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## Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Systems in the Horn of Africa: A Cross- National Analysis of Kenya and Ethiopia

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**ABSTRACT:** Conflict early warning and response systems have brought additional discourse on conflict prevention to maintain peace and stability in general and secure the lives of the people in conflict prone areas in particular. This paper assesses the conflict early warning and response systems employed at national levels in Kenya and Ethiopia. Both countries are members of the IGAD/CEWARN region in the Horn geopolitics from the sub-Saharan countries. They also experience cross border conflicts on the one hand and established joint border commission and designed joint development intervention to resolve conflicts on the other. The objective of the study is to assess whether conflict early warning and response systems are institutionally operationalized and serves as a tool for conflict prevention to proactively respond to conflicts. Besides, the paper aims to assess what variables of early warning and response systems they shared in common, what dissimilarities exist in the system and what experiences they learn from one another. The study employed qualitative desktop review and comparative study approach for methodological reasons. The crux assessment of this study is based on scientifically valid variables and in-built tools of conflict early warning and response systems. These are; the legal mandate, institutional structure and set up, warning indicators, situation room and information sources, the communication technology, the role of CSO and gender engagement and the models in use for conflict early warning and response systems. The major findings indicate the enormous differences in the practices of conflict early warning and response systems between the two countries. Kenya appears to have been practicing best system in institutionalizing the system qualifying the variables of conflict early warning and response systems in terms of utilization of information communication technology and engagement of the CSOs in the field at the earlier stage, while Ethiopia unfortunately practicing the least system. Nevertheless, the institutional design of Ethiopia is far from comprehensiveness. For one thing, minimum efforts have been made to institutionalize and launch the system to operate and for the other, the practicability or otherwise of the system is not clearly implemented on the ground. The absence of the comprehensive early warning and response system, unlike in Kenya is a significant factor which results in the timely inaction of responses to conflicts that resulted in humanitarian costs and material impacts. The gap gives more space to engage Ethiopia to institutionalize the system. In terms of few variables, there seems similarity between both countries. The finding has also pointed out that the main factor explaining the differences among them lies in the nature of institutional transformations which in turn are contingent to their attempts to transition to democracy and political stability. Ethiopia's efforts of building an effective conflict prevention strategy could be backed by drawing distilled lessons from the Kenyan experiences. Finally, this paper suggests an integrated utilization and employment of the conflict early warning and early response systems is mandatory for the national governments of the Horn of Africa centered on their specific contexts.

**Key words:** *Conflict, causes of conflict, Conflict prevention, Conflict early warning, early response, indicators, institutions, ICT*

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background

Conflict early warning aimed at the collection and analysis of data in order to detect and identify a pending crisis and forestall the possibility that the crisis may degenerate into uncontrolled violence of conflict (Mwanasali, 2003).

The formal study of Conflict Early Warning and Response began in the 1970s and its incorporation into public policy began after the end of the Cold War (OECD, 2009:15). The UN has also been developing conceptualization of early warning and early response and enhancing collaboration among its various organizations. The UN EWER framework aims at strengthening the national capacity for conflict prevention by

building the skills of national actors including civil society and developing closer collaboration between them (UN SC Report, 2001).

The application of early warning in the realm of conflict prevention in the African continent started only in the 1990s in line with a global trend in conflict management and resolution which espoused a preventive approach towards violent conflicts. Africa's very first attempt at establishing a conflict early warning unit was initiated in June 1992, "when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) decided to establish the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution" (African Union, 2006). From the 1990s onwards, there was an increase in the level of interest shown by practitioners at local, national and international levels in using programming to scientifically analyze potential conflicts (Wulf & Debiel, 2009).

In contemporary Africa, there is high level of violent conflict not just in situations where law and order have broken down entirely but also in places where conditions are deemed to be relatively stable. On the other hand, Aseto (2011) states, while talking of conflict in the Horn of Africa, one cannot avoid saying that, politics in the Horn of Africa has been shaped by seeds of violence due to the historical and political factors that goes back to the Colonial boundary arrangements and the new dynamics during post-cold war era. Countries in the region have experienced large-scale conflicts manifested through inter- or intra-state wars, though not all of them are affected to the same degree. Coupled with re-curent drought and famine, the level of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment, Environmental degradation of rangelands, increased communal competition and pastoral conflicts over water, grazing and expansionism by pastoralists at the expense of other groups contributes to periodic clashes over boundary areas. The instability which periodically plagues the member countries border area is part of a broader, complex pattern of state failure and communal violence afflicting much of the Horn of Africa including Kenya and Ethiopia.

The operationalizing conflict early warning system which was initiated at the continental level was replicated at sub-regional levels with the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) following suit in establishing their respective early warning mechanisms. Similar to the continental one, the main focus of the sub-regional early warning initiatives is generally conceptualized as "alerting a recognized authority<sup>1</sup> to the threat of a new (or renewed) armed conflict at a sufficiently early stage so that the authority can attempt to take preventive action" (Carment, 2004). Carment states that operationalizing conflict early warning systems which was initiated at the continental levels was replicated at sub-regional levels with the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) following suit in establishing their respective early warning mechanisms. Similar to the continent alone, the main focus of the sub-regional early warning initiatives is generally conceptualized as "alerting a recognized authority to the threat of a new (or renewed) armed conflict at a sufficiently early stage so that the authority can attempt to take preventive action."<sup>2</sup> In addition, the onus for ensuring the success of these conflict prevention efforts have fallen on sub-regional organizations; as they are expected to provide the socio-political and economic support that is crucial to the successful implementation of these conflict prevention efforts. Prominent among these sub-regional organizations are the Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS) whose early warning mechanism is the West African Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN), and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) which hosts the Conflict Early Warning Response Mechanism (CEWARN) (Birikit, 2012; Nyheim, 2009).

At national government levels, the operationalizing conflict early warning system was introduced by replicating the sub-regional levels following suit in establishing their respective early warning mechanisms. Accordingly, this article attempts to assess how the national governments of Kenya and Ethiopia operationalize the system taking certain common variables into account. Both countries operationalize conflict early warning and response systems within the realm of IGAD/CEWARN<sup>3</sup> system. As a final point, the paper also assesses the major challenges encountered by both countries in the path to operationalization of the conflict early warning systems and figure out the distilled lessons from their experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> The Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) covers the seven member states of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. The mechanism focuses on preventing violent conflicts in the sub-region. CEWARN relies on Conflict Early Warning and Response Units (CEWERU) within the member states and its network of National Research Institutes (NRIs) and Field Monitors (FMs). CEWARN is focused on key three clusters namely: the Karamoja Cluster (covering the cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda); the Somali Cluster (covering the cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia) and the Dikhil Cluster (covering the cross-border areas of Djibouti and Ethiopia). Although CEWARN is extremely useful in harnessing and coordinating regional responses to regional threats to peace and security, it only deals with the pastoralist clusters, thus covering a specific theme within a broader area of conflict (see Ettangetal, 2014; Wulf&Debiel 2009; Birikit 2010).

### 1. The Objectives and Methodology of the Study

The objective of the study is to make a comparative assessment in Kenya and Ethiopia on how the conflict early warning and response systems were designed and institutionalized to respond to conflict before turning to violent confrontation. Besides, the paper aims to assess what variables of early warning and response systems they shared in common, what dissimilarities exist in the system and what experiences they learn from one another. The study employed qualitative desktop review document analysis and comparative case study approach. Yin (2004) has described case study methodology as a distinctive means of empirical enquiry particularly suitable for exploring the how and why of contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. This methodology, notes Yin (2004), is particularly relevant when the researcher believes the context to be highly pertinent to the subject under study, hence the rationale for my choosing such an approach that allowed for 'cross-national' (Hakim, 2000:71). Techniques applied to case study methods have been described by Yin (2004) as including use of multiple sources of information (library research and discourse with some informed individuals on the subject matter), establishing a chain of evidence, pattern matching, explanation building, addressing and explaining variations. This research methodology allowed me, therefore, to understand and compare the operation of organizations and institutional practices and policy implementations based on scientifically valid variables and in-built tools of conflict early warning and response systems. These are; the legal mandate, institutional structure and set up, warning indicators, situation room and information sources, the communication technology, the role of CSO and gender engagement and the models in use for conflict early warning and response systems of two nations, Kenya and Ethiopia.

