

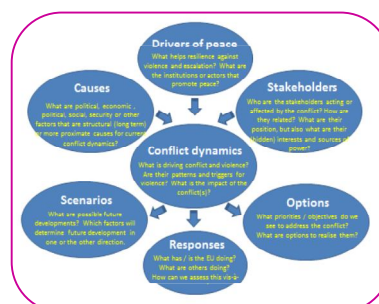


EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION: ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

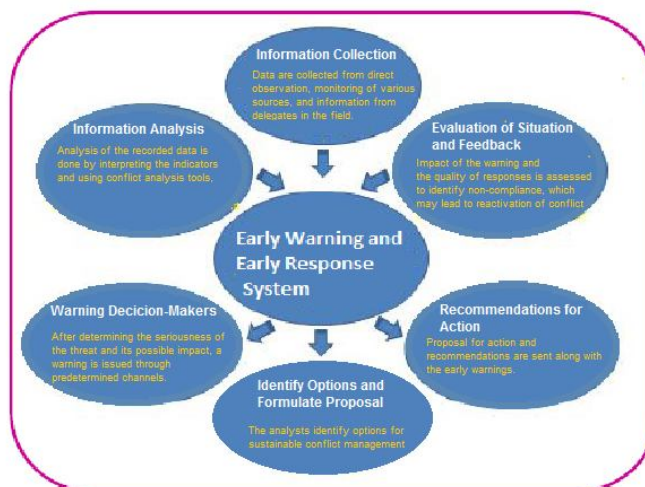
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ABSTRACT

Conflicts are dynamic, therefore prevention is a challenge. The unfortunate consequences of conflicts cannot be undone, so it is imperative to prevent conflict from happening or escalating. The aim of this paper is to present a study of the Early Warning System (EWS) for socio-political conflict in international organizations (IOs). EWS is an institutional setup where the early warning is included as part of preventive diplomacy. Such an early warning shall be operational in case of conflict within or between states. EWS is considered effective where it is able to issue warning well ahead of time, so that there is enough scope for timely response. The EWS works by inducing the policy makers to prioritize and suitably time difficult decisions. The purpose of the EWS for socio-political conflict is to issue an assessment of the situation, regarding upcoming events. Several IOs are engaged in developing EWS and using it to determine or modify the course of action in the situation of a crisis.



KEY WORD: conflict, early warning, international organisation, United Nations.



Source: UNDP & OAS 2015

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Early Warning System (EWS) has historically been used in two types of intelligence based models. One is a security based intelligence model which seeks to deter planned or sudden imminent

hostility by human actors. The other model seeks to better equip people by anticipating natural disasters and humanitarian crisis such as earthquake, storm, flood, drought and famine (Adleman 1997). There are other models of EWS also which seek to correlate natural disasters and socio-political crises to help combat the disasters (O'Brien 2002).

A statement by Ban Ki-moon (then Secretary-General of UN) reflects the desire within the United Nations (UN) to develop and utilize an EWS:

Prevention means acting early...Together with a commitment to accountability, we owe this to the millions of victims of the horrific international crimes of the past — and those whose lives we may be able to save in the future. (UN 2014)

This desire finds support in the Responsibility to Protect (R-to-P) principle of the UN. However, any such attempt is bound to be faced by challenges like issue of sovereignty of states, funding, staffing and resource shortage, proliferation of the concept of 'failed state', and even mass hysteria.

