Practical Guide
Early Warning and Response Systems Design for Social Conflicts

Human Rights
Mapping
Systematization
Warning
Democracy
Social Conflicts
Prevention
Anticipate
Strategic Planning
Coverage
Security
Monitoring
Analysis
Responses
Networks
Coordination
Decision-making
Data
Confidentiality
Tensions
Actions
Reliability
Crisis
Citizens
Management
Communication
Context
Risk
Actors
Tools
Traffic light systems
Peace
Recommendations
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Information
Stability
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Early Warning and Response Systems Design for Social Conflicts

PROLOGUE

In the past three decades, Latin America has progressed significantly in the consolidation of its democratic institutions. Contemporary to this democratization process, many political, social and economic actors have emerged in the public arena with new demands, testing the effectiveness of political systems to process new claims.

The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) consider that the promotion and strengthening of different local and national institutions' capacities is of strategic importance for the prevention, management and peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts in the context of compliance with both organizations' legal instruments and mandates, and respecting each country's priorities.

In 2007, the two organizations, together with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), developed and published "Democratic Dialogue - A Handbook for Practitioners". The purpose of the Manual was to create a methodological tool to facilitate the work of institutions and practitioners in the design, facilitation and evaluation of dialogue processes in diverse contexts and circumstances, and it has been a valuable reference tool for the practice of democratic dialogue worldwide. This work continued in 2012 based on an update of the concepts of this instrument and the development of a Practical Guide for governments, social partners and practitioners, expanding the toolbox available for dialogue professionals and practitioners.

Aware of the importance of continuing to generate prevention mechanisms and maintaining a constructive approach to conflicts in the region, the GS/OAS and the UNDP identified the usefulness of developing a Practical Guide for the Design of Early Warning and Response System to tackle Social Conflicts.

Early warning and response systems (EWRS) are just one of the many existing tools to prevent and resolve potential social conflicts and should be part of a comprehensive prevention strategy with other approaches, such as conciliation, mediation or dialogue, as well as the inter-institutional coordination of actors responsible for the adoption and promotion of a culture of peace among public officials and citizens.

Each system can and should be designed and developed based on the needs and realities of each context. As will be seen, the Guide does not provide exact formulas or closed models, rather it highlights important aspects to be considered in the design, development and operation of systems of this kind, with the understanding that they may be useful tools for anticipating the emergence of disputes or conflicts and their corresponding treatment and approach in a peaceful, constructive and sustainable manner.

We hope this material will contribute by adding quality to the discussion on capacity building and development in order to analyze, monitor, prevent and manage conflicts from the central, regional, and municipal governments as well as the civil society and academia.

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INDEX

I. Introduction

Early Warning and Response Systems (EWRS) are an important tool within the spectrum of actions for conflict prevention, management and resolution. While most of these conflict prevention systems have been implemented in Africa, in recent years increased interest in the development and design of such mechanisms, both at the level of the state as well as in the civil society, has been seen in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in order to mitigate the effects of social conflicts in the countries in the region.

There are several theoretical and methodological models, which have been developed based on the purpose for which these systems are created - tackling armed conflict, addressing political crises, social conflict prevention, etc. - and the dynamics and specific reality of each case. In this regard, system designers must decide which model is most appropriate for each context. The important thing is to establish the scope and limitations of each model.

The EWRS are custom made and their specific configuration depends on, among other things, the characteristics of each country, the mandate, the specific objectives assigned to it, and the human and financial resources available.

The main purpose of this *"Practical Guide for Early Warning and Response Systems Design for Social Conflicts"* is to contribute to strengthening a preventive approach in addressing social conflict in the region, providing some basic aspects to keep in mind in the design and development of an EWRS from a perspective of conflict prevention and management with a socially and culturally sensitive approach, strengthening democratic governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

This Guide is intended for national and subnational public officials responsible for the development, design and implementation of an Early Warning and Response System. It is hoped that the Guide will serve as a support and reference tool to guide the process of designing these systems. It does not claim to be a unique or universal recipe, nor does it advocate a particular EWRS model that applies to all political and social contexts.

This document has been prepared on the basis of lessons learned from experiences and practice in the design and implementation of EWRS in the region.

II. Basic concepts and elements of an Early Warning and Response System (EWRS)

1. What is an EWRS?

An Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) is a tool whose primary objective is to prevent the escalation of violence that could jeopardize the integrity of individuals and democratic governance. The EWRS are mechanisms for preventing and addressing conflicts that focus on the systematic collection, processing and analysis of information (quantitative or qualitative) about conflict situations for the purpose of warning decision-makers so that they can take measures or implement actions that will avoid the emergence or escalation of conflict. These systems aim to:

- Identify the causes of a conflict
- Anticipate their outbreak, and
- Mitigate their impact

The systems are varied, but at least two general types can be identified:

a. Early Warning Systems (EWS) are limited to informing and warning about the occurrence of events that pose risks to people and to the democratic stability of a particular country or region. Their final objective is to prevent violent outcomes, not only anticipate them.

b. In addition to the above, Early Warning and Response Systems (EWRS) make recommendations about how to proceed in these cases.

The EWRS apply a series of monitoring and analytical instruments to identify conflict types, phases, trends and dynamics, making it possible to diagnose and predict situations, as well as providing guidance on actions and best approaches.

An EWRS should be considered as a subsystem within a broader system of preventing and tackling conflicts and their various manifestations. This system should be designed based on thematic, local or national objectives. For a country, the system should be part of a national conflict prevention policy covering strategic issues of interest and assessing the country's particular situation regarding the risks and threats posed by the context. If this holistic vision is lacking, the EWRS may contribute to promoting it with experiences and ideas.

WHAT DOES EWRS MEAN?	
Early	*a warning issued with enough time for prevention measures to be implemented, escalation avoided, and mitigation measures activated.*
Warning	*a signal issued by the system to anticipate crisis situations for the purpose of preventing their outbreak and mitigating their impact.*
Response	*a reaction generated by the entity that receives the warning, based on recommendations suggested by the System.*
System	*a set of interconnected steps/processes with specific and complementary functions, pointing to a common purpose.*

2. Three key distinctions

FIRST   THE EWRS AS A PROCESS AND AS A STRATEGIC TOOL

As a process

The operation of an EWRS is based on a series of processes linked to systematic information collection (quantitative and qualitative), the application of analytical tools to process that information, and the issuing of warnings and recommendations for action aimed at decision makers.

As a strategic tool

An EWRS can be considered as a subsystem within a broader prevention and conflict attention system and its various manifestations. In an ideal case scenario, the system is part of a national conflict prevention policy which also includes intervention mechanisms (dialogue, mediation, conciliation, etc.), institutional management and coordination to ensure orderly and sustainable responses from the State, and training and awareness raising for key stakeholders. The EWRS makes it possible to assess the risk profile of the country and it can offer guidelines to establish a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention.

- An **EWRS** is a subsystem whose function is to manage information about conflicts, issue warnings, and promote early response.

- The **intervention** subsystem is a set of mechanisms established to design or facilitate opportunities for dialogue and negotiation aimed at finding peaceful solutions to social conflicts.

- The **management** subsystem includes the group of institutions responsible, either because of legal jurisdiction or political necessity, for addressing conflicts and demands that may finish through arrangements or commitments.

- The **education and training** subsystem is the educational body that prepares and trains actors to prevent and manage conflicts.

INFORMATION SUBSYSTEM (EWRS)

MEDIATION SUBSYSTEM

MANAGEMENT SUBSYSTEM

TRAINING AND EDUCATION SUBSYSTEM
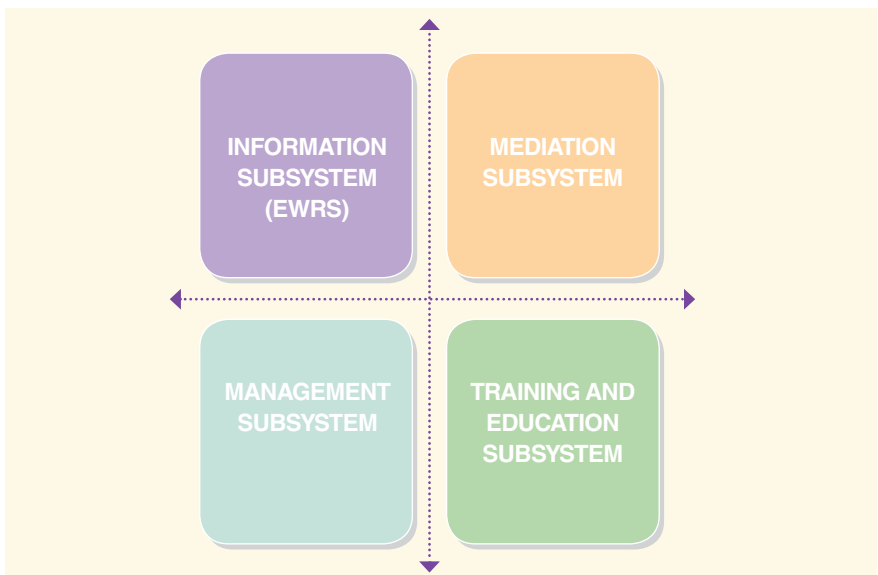
SECOND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS (EWS) OR EARLY WARNING AND RESPONSE SYSTEMS (EWRS)

- **Early Warning Systems (EWS)** focus on informing and warning of the occurrence of events that may pose a risk to the integrity of individuals and democratic stability. An EWS aims to identify the causes of conflict, predict outbreaks, and mitigate impacts. They can also monitor political decisions or

agreements signed between the parties to a conflict to determine compliance levels and anticipate the resurgence of social tensions. Warnings do not include recommendations regarding what to do and how to act, so the task of the EWS concludes with the distribution of reports and the sending of warnings to a predefined list of recipients.

The basic premise of an Early Warning System is that the evolution of social conflicts can be monitored through follow-up and analysis of key pre-defined indicators.

