FCE Citizen-based Early Warning and Early Response System:

A New Tool for Civil Society to Prevent Violent Conflict

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1. The Vision of Coexistence

“To truly achieve conflict prevention we must seek to build coexistence. As is visible through many examples of civil wars and ethnic identity conflicts, a lack of coexistence is a grave threat to individual and global human security. Learning to live together, to accept difference, and make the world safe for diversity is one of the great challenges for the 21 Century.

To build coexistence requires transforming violent conflict into peaceful processes of political and social change. Coexistence is a vision of society where conflicts are resolved non-violently, where there is human security for all, and where accepting diversity is not perceived as a threat to identity and culture. It is a framework of interaction in which groups show sufficient respect and tolerance of each other, that they fruitfully coexist and interact without conflict or assimilation. In order to build such a society, direct violence must be prevented and the transformation of violent structures, attitudes, and patterns of behaviour is required. Communities need to be self-empowered and work together to achieve human security”.

2. Sri Lanka – A Post War Scenario for Early Warning

The current political context in Sri Lanka (The post Geneva Talks 2006 period) is posing new human security challenges in the East and in the other districts of the country. The escalating trend of sporadic clashes between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) security forces on the ground and a number of policy level disagreements between the two parties led to the outbreak of a limited war in the East in August 2006. The limited war turned out to be a full-scale war in early 2007. This war resulted in a military re-positioning of the LTTE and the GoSL security forces. The LTTE ‘militarily’ were cleared from the East. The areas that used be under control of the LTTE were captured ‘militarily’ by GoSL security forces by August 2007. This war displaced more than 200 000 people (Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese) in the East. The displaced are now being resettled by the GoSL. About fifteen percent of the displaced population have not had access to their places of origin due to the imposition of the High Security Zones (in Muttur East) and land mines. The GoSL started its ‘democratization’ process of the Province by holding the Local Government Elections on March 10th 2008, in the Batticaloa District and the Provincial Council Election on May 10th 2008 in the entire Eastern Province. This situation indicated a positive prognosis for the re-establishment of civil and political administration in the Eastern Province despite anticipation of much violence by several analysts after the re-capture of the LTTE-controlled areas of the province by the Government. On January 16, 2008 the GoSL officially withdrew from the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) it had signed with the LTTE in February 2002 and launched major military offensives to capture the LTTE-controlled areas in the North. The LTTE have now been ‘cleared’ from the north too except for a small area in the Mullaitivu district. With the war, now apparently reaching its conclusion with a ‘defeat’ of the LTTE, the fighting between the security forces and the LTTE is causing immense trauma.

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and hardship to about two hundred and fifty thousand civilians who are still in this area. A large number of civilians are said to have been injured and several killed due to the fighting.

Simultaneous with the resumption of war in the North the LTTE has increased the number and the intensity of the killings of civilians in the other parts of the county by carrying out clandestine explosions and other means of violence. This has created more tension and latent ethnic rhetoric between the Sinhalese and Tamils in the South. This tension is more noticeable in the districts where Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims live together in large numbers. As a result, there is high propensity of ethnic rhetoric breaking out into violent strife especially in the Eastern Province.

The war, apart from the displacement, deaths and injuries to persons, has caused enormous damage to private and public property, and has created many a divide among the communities in the East. Loss of livelihoods reflected in the mass devastation of paddy fields, fishing restrictions imposed by the GoSL security forces and the collapse of the markets is developing tension among communities in the East. In addition, there is fear and suspicion among Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese due to the memories of past and recent atrocities (e.g. mass killings of civilians) during the war. For example, the early warning system of the Foundation for Co-Existence (FCE) has identified that the Tamil population in Muttur (a multi-ethnic area in the Eastern Province) indicate fear of reprisals by the Muslims over the atrocities inflicted upon Muslims by the LTTE in the past. The Muslims are now attempting to recapture their land that had been forcibly occupied by the LTTE and Tamils. About fourteen Tamil and Muslim militant groups are attempting to take control of the civilian population and markets in the East. There is a danger that an increased sense of loss, vulnerability, and deprivation can lead to greater mistrust and an evaporation of inter-ethnic good will, constituting a fertile ground for violence.

Though the war in the East has seemingly subsided, it has not, by any means, laid to rest the animosity between the communities living in the East. While general relations between the Hindu Tamils, Muslims and predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese communities have seen a rapid deterioration during the war, once the formal political structures regained control of the situation some political leaders have resorted to divisive rhetoric resulting in a further worsening of ethnic relations. In this context the utility of the FCE’s conflict early warning and response system is highly felt and the context gives more demand for its expansion into the Northern Province even as the war subsides and return and reintegration of the civic population takes place.
3. Human Security, A Basis for Conflict Prevention

“Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms - freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers. It requires concerted effort to develop norms, processes and institutions that systematically address insecurities. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision-making. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing, and both are required in most situations”.

“We must therefore broaden our view of what is meant by peace and security. Peace means much more than the absence of war. Human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratisation, disarmament, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.”

Ensuring human security has been presented as a means of reducing the human costs of violent conflict. We take this a step further and seek to employ human security as a preventative mechanism to violent conflict. FCE’s approach consists of a holistic and comprehensive vision and method, integrating early warning and early response with a conflict prevention through intervention strategies based on human security and a multiple engagement, multi-track approach to address sources of violence.”