The issue of EWS for natural disasters continues to face difficulties from limitations of science, technology and policy implementation while there continue to be skeptical views on the viability, legality, and effectiveness of conflict prevention and the use of EWS for peace and security. Yet the relevance of both cannot be dismissed. The main difference that can be drawn between EWS for natural-disaster and conflict related early warning is that while EWS for natural-calamities issues warning by anticipating physical dangers in the form of disastrous natural phenomena, the EWS for conflicts works under many constraints and conditionality of numerous variables because of the undefined character of human behaviour. Yet, methods and indicators are being developed to evaluate both natural elements and human activities with more accuracy that can alert policy makers about possible outbreak of conflict, the potential of escalation, and recurrence of violence. This also involves understanding and disseminating information about the nature and impact of violent conflicts (Babaud and Mirimanova 2011) that acts as a purposeful warning which can induce policymakers to overcome initial policy paralysis and act towards prevention; the warning should not simply imply that a bad situation is getting worse (George and Holl 1997). In this light B.G. Ramcharan (1991) has elaborated on the guiding principles and propositions that must underline any EWS. The EWS must be a confidence building instrument and not create suspicion, in addition to being transparent, ethical, accountable, flexible, and non-automatic and consistent with legal principles (Ramcharan 1991). These principles guide EWS for both natural and conflict related disasters.

Concept of EWS for Socio-political Conflicts and Crises

Jonathan Whittall (2010) and A. Matveeva (2009) define EWS as 'any initiative that focuses on systematic data collection, analysis and/or formulation of recommendations, including risk assessment and information sharing'. Whittall had further debated whether EWS for humanitarian crisis is a reality or a myth since states are driven by self interest and constrained by sovereignty. Further technical humanitarian early warning models are idealistic due to lack of political contexts. The gap between early warning and early response, critical for the effectiveness of EWS, is due to ignorance to *realpolitik*.

Susanne Schmeidl and J. Craig Jenkins (1998) have given a conceptual understanding of the UN EWS for humanitarian crises. These authors argue that there is a methodological problem in creating EWS for conflict and humanitarian disaster. However authors like I. William Zartman (2001) highlight that the correct timing of intervention is also important for preventive diplomacy to be effective. He mentions that if the ripe moment for intervention is missed by diplomats, or intervention happens too early, then it will not be effective. Sezai Ozcelik (2006) has also written about the theory and practicality of preventive diplomacy as a new tool or a new expression of old ideas.

After the end of cold war early warning for conflict prevention emerged as an international issue. Its acceptance as a policy agenda in international platform was further prompted by the failure of international bodies in preventing the conflict in Rwanda and Balkans during the 1990s. Conflict early warning from this point onward was viewed to be different from intelligence based analysis devised for protecting interest of

state. The goal of early warning, from its onset was finding solutions with local participation, gender sensitive approach and involvement of stakeholders for creating lasting peace.

Conflict early warning may contribute to evidence base in decision making for conflict prevention. Early warning and response system has evolved overtime due to progress in the analytical techniques and tools for collecting and processing information. However, some problems such as biased and impractical proposals have consistently resulted in non- responsive output. Furthermore, due to involvement of large number actors in international operations poor or ambiguous early warning is generated, while the response is ad hoc, delayed and inconsistent.

Beginning of EWS: Non-Military Use in Complex Emergencies

The FAO was first organisation to utilise a non-defensive EWS against drought and famine (Adelman 1997). After 2005 Tsunami EWS was considered as a very relevant issue by international community. Three International Conferences on Early Warning (EWC I, II, III) are of relevance in the study of international discourse of EWS.

Use of EWS for combating natural disasters and diseases is well known since history. On 3rd November 1868 in San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin, Dr. Cooper published a report about the main concept of early warning of earthquake (Zschau & Küppers 2013: 454). The first use of data for predicting outbreak of infectious diseases was done by Gill (1923) and some other contemporaries in India (WHO Doc 2004). A response mechanism also existed and in 1921-1942 this model was used in 29 districts of Punjab. A worldwide mapping of diseases such as pneumonia, smallpox, leprosy and tuberculosis, malaria, epidemic could be correlated with climatic variables and physical symptoms. It was possible to construct an EWS based on overall associations of climate variables with disease incidence (WHO Doc 2004). The health sector can better utilized EWS for preventing disease at present. In the past several decades much research and development efforts has been put into advancing Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS). This was triggered by the famine that spread extensively across several regions of Africa during 1980s(WHO Doc 2004).

