



United States Department of State  
Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

# Preventing Violence Against Civilians Through Early Warning and Early Response



Early warning and early response programs (EW/ER) are important tools embassies can use to help their local counterparts identify and respond to risks of violence against civilians. These programs collect information on imminent or ongoing violence and share it with local mediators, community leaders, police, or other actors who can help slow or stop violence. Information is collected in a variety of ways including social media, text message, call centers, and in person. Responses may include but are not limited to:

- Sending local mediators to address growing frictions through roundtables and village meetings
- Providing accurate information to the media to counter rumors and disinformation
- Deploying security forces (proportional to level of threat detected)

## **EW/ER EXAMPLES AND BEST PRACTICES:**

**RADIO** - Invisible Children operates an Early Warning Radio Network in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic, which is comprised of high-frequency radio notification and response systems. These radios deliver messages twice daily to remote areas at risk of possible attacks by groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army. The network has grown to include 66 radio notification systems since beginning in 2010, which helps protect 85 communities and over 300,000 people through advanced warning of danger.

**SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE (SMS)** - During Kenya's general elections in 2013, community activists employed Ushahidi's crisis-mapping technologies to monitor SMS messages for hate speech, corruption, voter suppression, and other indicators of possible violence.

**LOCAL RESPONSES** – CSO and USAID sponsored Kenyan-led call-in centers, peace monitors, and volunteers to strengthen partnerships between police and civil society during the lead up to Kenya’s 2013 elections. In March 2013, the Kisumu center fielded 1,923 calls and made 2,135 calls to validate reports of potential or ongoing violence and supported localized responses by peace monitors and media. The call-in center in Mombasa helped prevent clashes between more than 1,600 youth two days before the elections.

**PEACE MONITORS** – USAID supported the Local Empowerment for Peace (LEAP) program in the Kenyan Rift Valley region which coordinated 600 trained peace monitors that worked with civil society organizations, the police, and local government officials to observe, alert, and generate early responses to indications of violence. LEAP coordinated responses through two Early Warning Hubs designed to analyze and respond to cell phone and other alert methods from peace monitors.

**LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS:** The Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) in North Kivu Province of the DRC, which is supported by a grant from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights Labor to the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), received 47 reports of violence and security threats and coordinated responses to 33 reports within the first three months of the program. Community observers – whose identities are kept anonymous – working with the EWRS receive mobile phones and solar battery chargers, allowing them to communicate with authorities from remote parts of the provinces. The information provided by community observers allows the Congolese Army to track violent rebel groups and intercept raiding parties before they can attack and destroy villages.

**RISK MAPPING AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING:** In South Sudan, Nonviolent Peaceforce initiated an EW/ER program in response to the concerns of a community that had been forced to flee when the army seized their town. The program involved workshops that trained participants to develop a risk map of each area and safe escape routes. Participants were taught how to construct quick run bags and established plans to ensure the protection of disabled persons. At the close of each workshop, groups were formed to disseminate the basic principles and steps to the rest of the community – and to identify people responsible for specific actions. Shortly after the conclusion of the workshop, approximately 500 people were forced to flee from their homes and applied the EW/ER protocols from the workshop.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you have specific questions, please contact CSO’s Atrocities Prevention team:  
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