4. Early Warning and Three Generations

Early Warning & Early Response

Early Warning is defined as the systematic collection and analysis of information coming from areas of crises for the purpose of: a) anticipating the escalation of violent conflict; b) the development of strategic responses to these crises; and c) the presentation of options to critical actors for the purposes of decision-making. In order to achieve the purpose, Early Warning follows the four steps given below:

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1. Collection of data (using specific indicators)
2. Analysis of the data (attaching meaning to indicators, setting it in context, recognition of crisis development)
3. Formulation of best/worst scenarios and response options
4. Communication to decision makers

What is interesting in the above definition is that the EW system itself is ‘the systematic collection and analysis of information’ rather than ‘giving a warning’. According to Austin, ‘Early Warning is a term that is often used to describe a variety of activities that are not all strictly Early Warning, including conflict analysis and monitoring, data analysis, risk assessment and advocacy.’ Therefore, not all EW systems follow all the steps listed above. While some of them like SIPRI, UPPSALA, PIOOM (these conduct monitoring and conflict analysis), KEDS, PANDA WEIS, GEDS, State Failure Project (these conduct model data analysis) focus on only (1) collection of data and (2) analysis of the data. Some others like International Crisis Group lobby the international community to take action by following all the outlined steps. If a system is to be referred to as an Early Warning system, its minimum requirement is to conduct at least information gathering and analysis.

Early Response (Action) is often used in conjunction with ‘Early Warning’. The term refers to either ‘preventive action’ or ‘early response action’. According to Diller, early response is defined as a “process of consultation, policymaking, planning, and action to reduce or avoid armed conflict. These processes include: (a) diplomatic/political; (b) military/security, (c) humanitarian; and (d) development/economic activity.” It means that there exist various kinds of ER actors: UN, regional governments, individual governments, NGOs, individuals and so on.

Three Generations

First Generation
The first generation early warning systems are the systems where the entire early warning mechanism (including conflict monitoring) was based outside the conflict region (“Headquarter-based” namely, in the West. In addition, EW systems which use only quantitative approaches are included in the first generation.

Second Generation
They conduct monitoring within conflict countries and regions. However, analysis is still conducted outside conflict countries (the West).

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**Third Generation**

The third generation early warning systems are entirely located in the conflict regions. They integrate EW and ER together as simultaneous processes.

**First Generation**

According to Rupesinghe’s definition, a first generation EW system monitors and analyses conflict outside the conflict regions – in the western countries. It does not intend to monitor conflict within particular conflict countries and regions. Instead, it uses secondary sources like newspapers in collecting information. Therefore, EW systems which adopt only quantitative approaches in the western countries are included in the first generation. While the source of information in the first generation initially came from newspapers, it has shifted to the much denser and more even coverage of on-line newswire sources such as Reuters. Moreover, academic papers and reports by NGO and governmental organisations are also used sometimes.

The pioneer of the first generation EW is World Event Interaction Survey (WEIS) by McCleland at the University of Southern California in the early 1960s. ‘He was interested in quantitatively mapping behavioural events between states, especially in crises. He developed a coding system for tracking the tempo and magnitude of cooperative and conflictual events in a political crisis’. The WEIS coded public events reported daily in the New York Times. Then, Edward Azar developed Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB) in 1982. GEDS, KEDS, PANDA, LIVA, MAR, PIOOM and State Failure Project to mention some are included in the first generation. It is noteworthy that the first generation EW systems were developed in the United States and the academics played an important role in taking initiatives in developing those systems. The objectives of the first generation systems are not limited to providing early warning for interventions but conflict analysis itself.

The problems of the first generation are consistent with those of quantitative approaches; they use limited secondary sources which do not provide any certainty about their accuracy and they have difficulty in predicting eruption of armed conflict accurately. However, they are good at interpreting trends, so as to be called ‘good enough models’.

Ramsbotham et al states that “these statistical approaches blur the case-specific and context-specific information which area experts would use”. In addition, according to Austin, “grievance is not an empirical state and the search for the causes of conflict outside of perception will remain similar to a search for unicorns … Levels of grievance tolerance vary

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http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/WPP.APPENII.HTM


considerably from person to person and cannot be known empirically – only conceptually. As a result, quantitative early warning systems will remain to be a quest for a mythical beast”.\textsuperscript{17} However, it is important to note that it is useful to monitor and recognize the trends of latent armed conflict, particularly where figures of human rights violations are shown.\textsuperscript{18} According to Gurr and Moore, ‘quantitative scholars began to agree that more macro-level structural models are primarily useful for yielding risk assessments that can guide analysis while more micro-level approaches are invaluable in the actual monitoring process and anticipation of conflict’.\textsuperscript{19}

They basically focus on predicting violent conflict and conflict analysis and do not have effective procedures to communicate with decision-makers for early response. EW and ER are seen as completely separated. In the first generation EW/ER systems, early response was expected to be carried out by Track 1 actors such as the UN, regional governments and individual governments (during the Cold War by the US and the USSR). However, the past record shows that they have seldom intervened in impending armed conflict due to political, situational, psychological, institutional hindrances. Particularly, the UN has been held back by the discipline of non-intervention.

**Second Generation**

A characteristic of the second generation EW systems is that they conduct monitoring within conflict countries and regions. However, analysis is still conducted outside conflict countries (in the West). These systems were initiated by INGOs such as International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and FAST and they employ field-based analysts, often posted within the region in question, to monitor and conduct specific research, which enable them to read the context of conflict. The resulting recommendations are then lobbied with key decision makers and policy makers.\textsuperscript{20} While the first generation EW systems focus on conflict analysis and do not have effective procedure to communicate with key decision-makers, the second generation EW systems adopted monitoring on the ground, conduct risk assessment researches and carry out active lobbying.

The advantage of qualitative approaches is that ‘qualitative monitoring offers vastly more content-rich and contextual information than quantitative statistical analysis’.\textsuperscript{21} In particular, people’s perceptions are only gained from monitoring along with the context which exists in a conflict area. Ramsbotham et al insists that ‘given the current state of the art, qualitative monitoring is likely to be most useful for gaining early warning of conflict in particular cases: the expertise of the area scholar and the local observer, steeped in situational knowledge, is difficult to beat’.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Austin, A. (2004) op.cit.
\textsuperscript{18} Rupesinghe, K. with Anderlini, S. N. (1998) op.cit, p.76.
\textsuperscript{20} Austin, A. (2004) op.cit.
\textsuperscript{22} Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T. & Miall, H. (2005) op.cit, p. 114.
On the other hand, there are some significant problems. For example, there are the problems of noise and information overload.\(^{23}\) In addition, it is seen as too subjective.\(^{24}\) It is feared that the data collected by qualitative approaches are biased. This implies that some intervention recommendations based on qualitative researches are not taken seriously or questioned by decision makers.

