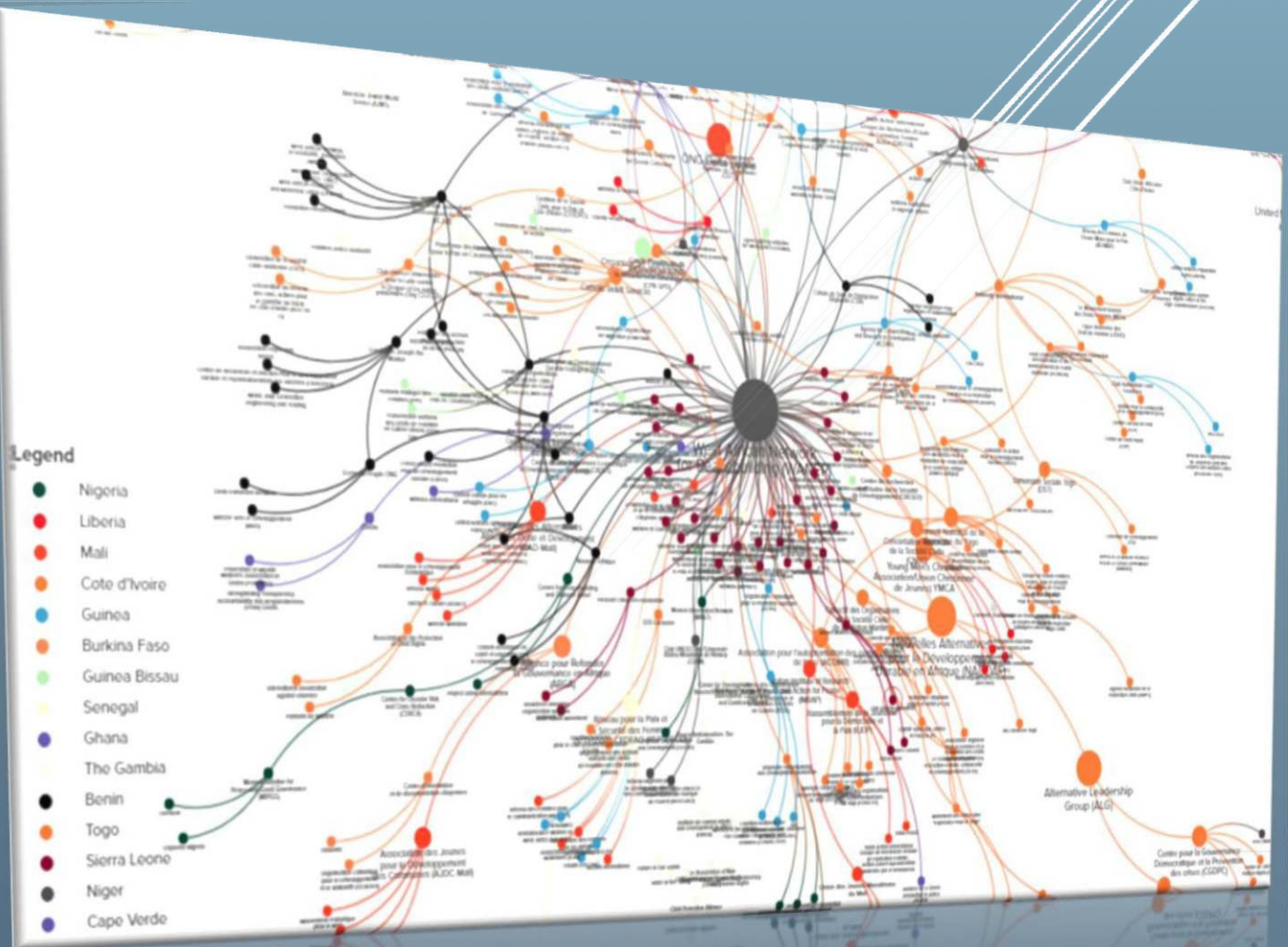




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ECOWAS RESPONSE PLANNING FRAMEWORK - (ERPF)

2020

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The ECOWAS Response Planning Framework

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Terminology and Conceptual Definitions

“Assumptions” are suppositions about the current crisis that are presumed to be true in the absence of facts.

“Conflict” is defined as the natural condition in which individuals and groups seek to advance their interests. Conflict only becomes acute when it eclipses the ability of social, economic, and political institutions to manage divergent interests. Consistent with the ECPF, “conflict refers to the contradictions inherent in power relations and which manifest themselves in individual and group interactions with one another and with nature in the pursuit of limited resources or opportunities. Conflict is the motor of transformation and is either positive or negative. It can be creatively transformed to ensure equity, progress and harmony; or destructively transformed to engender acute insecurity” (Source: ECPF).

“Crisis” is defined as a series of events that eclipses the ability of social, economic, and political institutions to manage naturally occurring conflict and competition. These crisis events can occur across the human security pillars and are prone to escalation and/or spreading if not addressed.

“Direct Violence” refers to physical threats and acts, from political to criminal violence, that threaten individuals and communities. A key assumption is that all direct violence rests on larger, indirect structural and cultural factors. These indirect structural and cultural factors often manifest across the human security pillars.

“Driving force” is defined as any external factor that is likely shaping the human security challenge in question. In standard scenario planning, analysts explore broad categories to identify potential driving forces: social, technological, environmental, economic, political (STEEP). Examples of driving forces include demographic factors like migration and youth bulges, changes in laws and regulation affecting land ownership and access to resources, market activity altering the price of important commodities and food security, new technologies that make it easier to mobilize supporters (i.e., cell phones, social media, etc.), new employment patterns that affect livelihoods and tax revenues, and resources constraints such as changes to fisheries or agriculture that affect basic needs. The combination of these driving forces produce trends (Source: OECD). As used in the HSAF, driving forces are the larger factors shaping your assumptions about cause and effect relationships at play in the environment.

