



**Observation and Monitoring Center
EARLY WARNING AND RESPONSE NETWORK (ECOWARN)**

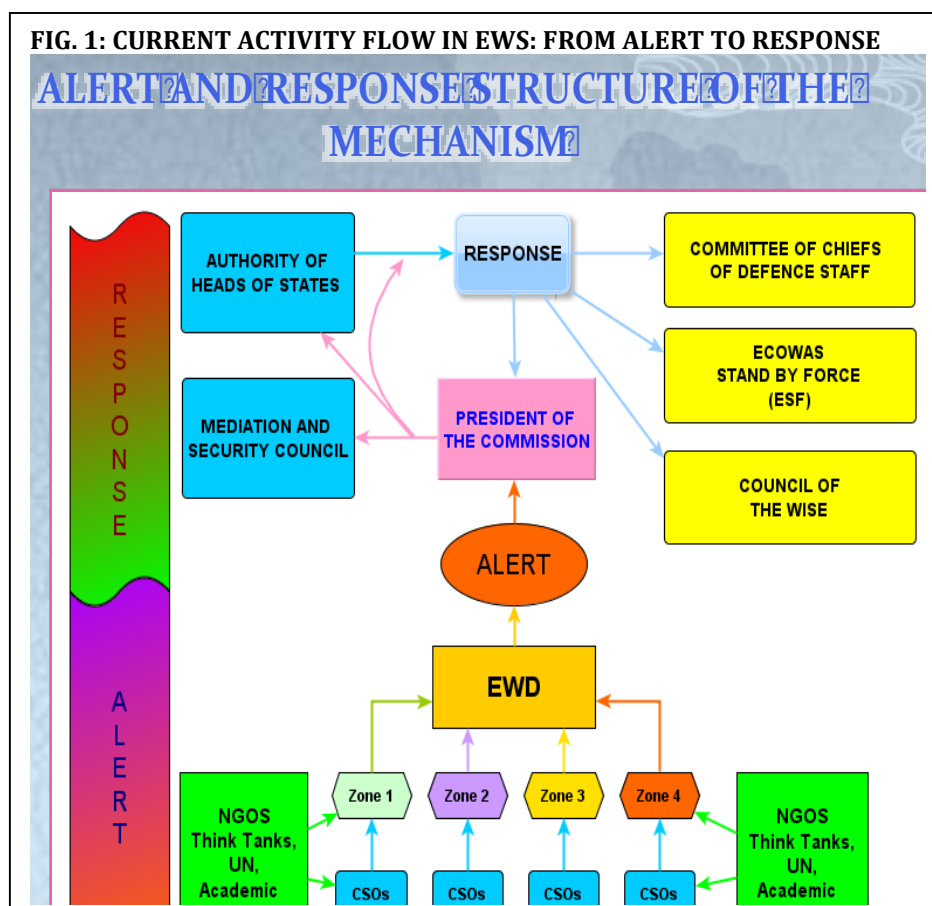
**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL EARLY WARNING AND RESPONSE
MECHANISM**

**The ECOWAS Commission
Abuja, February 24, 2017**

Implementation of the National Early Warning & Response Mechanism

Preamble:

The ECOWARN Field Reporter deployed in 2005 is characterized by a network of field reporters (Government designated and civil society) operating in all 15 Member States and analysts animating the Headquarters' Situation Room and providing real time baseline analysis of the peace and security situation in the region. The Reporter is a web-based field monitoring, interactive analysis and visualization tool with content customized for the ECOWAS region. On daily basis several comprehensive early warning reports are produced, which appear as Daily Highlight, weekly and monthly situation reports, situation briefs or other thematic reports and distributed among the hierarchy and network of partners according to established EW data sharing protocols.



