



From Security to Peace: Integrating Early Warning and Intelligence Systems in Nigeria's Conflict Prevention Architecture

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Abstract

Nigeria's persistent security challenges, including insurgencies, communal violence, and resource conflicts, underscore the limitations of reactive measures. This paper examines the integration of early warning systems (EWS) and intelligence gathering within Nigeria's conflict prevention architecture, drawing on Human Security and Preventive Diplomacy theories. Through conceptual clarification, contextual analysis, and a proposed integration framework informed by African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) models, it highlights coordination gaps exemplified in recent farmer-herder clashes. Findings emphasize benefits for peacebuilding and national security, including reduced escalation and enhanced public trust. Policy recommendations advocate institutionalized linkages, data interoperability, community monitoring, and trust-building mechanisms. By bridging warnings with responses, Nigeria can transition to proactive peace, aligning with the AU's Silencing the Guns agenda.

Keywords: Early Warning Systems, Intelligence Integration, Conflict Prevention, Human Security, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria's security landscape remains one of the most volatile in sub-Saharan Africa, characterized by a confluence of insurgencies, communal clashes, and resource-based conflicts that have displaced millions and stifled economic growth. As of mid-2025, the country grapples with over 2.2 million internally displaced persons in the northeast alone due to Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) activities, alongside escalating farmer-herder violence that recorded 132 incidents nationwide in early 2025. These challenges are compounded by broader threats, including banditry, kidnappings exceeding 2,000 cases in the first half of 2024, and food insecurity affecting 33 million people during the 2025 lean season. Traditional reactive security measures, such as military deployments and post-conflict interventions, have proven inadequate, often exacerbating tensions rather than resolving root causes like ethnic polarization, resource scarcity, and governance failures (Adzenga et al., 2025; Effiom, 2023).

The central problem necessitating this study is the entrenched disconnect between early warning systems (EWS) and intelligence gathering in

Nigeria's conflict prevention architecture—a systemic gap where predictive alerts from grassroots monitors (e.g., WANEP's NEWS) fail to integrate with operational intelligence from state agencies (e.g., DSS and NIA), leading to delayed or absent responses. This fragmentation, rooted in institutional silos, political mistrust, and inadequate data-sharing protocols, has resulted in preventable escalations, such as the 2024-2025 Benue and Nasarawa clashes, which claimed hundreds of lives despite warnings and cost billions in humanitarian and economic losses (SBM Intelligence, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025). Without addressing this, Nigeria risks perpetuating a cycle of reactive securitization that undermines human security, erodes public trust, and contravenes AU commitments like Silencing the Guns, highlighting the urgent need for an integrated framework to transform warnings into proactive peace.

At the heart of this crisis lies a critical linkage between intelligence gathering, Early Warning Systems (EWS), and conflict prevention. Intelligence provides actionable data on threats, while EWS anticipates escalation through



systematic monitoring; together, they enable proactive interventions that shift from militarized responses to peace-oriented strategies. Yet, Nigeria exhibits a stark gap: reactive security dominates, with early warnings frequently ignored, leading to preventable escalations. For instance, in the 2024-2025 farmer-herder clashes in Nasarawa and Benue states, governance lapses and delayed responses resulted in hundreds of deaths, underscoring systemic failures in integrating intelligence with preventive action (SBM Intelligence, 2025).

This paper addresses this problem by examining how integrating EWS and intelligence can transform Nigeria's conflict prevention architecture. Its purpose is twofold: to offer scholarly insights into conceptual and theoretical underpinnings and to provide policy-relevant recommendations for enhanced coordination. By bridging this gap, the integration not only averts violence but also fosters human security and sustainable development, aligning with Nigeria's commitments under the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative. The article proceeds as follows: conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, the Nigerian context, integration strategies, implications, and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

To ground the discussion, key terms must be defined and distinguished, drawing on established literature while noting their practical intersections.

Early Warning Systems (EWS): Refers to structured processes for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on potential crises to enable timely interventions (Boutros-Ghali, 1992; Ephraim, 2014). In conflict contexts, EWS identify indicators such as rising tensions or resource disputes, as seen in WANEP's National Early Warning System in Nigeria, which monitors grassroots signals for escalation risks.

Intelligence Gathering: This Involves covert and overt collection of strategic information by state agencies, such as Nigeria's Department of State Services (DSS) and National Intelligence Agency

(NIA), to assess threats and inform decision-making (Ozoani-Ene, 2022). Unlike EWS, which emphasize predictive analytics, intelligence focuses on operational details, often classified.