## II. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

There are different ways in which one can describe the concept of conflict early warning and response system. For example, in the Berghoff Handbook on Conflict Transformation, Alexander Austin (2004) defined an early warning system as: "any initiative that focuses on systematic data collection, analysis and/or formulation of recommendations, including risk assessment and information sharing, regardless of topic, whether they are quantitative, qualitative or a blend of both" (Austin, 2004: 2). Other scholars (Haider, 2014:49; Woocher, 2008: 3), also state that within early warning, three components can be differentiated: estimating the magnitude and timing of relative risks of emerging threats; analyzing the nature of these threats and describing plausible scenarios and communicating warning analyses to decision makers'. For Matveeva, early warning and early response is considered one of the pillars of operational conflict prevention (Matveeva, 2006). Austin defines early response means any initiative that occurs in the latent stages of a perceived potential armed conflict aimed at the reduction, resolution or transformation of conflict (Austin, 2004: 23). According to OECD, early and rapid response refers to any initiative that occurs as soon as the threat of potential violent conflict is identified and that aims to manage, resolve, or prevent that violent conflict (OECD, 2009). In addition, Haider states that early response systems refer to timely and appropriate prevention initiatives, usually undertaken during dormant stages of perceived potential violent conflict (Haider, 2014: 49). Jessica and Luis described the aims of EWS as to identify the causes of conflict, predict outbreaks, and mitigate impacts. Early Warning and Response Systems (EWRS), besides producing analyses and issuing warnings, also offer recommendations on how and when to proceed, and contribute to identifying the entities responsible for executing responses (Jessica and Luis, 2015).

According to Barton and Hppel (2008), early warning offers a descriptive picture and analysis of indicators used by models. For them, indicators are the inputs, or data, that are entered and monitored on a regular basis, and which should be able to tell a story about the direction a country or part of a country is heading (Barton and Hppel, 2008). As Dorn (2004) argued, Early Warning can be seen as a way of alerting a recognized authority (such as national, regional, continental institution) to a potential threat to peace at an early stage. Therefore, the essential concerns of Early Warning include: detecting rising tensions which could lead to violent conflicts and putting mechanisms in place that can stem these tensions; although the concept may not necessarily have the ability to prevent the tensions from arising (Aldeman, 1998). It not only includes the gathering of data, but also engages in systematic evaluation with a view to developing a robust mechanism to prevent the occurrence of a conflict; and, if not, capable of facilitating an accompanying response when faced with a conflict situation. (Woocher, 2008) portrayed that other responsibilities of the EWER include: estimating the magnitude and timing of the relative risks of emerging threats, analyzing the nature of these threats and describing possible scenarios, and communicating warning analyses to decision makers.

The scholars argue in different ways yet the crux of their argument spins around the common variables of conflict early warning mainly on detecting indicators and collection of information, analysis of the same in the situation room, developing scenarios, communicating credible information to alert the decision making and responding to the conflict in a given time frame. Therefore, the conceptual clarifications and debate enlightened above would be plausible in making the cross - national assessment of the operationalization of the conflict early warning and response systems in Kenya and Ethiopia.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Background: Context of Conflicts in Kenya and Ethiopia

Kenya is named after Mount Kenya, a major landmark and the second highest mountain peak in Africa. Kenya is bordered by South Sudan to the North West, Ethiopia to the North, Somalia to the East, Uganda to the West, Tanzania to the South and the Indian Ocean to the South-East. As of 1 January 2019, the population of Kenya was estimated to be 50,470,318 people.<sup>4</sup> Total area 580,367km<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, Ethiopia an ancient African country with an area of 1.12 million square Kilometers and estimated population 104,957,438. Ethiopia is bordered by Eritrea to the north, Sudan and South Sudan to the west, Kenya to the south, Somalia to the east and Djibouti to the northeast.

In many cases, the conflict context in the Horn has semblance characters. This is no exception for the context of conflict in Kenya and Ethiopia. Over the years, Kenya has experienced various types of violent conflicts. These include inter and Intra-communal disputes over shared resources (pasture, water, livestock, land) as well as competition for political power and identity, which guarantees access to state resources. In Kenya also, conflicts among neighboring communities have occurred. For instance, the one between Turkana and Pokot have been sporadic. Mostly, these, conflicts arise out of scarcity and competition over pasture and water as well as border disputes. The disputes are compounded by minimum routine interaction and communication between the two communities (Government of Kenya, 2006). The conflict typically occur in the context of weak or non-existent structures and institutions for conflict prevention and response (Mworia and Ndiku, 2012). Equally important, colonial experience in Kenya has meant that land often forms the backdrop to a variety of conflicts. A predominantly agricultural land potential combined with consolidation, adjudication and registration of land defined territorial concepts of ethnic living space within the country. These have combined in various degrees to make land in Kenya a hot political issue clearly explained by the clashes in the Rift Valley in 1992, 1997 and 2007 (Wamwere, 2008). Further, pastoral communities in Kenya clash over traditional grazing lands, made worse by harsh climatic conditions and recurrent drought prevailing on the Pokot side and marginalization of pastoral communities from main stream development (Mworia and Ndiku, 2012). Armed conflicts have, at best, prevented people from fully harnessing abundant human and natural potential. At worst, the conflicts have given rise to conditions of near hopelessness (Kuria, 1994).

Conflicts have caused damage to property, destroyed lives and adversely impacted the development of the country. The impact of violence includes psychological, physical and emotional strife. The conflicts have registered immense political, economic, social and cultural costs, including the lowering of economic productivity, weakening of political institutions, lack of access to essential services, destruction and depletion of natural resources, loss of food production ability and capital flight. Other direct consequences of conflict are displacement of large numbers of refugees from neighboring countries living in Kenya, as well as internally displaced persons and besieged populations. The intangible effects of conflicts in Kenya include trauma experienced by individuals and groups, and their consequential loss of trust in the existing institutional and conflict resolution and management systems (Kuria, 1994). Furthermore, conflicts Prevention system in Kenya along the bordering areas are mostly local partnership and ownership inclusive. The local partners which the Kenyan government works are organized into local Peace Committees (PCs), an umbrella group of local CBOs, including traditional clan elders and a government representative. The PCs have varied in performance, but overall have been the single most important factor in the dramatic reversal of anarchy and insecurity in the region (Menkhaus, 2000). The PCs success is due to several key features linked to a good functional relationship with the Kenyan government, which has generally given the PCs adequate space and autonomy to operate; strong local ownership; commitment and knowledge of local conflicts; open, flexible membership combining traditional and civic leadership; international financial support; a strong spillover effect, in which one successful PC is emulated by others in other regions and across the border; and an ascent institutional learning capacity, in which lessons are shared by PCs from one region to the next.