- **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.

THIRD   FOUR GENERATIONS OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

EWS/EWRS can be distinguished from each other depending on how information (sources and tools) is collected and who collects and analyzes it. Four different generations can be identified.

First generation

The first early warning systems were implemented by actors located outside the conflict zones in order to conduct analysis and to issue warnings about a variety of issues, from armed conflicts to humanitarian crises. These systems based their analysis on secondary sources and pioneered the use of **quantitative analytical** tools for preventing violent escalation. Most of these systems had no mechanisms for getting information to the communities affected or to decision makers, nor did they link warnings to early responses.

Second generation

These systems incorporated **qualitative** information in the analysis of specific conflicts. Furthermore, event monitoring and reporting were carried out by teams located within the countries and regions in conflict, this having the advantage of allowing for a better understanding of the context. Finally, recommendations resulting from the analysis were presented to key decision makers as part of the system design. However, as in the first generation, the final analysis and issuing of warnings were directed to persons located outside the area of conflict and usually did not involve local actors in early response.

Third generation

The third generation of systems were **mixed methods** (quantitative and qualitative tools) and assigned specific roles to people living in the areas of conflict. So conflict monitoring and analysis were carried out by persons in the field, usually in the place of conflict. In some cases, these "people-centered" systems provided mechanisms for involving leaders of the communities affected in early response activities.

Fourth generation

These systems represent the latest developments in the discipline of conflict prevention and incorporate information analysis generated through new information and communication technologies. As with the third generation systems, these systems are based on information obtained directly in places of conflict, but do not necessarily use field monitors. Fourth generation systems draw on collaborative mechanisms for obtaining information via mobile data (crowdsourcing) or automated analysis of large volumes of data generated by open sources on the internet.

3. Basic Stages of an EWRS

An EWRS consists of five basic stages which, in practice, are closely related and provide feedback for each other:

Stages of EWRS

Collect information
- Data are collected from direct observation, monitoring of various sources, and information from delegates in the field.
- The information is processed and recorded in a database using a predetermined set of indicators.

Analyze the information
- After the initial data are recorded, an analysis is made by interpreting the indicators by means of conflict analysis tools, and the context is then evaluated.
- As a result, the possibility of crisis or escalation of violence in the context of the conflict is determined and the need to inform decision makers is established.

Warn the decision makers
- A warning is issued, determining the seriousness of the threat and its possible impact.
- Early warnings are sent to decision makers through pre-established channels.

Formulate proposals for action
- EWRS analysts identify options for sustainable conflict management.
- Typically, recommendations are sent together with the early warnings.

Evaluation
- EWRS teams assess the impact of the warning and the quality of responses for two purposes: to identify noncompliance that could lead to reactivation of the conflict, and to improve overall System efficiency.

4. Approaches for addressing conflict

One of the first questions to ask those who are interested in creating an EWRS is: What are you trying to achieve? In other words, the purpose or ultimate goals underlying motivation. This purpose would determine the type of approach for addressing conflict: the particular way in which the country or national, regional or local government wishes to address conflicts. The development of specific

objectives depends on this as well as the demarcation of research boundaries, organizational and operational structure design, and the instruments and methods that will be used. In other words, the accuracy of the approach is the cornerstone of the construction process.

These approaches are:

- **Conflict prevention:** aims to prevent violence. Efforts focus on the early stages of its manifestation.

- **Conflict management:** actions are taken when the conflict has already been manifested, with or without violence. The aim is to limit and avoid the escalation of aggressive actions by promoting behavior change.

- **Conflict resolution:** this tackles the causes and seeks to build agreements, identifying common interests.

- **Conflict transformation:** this addresses a broad range of social and political roots, seeking to transform negative energy into positive social and political changes. Agreements are of interest but relations are significant too.

WHAT DOES AN EWRS DO?	WHAT DOES AN EWRS NOT DO?
» It generates permanent, timely and accurate information about the state of a conflict, its dynamics and prioritization. » It issues timely warnings to prevent escalation of tension. » It recommends strategies for addressing the conflict. » It can monitor compliance with political decisions and agreements reached by the parties. » It can provide useful information for programs, projects and public policy that address the immediate and structural causes of conflict.	» It is not a military or police spying system. » It does not carry out surveillance or follow individuals or public figures. » It does not carry out mediation, conciliation, negotiation, or arbitration. » It does not manage conflicts in the field; that is the prerogative of the responsible institutions.

III. Preliminary stage: Elements to consider in designing an EWS/EWRS

Designers should develop two series of questions at the preliminary stage, before starting to construct the System. The first set of questions is linked to factors that contribute to the sustainability of the EWS/EWRS and the second set addresses specific design issues.

1.Guiding questions for establishing the sustainability of an EWRS

What political support does the System have?

In general, the type of support may be unilateral (emanating from a single high-level public authority and embodied in an executive decree or decision) or based on consensus (product of the will of several high-level public authorities and embodied in an agreement). An EWS/EWRS that has the support of the highest authorities of the government/institution or organization that will implement it may have more leeway for action and institutional and political legitimacy, thereby obtaining better results.

Political support may be fundamental for:
- Access to key sources of information
- Cooperation with other public entities
- Facilitating adequate interinstitutional coordination (horizontal and vertical)
- Guaranteeing access to the highest decision-making levels

> The EWRS must have strong political support, sufficiently stable to be efficient and sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes in the context.

Where is the System located institutionally?

The place assigned to the EWS/EWRS within the institutional architecture is a political and strategic decision. It reflects the weight that will be assigned to the System and sends a message to the other institutions about how they should treat it and relate to it. In other words, the place given to the System in the state apparatus is an initial message about its significance and recognition.

The institutional anchoring of the EWS/EWRS is a fundamental decision for the timely and effective operation of the System. These systems can be implemented by entities outside the institutional structure of the State or may be placed at the core of the state apparatus. The former can result in better levels of access for collecting information from the field, but it may also limit the capacity to transmit warnings to decision makers and adequately follow up on commitments undertaken by different public administration agencies.

The EWRS which are placed near the upper echelons of decision-making benefit from better access and capacity for influence, but may be perceived as alien to and distant from the communities, generating a feeling of distrust and consequently hampering access to field data. Obviously, there are several possible configurations between these two extremes.

Appropriate institutional anchoring of an EWS/EWRS:
- Facilitates access to sources of State and civil society information.
- Facilitates interinstitutional cooperation and coordination at different levels (local, regional and national).
- Ensures direct access to the highest political decision-making levels.

> The place occupied by the EWS/EWRS in the state apparatus will be indicative of its political weight, institutional significance, and possibilities of becoming established in the field.

What financial resources does the System have available?
The success of an EWS/EWRS depends not only on obtaining an adequate budget, but also, and especially, on the possibility of continuous and constant financial resources that are available when needed. Administrative delays may affect the continuity of the work stages and the effectiveness of actions.

> The EWS/EWRS must have stable, sustained and timely funding.

Are there any other relevant experiences?
The team responsible for designing an EWS/EWRS should make a thorough inventory of previous experiences of formal conflict prevention mechanisms.

Should the country, region or municipality have already implemented early warning and response mechanisms, it is essential to reflect on lessons learned, evaluations of the system by the team and by relevant external actors, and resources (legal, procedural, human and technological) that could be reused.

> The EWS/EWRS should learn from past experiences, incorporating the elements/procedures/tools that have proven to be successful and seeking to overcome past mistakes.

2. Guiding questions for designing an EWS/EWRS

A series of guiding questions that designers should answer before embarking on the construction of the System is provided below.

Purpose	What do you want to do?
Justification	Why do you want to do it?
Objectives	What for?
Recipients/ Users	Who for?
Conflict	For which type of conflicts is it necessary to construct a EWS/EWRS? [See box on page 22 where an example of conflict typology is provided.]
Methodology	How? Which combination of tools for data collection, analytical methods and IT components will be available in the System?
Structure	• Which team? • What degree of centralization/decentralization? • Which State institutions will it be necessary to cooperate with? • With which field entities will it be necessary to establish an information and work network?
Coverage	What will the geographical–territorial scope of the System be?
Products	What products will be developed and how often will they be delivered?
Security	What safeguards will be implemented to preserve the confidentiality of information and the integrity of personnel, equipment and facilities?
Results	What results are sought and how will the System's impact be measured?

An initial diagnosis of the conflict in the country is essential. This analysis will establish a baseline and prioritize areas of focus for the initial phases of implementation of the System. The scale and coverage of the System can gradually be extended in accordance with users' needs and financial and human resources available. The fact that it will be gradual will allow learning to take place as implementation progresses, adjusting the operation of the System based on specific needs and lessons learned as a result of the experience.

Define the object of study → conflict typology
It is important to define the types and sub-types of conflict that will be analyzed and monitored in order to know where to focus EWS/EWRS efforts.

Each System usually has its own classifications related to its areas of specialization and competence (education, health, labor issues, mining, land, etc.). One of the first tasks of the EWS/EWRS is to gather all existing classifications and, based on these, develop a typology of social conflicts. This should be exhaustive, clear, concise and functional, since a list of classifications and sub-classifications that is too broad will be difficult to analyze. Moreover, typologies should be validated by external experts and revised and adjusted by the EWRS team during fieldwork.

EXAMPLE: CONFLICT TYPOLOGY

Service demands

1.1. Health
1.2 Education
1.3 Electrification
1.4 Transport
1.5 Housing

Strategic natural resources

1.1. Water
1.2 Forests
1.3 Mineral resources
1.4 Petroleum
1.5 Gas
1.6 Protected areas

Agrarian

1.1 Land tenure
1.2 Land use
1.3 Occupation of contentious areas
1.4 Displacements
1.5 Land occupation

Socio-cultural identities and conflicts

1.1 Religious identities
1.2 Ethnic identities
1.3 Sexual identities

3. Organizational structure

The basic organizational model of an EWS/EWRS should include at least two components:

- An internal one linked to the different teams (with their members, functions and roles), having the responsibility for implementing and managing the System on a daily basis.
- An external one linked to the creation of the structure, networks and inter-institutional processes, both horizontally and vertically, to facilitate and speed up the operation of the System during its different stages.

