

1 Towards a Human Security-Based Early Warning and Response System

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1.1 Introduction: Early Warning for Human Security Purposes

The recent attention given to the concept of human security – both in academic and political debates – is an encouraging development for those committed to improving the security and livelihood conditions of suffering populations. Not national security and defence, but the security and safety of the population are at the core of human security-focused domestic and international policy. While there are diverse interpretations of what is considered to be a human security threat, this chapter uses a definition that has been developed in a project on the operationalization of human security currently pursued by one of the authors: A human security threat constitutes an already or potentially life-threatening danger to a population in a specific geographic context. The specific source and nature of this threat depends on each situation and context – it could range from flooding to land slides to diseases or violent conflict.¹ Consequently, efforts to monitor, analyze and respond to such diverse threats vary greatly. In this chapter the authors argue that the contextualized, sometimes multi-layered nature of human security must therefore be

matched with an equally multifaceted monitoring, warning and response system.

Depending on the nature and source of the identified threats, their symptoms and causes, monitoring and early warning exercises must focus on very specific information and threat indicators. As the salience of data and events monitored will inevitably vary from threat to threat, the monitoring and warning approach used needs to differ accordingly. Contemporary political early warning systems lack the necessary flexibility to meet this requirement. They generally suffer from two major shortcomings: *First*, their focus lies exclusively on trends leading towards or away from violent conflict. Environmental, economic, and other threats do not feature on the radar screen unless they trigger social unrest or political upheaval. *Second*, in the past, early warning was targeted at ‘Third World countries’ only and the information gained was primarily used by Western states in order to enhance their country policies and development programmes. We believe that in a globalized world where developments in one corner of the globe sooner or later affect all societies, such ‘open source intelligence’ provided more or less exclusively for the donor community is not appropriate anymore – indeed has never been. Early warning information needs to be shared with all stakeholders and the response to human security threats has to be found in a participatory process with the response itself mainly being the responsibility of the local/national governments and non-state actors. Hence, no single-focus early warning system alone will satisfy the monitoring and warning capacity required for human security provision. Moreover, the up to now ‘extractive’ approach to early warning practiced by Western governments has to give way to one that is based on true partnership. The latter is a prerequisite for long-term, sustainable response strategies and mechanisms to alleviate potential and emerging threats to populations’ survival and state and regional stability.

1 The methodological approach towards human security analysis, monitoring, warning and response described in this chapter relies in large part on *swisspeace*’s ongoing work in human security research, particularly the four-year project “Operationalizing Human Security for Livelihood Protection: Analysis, Monitoring and Mitigation of Existential Threats by and for Local Communities,” jointly sponsored by *swisspeace* (HUSEC) and the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South: Research Partnerships for Mitigating Syndromes of Global Change. The project is directed by Albrecht Schnabel, who acknowledges NCCR North-South for its support of his work. For further background see: Schnabel (2004: 109–131, 2004a, 2005a); Schnabel/MacFarlane (2005).

The chapter begins with an examination of existing first- and second-generation approaches to early warning and an illumination of the factors that explain their relatively limited utility for human security early warning (97.2). This part is followed by a discussion of the emerging concept of human security (97.3). We conclude by outlining how a third-generation early warning system would have to look like in order to successfully address the genuine human security needs of societies (97.4).

1.2 From Conflict- to Human Security - Early Warning Systems

Most if not all current political early warning systems are geared towards one specific threat, i.e. violent conflict, while they neglect other existential risks to human security linked to economic, political, social or environmental developments. The main reason for this negligence lies in the fact that political early warning generally builds on a traditional definition of security. According to this definition, which was coined during or even before World War Two, the security concept encompasses all forms of military threats and indirect warfare against a nation-state, while non-military threats to society are factored out. There are several reasons why decision-makers favour such a military-centered definition of security.²

The main argument was raised by Richard H. Ullman with regard to his home country: "Politicians have found it easier to focus the attention of an inattentive public on military dangers, real or imagined, than on non-military ones; political leaders have found it easier to build a consensus on military solutions to foreign policy problems than to get agreement on the use (and, therefore, the adequate funding) of other means of influence that the United States can bring to bear beyond its frontiers" (Ullman 1983: 129).

The resurgence of ethnic conflict after the end of the Cold War era has seemed to reconfirm the prevalence of military conflict as the main source of national, regional and global instability and human suffering, further confirming the tendency to return to traditional definitions of security and security provision in the creation of early warning analysis.

1.2.1 Genesis of Early Warning

Originally, early warning was a military concept. Over time it was adjusted for civilian purposes and various types of early warning systems emerged to assist national and international actors in the early anticipation of, and timely preparation for, natural disasters, the outbreak of famine, political destabilization, and forced migration.³ The rationale behind these political early warning frameworks, however, was still reactive rather than pro-active. Early warning and response measures were taken only after a humanitarian emergency had occurred and not beforehand. Crisis de-escalation was the key issue, not solid early preparedness.