On the other hand, Ethiopia also experienced different types of conflicts in its past and present history emerging from diverse and multiple causes. The majority of conflicts in Ethiopia that are dubbed 'ethnic', are about land and the boundaries between territorialized ethnic groups (Abbink 2006:389). Most conflicts are manifested as local, claims along the common borders of regional states. Regarding Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional state, Aalen (2002:70) states that there is a large potential for inter-ethnic struggles for regional hegemony because of the region's ethnic heterogeneity, but that until now, conflicts over self-government and representation have taken place only at local level in the zones or woreda. Examples of such conflicts are the language issue in Wolaita in North Omo zone, the Silte's request for independence from

<sup>4</sup>See

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=kenya+demographics+2019&form=EDGEAR&q=HS&cvid=c1fc4056499e469c864403546201a254&cc=US&setlang=en-GB>

the rest of the Gurage zone and conflicts between Suri and Dizi pastoralist groups in South Omo zone. In addition, the western lowland regions of Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella have both a majority consisting of two major ethnic groups and a minority of several smaller ones. In Gambella, the Nuer and the Anwak have fought for regional hegemony. In Benishangul-Gumuz, the Berta and the Gumuz, who together make up the majority of the population, have been at odds with each other. In both states, the two majority groups fought against each other for the control of the regional government (Aalen 2002:69). In Somali, the conflicts have been between different pastoralist clans of the Somali tribe. In Afar region, which is also a pastoralist and clan based society, the same problem has been experienced (Bekalu, 2017). Ethnic groups are competing with each other and several inter-ethnic conflicts have arisen across boundaries of regional states that are drawn along ethnic lines ( Temesgen, 2018, Legesse 2015:2; Abbink 2006:390). These conflicts led to numerous deaths and displacement of citizens in regional states.

### 3.2. Why Conflict Early Warning & Early Response Systems in Kenya?

The 2007/2008 post-election violence amplified the urgency of developing a harmonized conflict early warning mechanism in Kenya.<sup>5</sup> One of the initiatives in early warning being done by IGAD is the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM).<sup>6</sup> Kenya is part of IGAD and thus implements the CEWRM protocol. The CEWRM was established in the year 2000 following concerns over the prevalence of intra-state, inter-state and cross-border community conflicts in the Horn of Africa. The rationale of the CEWRM is to systematically anticipate violent conflicts and respond in a timely and effective manner. Kenya domesticated the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism from the Conflict Early Warning and Response-CEWARN (IGAD) and developed a National Conflict Early Warning and Response System (NSCPBCM Secretariat, 2014). The framework of the Conflict Early Warning System (CEWS) applies the use of technology, Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, Peace structures, Short Message Service (SMS) as well as other sources to cross check information, thus ensuring the credibility of the system. The system is web-based and incorporates all the three sources (situation reports, media and SMS) into the platform. The online platform is called the National Early Warning Information System (NEWIS). Kenya's Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit engage with Peace Structures and Peace Monitors to gather information from the field. Local Peace Structures have been the critical link between the grassroots and national-level peace structures. In the new constitutional dispensation, they have been transformed into Sub-County Peace Structures. The local peace structures go all the way to the grassroots level. The information from these grassroots peace structures is sent to the Situation Room in Nairobi and analyzed by an analysis group, which then disseminates indicator-based early warning reports to the relevant parties (NSCPBCM Secretariat, 2014). Hence, it is observed that Kenya established conflict early warning and response systems to forecast and proactively respond to conflicts multiple causes.

### 3.3. Conflict Early Warning & Early Response System Essential for Ethiopia?

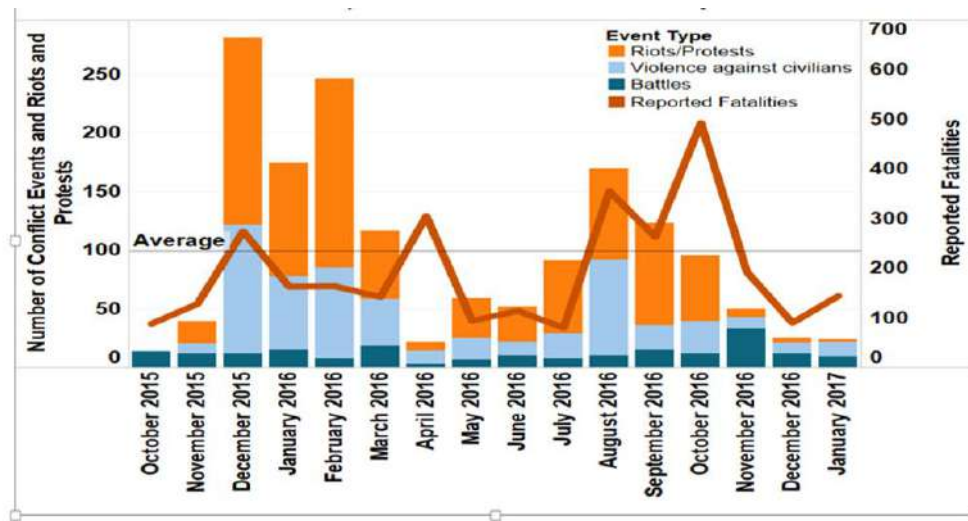
Several inter-ethnic conflicts that have arisen within and across boundaries of regional states necessitates the establishment of conflict early warning and response systems in Ethiopia. Ethnic-based federalism has been a building block of the Ethiopian state since it was created in 1994. It includes ethnically defined national citizenship, self-determination on an ethno-linguistic basis as enshrined in the constitution, as well as ethnically defined political representation and decision-making at all administrative levels and related policies ( ICG Report, 2009:1). Initially promoted by the ruling coalition as the solution to hold a multi-ethnic country together, its implementation degenerated so as to undermine the very foundations of the Ethiopian state, for three main reasons ( Bekalu, 2017:7). First, ethnic conflicts that had plagued Ethiopia did not disappear with the new federal system, but were transferred from the national to the regional or district levels, pushing ethnic groups to become more and more competitive to expand their control over land, resources and administrative budgets ( Turton, 2006: 1-3). This period witnessed a variety of intra-regional, inter-regional and cross-border conflicts and experienced cumbersome conflicts emanating from different causal factors. The root causes and triggers of these conflicts are multiple and diverse; including competition for natural resources, contested border claims, dearth of good governance, harmful traditions such as revenge killing, and a poorly developed culture of peace (Tigist, 2014; Temesgen and Lemma, 2010; Sisay, 2007; Ahmed, 2005). Second, despite the façade of a federal system, a strongly centralized decision-making structure and state bureaucracy, controlled by the EPRDF, characterized Ethiopia's politics, with few powers devolved to the local level ( ICG Report, 2009:1). Third, the existence of a de facto one-party state was at odds with the initial commitment to deliver multi-party elections. The public space was instead firmly in the hands of the EPRDF (Theodore, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> See Handbook on National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response System (NCEWERS); 15.

<sup>6</sup> See NSC Concept of Early Warning <http://www.nscpeace.go.ke/nsc/index.php/concept-of-early-warning> (Accessed on 25 January 2020).

This contributed to pose politically motivated conflicts accompanied by public unrest that frequently experienced all over the country and necessitated the establishment of the system. The following figure depicted that the number of conflict events, violence, protests and fatalities from 2015-2017.

Figure one. Number of Conflict by Type and Reported Fatalities in Ethiopia from October 2015- January 2017:



Adopted from ACLED, 2017

The humanitarian situation has been further exacerbated by an upsurge in conflict around the border areas. For example, one among all is the Oromia- Somali common border contestation. Since the inception of the regionalization in the post 1991, the vast majority of the displacements occurred in the Oromo- Somali border conflict from 2012 to 2018.

In addition to this, after 2016 the conflict dynamics and displacement were changed since it was triggered by conflict between Somali-Oromia over access to political power and regional boundaries. Moreover, BBC has also reported that some 70,000 people have fled their homes to a remote part of southern Ethiopia, after a deadly conflict broke out between Oromo and Somali clans. Since early September 2017 the conflict between Oromo’s and Somalis has left hundreds of thousands displaced people, and many more death and injury, often in areas already experiencing ongoing drought-related humanitarian need.