3.1 INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

The internal organization of an EWS/EWRS should be decided once the magnitude of the work has been determined. Rather than adopting pre-established models, the structure of the EWS/EWRS should be adapted to previously identified objectives and needs.

The internal structure of the EWRS should comply with certain basic requirements:

- High level of functional, operational and financial autonomy.
- Some level of decentralization and presence in the territory.
- Teams with differentiated and clearly defined functions.
- A formalized organizational chart with clear hierarchies of authority and responsibilities.
- Mechanisms to ensure horizontal and vertical information flows.
- Guarantee of an independent physical space and infrastructure.
- Permanent mechanisms to evaluate System performance and product quality.

Based on these criteria, an EWS/EWRS should provide at least the following structure and functions:

- » A coordinating team or director.
- » A central team of analysts to process the information received and develop the products that the EWS/EWRS will provide for end-users.
- » A group of delegates in the field to collect and send information, build social and institutional relations, and promote coordination tasks locally.
- » The temporary activation of thematic groups can also be considered whenever there is a need for specialized analysis. These may be experts or consultants who will analyze specific situations or problems.

> » An IT and information management team to design, maintain and refine the tasks of data collection, analysis and transmission.
> » An administrative, financial and operational support team.
> » A strategic communication team.

An EWRS should have a permanent, multidisciplinary, culturally sensitive, well-coordinated and flexible team.

3.2 EXTERNAL COORDINATION

Institutions, organizations and actors should be identified for the EWS/EWRS to collaborate and coordinate with in the implementation of different functions and tasks.

Once identified, the content and form of collaboration and coordination should be defined. Designers must decide, among other issues, whether horizontal and vertical cooperation will be established by formal agreement; whether tasks, roles, responsibilities and timelines will be defined and specified beforehand; whether ad hoc or permanent bodies will be created, or both.

One of the keys to success of the EWS/EWRS has to do with the ability to design fluid coordination mechanisms with institutions, entities and actors that address conflict in the field.

> The vertical and horizontal coordination of the EWRS is a *sine qua non* condition for information collection, the reliability of warnings, and the effectiveness of early responses.

4. Cultural sensitivity

EWS/EWRS designers should incorporate a perspective that is sensitive to cultural and gender differences. Some guidelines on how to implement this perspective in EWS/EWRS design are presented below.

- Identify and incorporate specific indicators on gender and differentiated ethnic identities in the data collection stage to feed into the context analysis stage.

- At the information collection stage, when working with primary sources through interviews, focus groups and Delphi groups, ensure achievement of balanced gender and ethnic participation, incorporating local language interpreters if necessary.

This information can be crucial during the conflict analysis stage. It should deepen and contrast the perceptions, demands and narratives of the various groups regarding the causes of conflict, motivation of the actors, and the different impacts of overt expressions of the conflict. This approach will make it possible to achieve balanced interpretations.

- Specific analysis of gender and ethnic identity dimensions. This analysis can help to:
    » Reveal prevailing political, social and economic inequalities.
    » Highlight the different impacts that the conflicts might have on different groups.
    » Understand the objectives, roles, and functions assigned to group members in the conflict.
    » Distinguish how each group perceives and experiences threats, as well as their vulnerabilities and the conflict itself.

This understanding will provide the EWS/EWRS team with increased sensitivity to propose courses of action, taking into account these differences and incorporating them into their recommendations.

- Build work teams with a balanced internal composition in terms of gender and ethnicity.

5. Systematization of EWS/EWRS operation

Once the regulatory and institutional framework, internal organization, external coordination, and the functions of each team/work unit have been defined for the operation of the EWS/EWRS, manuals and protocols should be designed for the staff.

The main objective of these is to standardize the operation, processes and practices of the EWS/EWRS.

The manuals should present clear and orderly information on the objectives, attributions, organization and procedures of the EWS/EWRS teams/units, and explain the form and type of interrelation with state agencies and in the field.

Protocols can be understood as a set of rules, steps and standards that guide a specific activity, task, action or situation.

Since information is the main capital and raw material of EWS/EWRS work, one of the most important protocols to be developed by the team is on the protection and management of such information. The information management protocol should be governed by the highest quality standards that will contribute to safeguarding its integrity, reliability, authenticity and availability.

Some suggested guidelines for information management are:

- Limit access to confidential information. This is usually done by establishing access levels and personnel profiles.

- Define encryption techniques or password use to manage information.

- Establish security processes for communication (data encryption).

- Determine the way that printed documents and other tangible materials will be managed.

The series of ISO/IEC 27000 standards contain best practices regarding Information Security Management Systems (ISMS), which could serve as a reference for EWS/EWRS IT operators for developing their own protocol.

Once developed, the protocols should be disseminated to all EWS/EWRS personnel in order to ensure understanding and effective implementation. It is possible that, after implementation and daily experience with EWS/EWRS application, it will be necessary to include other activities, tasks or situations in the protocol.

6.Communication plan for the construction and consolidation of the EWS/EWRS institutional niche

The construction of an institutional niche is a challenge for any initiative being developed for conflict prevention in the public domain. The EWS/EWRS also face this challenge. The key issue is to create demand for EWS/EWRS products and convince people and relevant institutions of their need and usefulness for the public.

In order to understand the importance of having a communication plan, it is necessary to remember some of the conditions under which an EWS/EWRS will start to operate. The initiative will be:

- New
- With little knowledge available
- It will probably operate within the jurisdiction and spheres of action of Ministries, Secretariats and State institutions

Given these conditions, those responsible for the EWS/EWRS should seek and consolidate an institutional space with the necessary political and social support that will achieve sustainability over time. This is why communication is a fundamental, crosscutting, permanent and strategic activity for the operation, legitimacy and sustainability of the System.

The system will maintain a continuous communication strategy based on at least two central themes:

First Theme: internal communication, to contribute to the operation of the EWS/EWRS.

This first central theme is for EWS/EWRS staff and implementing partners, including delegates in the field and institutional collaborators of the System. The aim is to ensure good coordination, information flow, the generation of

high quality and timely products, and the transformation of warnings into early responses.

Second Theme: external communication to ensure sustainability.

This second central theme is to disseminate and promote the existence of the System; to communicate clearly what its scope and its limitations are so as not to create false expectations; to demonstrate its achievements and results; to maintain the commitment of key internal and external political and institutional support; to establish collaboration with similar domestic and international Systems, among other objectives.

Both themes are closely related and complement each other.

IV. Stages for an EWS/EWRS implementation

FIRST STAGE

INFORMATION COLLECTION AND REGISTRATION (OF THE CONFLICT AND OF THE CONTEXT)

The first stage of an EWS/EWRS has to do with collecting and recording the information. There are two key questions to guide this first step:

- What type of information is it necessary to obtain and record?
- Where can one get the information?

The answer to the first question is based on the distinction between information about conflicts and information about the context.

The answer to the second question is related to the distinction between different sources of information and the need for expeditious instruments for information registration and systematization.

1.1 INFORMATION ABOUT CONFLICTS

The collection of information about conflicts starts in the field and is based on a series of pre-established indicators or dimensions in order to determine:

- Name of the place where the events are registered
- Date
- Actors involved and the possibility that more actors will become involved
- Causes of the conflict and the interests at stake
- The potential for escalation and the possibility of violence
- The potential impact of escalation → for this point it is possible to differentiate between different areas of impact: human lives, security, stability, governance, etc.

EWS/EWRS designers should determine how this information will be collected by field delegates (written or digital) and how it will be introduced into the System (by sending the form or by entering the information directly into a database). This is one of those times in the design of an EWS/EWRS that those responsible may consider incorporating an IT component.

In high level conflict situations it is impossible to analyze all conflicts registered by field delegates with the same level of depth. Therefore, EWS/EWRS designers

must define a set of criteria in order to prioritize conflicts registered. This implies not only identifying the criteria that will be used, but also explaining the assumptions behind each in terms of the reasoning that sustains them, and then implementing them, i.e. converting them into measurable quantities.

The score assigned to each criterion can be assessed uniformly (i.e. all receive equal weight) or based on a weighting parameter in which some criteria are given greater weight. A proper assessment (whether uniform or weighted) is essential to ensure proper targeting of resources and to increase the effectiveness of the System.

The criteria for discriminating among conflicts that will be followed up and analyzed will vary from case to case, although some basic elements can be identified, as in the following example:

	CRITERIA	WEIGHTING	SCORE
1.	Collective conflict: aims to identify the number of persons or families involved. The assumption behind this criterion is that the more families or persons involved, the higher the priority that should be given to the conflict.		
2.	Conflict whose dynamics anticipate threats to the lives and safety of the persons involved or their property.		
3.	Conflict that affects or threatens to affect the rights of third parties.		
4.	Conflict that has a special impact on public opinion. Conflict with high media visibility.		
5.	Conflict that would entail serious political and economic repercussions in that town, department, region or country.		

6.	Conflict led by actors capable of articulating and mobilizing local social organizations. Conflict involving organized social groups.		
7.	Conflict involving actors with significant support and alliances at local, municipal, provincial, national or international level.		
8.	Conflict that, despite being perceived as urgent by those affected, has not been addressed by the institutions.		
9.	Recurring conflict.		
10.	Conflict that involves several institutions in its resolution, management or attention.		

The closer the conflict score to 100, the more of a priority it becomes.
Priority ranges are as follows:
0-10: The conflict is registered but no immediate follow-up activities are established.
10-40: The conflict is registered as low priority (C)
40-60: The conflict is registered as medium priority (B)
60 and above: The conflict is registered as maximum priority (A)

Source: Developed by the author based on the criteria defined by the Early Warning System of Guatemala. 2006.[1]

Uniform or weighted assessments will highlight conflicts to which the EWS/EWRS team should pay more attention and in which it should invest more resources. This prioritization process is another step that could benefit from an IT component capable of automatically calculating the final result based on scores and the weighting formula.