Organisational problems have to a large degree limited the success of FEWS. Also, there are the other factors apart from climate that need to be accounted for in an EWS. Moreover, early warning about an impending crisis doesn't always result in prevention since political, social and economic issues of varying importance are also relevant in determining the interest of organizations and state in preventing a crisis. The political aspect is especially complicated since the governments involved in response action in many events are not directly answerable towards the affected people. Often, the direct impact of donor level organizational problem is that early warning goes to vain as a result of delay in relief.

The major underlying issues or principles for EWS have been explained by many scholars. EWS is essential for ensuring international peace and security, welfare, avoiding anthropogenic and socio-political disasters. EWS is different from early notification, urgent action, good office, crisis control and preventive diplomacy, although it may work in tandem with them (Rupsinghe 1998). The EW should be addressed to a competent authority, which has legitimate concern about the issue. The issues to be covered under purview of EWS are those pertaining to considerable threat to international peace and security, or humanitarian concern of magnitude. International organisations must act as harmonising and coordinating centers for state, organisations and individuals for establishing EWS and achieving the larger aim for which EWS is established. It entails a partnership between institutions.

For a general study of EWS in international organisations we may include several relevant institutions and UN is most significant among them. Several historical events have contributed towards the emergence of various systems within the United Nations, concerned with early warning. These events include (in the form of UN documents) "An Agenda for Peace" (1992), the "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations" (2000) and "Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General" (2001). These documents released over the course of time have reiterated the attempts of UN to establish effective institutions of EWS. Such institutions include Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – Early Warning Unit (New York), OCHA – Humanitarian Situation Room (Colombia), United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) – Country-level early warning systems in Ghana, Kenya, Ukraine (Crimea), Bolivia, Balkans, and Kyrgyzstan and the OCHA ERC (emergency relief coordinator). In 1992 Japan provided start-up fund and it began working on pooling information for prevention and preparedness to bolster humanitarian efforts (Davis & Gurr 1998: 204). These systems use a qualitative type of EWS utilising field based and headquarter based data, and combined system of multilateral and civil society networking.

The objectives of this EWS are to inform humanitarian contingency planning efforts for complex emergencies, to inform country programming of UN agencies and partners. It focuses on violent conflicts, political instability, state fragility, and human security in countries covered. Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) 1975 is a food security information sharing forum that operated under the headquarters of the FAO, in coordination with several UN agencies (Davis & Gurr 1998: 186). GIEWS had issued warning about Great Lakes Region of Central Africa, and higher price of commercial food import which may cause threat to food security in the region.

The FAO has numerous agencies and programmes which seek to anticipate threats to food security such as migration of animals and pests, crop yield monitoring activity, monitoring global trade of food grains. The FAO has put in place Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) which collaborates about possible threats of disease to food crops. The World Food Program (WFP) works with the FAO by coordinating regular meetings and issuing weekly field reports. Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS), by identifying crises with humanitarian indicators, recognises the numerous and complex causes and implications of security related crises. ReliefWeb, 1996, established the close link between information of various sources and agencies. It provides information which is provided to it by advocacy groups, and human rights organisations like Amnesty International and also provides documents on situational information on current humanitarian emergencies and disasters.

K. Rupesinghe has written that the information revolution in the dynamic era can be used to protect victims of conflict instead of merely recording the suffering of the victims (in Alger 1998: 176). A multilateral system of structured response to an early warning on the basis of information gathered and shared is instrumental for EWS.

International Organisations using EWS for Conflict Prevention

Need of Time

International Organisations (IOs) and numerous Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have developed system of EW alerts for gross violation of human rights, relying on indicators of short or long term (i.e. 'structural') conditions conducive to violation of human rights such as instances of physical violence, sporadic massacres, forced disappearances, forcible transfers of population, extreme social and economic polarisation, denial of due process, extent of freedom of expression and right of association. These indicators give attention to the identifying of factors enhancing the likelihood of mass atrocities and genocide. Thus these indicators are designed to facilitate the implementation of specific preventive measures.

