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SUMMARY

• Numerous local and international groups currently track violence and implement early response to conflict in Nigeria. However, a number of logistical, technical and strategic challenges limit the impact of these efforts.

• The conflict early warning and early response (EWER) landscape in Nigeria is characterized by strong hierarchical information collection but weak horizontal information collection for early warning, and weaker hierarchical early response actions but stronger horizontal early response actions.

• Most actors working in Plateau State use very simple technology to collect and process information on conflict. Phone calls and individual SMS directly to a dedicated phone are the most common ways of receiving reports. These reports are typically relayed directly to early responders on the ground via phone call.

• Many actors in Plateau State identify a particular challenge in reaching people in rural areas. By leaving out people in rural areas, EWER actors in Plateau State are paying less attention to pastoralist – farmer conflicts.

• Better links need to be built between early warning information and early response actions in Plateau State. Most actors in the state agree that a full integration of data systems is unlikely to work, but working together on specific data issues (such as verification) is sorely needed.

• Weak analysis capacity among EWER actors in the state and a focus on incidents data over perceptions data limits the possible depth of longer-term analysis that can help identify activities to prevent conflict.

OVERVIEW OF EWER IN NIGERIA

The conflict context in Nigeria is complex, with extremist violence affecting the northeastern part of the country and increasingly the Middle Belt as well. Across Nigeria, inter-communal conflicts are fueled by access to resources and complicated by issues of ethnic or religious identity. In the Niger Delta, conflict dynamics are complicated by economic interests and community demands related to oil extraction. In addition, criminality is resulting in significant loss of life and destabilizing communities. Public confidence in the Nigerian security sector is low; with some believing security groups are involved or complicit in some conflicts. Vigilante groups, which are self-formed community patrols, have been established in many communities.
The conflict EWER landscape in Nigeria is complex. In theory, the Government-led EWER architecture is a well-structured hierarchy, with warnings flowing up to the center and directives for response actions flowing down from the center. At the national level, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) is responsible for coordinating national conflict early warning and response, receiving information from security agencies and other relevant agencies selected for data collection, coding and analysis. After receiving this information, IPCR sends relevant information on warnings to the federal Stability Task Force / Joint Task Force, which brings together military, police and civilian government staff, and is responsible for conflict early response at the national level. In turn, the Task Force communicates with its State-level committees to decide on an appropriate response at the State, Local (LGA), and community level.

Key people interviewed in summer 2014 suggested that although the early warning hierarchy works relatively well, early response on the ground is less effective, owing in part to lack of political will on the part of federal and state level leaders. On the ground, actors report that the security services are relatively well informed about impending conflicts, but are often not able to respond to warnings, in part because security agencies at the state level are required to seek funding and permission for major operations from the Federal level.

In addition to the government-led, EWER system, civil society organizations also play a critical role in the EWER landscape. These include: (1) Nigeria Watch (based at the University of Ibadan), which collects and makes publicly available information on incidents that result in death, (2) Nigeria Security Tracker (a database of the Council on Foreign Relations), (3) UNLocK, a project of Fund for Peace which collects reports from community-level monitors, and (4) Partners for Peace, an online map that collects data from several participating organization and collates this data on a map.

Despite claiming to be national, data collection for these early warning databases is geographically focused in a few critical areas (Plateau State and the Niger Delta). Troublingly, these civil society early warning databases are not clearly connected to early responders. Nigeria Watch, Nigeria Security Tracker and UNLocK issue public alerts and make policy recommendations based on data collected. Partners for Peace are a step closer to responders, producing monthly bulletins from this database and take them to community meetings to discuss actions that can be taken at the community level.

THE EWER INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM IN PLATEAU STATE

Key actors in Plateau State

In addition to the national structures identified in the previous section, there are a number of local structures operating only in Plateau State that are important in understanding the EWER information ecosystem in the state.