The FAST system of the Swiss Peace Foundation is a very unique system among the second generation systems, because it developed an EW system which employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It has enabled more comprehensive EW. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are literally the combination of both methodologies. In the previous section, it was pointed out that both qualitative (social constructionist) and quantitative (positivist) approaches have some defects. Considering the characteristics of the defects, in spite of the fact that they have the fundamental differences, it seems to be possible to complement each other’s weak points. Comparatively - not completely - objective quantitative approaches can be used as ‘good enough’\(^{25}\) models to interpret the ways in which conflict is more likely to occur. Since it can complement qualitative approaches’ subjectivity, intervention options based on both approaches are more reliable and can be taken seriously by policy makers or end users and can be applied vice versa too. The field which quantitative approaches cannot gauge such as people’s perceptions is complemented by qualitative approaches.

The actors of Early Response in the second generation are not different from those of the first; actors in ER in the second generation are also the UN, regional governments and individual governments. While people have witnessed development in Early Warning methodologies, early response has seldom taken place in both the first and second generation EW/ER systems; the most serious issue - the gap between EW and ER - remains to be answered.

**Macro and Micro**

The differences between the first and second generations were discussed from the perspective of data collection and analytical frameworks. However, the difference between the third and second generations cannot be discussed from the said perspective because the third generation derives its EW methodology from the second generation - particularly from the FAST system. Then, a “macro-micro perspective” becomes the key to this argument. This paper looks at this point by referring to Rupesinghe and Matveeva, who emphasise two common defects in the first and second generations.

1. Firstly, he argues that they are too far from conflict context to enable effective early response. Whereas the monitoring and analysis are conducted mainly in the West, actual conflicting situations are located in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia. Due to the geographic and cultural differences, the early warning agencies in the West have little influence over the institutions that

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23 Ibid.
could execute preventive diplomacy in actual conflict. As a result, early response is less likely to follow early warning. In addition to this, the distance between the possible conflict areas and the West lessens the international community’s motivation to intervene. In fact, proximity of conflict areas to the EU and the US is one of the factors that would prompt the international community to respond.

2. Secondly, they exclude micro level conflict scenarios and the contributing factors. The unit of analysis in the first and second generation EW/ER systems is mostly ‘states’; they focus on identifying the states where violent conflict may take place. As the case of Sri Lanka illustrates, while there is the high-intensity armed conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), there exists another low intensity conflict between the Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala populations in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The first and second generations can identify at most the former conflict. In order to respond to the latter kind of complex situation, the international community is not the best actor.

In this context, the necessity of a micro level a EW and ER system has been perceived and that has brought about third generation EW and ER systems.

Third Generation

A third generation EW/ER system is largely different from first and second generations. While the first and second generations were created by outsiders for someone else in conflict regions, the third generation was created by people in conflict areas for themselves. It can be referred as “Early Warning and Early Response system of citizens, by citizens and for citizens.” What makes it unique is its presence and analysis in conflict areas and the strong link of EW and ER. The logic behind them is that closeness to the conflict area enables one to understand the situation better and intervene rapidly and appropriately. By so doing, it intends to reduce the number of victims by preventing direct violence in community-based conflicts (micro-conflict). Considering the fact that it derives its risk assessment methodology for early warning from the second generation – most of the third generation employ FAST’s combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, -it can be said that the creation of the third generation EW/ER systems were highly oriented toward intervention. While the third generation keeps the basis of EW/ER processes such as data collection, data analysis, scenario making, planning of intervention, transmitting the plan, substantial intervention, it is unique in size, cost, indicators it uses, actors and the speed of intervention. These can be explained by the third generation’s compactness (Micro-EW/ER). Moreover, although not all EW/ER systems follow all the steps of EW/ER, the third generation which integrates EW and ER takes all the procedure from data collection to intervention. Currently, there exist two kinds of actors in the third generation EW/ER: local NGOs and (non-western) regional governments. The former

includes the Foundation for Co-Existence (FCE) in Sri Lanka, FEWER Africa and FEWER Eurasia. The latter includes Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN).

5. FCE Human Security Program: An Integrated Approach

The Eastern Province of Sri Lanka is ethnically the most diversified geographical region of the country. There are approximately 636,739 Tamils, 454,526 Muslims, 322,542 Sinhalese and 5,765 other ethnic groups living in this region. This high ethnic blend within the region caused concern during the first phase of the Ceasefire Agreement (2002) when clashes erupted between communities mainly regarding land issues, and political killings. At this point experts in the field of conflict studies led by Dr Kumar Rupesinghe launched a baseline survey to identify potential threats to Human Security that might develop in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The reasons behind this survey were not only governed by the communal clashes that took place in the province but also the for the fact that most of the incidents taking place were indicative of developing a post war situation of endangering human security in the province even as in the past.

According to the findings of the survey it was revealed that upholding co-existence amongst the communities in the Eastern province was mandatory for ensuring Human Security in the post war scenario( during ceasefire). The challenge was to improvise a mechanism for early identification of conflict sensitive scenarios at the grass roots level and to address them in a timely manner in order to bring about co-existence among communities whilst enhancing the Human Security situation of the Province. It was expected that even though the system will not directly involve resolving the conflict between the main protagonists, it will be a complementary mechanism for sustaining peace on the ground in the post war period.