Conflict prevention is controlling and managing strained relationships early enough (timely and promptly) to avoid the threats of a conflict. This calls for effective, proper, and convenient use of early warning mechanisms or systems to contain and respond to early threats of violence, thereby saving the situation from escalating out of unmanageable proportion. This is premised on the notion that prevention is better than cure. However, the extant literature on conflict prevention has failed to agree on any acceptable definition of conflict prevention (Best, 2008; Carment & Schnabel, 2003; Munuera, 1994; Lund, 1994), while others have referred to conflict prevention as 'preventive diplomacy' (Lund, 2002; Boutros-Ghali, 1996).

Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding is one of the United Nations' cardinal models of peace processes. The concept was made globally popular in Boutros-Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace". Boutros Ghali wrote this paper in 1992, while he was the United Nations Secretary General. Peace building involves addressing not only the triggers, which are the immediate variables that initiate the outbreak of any armed conflict, but also considers the possibilities and prospects of long-term healing, the reconciliation stage. It involves long-term efforts to rebuild societies after violence, integrating reconciliation and governance reforms (UNDP, 1994).

Security Governance denotes the coordination of state and non-state actors in managing threats, emphasizing multi-stakeholder approaches (Nwohu et al., 2023).

In practice, these concepts intersect: EWS feeds intelligence for prevention, enabling peacebuilding through governance reforms. For example, community-based EWS in Nigeria link local monitors to state intelligence, bridging grassroots insights with national responses (Adzenga et al., 2025).



Term	Definition	Role in prevention	Nigerian example
Early Warning Systems	Systematic data collection and analysis for crisis anticipation (Boutros Ghali, 1992).	Identifies risks pre-escalation	WANEPNEWS (WANEP -Nigeria, 2025), Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja
Intelligence Gathering	Strategic information collection for threat assessment (Ozoani Ene, 2022).	Provides operational intel.	DSSNA surveillance.
Conflict Prevention	Measures to avert violence (Effiom 2023).	Proactive diplomacy and reform	UNDP early response initiatives.
Peacebuilding	Post -violence societal reconstruction (UNDP, 1994).	Sustains long -term stability.	Community mediation post clashes.

This table illustrates synergies: EWS and intelligence converge in governance to enable prevention and peacebuilding.

Theoretical Framework

This analysis draws on Human Security Theory, which redefines security as protecting individuals from multifaceted threats, economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political, rather than state-centric defense. In Nigeria, this lens critiques militarized responses to farmer-herder conflicts, advocating EWS integration to safeguard vulnerable populations from displacement and hunger (Ozoani-Ene, 2022; Adzenga et al., 2025).

Complementing this is Preventive Diplomacy Theory, which posits early, coordinated interventions to de-escalate tensions before violence erupts (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). It emphasizes timely action based on warnings, as delays amplify costs, e.g., Nigeria's late responses to 2024 herder incursions exacerbated deaths and economic losses (SBM Intelligence, 2025).

Together, these theories underpin proactive security management: Human Security provides a people-centered rationale, while Preventive Diplomacy offers tools for integration. Critiques note resource constraints in low-capacity states like Nigeria, yet empirical evidence from ECOWAS shows that joint EWS-diplomacy reduces escalation by 30% in monitored cases.

Applied here, they advocate shifting from reactive force to integrated, preventive architectures.

The Nigerian Context

Imagine the dusty plains of Benue State in early 2025, where the first whispers of tension ripple through farming communities like invisible fault lines. As the dry season yields to tentative rains, Fulani herders, driven northward by drought in the Sahel, begin their annual migration southward in search of grazing lands. Local farmers, already strained by shrinking arable plots and erratic weather patterns, eye these movements with growing unease. By February, what starts as isolated disputes over crop damage erupts into coordinated attacks, claiming over 200 lives and displacing thousands in a matter of weeks, a tragedy that could have been foreseen, yet one that unfolded amid a cacophony of unheeded alerts (Punch, 2025; Okafor & Eke, 2025).

This narrative, drawn from the latest farmer-herder clashes, encapsulates Nigeria's fraught security terrain: a mosaic of early warning mechanisms that hum with data but falter in orchestration, intelligence silos that hoard insights, and a governance apparatus too often paralyzed by political inertia.

Nigeria's early warning ecosystem, pieced together over the past two decades, reflects both ambition and fragmentation. At its core stands the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)'s National Early Warning System (NEWS), a grassroots sentinel that deploys over community monitors to flag risks from ethnic flare-ups to resource rivalries (WANEP-Nigeria, 2025). Complementing this are state-led efforts, such as the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA)'s Early Warning Centre, which synthesizes open-source intelligence for policy briefs, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) framework, piloted in the Middle Belt to link local alerts to federal responders (NIIA, n.d.; UN, 2024).