Institutionalisation of EWS mechanism must be accompanied by targeted programmes of prevention such as development of military capacity for rapid response, judicial institutions, and promotion of democracy, freedom and pluralistic tolerance. The development of Early Warning System for socio-political conflict prevention in United Nations has been a need of time. The incidents in Yom Kippur war, 1973¹ and Falklands/ Malvinas in 1982² shook the UN for its lack of information in the face of humanitarian crisis, and brought about a debate for the need of an early warning system for prevention of violent incidents, which would include information gathering, information analysis and preventive diplomacy. According to scholars

¹ On the day of Yom Kippur, a holiday of Judaism, coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria fought against Israel from October 6 to 25, 1973 and captured territories. An estimated 200 Israeli soldiers, who had surrendered, were killed by Egyptians while Syria disregarded the Geneva Conventions to tortured and killed many prisoners.

² The Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) are a group of islands in the south Atlantic. Argentina has claimed the islands since 1820, however Britain had rejected Argentina's claims and occupied and administered the islands since 1833. Argentina invaded and took control of the islands in April, 1982. It resulted in massive casualty, and UN lacked even a map of the islands.

and specialists, already there is information available within the UN for the development of an effective EWS, yet there is need to fill the gaps through specific and robust capacity building, to analyse different streams of data and information collected and transmitted from both within and outside the UN. Regional organisations like the OSCE and OAU have also made attempts towards developing EWS regarding conflict prevention, yet a UN based EWS would be very unique multilateral system.

There is popular opinion that the UN is more like a reactive body which takes action only after a violent incident has happened, instead of being pro-active in preventing conflicts and security threats from escalating. With growing demand for the UN to act beforehand towards preventing conflicts and saving lives, there is a change in its traditional mode of operation. The UN is attempting to use EW for anticipating threats to security, and not merely following the events. In addition to the already existing information collection system, it would also require analysis and dissemination of information regarding potential threats. It entails a strengthened two-way communication between the UN Security Council, other UN agencies, member states and regional organisations.

Evolution of EWS

Since the mid-1990s, conflict early warning and response (EWR) has been conceived as a means of preventing violent conflict in order to protect the life of people. Some regional organizations, especially in Africa, are now beginning to use EWR as a peace and security instrument to prevent crises. This comes at a time when the methodologies of EWR have improved.

Several attempts for the establishment and development of EWS have taken place. The evolution of EWS over four generations is as follows (Rupsinghe 2009 and Meier 2009). The EWS of first generation (mid and late 1990s-till today) have been headquarter-based. They draw information from different sources and analyse it using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. Early types of International Crisis Group (ICG), European Commission utilised indicators of conflict in this generation. The second generation EWS (since early 2000) stand in contrast to the headquarter based first generation systems as these were field based systems, engaging a network of monitors in the conflict areas, and employing a number of reports generated by utilising qualitative and quantitative methods. These EWS provide recommendations and bring together decision-makers. Examples include ICG later models, EAWARN, and FAST.

The third generation systems (2003 until today) are more advanced. This generation employs systems which are based in conflict areas and have stronger response links than second generation systems. These are often used to de-escalate situations, and field monitors actively respond to the situation if there are signs of violence, while also engaging a network of local/national responders. Examples include FEWER-Eurasia, WARN, ECOWARN, CEWARN, FCE (Foundation for Co-existence) approach and corporate systems established by multinational entities. The Fourth generation EWS is a relatively new phenomenon. EWS of this generation are based in conflict area, without pre-designated field monitor. It engages more open sources, in contrast to the highly structured reporting and sophisticated software program used earlier. The fourth generation system uses crowd sourcing instead of very structured reporting. It is a highly decentralized and horizontal network system (Letouzé *et al* 2013). It is a people-centred system that focuses on first-responder intervention, and may include building political movement instead of just identifying causes or implementing policy instruments. Examples are Ushahidi (utilised in Kenya in 2007), Third Side approach³, UN-ISDR (*United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction*), EWC-3 (Third International Conference on Early Warning).

