

SUMMARY REPORT

WORKSHOP ON MAPPING APPROACHES TO EARLY WARNING AND PREVENTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

**Johannesburg, South Africa
16 April 2019**



Workshop Participants, 16th April 2019

Context and objectives

The workshop was held on the 16th of April 2019 in Johannesburg, South Africa and brought together a range of participants from civil society organisations, regional economic commissions (COMESA), the African Union’s Continental Early Warning System (AU CEWS), think tanks and academic experts, OHCHR New York Sustaining Peace and Prevention Section, the OHCHR METS from Geneva, the Regional Office for Southern Africa (OHCHR ROSA), UN DDPA and other UN Agency colleagues. The overall objective of the workshop was to bring together stakeholders working on prevention and early warning systems to collectively identify and explore the challenges faced by organisations in framing early warning mechanisms within the southern Africa region. The workshop focused on:

- Exchanging experiences of prevention strategies and techniques used in the region and discussing how integrating human rights can contribute to prevention efforts;
- Presenting and reviewing approaches, tools and practices used for early warning efforts related to event monitoring;
- Risk assessment, data analysis and visualisation; and
- Establishing a knowledge sharing group that can regularly discuss and exchange on issues facing the region in an effort to enhance early warning and early action, with a view to identify lessons and good practises.

The workshop consisted of three panel discussions and one breakout session, followed by a plenary discussion as follow:

- *Panel Discussion 1:* Early warning and prevention concepts, approaches and engagement at the continental and global level;
- *Panel Discussion 2:* Early warning and prevention initiatives, activities and experiences in the region: experiences, good practises and lessons learned;
- *Panel Discussion 3:* Use of data for early warning and prevention – providing a crucial basis for decision-making;
- *Breakout sessions and Plenary Discussion:* Identifying the key elements of effective human rights-based informed early warning and how to move towards effective preventative action.

Summary of workshop sessions

Panel 1	Early warning and prevention concepts, approaches and engagement at the continental and global level
Objective	Participants deepen their understanding of UN and AU approaches to early warning and prevention, and how human rights information can contribute to these efforts
Facilitator	James Turpin, Chief of Section, OHCHR Prevention and Sustaining Peace
Participants	AU CEWS, COMESA, University of Free State, Amnesty International, IPSS Addis Ababa University
<p><u>Summary of Discussions:</u></p> <p>The African Union's (AU) organisational structures regarding peace and security (Continental Early Warning System CEWS, FemWise, PanWise, Peace and Security Council) was presented. The role of women in conflict prevention and mediation were highlighted as a key cornerstone of the work of the CEWS. The CEWS is responsible for data collection, monitoring, scenario development, collaborating with stakeholders, advising the Peace and Security Council, as well as enhancing the capacities of AU member states. Human rights are included in the AU indicators, which consists of five distinct categories. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are included as data sources, and that the AU is considering how to enhance the participation of civil society in its processes. The 'Silencing the Guns'¹ initiative by the AU was mentioned as a clear strategy to deal with the proliferation of arms that could contribute to peace and security on the continent.</p> <p>The importance of predetermined indicators in early warning data collection is important, whilst in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, the focus should be more on structural issues and vulnerabilities such as corruption, the equitable distribution of resources and election processes favouring the incumbent unfairly. However, early action and putting measures in place is a key challenge even though early warning data might be available – changing this narrative would help translate the value of early warning analysis into early decision-making. The point was further emphasised by highlighting the various global and regional structures currently available concerning peace and security, in contrast to the lack in political engagement and will to prevent conflicts. The model of ECOWAS was touted as being the best example of inter-governmental</p>	

¹ <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.716.press.statement.launch.of.african.amnesty.month.4.09.2017.pdf>

cooperation on early warning in the region, which included collaboration with civil society organisations.

Threats to human rights defenders, the global food and environmental crisis, and the challenge of growing inequalities due to neoliberal economic policies, a global leadership crisis, and inequality globally are some of the main drivers of conflict. The AU, SADC and other regional organisations should be peoples’ assemblies, instead of serving the interests of heads of states. The AU and the UN should transform and focus on further enhancing the participation of civil society in decision-making processes.

The reliability of the early warning data used and the conclusions made by regional bodies like SADC and the AU in preventing deteriorating situations on the continent require strengthening. Systematic collective action could be a solution to conflict prevention. The discussion also focused on whether the United Nations was fit for purpose in incentivizing political leadership given the current state of the multilateral system.