After the phase of selecting prioritized social conflicts, an instrument should be designed to record in a standardized manner some of the fundamental characteristics of the conflicts. This information forms the basis for the analysts' work, as in the example below:

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1 Ortiz, Carmen y Andrés Álvarez. 2009. Sistemas de Alerta Temprana para la Prevención de Conflictos: la experiencia del SATP en Guatemala. http://www.uvg.edu.gt/facultades/ccss/antropologia/doc/articulo7.pdf

REGISTRATION FORM FOR SOCIAL CONFLICTS
Name of the event (it should be short and synthetically represent the core of the conflict)
Type and subtype (according to EWS/EWRS internal classification)
Date and registration number
Geographical location
Brief **background of the event** (including conflict timeline if this is the first time registered)
Description of actors
Description of events
Conflict status (phases: early, escalation, crisis, des-escalation)
Description of demands of the parties
Measures and actions announced (threats if any)
Previous resolution attempts (dialogue, mediation, conciliation, etc.)
Entity or institutions responsible for management according to local perceptions
Sources of information used

Description of actors: Actors must be classified. There are at least three basic criteria for developing this classification:

FIRST CRITERION
- **Direct or primary:** those directly interested or affected.
- **Indirect or secondary:** those who are affected or interested indirectly or in a secondary manner.
- **Neutral:** those who are not affected or interested but who show interest/concern about the situation.

SECOND CRITERION
- **State:** belong to the State apparatus or structure.
- **Non-state:** are outside the State structure, have their origins in the society, and operate within the society or in a State–society intersection.

THIRD CRITERION
- **Institutionalized:** the actor is an institution or person who represents an institution.
- **Informal:** the actor is or represents a group of people that is not institutionalized but has a certain level of organization, a common identity and minimum rules of operation.

Conflict status: Four phases can be distinguished: early, escalation, crisis, de-escalation.

EARLY PHASE the conflict has been publicly expressed in declarations, gestures or actions. It shows no signs of violence, but nor has it disappeared or decreased in intensity.

ESCALATION PHASE this refers to the evolution of a conflict that is increasing in intensity[2] and strength[3].

FASE DE CRISIS this occurs when the system can no longer contain the hostility; the means of expressing the contradiction become particularly aggressive and may include the use of violence.

FASE DE DESESCALADA after the explosion, tensions relax and exhaustion is perceived in the parties. The conflict is retracted and there are opportunities for finding negotiated solutions and establishing spaces for peaceful resolution.
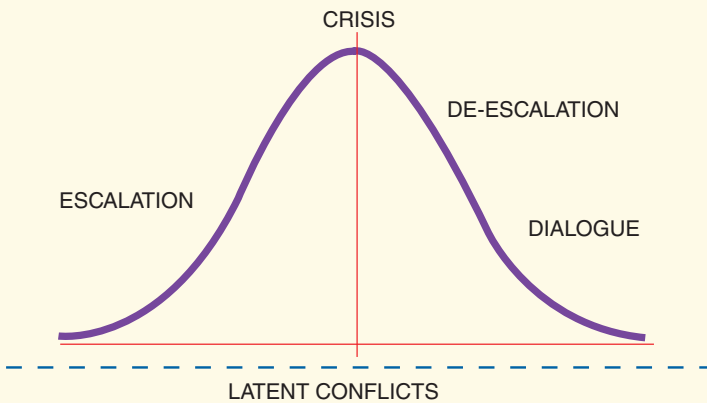
Source: Rubin, Pruitt y Hee[4]

2 Rubin, Pruitt y Hee. 1986. Social Conflict Escalation, Stalemate and Settlement, NY, Mc Graw-Hill.
3 Kriegsberg, L. 1999. Conflict transformation en Kurst y Turpin (comps). Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict, Vol 1. San Diego Academic Press.
4 Rubin. et al. Op cit.

This record may be accompanied by attachments such as photographs, certificates, agreements, press articles, and any documents that may contribute to further analysis of the case.

It is important to provide mechanisms for expeditious communication between analysts and field delegates in order to request further information, confirm data, and contrast hypotheses.

Once this first registration has been completed, the recommended time frame/monitoring frequency should be determined for each conflict in order to maintain up-to-date control of its evolution. This decision can be entered on a conflict "file card". This file card should be updated as the conflict evolves.

It therefore follows that registration of the fundamental characteristics of prioritized conflicts is an ongoing task, so either information about already registered conflicts will be updated or new conflicts entered.

> The registration and systematization of fundamental characteristics of prioritized conflicts is another step that can be expedited with the introduction of a centralized IT component.

1.2 INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTEXT

Conflicts arise and develop in particular socio-political, economic, institutional and cultural contexts, with different histories, traditions, worldviews and realities that influence and explain their dynamics. It is therefore important to have contextual information to provide a framework and facilitate understanding.

Relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators should be selected. These indicators will point to the conditions that frame particular conflicts and can contribute to understanding their structural causes and anticipating their evolution.

An example of comprehensive pillars for developing a set of contextual indicators is presented below[5]:

Demographic data: gender, age, socio-economic structure, geographical distribution of the population, ethnicity.

Educational data: level of schooling, illiteracy, school dropout rate, school completion rate, etc.

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5 Barton and Von Hippel, after having studied 30 EWRS models throughout the world and classifying over 800 indicators, the indicators were summarized in the follwing six comprehensive pillars.

Security data: murder rate, impunity, confidence in the security forces, participation of the Armed Forces in public security, local dispute resolution mechanisms, etc.

Social data: poverty/extreme poverty, Gini coefficient, malnutrition, access to public services, etc.

Economic data: inflation, unemployment and underemployment, informal economy, cost of basic food basket, type of economic development model, etc.

Data from the energy sector: composition of the energy matrix, electricity prices, gas prices, fuel prices, etc.

Other formulations and disaggregations are possible in accordance with the needs of each country, region and community.

These data can be entered using an IT component.

1.3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Having provided general guidelines on the type of information that needs to be collected and registered during the first stage of an EWS/EWRS, the second key question given at the beginning of this section is addressed below: Where can one get the information?

Information can be obtained from several sources. One source refers to the origin of the information. These can be classified according to four criteria:

FIRST CRITERION	ORIGINAL INFORMATION OR THIRD-PARTY INTERPRETATIONS

Primary sources: these provide new and original knowledge from direct participants in the conflict, the authorities in the area, close observers, documents from related institutions, local networks.

Secondary sources: these are developed using primary sources, but they are complemented and extracts are analyzed. One example is the media.

Tertiary sources: these are reference guides that collect and condense secondary sources related to a theme or issue in a single place, including bibliographies, reading lists, etc.

ACCESS

Open: with public access, for example, laws, budgets, media declarations, published research.

Reserved: these are confidential, not for public use or having limited distribution to predefined recipients.

TYPE OF INFORMATION

Personal: direct contact with people is necessary for obtaining this information, for example, face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

Indirect or Impersonal: these do not require contact with individuals, for example, the information obtained from electronic surveys or from data processing.

FORM OF INFORMATION

- Bibliographical information.
- Audiovisual information.
- Through electronic media, such as data obtained from webpages and social networks.

CLASSIFICATION OF SOURCES	
Classification	**Disaggregation**
Level	Primary - Secondary-Tertiary
Access	Open - Closed
Type of information	Personal - Impersonal
Form of presentation	Bibliographic-Graphic-Audiovisual-Electronic

SOCIAL NETWORKS ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE INTERNET

Within an EWS/EWRS, social networking sites can serve several functions:

Provide information from the field in real time about emerging and manifest conflicts, establish geographical location and documentation through images or *in situ* testimonies. This information can feed into the analytical process and increase the possibilities of timely and appropriate responses.

Promote dialogue and as a means of expression, promoting an exchange of ideas and opinions; encouraging the formation of groups with similar objectives; spreading conciliatory messages through spots, videos, photographs; and serving as a platform for discussion of certain issues.

Monitor conflicts in real time, such as fulfilment of commitments reached for resolution with the direct participation of communities affected. Networks can be a complementary channel of information for evaluating the impact of the measures adopted.

Raise awareness of a large number of users about the dimensions of the conflict to facilitate a constructive way out.

Organize and mobilize groups of people, warning, convening, and scheduling meetings.

Offer alternative visions to those promoted by actors directly involved in the conflict, contrasting information and offering new data.

Oversight and denouncing of human rights violations.

Despite their positive contributions, it is important to remember that social networks can also have negative impacts on the conflict when messages are sent for the purpose of misinforming, activating triggers in sensitive situations, spreading rumors, or sowing panic. That is why information from these sources should be checked to corroborate its veracity.

1.4 TOOLS FOR SYSTEMATIC INFORMATION COLLECTION

The designers can incorporate a series of complementary methods or tools into this first stage to make it possible to obtain the necessary information

systematically. A combination of various research tools will contribute to obtaining high quality, reliable and balanced information.

Focus groups: qualitative data collection technique based on collective and semi structured interviews with homogeneous groups of people.

Delphi Group: qualitative data collection technique based on the application of successive questionnaires with a group of experts.

Surveys: quantitative data collection technique performed after using the questionnaire with a representative sample to determine opinions or perceptions related to various aspects of the situation.

Monitoring of mainstream and alternative media (print, radio, television and social networks): there are different computer applications available that facilitate following up on events in the media. These tools are capable of identifying relevant topics, content, issuers, tones, keywords, and they can even determine positive or negative opinions related to certain topics.

1.5 QUALITY CRITERIA: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

An EWS/EWRS is built on the basis of reliable, accurate and consistent information. Hence the importance of ensuring that it adheres to certain quality criteria.