The Foundation for Coexistence began work in 2003. It came together with the goal of developing an effective early warning and early response mechanism for the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka (Later it and expanded it to the district of Mannar, Nuwara Eliya and Colombo slum dwellings also). FCE’s approach to early warning was an experimental effort to integrate early warning and early response into a common framework. It envisaged discovering a third generation early warning system in practice. The programme was designed based on a model for a citizen-based early warning system (see below). This model requires the development of tools and techniques such as standard formats for events data collecting, databases for information storage and indicators for analysis. It incorporates an information centre which collates, document and analyse information in order to deliver early warning. The field monitors based in the conflict region monitor the ground situation through peace and conflict indicators and report it to the information centre on a daily basis. The model includes an early response unit which coordinates with the information centre in implementing early response in practice through local early response networks. The dissemination of information to the stakeholders is implemented through an advocacy program which includes producing daily, monthly and annual reports and holding monthly roundtable discussions with multilateral agencies. There is an expert advisory group for the quality control of the system. Today, FCE has adapted this model to suit the ground situation and further expanded to incorporate the lessons learnt through the past five years of implementation of early warning and early response in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka.
A model for a citizen-based early warning system

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Main components of FCE’s Citizen-Based Early Warning and Response System

b) Early Warning: Information Gathering, Analysis and Dissemination

The key achievement of the Foundation for Co-Existence in its venture into conflict early warning during the past five years is the development of computer software (FCEWARN) for early warning. International expert evaluators in the science of conflict prevention have recognized the FCE’s software as a ‘micro system.’ The unique feature of the FCE’s software system is that it can be utilized to monitor conflicts at the ‘micro’ level especially, at the village level. This software is combined with complementary Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software that visualizes spatial dimensions of conflict and peace indicators. The FCE’s system is based on events data method. But, it can be customized to either the super-events method or situation analysis method depending on the requirements of the early warning agency using it. The FCE’s software has the ability to quantify conflict and peace indicators and present them in terms of descriptive statistics such as tabulations and graphs. The ability to quantification and presenting spatial data makes this software’s utility for deriving prognosis on future conflicts. The FCE’s software has a flexible database system that can be manipulated in the wishes of the early warning agency in order to automatically extract the reports it requires. The software can be used either on a stand alone computer or a Local Area Network (LAN) server or a Wide Area Network Server (WAN) or in a web-based country or a regional early warning network.
The Foundation for Co-Existence continues Research and Development (R&D) on its conflict early warning software. It will soon be upgraded with a pattern recognition tool that will be in-built in the software.

FCE’s early warning system of Sri Lanka is mainly based on local information sources. At the bottom level of the information flow FCE has developed a unique community-based network made up of Co-Existence Committees (CECs) and other community based networks at the grassroots level. These committees spread across the province (83 in number) and comprise of representatives from different ethnic groups (Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese), religious leaders, women’s organisations, traders organisations and youths’ organisations (Approximately 4000 in number). The members of these committees have been trained and mobilised to monitor and identify the peace and conflict indicators at local levels. Conversely, they serve as a mechanism for implementing early actions at the grassroots level.

Secondly, FCE’s early warning system consists of thirty seven field monitors operating in the conflict zone. They are organic members of the communities they represent. They collect local information on peace and conflict indicators and send it to the information centre in Colombo in a specific format on a daily basis. (This format has been developed by FCE in collaboration with the Swiss peace foundation). As a result, the information centre in Colombo (which is the central coordinating hub of the early warning and early response actions) receives 30 event data forms in the least a day. In total this amounts to 600 event data on average per month. This density of first hand information allows for adept trend analysis at the early warning stage. The field monitors collect information through co-existence committees, state and non-state actors, local media and interpersonal relationships.

Thirdly, the FCE’s early warning system has a Human Security Information Centre that acts as the central coordination hub of the entire early warning and response mechanism. It maintains the FCEWARN software system and centrally generates early warning products that support the early response functions in the conflict zone by the field monitors and the CECs. The Human Security Information Centre is a central repository of all information on peace and conflict and provides technical support for the field monitors and the CECs to undertake interventions to prevent conflicts. The Human Security Information Centre is connected with seven peripheral Information Units (District Based) in the conflict zone (See illustration below).
b) Early Warning Products

The FCE’s early warning system has developed a number of products to provide conflict early warning (*in the Sri Lankan context*). These products may not necessarily be relevant to an early warning agency in another context but, the system has the flexibility to be customized in order to produce the outputs such different context requires.

- **Descriptive Statistics (Quantitative Data) and Spatial (GIS) Data:** The immediate products that the FCE’s system can generate for identifying early warning signals are the quantitative and spatial data. These outputs can be obtained from the system at any given point time in terms of a cross-section or a piece of time-series. The field monitors and the information analysts in the FCE’s system study the spatial and quantitative outputs on a daily basis and build predictions.

- **Daily Human Security Situation Report** - The Daily Human Security Situation Report is a summary of key conflictive and cooperative events that have taken place in the conflict zone during a day coupled with other selected media reports relating to the Human Security situation. The report has an outreach of approximately 1200 recipients who are either directly or indirectly involved as a stakeholder to the conflict in Sri
Lanka. This information supports early response interventions in the field level as well as at the policy making level.

- **SMS Alerts** - The FCE’s Short Message (SMS) Alerts through mobile phone units are a very efficient and effective method of information sharing for generating conflict early warnings at different levels for different types of actions in either prevention or mitigation of violence in a given geographic location. This effectively addresses the function of an Early Warning system which is sending the right information at the right time for the right people to take timely action for prevention of conflicts. The FCE’s system has the flexibility to combine mobile communication with the early warning software system for increasing efficiency.

- **Monthly Human Security Risk Assessment Reports and Special Reports on Focused Issues** – The Human Security Information Centre of the FCE’s Early Warning System produces Monthly Human Security Risk Assessment Reports and Special Reports on Focused Issues that reaches out to a wide range of stakeholders (at track III, II and I levels) including the state and non-state armed actors. These report utilize both qualitative and quantitative techniques of analyzing and presenting data and are primarily expected to update policy makers and key decision makers and those who are considered as deep-drivers of the conflict.