Figure two: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Ethiopia December 2017-April 2019, in million



Source: Giovanni Faleg (2019) & IOM, 2019.

In Ethiopia, conflicts have been built over a long period of time and brought about numerous economic, political and social (humanitarian) crises mainly due to lack of viable institution of conflict prevention and early warning systems. Additionally, in the present conditions, it is contended that the post-1991 regime in Ethiopia, despite its promise and claims to provide solutions, has been less successful than expected in

managing ethnic tensions in the country. Thus, the pursuit for establishing viable conflict early warning and response system is a vital concern.

#### IV. MANDATE FOR CONFLICT EARLY WARNING

Kenya has a legitimate Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). The National Policy on Peace- building and Conflict management of Kenya on conflict early warning and response provides that the government is signatory to the IGAD-CEWARN protocol, that seeks to strengthen Kenya's mechanism for conflict early warning and response. These mechanisms are mainstreamed within the Ministry responsible for Internal Security, and are complementary to existing intelligence systems. The protocol is implemented through the peace committees working closely with the Security Intelligence Committees to ensure that conflict early warning and response is streamlined in the country (GoK, 2011). Since the return to multiparty democracy in 1992, various governmental actors (including provincial administrations), intergovernmental actors, and nongovernmental organizations have engaged in diverse ways and settings to develop effective conflict-prevention strategies in Kenya (Godfrey, 2013).

Kenya's Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit (CEWERU) were officially launched on 25 November 2010, in a move that was seen as an effort to mitigate violent conflicts within its borders. CEWERU's establishment was timely and necessary as the 2007 elections showcased the need to develop sufficient structures to prevent violence from erupting into a full-blown disaster. In addition to CEWERU, Kenya also has a National Research Institute (NRI) (Ettang et al, 2014). Kenya has developed its national Early Warning and Response mechanism that remains one of the most advanced and prominent systems among the seven CEWARN member states (Wulf & Debiel 2009; Birikit 2010).

On the other hand, Ethiopian national legislation or policies are developed to provide an institutional and legal basis for implementing conflict early warning and response systems. Accordingly, the constitution of Ethiopia (1995) offers the mandate of settling any disputes that may arise between the constituent units to the House of Federation. Article 62 (6) of the FDRE constitution provides that the House of Federation (HoF) shall strive to find solutions to disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between States. On the other hand, Article 3(5) of Proclamation No. 251/2001 that consolidates the HoF and definition of its powers and responsibilities has also provided principles, procedure and institution for the management of disputes and conflicts over the issue of boundary conflicts between regional states.

In addition, the other important institution in Ethiopia in relation to conflict prevention, management and resolution was the former Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs currently restructured as the Ministry of Peace. The MOFPDA was mandated by Proclamation 691/2010 to work on conflict management activities. Mainly to intervene to prevent ethnic conflict along the common borders of regional states when Regional states fail to resolve within or between themselves and when the regional states requested the intervention of the Federal Government. In this regard, proclamation No. 359/2003 authorized the intervention of the federal government. The proclamation authorized the intervention of the federal government under three conditions: in case of deteriorating security situation, when the constitutional order is endangered, and in cases of human right violation. However, their intervention is supposed to come following repeated failures by regional states to prevent conflicts. Therefore, the mandate for conflict prevention, conflict early warning and management emanates from the Art 62 (6) of the 1995 FDRE constitution, proclamation no.251/2001, and proclamation No. 359/2003 Proclamation 691/2010 which is recently replaced by proclamation no.1097/2018 respectively.

However, the interventions of the institutions in conflicts usually come after the damage on property and lives sustained and conflicts transferred to violence. They follow the approach what is literally called "fire-brigade". This denotes the intervention is not proactive at the early stage of the conflict. Hence, the institutions of conflict early warning and response systems are said to be reactive. This is particularly true to the House of Federation which waits outside simmering ethnic conflicts over issues of border disputes until formal requests are made by regional states. The former Ministry of Peace, however, has the opportunity to intervene conflicts early before the conflict escalated but late as its task of helping disputant groups to come together and solve their problems cannot be considered as a compromise to the autonomy of regional states in their own affairs. Nonetheless, the rule of engagement in prevention of conflicts within regional states is not clear.

#### V. PEACE STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL SET UPS

In Kenya the National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSC) is responsible for the co-ordination of all peace-related activities in Kenya, and also serves as the country's Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit (CEWERU), as required by the CEWARN Protocol of 2002. The Peace building and Conflict Management Directorate, which is part of the Uwiano platform for peace, is the inter-agency committee that coordinates peace building and conflict management. NSC is also the

CEWERU. As such, part of its mandate is to domesticate the Early Warning Mechanism in the country.<sup>7</sup>Peace structures, such as government and non-governmental institutions are central to Kenya's Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit, including District Peace Committees (DPCs) and Peace Monitors. These stakeholders and institutions have proved useful in obtaining and analyzing information to rapidly devise and undertake responses to conflicts (Olmuyiwa Amao et al, 2014; Ettang et al, 2014; Birikit 2010). In addition, District Security Committees and Police Operations (DSCPO) among others (NSCPEACE, 2012). The Peace Committees are made up of "community representative institutions that facilitate peace forums at the various levels and bring together traditional dispute resolution mechanisms involving elders, women, and religious leaders and modern mechanisms for conflict resolution (security agencies, NGOs)". They have been extremely useful in pastoral conflicts and were employed in the Central, Coast, Western, Nyanza and the Rift Valley regions of Kenya in response to post-election violence in the country in 2008. Their roles range from enhancing conflict Early Warning and Response, to facilitating community dialogue processes, developing mechanisms to resolve inter-district and cross-border conflicts, and monitoring and reporting on various peace and nation building programs (Ettang et al, 2014). Moreover, Peace Advisory Councils, in conjunction with the National Peace Council, The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the National Electoral Commission were very instrumental in the minimization of the post-election conflicts witnessed during the 2008 election in Kenya. This was achieved through the initiation of dialogue with relevant stakeholders (International Peace Institute, 2012).

In Ethiopia, Proclamation No.691/2010 places the responsibility for sustainably preventing, managing and resolving conflicts on the Ministry of MOFPDA. The national peace architecture seeks to prevent conflicts and promote peace building through peace education, early warning and rapid response in conflict prone areas. The Conflict Prevention Resolution Directorate General(CPRDG) is responsible to implement the above tasks. The CPRDG accomplish its roles through strengthening the culture of peace by empowering communities to effectively handle differences and conflicts nationwide through tolerance and dialogue. Besides, it focuses on collecting and analyzing early warning information on actual and potential inter- and intra-regional state conflicts in collaboration with relevant federal and regional state structures to promotion of sustainable peace. Unfortunately, the intervention is made after the outbreak of conflicts. On the other hand, Local Peace Committees (LPCs) were established to prevent or reduce levels of violence and engage in dialogue, consensus building, and reconciliation. They are useful in providing early warning information and responding to tense situations before they erupt. LPCs are created within a specific context and are needed to resolve issues, sometimes far from the government's reach. They have been successful because they emerge from local initiatives and locality from which they emerge (Katija and Luke, 2013).. In fact, LPCs were structured high from federal to the lower levels. The members including respected elders, religious figures, women, youth selected from the community. Though not significantly shown in the operationalization of early warning systems, the LPCs played minimal roles. Unlike the Kenyan case, the linkage between CSOs and LPC is almost non-existent until recently due to the ban by the former CSO law in Ethiopia.

