TRAINING LECTURE 1 (English)

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (EWS) AS CONFLICT PREVENTION FRAMEWORK
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1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of early warning in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy is becoming widely accepted. However, this has not been translated into workable practice in Nigeria. Everyone needs to know that there is nothing automatic about peace and stability. Therefore, structures of security must be created to address and manage disputes before they turn into damaging conflicts. Both early warning and conflict prevention are pro-active strategies that suggest something in advance and prior to events (Blenesi, 2011). In this article the purposes and scope of early warning system (EWS) are explained. It also discusses some basic elements in setting up EWS. Furthermore, the reports got from early warning observations were highlighted. The article also explains the details of capacity requirement for early warning objectives and the benchmarks for preventive and thorough EWS.

2. DEFINITION OF BASIC TERMS

The following basic words are defined for better understanding of the subject matter.

Conflict:
Conflict is endemic to man. It is defined as a disagreement or clash between ideas, principles or people. Hence, anywhere man is found, conflict is bound to be present; like in the workplace, in the family, and in the neighbourhood; and among all people: young or old, poor or rich, male or female. This is because of the diverse backgrounds, status, temperament, and character that mark out people as individuals. Conflicts can arise from almost every imaginable area of interaction. Where conflicts are not well managed relationship collapses in quantity and quality. This refers to the contradictions inherent in power relations and which manifest themselves in individual and group interaction with one another and with nature in the pursuit of limited resources or opportunities. Conflict is the motor of transformation and is either positive or negative. It can be creatively transformed to

ensure equity, progress and harmony. It can also be destructively transformed to engender acute insecurity.

***Human security*:** This is the outcome of negative actions when structural factors are encouraged by promoting conflict accelerators. Conflict becomes open violence by triggers that get people agitated and become unruly.

***Structural factors*:** Refer to systemic variables conditioned by interaction and internal power relations, fault-lines. The root causes of violent conflict such as poverty, exclusion, gender and political/economic inequalities are traceable to fault-lines. They have always constituted a time bomb under governance and are primary sources of latent/hidden violence.

***Accelerators*:** These are events and processes that make living situations get worse, such that there will be conflict. These include collapsed educational systems; security challenges; lack of freedom and human rights; corruption in public organizations; religious and ethnic discrimination; and high poverty level.

***Triggers*:** These are sudden events that help the accelerators to spark a crisis which could lead to violent conflict. For example, if there is sudden increase in prices of petrol, kerosene, rice, sugar, salt or any other common commodity, that can lead to riot or coup d'état.

***Cultural aggravators*:** These are factors that often cause problems. They can be physical, social or spiritual differences. They can be differences in ideology, ethnicity, religion, gender etc. They are often expressed through art, music, education, films, and media. Cultural aggravators promote negative mind-set that conditions the mind to emphasize differences and reject tolerance among different people so that there will always be fights and disagreements among them. People use propaganda and discrimination to carry out these evil acts.

3.   INTRODUCTION CONCEPT

❖ **Early warning**:
This is a system put in place to enable authority to get reports on peace and security situations so as to provide help immediately. It also assist policy makers to guess where conflict can happen and quickly prevent it   by looking into the problems and challenges the people are facing. In this   way conflicts do not arise always and they do not get out of hand.

❖ **Preventive diplomacy:**
To have a peaceful environment, there are ways and means to settle disputes among people and reduce tension. This is done through mediation, conciliation, dialogue, negotiation and arbitration.

4.   THE GENESIS OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (EWS)

There are two schools of thought about the origin of EWS. The first one believes that it comes from the military. It was said to develop during the cold war between America and USSR during 1940s to 1980s in the field of national military intelligence to detect enemy attacks. The second one says the EWS evolved as a system of predicting environmental hazard, mainly to detect natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, and earth quakes. In the early 1980s, it was also used for predicting the economic conditions of the stock markets. The effect of these occurrences in terms of human casualties makes it obvious that these events have direct impact on individuals and communities as a whole.

For this reason, EWS started to focus on humanitarian issues and also included famine and refugee migration in the late 1980s. This activity was led by relief organizations that are mostly non-governmental (NGOs), making them the first actors to use EWS as a system of humanitarian assistance. In 1992, EWS as a system of conflict prevention was established in the UN Secretariat after the Secretary-General, *Boutros Boutros-Ghali's* report titled **'An Agenda for Peace'**, highlighted the link between humanitarian action and the peace process.

In his report he mentioned the 'valuable work' of the EWS on environmental threats; the risks of nuclear accidents; natural disasters; mass movement of the populations; the threat of famine; and the spread of disease. He stressed that there is a need to see how information from EWS can be used with political indicators to assess whether a threat to peace exists and to analyse what action to take to improve it. Subsequently, the type of conflict in Africa, the high number of people dying from hunger and poverty; and the seriousness of human rights abuses led to the focus on conflict prevention through the EWS.