- **Roundtable Meetings** – The FCE’s early warning system convenes Roundtable meetings on Human Security as part of its strategy for influencing policy. The roundtable meetings are held on a monthly basis in which the participation of track I level representatives takes place. The participants include a spectrum of decision makers ranging from the government delegates, diplomats and heads of international and national NGOs. The FCE’s field monitors and information analysts present reports in these roundtable meetings on the state of human security in the conflict zone under surveillance of the early warning system. On top, is presented a political analysis of the overall situation of the country by the FCE. After the presentations a plenary is encouraged where deliberations on policy action to improve the state of human security in the conflict zone takes place. The key feature of the roundtable meetings is that the field monitors and the policy makers gain the opportunity to exchange information.
6. Early Response Mechanism

In parallel to the Early Warning System the Foundation for Co-Existence (FCE) has been implementing a citizen based early response mechanism. This system has intervened in a recorded number of 156 cases of conflict. Four independent evaluations by international experts in the science of conflict resolution have attested that this system has prevented or mitigated or contributed to resolve conflicts.

The FCE’s early response system is based on the application of multi-track diplomacy. Multi-track diplomacy is the implementation of conflict prevention interventions from different vantage points within a ‘citizen based network’. It emphasizes making citizens a major stakeholder in the process of transforming the conflict. “Multi-track diplomacy is based on two principles. The first is that the greater the degree of concern and effort there is to prevent or resolve a conflict, the greater the chance of success. What is intended is that citizens share the burden of reconciliation, conflict resolution and networking to revive and transform relationships. The second principle is that the limitations of each actor or sector can be overcome through cooperation and coordination with others. What is meant here is that strategic sectors of society such as business elites, trade unions, professional organizations, religious organizations, war victims, NGOs, and community leaders are involved in sharing the burden of conflict transformation.”

It is evident from the ‘multi track diplomacy’ approach that the success rate of an early response process depends on two- on many occasions social- variables. They are the degree of effort invested in order to prevent and the amount of limitations to intervene in a conflict. However, the thesis explains that the limitations to intervene can be overcome or perhaps more pragmatically minimized by the cooperation and coordination of the stakeholders. Therefore, in overall the success rate of the FCE’s early response mechanism can be derived as follows.

\[ S = f(e, L) \]

As implied by the first principle of the ‘multi track diplomacy’ the higher the degree of effort of the stakeholders to intervene through different vantage points in a conflict the greater the rate of realizable success. As a result, the degree of effort \((e)\) is positively related to the rate of

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30 As at October 25, 2008
realizable or achievable success of the early response process. The second principle of ‘multi track diplomacy’ suggests that the limitations to intervene can be overcome by the coordination and cooperation of the stakeholders to the conflict. Therefore, the Limitations to Intervene (L) are inversely related to the degree of cooperation and coordination of the stakeholders to the conflict.

Therefore, $S \propto e$ and $L \propto 1/C$ where $C =$ Degree of Cooperation and Coordination of the stakeholders.

This derivation of principles brings about two essential conditions for the application of FCE’s early response mechanism in any context. In light of the above analysis, the success rate ($S$) of an early response process can be simply explained as a positive function of the degree of effort to intervene ($e$) and the amount of cooperation and coordination of the stakeholders to the conflict ($C$).

Therefore, $S = f(e, C)$

The FCE’s early response system requires the early response agency to focus on these pre conditions when implementing early response processes. The early response agency has to have built, in the conflict zone, sufficient capacity and power of mobilization to solicit substantial amount of stakeholder effort from different vantage points. The early response agency and the system also have to have good coordination skills in-built in order to overcome the limitations by sharing the burden. Therefore, the early response agency adopting the FCE’s system should attempt to fulfill the following conditions proper, at least, to the maximum extent possible.

a. A solid network of Field Monitors: The field monitors are the primary coordinating hubs of information and early response interventions in the conflict zone. They collect and analyze information and initiate early response processes to prevent conflicts. When adopting the FCE’s early response systems’ methodology the early response agency has to be critical about three primary standards in the field monitors. The field monitors have to have excellent ‘analytical skills’. They should have the skills or potential to have skills in using computer technology and other audio visual material for analysis. Secondly, the field monitors should have dense social networks. These networks should spread ‘near-evenly’ with all stakeholders in the conflict zone including the conflicting parties. Thirdly, the field monitors have to have substantial influence on the masses and/or stakeholders in the conflict zone. Without fulfilling these conditions an individual cannot be identified as field monitor proper in the FCE’s method of early warning and early response. The early response agency adopting FCE’s system has to substantially invest in the field monitors’ analytical skills, social networks and influence.

Therefore, the formula for the individual field monitor proper can be written as follows.

$m = \text{value of individual field monitor proper} $
$a = \text{analytical skills level of the individual} $
$n = \text{density of social networks of the individual} $
i= individual’s influence on the masses and/or stakeholders in the conflict zone

Therefore, 
m= a+ n+ i

In this view, the value of the network of the field monitors proper can be explained as follows.

\[ \sum m = \sum a + \sum n + \sum i \]

Hence, where \( \sum m=M, \sum a=A, \sum n=N, \) and \( \sum i= I \) the value of the Field Monitors’ Network Proper can be \( M=A+N+I \). The early response agency attempting to maximize the value of the field monitors’ network proper should have maximum \( M (\partial M/\partial A+\partial M/\partial N+\partial M/\partial I=0) \).

b. Capacity to Intervene: The early response agency adopting the FCE’s system has to have built substantial capacity to intervene in conflicts. A form of building such capacity is to have fostered formal inter-ethnic/cultural/strata associations. The Co-Existence Committee (CEC) model in the case of Sri Lanka is an example. The CECs fostered by the Foundation for Co-Existence in Sri Lanka are formal associations of ethnic groups in the conflict zone. The CECs have been formed by profession such as traders, farmers, youths, women, religious dignitaries etc. as well as by the geographic area. The key feature of the CECs in case of Sri Lanka is that they are inter-ethnic. The members of the CECs are selected based on the individual’s social networks (N) and the influence (I) they command on their population. Thus, for instance, community leaders, opinion leaders, women’s activists, government officials and non-state officials become members of the Co-Existence Committees. The types and the optimal amount of CECs to be fostered are determined by the early response agency especially, after a profound analysis of the conflicts in the target area has been carried out. An Important aspect of forming inter-ethnic associations such as the CECs is that the early response agency fostering such associations should ensure their long term sustainability. The key outcome of a dense network of formal inter-ethnic associational forms (like the CECs) is that they increase the capacity for the early response agency to intervene in conflicts. In Sri Lanka the FCE has fostered an average of one sixty (60) member CEC for an average population of fifteen thousand (15,000).