The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention program has been touted as one of the most advanced among the Regional Economic Blocs of the African Union. Despite this feat, the systematic monitoring and reporting of early warning indicators across the region has provided real-time information about imminent crisis but without the corresponding timely responses to prevent their escalation to violence. While the success of the ECOWARN program

has been premised on the fact that most political crises in West Africa were resolved by ECOWAS with the support of the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN) and development partners, the gap between alert and response has emerged as a recurring lacuna. Empirical evidence abounds to this fact emanating from research, the latest of which was conducted in 2013. **The overarching issue is that we should clearly differentiate between political and apolitical crisis.** The following attempts to address the apolitical crisis situation and development in the Member States.

Articles 8 and 9 of the 2010 Monrovia Declaration on Two Decades of Peace Processes in West Africa stipulated that:

1. ECOWAS should enhance its capabilities to engage in the prevention, management and resolution of local intensity conflicts by developing bottom-up mechanisms (i.e. alternative dispute resolution methods, including traditional approaches) to reinforce the existing peace and security architecture;
2. ECOWAS should engage Member States in the enhancement of their capacity to manage and resolve local and low intensity conflicts by developing national mechanisms to reinforce the existing peace and security architecture.

The above stems from the philosophy that empowering local populations to better prepare for and respond to threats to themselves and their community might just bring about the appropriate way of linking early warning to rapid response. In this realm, the concept, which is termed 'proximity policing', tends to deploy early warning and response at the grassroots level through the inexhaustible networks of Government and civil society peace actors. In a critical sense, the above derives from the larger concept of social protection, as defined by the United Nations Research Institute For Social Development, which is concerned with preventing, managing, and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's well being. In addition to other reviews undertaken by Civil Society in partnership with the Early Warning Directorate (EWD), the significant supposition around which there is consensus is the recognition that **Member States have the primary responsibility for peace and security within their borders.**

As a consequence, at the AU 2014 Malabo Meeting of Heads of State and Government, a request was addressed to the US Government to support and strengthen early warning mechanisms of regional communities. The US government responded positively to this request and decided to begin with ECOWARN (the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network), and later expand to other regions.

As a follow up, the US Government through its embassy in Abuja requested from the directorate of Early Warning to express the needs in a formal solicitation. **At the conclusion of the August 2014 US-Africa Summit, President Barack Obama in his concluding notes, mentioned ECOWARN by name and stated that the US will provide focused funding to enhance ECOWARN capacities as a first stage of a global**

support to early warning mechanisms within the regional communities in Africa.

The solicited support is geared towards increased regional information sharing among ECOWAS (and later, African) partners to address terrorist and other threats by bolstering institutional mechanisms (i.e. ECOWARN) for sharing information, increasing analytical and technological capacity, and building a culture of collaboration.

Introduction

After 10 years of operation, the ECOWARN system has identified its greatest challenge as being bridging the gap between alert and response. The situation is further exacerbated by the increased security and vulnerability risks associated with emerging threats. The region has experienced varying degrees of conflict and insecurity caused by: lack of pluralism; poor management of diversities – ethnic, religious; severe competition over scarce resources (land, minerals, water, timber, etc.); poor economic management; natural and man-made disasters, the threat of state fragility, and the new trend in politics associated with the “street”.

Current security challenges in West Africa

A study has been concluded in 2013 by the Early Warning directorate highlighting the risks and vulnerabilities of the region. Despite the considerable progress made in development and peace consolidation in some parts of the region (and in some instances the notable democratic and socioeconomic advances), it seems that there are apparent structural deficiencies which have made much of the region particularly susceptible to the emerging threats. The vulnerabilities have been identified as weak border control systems (leading to porous territorial boundaries), the inability of criminal justice systems to ensure effective operation of the rule of law and inadequate coordination and information-sharing among relevant national agencies, as well as limited institutional cooperation across borders with neighboring countries. As a consequence, the emerging security threats identified in the region include:

- Drug/Human Trafficking and Organized Crime
- Terrorism (Boko Haram, MUJAO, ANSAR DINE, etc.)
- Challenges to Democratic Governance (The Conundrum of Democratic Elections based on “Winner Takes All”, Principle Renewed Propensity to Unconstitutional Changes of Government, democracy and ‘the street’ syndrome)
- Piracy (Benin-Nigeria – Togo - Ghana-Cote d’Ivoire axes)
- The Ebola+ Syndrome
- Climate change related menaces (coastal erosion, flooding, bush fires and desertification which has caused an increase in conflict between nomadic cattle breeders and local farmers all over the Region)

To tackle the above, ECOWARN needs to steam up capacity as it is said if early warning is better practiced, it is likely we have a more stable and peaceful environment to live. It should as well be understood that crisis/conflict may be either human induced or nature induced; it is with this understanding that ECOWARN as far back as 2008 introduced the use geospatial science and technology with the setting up of a Geographic Information System Laboratory at Headquarters to enable the acquisition and processing of satellite imagery and related environmental data. A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a system of computer hardware,

software, and data that is capable of capturing and assembling, storing, manipulating, analyzing, and visualizing spatial or geographically referenced information. To a large extent, this has been supportive to our routine analysis and reports, with capabilities of providing amongst other:

- Overlay of critical information on a geographical reference background in order to view a consolidated situational display
- Development of plans in response to conflict situations or natural disasters, as in the case of the Ebola virus disease.

Defining priority

It is critical to provide a first initiative definition on the nature of data sourcing. Over the years, a misconception on the definition of ‘open source’ even within the network has led to common misunderstanding and a very serious back lock resulting in porosity in data sourcing.

Broadly speaking, open-Source refers to a broad array of information and sources that are generally available, including information obtained from the media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.), professional and academic records (papers, conferences, professional associations, etc.), and public data (government reports, demographics, hearings, speeches, etc.).

In the context of the ECOWARN system, ‘Open sources’ refer simply to all forms of data/information partners are ready to share with ECOWARN. In this context, and we are today encouraged by the involvement of all the security apparatus of Member States within the Peace and security Architecture, ECOWARN will work closely with the named agencies which include amongst others the chiefs of Intelligence Services and development partners for the purpose of collaboration, and verification and validation of critical information.

Resolving the gap between Alert and Response

As a reminder, Research has identified two ways of practicing early warning, as 1) collecting, disseminating, analyzing data and raising alerts where necessary, or 2) as was emphasized earlier, empowering local populations to better prepare for and respond to threats to themselves and their community. Whereas ECOWARN for its 10 years of operation has solely practiced the former, it is being recognized as in CEWARN that an appropriate way of linking early warning to rapid response resides at the community level.

The project already enjoys adoption by the Heads of State and Government through the communiqué of its 45th ordinary Session, held in Accra on 14 July 2014 (Article 51). In order to seek inputs and convergence through a participative approach for implementation, the directorate conducted a consultation tour with partners from civil society around the region, the AU in Addis, the UN offices in New York, UNOWA in

Dakar, and various experts from the local and international fora. Following a comprehensive study of the many options available, and in order to boost ECOWARN capacities and ensure full appropriation/responsibility of Member States while ECOWAS plays the lead role, and in consonance with the 1999 protocol and the actualization of the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the architecture described in the following was adopted.

It consists of widening the network of field reporters and using the extensive response outfits of Government and civil society organizations to address conflicting situations. **For reasons of clarity, ECOWARN (ECOWAS Warning & Response Network) remains the overall title of the system of early warning as provided by the 1999 protocol. For the deployment of the system at the Member State level, architecture is hereby proposed, called Mechanism for Early Warning & Rapid Response which comprises structures at the Member State, the Headquarters, and the Continental levels.**

i) at the country level

1. Field Reporters

The network of Field Reporters using the ECOWARN Field Reporter is now to be boosted with the involvement of research institutions and think tanks enabling a total of 4 reporters led by a WANEP reporter acting as a reference guide. In the case of the host country, these reporters will cover the 6 geo-political zones of the country and WANEP will occupy the Abuja seat. As a way of resolving the expected rise in funding the network, training will now be conducted by local WANEP on a half yearly basis.