An Overview of EWS in International Organisations

A number of inter-governmental organisations (particularly in Africa) have established conflict early warning systems. Broadly speaking, the purpose of these systems is to bolster the different organisations'

³ The '*Third Side*' is the person on the sidelines in a conflict (not party to the conflict) who wants to help in the situation of a war/conflict. Identifying the third side is crucial in de-escalating or ending a conflict. There is a rise in groups of concerned individuals, organised in the form of social groups and civil society who participate to prevent, contain and resolve conflict.

ability to anticipate crises and initiate preventive measures. Among some of the regional organisations (OSCE, AU, IGAD, ECOWAS, ECCAS), the geographical scope is limited to member countries.

There are a number of international, regional and national early warning organisations. The major organisations can be grouped as follows: (a) Intergovernmental EWS under international organisations such as United Nations OCHA – Early Warning Unit; Humanitarian Situation Room (Colombia); UNDP – Country-level early warning systems in Ghana, Kenya, Ukraine (Crimea), Bolivia (PAPEP), Balkans, Kyrgyzstan. (b) Regional EWS under EU: EU Watch List; AU: Continental Early Warning System (CEWS); CEEAC: Mechanisme d’Alerte Rapide pour l’Afrique Centrale (MARAC); ECOWAS: ECOWAS Early Warning and Early Response Network (ECOWARN); IGAD: Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN); OSCE: Centre for Conflict Prevention. (c) National EWS

United Nations- EWS

The UN based EWS includes Office for Research and Collection of Information (ORCI), Office for coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) which is specially constituted for EWS, and other agencies which can also assist in early warning. ORCI, mandated with data/information collection and analysis for the purpose of assessing threats of conflict, was decommissioned and closed in 1992 by Butros Ghali.

In the DPKO, there was practice of keeping Intelligence Officers, since 1994 (discontinued later). The Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the Information Centre, was an agency with information gathering and analysis capacity. The information officers helped to evaluate the motivations and assess threats. The HEWS, under UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (before it was replaced in 1999 by the OCHA) utilised textual and statistical information and indicators (including ecological factors, human rights, social, economic and political indicators) to monitor situations in over 100 countries and point towards emerging humanitarian crisis such as violence and conflict.

The instruments and agencies of UN involved in conflict prevention serve for early warning in ethno-political conflicts. Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect work together to for the protection of populations from ethnic cleansing or genocide and other crimes against humanity in war and peace. These offices act as an early warning mechanism by alerting the United Nations Secretary General and, through him, the Security Council to situations where there is a risk of genocide and by presenting recommendations (UN 2014). This advisor advocates and mobilizes the United Nations system, Member States, regional arrangements and civil society for suitable preventive action. Special Advisers are supported by a joint office, the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (the Office). The Office collects information and conducts assessments of situations worldwide where there is possibility of occurrence or provocation of atrocity crimes.

There are also other United Nations departments and institutions with mandates that are engaged in prevention of atrocity crimes. These include the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), through its work on conflict prevention and peaceful resolution; the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), through its work on the protection of civilians; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which takes the lead on the promotion and protection of human rights; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its work to promote the rule of law as a tool for prevention; Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes which works to support democratic governance and crisis prevention initiatives; and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In 2003 the ‘indicator-template’ was adopted by the OCHA’s Early Warning Unit, and it is mandated to identify, monitor and analyze trends and developments in states that may cause humanitarian crisis or state failure. The OCHA’s Early Warning Unit monitors the situation in those countries only where the office lacks presence in field. The approach that the OCHA’s Early Warning Units take at present to report identifies the main humanitarian issues in three aspects. It gives a description of the situation, what is being done and further recommendations to the OCHA for action.

In 2005 the HEWS was reinstated as the HEWSweb, to issue humanitarian warnings about natural hazards and socio-political developments that may deteriorate into violent crises. The HEWSweb attempts to make accessible information from many specialized institutions. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Working Group (IASC-WG) on Preparedness and Contingency Planning is composed of eight UN operational organisations and nine Standing Invitee Organisations. It is chaired by the WFP and the UNICEF on a joint basis. The IASC-WG has developed a colour coded reporting of risk levels, which assigns priority to countries which it monitors.