c. Impartiality, Neutrality and Disinterestedness: The early response agency adopting the FCE’s method has to maintain impartiality, neutrality and disinterestedness. This implies that the entire early response system has to assume the role of a ‘near’ mediator. Any element in the early response system cannot partake in the conflict or the conflicting parties’ interests. The early response agency or the elements in the early response system cannot expect a direct or indirect introvert gain either from the process or the outcome of an early response intervention it undertakes. The early response system or the elements in the system should not have subjective interests in the conflict it intervenes.

d. The FCE’s early response method requires the system to have established clear access to the policy makers, especially in the conflict zone. Some conflicts, upon which early
response processes are driven, require the intervention of the track 1 level actors (especially, policy makers) in order to yield positive outcomes even at the grassroots level. Therefore, the early response system has to have systematic links between the grassroots level early response tools and the track 1 level policy makers and it has to have proper criteria for the selection of the level/s of intervention required versus the conflict warned of.

The following illustration (Table 2) and the ensuing description shows how the FCE’s early response system works in practice.

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“Column B of Table 2 illustrates the key steps of the FCE’s Early Response system. Column A presents the clusters of key actors that drive the intervention process at each step. Column C depicts the key intervention tools each group of actors use at different stages of the system.”
The FCE’s field monitors, Co-Existence Committees (CECs) and the Human Security (HS) Information Analysts identify a precipitating event or a situation. The indicators of the Early Warning System, Micro System Database and the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Maps help them identify a precipitating event or a situation. When a conflict precipitate is identified the field monitors, CECs and the Human Security Information Centre together start the backward and forward analysis processes. They zoom into the databases and the GIS maps and single out the events data relating to the precipitating event. On the other hand, the field monitors, CECs and the Information Analysts collect more information on the problem within the current situation. They analyse both past and present information and establish prognosis for the issue concerned, identify and classify the stakeholders and potential interveners. The CECs, field level contacts, the media, GIS mapping, micro system database (statistical) indicators and the knowledge of the field monitors become highly instrumental in establishing ‘correct’ prognosis of the conflict. The next task for the Early Response system is to estimate the time period for the actual onset of violence. This is identified as the ‘lull’ in a conflict by Horowitz (2001) where the consensus building for violence takes place and becomes the most critical point in the Early Response process for, errors in timing for the onset of violence can have the entire intervention effort in vain. The system uses conflict mapping tools with the support of past and present information, the estimated intensity of hostile relationships and the estimated intensity of cooperative relationships/events weighted (quantitatively and qualitatively) by the Early Warning System’s indicators for estimating the ‘correct’ timing for the actual onset of violence. The timing can vary from a few hours to a few months or years. When the timing is identified the field monitors, the CECs and the Human Security Information Centre plan the intervention process. They select the best practices and methods to intervene, establish partnerships with the stakeholders and have communication with track 1, 11 and 111 level potential interveners as necessary. In case of short ‘lull’ the planing of the interventions takes only several minutes. Once the planing is assured the system undertakes the intervention through holding negotiations, mediations, meetings and facilitating referrals of stakeholders and issues to other levels and entities until the threat for the onset of violence is reduced. Theoretically explaining, the intervention process of the FCE’s Early Response system substantially expands the ‘timing’ and dilutes the intensity of the ‘lull’ of the conflict. This is achieved by increasing the capacity to prevent violence (Varshney, 2002 and United States Institute of Peace, 2003) in societies. The mobilization of the CECs as formal inter-ethnic associations, the field monitors constituting a group of different ethnicities and religions and the other dense networks the FCE’s Early response system has acquired in the past increase the capacity to intervene. The final but, continuous part of the FCE’s Early Response system is the follow up process. The system reviews the outcomes of one instance of intervention and builds analysis and prognosis for another phase of intervention. This cycle continues until the conditions to the precipitating event are transformed or diluted to a satisfactory level.34

Case Study – Kattankudy (2008)