2. National Centre for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism

The functions of Government as classified by the United Nations Statistics Division, implore the rendering of general public services, defence, public order and safety, economic affairs, environmental protection, housing and community amenities, health, recreation, culture and religion, education, and social protection. As a reminder, the 66 indicators of the ECOWARN reporter constitute a template for gauging the impact of Government's attendance to the above for purposes of early warning. In other words, the system basically provides a direct measure of the strength of Government or the vulnerability of its people.

In the particular case of the ECOWAS region, the so called gap between Alert and Response has been identified to solely concern with deficiencies or strictly inabilities of Government structures to act where and when needed. Hence the creation by Member States of a **Centre with the mandate to activate (by**

identifying who and who should respond and liaising with them), coordinate (in some cases facilitate), and monitor the response mechanism instituted through the basic functions of Government, with support from civil society networks.

The Centre is basically staffed with a Director, 5 Experts, one (1) accounting officer, one (1) IT officer, one (1) secretary and one (1) driver.

For the purpose of sustainability, and in order to make states fully appropriate the mechanism, the National Centre for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism is supervised by a **Statutory Board led by the Prime Minister/ Vice President of the Member State as Chairman**, the minister of Interior, the minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice, the minister of foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finances, the minority leader in the national assembly, and a thematic Minister (i.e. Minister of Health in the case of EBOLA virus disease), the Council of the Wise Member, and the Permanent Representative of the ECOWAS Commission.

The Centre will deliver monthly reports to the Statutory Board, while the latter can expressly be convened to a meeting in the advent of highly challenging situations.

3. The ECOWARN Liaison Officer/The Permanent Representative of the ECOWAS Commission

As the 2008 proposal for creating an ECOWAS House in Member States (consolidating all Community institutions with an EW presence through an officer) has received blessings from Council through the actualization of the Permanent Representative status, the zonal bureaus are by the concept transformed to national ECOWARN Liaison officers (P4 level). The Officer as a staff of the Permanent Representative plays equivalent role as the physical link between ECOWARN and the National Centre for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism.

The primary role of the Officer through his linkage with Headquarters is to provide technical, technological and analytical support to the Centre. His relationship with the permanent Representative, the Member of the Council of the Wise, the ECOWAS National Cell, other Departments of ECOWAS, development partners and the local Peace Forum Network will to a great extent enhance the spectrum of intervention of the Centre.

The Head, System Division of EWD is the direct overseer of the Liaison Officer.

4. The WANEP Liaison Officer

WANEP as ECOWARN implementing partner has seen its scope expanding over the recent years with the consolidation of national offices in all the 15 ECOWAS Member States. Through a country specific approach, the WANEP offices will develop curricula for regular training and upgrading of Field Monitors. Further to this, one officer will be nominated as the CSO Liaison Officer to the National Centre for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism along with his ECOWAS counterpart.

5. The Member of the Council of the Wise

The President of the Commission has just proposed to his Excellences, the Heads of State and Government a list of Members for a renewed Council of the Wise. As EWD has de facto been operating with the support of the Council, the relationship will be expanded to accompany the ECOWARN Liaison Officer with his involvement with the national Centre.

6. The DPA Mediation facilitation Division

As the deployment of early warning and response at the community level is conceived around the philosophy of setting up an environment of constant dialogue and mediation, the Mediation Facilitation Division of the Directorate of Political Affairs is naturally a key component of the mechanism. In this realm, the division will be highly solicited to provide linkages and to work with the apparatus at the MS level to deliver on its duties.

7. The ECOWAS National Office

The ECOWAS National Office within the office of the ministry responsible for Community affairs is the link in coordination of programmes/activities. In the past, relationship with these offices was limited to nomination of Government agents to participate in EW field monitoring.

With the expanded scope, the National Office will be required to be the facilitator of permanent access to local ministries, parastatals, agencies, institutions of Government for deployment of the national mechanism.