“Gender lens” is a fundamental tool for implementing gender integration in early warning at all times and levels. It means thinking about how gender norms, roles, relations, structures, and other factors might impact or affect a particular issue, problem, or event. (Source: Gender Integration in Early Warning: ECOWAS Gender Manual for Practitioners).

“Human Security” refers to seeing human development and security as transcending narrow approaches that focus solely on physical violence. A human security approach moves beyond immediate threats to physical security to examine basic needs and livelihoods related to economic access, food, environmental considerations, and health.

In the HSAF, there are five human security pillars: 1) governance; 2) security; 3) environment; 4) crime and criminality; and 5) health. A fundamental assumption is that human insecurity is driven by the negative transformation of structural factors through the exacerbation of conflict accelerators. The degeneration of conflict into open violence is often sparked by triggers (Sources: UNDP, ECPF).

“Human Security Issue” is defined as how key actors define events. The assumption is that no event is neutral. Each actor has a particular set of contextual factors and historical understanding that shape how they view events on the ground. Human Security Issues are closely related to attitudes, which describe an actor’s preferred set of behaviors based on an issue as it pertains to governance, security, crime, health, and environment.

“Resilience” is defined as any social/institutional factor that has the potential to help mitigate or manage risks and vulnerabilities. These include political, cultural and community leadership with significant social capital to influence conflict dynamics in a constructive way, including public sector, private sector, religious institutions, civil society, opinion leaders, development workers, etc. Resilience factors can include institutions/individuals that play a stabilizing role in the short, medium, or long term (Source: USAID CRVA framework).

“Risk” is defined as any event-driven factor that has the potential to be a conflict trigger. Risk factors usually emanate from, or are exacerbated by, structural vulnerabilities and can include specific controversies, or events such as natural or manmade disasters, protests, or election violence, that may occur (Source: USAID REWARD CRVA framework).

“Scenario” is defined as a causal description of how past tendencies and current interaction between key actors based on issues, attitudes, and resources/means unfold in the short, medium, or long term. A scenario in effect postulates how a sequence of events creates the future. These descriptions of the future are used to plan possible responses and identify additional information requirements in support of policy (Source: OECD). Note that not every early warning product requires an explicit section with best-case, most likely, and worst-case scenario. However, each should consider implicitly or explicitly how the human security issue may unfold and what the future risk may be.

“Stakeholders” are defined individuals and/or groups able to positively or negatively shape events. These key actors, often identified through stakeholder analysis, see events through a particular issue lens, and as a result, maintain prevailing attitudes towards each other and possible actions by stakeholders. In a conflict situation, the attitudes of actors often lead to polarization and create in-group/out-group dynamics in which groups become more cohesive and recalcitrant in opposition to other parties. In conflict analysis, there are primary parties (those directly involved in the conflict), secondary parties (those supporting the primary parties, and third parties (actors who are outside the conflict and are helping the primary parties to resolve it).

“Structural Factors” According to the ECPF, “structural factors mask latent (indirect) violence, that is, harm perpetrated against the individual or group and which is embedded in the structure of our societies, such as the sources of illiteracy and innumeracy,

unemployment and environmental degradation. Their possible degeneration into direct violence is a function of how, and in what direction, people interact with each other and with nature to transform them. For instance, a repressive regime may create a security racket to protect itself, crackdown on the labor movement, muzzle the press, imprison opposition figures, and fill a voters' register with double entries and ghost names, all in the attempts to cling on to power. All these practices accelerate the negative transformation of structural factors and nudge society towards direct violence (Source: ECPF)." These "structural factors refer to systemic variables conditioned by decades and centuries of interactions with regard to external, regional and internal power relations (global and local governance); fault-lines in the architecture of the postcolonial African State; and the vulnerability of the continent to the vagaries of global processes and nature, such as the region's disadvantaged position in the world market and environmental degradation. The root causes of violent conflict, such as poverty, exclusion, gender and political/economic inequalities are traceable to these global and local fault lines. They have always constituted a time bomb under governance processes in West Africa, being the primary source of latent, indirect violence" (Source: ECPF). The key is to identify not just structures, but how they shape the behavior of key actors, as agents, whose actions shape tendency and potential in the conflict system.

"Trends" are defined as larger patterns of events produced by the interaction of driving forces. In a conflict situation, a trend may exacerbate tensions or create opportunities to reduce tensions. Trend analysis implies examining how a potential driver of change develops over time and shapes potential futures (Source: OECD). As used in the HSAF, analysts combine driving forces to visualize and describe larger trends. These trends help the analyst develop scenarios about alternative futures.

"Vulnerability" is defined as any structural factor that has the potential to be a conflict driver. These can include such things as youth unemployment, poverty, inequality, climate, patronage, demographic factors, etc. (Source: ECOWAS CRVA framework).

Background

Human security challenges occur in different sequences, settings and circumstances. In these complex environments not all response options are viable and may in fact risk exacerbating a crisis if not carefully thought through. For example, while trying to resolve deeply rooted tensions in a society, there may be unique political limitations related to larger diplomatic efforts that constrain response actors. Such interactive complexities necessitate strategically developed response options.

The Economic community Of West African States' (ECOWAS') Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) seeks to address such complexities of human insecurity in its member states through two complementary forms of preventative response – operational and structural prevention. The ECPF defines operational prevention as response measures applicable in the face of imminent crises. These generally have a shorter-term focus. Structural prevention refers to measures that address more systemic issues to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place, or if they do, that they do not re-occur. These generally have a medium to long-term focus.¹

The ECOWAS Response Planning Framework (ERPF) is designed to assist ECOWAS, particularly ECPF focal point directorates (FPDs), to systematically think through all elements of both operational and structural human insecurity response planning. The Framework is a critical step in the larger ECOWAS early warning and response (EW/ER) system.