Operation Rainbow is a hybrid military / civilian early response security force for Plateau State. It receives most of its information from informants, counter-terrorism operatives and trained operatives in each LGA. It also relies on information received from the public, primarily via the Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EPRT).\(^1\) It receives information on a range of criminal and conflict

\(^1\) EPRT is a partnership of 11 organizations working in all 17 Local Government Areas of Plateau State: Jama’atul Nasril Islam (JNI); Christian Association of Nigerian (CAN); Country Women Association in Nigeria (COWAN); Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN); National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations in Nigeria (NACOMYO); Centre for Peace Advancement in Nigerian (CEPAN); National Orientation Agency (NOA); Justice Development and
incidents (armed robbery, communal clashes, cattle rustling, etc). Operation Rainbow does not currently store information received in a system. However, any report that appears to be verified or likely receives an immediate response from the operations team, which often liaises with community leaders for mediation. Operation Rainbow is working with UNDP to establish a more systematic data collection process and early warning system that will incorporate reports from EPRT, security agents and the public.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has an early warning system that collects data on violent incidents, tensions and rumors. The system relies mostly on SFCG trained community focal points and community leaders. It has received 117 reports since February 2013, mostly focusing on ethnic / religious violence. Reports received are sent out as daily alerts to anyone who has signed up for the service, including key people in the security services. SFCG also uses the information to prepare monthly trend reports that are sent to a network of stakeholders and used to support community initiatives, sensitize the media and advocate for policy formulation.

Justice, Development and Peace Caritas (JDPC) has trained community response teams that take action on information they receive regarding land disputes, community violence and hate speech. Community response teams do not store this information in a system, but rather use it to either organize community mediation or call security.

Interfaith Mediation Council’s Conflict Management and Mitigation Regional Council (CMMRC) for Plateau State is particularly active and runs a Community Peace Action Network (CPAN) that collects early warning information. The network relies mostly on reports from community peace observers, who either call, WhatsApp or SMS CMMRC members directly or can call two dedicated phone lines. CMMRC members are all prominent leaders and also collect information directly in their daily activities (e.g. at religious gatherings). Their information covers a wide array of issues, including ethno-religious violence, rumors of attacks, hate / dangerous speech and farmer-pastoralist violence. Information received is used by CMMRC members to coordinate early response activities, which include mediations, bulk peace SMS, radio / TV messages and sensitization workshops. IMC also uses the information to produce briefings and bulletins. All information is currently collected informally and is not systematically stored. There are plans underway to create a system for data collection and analysis that builds on the CPAN.

Mercy Corps has trained a network of mediators in interest-based negotiations and supports them in carrying out peacebuilding activities. As part of this support, Mercy Corps maps the main conflicts in Plateau State to identify interests. This involves collecting information from the network of mediators on peace initiatives, intended attacks, actual attacks, etc. Although this is not intended as an early warning early response system, their data collection on conflict trends does link to medium-term prevention activities.

**Information flows for EWER**

Taken together, the explanations that EWER actors in Plateau State gave for information flows regarding conflict highlight three key messages.

First, there appears to be somewhat of a disconnect between actors working at the very local level to respond to tensions or incidents (community early responders) and actors...
working at the state level to manage information on conflict and coordinate early response activities (state-level early warners). Whilst all the state-level early warners are connected to some community early responders (often trained by them), the same is not true in the opposite direction: not all community early responders are aware of state-level early warning.

Diagram 1 (below) illustrates stories shared by community early responders on how they go about their work. A key task of community early responders is to connect people affected with security actors. We heard several stories of security not responding to calls from individuals they did not know. Community early responders are essentially trusted sources for the security. These stories contrast with the information flow outlined by early warners working at the state level (diagram 2), whose process appears to be more hierarchical and makes the connection between early warning information and early response actions more evident.

Second, most actors operating at the state level have trained their own network of local monitors and / or responders. These local monitors are charged with sending information and alerts to focal points at the state level. At times they are also the first line of response to incidents. This duplication has resulted in some communities having three or four different sets of monitors reporting through different channels; in other communities the same monitor may be reporting to three or four different systems.

Third, and related to the second point, although there is some information sharing already taking place, there is very limited coordination of early response actions. All actors have their own channels to communicate alerts to relevant security agencies and / or local leaders and mediators who can intervene. The networks discussed above do not have systematic processes to coordinate with each other on response activities.

Diagram 1:
Most actors working in Plateau State use very simple technology to collect and process information on conflict. Phone calls and individual SMS directly to a dedicated phone are the most common ways of receiving reports. These reports are typically relayed directly to early responders on the ground via phone call. Two actors – Mercy Corps and SFCG – also operate bulk SMS platforms that they use to relay information received to people on the ground.