On the intelligence front, the Department of State Services (DSS) and National Intelligence Agency (NIA) form the backbone, with mandates to surveil internal threats and foreign influences, respectively, yet their outputs remain shrouded in secrecy, rarely intersecting with civilian peace networks (Ozoani-Ene, 2022).

This patchwork, while innovative, unravels under the weight of coordination deficits. Data-sharing protocols are nominal at best; WANEP's weekly bulletins, rich with field reports, often languish in bureaucratic inboxes while DSS intel on armed incursions circulates in closed loops (Ephraim, 2014; Effiom, 2023). The "warning-response gap" a term now etched into Nigerian security lexicon, widens further amid institutional mistrust: peace actors decry security agencies' heavy-handed tactics, while the latter view NGOs as naive or compromised (Akinwotu, 2025). Political factors compound this: in multi-ethnic Nigeria, where indigene-settler divides fuel 70% of communal violence, warnings risk being dismissed as partisan if they implicate powerful elites (Adzenga et al., 2025).

The human toll of these fissures is starkly illustrated in recent escalations. Take the 2023-2025 arc of Benue's farmer-herder strife: WANEP monitors detected herder mobilizations as early as November 2024, corroborated by NIA satellite imagery of cross-border movements. Yet, fragmented channels delayed federal alerts until January 2025, when ambushes left villages in flames, over 400 dead, 50,000 displaced, and \$200 million in agricultural losses (SBM Intelligence, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025). Echoing this, Taraba State's 2025 clashes saw EWS flags on youth radicalization ignored, as intelligence silos failed to fuse community reports with DSS surveillance, birthing a cycle of reprisals that displaced 20,000 (GOJAMSS, 2025).

These are not anomalies but symptoms of a system where early signals, ethnic slurs on social media, unusual livestock migrations, dissipate into ether, allowing latent grievances over land, water, and livelihoods to ignite (Okafor & Eke, 2025). As climate pressures intensify, projected to shrink

grazing lands by 20% by 2030, these failures portend a deepening crisis, underscoring the urgent imperative for integration (VoxDev, 2025).

Integrating Early Warning and Intelligence Systems

In the shadow of such preventable tragedies, the case for integration emerges not as an abstract policy but as a lifeline, a deliberate weaving of disparate threads into a resilient fabric capable of preempting violence. Picture, for a moment, the success story unfolding across West Africa's borders: in The Gambia's 2023 border skirmishes, ECOWAS's ECOWARN platform fused community sentinels' reports with AU Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) analytics, triggering diplomatic shuttles that de-escalated tensions in days, averting what could have been a regional flashpoint (AU, 2022; WANEP, 2025b). This is no outlier; the AU's CEWS, operational since 2002, has streamlined data flows from regional outposts like ECOWARN, enabling predictive modeling that slashed response times by 25% across monitored hotspots (African Union, 2025). For Nigeria, the rationale is compelling: with conflicts costing \$10 billion annually in lost productivity and aid, harmonizing EWS and intelligence could reclaim lives and livelihoods, transforming reactive firefighting into strategic foresight (Nextier, 2025; USIP, 2024).

Yet, integration demands more than aspiration; it requires a scaffolded framework, evolving from lessons etched in regional triumphs and Nigerian trials. Begin with data harmonization, the foundational stitch: standardize indicators, from WANEP's socio-economic metrics to DSS's geospatial intel, via shared dashboards, much like CEWS's "Situation Room" that ingests feeds from 15 regional bodies (Nwohu et al., 2023; AU, 2025). In Nigeria, this could leverage emerging AI tools, as piloted in UNDP's 2025 CEWS enhancements, to cross-validate alerts and flag anomalies with 85% accuracy (UNDP, 2025; Okafor, 2025).

Next, forge joint analysis and response platforms, inter-agency nerve centers where warnings



crystallize into action. Envision NIIA's Early Warning Centre evolving into a fusion hub, echoing ECOWARN's scenario-planning desks that convened Gambian stakeholders pre-crisis (NIIA, n.d.; WANEP, 2025b). Here, DSS operatives and WANEP analysts co-draft briefs, bridging the trust chasm through mandated rotations, a model proven to boost intel-sharing by 40% in IGAD's South Sudan ops (Nwohu et al., 2023).

Sustain this with institutional collaboration protocols: formal memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for real-time exchanges, inspired by the AU-ECOWAS "desk-to-desk" consultations that synchronized responses to 2025 Sahel spillovers (AU, 2022; UN, 2025). In Nigeria, these could embed liaison officers in key agencies, ensuring EWS flags trigger NIA deep dives without bureaucratic vetoes.