8. The Minority leader or High Representative of the Opposition Parties

As a way of actualizing the calendar for democratic reforms, good governance, leadership, transparency and strengthening of our institutions, Government is required to involve, as expressed by Heads of States and Government, both opposition and civil society peace actors in the response mechanism.

Hence, the minority leader or in some cases the High Representative of the opposition is a key member of the crisis Statutory Board.

ii) at Headquarters level:

The ECOWARN Field reporter, likewise its CEWARN counterpart is now running on a new modern platform enabling more coherent customization and development for Situation and Incident reporting.

The reports readily available through the ECOWARN Field Reporter are exploited by the Situation Room at Headquarters to generate the various early warning products capable of inciting the deployment of national mechanisms.

1. EWD System Management Division

Besides its basic responsibilities for ensuring design, planning, and implementing the ECOWARN objectives including the direct supervision of Field Monitors and Liaison officers, the SMD will be providing full support to the National Centre for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism with respect to Information and Communication Technology infrastructures and tools, and adequate linkage with the regional network.

2. The Analyst Division

Besides its basic responsibilities for ensuring networking with partners including intelligence institutions, collation, analysis and dissemination of EW reports, the AD will on day-to-day basis liaise with the ECOWARN and WANEP Liaison Officers at the country level to provide reports/security alerts for the close monitoring of local developments. In other words, this will enable the two officers to be fully abreast of developing situations and consequently liaise with the national Centre for activating the response mechanism.

3. The Peace Forum

This database known as ECOWAS Peace Forum accessible through the INTERNET is to provide a forum for the exchange of commentary, narratives and unstructured observations between analysts and the field reporters, other identified civil society organizations, UN agencies, think tanks and Early Warning experts/observers in the West African region. The exchange is designed as a repository of information/knowledge to qualitatively complement the efforts of the analysts in options development and the Commission in response building.

In a nutshell, the Peace Forum as actualized on country basis, will now act as the core network for the coordination of the actions of peace actors across the entire network.

4. The Permanent Residents

Through the instituted by monthly meeting between the PAPS Department and the 15 ECOWAS Ambassadors in Abuja, regular exchanges on country specifics are established to enable awareness and inputs and the smooth coordination and operation of the entire network.

This will enable exchange through the Peace Forum, the presentation of the security situation to Their Excellences, as well as getting inputs and other forms of contribution to enhance the reporting process.

5. ECOWARN Early Response Fund

The ECOWAS Peace Fund (EPF) was established by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a contributive instrument to the achievement of ECOWAS' mandate, with the mission to fund and support relevant activities and initiatives for conflicts prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and recovery, while developing the capacities of relevant stakeholders to promote durable peace and human security across the West Africa region. EPF constitutes one of the six (6) pillars of the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture.

The EPF Three (3) operational windows are:

Window 1: supports/FINANCES conflict prevention and capacity building activities, including Preventive diplomacy, Early-warning system, Peace-building, training and sensitization programmes, Good governance and Human Rights.

Window 2: supports humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities, including electoral processes, Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation programmes, as well as socio-economic and reintegration activities, etc.

Window 3: support deployment for conflict management and peace support operations (civilian, police and military components).

A centralized ECOWARN Response Fund that provides effective and sustainable source of funding for the mechanism through contributions from national governments, the private sector, international partners and civil society actors is established. This fund will be deployed for rapid response at national level through competitive evaluation, in line with existing guidelines.

The ECOWARN Early Response Fund is lodged as a subset of Window 1 of the ECOWAS PEACE FUND

iii) at Continental level:

The African Union Commission operates the Continental Early Warning System that includes ECOWAS and the other seven Regional Economic Communities (RECs). CEWS is a key component of the overall security architecture of the African Union. The RECs along with their civil society partners are integral to CEWS, and CEWS is integral to ECOWARN. Thus the tasks of harmonizing, coordinating and working together with the African Union Commission and other Regional Mechanisms and their civil society partners are considered central to ECOWARN.