The process begins by describing the broader human security environment needing to be addressed using reports generated by the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate (EWD). These reports are the results of fact-finding missions such as human security risk and vulnerability assessments (HSRVAs), data compilation and triangulation, insights on key information gaps from ECOWAS' strategic network, and other reliable sources such as technical assessments. These insights are developed into policy-relevant analysis and recommendations using ECOWAS' Human Security Analysis Framework (HSAF). The HSAF is the starting point of a deeper situation analysis describing an emerging or acute crisis in terms of patterns and trends, driving forces, as well as major actors and their resources, motivations and alignments, in order to draw out potential scenarios for response planning purposes. These scenarios provide the analytical basis upon which the ECPF FPDs can begin to assess possible response options utilizing the ERPF. Furthermore, this information becomes important later as the team applying the ERPF develops its implementation plan and key monitoring and evaluation tools. That is, the ERPF takes the driving forces and scenarios from the HSAF and uses them to develop options that address the larger array of factors producing a tendency towards crisis.

¹ Adapted from ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework p. 12.

Introduction to the ERPF

The ERPF provides a planning tool for ECOWAS to develop response options. The process involves three steps. **Step I: Frame the Problem** synthesizes existing EWD products and staff observations relevant to the context. **Step II: Develop and Analyze Response Options** uses the insights from Step I to evaluate possible options in terms of their likely payoff and sensitivity to make recommendations to leadership. **Step III: Develop an Implementation Plan** maps how to ensure the recommended response options are resourced, implemented, evaluated and communicated. Together the steps provide a planning framework that can be scaled to time and contingency, enabling rapid responses as well as more deliberate, calibrated interventions.

Step 1: Frame the Problem	
Describe the Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Consult EWD assessment and analysis products (e.g. HSRVA and Monthly Human Security Reports) to identify key drivers and trends <input type="checkbox"/> Identify gaps in knowledge about the current situation <input type="checkbox"/> Seek inputs to address these information gaps from across ECOWAS and through field offices <input type="checkbox"/> Generate a situation assessment from these sources describing the human security environment and causes from sources such as the Human Security Analysis Framework (HSAF) <input type="checkbox"/> Assess ECOWAS strategic position
Assess ECOWAS Strategic Position	
Step 2: Develop and Analyze Response Options	
Generate Options	<input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorm possible options <input type="checkbox"/> Analyze and refine the options <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a coordinated response option plan <input type="checkbox"/> Analyze and refine the plan <input type="checkbox"/> Present to leadership
Sensitivity Analysis	
Step 3: Develop an Implementation Plan	
Develop an Implementation Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify key tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Develop synchronization mechanisms <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a resource plan <input type="checkbox"/> Produce an M&E plan <input type="checkbox"/> Develop talking points <input type="checkbox"/> Produce a communication strategy
Develop a Communication Strategy	

Step 1: Frame the Problem

Responding to human security crises starts with understanding the underlying problem. From disease outbreaks to communal clashes fueled by climate change and migration, most incidents are symptoms of larger issues emerging from environmental factors, long-term social patterns and unequal power relations. Without sufficiently understanding emerging human security crises in terms of these underlying structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risks, social and institutional resiliencies, and key actors and response limitations, any attempt to prevent, manage, or mitigate an emergency will be limited in its effectiveness. Therefore, **problem framing is the heart of response planning**. Understanding a problem requires seeing issues from multiple perspectives and leveraging a wide range of analytical products to assess possible response options. **This understanding must include careful consideration of gender and social inclusion as well as the myriad ways groups marginalize others and perpetuate human insecurity.**

Inputs	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EWD Products ✓ Consultations based on identified information gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Description of the environment ➤ Situation Assessment ➤ Assessment of ECOWAS Strategic Position

A. Describe the Human Security Environment

As part of problem framing, the first step is to describe the environment. This step involves collaborating across ECOWAS to generate a short description of the environment and the factors both producing a human security crisis and mitigating against it.

1. The ERPF team, appointed by the ECPF Internal Steering Committee (ISC), pulls existing EWD products along with guidance from an EWD representative. The ERPF team is composed of the Directorates of Political Affairs, Strategic Planning, External Relations, Early Warning, Humanitarian Affairs, Free Movement and Communication. As stated above, an analysis using the HSAF should be the starting point. If an analysis using the HSAF has not already been completed on the crisis, one should be requested from EWD. Ideally, the HSAF-informed analysis will be done in collaboration with relevant FPDs that can provide critical inputs.

Steps to describe the human security environment:

1. Gather existing EWD assessment and analysis products as well as other directorate assessments and key insights from ECOWAS' strategic network and fact-finding missions;
2. Identify information gaps with a careful eye towards how gender inequality and social exclusion manifest in the situation;
3. Seek inter-directorate and local input to address these gaps;
4. Consolidate reporting into a situation assessment.

2. The ERPF team formulates questions based on any gaps identified in reviewing the HSAF-informed analysis. From this vantage point, team members seek local input from the field as well as other stakeholders with access to relevant information. Local perspectives are important for establishing context and, later in the planning process, generating response options.



Helpful Hints

1. All EWD products informing HSAF analysis should be considered “living documents.” They are subject to change as the environment shifts and new factors alter the balance of interests and how key actors respond to the system.
2. Staff retuning from fact-finding missions and technical assessments should be tapped for information on how perspectives of key actors may have changed.
3. Another key source of information to map these changing perspectives is local media. While local media can and often is politicized or beholden to economic interests, how these outlets portray events often illustrates shifting attitudes and underlying grievances triggered by inflammatory language.

B. Situation Assessment

From the information gathered through field inputs, the HSAF-informed analysis, and other EWD products, a situation assessment can be created. The situation assessment describes the problem the team is trying to solve and/or the opportunity they are trying to capitalize on. ***The situation assessment forms the foundation for the planning framework.*** It can be a brief or more formal analysis depending on the time and resources available; it can be as short as a 2-3-pages or as long as a formal report.