Contrary to this first generation of political early warning schemes, present day early warning systems address - at least in theory - not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of violent conflict. As the term 'early warning' indicates, monitoring and analysis of a potentially conflictive (or otherwise disastrous) situation should be initiated at the earliest possible stage in order to prevent rather than alleviate human suffering. The *Forum on Early Warning and Early Response* (FEWER), for example, defined (political) early warning as the "collection and analysis of information about potential and actual conflict situations, and the provision of policy options to influential actors at the national, regional and international levels that may promote sustainable peace." It further argued that "[e]arly warning is not only about assessing the possibility of conflict but also identifying the possible resurgence of conflict and the opportunities for peace" (Forum on Early Warning and Early Response 1999: 3).

On the one hand such definitions are helpful as they (a) link theoretical analysis of violent conflict to concrete action, (b) acknowledge the necessity to involve a broad range of state and non-state as well as local, regional, national, and international actors in addressing threats to sustainable peace, and (c) they point out the necessity to look not only for signs of escalating tensions but also of peace-building opportunities. The fact remains, however, that this and similar definitions used within the early warning community are still focusing on one single facet of the threat spectrum, which is violent conflict. Neither do they take other existential threats to society into account, nor

2 Kruppenacher (1989) has discussed these motives with regard to the Swiss security policy.

3 An overview is given by: Kruppenacher/Baechler/Schmeidl (1999: 77-99) and Schmeidl/Jenkins (1998: 56-69).

do they clearly delineate what type of information needs to be collected and analyzed. Thus, such definitions invite decision-makers with a traditional military-centred understanding of security to continue looking at factors intimately linked to power structures and the adverse behaviour of opposition groups. The root causes of human insecurity, however, are easily neglected, since the focus is on inter- and intra-state violent conflict triggered by power struggles between opposing parties.

Most if not all political early warning activities fall into this trap.⁴ For instance, the FAST approach⁵ to early warning circumvents this definitional cliff by stressing the need to use a so-called 'analytical framework' in order to identify and categorize causes and issues of conflict for each of the observed countries.⁶ Nevertheless, in the FAST scheme, too, the dependent variable is violent conflict, and environmental or economic collapse, societal disintegration or state failure is beyond its explanatory power. In other words, while FAST is probably one of the more elaborate early warning systems that deals with violent conflict, it still does not capture the complex reality that contemporary societies face with regard to human security. If we are to create early warning systems that live up to this complex reality, we need to build a third generation type of early warning system. To this end, however, a number of challenges have to be overcome. Some of them pertain to models and approaches of early warning systems in general, while others are related to the fact that human security as a dependent variable is not as easily defined and operationalized than such narrowly defined threats as 'famine', 'forced migration', or 'violent conflict'.

1.2.2 Why a Human Security Focus?

1.2.2.1 Human Security as a Guide for Preventive Activity

Why should we focus on human security when considering preventive action? It is not easy to summon the necessary resources and goodwill to commit states, interstate and non-state organizations to preventive activities, when so much of their attention is already required to address the consequences of already ongoing crises. However, most of the very same actors who find it difficult to invest in preventive activities also realize and admit that prevention is the best insurance against the suffering and instability associated with structural and direct violence, and the costs of repairing the subsequent damage. Still, they remain stuck in a mainly reactive mode.⁷

How, then, can we assure that this obvious preference to react can be utilized in encouraging preventive action? The concept of human security offers a solution. If we assume that certain basic human security needs must be met to maintain a minimum standard of stability and order, then we can respond to cases where such needs are neglected. Once such neglect is addressed and needs are met, chances for suffering, disintegration and conflict are significantly reduced. Thus, reaction to observable slippage in the provision of basic security needs amounts to the prevention of eventual conflict, violence and, possibly, war. At the same time a foundation for long-term, positive peace is laid.

1.2.2.2 Human Security as a Pragmatic Notion

The provision of human security is not simply an idealist sentiment. It is a very pragmatic notion. Individuals want their needs fulfilled. In representative and participatory political systems politicians are interested in serving - at least nominally - the interests of their constituencies. If they want to secure their political office, they have little choice but to accommodate

4 These include early warning efforts by, among others, the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* (UCDP), *Virtual Research Associates* (VRA), *Kansas Event Data System* (KEDS), UNDP's *Early Warning Systems in Southeastern Europe*, *ReliefWeb*, *Country Indicators for Foreign Policy* (cifp), *Global Information and Early Warning System* (GIEWS), or *International Crisis Group*, as well as *FAST International*, with whom the two authors are associated.

5 The FAST methodology distinguishes four vital components in early warning exercises: 1) systematic information collection on root, proximate, and intervening factors explaining the likelihood of armed conflict, 2) analysis of these factors and their interlinkages, 3) timely communication of early warning signals to all relevant stakeholders, and 4) linking early warning signals to concrete preventive activities (see: <<http://www.swisspeace.org/fast/>>).

