

prosecutors, local staff of the Ministry of State Security)? Does underrepresentation create dissatisfaction on the part of minorities?
- Group solidarity and mobilisation based on manipulation of identity (belonging to an ethnic or clan group). How possible is it that mobilisation along ethnic or group lines can occur if some representatives of a group feel under threat? Are there any examples of such possibility?
- Forms of social control and group propaganda on behalf of influential people in the community, for instance, the elders.
- Tendency towards group segregation - existence of areas closed to outsiders, where only people belonging to a certain group can settle, bars/cafes where only representatives of one group are welcome; existence of interethnic marriages; segregation of clergy based on ethnicity.

Religious Factor

Existence and Activity of Radical Religious Groupings
- Do radical groups exist in the area?
- Do they engage in propaganda, distribution of leaflets?
- Are there arrests?
- How does the population react?
- Is there potential for the growth of such groups?

Tension around Non-traditional (New) Religious Groups/Cults, such as Protestant Sects

Existence of Rural Settlements known for Heightened Religious Zeal and closedness from the neighbouring villages. Such closed communities are often viewed by their surrounding neighbours with suspicion and create negative expectations.

Rumours and Gossip

Negative perceptions/stereotypes of representatives of the authority, people belonging to another ethnic group or intentions of the neighbouring states can play an important role in generating conflict. Irrespective of validity of such stereotypes (often such stereotypes are based on false premises), they can be persistent and become guides to action when social tensions emerge.

In such situations they can provoke or feed into conflict. Such perceptions are often aggravated by the lack of adequate information or by low trust in the authorities who provide information.

- To what extent rumours (oral transmission of information between neighbours, relatives, friends) are a substitute for genuine information which comes from official sources or media? Can such rumours create distorted perceptions of reality and provoke conflict?
- Level of trust in authority - would people rather believe rumours or official information?
- Influence of diasporas/ethnic kin across the border in spreading stereotypes and mis-information.

Exclusion from National Social-Cultural Milieu

Minorities. As a result of the establishment of the borders of the new states and disruption of the communication infrastructure which followed, some territories of Kyrgyzstan became more detached from the social and cultural space of the country of which they are citizens, and are becoming incorporated into the social and cultural space of their kin states. This can lead to separation from the majority linguistic environment (for instance, Uzbeks who live in Uzbek-only areas have little interaction with the Kyrgyz state language), lack of feeling of belonging to the state, acquisition of dual citizenship by illegal means etc.

- Existence of enclaves;
- Language barriers and social barriers they create;
- Existence of areas which are *de facto* incorporated into social-cultural milieu of the neighbouring states (people watch TV only of the neighbouring state, do not follow news/information of their own state, do not feel that the national authorities can ensure their rights etc.)

BORDER ISSUES CLUSTER

Border Delimitation and Demarcation

- Describe the work of Intergovernmental Commission on Border Delimitation (which is established to reach an agreement on the border);
- how the process is going, what are the outstanding issues;

- how the Commission interacts with local authorities and the population of the border areas,
- number of territories where delimitation has already been accomplished,
- existence of disputed territories
- impact of demarcation/delimitation process on the local population and local context as a whole;
- popular expectations of the process of border delimitation.

Settlement of citizens of the neighbouring states

(Uzbeks and Tajiks) on the territory of Kyrgyzstan (so-called 'creeping migration, please indicate reasons for this and consequences)

Disruption in Cross-Border Trade

- what impact the actions of the authorities, customs and borderguards have on the cross-border trade
- do problems in cross-border trade create social tensions and conflict situations?
- Which of the border communities benefit from the current chaotic situation and which are losing out?
- What are the informal rules in cross-border trade?
- What are the external factors facilitating or disrupting cross-border trade?

Mining of Borders by Uzbekistan

- Are there cases of people being injured by mines?
- How do local population react to such cases?

Actions of Borderguards and Customs Officers at the Border

- Instances of harassment or brutal violation of citizens' rights
- Inability to protect one's own citizens from brutality of borderguards from the neighbouring states.

Relations with the Neighbouring States

- Actions of foreign (Uzbek) law-enforcement agencies on the territory of Kyrgyzstan
- Deterioration in interstate relations
- Presence of opposition or human rights groups in Kyrgyzstan from the neighbouring states which cannot operate legally in their own countries because of political harassment.

POLITICS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
CLUSTER

Policies and Actions of the Authorities
Local Authorities
- Elections (positive and negative effects, clan struggle during election periods)
- Conflict between levels of power, i.e. relations between heads of municipalities and districts.

Reaction to Central Government's Initiatives
- Adoption of laws, political initiatives coming from the centre, establishment of new ministries, departments and structures;
- Reaction of the central government to local tensions - do they ignore the situation or do they use excessively forceful methods?
- Personnel appointments and changes within elite

Influence of Non-State Actors
- Local businessmen
- NGOs
- Donor community

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL DISASTERS
CLUSTER

Impact of human activity which disrupts environmental balance
- Cutting of forests for timber to heat houses
- Creation of deserts as a result of irrigation projects going wrong
- Water and air pollution
- Nuclear and hazardous waste disposal

Natural Disasters
- Areas most prone to natural disasters (earthquakes, mud-slides, floods, snow storms etc.),
- consequences of natural disasters
- reaction of local authorities and population when/if disasters happen.