UN and Conflict Prevention: UN activity in Humanitarian Crisis

There were four paradigms of preventive action which were employed in Macedonia, of which coercive diplomacy would be the most suitable (Nicolaidis 1996). Authors have written about the paradigm shift in the UN action towards conflict management (Grizold *et al* 2012). There is a shift from crisis management to conflict prevention. In the case of Macedonia (1993-95), where UN initiated a preventive mode of action as contrasted from the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina a shift from reaction to prevention is evident. Timing of UN intervention in each case is also quite crucial, as William Zartman (2001) mentions that the situation in Azerbaijan was not 'ripe' for intervention or mediation.

On the contrary, Sezai Ozcelik (2006) has written about the theoretical and practical aspects of preventive diplomacy and presents instance of Macedonia. He highlights that the use of EWs is not a new change; rather it is an expression of old ideas within the UN. He mentions that the name of UN Peacekeeping Force was deployed to Macedonia under a new name UN Preventive Deployment Force (UN PREDEP).

Touko Piiparinen (2007) has written that in Darfur case the UN EWS was utilised as innovative preventive measure for humanitarian intervention. He calls this as an optimistic precedent, where techniques such as division of labour between regional and international organisation and pragmatism in peacekeeping were implemented. He highlighted that such innovation are adversely affected by bureaucratic rigidity and 'body-bag syndrome'. He highlights that in the Darfur case an important dimension was the backlash of the UN R-to-P initiative.

Role of International Organisations in select cases:

There are several cases where one or more international organisations have been involved in setting up Early Warning and Response system. Nderitu (2013) while writing about the case of Uwiano activity in Kenya has given insight on the key strategies adopted in the after election violence of 2008 in Kenya. A peacebuilding platform bringing together the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, the United Nations Development Programme, the National Steering Committee on Conflict Management, the police, and PEACE-NET, a civil society network of more than 500 NGOs, created an early warning and early response mechanism (Nderitu 2013). Key features of the Uwiano strategy in this event was the deployment of peace monitors across country, and also operating a platform for reporting incidents or tension through free text messages. The responses generated were (a) radio messages directed at specific issues or locations; or (b) mediation; or (c) security measures (Nderitu 2013).

The role of EU during its role in conflict early warning in Kenya during 2007-08 election violence has been criticized by scholars (Babaud and Ndung'u 2012). Nyheim has written about the role of IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN/CEWERU) in Kenya/Uganda, 2007. In 2007, Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD)'s CEWARN/CEWERU was able to prevent an attack by Pokot warriors from Kenya on the Bukwo Barracks where the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) were holding their cattle (Nyheim, 2009). This mechanism covers the Karamoja Cluster (Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda) and Somali Cluster (Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia).

The role of UNDP and the European Commission in Kyrgyzstan for preventing election violence is also scrutinised. During the parliamentary elections in October 2010, UNDP and the European Commission worked together to mitigate tensions that could lead to inter-ethnic violence (UNDP 2010). UNDP and the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia coordinated to establish Six Oblast Advisory

committees and early warning telephone hotlines to get information and coordinate response about violent incidents (UNDP 2010).

The role of UNDP in Nepal in recent times is analysed in policy papers and literature. Under the Conflict Prevention Programme (CPP) Nepal, UN is supporting the Nepal Government to develop a conflict Early Warning/ Early Response (EWER) system to address the emergence of localized tensions in timely and constructive manner. As per the agreement of the Nepal Peace and Development Strategy (PDS) 2010-15 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2013-17, the CPP was developed as a two-pronged complementary approach to the prevention, mitigation, and management of conflicts (UNDP 2010a). The approach includes two pillars, namely, Promoting Collaborative Leadership and Dialogue (CLD), and Mainstreaming Conflict Sensitivity (CS). In late 2013, a third pillar, Early Warning Early Response (EWER), was added to the programme. The EWER pillar complements the CLD work by supporting the Government to develop a nation-wide conflict Early Warning/Early Response system that detects, analyzes and addresses local conflicts. This effort works with Local Peace Committees and other local networks to engage with early stage local tensions, and use participatory tools to prevent confrontation and violence (there is separate UNDP programme for environment related risk management/ Climate-induced Disasters and EWS in Nepal which is operating separately from the EWER under this CPP initiative) (UN, Sep.2006).