6 See: <<http://www.swisspeace.org/fast/html>>.

7 For a series of case studies on efforts to mainstream conflict prevention within the UN and regional organisations around the globe, see Carment/Schnabel (2003, 2004) and Schnabel/Carment (2004). Case studies analysed in these books include the *European Union* (EU), the *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE), the *United Nations* (UN), the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF), the *Organization of American States* (OAS), the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), and the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN).

their voters' (reasonable) demands. Human security provision is thus the norm in well-functioning political systems where citizens have means and ways to keep those in power under control and where they ensure that the latter spend a substantial portion of their resources on securing the population's interests. If citizens enjoy good, accountable, and responsible governance, a culture of peace is more likely to develop than in an environment of oppression, insecurity and instability. This has positive effects on cross-border relations as well. Human security provision is thus a key ingredient in the creation and consolidation of 'security communities' (Adler/Barnett 1998).

Unfortunately, the majority of the world's population is ruled by governments that do not offer responsible, accountable, and good governance. Governments that are not interested in the welfare of their people will refuse to embrace a human security agenda. There have been suggestions to initiate human security audits or periodically publish a human security index or report. However, these efforts will not be successful as long as the provision of human security runs counter to the interests of many governments. What is needed are self-enlightened governments and leaders; the presence of domestic opposition groups who are capable of challenging irresponsible governments by non-violent means; and/or external pressure by states, sub-regional and regional organizations or the UN to encourage more responsible behaviour by governments.

1.2.2.3 Human Security Concepts in and for the UN System

While human security may be the key to good governance and peace, a fundamental shift of domestic, regional, and international norms towards the recognition of the general welfare of individuals and communities (i.e. the population as a whole) as the primary goal of governance is difficult to achieve. The work of the *International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (ICISS 2001) is a prominent example of an attempt to integrate human security in emerging global debates (and evolving norms) on the international community's responsibility to intervene in the affairs of sovereign states for 'human protection purposes'.⁸ In its final report, entitled *The Responsibility to Protect*, the ICISS defines "human security" as "the security of people - their physical safety, their economic and social well-being, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings, and the protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms" (ICISS 2001: 15, para 2.21). It links the in-

ternational community's responsibility to prevent, to react and to rebuild directly to violations of human security. Other reports, studies, proclamations, or resolutions, many of which were the results of studies commissioned or undertaken by the United Nations, have produced a tremendously rich reservoir of recommendations for actions by nation states and their intergovernmental organizations to improve development, human rights and security provision, and thus to strengthen the chances for peace, stability and regional or global security for all.⁹

1.2.3 Human Security – From Debate to Policy?

Threats to the basic human needs of individuals and communities lead to human suffering, social and communal deterioration, and thus to violence in its various direct and structural manifestations. On the other hand, if individuals and communities feel secure and protected from actual and feared existential threats that emanate from social, political, and economic injustice, military violence, environmental disruptions or natural disasters – that is, if their basic human security is assured – human suffering on an individual level and conflict and violence on communal, regional and international levels can be significantly reduced.¹⁰ Therefore, investing in human security – particularly if approached in a pragmatic, systematic and focused way – will produce improved livelihood conditions for individuals and communities that currently live in vulnerable and life-threatening situations. Investing in human security improvements is thus a win-win situation. Moreover, if done in a contextualized (i.e. adjusted to specific needs and specific contexts) and focused manner (i.e. addressing the root causes of

8 The *International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (ICISS 2001) was established by the Canadian government, co-chaired by Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, and modeled along the Brundtland Commission (1987). See at: <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/menu-en.asp>>.

9 Among these are: UNDP's: *Human Development Report* (<<http://hdr.undp.org/>>), the *UN Millennium Development Goals* (<<http://www.un.org/millennium-goals/goals.html>>), several reports by the UN (2000, 2001, 2004, 2005); the Human Security Commission's (2003) report, at: <<http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html>>; the *Human Security Report* (2005), at: <<http://www.humansecurityreport.info>>.

10 See also Lake/Rothchild (1996: 41–75).

threats), such investment is bound to produce positive results.

Many governments and international organizations have recognized the concept of human security as an important item on their national and international security and development agendas.¹¹ It is championed by those governments and non-governmental groups and organizations that oppose power politics – the tendency by powerful states and multilateral organizations to wield their might to advance their own interests and views of the world, which, incidentally, often do not coincide with the views of many of the less powerful. When it was initially introduced to broader policy and academic debates by the *Human Development Report* (UNDP 1994), where the concept was used as a comprehensive approach to encompass all human rights, security and development threats experienced by individuals and communities, the human security concept was meant to represent a key instrument in fighting poverty and improving human livelihoods. Human security has been promoted primarily by countries such as Sweden, Norway, Japan, Switzerland and Canada.¹² Some politicians and policy-makers have actively introduced the concept to the highest-level international debates – most prominently exemplified by former Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy's initiative to introduce the concept into UN Security Council debates (Oberleitner 2005: 185–203; Dedring 2008). Japan's initiative of a Human Security Commission added prominence and worldwide deliberations to the concept of human security (CHS 2003).