- *The information should be current and timely:* time lags can be misleading, resulting in mistaken conclusions and misguided recommendations.

- *The information should be balanced:* a pluralistic and inclusive approach should be ensured so that the opinions of all stakeholders can be considered.

- *The information should be rigorous, verifiable and thorough.*

- *The information should add value to the work of the system.*

A particularly sensitive challenge for the EWS/EWRS team is to judge the quality of information and establish the reliability of its sources. It is therefore important to have at least two basic quality controls:

Consistency between sources

Check the degree of similarity of information provided by different sources, whether these are documentary or personal, open or reserved, primary or secondary. Comparison between sources allows for a better balance between

matches, inconsistencies or disagreements. To determine the reasons for the latter may require additional research.

Consistency of interpretations

Check the level of interpretive consistency between the different versions or observations of the same phenomenon. Analysts have the responsibility to make sure that their interpretations are correct. To do this, it is a good idea to contrast findings with those of other colleagues and determine coincidence, disagreements and possible bias. Another method is to submit the analysis to the judgment of members of the population subject to observation or sources consulted during the process to discover their reactions and opinions.

SECOND STAGE   INFORMATION ANALYSIS (OF THE CONFLICT AND OF THE CONTEXT)

2.1 CATEGORIES/DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Once the conflicts have been registered and prioritized, a thorough analysis of the highest priority conflicts should be made based on a series of categories/dimensions and using a set of analytical tools.

2.1.1 CAUSES OF CONFLICTS

In the discipline of conflict prevention it is common to distinguish between three types of causes of conflicts:

1. **Structural** causes refer to profound variables that evolve very slowly and whose control is not in the hands of the actors involved in the conflict (for example, secular political exclusion, demographic transformations, socio-economic inequalities, environmental degradation, changes in the economic cycle, etc.).
2. **Proximate causes** refer to circumstantial variables that result in the emergence of a conflict at a given time.
3. **Trigger events** (for example, a real action, a political assassination, election fraud, human rights violations, etc.) are specific factors that unleash the confrontation, making it visible.

In addition to identifying the multiple causes of a conflict, it is important to establish the linkages between them. The identification and analysis of chains of causality (cause-effect relations between different variables) can also provide relevant information about conflict dynamics.

2.1.2 CONFLICT EVOLUTION

Conflicts can move from a state of apparent inactivity (latent conflict) to manifestations of open hostility or violence (manifest conflict). This escalation may cause a crisis and then there might be a de-escalation, in which the easing of tensions can lead to a "plateau" phase or a situation of latency. However, if the conflict is not addressed properly, there may be further escalations and crises.

There are no universal prescriptions to determine the phase of a specific conflict or when it moves from one phase to another. However, there are some basic definitions that can guide EWS/EWRS team members in analyzing the status and evolution of the conflict. This requires using the generic definitions of the four phases of conflict presented on page 34 (early phase, escalation phase, crisis phase and de-escalation phase) and based on this to adjust the number of phases, if necessary, and provide them with specific content and meaning in accordance with the conflict that is being analyzed.

In other words, for any given conflict the conditions, indicators and situations that characterize each of the phases established should be defined. The idea is to move from generic definitions of phases to specific definitions, attributable to a particular conflict.

The formulation of definitions of particular phases in a specific conflict will make it possible then to identify some indicators of movement from one phase to another. Some elements that may contribute to the construction of such phase indicators are provided below:

- The status of **communication:** Escalations in conflicts can be anticipated when the parties have broken relations, no longer communicate, or do so through third parties. Or, when verbal exchanges are characterized by hostility and mutual distrust.

- Accumulation of **causes**: In the early stages of a conflict it is generally easier to clearly identify the issues that led to the incompatibility of interests between the parties, whereas the conflict tends to worsen when more demands and interests are added to initially existing ones.

- An increase in the number of **actors** involved: In the early stages, people or groups directly affected by the situation are clearly identifiable. However, the conflict becomes more complicated in later stages and crises, when a greater number of actors is involved and affected.

- Collective **actions by the parties**: These can be peaceful, aimed at expressing demands, establishing positions, and seeking opportunities for conciliation, negotiation or dialogue, or de facto actions. Violent expressions usually occur during the escalation and crisis phases of social conflicts. In more serious situations violence may trigger escalation, resulting in further violence.

- The type of State **response:** Overreaction by forces responsible for maintaining public order may be counterproductive if it generates more tension. However, the absence of authority can also encourage violence. Significantly, each phase of the conflict requires a different type of State response. For example, in the initial phases the development agenda should prevail (measures that aim to hear demands, management, public policy development, and alternative resolution methods). During escalation and having reached a critical point, the appropriateness of applying security agenda actions (police intervention) should be evaluated.

  Importantly, the latter should be proportional to the situation, deploying specialized units with human rights training. Comparative experience demonstrates that, so as not to be counterproductive, the use of force should be an exceptional and temporary resource in the management of social conflicts.

- **Perceptions:** these are subjective interpretations and attitudes that the people who are affected have about reality, events that occur that are related to the conflict, and the nature of the "other". Factors associated with emotions weigh heavily in the context of social conflicts and should be incorporated in the analysis.

  What do the parties say about what is happening? What opinions do they have of the other? What does their narrative of the conflict express? What threats do they sense? In an environment dominated by negative perceptions, mistrust, disqualification, polarization and a growing sense of risk, there is a high probability that the conflict will evolve to critical stages.

The following example shows graphically the dynamics of a particular conflict over time. This chronology makes it possible to appreciate its evolution in terms of phases and states, as well as identify relevant or trigger events that lead to passage from one phase to another:
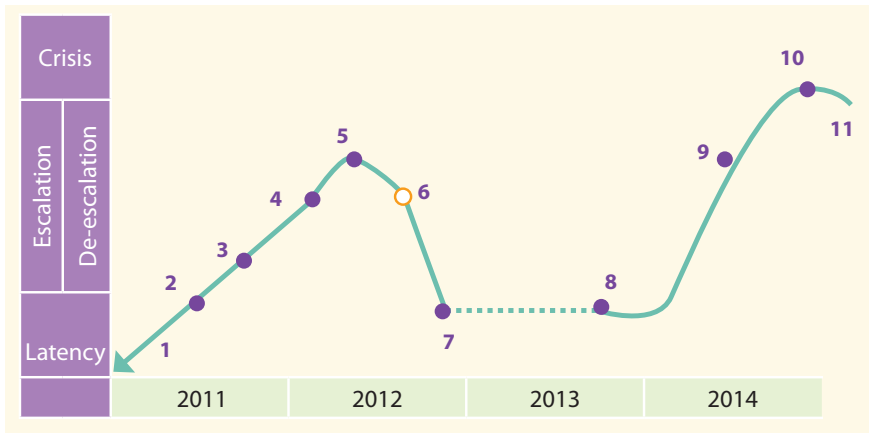
Description of events:
1. Authorization of the mine.
2. Peaceful protest.
3. First land occupation by the mine.
4. Violent eviction, resulting in two dead and seven wounded.
5. Judicialization of the conflict and initiation of institutional dialogue.
6. Mediation by a third party.
7. Protest over judicial decision, creation of a regional support forum.
8. The mine begins operations.
9. Roads are blocked.
10. The mine is occupied.
11. State of siege declared, military forces occupy the zone.

2.1.3 ANALYSIS OF ACTORS

Analysis of the characteristics of the actors involved in a conflict is central to the operation of an EWS/EWRS. A thorough analysis of actors requires a substantial investment of time and resources normally reserved only for cases that are considered priority. The development of these analyses requires continuous interaction between field delegates and analysts. As a minimum, this analysis should:

1. Distinguish between the positions, interests and needs of each actor.
2. Determine the level of internal organization and cohesion of the actors.
3. Determine the existence of formal or informal leaders.
4. Identify resources available and the repertoire of actions that can be activated.

5. Identify the functions and roles of each actor.
6. Establish hierarchies and networks of relations between actors.

The analysis of actors can benefit from the incorporation of an IT component, making it possible to enter the distinct characteristics of actors and generate a map to visualize the type and intensity of their relations.

2.1.4 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The actions of actors are usually preceded by their discourse. It is essential to analyze what the different actors involved in political and social processes say and the implications of what they say, in order to clarify their positions, interests and needs, and understand the dynamics, intensity and possible evolution of a conflict. A tool is necessary to systematically analyze and standardize the discourse of primary and secondary actors in a conflict.

There are several theoretical currents of discourse analysis. Therefore, designers of an EWS/EWRS can choose from any one or a combination of elements selected from several or all currents.

With regard to content analysis (one of the theoretical currents of discourse analysis), IT applications are available in the market that could be incorporated as part of the toolkit for conflict analysis.

2.1.5 PROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

The EWS/EWRS should incorporate a prospective analysis technique to anticipate potential evolution of conflicts identified as priorities. There are several techniques available. The EWS/EWRS designers should choose the one that best fits the data collected and processed, the quality of the information, and the time frame.

Since anticipation is a creative activity based on quantitative and qualitative information, it should be performed by the team with each member contributing their experience and area of expertise to the development of possible future conflict scenarios.

The scenario construction technique is an unconventional tool. In the context of an EWS/EWRS, this methodology involves building on the information

obtained regarding the causes, main actors, conflict dynamics and central characteristics of the context. Analysts carry out an exercise in imagination, following a series of methodological steps to project three to four scenarios.

The result of the prospective analysis will be essential to raise awareness among decision makers of the need to take some type of early action, as well as informing about available courses of action, each accompanied by a cost/benefit analysis. Non-action is also an option that should be considered, along with its impact.