On May 22, 2008 the local leader of the TMVP (Tamil Militant Group that later assumed power as a political party) was assassinated by an unidentified gun man in front of a mosque in Kattankudy, Batticaloa of the Eastern Province. (Kattankudy is a densely populated Muslim Township in the Batticaloa district surrounded by a large number of Tamil villages.) There was an immediate retaliation to this incident by the TMVP militant group, who presumed that the assassination of their local leader was perpetrated by the Muslims, by killing three Muslims in the vicinity. Simultaneously, the FCE’s field monitors found an incident of abduction of two Muslims who were from Eravoor (another Muslim Township in the district surrounded by many Tamil villages) by the Tamil militants. Townships of Kattankudy and Eravoor have witnessed long term atrocities between Tamils and Muslims during the recent history despite Tamils have been depending on Muslims in these two townships for trade and conversely, the Muslims on Tamils for supplies of agricultural and fishery produce. The FCE’s Human Security Team in Batticaloa alarmed that this situation could lead to the outbreak of ethnic violence in the district. They also identified that those conflictive events were taking place in the aftermath of a provincial council election (on May 10, 2008) in which the TMVP (political group) had assumed power with the influence of the central government over the Muslims who gained the majority of the seats. The FCE’s Human Security Team decided to intervene in this conflict and established contacts with the Mosque federations of the Muslims, the TMVP and the Tamil community leaders in the district through the support of its influential network of the Co-Existence Committees (CECs). Simultaneously, the FCE’s team established contacts with the Tamil (TMVP) and Muslim (Hisbulla Faction) political parties in the newly elected provincial council. The Human Security Team’s effort was to bring about negotiations between the TMVP and the Muslim community in Kattankudy and Earvoor. No sooner had this intervention was planned than acute violence broke out in Eravoor on May 26, 2008 between Muslims and Tamils following false rumours of two Tamil women being killed by Muslims and an abduction of a Muslim by Tamil militants. This resulted in an actual death of one Muslim woman by police gunfire. This situation was exacerbated by another false rumour of a Muslim being killed by Tamil militants in Kattankudy on June 05, 2008. It resulted in the outbreak of large-scale violence between Muslim youths and Tamils where 35 people were injured along with extensive damage to private and public property. The FCE’s human security team rapidly re-visited its intervention plans meanwhile and used its influence at track 1 (H.E. the president) track 11 (the provincial council and the Chief Minister) and track 111(TMVP local leadership, Mosque federations and Tamil community leaders) levels to bring the conflicting parties to negotiation. This effort yielded positive results where negotiations took place between the police and the security establishments and the Muslim and Tamil Community leaders on June 06, 2008 in Batticaloa. Subsequently, a higher level negotiation took place on the same day between the chief minister of the province (TMVP), the mosque federations and the Tamil village leaders. These negotiations helped curbing violence in Kattankudy and Eravoor townships. In order to contain the violent situation further the FCE facilitated a negotiation meeting between the Muslim and Tamil community leaders, the mosque federation representatives and a group of special representatives of H.E. the President.

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35 This case study was extracted from Endaragalle, D (forthcoming) ‘Theoretical Justifications for FCE’s Early Warning and Early Response system.’ In Rupesinghe, K. (ed.) Responding to Civil War. Colombo: The Foundation for Co-Existence.
in Colombo. In all these negotiations the parties made commitment to implement action together to curb communal violence in the Batticaloa District and the situation returned to ‘normal’ in a few days’ time.

7. Applicability to Other Countries’ Conflicts

**Necessary Condition**
1. Inter-communal conflict (Not political conflict and no military confrontation)

**Subordinate Conditions**
2. Causes of conflict are grievances (Neither factional conflict nor greed)
3. Cooperation of politicians and Police

Necessary condition means whether the FCE’s EW/ER system can be applied to a particular violent conflict or not; that is, only the applicability of the system. On the other hand, subordinate conditions decide if the system will work in the violent conflict “effectively”.

**Necessary Condition**

1. Inter-communal conflict

The FCE’s EW/ER system can be applied to inter-communal conflict, not to political conflict. This system is difficult to be applied to interstate conflicts. The case study of Sri Lankan shows that it is very difficult for the FCE to intervene in the political conflict between the GoSL and the LTTE; however, it works well at the inter-communal conflict in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The FCE’s EW/ER system has been developed to intervene in micro-level conflict.

By inter-communal conflict, this paper means a conflict carried out by ethnically divided communities (religion, race, language etc...) and the form of conflict is not military confrontation. Since long-standing hatred is at the base of most of the inter-communal conflicts, just a trivial matter between age-old rival communities can trigger a violent inter-communal conflict. A characteristic of inter-communal conflict is that there are many sporadic conflicts. Although killings are sometimes carried out by military personnel who represent their communities, it is actually the civilians’ consensus for violence that makes it easier for armed factors to engage in killings, abductions or harassments.

This paper defines political conflicts as territory or government conflicts, a definition that is based on the SIPRI Yearbook and Wallensteen. According to the SIPRI Yearbook 2008, there were 14 major armed conflicts in 2007 and they all belong to either territory or government conflict categories. SIPRI defines ‘a major armed conflict’ as:

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‘a contested incompatibility concerning government or territory that results in
the use the military forces of 2 parties, at least 1 of which is the government of a
state, at least 1,000 battle related deaths in any single year.’

In the current major armed conflict, political will to procure territory and the governance of the
state play significant roles as the driving forces of the conflicting parties. Major armed
conflicts are highly militarized, where heavy weapons are used. In the present case, since at
least one of the conflict parties is the government of a state which is highly militarized, they
require Track 1 solutions to settle the conflict, which includes humanitarian intervention
(military intervention) or a third party intervention at Track 1 level (inter-governmental
organisations, governments etc.). There are more suitable actors who could play crucial roles
than civil society organisations such as the FCE in political conflicts (can also be called as
‘macro’ conflict). For example, inter-governmental organisations such as the UN, its Peace
Keeping Operation, NATO and OSCE are expected to play this role. Macedonia is often taken
as a successful case of EW/ER at a Track 1 level.

Subordinate Conditions

(1) Does the FCE’s EW/ER system work at factional conflict?
Ramsbotham et al categorise non-interstate conflict (intrastate conflict) into three types:
revolution/ideology, identity/secession and factional conflict. Revolution/ideology conflict is
concerned with “changing the nature of government in a state.”³⁹ This category includes a
change from capitalist to socialist, dictatorship to democracy and secular to Islamic. This
category is consistent with SIPRI’s government conflict, which has already been discussed.
Identity/secession conflict is related to ‘the relative status of communities’ or “communal
groups” in relation to the state.⁴⁰ This category can be seen as corresponding with SIPRI’s
territory conflict. This paper defined the above two conflicts as “political conflicts”. The
reason why the FCE’s EW/ER system cannot be applied to these conflicts is due to the lack of
capacity for a FCE-type EW/ER system in military confrontation in which the government is
involved. Although the same explanation applies to factional conflicts, the reason is quite
different. Without regard to military confrontation, the nature of factional conflict limits the
effectiveness of the FCE’s EW/ER system. Ramsbotham et al argue that factional conflict is
‘solenly about the competing interests or power struggles of political or criminal factions.
This may be seen to coincide with a category of “economic opportunity” conflicts. It covers coups
d’état, intra-elite power struggle, brigandage, criminality and warlordism, where the aim is to
usurp, seize or retain state power merely to further economic and other interests.”⁴¹
Theoretically, it is very difficult for the FCE’s EW/ER system, which relies on stakeholders’
good will, to prevent factional conflict because violence is strategically used in this conflict
until conflict parties achieve their goals. It is worth noting here that this point is not irrelevant

⁴⁰ Ibid.
⁴¹ Ibid.
to the security of the practitioners of EW/ER. Once the conflict parties perceive that the practitioners are attempting to hinder their main goals, they can be a target.