There has been an ongoing debate between those favouring a broad and those favouring a narrow definition of the human security concept. Some of the most forward-looking protagonists of human security, such as Canada, champion a narrow definition of the concept, one focused on *freedom from fear*. For reasons of political expediency as well as intellectual clarity, the focus is on personal security, immediate threats from violent conflict, and the provision of a *negative peace* (Galtung 1969). Such threats are miti-

gated primarily by operational preventive action once violent conflict is imminent or – in post-war situations – its resurgence must be prevented (Human Security Centre 2005). Others think quite differently: Much like the 1994 *Human Development Report*, the Human Security Commission's Report *Human Security Now* argues that a broader bandwidth of threats should be addressed, and existential threats of individuals should be addressed regardless of their source. The Commission equates human security with the protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment” (CHS 2003: 4). The Commission further argues that, “[h]uman security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity” (CHS 2003: 4).

Thus, our understanding of human security analysis and provision – and our point of departure for a human security-based early warning system – focuses on the following five pillars (Schnabel 2004a):

First, human security focuses not only on armed conflict and its consequences for civilians, but also on many non-traditional security threats, including threats arising from diseases, or economic or environmental disasters. The costs of non-traditional security threats can be as – or more – devastating for human beings as those of traditional security threats. Moreover, they often have the potential to escalate into violence and war.

Second, the nature and level of human security and human insecurity depend highly on the context of one's analysis. For example, populations along border regions experience dramatically different threats than those living elsewhere in the country, or those living in a large capital. Thus, analysis of human security threats as well as the identification of mitigation measures is highly context-specific.

Third, a thorough threat (not ‘conflict’) analysis is key to identifying the most pertinent human security challenges.

Fourth, using a vulnerability scale as threshold criteria, one is able to differentiate between life-threatening and non-life-threatening dangers for the population. The former – actual or potential life-threatening danger – qualifies as a human security threat. Thus, a sanitation issue with deadly consequences for the

11 For an analysis of human security as a foreign policy tool, see: Debiel/Werthes (2006).

12 See the ‘human security’ website of the Canadian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT); at: <<http://www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/foreignp/humansecurity/menu-e.asp>>. See also Lloyd Axworthy (1997: 183–196) and Behringer (2005: 305–342). For more information on the work of the Human Security Network, see: <<http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/>> and chap. 76 by Fuentes/Brauch.

population of a refugee camp could be a major human security threat, while ethnic tensions within that same camp, yet with little potential of escalating into physical violence, are not human security threats. In order to assure the feasibility of response measures, 'human security clusters' are formed by a small number of such existential threats within a given context.

While this seems to be a very selective approach, focusing on issues with the most severe impact on the survival of the population, the *fifth* component of this approach focuses on root cause analysis and alleviation. The root causes of such visible, actual, life-threatening dangers inevitably overlap with those root causes of non-life-threatening vulnerability. Tackling the root causes of the former will inevitably also reduce suffering at the level of the latter. Root cause alleviation in the context of the most severe human security threats is thus seen as a comprehensive tool for the prevention of both life-threatening and non-life threatening dangers for suffering and endangered populations. Below we will discuss the possibilities for building an early warning system on such an approach to human insecurity identification and human security provision.

1.2.4 Challenges and Opportunities of Human Security-based Early Warning

Many challenges of a human security-focused early warning system reflect those of any early warning system. Some challenges are, however, unique to attempts at gearing an early warning system towards a cluster of threats that have emerged as key obstacles to the survival and safety of the population. They focus on a different approach to threat analysis, the necessity to undertake ongoing analysis, assessment and possibly reconsideration of key threats, and the necessity to move away from 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to the design and application of focus, method and implementation of early warning systems.

1.2.4.1 Focus of Early Warning

One of the key questions of any early warning effort is: What do we warn of? What are the core threats to human security that need to be addressed and that we wish to cover with our early warning system? In the context of human security monitoring it is obvious that a wide array of environmental, economic, social, cultural and political dimensions needs to be considered. However, the focus of monitoring and warning as well as the indicators used depend on the perceived

real threats (existing dangers) and potential threats (fears and concerns) identified in each covered geographic context. Once these threats are identified, the early warning system must develop indicators, methodologies and approaches to data collection and analysis that are suitable to the type of information required to measure such threats. For instance, event data may be particularly useful to track latent conflict developments but not the onset of environmental disasters. Thus, the nature of the threats monitored will also influence the methodology and type of data collection and assessment. One has to envision to run parallel systems based on a diversity of threats - or to generate one system with several thematic analysis units utilizing the same information collection, monitoring and analysis system. In the latter case the data collection and indicators used must be broad and versatile enough to accommodate the diversity of information required for tracking developments of several threat scenarios.