This step allows the team to home in on the problem or opportunity in a manner that enables ECOWAS to consider viable responses in subsequent stages of the process. It also lists critical information gaps so that the team can coordinate with the FPDs and other actors to address information gaps as they continue planning.

Documentation: All situation assessments should be connected to accessible digital files and organized in a manner that supports cross-staff and cross-directorate access and knowledge management. ***When sensitive materials are involved,*** staff should properly handle them and distribute only on a need-to-know basis and as directed by the original classifying authority.

Note: Leadership often combines this staff-level assessment with more sensitive material and insights from confidential networks. This information may or may not be present in reporting given its sensitive nature.

Situation Assessment Template

Situation Assessment	
Summary	
Key HSAF Insights	
Facts & Context:	
Assumptions:	
Driving Patterns & Trends:	
Key Actors, Resources and Possible Motivations:	
Scenarios:	
Other ECOWAS Product Insights²	
<input type="checkbox"/> Product 1 Key Insights:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Product 2 Key Insights:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Product 3 Key Insights:	
Information Gaps	
Gap 1:	Action Taken to Address: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Text 2. Text
Gap 2:	Action Taken to Address: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Text 2. Text
Gap 3:	Action Taken to Address: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Text 2. Text

² If up to date EWD products on the subject are unavailable or insufficient, then response planners should gather reports from other reputable sources.

C. Assess ECOWAS's Strategic Position

In developing response options, staff should consider the strategic position of their organization. Where the environment description captures the root causes of human insecurity, the *strategic position identifies how to maximize organizational strengths and minimize weaknesses to solve the problem at hand*. Every organization has an inherent set of advantages and limitations in relation to emergent crises. These attributes bound the types of responses available to the organization. In making this assessment, staff should always frame their relative strengths and weaknesses as they relate to addressing the underlying human security challenge.

After describing the environment and drafting a situation assessment, the team directs their attention internally to:

Key questions to help staff think about strategic position

- What is the policy and legal framework surrounding the situation (ECOWAS' mandates, authorities)?
- What limitations are there?
- What are major leadership objectives?
- What potential response actors are involved and what is ECOWAS' current relationship with them?
- What experience and capabilities can ECOWAS leverage to address this situation?

1. **Assess how ECOWAS' mandate, authorities, leadership objectives, and resources are shaping their ability to respond.** This step is critical in that it helps orient the team to key limitations that affect the ability of ECOWAS, in collaboration with local and international partners, to respond.
2. **Build on the HSAF stakeholder analysis to identify the range of possible response actors.** Describing the network of actors includes identifying those who can both positively and negatively affect the situation, ECOWAS' current formal and informal relationships, and ECOWAS' policy towards these groups. This includes assessing both internal strategic position as well as a social network analysis of the broader universe of response actors.
3. **Compile a list of available ECOWAS resources.** By understanding available resources, planners can better assess response options and establish priorities. The team should take into account available labor and financial resources as well as competing priorities for those resources.

Once the team has a description of the environment and an understanding of ECOWAS' strategic positioning that includes policy and mandate issues, they **generate a "strategic position assessment."** This assessment provides a brief overview capturing key challenges, opportunities and risks. The ideal assessments will include a clear articulation of both the inherent advantages and disadvantages of intervening relative to the problem at hand.

The overview should pull directly from the environment description and situation assessment and can be as short as an e-mail or as long as a formal report depending on the time and staff available. In time-sensitive crisis response, the assessment can be an

informal briefing. Regardless of time, the document should be clearly labeled and integrated with a knowledge management system to ensure response planners can access the assessment and understand the findings.

The purpose of the strategic position assessment is to present sufficient information to leadership so that they, or their designated representative(s), can issue planning guidance. This guidance tells the team what to prioritize in their response planning. It can also designate, where appropriate, which FPD should be in the lead and key supporting relationships and resource considerations.

Regardless of length, the strategic position assessment, should have the following sections:

Strategic Position Assessment	
Situation	
Brief Overview	<i>The brief overview should summarize the situation in terms of the key challenges, opportunities and risks. It captures the human security challenges in terms of its cause and its key contextual factors to include driving forces. This overview should be linked to the HSAF and other central EWD or directorate products that describe the environment. The overview should include consideration of how gender and identity politics and conflict dynamics manifest in the situation.</i>
Key Challenges	<i>The assessment should include a clear statement of challenges that are 1) inherent to the human security crisis given the context in which it emerges and given the analysis conducted as part of Step I; and 2) unique to ECOWAS given its mandate, resources and limitations. Defining challenges helps leadership and staff prioritize how to respond while managing concurrent commitments and larger strategic risks.</i>
Key Opportunities	<i>The assessment should include a clear statement of opportunities that leaders and staff need to know about as they think about possible response options. These opportunities should consider time-sensitive windows of opportunity and larger resiliencies inherent in the social system and array of actors involved. Amplifying resiliencies in the system is often a low-cost, high impact way to respond that does not disrupt local institutions and complex relationships.</i>

Key Risks	<i>The assessment should articulate key risks inherent in the situation. In stating risks, the team should consider both risks to ECOWAS and risks to key local stakeholders.</i>
Planning Guidance from Leadership	
Planning Priorities	<i>The assessment should include initial feedback from leadership and standing priorities as they relate to broader mandates. This statement helps the team develop more viable options. In the absence of leadership guidance, the team should base their assessment of planning priorities on existing ECOWAS mandates and authorities as well as key inputs and FPD feedback from their respective areas of competence.</i>
Coordinating Instructions	<i>The assessment should include a list of key FPDs and a designated lead FPD. In the event leadership has not designated a lead FPD, the team will recommend one based on the human security issue at hand. In listing which FPD could help develop viable response options, the team should coordinate with the FPDs to get a point of contact. The assessment should list this point of contact. The coordinating instructions should also contain other information relevant to increasing cross-directorate collaboration. This information includes key knowledge management considerations such as where relevant files will be posted, sharing protocols, and a contact roster. In addition, should the team deem it necessary, the coordinating instructions will specify the frequency of community of interest updates and the format (i.e.; calls, e-mails, workshops, etc.).</i>
Resource and Time Considerations	<i>The assessment should also include a clear statement of available resources and time considerations. Resources are not simply money or personnel. They include authorities and mandates as well as key relationships that give ECOWAS a strategic advantage. The team should list these resources and state any significant resource discrepancies in order to help leadership prioritize their response relative to other contingencies. Second, the assessment must be clear about timelines, listing key events on the horizon shaping response planning.</i>