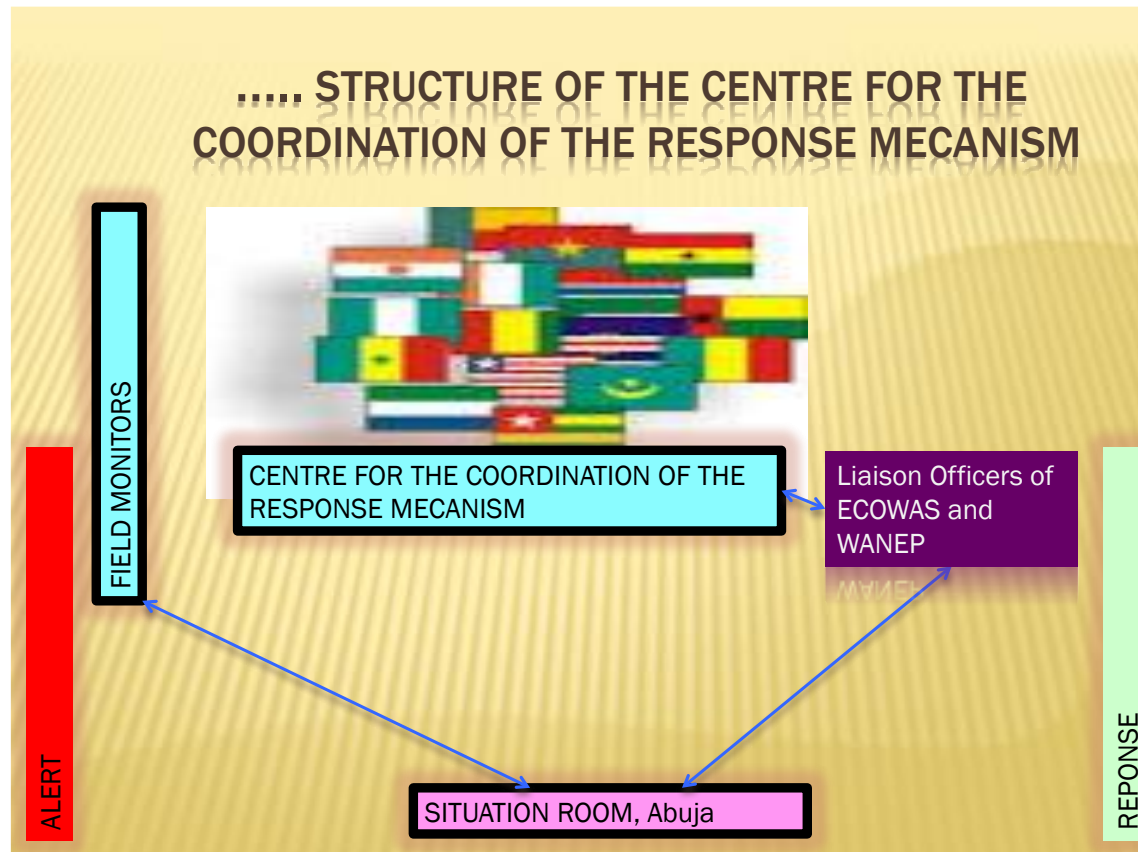
Through a memorandum signed in 2008, the mechanism is operational vis-a-vis the linkage and Analysts from all ends share information on daily basis, which serves as the backbone for decision making at the continental level.

Support from partners

The support from partners is in the following areas:

- The provision of Information and communication Technology infrastructures and tools.
- The provision of up to date geospatial data including commercial maps (Mapping facility from ESRI is already available within the Early Warning Directorate at Headquarters).
- The Training of staff in data gathering, management and analysis (this will include analysts and GIS Staff).
- The Support to Civil Society organizations, through WACSOF and WANEP (in various forms to carry out their activities).

ANNEX A



ANNEX B