Methods of Information Collection

Field monitors and PDP specialists conduct interviews with representatives of the local authorities, law-enforcement agencies and alternative elites (businessmen, religious leaders, international organisations/NGOs working in the filed, informal leaders). They also talk to groups of local population, such as professional groups, parents, *aksakals*, regulars at tea houses, women's organisations) and make field observations, for instance, at border crossings. Where possible, they collect statistical information where available, or reliable estimates made either by the local authorities or by humanitarian organisations who distribute aid. They also obtain information from local press. The analysts in the centre supplement local information from the field with matters of national policies, governments' decisions and important initiatives stemming from the capital.

Reports' Format
The report is comprised of the following sections:
1. Executive summary
2. Introduction (goal, objectives, contents (issues discussed), recipients, outline of methodology and risk factors)
3. Situation Background (long-term factors, subject to little or no change over 3 - 5 years)
- Demography (ethnic breakdown, population statistics and density of population)
- History of conflicts (outline of past events, distinct features)
- Social and economic background and needs
- State Institutions (structures and responsibilities)
- Presence of donors (use the donor map)

4. Analysis of Dynamics factors (Indicators, which can show dynamics on 3 - 6 monthly basis)
- Social/economic factors
- Social/cultural factors
- Border issues
- Politics and conflict resolution
- Environment and natural disasters.

5. Conclusions

How does the dynamic compare to the earlier period?
What are the most important risk factors at the moment?
Which way the situation is developing - towards
stability or destabilisation? What can be expected?

6. Recommendations

Recommendations should be implementable. While
elaborating recommendations, one should bear in mind
the objectives of EWS. It is important to assess whether
those individuals and institutions whom
recommendations target, have political will to
implement them or it whether it has yet to be created,
and whether the recipients have adequate resources to
follow-up. If resources are lacking, can the programme
help to attract them?

7. Appendixes
• Map of Donors
• Conflict Map
• Available statistics

CROSS-BORDER PROJECT

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC ISSUES

Water
• Are there shortages of drinking or irrigation water?
• What are the ways of water use: for irrigation in
  disputed territories, improvement of quality of life,
  building of a water mill? Is a water source in dispute?
  If yes, during which period?
• Which party feels aggrieved and why?
• Have water disputes ever led to open conflict: fight,
  brawls, rough verbal exchanges and accusations?
• Why parties cannot arrive at consensus? What are the
  obstacles? What do local people suggest needs to be
  done? How do the local authorities try to solve the
  problem?
• Do people realise that they need to achieve a
  compromise? If not, how can this be influenced? Who
  can produce such influence (mosques, village elders,
  administrations, water management committees)?
• What are the possible effects of water conflicts:

violence, increased isolation, hostility,
resentment?
• Do water management committees from both sides
  work together? Do they take part in solving problems
  of water distribution, working out of a water use
  schedule? Is their role positive?

Use of Land and Pastures
• Is there a shortage of pasture lands? Are there
  pastures on the territory of the neighbouring state?
• Do people from the opposite side use these pastures?
• Are there cases of disappearance or theft of livestock
  from these pastures? If yes, who has been blamed?
  (Borderguards, police, customs officers, local people,
  neighbours)
• How is the problem of theft of livestock being
  solved?
• Have there been cases of shepherds beaten up or
  detained?
• Are administrative fines levied, punishments and
  attempts to extract bribes?
• Is it possible to allow the other side to use pastures
  for a fee? What is the amount of the fee?
• Are there any agreements regarding pasture rights
  between forestry commissions or local administrations?

Wood Cutting
• Have there been any conflicts on these grounds
  (arrests, detentions, confiscations of animals)?
• If yes, how were such conflicts solved?

Labour Migration
• Is there a phenomenon of 'creeping migration', i.e.
  settlement of people from Tajikistan on the territory
  of Kyrgyzstan?
• Is it regulated or are there tensions because of the
  lack of regulation and inaction by the authorities?
• Does 'creeping migration' lead to fights? Do the local
  authorities interfere?
• Is there a tendency to push people out from the area
  who are distinct from others (belonging to ethnic
  minorities, recent migrants from other regions of the
  country)?
• Is labour migration a factor for stability or
  destabilisation?

- What is an approximate proportion of long-term out-migrants to the remaining population?
- What migrants do when they stay at home in-between going back to Russia? Can groups of idle young men be used as explosive material to ignite conflicts?
- What kind of legacy do returning migrants bring? Do they become more religious or more secular? Can they adapt back to the community?