It is important to note that staff level assessments of the strategic position are the starting point. Often, ECOWAS management have key insights and access to sensitive information about behind the scenes political considerations that alter this assessment. These political considerations are critical to factor in as management responds to the situation and provides guidance that updates the living documents produced in Step 1.

Strategic Position Assessment Template

Strategic Position Assessment	
Situation	
Overview:	
Key Challenges:	
Key Opportunities:	
Key Risks:	
Planning Guidance	
Planning Priorities:	
Coordinating Instructions:	
Resources and Timelines:	

Step 2: Develop and Analyze Response Options

The second step of the response planning process involves transitioning from problem framing to option development. The purpose of this step is to **develop a range of viable response options and make recommendations to leadership**. First, teams generate response options that address the causes of human insecurity identified in previous steps given existing resources and the organization’s strategic position. Second, the staff analyzes and refines response options. Last, the staff presents them to leadership for decision.

Inputs	Outputs
✓ Description of the Environment	➤ Response Plan Options
✓ Strategic Position Assessment	➤ Risk Analysis

A. Generate Response Options

The first task is to **list possible response options as they relate to the description of the environment and strategic position assessment** from *Step 1: Frame the Problem*. In generating initial options, the team lists all available options. This process is best conducted in a brainstorming session to ensure diverse inputs and an open, creative environment. Ideally, the process involves representatives from multiple FPDs. If they are not available, the team should make every effort – whether in-person or virtually – to gather their perspective and input to facilitate a combined response.

Options should take into account ECOWAS’ core capacities, which are listed in Appendix I. When listing options, the team considers temporal factors (immediate, short-, and long-term), whether the option is geared toward operational or structural prevention, and the range of potential partners in terms of their interests, resources and key relationships. **These three factors – interests, resources, and key relationships – help the team determine which partners are best placed to assist in implementing the response options.** The team should draw on both EWD products and other staff insights, including stakeholder analysis from Step I, in making this determination. Once the team has an array of options, they can begin the process of narrowing them down from “all available options” to those deemed most viable and organize them into a coherent response plan.

These plans should contain multiple options organized into a coherent response strategy. The response strategy should illustrate how these options are linked and any key sequencing issues associated with their deployment. For example, are there options that must be completed before an additional option in the plan can be considered? Are there key decision points in which, depending on how a particular option unfolds, the team has to alter the next response option?

The resulting product should be a list of available options that includes the following:

Initial Condition

- **Problem Statement.** The response option plan should have a short statement that summarizes the description of the environment and strategic position assessment. This statement helps focus the response planning team.
- **Initial Condition List.** The team should deconstruct the overall problem into a set of distinct challenges and/or opportunities. For example, the initial condition might be growing unrest and/or include a key resiliency such as the presence of a peacebuilding network of civil society actors. Each challenge/opportunity is used to organize different response options. The options should address the initial condition.

Desired Condition

- **Theory of Change Statement.** The response option plan should capture how the response plans envision changing the situation to create more favorable conditions. A Theory of Change (ToC) is an “if, then....” statement that makes explicit how a specific intervention will lead to desired change, such as prevent or mitigate conflict. It expresses the logic of the response option. It is usually expressed this way:

“If we do X, then Y...is likely to happen because Z.....”

A strong ToC *creates a bridge* between analysis and a response intervention. It identifies the critical drivers that will be addressed and articulates *how* the intervention will address these and *how* it will achieve its intended outcome. It can also provide key indicators for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan that will be developed. Here is an example of a TOC that ECOWAS might use in a hypothetical situation:

*“If ECOWAS joins partners in the international community in calling for a ceasefire and provides a realistic opportunity for the parties to engage in a mediated solution to the conflict, **then** violence will decrease, and the ceasefire will be more likely to hold.”*

This TOC provides two key indicators to gauge the success of the intervention that can inform a M&E plan: 1) a decrease in violence and 2) durability of the ceasefire. It’s also important to note that if the TOC did not include the provision “and provides a realistic opportunity for the parties to engage in a mediated solution to the conflict,” then the results (indicators) would not be logically achievable.

- **Desired Condition List.** Each initial condition should be linked to a desired condition. A desired condition is a simple statement about what the response planning team wants to see in the environment. For example using the TOC example above, if the initial condition is escalating violence, the desired condition might be a decline or cessation in violence.

Options. The plan should have a clear statement defining each option. This statement should specify 1) **who** takes action; 2) **what** action; 3) **where** the action takes places; 4) **when** the action takes places; and, 5) the desired effect of the action (i.e., **why**, the purpose). Taken together these attributes are the “**5 Ws**.”