The scenario technique also includes identifying indicators to determine in advance when a conflict is evolving into any possible scenario. This information, in turn, will enable the EWS/EWRS to react at an early stage, recommending a specific course of action adjusted to a possible future reality.
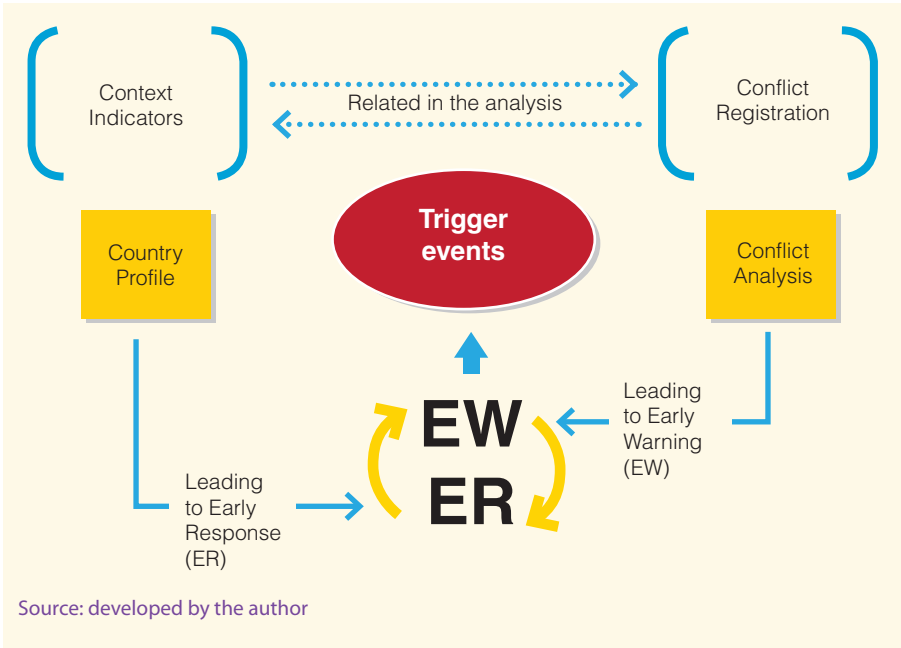
2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT

Once the data for completing context indicators have been collected (see First Stage in Section III), a systematic analysis must be conducted to understand what they indicate about the reality of the context of prioritized conflicts. This analysis may simply be limited to providing a general framework to understand the root causes of the conflict and some factors that influence it indirectly. In some cases, when data collected are rigorous, valid, reliable and representative, it is possible to apply time series analysis methods to identify, for example, trends, cycles and patterns, or make regression analyses to estimate the magnitude of the causal relation between certain key variables for conflict development and project the possible future behavior of these variables.

The analysis of context will make it possible to build a profile of the municipality, province, region or country where the conflict is taking place. These profiles can be viewed as the backdrop against which social conflicts take place.

2.3 COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN THE TWO TYPES OF ANALYSIS IN AN EWS/EWRS

The following diagram explains the systemic relation between indicators/analysis of the context and indicators/analysis of a particular conflict. The analysis of the relation between indicators of contexts and the characteristics of specific conflicts enable the appropriate design of early warnings and responses.

Context
Indicators

Related in the analysis

Conflict
Registration

Country
Profile

**Trigger
events**

Conflict
Analysis

Leading
to Early
Response
(ER)

**EW
ER**

Leading
to Early
Warning
(EW)

Source: developed by the author

THIRD STAGE **WARNING / TRANSMISSION OF ANALYSIS TO DECISION-MAKERS**

If designers are building an Early Warning System, this would be the third and penultimate stage of the process. The challenge is to convert early warning into political will for action, and to this end, it is essential to change the prevailing culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. This section is structured around three key questions: When alert warning ? How? and alerting Who ?

Changing the culture of reaction to a culture of prevention

3.1. WHEN?
To issue a warning is based on three criteria:
- Phase indicators
- Phase transit indicators
- Scenario indicators

3.2. HOW?
To issue a warning is related to at least three elements:
- Warning format
- Warning content
- Warning dispatch, referring to users as well as channels/means of distribution

The basic format and content of a warning should be designed taking into account the following dimensions:

1. Title, date and time of issue
* Direct, clear, concise.
2. Description of event / conflict
* Description of facts, participants and general situation.
3. Relevant information about the context
*Information about the context in which the conflict is taking place, enabling full understanding of the importance of the warning.
4. Possible future evolution of the situation
* Based on a scenario construction exercise.
5. Window of opportunity for action:
*Expressed in number of hours, days or weeks considered to be "reasonable" for taking action in order to avoid undesirable consequences. After that period, the risk of violent outcomes would increase and conditions deteriorate for implementing alternative methods of peaceful resolution.
6. Name(s) of person(s) drafting the warning

3.3. WHO?

Regarding the dispatch of warnings, it is important to identify who should be informed [users] and what channels or means will be used.

Regarding users, designers can choose from at least two alternatives:
*   An established list of recipients
*   An established group and, in addition, ad hoc recipients who will be added depending on the specific situation

In cases where it is deemed necessary to have an impact on public opinion, warnings can be designed for open distribution. Aspects such as the legal obligations of institutions regarding public information should be taken into account, as well as the common good, health, safety and political or social sensitivities at local, regional or national levels.

In any case, this decision and the regulation should be reflected in the System's protocols.

For sending warnings, a combination of distribution channels and means can be used. One advantage of proceeding in this way is that it guarantees reception of warnings. Furthermore, warnings sent by email and text message can incorporate confirmation mechanisms.

List of points to consider when sending warnings:

✓ Check format

✓ Check content

✓ Get final approval from EWS personnel assigned to that function

✓ Control list of recipients (established and additional users)

✓ Check use of all pre-established distribution channels/means

✓ Confirm and record reception

FOURTH STAGE
RESPONSE /EXECUTION OF CONCRETE ACTIONS

As indicated at the beginning of this guide, there are at least two types of Systems:

- EWS that are intended to warn the authorities about specific conflict situations, concluding the work cycle with delivery of the warning document.
- EWRS that also offer proposals for action, i.e. early response options.

If implementers take the decision to build an Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), recommendations for action will be one of the basic stages of operation of the System. In such cases, Early Response (ER) would be the fourth stage of the process.

Early Response (ER) can be considered to be a logical consequence of Early Warning (EW) since EW needs an ER to be effective. In this regard, the warning process already implies a response process.

To increase the efficiency of the System at this stage, the legal and administrative mechanisms should be established beforehand as well as institutional, operational and financial capacities in the national or sub-national governments so that they are able to intervene in the resolution of a conflict.

Early Response (ER) tends to be more acceptable to decision makers when:

✓ Options for operational response are clearly established.

✓ Several possible courses of action are suggested, adapted to the specific situation.

✓ A cost/benefit analysis is included or an analysis of probable impact of each suggested action.

✓ Realistic courses of action are proposed that are adapted to institutional, political and financial skills.

Ideally, Early Response (ER) should also determine an appropriate combination of short, medium and long term measures. This entails a sustained commitment

over time capable of addressing even the structural causes of the conflict, rather than simply being limited to recommending mitigation measures or ad hoc responses.

ER should also be based on the principle of Do Not Harm. This principle is based on the premise that the actions of organizations, institutions and actors may have unforeseen, negative or positive impacts in the contexts in which they are immersed. Therefore, when proposing courses of action, it is necessary to reflect on their potential negative impacts on the specific context, in terms of possible actions, behaviors, incentives and damages.

Who is responsible for developing the ER?
The EWRS team of analysts is responsible for designing response proposals. Their proposals should be submitted to the appraisal of field delegates or observers because they will understand the nature, dynamics and impacts of the conflict. When deemed appropriate, it may also be helpful to consult with local officials and even some community members on the feasibility of responses.

If the EWRS team is small or the issue is very specific, an additional expert or group of experts will probably be required to help the team design the response. They can be recruited from the public institutions that will be responsible for implementing the response.

How and when is the ER sent?
The Early Response is sent as part of the Early Warning. A seventh dimension of recommendations for action should be added to the basic structure and content suggested for an EW [See page 49]. These recommendations will be presented, in the first instance, within the suggested time frame as a window of opportunity. Recommendations can also be indicated for the short, medium and long term.

Who should an ER be sent to?
As with the EW, communication of recommendations for immediate action can be restricted to decision makers or distribution can be extended to increase its impact.

Who is responsible for carrying out the ER?
Depending on the institutional mandate and anchoring of the EWRS, as well as other factors, implementation of the ER may be the responsibility of the System itself, with the creation of a specific unit to coordinate implementation of proposed actions, or it may be the responsibility of another State agency.

Even if the EWRS is not responsible for implementing and coordinating actions, it should be capable of suggesting who within the State structure could take charge of carrying out the proposed ER.

The step from EW to ER is not automatic. This should be defined during System design.

From EW to ER

Sending an Early Warning that includes alternatives for action does not imply automatic implementation. There is a number of factors that may have an adverse effect on the warning being transformed into an effective early response:

Preferences and interests: some regions or themes are higher priority or more significant for decision makers.

Impact: number of people affected and level of impact.

Economic resources: some approaches may be expensive and there may not be sufficient budget available.

Political–institutional dynamics: there are restrictions associated with political cycles (e.g. election calendars, budgeting procedures, etc.), relations between the different levels of government, and relations between different State institutions, which may affect the transformation of a warning into action.

Cognitive structures or mental maps: variations may emerge in the perception and judgment of decision makers and among those responsible for implementing responses.

Bureaucracy: factors such as indefinite mandates, inertia and administrative delays may limit or adversely affect the effective transformation of an EW into an ER.

FIFTH STAGE **EVALUATION**

Evaluation of the System can focus on the outcome of the process or on specific stages.

To evaluate the outcome of the process or complete cycle it will be necessary to focus on the early warning and response. This means, in practice, that this stage should be carried out after the warning has been issued or once the series of suggested recommendations has been implemented, as appropriate.

To evaluate the whole process a series of experiences should be accumulated that mark recurrences or patterns of action and specific results in order to make corrections and modifications as considered necessary.