1.2.4.2 Method

Once the threats to, and vital requirements for, human security in a given country or region are identified, appropriate methodological approaches to monitoring and analysis have to be chosen. There are basically three methodological types of early warning systems: qualitative and quantitative approaches, and a combination of both. Examples for qualitative early warning systems are the publications of 'Human Rights Watch', 'Amnesty International', or the 'Crisis Group'.¹³ Analysts of such institutions are normally based in the countries monitored and produce risk assessments and recommendations based on context-specific background expertise. Quantitative early warning models boomed in the 1990's; partly because of a greater availability of data due to the fall of the Iron Curtain, and partly because of significant improvements of computer technology. The basic principle behind such models is the collection of structural or event data, which is then analyzed in order to provide statistical trends of a country's stability or the

13 We consider them to be early warning systems even though they often lack typical early warning characteristics such as theoretical rigidity and periodicity. The country reports of the Crisis Group, for example, do not focus on the same conflict relevant factors but highlight varying specific dimensions or thematic issues of a conflict. In addition, reports are issued in irregular intervals and end-users of CG-reports never know when to expect the next issue.

level of conflictive and cooperative actions. Examples for quantitative oriented early warning systems are the Kansas Event Data System developed by Deborah Gerner and Philip Schrodt¹⁴, Barbara Harff's work in the field of genocide and politicicide¹⁵, and the *Country Indicators for Foreign Policy* (CIFP) programme run by David Carment.¹⁶ Early warning systems that combine both approaches, such as FAST International¹⁷ and CEWARN (which draws on FAST methodology)¹⁸, benefit from the combination of extensive, standardized data collections, quantitative analysis, and qualitative expertise of country experts. We strongly believe in the necessity of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis.

1.2.4.3 Recipient of Analysis

It is not enough simply to generate information and hand it to those who might be in the situation to take necessary responses. If the recipients of early warning information are not placed, capable or willing to take action, early warning analysis would be nothing but an academic exercise without any effect on the improvement of volatile situations. Those who are engaged in early warning work, particularly if operating on a system that focuses on context-specific threats and their amelioration, must assure that the recipients of their analyses – the expected response actors – are closely involved in the early warning process and that they support the work done by the early warning system. Thus, those of us involved in early warning must ask a number of important questions: Whom do we want to warn? Who is the appropriate recipient of our analysis and warning? Are we aware of the political context within which recipients will receive our analysis and warning? Will they use the results of analysis and warning to serve the population's or their own particular interests? Is transparency of early warning analysis and recommendations assured? In short: How do we treat information, who should receive it and who not? Have the recipients of warning signals been adequately involved in developing the system so that it re-

sponds as closely as possible to their needs, capacities and requirements? Are the outputs/products of the early warning system presented and packaged in a way that is most appropriate for quick and thorough consumption by the recipients, and that responds to the recipients' needs and capabilities? Without satisfactory answers to these questions early warning activities stand on very weak ground.

1.2.4.4 Quality of Analysis

As a result of the 'cottage industry' that emerged from the prevention hype of the early to mid-1990's, many institutions claim to produce early warning analysis and policy description. However, only few have been able to produce useful products on a consistent, systematic basis, and others have overstepped their mandate of providing solid analysis to embark on the slippery path of advocacy. Despite the obvious need to pool resources and know-how, institutions show little willingness to cooperate, share information or develop and use common tools and methods. Funding continues to be rare and competition for funding is high. Donors are not without fault – they tend to show interest in supporting a diversity of small programmes with limited funds rather than a limited number of collaborating programmes with more significant funds. Donor coordination and cooperation would be able to improve much in this direction. Furthermore, as regards the methods used to collect and analyze data, too many institutions cover too many countries in unsystematic ways, with very little attention to detail and long-term analysis. The more countries would be covered by early warning efforts, the less 'selective', judgmental and thus politically sensitive it would appear if a country finds itself included on a certain organization's early warning roster. Unfortunately, governments' and regional or international organizations' willingness to fund early warning and preventive activities seems to have declined sharply in the past years, despite repeated calls in major international reports and policy statements for strengthening, not weakening, preventive capacities of state and intergovernmental actors. The former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's quest to make prevention part and parcel of international, global policy making, has not materialized and has lost further momentum with the end of his term.