## VI. MONITORING INDICATORS

The Kenyan system specifically clustered the indicators so as to identify and employ pertinent strategy. The National Peace Initiative Africa and NCS Secretariat (2012) of Kenya explained that the major clusters of conflict early warning indicators include: Political *indicators*: political statements, secretive political meetings, political party and government wrangles, militia activities/ inactivity, constricting democratic space. *Security triggering indicators*: ineffective of security agencies, mushrooming of organized gangs, proliferation of illicit small arms, decreased community safety, cattle rustling, and *Economic indicators*: land ownership, competition for economic resource, business competition and rivalry, manner in which local resources are exploited, unequal opportunities, unemployment and level of poverty. The initiatives to cluster warning indicators were a good practice. However, whether these indicators were properly analyzed and interpreted to respond to the local conflicts could not get-out from argument because merely clustering could not suffice unless the problems at the grass root level are entirely addressed.

On the other hand, conflict early warning indicators in Ethiopia are not in strict sense and formally identified and registered in all regional states. However, there are irrefutable efforts sought to make use of conflict indicators at every stage. Accordingly, MoFPDA report indicated that there are about forty-four (44) indicators identified throughout the country (MoFPDA, doc, 2012). The indicators are not clustered in either economic, political, socio-cultural, governance or security issues and in which contexts are they prevalent and at what stage or phase of conflict is the conflict early warning being employed. However, the Ministry claimed that there is inadequate identification and utilization of conflict indicators at all levels due to capacity problem at

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid



lower levels (MoFPDA report, 2009). Hence, this requires a critical concern as responding to conflicts without identifying indicators is proving practical impossibility.

### Situation Room and Information Sources

Situation room is a head quarter where the latest information on conflict early warning is channeled. In order to report on a region as accurately as possible, the information used should be comprehensive and unbiased. According to GTZ (2006) information comes from a wide range of sources such as reports from individuals, local authorities, NGO representatives and the local media. In the case of CEWARN its data collection is a standardized, systematic and continuous process. Data collection through appointed CEWARN field monitors, though a key source of information, must be reinforced and supplemented by information gathered through established networks of individuals and institutions within a given region. In addition to the aforementioned CEWARN event reports, it is important to incorporate information gathered by other early warning systems concerning issues such as food security, meteorological changes, etc. and the incorporation of structural data in the form of situation reports (demographic data, infrastructural changes, economic data, market survey etc. (GTZ, 2006: 11). Similarly, Bercovitch (1998) states that, early warning requires three types of information: (a) information on the conflict history and its contexts; (b) information on each party's status, traits and objectives; and (c) information on the ethno-communal groups and their grievances.

In Kenya, the situation room is set up to monitor the elections and related matters, and the coalition engaged in numerous negotiations and dialogue sessions with presidential candidates with the collaboration of the National Peace Council and religious leaders. They have been also useful in providing information on inter- and intra-communal violence as groups' battle for depleting resources (Olmuyiwa B. Amao et al, 2014). Besides, Kenyan information sources for conflict early warning and response systems are the mergers of peace structures. Inter – religious council of Kenya (IRCK) has been instrumental in collecting information from various religious bodies, and in the use of participatory research and conflict mapping (NSCPEACE, 2001 cited in Olmuyiwa B. Amao et al, 2014; Birikit 2010). In sum, Kenya is utilizing as a source of information and robustly participating civil society organizations in conflict early warning and response systems. Moreover, Kenya's CEWERU is also designed to feed into the sub-regional CEWARN and it has developed a system to monitor developments in conflict and identify successes in prevention. One of the preventive aspects of working with conflicts is the ability to get early warning information on which one could base the rapid response that will help prevent the escalation of the conflict into violence. In this regard, Kenyan process of early warning information is usually relayed to the Situation Room through the system on <http://www.nscpeace.go.ke/ncewers>, which has access rights and <http://www.nscpeace.go.ke/108> which is open to the public. Information is also relayed through mobile phones and emails. After information is received in the Situation Room, it is verified for credibility. The information is then analyzed and used for scenario-setting. Communication is done with relevant actors to enable their intervention and finally, follow-up is conducted and documentation done.

Whereas, the Ethiopian context diverges from Kenya's cases. There is an independent situation room under the conflict early warning and rapid response directorate in the former Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs (MoFPDA) which is recently replaced by Ministry of Peace (MOP). However, it is stifled with small room and inadequate technological infrastructure and not so far used optimally. Such important components as modern communication network and satellite radio etc. are largely missing. The Information sources for CEWER at MoFPDA are mainly from the institutions of Regional state administration and security bureaus', the federal police, the defense force, and the intelligence. Besides, there is a regular contact with regional states and peace committees every 3 months. The information is also gathered from Districts through regional states as the regions have direct access to the main sources such as field monitors, peace committees, militia and other local (kebele) level structures. On the other hand, IPSS Research Team Report<sup>8</sup> in Addis Ababa University depicted that the situation room (SR) at the federal level collect information using the 44 (forty-four) conflict indicators earmarked by CPRDG. After analysis is carried out, output is provided to end-users in MoFPDA on a weekly basis, and to the Prime Minister's Office every fortnight. However, there are no clear protocols, frameworks and guidelines for data collection and transmission. There were limited staff members working on rotational basis (two each every month) in the situation room. Lack of, or limited, skilled manpower makes it difficult, if not impossible to collect, process and distribute daily reports. Moreover, the

<sup>8</sup>The research team was organized in Addis Ababa University, Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) to conduct a research for the Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs on the topic: *In-depth Assessment of the Institutional and Operational Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention and Resolution (CPR)*. The writer of this thesis was also a member of the IPSS Research Team and visited Oromia and Somali Regional States of Ethiopia.

work of the situation room is still manual because the IT backbone has not been fully implemented. Presently they only have two each of desktop computers, personal laptops, and fixed-line telephones (IPSS Research Team Report, 2016: 7).

## VII. THE PRACTICE OF UTILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Kenya, in 2010, developed a web-based platform known as the National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response System (NCEWERS) that describes itself as monitoring “essential conflict indicators, analyzes and disseminates information to prevent and address potential conflicts” (Ettang et al, 2014; Birikit 2010). CEWERU also relies on Short Message Service (SMS) messages, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and a website, *Amani Kenya @108*, to obtain information from the public that is used to prevent wide scale violence erupting. The sources of Early Warning and Response mechanisms vary. An online platform, the National Early Warning Information System, is used to obtain information from three sources: District Peace Committees (DPCs) and Peace Monitors provide situation reports; SMSs received from members of the public and media reports. Beyond these various mechanisms and tools for Early Warning, two key platforms are very visible in Kenya, namely *Ushahidi*<sup>9</sup> and *Uwiano*, both of which employ the technique of ‘crowd sourcing’ to identify cases of violence and peaceful responses across the country. The *Uwiano* platform appears to be more effective due to its use of a wide range of resources to gather information (Ettang et al, 2014). These include mobile phone text messages (SMSs) for early warning and early responses in the form of mediators, DPCs. Hence, key element in Kenya is that the early warning systems have been established technology-based ways of reporting events.

Whereas, in Ethiopia, the former Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development began to use information communication technology tools such as telephone, fax, radio, internet, e-mail, letter, telegram. However, utilization of ICT is limited to telephone and desk computers at the ministry level. On the other hand, in regional states, the availability of ICT and other infrastructure is limited only to telephone and fax. In addition, regional states fail to have separate situation room to collect, consolidate and disseminate information. According to MoFPDA (2013), both at Federal and Regional levels utilization of information communication technology with regard to conflict early warning and early response is almost non-existent. Besides, Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz and Somali Regional states do not have computers in the regional office particularly for conflict early warning purposes. Despite the regions have proximity to bordering countries, like Kenya, South Sudan and Sudan and Somalia respectively, the possibility of breakdown of cross border conflict and escalation in to violence along these borders, the regional states remain to come across a hurdle. MoFPDA’s report shows that the problem is related to lack of adequate budget and capacity. Until recently, the conflict early warning system in the Ministry has not taken full advantage of new technologies (MoFPD report, 2013). This has significantly impacted the collection of information for early warning. Hence, the Ministry relied to follow the “fire brigade approach”. Thus, one could observe that, while utilization of information communication infrastructure is critical in the implementation of conflict prevention strategies, the attempt left only on paper in Ethiopian. Besides, the data collection was unsupported by a well-designed data collection formats and transmission technologies to concerned bodies to provide rapid response.