Finally, vitalize the base through community-state information flows, channeling the wisdom of the margins upward. Deploy GIS-enabled apps, as in Adzenga's community pilots, to geolocate risks from herder trails to youth mobilizations, feeding directly into national grids (Adzenga et al., 2025; Effiom, 2023). This bottom-up pulse, amplified by social media monitoring, democratizes prevention, echoing ECOWARN's success in empowering local mediators (WANEP, 2025b).

The dividends? A tapestry of faster, sharper interventions: ECOWARN precedents suggest 20-30% quicker mobilizations, while AI infusions promise predictive precision that could halve Benue's 2025 toll (Okafor, 2025). Beyond metrics, integration begets proactive peacebuilding, mediating grazing pacts before blades are drawn, fostering resilience where fragility once reigned (USIP, 2024).

Implications for Peacebuilding and National Security

Envision a Nigeria in 2030, where the scars of 2025's Benue bloodletting have faded into footnotes of progress: integrated EWS-

intelligence webs have not only stanching the flow of violence but irrigated fields of reconciliation, yielding bountiful harvests and bolstered trust. This is no utopian sketch but a plausible horizon, where the fusion of warnings and wits ripples outward, embodying Human Security's promise of holistic protection and Preventive Diplomacy's grace in averting the abyss (UNDP, 1994; Boutros-Ghali, 1992). In this narrative arc, integration emerges as a catalyst for preventive peace, dismantling the structural pillars of conflict, inequity, exclusion, and environmental strain, through anticipatory grace.

At its core, such synergy elevates peacebuilding from reactive bandage to proactive architecture. By channeling EWS insights into intelligence-driven diplomacy, Nigeria could mediate 50% of herder-farmer flashpoints pre-escalation, as modeled in Taraba pilots where fused data enabled grazing corridors that preserved livelihoods and lives (GOJAMSS, 2025; Adzenga et al., 2025). This people-centered pivot, true to Human Security tenets, safeguards the vulnerable: women and youth, often first to flee violence, become sentinels in community nets, their voices amplifying resilience against gendered displacements that claimed 60% of 2025's IDPs (Okafor & Eke, 2025; VoxDev, 2025). Peacebuilding thus evolves from ad-hoc reconciliations to sustained dialogues, where former foes co-design water-sharing pacts, fostering social cohesion that outlasts any ceasefire.

For national security, the implications cascade into fortified sovereignty and economic vitality. Coordinated responses erode the "warning-response gap," slashing violence by 30% per ECOWAS benchmarks, freeing resources from \$10 billion crisis drains to infrastructure and jobs (Akinwotu, 2025; Nextier, 2025). Public trust, eroded by opaque ops and unheeded cries, rebuilds through transparent platforms, DSS-WANEP forums that demystify intel, countering "securitization fatigue" in the northwest where pilots restored 70% community confidence (UN, 2024; USIP, 2024). Policy coherence sharpens,



aligning with SDGs 16 (just peace) and 2 (hunger's end), while stabilizing the AfCFTA gateway, potentially unlocking \$5 billion in FDI by curbing 2025's 33 million in food peril (ACAPS, 2025; Akinwotu, 2025). Yet, these gains hinge on inclusive design: gender-lensed EWS to capture women's risk insights, youth tech-training to harness social media as a peace amplifier (Okafor, 2025). In this integrated vista, security transcends bunkers, becoming a shared vigil that heals divides, propels equity, and secures a future where warnings whisper hope, not herald havoc.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the sun sets over Nigeria's fractious heartlands, where the echoes of Benue's 2025 laments mingle with the resilient hum of community dialogues, this paper circles back to its genesis: a clarion call to reimagine security not as an iron fist but as a vigilant hand extended in partnership. We have traversed the conceptual terrain, where EWS and intelligence emerge as symbiotic sentinels; probed into theoretical moorings that anchor prevention in human dignity and diplomatic foresight; mapped the Nigerian web of silos and silenced signals; charted pathways to integration drawn from AU and ECOWAS tapestries; and glimpsed horizons where peacebuilding blooms amid fortified national sinews. At every turn, the verdict resounds: Nigeria's pivot from reactive fortification to proactive harmony hinges on fusing these systems, a bridge not just over rivers of blood but toward oases of equity and endurance. In the shadow of 2025's herder-farmer infernos and northeast tempests, this integration stands as both salve and strategy, echoing Ephraim's (2014) timeless plea for prevention's "ounce" to outweigh cure's pound, while heeding Ozoani-Ene's (2022) imperative to uproot oppression's tendrils through empowered grassroots. By embracing Human Security's embrace and Preventive Diplomacy's pulse, Nigeria can not only mute the guns but silence their prelude, aligning with the AU's 2025 Silencing the Guns blueprint and ECOWAS's ECOWARN evolutions that have tamed regional tempests (African Union, 2025).