1.2.4.5 Warning-Response Gap

The main challenge of early warning is the ability to bridge the gap between early warning and early ac-

14 See <<http://web.ku.edu/keds>>.

15 See at: <<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/genocide/>>.

16 See at: <<http://www.carleton.ca/cifp/>>.

17 For more information on the FAST programme of swisspeace, see: <<http://www.swisspeace.org/fast/>>.

18 For more information on CEWARN, the *Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism* of the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development* (IGAD), see <<http://www.cewarn.org/>>.

tion. Strong commitment by all stakeholders to act timely, appropriately and in a coordinated manner is imperative in ensuring effective early warning and crisis mitigation. With the help of thorough conflict and threat analyses, stakeholders (and key security providers, including foremost government authorities) can work with early warning systems on the root causes of potential violence and on the identification of early indications for evolving instability and crisis. Focusing on human security – on the survival needs of the populations – states would be able to show their commitment to serving society, not merely themselves. With their support, security providers would be able to adapt their work to the aim of long-term, sustainable and preventive action. Early action requires proper preparedness and the selection of the most appropriate and effective entry points for mitigation strategies. Both should be pursued in close cooperation with early warning systems. However, the issue of timing is not only crucial in the initial involvement in evolving crises situations, but also in choosing the most appropriate exit strategy: At that point, one's assistance should have created the basis for sustainable improvement, and relevant stakeholders should have been strengthened and equipped to the point where they can carry forward the work initiated by external actors, while progress should ideally be visible enough to allow external actors to sense that their input has been successful. Continuous monitoring of the impact of mitigation measures is thus a key issue in measuring what would otherwise be extremely difficult to assess: The impact of preventive activities. Such monitoring would quickly reveal if the gap between warning and response is not being closed. It would also inform those responsible for monitoring and analysis as to which recommendations and measures work, which do not, and which impact this may have on the approach, methodology and nature of monitoring, analysis and the generation and transfer of recommendations. If we talk about an 'early warning system' – in contrast to an early warning 'activity' – we are referring to a process that spans monitoring, analysis, recommendation for (policy) response, design and implementation of response actions, and subsequent monitoring and assessment of such mitigation measures. For early warning to be successful – in any context and in regard to any threat – we have to take such a system approach. Thus, partners in early warning and response need to work closely together.

1.2.4.6 Political Sensitivity

Resistance of those who fear intrusions in their own political backyards has been successful in spoiling efforts of strengthening early warning and preventive capacities by the UN and other well-intentioned international actors. Political sensitivities still surround 'early warning' as a political activity: They concern on the one hand the presence of foreign representatives who conduct 'intelligence' work for supposed benign reasons to improve and strengthen development assistance programmes, and on the other hand the debates at highest international levels about a much talked about 'responsibility to protect' populations whose human security needs are being violated at least partly at the hands of their own governments. For many governments these are worrisome issues. These developments go hand in hand with a certain degree of loss of faith in the UN as the neutral 'conscience of humankind' – because the organization is too heavily influenced by the North while proving extraordinarily resistant to efforts of further democratization, political opening and reform. Nevertheless, in order to be effective and be heard, early warning systems need to find ways of remaining objective and maintaining the ability to offer constructive criticism – even directed at governments, if needed – while at the same time they must retain the possibility to cooperate with government actors. Here again the advantage of a human security focus comes to the fore: Focusing on issues below the level of armed violence creates space for tackling root causes of human misery through engaging less sensitive issues, yet with a chance for real impact.

1.2.4.7 Measuring Success

The role and success of early warning depends on the degree to which it can be translated into early action. Thus, early warning can only be as useful as relevant organizations and individuals are committed to incorporating early warning analysis into their short-, mid-, and long-term activities and planning, particularly if this refers to efforts at root cause mitigation. In general it is difficult to prove the effectiveness of early warning systems in preventing crises, disasters and destabilization: Success of early warning depends on the counterfactual that due to specific actions negative events and developments did not occur. In addition, it is difficult to measure the extent to which early warning signals are incorporated into the work of relevant stakeholders, and to what degree and extent they do trigger early action. Should a deteriorating sit-

uation improve for the better, it is moreover difficult to link such developments to the implementation of recommendations generated by the early warning system. Often, credit for constructive mitigation efforts has to be situated with the implementing actor (for instance, government agencies), even if they were triggered by analysis and recommendations from the early warning system. Nevertheless, this challenge may be less problematic for a human security-based early warning system, where specific – and very concrete – threats are monitored, and specific response measures are designed and assessed for their implementation and effectiveness. Assessment of response measures requires a clear understanding of the targets, goals and indicators for success associated with each of them. We are thus not dealing with counterfactuals: We do not search for what has not happened (i.e. a crisis), but what has happened (i.e. the effect that counter-measures had on specific root causes). Human security-based early warning focuses on key problems that can be alleviated in order to prevent key threats. If such key problems persist, counter-measures were either misplaced, ineffective, or they were never implemented. Information on these issues will inform revised measures and undoubtedly will have an impact on the results of threat monitoring.