In the case of an Early Warning System (EWS), evaluation of the result of the process should focus on the impact of the warning and its monitoring. Evaluation can be made through interviews or questionnaires with decision makers.

EW monitoring will assess the following aspects:

- Transmission process

- Opportunity and usefulness

- Quality of the content

- Value attributed to the warning by decision makers and other strategic users

- Usefulness of the warning for deciding whether to take action or not in a specific situation

For an Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), in addition to following up on the warning, the impact of the suggested recommendations for action should be measured. In this case, what matters is to know whether the recommendations made in the EW/ER were considered by decision makers and whether they had an impact on the conflict.

This assessment can be structured based on the following dimensions:

Communication dimension: based on the message.

If the message modified perceptions, attitudes or understanding of the situation in any way.

Institutional dimension: based on the product.

If the product was considered by recipients as relevant to their institutional, organizational or personal competence.

Political dimension: if incentives for action are generated.

If the EW/ER increased interest in addressing conflict.

Strategic dimension: if incentives for decision-making are generated.

If the EW/ER created a space for discussing recommendations proposed by the System.

Operational dimension: based on actions proposed.

If in effect the EW/ER was transformed into at least one concrete action as a response to the situation.

Evaluation by stages offers the opportunity to review and revalidate the steps, processes, instruments and products generated at each stage. For example, it may be possible to determine that the conflict typology is not sufficiently explicit by observing that there are cases that cannot be placed in the predefined classification. Analysts will have to review and adapt the instrument as often as deemed necessary.

From the standpoint of strategic planning the EWS/EWRS should, in principle, establish a plan time frames, resources, and the technical support necessary for the evaluation stage.

In theory, self-reflective systems tend to stabilize as they become regular and the teams or units improve their expertise, learn to use analytical tools, acquire practice in product development, and engage in external feedback processes. With regard to the above, dialogue between operators and analysts is essential to strengthen the system itself, its cycles, and the quality of human resources.

V. Products

The purpose of the EWS/EWRS is to be prepared in order to respond rapidly to contingencies. Therefore, some products do not have a timeline established but respond to the evolution of the situation and the demands of decision makers. By their very nature, EWS/EWRS should be designed to achieve sufficient flexibility in issuing warnings and producing analytical reports and proposals for early response.

However, most EWS/EWRS also provide for periodic reporting and analysis whose added value lies in providing longitudinal, comparative and comprehensive analyses of the dynamics of conflict, the state of general conflict, geographical distribution throughout the territory, and possible evolution scenarios.

A list of some products that could be entrusted to the EWS/EWRS is provided below.

Basic list of products

Traffic light system for conflicts

The traffic light system is a powerful visual tool to guide decision makers in prioritization before addressing conflicts:

Nº	Name	Location	Type of Conflict	State	Cycle/ Phase	Priority
026-14	Atalante	Southern Border	Migration, forced displacement.	Latent	Early	Low
234-14	Finca Jonás	Northern Department, Municipality of Río Seco.	Strategic environmental resources hydroelectric plant	Manifest	De-escalation	Low
122-13	Las Lomas	Coastal Province, Region of Las Lomas.	Land conflict as a result of regulation.	Manifest	Dialogue	Low
443-12	Entre Ríos	Coastal Plain, Municipality of Entre Ríos.	Strategic environmental resources - silver mine	Manifest	2ª Escalation	High
022-14	Monte negro	Eastern Province, Region of Tierras Morenas	Road project, forest defense	Manifest	Crisis	High
078-14	Palo Blanco	Capital, Municipality of Palo Blanco	Public services, waste water	Manifest	Crisis	High

Statistical registration

Statistics are generally useful for analyzing the system of conflicts in a specific area, country or region. They make it possible to display progression, make regional comparisons, compare by demographic segment, or cross-reference the information available with other databases. Monthly, bi-annual or annual statistical reports can be presented which show the evolution of the conflict and how it is being addressed by State institutions.

Historical registration/conflict narrative

This type of record contains the history of the conflict. It explains the background, causes, actors, relevant facts, dynamics, etc., allowing decision makers to have an up-to-date overview of cases presented.

Thematic reports

Based on an analysis of the system of conflicts, there may be cross-cutting themes or issues that emerge which, because of their political, economic, social and strategic weight and implications, require particular monitoring. Some of these themes include: migration, displacement as a result of flooding, earthquakes, food crises, unemployment, and others. It may be necessary to consult an expert or group of experts to prepare these reports.

Warnings

Warnings are the core product of the system. Warnings should inform decision makers about events on the ground, detailing who did what, who was affected, where, when and why.

They should be designed in an executive manner for quick reading and indicate the central factors of the conflict which represent the context of each event. Their immediate objective should be to mobilize resources (institutional, human, financial and others) to respond to the ongoing situation, event or process.

The essential features of a warning report are:

- Objectivity
- Brevity
- Clarity
- Precision
- Logical organization and coherence.

It is important to place key words at the beginning and provide some indicator of priority. The warning should also include recommendations for immediate

action to prevent escalation of conflicts or episodes of overt violence that may be about to occur, indicating the window of opportunity for such action and a brief assessment of possible best/worst case scenarios (based on the scenario technique adopted by the EWS/EWRS team).

Scenarios

Scenarios propose narratives or views of possible future developments of particular situations or conflicts. A scenario report should also include political, institutional, economic, social and strategic implications, some of which may actually occur. As a product, they may accompany the warning to raise awareness among decision makers about the need to take some course of action.

Maps

These enable geographical location of conflict characteristics (types, phases, actors, etc.), contextual characteristics, and institutional density.

Maps do not replace the interpretive exercise of specialists but are an effective complement to visualize and assess information, as well as for cross-referencing data.

IT tools exist that are designed to visually display geographically referenced information and data.

Some examples of types of maps that could be produced by the EWS/EWR team based on the geo-referencing tool are presented below:

A. CONFLICT MAPS

- **Geographical location:** the position of conflicts in the territory can be seen. Most modern EWS/EWR use geo-referencing systems based on IT platforms.

- **Phases and trends:** geographical location should facilitate visualization of conflicts by status [latent or manifest] and phase [early, late, crisis or de-escalation]. In this way, the traffic light system can be used on the map to facilitate conflict attention and prioritization.
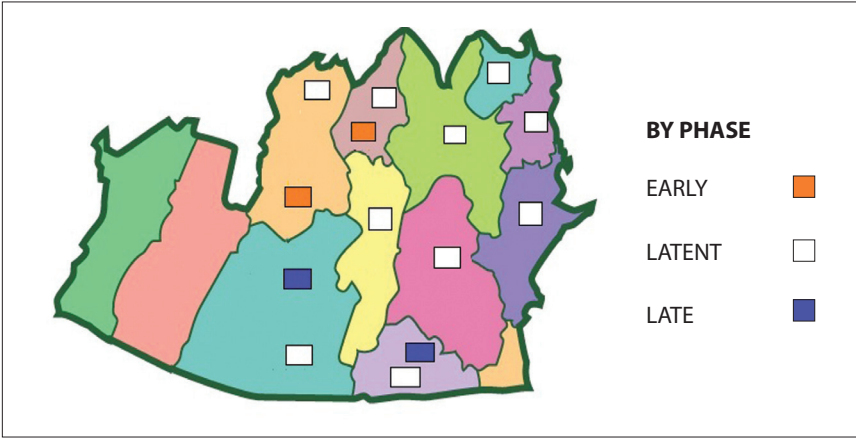
- **Types of conflicts:** to facilitate the location of different kinds of conflicts (for example, conflicts related to labor issues, land, water and sanitation, mining, hydroelectricity plants, etc.).

- **Actors:** permitting geographical registration of the areas of influence of primary actors in the conflict.

B. CONTEXT MAPS

These maps display information about a set of particular characteristics in a specific country, region or location. They are usually developed from official sources or information collected in specific studies. They may include:

- Population density and basic demographic data
- Health (infant mortality, maternal mortality, chronic malnutrition, famine, health centers, hospitals)
- Education (schooling, illiteracy, schools, job-training centers)
- Poverty and extreme poverty
- Unemployment
- Insecurity
- Violence
- Relevant historical data (populations most affected by civil war, for example)
- Percentage of ethnic groups
- Main economic activity
- Infrastructure
- Participation in elections
- Natural resources

C. INSTITUTIONAL DENSITY MAPS

Since the State is primarily responsible for managing social conflicts, it is essential to have accurate information about public institutions in places of interest (including physical addresses, phone numbers and names of the responsible authorities).

These maps facilitate identification of "porous and gray" areas with little State presence, a key variable when making recommendations. They may include:

- Public institutions (ministries, secretariats, police stations, hospitals, schools)
- Courts and mediation centers
- Churches
- Fire stations
- Offices of civil society organizations
- The media (local radio stations, television channels, newspapers)
- Universities
- Office of civil defense committees for disaster relief in case of natural events
- National and international human rights organizations

Product Summary		
Product	**Aim**	**Time frame**
Traffic light system	To provide a visual prioritization for addressing conflicts.	When necessary
Statistics	To provide updates about the quantity, progression and evolution of conflicts.	Monthly, bi-annually and annually
Narrative records	To provide an overview of the history, background and current status of conflicts.	When necessary
Thematic analysis or analysis of trends	To provide consistent information about the evolution of particular issues or cases.	Bi-annually or at the request of the authorities
Warnings	To report events and warn about possible violent escalation.	When necessary Criterion of opportunity Objective/subjective criterion
Scenarios	To help to imagine possible, feasible and credible developments.	When necessary
Maps	To provide visual aids to improve understanding of the dimensions of the system or of specific situations and their variations.	Should accompany statistical reports Depends on needs

VI. Users

The amount, type and final design of EWS/EWRS products depend on who the final recipients are. A series of questions is suggested below that can guide designers in identifying users of EWS/EWRS products.

First question: Who needs EWS/EWRS services?