Recommendations/ Observations/ Follow-up:

- Structural issues are not being taking into consideration in early warning and developmental processes, which means the root causes of conflicts are not addressed.
- Incentivised political leadership is required amongst international, regional and national bodies.

Panel 2	Early warning and prevention initiatives, activities and experiences in the region: experiences, good practises and lessons learned
Objective	Participants exchange about practical rights-based prevention work in the region and promising approaches, opportunities and/or challenges are identified and discussed
Facilitator	Chido Mutangadura, Institute for Security Studies
Participants	VIVA Zimbabwe, EISA, Bocongo Botswana, GEARS Zambia
<u>Summary of Discussions:</u>	
Structural issues in countries related to economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) drives conflict and human rights violations and abuses. Currently there is a dearth in ESCR indicators that drive conflict. Youth and women are not sufficiently involved, and not early enough, to contribute to the success of early warning. Southern Africa, although deemed to be a peaceful and safe region, is actually not as peaceful and safe as it may appear – <i>“you just need a spark to light potential conflict in many of the member states of the region”</i> ² . Examples were given of countries that are often seen as very stable democracies, where in effect, the shrinking of civic space has been severely felt. Climate change, proliferation of small arms among communities and access to arable land were some of the indicators given, which could lead to conflict within the region. These indicators need to be monitored to provide some form of early warning. The polarisation between the state and civil society must be bridged in effort to provide correct and timely data and actions for effective early warning. This must include communication and involvement of women and youth, who are often excluded from these processes. Young people are tech savvy and have broad networks that can be uniquely tapped into to access and disseminate vital information.	

² Reflection from one of the Participants

The Youth for Peace Initiative³ by the African Union Commission, will initially conduct five regional consultations on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa. This initiative seeks to capacitate young people to engage meaningful in national and regional peace and security matters, in early warning initiatives, on crisis/ conflict management and resolution, as well as crosscutting issues such as gender, humanitarian action, climate change, transnational organised crime, piracy and maritime security and violent extremism.

Organisations such as the UN and the AU need to amplify the voices of civil society, in order to mitigate potential conflicts. Legislation is used at times to stifle the participation of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. Coalitions are important, but they need support, both in terms of technical capacity building, but also financial assistance. Civil society organisations want to contribute to the improvement of their countries and this implies not only criticising what is not working, but also working with governments to address concerns and improve the situation.

Recommendations/ Observations/ Follow-up:

- A greater push to involve the youth and women in peacebuilding and early warning processes.
- The use of technology and the informal networks that young people have as an early warning tool.
- Need to greater attention and focus on shrinking cyber space as well as civic space
- Important role for UN/OHCHR to play in working with RECs and the AU to develop good practices on prevention.

Panel 3	Use of data for early warning and prevention – providing a crucial basis for decision-making
Objective	Participants share experiences and good practices on how data gathering, analysis and visualisation are used for early warning and prevention
Facilitator	Erik Friberg, OHCHR Methodology, Education and Training Section
Participants	Oxfam, City of Johannesburg, The Deep, Civicus, African Centre for Migration and Society (AMCS), OHCHR ROSA ERT

Summary of Discussions:

The need for early warning signs to become early warning actions is possible if those early warning signs are underpinned by reliable verified information. Social media mining is providing an exciting avenue for distilling data, as well as a means to disseminate information in compelling ways.

The City of Johannesburg, in collaboration with OXFAM, have built community resilience within some of the poorest areas of Johannesburg through an innovative project that identifies multi-dimensional vulnerabilities and root causes of chronic emergencies. Risk profiling and the development of early warning indicators were considered essential in developing the guidelines on disaster management. When it comes to early warning indicators, it is essential to assess what the communities in question perceive as the greatest risk, as well as identifying vulnerabilities and root causes of chronic emergencies. The key areas assessed were the socio-economic vulnerabilities of communities, the natural and built environment, the social interaction and life

³ Call for Youth to Peace and Security. (<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/call-for-application-regional-consultations-on-the-roles-and-contributions-of-youth-to-peace-and-security-in-africa>)

of the community, the history and profile of the community and the trends that have an impact on the community.