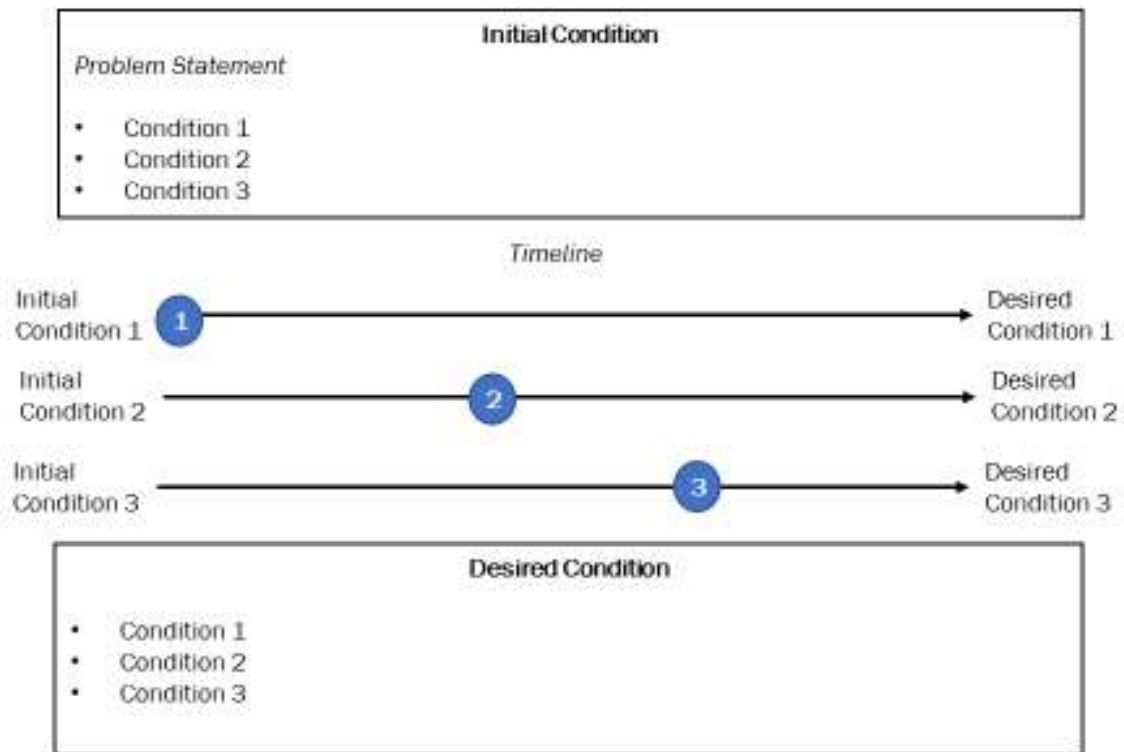
Helpful Hints

When stating temporal considerations (*When* the action takes place), differentiate between **immediate** (next month), **short-term** (next year) and **long-term** (over 1 year) options. Time should be factored with respect to how long it could take to reach the desired condition.

Each available option should also contain the following additional information:

- ***Response Directorate Consultation.*** When stating an option, the team should specify the response directorate they have consulted and how the available options impact their long-term programs. Teams have to ensure they are working with the FPDs to ensure synchronization and a clear understanding of which options are viable given ongoing programs and commitments across ECOWAS.
- ***Potential Partner Inventory.*** In addition to thinking across the ECOWAS response directorates, the team should list local, national, regional and international partners in terms of their interests, resources and key relationships. The purpose is to triangulate response planning and assess how options might interact with other initiatives primarily in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to leverage other initiatives to increase impact. The response team should specify key resources, interests and relationships linked to each partner.
- ***Advantage Analysis.*** The team should analyze advantages and disadvantages by considering the costs and benefits associated with the options. Costs should be based both on monetary and personnel resources as well as intangibles like reputation risk and access. Similarly, benefits are both tangible and intangible. A budget estimate and potential sources of funding should be included. The benefits should be stated as they relate to an observable change in the environment and/or behavior of key actors.

Response Option Plan Template



Option (Sws)	Theory of Change	Lead & Supporting Response Directorate	Partner Inventory	Advantage Analysis
1.	<i>"If we do X..., then Y...is likely to happen because Z...."</i>		Name - Interests - Resources - Relationships	- Advantages - Disadvantages
2.	<i>"If we do X..., then Y...is likely to happen because Z...."</i>		Name - Interests - Resources - Relationships	- Advantages - Disadvantages
3.	<i>"If we do X..., then Y...is likely to happen because Z...."</i>		Name - Interests - Resources - Relationships	- Advantages - Disadvantages

B. Sensitivity Analysis

Once the team has generated a response option plan, they should conduct a sensitivity analysis. This analysis seeks to determine 1) the viability of the overall response option plan and 2) any risks or unintended consequences. The sensitivity analysis has four major components listed below. The planning team should conduct a sensitivity analysis and use the results to modify the response option plan presented to leadership. This recommended response plan is then subject to approval.

Three Steps to a Conflict-Sensitivity analysis for Response Planning:

- 1) Understand the **context** in which you are planning your intervention.
- 2) Understand the **interaction** of your intervention and the context.
- 3) Act upon these understandings to **minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts** of the response intervention¹.

- **SWOT Analysis.** A SWOT analysis outlines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the response option plan. As part of the SWOT analysis, consider risks from a human security perspective including regional geopolitical factors, economic shocks, persistent inequality, and public health considerations. By thinking of threats in the SWOT framework from a human security perspective, analysts visualize and describe cascading effects across the system that affect human lives and response options.
- **Conflict Sensitivity/Do No Harm.** A conflict-sensitivity analysis seeks to avoid negative, unintended consequences. It analyzes how an intervention may be implemented in a way that, at a minimum, does not unintentionally exacerbate conflict and potentially supports local communities' capacity for peace. An important way of putting the "do no harm" principle into practice, is to consult with and involve diverse local stakeholders in the response planning process.
- **Gender Integration.** Gender integration involves taking into account the gender norms, relations, and gender-based inequities that shape the experiences and perceptions of men and women. In response planning, it is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action. Gender integration is closely linked with gender equity in that it often seeks to take into consideration and compensate for historical or systemic bias.
- **Social Inclusion.** Social inclusion in response planning involves creating opportunities for all those with a stake in lasting peace to shape it. It involves analyzing the role identity plays in a specific context and utilizing that understanding to reduce marginalization and exclusion as well as harness the benefits of inclusion. These benefits include increased access, opportunity, and equity for traditionally marginalized/excluded groups thus reducing core grievances that can fuel conflict.
- **Sustainability Assessment.** The team should assess how sustainable the recommended response option plan is, given both the costs in monetary and reputational terms as well as the broader impact on the human security environment.