Challenges for EWS for Conflict Prevention

Miskel & Norton (1998) opine that dependence of EWS on political will of super powers is a problematic fact. They argue that any early-warning system would have practical utility only to the extent that international organizations or major powers are willing to take action on receiving the early-warning information the system produces. Even if a system were devised to provide convincingly and reliably accurate information about impending humanitarian crises, early-warning will be ineffective if the major powers or international organizations like the UN fail to take preventive measures.

On the other hand Alexander George and Jane Holl (1997) have written about ‘policy paralysis’ due to improper warning. While arguing that leaders need the kind of warning that will induce them to act preventively George and Holl highlight that EW must not simply be a warning that a bad situation is getting worse. Further the authors highlight the need for institutions and policy maker to be proactive. Leaders tend to put off hard decisions as long as they can, and this has often resulted in delay or paralysis in dealing with developing crises. Early warning will not ensure successful preventive action unless there is a fundamental change of attitude by governments and international organizations. Third parties should not simply wait for unambiguous disasters and mass slaughter before they take preventive action (George and Holl 1997).

The problem of delayed warning itself is discussed by many authors. Handy & Souaré (2013) raise the questions with giving examples of ‘Arab Spring’ and northern Mali in late 2011 that why some events and conflicts were not ‘predicted’ and why no action was taken to prevent such events. They highlight about two important issues, the utility of early warning systems in themselves; and their usefulness in relation to the resulting action to be taken by decision-makers based on the early warning reports.

Contrary to this, Vetschera (2005) argues that EW signals are not ‘delayed’ but always present in varying strength. He has suggested that every future societal crisis will generate *signals* at an early stage; a close observer always has some knowledge of the developments of a crisis. Pursiainen (2007) also supports the opinion that signals are able to transform mere factual information into an early warning signal of a forthcoming crisis.

Schmeidl & Jenkins (1998) state that the problem of late warning is inherent in the logical contrast between SSMs (traditional Social Science Models) and EWMs (Early Warning Models). Scholars have greater time to construct their analyses and typically arrive at their conclusions many years after the events of interest have occurred. Policy analysts have a matter of days or weeks to conduct analyses, if necessary by crude techniques. Consequently, SSMs on all occasions are dated and yield *late warning*.

Although a widespread aspiration is that early warning information should be publicly available, in reality this may not be always possible or desirable (Matveeva 2006). Sharing information enhances awareness and political will towards action however as broader the circle of sharing becomes, the more diluted the message becomes. Thus response generation becomes weak.

CONCLUSION

The goal of early warning is not to predict conflicts, but rather to prevent them or to facilitate their prevention by others. However, the results have not been satisfactory in this regard. Early warning actors should either become better at prediction or redefine the rules of the game and put more emphasis on early action (Matveeva 2006). For the early warning signals to be identified in a timely fashion, politics plays a crucial role in determining whether or not the link between risk assessment and preventive action (warning and response), functions efficiently (Buchanan-Smith 2000). The decision-making for positive utilisation of early warning information is more determinately influenced by the *political will* to respond.

At times for political reasons, the government of a country where the catastrophe is taking place wants to downplay the scale of the crisis, and sometimes it wants to exaggerate it (Pursiainen 2007). On the other hand, the political relationship between donor governments and the recipient government is usually the key determinant of an international response. The role of the media, as a pressure tool from civil society, is often crucial here.

The development and working of EWS in IOs is an ongoing dynamic process as methodologies and instruments are evolving. This development draws optimism and skepticism from various groups of scholars and policy practitioners. With era of heightened information sharing and generation of newer data, it is only logical that humanitarian instruments like EWS would be better equipped to predict and prevent conflicts. EWS forms a part of the greater conflict prevention strategy, it assists in averting conflict outbreak and escalation. The future development of EWS depends on its capacity to bridge the warning-response gap by reducing dependence on hierarchical decision making and incorporating horizontal community based techniques.

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