1.3 Contours of a Human Security-Based Early Warning System

Despite their often-lamented lack of measurable success, early warning systems are likely to proliferate. Catastrophes of various kinds will continue to happen, but authorities at state and international levels as well as private business and civil society actors are increasingly wary of the high costs of post-disaster rebuilding. While even functioning early warning systems will not always lead to early and effective responses, there is no alternative to the creation and strengthening of early warning systems. The often-mentioned claim that despite the ample and timely availability of information and warning, response measures fail due to inadequate political will is also an overstated and unhelpful argument. Any early warning effort outside a well-lubricated early warning system in which each part of the system feeds off and informs the other will have great difficulties in generating the desired results. Moreover, if – as is the case with most early warning systems – threats are pre-selected with little or no effort in consulting stakeholders or in adapting to changing security situations, such

early warning efforts simply miss the point of their very existence: To generate knowledge about effective response options to prevent major disasters from threatening populations' safety and survival. What we propose here can be summarized very simply in three points: a) early warning must be part of a monitoring-warning-response system, without which it cannot be effective; b) early warning systems must respond to the actual threat(s) to the security and survival of the population in a given context; and c) the key threats monitored and responded to by early warning systems must be identified as a result of collaborative, participatory multi-stakeholder processes. Particularly the latter point will also increase the likelihood that different components of early warning systems will not only speak to each other but also act with each other in successfully addressing those root causes that are responsible for the most severe threats to all stakeholders' survival and future well-being.

1.3.1 Human Security Threat Analysis

Human security-based early warning systems, if properly conceived, would help resolve a great number of problems that have so far plagued such systems. Due to the multi-stakeholder process in identifying (and over time verifying) key threats and respective response strategies to life-threatening dangers, chances are high that an early warning system would target the most relevant threat(s), including traditional (and non-traditional) security threats. Focusing on threats that, in the first instance, affect populations, will add legitimacy to early warning efforts at the level of society, state and international community. All three communities will have to contribute to response efforts and thus must be able to identify themselves with the legitimacy, approach and focus of any given early warning system.

Human security early warning systems will prioritize a small number of severe threats and outline feasible response measures to effectively alleviate root causes, thus increasing the likelihood that response actors (or human security providers) find it necessary to implement response options. Root cause alleviation will in all cases reduce the suffering among the population and therefore generate positive – and observable – results that speak to the necessity and success of implementing contextual human security warning and response systems. Focusing not only on armed conflict, genocide or failed statehood (issues that are at the centre of existing early warning programmes) will increase the likelihood that govern-

ment actors will listen and act in political contexts that tend to be hostile towards traditional early warning and prevention initiatives.

1.3.2 Structure and Procedure

In addition to these basic requirements, we can identify a few technical issues of structure and procedure, which would help overcome some of the challenges of successful early warning outlined above. These apply to attempts at generating new human security-based early warning systems, or at upgrading existing early warning systems so that they are able to meet the basic criteria of human security early warning.

When developing early warning systems or when integrating an early warning component into one's work, one should ideally develop comprehensive approaches that combine monitoring, analysis, early warning and early response: Thus, applied prevention should take the form of integrated, systematic and long-term commitments, in close cooperation between all those involved in the early warning cycle ranging from threat monitoring to response implementation. Existing efforts should be evaluated, revised and adjusted to reflect such comprehensive approaches.

The early warning system should offer systematic early warning services for in-house access, for partners within the early warning system, and for use by external audiences and users. While early warning systems can collect, monitor and analyze data (at local, country, regional or global levels) either locally or externally, linking both local and external monitoring, data collection and processing provides a solid balance between local and external expertise and biases.

Early warning systems can process their collected event and structural data either through qualitative or quantitative methods. While there are often clear preferences towards one or the other method (often related to misplaced mistrust toward the other 'school of thought'), both approaches to early warning analysis are highly complementary and should go hand in hand. Whenever possible, long-term, systematic and thorough analysis of positive and negative trends should be combined with short-term expert analysis of particular events, how those events affect certain more or less problematic situations, and how these may impact the level and nature of the threat under observation by the early warning system.

1.3.3 Taking an Early Warning 'System' Approach

Ideally, a number of very general steps should be standard practice for early warning systems: 1) Those who collect and code pertinent data should possess local expertise; 2) only state-of-the-art data processing and analysis tools should be utilized; 3) local and international experts should interpret the results of such analysis in a holistic manner, by taking into account political, economic, social and cultural factors in crisis and disaster situation assessments; 4) those experts relate the findings to entry points for local and external actors who have the capacity to slow down or alleviate negative - and strengthen positive - developments; 5) early warning analysts are informed about policy and programme design and implementation; and 6) performance of implementation measures is included in monitoring activities.

Early warning is a team effort: Few organizations have the capacity, competence and mandate to be responsible for all aspects of early warning and early response: from monitoring to analysis to decision support and policy design, to implementation and evaluation. Realistically, several actors, both at state and non-state levels, need to cooperate closely if an early warning system is to run smoothly and for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. Some organizations are better placed to conduct monitoring and analysis, others to develop policy options and assure implementation. Nevertheless, without close cooperation - starting with a common decision as to what to warn of (threat) and what to look for (root cause indicators) - no early warning system can function effectively. The ownership of early warning systems should as much as possible rest with local or national actors. This may help to counter and alleviate any possible misgivings about the practice of certain countries, mostly from the North, and certain intergovernmental organizations to interfere in the internal affairs of states.