(2) Will for Peace
Stakeholders’ and people’s will for peace is a significant factor for a successful intervention. *The greater the degree of concern and effort there is to prevent or resolve a conflict, the greater the chance of success.* What possibly and actually hinders interventions are politicians’ will for violence, their connivance in violent acts and partial and inactive Police. When violence intensifies, cooperation with the government armed forces and Police is crucial. However, in some cases, government military forces are part of the conflict party and the Police are inactive. Even though they are not conflict parties, they sometimes do not intervene in violent conflicts due to political dynamics. If politicians perceive that their interventions in certain conflicts would create negative impacts on their governance, they would not take any useful actions. Under these circumstances, the FCE’s joint intervention strategy with stakeholders loses its strength.

8. Applicability in Nepal – a Case Study

The FCE’s EW/ER system has massive potential to be applied to the context of Nepal. Nepal is a country that has experienced a deadly conflict between the Maoist and royalist government - categorised as a political conflict -from 1996 to 2006. However, after the 2006 ceasefire agreement, inter-communal violence emerged in the Terai region, where the Madhesi is a majority. The latter is the conflict where the EW/ER system could possibly be employed. ‘An estimated 49% of the country’s population live in the Terai region. The Madhesi, or plains folk, seek autonomy to free themselves from what they feel is domination by Pahadis from the more mountainous parts of northern Nepal. The Madeshis also have closer ties to India than other regions of Nepal. The Madeshis have pressed for regional autonomy for the Terai region where most Madeshi live. Other ethnic groups in the Terai region have opposed this.’

More specifically, in Kapilvastu, there has been a conflict between Madhesi landlords, most notably the Khans and landless Pahadis. Fast Update of Swiss Peace illustrates an instance of inter-communal violence triggered by the killing of Moid Khan.

‘The most worrying incident of inter-communal tension took place in Kapilbastu, Dang and Rupendehi in the western plains from 16 to 20 September, where an unknown group killed Muslim landlord Abdul Moid Khan, who was also a leader of a formerly active anti-Maoist resistance group in Kapilbatsu. Enraged Moid supporters (mostly Muslims and Hindu-Madheshis) and criminal elements from across the border, who suspected the CPN-M (Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist) behind the killing, subsequently attacked houses of “hill” Nepalis, the security forces and CPN-M camps, torched vehicles and looted property. The next day, “hill” Nepalis retaliated in Rupendehi by attacking Madhesis and vandalizing a mosque. Altogether14 lost their lives during these incidents (all of them suspected

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42 Vaughn, B. (2008) Nepal: Political Developments and Bilateral Relations with the United States. Congressional Research Service. October 23. This paper was prepared for members and committees of congress.
to be CPN-M members and “hill” Nepalis), while over 500 houses were destroyed and around 5,000 persons temporarily displaced. On 20 September, angry ‘hill’ Nepalis (reportedly backed by the CPN-M) attacked and killed three more Madhesi leaders believed to be involved in the violence of 16 September. The situation in the Western Terai, which has a history of violence between hill-settlers and Muslim landlords, remains tense. The CPN-M, who had reached a peace deal with Khan shortly before his assassination, denied its involvement in Mob’s killing. Once again, the state response to this incident has been dismal and highlighted the vacuum of governance and rule of law in the Terai.\(^43\)

Referring to the application criteria identified above, this conflict can be referred to as an inter-communal conflict since it is not a military confrontation and a relatively low-intensity conflict between communities, which means that it would be possible for the FCE’s EW/ER system to be applied here. Another good sign is that it seems not to be a factional and greed-motivated conflict. Rather, the inter-communal violence, which took the form of retaliation attacks, can be seen as the manifestation of their anger to let off steam. It implies that there is a high possibility that the violence can be mitigated within the FCE’s EW/ER capacity.

However, the last criterion – will for peace – seems to be very weak in the area. The vacuum of governance and rule of law in the Terai can spoil the EW/ER system. A report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal illustrates law-enforcement agencies’ hesitation to intervene in violence and their inability to do so.\(^44\) In this situation, what is required for effective EW/ER is to establish a strong tie with the government sector, law-enforcement agency (police) and political military groups like the CPN-M. Considering the FCE’s EW/ER system worked more effectively during the period of 2003-2006, when the ceasefire agreement was relatively effective and FCE could work with the LTTE, it is crucial to establish a constructive relationship with military groups operating in the Terai region. This is the key to prevent violence from escalating.

Another report by MS Nepal tells that as regards the killing of Moid Khan, which triggered the retaliation attacks, ‘nobody knows for sure who killed Moid Khan. Some think the Maoist killed him. Others argue one of the armed groups could have killed him. Some even think it could be a family feud.’\(^45\) It is possible to infer that rumours could have inflamed a series of retaliation attacks. The fact finding mission of the FCE is one of the strongest points in its EW/ER system. It can be done through an extensive Co-Existence Committees’ network.

The establishment of Co-Existence Committees (CECs) is strongly recommended in the ethnically divided region, both in the long-term as well as the short-term. The CECs are

expected to establish a less conflict-prone society by connecting those from different ethnic
groups. Ashutosh Varshney argues that “strong associational forms of civic engagement, such
as integrated business organisations, trade unions, political parties and professional
associations are able to control outbreaks of ethnic violence.” On the other hand, as a short-
term strength, the CEC members can be first informers on conflictive incidents and also
stakeholders in interventions.