In terms of improving early warning and preparedness using secondary data, a shift is needed to also prioritise analysis of collected data, rather than collection and reporting only. The Deep⁴ platform helps to structure information from secondary sources, to assist the work of various stakeholders, particularly related to the maintenance of historical data.

The Civicus monitor attempts to track restrictions on civic space around the globe and visualise this information in an easy digestible way. No state in the SADC region was considered to be “open” under the Civicus classification⁵ used within this tool, nor was any southern African state considered to be fully “closed” either. The tool has helped to narrow advocacy efforts with various stakeholders and assisted Civicus in its advocacy work. A “watch list” is also maintained by the organisation, updated on a weekly basis, and provides various stakeholders early warning contextual information if they choose to use it. Another online platform, called Xenowatch⁶, developed by the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS), was developed to track and monitor xenophobic attacks and violence in South Africa. The platform developed from the need to know where attacks occur and what the causes of these attacks were in those specific areas. The platform itself can be seen as an early warning system, as it would have an historical account of where attacks have occurred and could inform stakeholders on the hotspots areas to monitor for future interventions. The platform is becoming slowly accepted by stakeholders like the UN and Government, however, lack of response from security stakeholders were sighted as a particular issue.

The use of existing tools and data should not be overlooked, when developing early warning indicators and analysis. Leveraging partnerships with a variety of stakeholders is essential to better inform and bolster advocacy strategies. Amplifying local voices by building strong civil society networks are key, as these are the grassroots organisations that collect information that could feed into early warning mechanisms, which could result in early action and better preparedness. Elections should be seen a key to promoting democracy and consolidation in fragile peace in countries and societies emerging from civil war and political transition. Mechanism are needed to put in place an electoral conflict intervention. Electoral Management Bodies (EMB) can be used and thus seen as independent and executors of free and fair elections, to ensure that conflict triggers are addressed.

Recommendations/ Observations/ Follow-up:

- Use of existing tools and data collected by various stakeholders are needed.
- Social media provides information quickly, although verification is required.
- Data for early warning is available, but early action is required most.
- Historical data should inform current trend analysis – we must do more analysis and not just focus on the collection of “new” data.
- Human rights as the normative framework should be used as the proxy for conflict prevention.

⁴ An open source online platform built by analysts for analysts to deliver timely, quality and credible situational and risk analysis. (<https://deephelptest.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360015943731-What-is-DEEP->)

⁵ How the Civicus Monitor works. (<https://monitor.civicus.org/methodology/>)

⁶ Xenowatch is a tool to monitor xenophobic threats and violence across South Africa. (<http://www.xenowatch.ac.za/>)

Group Plenary	<p>Q1. What are your experiences of early warning resulting in effective early action? Any examples of how human rights contributed to make, or could have made, prevention more effective?</p> <p>Q2. What are your experiences of early warning failing to translate into effective early action? What were the impediments? What strategies can be used to overcome these?</p> <p>Q3. What partnerships are key to move from early warning to effective action? Any experiences, examples and ideas of how to ensure inclusive approaches for prevention?</p> <p>Q4. What are the entry points to work with Governments, civil society and other partners in support of national-led prevention efforts? How can international partners support?</p> <p>Q5. What are the key drivers of conflict? How do we measure these? Which tools can be used, which human rights mechanisms are useful? How do we measure effective prevention?</p>
Objective	Participants discuss and identify key elements of effective human rights-based informed early warning and how to move towards effective preventive action
Facilitator	James Turpin, Erik Friberg
Rapporteurs	Shewit Hailu, Martinho Chachiua, Tim Murithi, David Kode, Chido Mutangadura
Participants	All participants, divided into five groups, questions addressed in carousal format, answering five key questions:

Summary of Discussions and Recommendations:

Q1:

The Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience (CSVRA) and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy (CSVMS) tool of the AU was used successfully in Ghana to identify the country's resilience and vulnerabilities at a very early stage, and develop mitigation strategies to address these vulnerabilities. The facilitation process of the AU, particular in regard to demarcation and delimitation of land and maritime borders and enhancing cross-border collaboration. In the Gambia, it was the swift and coordinated alerting and response by regional and continental actors, including ECOWAS, the AU, the UN and CSOs to address the election crisis that was given by participants as a good practice of early warning. The roadmap agreed by the Commonwealth Institution in Zambia during the 2016 elections was deemed critical to ensure dialogue between the various stakeholders. CEWS have provided timely and accurate reports, particular in the case of Comoros and Madagascar. Overall, it was difficult to ascertain whether these actions explicitly led to a de-escalation in potential conflict, but it was agreed that they must have contributed to early action and ultimately early decision-making and prevention.