Reports received are often also entered into Word tables (e.g. JDPC) or Excel tables (e.g. IMC). Some actors later use these tables to make graphs (in Excel) or maps (in Google Maps) for paper reports that are disseminated to key actors. Some actors also report using Facebook both to informally collect information (i.e. people sometimes post reports on their public Facebook pages) and to disseminate reports (posted on their public Facebook pages).

Operation Rainbow, SFCG and IMC all run (or plan to run) early warning databases that leverage ICT.

Initially funded by the U.S. Institute of Peace in early 2013, SFCG has run a Crowdmap (cloud-hosted Ushahidi platform) connected to Frontline SMS, available here: https://frontlinesmsplateaustate.crowdmap.com/ This online database can receive reports via email, via an online form or via an SMS. Once reports arrive in the system, SFCG staff manually categorizes, geo-locates and approves each report. Although the system is functional, SFCG have expressed disappointment in the technical solution it offers both for data processing and for data visualization.
Operation Rainbow has set up an online database here: [http://josproject.org/](http://josproject.org/) The database began in June and currently contains only four reports. It is an Ushahidi platform that will be connected to an SMS shortcode (not free) and will also receive reports via online form, email, smartphone app and on a Twitter hashtag. As with the SFCG platform, once operation this platform will require significant manual work to process information received.

**IMC** is in the process of creating an events-based software program with the assistance of the University of Massachusetts. The system is expected to become operational in October and will be based on the Sri Lankan early warning model FCEWARN that looks at conflict at the community level. IMC is looking for the system to process a range of incoming data and outputting spatial imagery, data analysis, and trend data. In addition, IMC is looking to incorporate dangerous speech indicators into this system.

**MAIN CHALLENGES TO EWER IN PLATEAU STATE**

This assessment of the information ecosystem for conflict EWER in Plateau State points to three main challenges.

*Connections & coordination between actors*

The early warning systems run at the state level all have some protocols for communicating alerts to early responders at the local level. However, as was described above, some early responders operating at the local level are not connected to these early warning systems and are unaware of the information available from them. A related coordination problem is the issue of duplication in local monitors, also described above. These coordination difficulties are at times compounded by a lack of coordination among donor organizations, many of which provide funding to set up new systems.

Weak connections between actors are resulting in inefficient duplication of efforts in data collection for early warning. This includes a missed opportunity to strengthen verification processes. EWER actors acknowledge that verification processes are weak, and would benefit from collaboration with others working in the same field.

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**Kenya: the challenge of coordination**

In the run up to the 2013 elections in Kenya, there were serious concerns that violence could erupt as it had during previous elections. Civil society organizations and the Government collectively set up 7 different SMS services for citizens to send in warnings of conflict and 3 different online maps (with online forms) for the same purpose. Despite efforts to bring together different actors, there were serious concerns about how reports from citizens were verified and how response was coordinated to avoid duplication. For further details, see “Kenya: one election, 7 phone services, 3 maps and some confusion!” by Anaha Ayala Iacucci.

Clearer channels for communication among EWER actors are needed. Most actors agree that a full integration of data systems is unlikely to work, but synergizing on specific data issues (such as verification) is sorely needed. There are currently two forums that could be strengthened to take on this role: the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) and the Conflict Mitigation and Management Regional Council (CMMRC).
Data for conflict prevention

Most actors focus on identifying warnings about incidents that require immediate response. There is very little analysis capacity among EWER actors to produce robust conflict trend analysis products that can help identify activities to prevent conflict. Related to this, there are few feedback loops to share longer-term conflict trends with affected communities, and therefore limited work at the local level on response initiatives that use conflict data to target drivers of conflict.