When planning response, inclusion can be supported by:

- ✓ Ensuring the team planning response is diverse.
- ✓ Understanding the factors leading to the exclusion of particular groups in the context where the response is being planned and finding creative and sensitive ways to overcome obstacles to inclusion without alienating other key stakeholder groups.
- ✓ Planning to build the capacity of certain stakeholder groups as part of the response plan, if lack of capacity prevents their inclusion.
- ✓ Creating a joint agenda for change, ensuring no one group's agenda is prioritized.
- ✓ Identifying opportunities for inclusion at every stage of a response intervention and monitoring inclusion through implementation and evaluation.

Sensitivity analysis makes a plan more viable in complex situations. It also helps the team anticipate possible weaknesses and address them before presenting the plan to leadership.

Sensitivity Analysis Template

Sensitivity Analysis	
SWOT	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Opportunities	
Threats	
Conflict Sensitivity/Do No Harm	
Social Inclusion and Gender Integration	

Sustainability Assessment	
Costs	
Reputation	
Human Security Environment	

C. Present the Response Option Plan

After adjusting the response option plan based on the sensitivity analysis, the team is ready to present to leadership. When presenting the refined response option plan to leadership, the team should include the following elements.³

- Situation Assessment.** The brief to leadership should summarize the findings from Step 1: Problem Framing. The section should include any updates based on the information gaps identified earlier.
- Response Option Plan.** The brief should include the response option plan specifying the initial conditions, desired conditions and coordinated response options arrayed overtime.
- Response Risk Analysis.** The brief should include a short summary of major findings from the sensitivity analysis and how the team refined the response option plan to address these issues.
- Key Decisions Required.** The team should state the key decisions required before transitioning to implementation. The list should be turned into a task tracker after leadership approval and socialized across the directorates to facilitate completion.

When leadership is not available for an in-person brief, a formal report can be submitted. In-person briefs are preferred as they allow for a more substantive dialogue. The team should be prepared to treat leadership feedback as sensitive based on the situation. Last, the team should be prepared to present a follow-up memorandum to leadership confirming leadership's 1) guidance and 2) how the team changed the plan to address that guidance. This document helps ensure the staff is synchronized.

³ For an overview of an abbreviated process, see the appendix.

Step 3: Develop an Implementation Plan

The third step involves *consolidating implementation guidance from leadership and developing tools and processes to manage the response*. The purpose of this step is to support the transition from planning to execution in a manner that ensures synchronization across ECOWAS as well as monitoring and evaluation, communications and long-term resourcing.

Inputs	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coordinated Response Option Plan ✓ Sensitivity Analysis ✓ Guidance from leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementation Plan ➤ Communication Plan

A. Develop an Implementation Plan

After receiving leadership guidance, the team generates an implementation plan. This plan builds on the recommended response option and any additional inputs from leadership. Key components include assigning key tasks across ECOWAS, identifying synchronization mechanisms, developing a monitoring and evaluation framework, and mapping out resource considerations. Synchronizing mechanisms ideally build off current ECOWAS processes to reduce additional meetings and reports. These mechanisms include knowledge management and creating e-mail lists as well as shared drives for sharing documents. Combined, these mechanisms help ensure that ECOWAS can coordinate across the FPDs in responding. Resource planning involves ensuring the plan considers current and expected future resources as well as informs how FPD and other ECOWAS groups go about developing larger resource requests. The team should also present a risk management plan. This plan should identify risks in terms of likelihood and consequences and outline ways to reduce both, employing composite risk management. Last, the team should develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan to guide implementation and help them determine where the response options are meeting their objectives and creating the desired conditions.

- **Key Tasks.** The implementation plan should list key tasks by FPD and other actors. These tasks should include 1) what the task is; 2) success criteria; 3) the option it is linked to; 4) when the task must be completed; and, 5) the current status. The purpose is to ensure that the ECOWAS leadership and staff have a list of activities that can be socialized across the organization and with key external partners.
- **Synchronization Mechanisms.** The implementation guidance should specify the key meetings and knowledge management tools (i.e., distribution lists, shared drives) used to coordinate the response plan. These mechanisms help give leadership or their delegate the ability to manage the response. It should include clear communication mechanisms that help management and leadership guide implementation of the response plan through program officers.
- **Resource Planning.** The implementation guidance should include an inventory of 1) a detailed budget; 2) current resources on hand to support response; 3) projected future resources; and 4) a list of actions required to secure projected resources. The status of resource planning should be a key feature of synchronizing meetings.

Resource planning helps the team consider both current monetary and personnel resources required to address the situation as well as long-term projections.

- **Risk Management Plan.** The team should develop a risk management plan that 1) provides an overview of key risks in terms of their likelihood and consequence and 2) identifies key tasks to mitigate these risks.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.** The implementation guidance should include a detailed M&E plan developed in consultation with ECOWAS' monitoring and evaluation department. The core attributes of that plan should be included in synchronization meetings through listing key indicators and their status based on specified measurement instruments. It is important to note that political considerations affect M&E reporting. Sensitive information from ECOWAS management consultations with their strategic network and behind the scenes dialogue can be used for internal After-Action Reviews (AARs) as well as M&E but kept internal and distribution limited. Whether unclassified or classified, M&E indicators respond to success criteria associated with each task.