Yet, vision without action is but a mirage in the

Sahel's haze. The path forward demands deliberate strides, rooted in scholarly rigor and policy pragmatism. Below, we delineate four interlocking recommendations, each forged from empirical crucibles like Adzenga et al.'s (2025) community pilots and Effiom's (2023) tech imperatives, calibrated to Nigeria's 2025 realities of AI-augmented foresight and participatory legitimacy (Okafor, 2025). These are not edicts but blueprints, urging a symphony of state, civil society, and international partners to orchestrate change.

First, institutionalize EWS-intelligence linkages through binding mandates under the National Security Council (NSC), leveraging existing scaffolds like WANEP-AU collaborations to embed fusion desks in every zonal command (WANEP-Nigeria, 2025a). This entails enacting a "National Prevention Act" by mid-2026, mandating quarterly joint exercises where DSS/NIA feeds triangulate WANEP's grassroots pulses, mirroring the AU's CEWS protocols that amplified inter-regional intel by 35% (Nwohu et al., 2023; African Union, 2025). Rationale? Silos breed paralysis, as Taraba's 2025 oversights attest; institutionalization, per Akinwotu (2025), cultivates a "prevention culture" that could avert 40% of electoral flashpoints by 2027, fostering trust in a polity weary of partisan shadows. Implementation hinges on NSC oversight, with benchmarks tied to violence metrics, yielding not just fewer clashes but a governance ethos where warnings command action.

Second, build data interoperability via secure, AI-infused platforms that knit DSS, NIA, and WANEP into a national "Prevention Grid," backed by a \$50 million federal seed from the 2026 budget, scaled through UNDP partnerships (Effiom, 2023; UNDP, 2025). Drawing from Okafor's (2025) AI-CEWS prototypes, which boosted predictive accuracy to 85% in simulations, this would standardize ontologies, e.g., fusing geospatial herder tracks with socio-economic distress indices, for real-time dashboards accessible to provincial leads. The urgency? Nigeria's \$10 billion conflict ledger demands fiscal prudence; interoperability, as



Effiom (2023) posits, slashes response lags by 25%, echoing ECOWARN's data harmonies that nipped Gambian border flares. Phased rollout, pilot in Middle Belt by Q2 2026, nationwide by 2028, ensures equity, with open APIs for civil society audits to guard against surveillance overreach.

Third, strengthen community-based monitoring by scaling tech-enabled networks, training 10,000 local sentinels annually through NAERLS and IPCR hubs, infusing GIS and mobile apps to amplify voices from the vulnerable fringes (Adzenga et al., 2025; Ozoani-Ene, 2022). This participatory ethos, championed in Adzenga et al.'s (2025) RuSAN proceedings, roots EWS in legitimacy, women-led clusters in Benue decoding gendered risks, youth coders in the northwest mining social media for radicalization cues. Why vital? Top-down intel blinds; bottom-up flows, per Ozoani-Ene (2022), empower against "endemic inequality," potentially halving displacement in indigene-settler zones as seen in Taraba's 2025 reversals (GOJAMSS, 2025). Rollout via zonal academies, with incentives like micro-grants, ensures sustainability, transforming monitors from informants to co-architects of peace.

Fourth, enhance trust between civil and security actors through IPCR-facilitated forums, biannual "Prevention Summits" blending DSS briefings with WANEP testimonies, to dismantle biases and co-craft ethical guidelines (Ozoani-Ene, 2022; Akinwotu, 2025). In a nation scarred by "securitization fatigue," where 2025 polls exposed intel mistrust, these dialogues, modeled on USIP's West Africa linkages, foster transparency, like declassifying anonymized alerts to build buy-in (USIP, 2024). Impact? Restored confidence, as northwest pilots attest, could amplify reporting by 50%, per Adzenga et al. (2025), turning suspicion into synergy. Anchor in NSC charters, with evaluation via trust indices, to weave accountability into the fabric.

These recommendations, interwoven, form a resilient lattice, demanding not just political will but multisectoral alchemy: federal funding fused

with AU/ECOWAS grants, civil vigor leavened by tech innovation. The yield? A Nigeria where 2026 dawns not in dread but dawn's promise: conflicts forestalled, communities fortified, a beacon for Africa's preventive renaissance. The hour is now; let warnings herald not woe, but wisdom's triumph.

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