BORDER DELIMITATION

- What do people expect from border delimitation?
- If their expectations are not fulfilled, what are people likely to do?
- Are there any disputed territories? Are they important in economic or social respect? Have there been any conflicts over them in the past?
- Are there any new constructions on the disputed territories?
- Has the disputed land been cultivated recently? Does this generate conflict?
- Does the establishment of the border prevent access to socially important places, i.e. cemeteries, hospitals? Is their use in dispute, if they are located across the border?
- Are local people prepared to cooperate with working groups from the Border Delimitation Commission? Are they likely to cause obstacles for the Commission if delimitation does not proceed in their favour and the lands they consider 'theirs' were to be allocated to the other side?
- Has the Commission ever worked in the given area? If yes, please describe its interaction with the local population and local administrations.

ACTORS AND INSTITUTTIONS

Local and Central Authorities

- Which measures or laws that are issued by the central authorities are relevant for local life and can they cause tensions?
- Which decisions were taken by the local administrations in a given period of time and what was the response from the population (decisions on land distribution, allocation of humanitarian aid, seeds, water etc.)?
- Do people trust what the authorities say, or would

they rather trust rumours and informal information they get from relatives, neighbours?
- Most important local events: elections, personnel appointments;
- How moments of change in authority impact upon on the community - for instance, when a new governor takes power? Does this cause tension?
- What is the impact of preparation for the national elections on the local level? Can electoral struggles produce destabilising effect?
- Are local communities prepared to cooperate with the local authorities?
- How do local authorities communicate with the population? Is there any tension because of lack of information or lack of trust in officially distributed information?

Law-Enforcement Agencies (Police, Prosecutor's office, customs and borderguards)

- Are there any cases of illegitimate detention?
- Extraction of bribes?
- Merger with Organised Crime?
- What are the actions of the law-enforcement agencies, are they met with popular support?
- Is there resentment, how do people react to harassment and what they are likely to do - are there protests, fights or attacks?

Local Elites

- Are there alternative elites (businessmen, religious figures)/ networks of patronage, or are all the elite functions concentrated around the local authority? If there are different elites, which sources of income do they control?
- Is there competition for power and resources among them?
- What is the position of ordinary people? Who supports whom?

Crime

- Are there frequent cases of theft of livestock from across the border?
- Theft of harvest?
- What is the reaction of population and law-enforcement agencies?
- Does organised crime produce effects on local life?

SOCIAL & CULTURAL FACTORS

Culture of Interethnic Relations

- Situation of minorities
- Deficit of culture of interethnic relations, for example, spread of stereotypes;
- Draft into the army (are minority representatives willing to serve in the national armed forces?)
- Access to education in native language.

Religion

- Categories of believers;
- Do Friday prayers or sermons help to diffuse tensions or work to instigate them?

- Level of religious tolerance;
- Tensions between religious and secular ways of life, between tradition and modernity
- Religion and mis-information, rumours and speculations
- Resentment of non-traditional (new) confessions
- Are there any graduates from Islamic academies from Muslim countries?
- What is the role of leaders or groups? For instance, what do people think of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir?*
- What do people think of Islamists, do they enjoy support or resentment? What do the authorities do to counterbalance their influence? Is this effective?

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Projects and Internet Resources

ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int) - managed by the UN OCHA, is the most comprehensive online service of information serving the humanitarian community. External organisations can submit their information and analysis to ReliefWeb

Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN, www.irinnews.org) - Managed by the UN OCHA, is a humanitarian news service covering over 60 countries in Africa and Asia. Middle Eat service is available in English and Arabic.

WriteNet is a network of researchers and writers on human rights, forced migration, ethnic and political conflict and a subsidiary of Practical Management (UK). Country Research Papers are publicly available on the www.unhcr.org, but not the early warning ('situation') reports.

Early Warning Unit, www. ochaonline.un.org, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

United Nations System Staff College, www.unssc.org

Foundation for Co-Existence, Sri Lanka, www.fcoex

Foundation for Tolerance International, www.fti.org.kg

West Africa Network of Peacebuilders (WANEP), www.wanep.org

FAST International Early Warning Programme, www.swisspeace.org/fast
Patrick Meier, PhD Candidate and Consultant, fletcher.tufts.edu/phd/students/Meier.html

Institute for Security Studies, South Africa, http://www.issafrica.org

'Early Warning Indicators for Preventive Policy' project at SIPRI was launched in 2002. The project combines a monthly expert survey, selected statistical data sets and Internet technology. The results will be made available on the Internet in the form of country-specific and regional reports. The pilot project focus on West Africa. It is funded by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and will involve regional partners and organisations. www.sipri.org

EAWARN (www.eawarn.ru) was created in 1993 in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IEA RAS) and the Harvard Conflict Management Group. The monitoring network, the first of its kind, brought together over forty experts from various parts of Russia and a number of post-Soviet states, proving itself to be a responsible and effective service. In the course of

its operation, EAWARN members elaborated methods of analysis and became experienced in conducting member consultations on the issues of early crisis recognition in the realm of ethnic relations. Over the

years of activities, EAWARN became recognised in the CIS and the Baltic states, as well as by many external specialists as an independent and effective monitor on the issues of ethnic relations and conflicts in the former