Q2:

Regional and international actors did not prevent the military takeover against former President Mugabe to take place. In Mozambique, even though the period from January to March is known as "cyclone" season – the impact of the cyclone was so damaging due to inherent structural problems within the country. In Angola, authorities were aware of the impending drought, and even allowed external monitoring to take place, but this required additional follow-up. Johannesburg city was used an example of where in the run-up to elections the structural issues plaguing low income areas are well-known, however, this has not stopped protest action to

spread to other areas and even other cities in the country. The following factors were raised in identifying what impeded early action:

- Lack of political will, failure in leadership;
- Absence of an actionable forum;
- Media biases which complicates fact-checking;
- Enduring perceptions that southern Africa is a stable region;
- Security sector is usually worth billions which contributes to a lack of political will; and
- Centralised decision-making in government.

Strategies that were identified to overcome these:

- Strengthening non-state actors through capacity building of communities.
- Redefining the role of human rights institutions and bolstering national protection systems.
- Identify and engage with key influencers.
- Find innovative ways of protesting (naked protesting at SADC headquarters)
- Integrating SADC's economic focus with a human rights' centred approach.

Q3:

Civil society partnerships are key, particularly related to democracy, rule of law, governance, social protection and human rights. The AU, the UN and SADC need more joint-approaches to support CSO action, but most importantly, build partnerships with governments which leaves room to both help and question governments' actions. The private sector and how we involve them with early warning processes are also important and examples were given of how this worked well in Lesotho and the Ministry of Environment. Other key partners identified are media, think tanks, traditional leaders, national human rights institutes, EMBs, legislatures, judiciary, local authorities, women and youth groups and donors. Finally, the emphasis should be to get community ownership and buy-in as early as possible into the process. The current peacebuilding project in Lesotho, where a national dialogue is being held to ascertain what needs to change and what change is needed, is a strategy to prevent longer-term conflict.

Q4:

Initiatives run by the AU and the UN, for example Agenda 2030, the 'Silencing the Guns by 2020' initiatives were mentioned as processes that could provide entry-points to move the discussions on prevention. A progressive civil society is needed, but not just project focused and mandate specific – similarly to the UN, where approaches are very much sectoral and mandate specific. Evidence-based research is needed and needs to be supported, usually undertaken by think tanks and those in academia. Gender commissions, national human rights institutions, national disaster management agencies and sectoral coordination mechanisms needs to put prevention on the forefront of their strategies and plans. The use of the UN, AU and SADC as the convening powers to bring all stakeholders to the table must be exploited further. Resource mobilization needs to look at prevention and early warning, and not just a band-aid to current problems when they have already occurred. A focus on context-based strategic planning i.e. "planning together" is needed. Human rights mechanisms should be used more as entry points to put on the table a discussion on prevention and early warning on sensitive issues.

Q5:

The key drivers of conflict are many, but primarily an historic imbalance of economic inequality and discrimination, social inequality, limited natural resources, corruption, lack of employment,

lack of land rights, lack of service delivery, contested elections, lack of participation and weak institutions. The lack of governance, adequate policies to address issues of immigration and migration are also drivers for cross-border issues that could lead to conflict. The human rights mechanisms should shift their focus from providing technical assistance in reporting to implementation and follow-up to recommendations. The Universal Peer Review system needs to be empowered to be able to highlight lack of progress made on recommendations that would lead to more accountability. Data must be shared and made available, which is currently available amongst AU, UN, SADC, CSOs and governments (for example statistical offices). With governments, the process of collecting data on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be used as entry-points to build a good relationship regarding data sharing for early warning.

Effective prevention is difficult to measure, however, identification of proxy indicators that would indicate progress for effective prevention are available and needs to be identified, monitored and analysed. There needs to be a deliberate approach taken in terms of telling the story of prevention so that it is clear for all actors involved. The tendency for the individual to claim ownership of effective prevention strategies devalues the process contributed by many. Historical trend analysis is important, to show a link of prevention to historical structural issues that have not been addressed in the present. The use of current frameworks accepted by member states needs to be used more, not just as tools collecting data, but also as tools that could aid and underpin effective prevention strategies.