The answer to the first question divides recipients into two groups: public officials and citizens. Public officials have institutional obligations that have to be fulfilled and citizens have a need to better understand their surroundings and especially the status of nearby conflicts.

Universities and academic institutions, social organizations, stakeholder groups, the media, ombudsmen, businesses, churches, international organizations, etc. are other recipients who can be considered more specifically.

In any case, there is a difference between need and desire. Someone might want to have the information but not really need it.

■ THE KEY CRITERIA IS NEED ■

Second question: Why does that person or institution need EWS/EWRS products?

Continuing with the above example, public officials may need the products because they have duties to perform, for example, they are responsible for public order or for guaranteeing potable water supply. Citizens, however, may need the products to make decisions about how to relate to the conflict (ignore it, cognitively or emotionally appraise it, reject it or prevent it) and how to contribute to solving it.

■ THE KEY CRITERIA IS MOTIVATION ■

Third question: What do people need the products for?

Public officials may need them for appropriate decision-making. Citizens could require them for protecting their lives, physical integrity and property.

■ THE KEY CRITERIA IS INTEREST ■

Fourth question: Who contributes to achieving EWS/ EWRS objectives?

Public officials can contribute directly and indirectly to EWR/EWRS implementation because they have the resources (human, financial, operational, reputational) necessary to provide assistance for the prevention and management of adverse events.

Furthermore, depending on their position in relation to the conflict, citizens can help by providing information, feedback on reports, and proposing responses.

THE KEY CRITERIA IS RELATIVE POSITION
IN RELATION TO THE CONFLICT

Fifth question: Who contributes to the sustainability of the EWS/EWRS?

A final criterion to consider is usefulness, defined as the calculation of benefits achieved by the EWS/EWRS team by sending products to specific recipients in order to contribute to the System's sustainability. This consideration has to do with the second central element of the EWS/EWRS communication plan. (See page 28).

THE KEY CRITERIA IS STRATEGIC BENEFIT

SYNTHESIS		
	PUBLIC OFFICIALS	**CITIZENS**
Who needs them?	National, regional, local.	Nearby or far from the conflict.
Why?	Obligations to fulfill.	To have the knowledge.
What for?	They have to take decisions to address the conflict.	EsteThis knowledge can save lives and guarantee physical integrity.

Which products? **A** Warnings **B** Situation reports **C** Maps **D** Scenarios **E** Trends	Require **A** and **D**	Require **A**
How do they contribute to EWS/EWRS objectives?	Implementing actions.	Informing, legitimating.
How do they contribute to EWS/EWRS sustainability?	Providing political and financial support.	Providing information and collaborating in the implementation of the ER.

In brief, key criteria for defining recipients could be:

- Need
- Motivation
- Interest
- Relative position
- Strategic benefit

VII. IT SUPPORT

Throughout this guide, this icon has been used to indicate points at which designers could consider the incorporation of an IT support component.

The EWS/EWRS is also a system of technological mechanisms: software, hardware and applications that form part of an interactive IT system which can help members of the System to process data, cross-reference variables, generate information, and create graphics or visual applications to facilitate analysis and communication.

One of the most important EWS/EWRS IT components is the database where all information deemed useful for the analysis of existing social conflicts in the territory is stored.

Inputs entered in the database must be capable of being processed by specific software to generate the expected outputs or reports.

When selecting the best software for processing or cross referencing information and generating outputs or reports, designers have two basic choices:
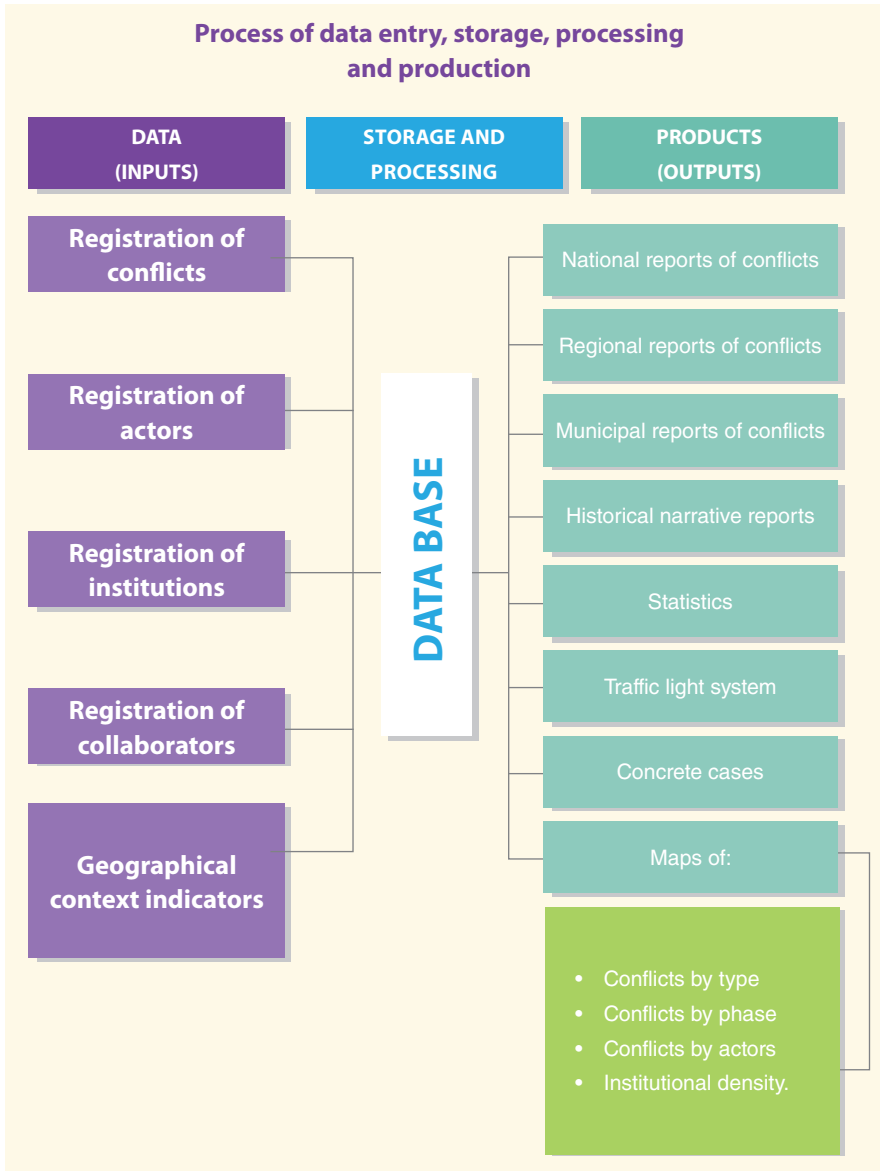
- to look at different options that exist in the market
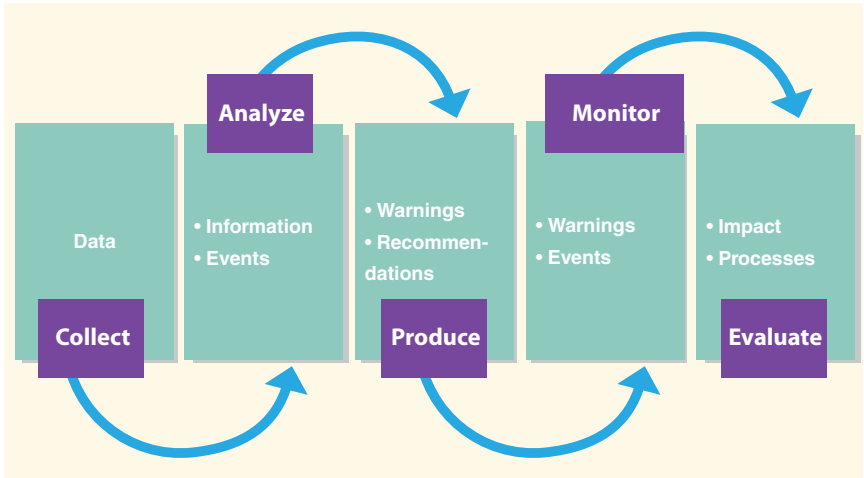- to create custom software

With the first option, EWS/EWRS stages and steps must be adapted to the software selected. One advantage is that, comparatively, it tends to be less expensive, and it may be accompanied by staff training and include technical support. On the other hand, one of the main disadvantages would be limitations in the process of building an EWS/EWRS because of its pre-established design.

Considering that the hardware and the software are the backbone of this work, the best option would be to create an IT system tailored to EWS/EWRS needs, analytical criteria, specific indicators, and expected outputs. This option may be more expensive than the previous one, but its main advantage is that it facilitates the building of an IT platform at the service of the stages and processes devised by EWS/EWRS designers which would facilitate and expedite processes.

It is virtually impossible to anticipate all EWS/EWRS needs in data analysis and processing. It would therefore be necessary for the software to be versatile in order to facilitate the incorporation of additional applications that would help with specialized tasks, such as: monitoring and geolocation of events, network analysis, content analysis, etc. Some are free open source applications, which means they can be modified by users, without major restrictions.

An example of how the IT platform might be organized is given in the following diagram:

Process of data entry, storage, processing and production

DATA (INPUTS)	STORAGE AND PROCESSING	PRODUCTS (OUTPUTS)

DATA BASE

Inputs:
- Registration of conflicts
- Registration of actors
- Registration of institutions
- Registration of collaborators
- Geographical context indicators

Outputs:
- National reports of conflicts
- Regional reports of conflicts
- Municipal reports of conflicts
- Historical narrative reports
- Statistics
- Traffic light system
- Concrete cases
- Maps of:
  - Conflicts by type
  - Conflicts by phase
  - Conflicts by actors
  - Institutional density.

Collect	Analyze	Produce	Monitor	Evaluate
Data	• Information • Events	• Warnings • Recommen- dations	• Warnings • Events	• Impact • Processes