5.   BASIC ELEMENTS IN SETTING UP EWS

Some basic elements and requirement in setting up an early warning system include the following:

(A) *INFORMATION ELEMENT*

i.   **Identification of the reliable early warners**

Who are committed to fulfil this demanding task? Who must be reliable, well prepared and have necessary background knowledge to be able to identify the problem? They should be able to select relevant information and have an unbiased approach to the problem. They must have a very good knowledge of the community being examined; be familiar with its cultural background; its language; and must enjoy the people's confidence and respect.

ii.   **Identification of the target group:**

It is important in a conflict situation to have a clear picture of who are the victims and who are the aggressors. It is essential to know each of them, as each target group requires specific approach.

Iii.   An estimation of the sources and pre-conditions of the conflict along with its level in due time because all these elements will ultimately   determine the preventive measures.

(B)   _INFORMATION GATHERING_

This entails:
- ❖ The need to assess the crisis situation before it gets out of hand.
- ❖ The need to know what the conflict situation within a mixed community is all about.
- ❖ Using past experiences to seek information on how ethnic crises have been solved, and see if they can be used again in the present situation.

(C)   _ACTION ELEMENT_

This entails identification of the audience and exchange of information on specific crisis situation where the tensions are evident. The capability of monitoring the development of the process is to initiate the most appropriate preventive measures and apply them effectively.

6.   PURPOSES OF EWS

Social conflict which is inevitable and a universal phenomenon is not always negative. It is used as an agent of change and a key to produce necessary and constructive transformation. It is a tool for mobilizing the masses. Those who fight for human rights and security agree that individuals should be protected from violence or fear; and also from other challenges such as hunger, diseases and natural disasters. These kill more people than war, genocide and terrorism put together.
More than 800,000 people a year lost their lives to violence, and about 2.8 million are suffering from poverty, ill-health, illiteracy and other social and economic problems. It is Important to know that without having effective national security communities and individuals are not safe at all. An efficient law enforcing system will help to make the country safe for everyone and everything. Therefore, both human and national securities are important purposes of the EWS.

7.   SCOPE OF EWS

From the beginning, the experts on EWS agree that dangers of violence and loss of lives are pointers for EWS. The system is to provide timely advice on likely places where conflicts and threats to peace and security may come from. This then help to enable the development of appropriate response strategies to prevent or limit their destructive effects.
If EWS is to assist in controlling violent conflict, it must know the root causes of such human problems like poverty, inequality in political representation, and unequal distribution of national wealth and resources.
The monitoring of the state of peace and human security must emphasize the following points:

- ❖ Intra-state conflict
- ❖ Ethnic, political or religious conflicts

- ❖ Political instability
- ❖ Environmental or resource-control conflicts
- ❖ Killing, gross human rights violations
- ❖ Internal displacements, refugee flows, humanitarian crisis.
- ❖ Illicit ammunitions importation
- ❖ Sharp economic downturns
- ❖ Economic performance
- ❖ Crime, corruption and safety problems
- ❖ Natural disaster, accident and environmental degradation

8. REPORTS GENERATED THROUGH EWS

Reports and data generated through EWS may be in any or combination of the under listed formats:

(a) Daily highlight of events or indicators
(b) Incident and security situation reports
(c) Weekly situation report
(d) Quarterly security situation
(e) Yearly security situation
(f) Early warning report
(g) Policy briefs

9. CAPACITY REQUIREMENT FOR EWS OBJECTIVES

To facilitate the achievement of the EWS objectives, the following capacity requirement are needed:

I. Recruitment or engagement of full complement of staff including researchers, analysts, advisers in the offices relating to political affairs, peace and security;

II. Provision of information gathering, processing and communication equipment in relevant department, ministries or parastatals;

III. Training of management staff in relevant departments in information gathering, data management, and mediation techniques;

IV. Training of local peace constituencies in conflict analysis and management and provision of resources and equipment for grassroots peace initiatives.

10. YARDSTICKS FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

When data and information are gathered, analysed and disseminated to policy actors, progress and success in preventive diplomacy can be accessed through these yardsticks:

- Measureable reduction in the incidence of violent conflicts at federal, state and local levels.
- Availability of functioning mediation, facilitation capabilities within state institutions.
- The setting up and regular updating of resources in the state or local level on mediation and arbitration.
- Capacity building workshops for agencies in mediation, facilitation and provision of resources and know-how for the establishment of a database of mediation resources.

11. THE BENCHMARK FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS IN PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL GOVERANCE

a) Adoption and enforcement of national constitution and protocol on democracy and good governance.
b) Grassroots awareness of international standards of democracy and good governance and promotion of democratic gains.
c) Public confidence in governance at all levels.
d) Adoption and enforcement of anti-corruption policies and enhanced transparency and accountability in the public sector.
e) Adoption and enforcement of policies and mechanism to enhance participation at all levels of governance process.
f) Availability and application of affirmative policies on minorities, women, youth and the marginalized.
g) Variant political party activities during non-electoral periods.
h) The existence of a reliable and credible voters' register
i) Reduced incidence of electoral fraud, disputes and violence.

12. CONCLUSION

This article is provided to crease awareness for the need of all to get involve in conflict resolution at all levels. As it has been highlighted, if conflict is well managed at the individual level, it will not get to community level, if it is well managed at the community level, it will not become a national problem. When we notice disagreements and fights that are not settled on time, it is advisable to inform people in authority and elders around to help solve the problem. In every community, everybody is responsible to everybody in maintaining peace. If not, your neighbours' quarrels will not allow you to sleep.