## VIII. CIVIL SOCIETY AND CONFLICT EARLY WARNING AND RESPONSE SYSTEMS

In his report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict to the General Assembly (2001) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (UN, 2001:4) has called for the full participation of civil society in conflict prevention efforts, especially where the intergovernmental system fails to address a problem that could lead to violent conflict. The report also recommended an international conference to be organized by local, national and international non-government organizations to determine their role in conflict prevention and develop regional action plans for interaction with the UN. The Security Council has endorsed this role of civil society in Resolution 1366 (2001), which states:

*“...the United Nations and the international community can play an important role in support of national efforts for conflict prevention and can assist in building national capacity in this field and recognizes the important supporting role of civil society.”* (UN, 2001:4)

Globally, civil society is gaining recognition by state and international actors for their contributions to peace. After the Cold War era, it has become unimaginable to achieve sustainable peace without civil actors. The involvement of CSOs is widely welcomed in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, particularly due to the close relationship between the CSOs and their communities, as well as CSOs’ understanding of the needs on the ground and ability to implement conflict management and resolution plans (Katja and Luke, 2013).

<sup>9</sup>*Ushahidi* means “testimony” in Swahili. *Ushahidi* is software allowing organizations to establish EWS using basic information technology. The software allows anyone to report incidents via SMS or the Internet and to receive information by the same means.

In addition, Mwangi (2002) argues that the rationale for participation of civil society organizations is because they are closer to the grass roots, where the most effective early warning for conflict can be discerned. Involving such organizations requires creating institutional structures that would enhance the whole conflict early warning and early response operation. For civil society to bring its potential to bear in CEWARN operations there must be a solid cooperative relationship between civil society's and CEWERU (Mwangi, 2002). In a similar line, Katja and Luke argued that the involvement of CSOs is widely welcomed in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, particularly due to the close relationship between the CSOs and their communities, as well as CSOs' understanding of the needs on the ground and ability to implement conflict management and resolution plans (Katja and Luke, 2013).

Kenya embraced the idea of preventing conflicts through the use of CSOs as early warning and response mechanisms. It has created an environment for such organizations throughout the country, for urban and rural (Amao et al, 2014). Civil Society Organizations in the country have been actively involved in the design, development, use and review of these tools, platforms and mechanisms. Within this broad national network, the role of CSOs, specifically those experienced in the area of conflict prevention and resolution becomes very important in ensuring the overall success of Kenya's CEWERU. Not only have they been instrumental in designing the CEWERU, they are also involved in the various mechanisms that provide warning and response. Some key examples attest to this. The NSC has brought CSOs and government together to work on issues relating to peace and security. The NSC, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), Peace-Net Kenya and the UNDP were actively involved in the development of the Uwiano Platform ahead of the 2010 referendum. Peace -Net Kenya, an umbrella body for faith-based, community-based and religious organizations, has been involved in early warning (Ettang et al, 2014). In developing early warning and peace building programs, CSOs work in collaboration with the DPCs, utilize the same resources (field and peace officers) in some cases and provide early warning information to the National Security Council (Babaud&Ndung'u 2012) (Ettang et al,2014). For instance, Civil Society Organizations have also been involved in technical forums such as the one held from 22 to 23 September 2011, on how to consolidate EWER capacity in preparation for the 2012 elections (Ettang et al,2014).

The Ethiopian experience do not accompany information sources from Civil Society Organizations because of the CSO law in the country while the Kenyan systems strategically employ the information sources of CSO in the early warning and early response architecture. Unfortunately, in 2009, the Ethiopian government adopted the Charities and Societies Proclamation (Proclamation No. 621/2009)<sup>10</sup>, which has had a considerably negative impact on civil society engagement in conflict transformation. According to the Proclamation, CSOs receiving more than ten per cent of their funding from foreign sources cannot engage in the advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of the equality of nations, nationalities, people, gender, and religions, the promotion of disabilities and children's rights, the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation, or the promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services.<sup>11</sup>Hence, actively integrating CSOs into the operational conflict prevention and early warning and response systems is not a practical or a political impossibility. However, recently, the new proclamation no. 1113/2019 amended the former to encourage the CSO involvement.

In a nut shell, CSOs have significant participation in Kenya while it is blemished in Ethiopian case. Hence, Ethiopia should draw a distilled experience of Kenya and other countries of Africa so as to confirm the participation of civil society organizations and broaden the sources of conflict early warning information by reassuring that the information will not be misused otherwise this may undermine a community's trust.

## **IX. GENDER AND CONFLICT EARLY WARNING AND RESPONSE SYSTEMS**

### **X.**

The United Nations (UN) has a unique ambition to develop effective gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms and institutions as part of the women, peace and security agenda.<sup>12</sup>Gender sensitive early warning systems can be defined by two factors: the first is equal participation of men and women in early warning processes; the second is the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators based on context-specific research into gender and conflict dynamics. An understanding of the different roles of women and men in conflict situations,

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<sup>10</sup> The former CSO law Proclamation No. 621/2009 has been repealed and replaced by the new Proclamation no. 1113/2019 since the inception of the new reform under the regime of the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia (DrAbiy Ahmed). This proclamation gives a broadened opportunity for the CSO landscape to work on issues banned by the former proclamation.

<sup>11</sup> See Article 14, Proclamation No. 621/2009.

<sup>12</sup> See United Nations, 2008-2009 United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

gender dynamics in conflicts and responses, and engendering conflict early warning systems is essential. Two main arguments have been put forward for gender-sensitizing of early warning systems. Firstly, that gender-sensitive early warning system could result in benefits in terms of gender rights and gender equality in conflict-affected areas, and secondly, that early warning systems that are gender-sensitive could be more effective in anticipating and preventing armed conflict (NSCPBCM<sup>13</sup>, 2016)

On the other hand, practices depicted that women play credible role in being agents of peace. For example, ahead of the 2012 presidential election in Senegal, women were mobilized and trained to serve as observers and mediators. Under the banner of the Senegalese Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections, a "situation room" was set up, which provided a space for conflict prevention and mediation, as well as the coordination of election monitoring using a gender perspective. The situation room brought together fifty women leaders from Senegal and neighboring countries involved in promoting women's rights, peace building, and ending violence against women and girls. The women were equipped with mobile phones to speed up warning and response through text messaging (International Peace Institute, 2012).

In Kenya, the role of women in conflicts is still limited. Conversely, anecdotal evidence shows that women were active participants in post-election violence both as perpetrators of the violence and as victims (Wamai, 2013). As perpetrators, they are alleged to have been involved in planning and organizing retaliatory attacks against other ethnic groups. This is evidenced by the lists of female and male suspects in the investigative report on post-election violence produced by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC, 2009). At the very local level, women were said to have secretly colluded with their male family members to organize violent attacks and arson (Wamai, 2013). Nonetheless, the fruits of women led peace initiatives exist in Wajir, where such an initiative saw a group of educated professionals drawn from all clans in the district to form Wajir Peace Group. This group teamed up with women in facilitating peace dialogues in the district. The initiative further inspired other groups in the district to coalesce into peace groups in the district (elders for peace, youth for peace, etc.), culminating the formation of Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) in 1995.<sup>14</sup> Conflict trends in Kenya also show that women are increasingly suffering sexual and gender based Violence such as rape, loss of livelihoods and displacement (GoK, 2008).