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<tr>
<th>Iraq: dispute monitoring for trend analysis</th>
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<td>Mercy Corps Iraq has developed a dispute resolution tracking system for the Iraqi Centre for Negotiation and Conflict Management (CNCM), a network of Iraqi mediators who intervene in local disputes to prevent them from escalating. The network has been working since 2005, has a very strong track-record, and enjoys widespread support. The system systematizes information collection and analysis of disputes the network has resolved. It helps the network to better understand conflict trends and drivers, allowing them to proactively address emerging trends rather than only reactively respond to incidents. For further details, see “What the red dots are for, or why we map (part 1: Iraq)” by Helena Puig Larrauri.</td>
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Most information collected by actors focuses on deaths or violent incidents. SFCG collects information on “tensions” and some early responders collect information on rumors. Nonetheless, there is very limited information available on perceptions, fears or rising tension. The lack of perceptions data also limits the possible depth of longer-term analysis, since it is difficult to link incident data to potential drivers of conflict.

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<th>Somali Region: opinion polls to inform prevention</th>
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<td>With the support of Interpeace, three organizations in the Somali Region (the Academy for Peace and Development, the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies and the Puntland Development Research Centre) have started using rapid opinion polls about conflict issues to systematically assess perceptions on the ground. The outcomes of these polls are used to inform community dialogue and prevention activities that aim to address key drivers of conflict. For further details, see “Tailored Technology for Peace” by Peter Nordstrom.</td>
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Somali Region: opinion polls to inform prevention

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<th>Reaching people in rural areas</th>
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<td>Many actors identify a particular challenge in reaching people in rural areas. This is a result of a combination of factors, including lack of cell phone coverage, lower income making the cost of calls / SMS prohibitive, illiteracy, lack of familiarity with technology and frequent electricity cuts. By leaving out people in rural areas, EWER actors in Plateau State are paying less attention to pastoralist – farmer conflicts in the area.</td>
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVENTION IN PLATEAU STATE

There are many EWER actors working at different geographic levels, with different topical focuses and differing approaches to technology across Plateau State. For donors and international actors seeking to support the EWER information ecosystem, this diversity indicates that support needs to be specific and tailored to each actor. In other words, given the very different capacities, focuses and approaches, group trainings / capacity building bringing together all EWER actors are unlikely to be effective. Targeted engagement with one or two key actors for more intense, tailored support is much more likely to be effective.

With this general recommendation in mind, this report proposes the following recommendations for improving and strengthening EWER for conflict prevention, management and resolution in Plateau State:

1. Enhance horizontal coordination of EWER actors on verification

There is a clear need for horizontal coordination of data collection and response between actors working in early warning and early response at the local level in Plateau State as well as vertical coordination with State authorities and bodies. Although it may be tempting to propose an all-encompassing central databank for the State, it is unlikely that such an initiative would be successful. Past attempts have failed, or quickly become irrelevant to operational concerns of responders.

EWER actors have identified that synergizing on some data / EWER issues may be more effective than consolidating all data into one system. Specifically, finding ways to collaborate on verification of reports is key. A central, mediated verification forum with a strong convening organization is a feasible undertaking and would add value to the existing information ecosystem.

2. Support technology design for key EWER actors

Operation Rainbow, the Interfaith Mediation Centre and Search for Common Ground are the three key EWER in Plateau State. All three are setting up or upgrading their technology systems, and have expressed concern about their ability to assess what technology fits their needs best. Support to design the right technology could be combined with a review of data quality and analysis training that would ensure any new system can adequately support the operational needs of early responders.
3. Support a pilot system that utilizes perceptions data

EWER actors in Plateau State realize that their current data systems are more reactive than preventive because they focus largely on incident data. Perceptions data would gather opinions and measures attitudes on issues that could be indicators of coming violence. Piloting a system that utilizes perceptions data to make recommendations for prevention activities could provide proof of concept for this approach, making it easier to integrate it into existing EWER activities.

4. Support a pilot system that focuses on farmer-pastoralist disputes

Pastoralist violence, which is a major issue in the Middle Belt, is hard to address through the current EWER systems. This violence occurs far outside of the cities, and it is difficult for the security sector to respond. Furthermore, people are less likely to have cell phone coverage, making it harder to send warnings. A pilot system that uses simple technology to enhance community response to farmer-pastoralist disputes could be an important addition to the Plateau State EWER information ecosystem.

5. Build capacity of EWER actors to undertake basic trend analysis

Aside from IMC, Operation Rainbow and SFCG, most EWER actors in Plateau State make little use of technology tools to produce basic trend reports from the data they collect. A short group training introducing a few basic technology tools and analysis techniques could significantly enhance the work of these EWER actors.