If willingness to engage in such cooperation can be secured, then the first step will have been accomplished towards an effective warning and response tool. If the various actors involved in an early warning system are not willing to cooperate, the effectiveness and success of such a system is doomed. Therefore it pays to accept delays in launching early warning systems until the key stakeholders have reached the point where they will in fact be ready to create a truly cooperative early warning and response system. That point, we believe, will be reached quicker if an early warning

system is based on human security criteria, speaks directly to the stakeholders' needs and the context concerned, and builds on cooperative efforts between a range of governmental and non-governmental human security providers.

1.4 Conclusion

Physical survival is the very basic need of a human being. Other needs beyond the simple physical survival determine the quality or comfort of life. For the majority of the world's population, life is a constant struggle to secure a minimum of comfort and self-fulfilment. Human security, as defined earlier in the chapter and based on the human security research conducted by one of the authors, stands for the ability of people to secure this minimal right - the right of physical survival. If people cannot be sure if they will survive the next day or week or month, if they have to fight to secure the survival of themselves, their families and communities, society will neither be stable nor peaceful. It is therefore these existential threats that endanger the lives of people, which are at the heart of our understanding of human insecurity. Those threats vary from region to region, from country to country, from place to place.

Most of today's early warning efforts focus on violent conflict as the key threat in need of prevention. However, consider these figures: The number of battle-related deaths has declined sharply over the past 50 years - according to one estimate from around 700,000 during the time of the Korean War to roughly 20,000 in 2002;¹⁹ and according to another estimate from approximately 600,000 in 1998 to 170,000 in 2002.²⁰ The differences in estimates relate to the inclusion or exclusion of civilian war-related deaths. These figures are still tremendously high, particularly considering that non-violent solutions to communal, intra-state and interstate conflict should be embraced by any political authority with some sense of responsibility towards its and other nations' populations. More needs to be done to prevent these violent conflicts. Still, violent conflict is by far not the greatest threat to people's survival: Even if we continue to focus on violent deaths: In the year 2000, out of a global estimate of 1,659,000 violence-related

deaths, only 310,000 were war-related, while 520,000 were homicides and 815,000 suicides.²¹

Moreover, while around 40,000 to 230,000 people died in violent conflicts in 2001 according to estimates by the UN Fund for Population Activities, in the same year 22 million people worldwide died of preventable diseases. HIV/AIDS are killing approximately 3 million people annually; tuberculosis 1.7 million; and hepatitis B between one-half and 3 million people. Between 600,000 and 1.2 million people are estimated to die of measles every year; 2.5 million children under the age of 5 die of diarrhea; and 4 million of respiratory infections. In addition, cancer, for instance, kills 7 million people per year.²² Every year an estimated 529,000 women die during childbirth (a number much higher than battle-related deaths and equal the annual figure of homicides).²³

Similar comparisons could be made in relation to casualties of environmental catastrophes. These statistics show that threats to people's survival are manifold - and that the focus of today's early warning systems on violent conflict is greatly inadequate if we want to prevent the most significant threats to people's survival. Moreover, reducing the danger of such threats will create the conditions for social and political stability and avoid wars, which, in turn, will prevent further suffering caused by armed conflict.

Beyond the main claim of our research that early warning systems should also focus on threats beyond armed violence, we found that too many early warning efforts operate in virtual vacuums: They monitor, analyze, and generate more or less suitable recommendations for security providers that are more or less informed and convinced about the utility of such information. Most of today's early warning systems are not 'systems' as such - they are individual components of what should be full-fledged early warning (and response!) systems.

A number of questions remain unanswered - such as who should take the lead and coordinate early warning and response systems, how tasks can be distributed based on each partner's comparative advantage, and how different early warning systems, each of them focusing on very specific priority threats, can collaborate in order to avoid overlap and duplication

19 See at: <<http://www.humansecurityreport.info/figures/Figure1.6.pdf>>.

20 See at: <<http://www.humansecurityreport.info/figures/Figure1.7.pdf>>.

21 See at: <http://wmc.who.int/pdf/WHO_Euro_Health_Rep_ch1.pdf>, p. 10.

22 See at: <<http://www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/layne/Epidemiology%20220/diseases.pdf>>.

23 See at: <<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2004/presskit/docs/message2.doc>>.

in the collection of data and events, and in the generation of response measures that would be relevant to a variety of early warning systems (and their priority threat focus). These and other questions need to be answered in the abstract and by trial-and-error – yet the fundamental mind-shift towards human security-focused early warning must first happen before further technical challenges can be resolved.