In Ethiopian case, the current policies regarding the participation and empowerment of women in all fields have positive implications. However, it is still plagued with problems obstructing women's roles in conflict prevention and early warning and response systems. These problems include; *first*, Weak Institution of CEWR System in Ethiopia and has a direct bearing in obstructing the integration of gender in to the system. *Second*, there is still domination of voices of women by men. When I was collecting data among the Oromia (Borana - Moyale) and Somali (Garri Moyale), I have observed the challenge that the women are confronting. The Borana and Garri communities are sociologically organized in patriarchal clan structures. They are male-dominant in many social affairs, which have left women with no or less independent voices. As a result, women are assumed to share a similar view as their husbands and the men at large. The voice of women is not proportional to men, not because they had no views on topics related to issues on the ground, but the culture itself obstructs women from forwarding their opinions on issues outside of the household activities. *Third*, the legal frameworks are meeting halfway and non-applicable. A recent development in conflict prevention and enhancing women's role in peace and security decision-making is observed from the Resolutions of the United Nations<sup>15</sup> and other organizations. Similarly, the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1994), unequivocally guarantees gender equality in social and economic matters. However, the implementation of all legal frameworks and policies are compromised and not fully applicable. The reason is due to inadequate focus to the issue due to lack of commitment and political will by the leadership; the few women who are in decision making position lack the commitment to fight for issues of gender participation; backward thinking among society, societal perception about leadership ability of women; women's low economic status; women's lack of assertiveness (Ogato, 2013; MOWA, 2006). This implies that the role of women in conflict early warning and response system in Ethiopia is still lacking.

## XI. MODEL USED FOR THE ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT EARLY WARNING

Kenya and Ethiopia are member states in the IGAD/CEWARN. Both countries failed to clearly articulate which methodologies are being employed to operationalize conflict early warning and response systems.

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<sup>13</sup>See National Steering Committee on Peace building and Conflict Management (NSCPBCM), Nairobi, KENYA.

<sup>14</sup>[http://practicalaction.org/docs/region\\_east\\_africa/peace\\_committee\\_analysis.pdf](http://practicalaction.org/docs/region_east_africa/peace_committee_analysis.pdf). accessed February, 19, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> See United Nations, 2008-2009 United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

However, they adopt “the Swiss Peace Foundation FAST model of early warning analysis” originally imported from EU model (Kasujja, 2007) and based on the “interaction of root causes, proximate, and intervening factors which may lead to armed conflict, hamper conflict mitigation, or provide a window of opportunity for de-escalation and peace-building efforts (Krummenacher and Schmeidl, 2008). Interms of specific tools of data analysis, both employ a similar qualitative data analysis tool known as the Reporter (Kasujja, 2007) which is “a network of the web programs specifically designed for early warning purposes that allows data management and graphical display of event frequencies overtime” (CEWARN Strategy, 2003).

The Reporter also allows for qualitative and quantitative analysis of field data to identify developing trends and assists in tracking how changes in behavior are likely to lead to more tension and conflict, or cooperation. The use of such an automated electronic process of data analysis is justified by the claim “such statistic or graphic approach makes it easier to pass on messages to politicians who accept more easily a scientific analysis of the situation, rather than an analysis based on factual interpretations and/or theories (Kasujja, 2007). In this regard, I argue that both countries need to be encouraged and develop their own model of conflict early warning system because they have their own peculiar cultures of conflict prevention and resolution than importing and adopting from other contexts. Otherwise, it will brew glitches on the effectiveness of their domestic conflict prevention strategies.

## XII. CONFLICT EARLY RESPONSE SYSTEMS

Early response is the process of using information gathered from early warning systems to design action aimed at preventing violent conflict. The action could be the development of a policy or programs. It involves the developing of strategies to prevent conflict at different levels using specific entry points. It involves consultation, policy making, planning and action to reduce or avoid armed conflict. In addition, actions may include diplomatic, political, military, security, humanitarian, development or economic activity (Schmid, 1998). There are many early response actors such as national governments, regional organizations, UN, AU, NGOs, private sector and individuals. However, the presence of these institutions has not prevented occurrence of conflicts (IPSTC, 2014)<sup>16</sup>. For Austin, early response, accordingly, means any initiative that occurs in the latent stages of a perceived potential armed conflict with the aim at reduction, resolution or transformation (Austin, 2004: 23).

In Kenya, responses to conflicts in Kenya are largely dependent on the specific geographical location of the conflict, and the prevailing socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. According to the National Policy on Peace-Building and Conflict Management, responses can be broadly classified as traditional responses, state responses, civil society responses, private sector responses, collaborative responses, regional responses and international responses. Notably, the government spearheaded the enactment of the new Constitution, which establishes the framework for addressing the issues that underlie conflicts in Kenya. The Government of Kenya is a member of regional structures for peace and security. This synergizes Kenya's conflict warning and response approaches. They include the AU Peace and security and the CEWARN. Responses by civil society have concentrated on reconciliation and rebuilding relationships amongst warring communities<sup>17</sup>. The activities have included dialogue, negotiations, and problem-solving workshops, information, education and communication. Several initiatives including conflict early warning have played a central role in facilitating a negotiated end to violent conflicts in Kenya. Moreover, the private sector has played a pivotal role in enabling the take-off of conflict management interventions. Business communities in violent conflict-prone areas support some of the activities of security operations in the areas. In the northern Kenya, the private sector played an important role in resourcing the initial caucus mediation efforts that involved shuttling elders from one clan to the other. In the peace committee guidelines, there is provision for inclusion and participation of the private sector.<sup>18</sup> Collaborative responses are interventions that are fostered at various levels to address peace building and conflict management by both government and the civil society, and to some extent, the private sector. These responses include humanitarian responses, implementation of the Peace Committee Model, community-based policing, the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism, the Joint Cross-Border Commissions, and the East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

In Ethiopia, the directorate for conflict early warning and early response systems at MOFPDA has produced a guideline named as “Conflict Rapid Response Guideline of the Ministry of Federal Affairs” in 2015 aimed to prevent the escalation of conflicts by implementing a coordinated rapid response using information passed through the conflict Early Warning system. Rapid response is defined under the same guide line and

<sup>16</sup> *Conflict Early Warning and Response Systems in Eastern Africa: Do they Work?* International Peace Support Training Centre, Issue Briefs Series no.7, 2014

<sup>17</sup> Republic of Kenya, *National Policy on Peace-Building and Conflict Management*, 2012:22.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Republic of Kenya, *Draft National Policy on Peace-Building and Conflict Management*, 2006:35.

states efforts of containing, managing and resolving conflicts before they turn violent pursuant to the mandate bestowed to it by 691/2010.<sup>20</sup> Besides, the informant describes the relevant actors for early response at the national government is the House of Federation and the Ministry of federal and pastoralist development affairs. At regional levels regional governments, local officials, local community, elders, clan leaders, *Aba Gadas* are the major actors. The informant also noted that the early response instruments are mainly dialogues, peace committees 'engagements and joint meetings.'<sup>21</sup> Another informant depicted that the speed of decision making and implementation of responses is noted as a constraint to MoFPDA potential for early responses to conflicts. Bureaucracy and the regional states inability to act quickly as one reason. The perception of slow decision making hamper coordinated MoFPDA action. Therefore, the majority of actions that the MoFPDA has undertaken have been responses to conflict rather than responses to early warnings.<sup>22</sup>

The report obtained from MOFPDA (2015), reveals that there are multiple and diverse challenges regarding conflict early response in the country. These challenges include; lack of proactive engagement in conflict at its earliest stage because of lack of commitment and political will from leadership at every level, lack of capacity and rent seeking attitude, in most cases the leadership members themselves become the main actors in the conflict. For instance, the cases of the 2012 conflict between Borena (Oromia) and Garri (Somali) around Moyale and the 2013, 2015 and 2016 Eastern Hararge (Oromia) and Jijiga zone (Somali) around Qumbi could be understood as practical examples. In addition, there are also other challenges that plague the response system. The time framework when to intervene and respond to the conflict were not observed. Instruments for early response such as peace-making dialogue, consultations, preventive diplomacy, mediation, administrative actions were not introduced in the system. The problems associated with identification, qualification and classification of early warning indicators were also impacted the response systems. The conflict indicators are disjointed and unclustered as economic, social, political or environmental indicators for effective and timely response. These led to the response systems to be usually event based literally known as *fire-fighting* approach. There was also weak joint action between the federal and regional governments and loose coordination among stakeholders such as CSOs, CBOs impaired the rapid response system. Specific actionable warnings were communicated and yet they failed to trigger an operational response. In addition, while there is evidence of worthy information gathering, intelligence preparation and understanding of security issues, there is a weakness in translating this into clear, demonstrable and useful operational intervention. On the other hand, most biased information communicated to the leadership has also wedged the rapid response. Lack of skilled man power accompanied by high turn-over of the staff members from federal to regional level have greatly obstructed the response system in Ethiopia. Thus, it is likely to realize that there is an attempt to have the conflict early response system in place that could not suffice to serve the purpose.

### **XIII. THE CHALLENGES**

Like other nations in Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia also experienced challenges in their respective early warning and response systems. These challenges are not limited to but the major ones are discussed below.

#### **3.11.1. Bridging the Gaps between Early warning and Early Response**

Early warning should be timely in order to be effective and that achieving timeliness is often a challenge. In theory, early warning systems should look to the future in a predictive fashion. In Kenya and Ethiopian practice, however, signs that should serve as "early warnings" of violence are frequently identified retrospectively, after conflict have broken out. Like many preventive actions, the success of early warning systems can only be measured in hindsight, once it can be determined whether or not conflict has been averted. Data from both countries underscore that early warning signals are not always translated into prompt response decisions. There are additional challenges in the course of implementation associated with their accuracy in anticipating a conflict the credibility attached to the prediction formulated, the decision by relevant players to act on the information provided, and the impact the action taken has on the conflict. Moving early warning to response that concretely prevents conflict is particularly difficult in the context of limited financial, human and material resources. Therefore, bridging the gap between early warning and early response remains a major challenge in Kenya and Ethiopia.

#### **3.11.2. Political will**

The "lack of political will" is frequently quoted as the chief obstacle to early response. Unpacking the concept, particularly in relation to its causes, is important after understanding its implications for early response. The governments are also very slow at disbursing funds for urgent conflict prevention activities. Such

<sup>20</sup> See Proclamation no. 691/2010. A proclamation to provide for the definition of powers and duties of the executive organs of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with official in the MOFPDA, Addis Ababa.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with senior expert in the MOFPDA

slow response time to rapidly changing and escalating situations often undermines efforts to capitalize on “windows of opportunity” for peace. Institutions are chronically “reactive” in nature. On the other hand, decision-makers are often swamped with information. Furthermore, often it is felt that there is too much early warning and too many false ones. This “noise” reduces the credibility of those groups engaged in effective early warning. Thus, one could accentuate that the success of these systems depends largely on strong political will and commitment by states.

#### XIV. OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to highlight the significant progress that EWERS have made in Kenya and Ethiopia and the steps taken to make sure they are fully functional. In spite of the challenges that exist, there are a few opportunities that must be explored further for the continued success of these systems. The engagement between countries and IGAD/ CEWAN has been rather positive and showcases a solid example of cooperation among the countries, sub-regional bodies and civil society organizations.

#### XV. DISTILLED LESSONS

The Kenyan national early warning system, it is inferred that Kenya has developed its national Early Warning and Response mechanism that remains one of the most advanced and prominent systems among the seven CEWARN member states (Wulf & Debiel 2009; Birikit 2010). One could argue but we could not undermine that there is a relatively well-established EWER system in Kenya. The early warning systems have established technology and web-based platform ways of reporting events. Among all, two key platforms are very visible in Kenya, namely *Ushahidi* and *Uwiano*, both of which employ the technique of ‘crowd sourcing’ to identify cases of violence and peaceful responses across the country. The *Uwiano* platform appears to be more effective due to its use of a wide range of resources to gather information (Ettang et al, 2014). This includes mobile phone calls, SMSs, and social media such as Face book, Twitter and Blogs provide updated and varied information on issues of national security and public importance (Rheingold, 2010). Another important element of the EWER mechanisms in Kenyan cases is the expansion of sources of information. The warning information no longer necessarily emanates from governments or military intelligence agencies. CSOs have also engaged citizens in information sharing. Information is offered by individual citizens, LPCs, DPCs, Peace Committees etc. This creates a decentralized, peer-to-peer...approach to conflict prevention and management and through these different structures, citizens are engaged in “collective intelligence” (Rothberg 2010). Moreover, inclusive Local Peace Committees are created within a specific context and are needed to resolve issues, sometimes far from the government’s reach. They have been successful because they emerge from local initiatives and are owned by the community or locality from which they emerge. Finally, CSOs have been actively involved in the design, development, use and review of these tools, platforms and mechanisms (Ettang et al, 2014; Katija and Luke, 2013). Therefore, such specific but critical experiences could be grabbed by Ethiopia.

#### XVI. CONCLUSION

From the preceding discussions it is feasible to draw some overall conclusions. One can only state that the conflict early warning and response system in the national governments has brought significant steps in promoting conflict prevention strategies. They would help to attain the realization of peace, security and stability in countries. Conflict prevention is only possible if stakeholders and policymakers are sensitive and responsive to early conflict indicators. In this regard, early warning and early response (EWER) systems are critical elements that serve as the basis for peace-building. Response systems are needed at all levels of society from small communities up to the national level. Integrated utilization and employment of conflict early warning variables by the national governments would significantly contribute in mitigation of conflict at the earlier stages and undermining these variables will lead to detrimental impact on operationalization of conflict early warning and response systems within the framework of conflict prevention strategies.

As comparative analysis of both countries has shown, there are similarities and differences in the way conflict early warning and response system is being undertaken. The similarities exhibited by both countries are overarching early warning mandates in establishing structural set up and use of open sources for data collection for conflict early warning. The differences are the utilization of technologies and CSO engagements which are vital and crucial. The key element in Kenyan case was that the early warning systems have established technology-based ways of reporting events. In addition, the involvement of Civil Society Organizations in various conflict prevention efforts is critically useful. As has been made by Kenya, an effective EWER system must have strong connection between civil society and key stakeholders and closer engagement between local actors and government are indispensable lessons to be drawn. The role of traditional and local leaders, community-based organizations, and faith groups need to become more prominent in providing information and support. In addition, clear and accurate information is integral to EWER. Wrong or subjective information can lead to a wrong response. Importantly, information should reach decision-makers fast enough in order to make quick decisions. However, reported and unreported information on early warning indicators were not critically

scrutinized for response options in all cases. On the other hand, the contribution of local, state and national systems to conflict prevention in Kenya depend on how strong the linkages between them and how participatory and inclusive they are can adequately complement each other convey a lesson to Ethiopia. In sum, the prerequisite resources, human expertise, technological infrastructure, and political will needed for successful early warning and early response mechanism are important. Without these, information will not be easily accessible and responses cannot be rapid. Finally, returning to the initial focus of this article, I believe the research methods I chose allowed for a pragmatic approach to exploring different concepts and cross national comparison of early warning and early response institution, policy and practice of two countries. Findings that I hope will further contribute to strengthen conflict early warning and response systems in conflict prevention policy and strategy that results in remaining communities in peaceful and sustainable life.

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