Implementation Plan Template

Key Tasks			
FPD	Task	Deadline	Status
Lead	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started
Department/ Directorate	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress
	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete
Lead	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started
Department/ Directorate	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress
	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete
Lead	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Not started
Department/ Directorate	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress
	<input type="checkbox"/> Task 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete
Synchronization Mechanisms			
Meetings			
Distro Lists			
Shared Drives			
Resource Planning			
Current			
Projected			
Required Action			

Risk Management			
Risk	Impact	Mitigation	Assessment
Risk 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Likelihood <input type="checkbox"/> Consequence	<input type="checkbox"/> Action 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Action 2	<input type="checkbox"/> New Likelihood <input type="checkbox"/> New Consequence
Risk 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Likelihood <input type="checkbox"/> Consequence	<input type="checkbox"/> Action <input type="checkbox"/> Action 2	<input type="checkbox"/> New Likelihood <input type="checkbox"/> New Consequence
Monitoring and Evaluation ⁴			
Theory of Change			
Key Indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 3	How Measure	<input type="checkbox"/> Instrument 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Instrument 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Instrument 3

B. Develop a Communication Plan

All response options are subject to information effects. In a connected world, rumors, propaganda and even inadvertent media coverage can cause a response plan to fail. Therefore, teams need to develop a robust communication plan that helps ensure they inform key constituencies and counteracts negative messaging. Information should flow from ECOWAS to national centers and take advantage of existing mechanisms like the Mediation and Security Council so as to include the Member State Ambassadors. This communication plan should have the following attributes.

- List of Influencers.** The team should develop a list of key influencers, both positive and negative, as it relates to the response option plan at the local, regional and international level. This influencer list should also list which communication networks these influencers use. This list should be informed by the stakeholder mapping and analysis of key relationships in previous steps. For example, in a mediation initiative the stakeholders may include those at the mediation table, as well as those who are not present but provide resources or exercise influence or control over the parties.
- Talking Points.** The team should develop key talking points describing the response option and ensure they are synchronized with the ECOWAS mission, mandate and authorities as well as the existing communication strategies of associated FPDs. These talking points should be distributed to ensure constituent messaging across ECOWAS and its partners. Each talking point should have a stated intent that connects the message to a response option, risk mitigation tool, or other aspect of the plan.
- External Messaging.** The team should describe how to adapt talking points for key influencers and constituencies (messaging considerations) as well as how to disseminate the message (i.e., interview, social media, newspaper, etc.).

The Communication Focal Point Directorate will be a key partner in developing a communication plan. By combining their understanding of local media with perspectives

⁴ A complete M&E plan should be developed. That plan should be summarized in the implementation guidance.

from senior leaders, whether from fact-finding missions or behind the scenes dialogue – the team develops a sense of key messages along with the proper conduit through which to disseminate these talking points. Staff should leverage best practices, like social network analysis, for identifying influence networks and tailoring their message.

Communication Strategy Template

Communication Strategy			
Influencer (Constituency)		Level	Network
Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency. <input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency. <input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency.	<input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input type="checkbox"/> International	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media
Negative	<input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency. <input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency. <input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency.	<input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input type="checkbox"/> International	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media
Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency. <input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency. <input type="checkbox"/> Name. Constituency.	<input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input type="checkbox"/> International	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media
Talking Points			
<input type="checkbox"/> Talking Point 1 (intent) <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Point 2 (intent) <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Point 3 (intent)			
External Messaging			
Talking Points		Influencers/Constituencies	Network
<input type="checkbox"/> Talking Point 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Point 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Point 3		<input type="checkbox"/> influencer engaged; how to adapt the talking point <input type="checkbox"/> constituency engaged; how to adapt the talking point	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media

Appendix

Guideline for Crisis Response and Abbreviated Planning

The time available to plan is a function of the prevailing environment and pressures it produces for decision makers. As a result, planners need an abbreviated process that allows them to quickly generate viable options for leaders.

In the ERPF, the abbreviated process focuses on the response option plan in Step II. Teams confronting a situation where either events on the ground or internal dynamics in ECOWAS limit the time available should use the following process:

- Gather inputs. The primary input, if available should be an HSAF. Teams do not need to produce a formal running estimate, but they still have a clear understanding of 1) the human security factors shaping the environment and 2) ECOWAS' strategic position.
- Develop response options. Similar to the formal step, the team should list options and assess them.

Abbreviated Response Planning Brief to Leadership Template

Problem Statement			
Human Security Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> A
	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> A
	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> A
Strategic Position Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> a	<input type="checkbox"/> a	
	<input type="checkbox"/> a		
Response Options			
Option (5 W's)	FPD	Partners	Cost/Benefit
Option 1			<input type="checkbox"/> Cost <input type="checkbox"/> Benefit
Option 2			<input type="checkbox"/> Cost <input type="checkbox"/> Benefit
Risk Management			
Risk	Effect	Mitigation	Resulting Effect
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Likelihood	<input type="checkbox"/> Action 1	Likelihood
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Consequence	<input type="checkbox"/> Action 2	Consequence
Communication Strategy			
Talking Point 1 (Option 1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Constituency <input type="checkbox"/> Network (radio, news, social media)		
Talking Point 2 (Option 2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Constituency <input type="checkbox"/> Network (radio, news, social media)		

Appendix

ECOWAS RESPONSE OPTION TOOLBOX

The following response options are categorized in terms operational prevention and structural prevention. The ECPF defines operational prevention as measures applicable in the face of imminent crises. These generally have a shorter-term focus. Structural prevention refers to measures that address more systemic issues to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place, or if they do, that they do not re-occur. These generally have a medium- to long-term focus. In some instances, measures in the table below may be used for either operational or structural prevention.

This list is provided as a resource for response planners but should not be considered exhaustive, nor should planners limit themselves to these options. Response planning should not only be guided by sound analysis, consideration of current best practices and of ECOWAS' experience and strengths, but also by a spirit of creativity and innovation. In addition, the ideas of a diverse range of partners in the relevant Member State of how ECOWAS can best respond to a given situation should be actively solicited.

Some guiding questions to consider in the process of selecting options might include:

- How does the intervention attempt to manage or dissolve the conflict issues raised in the HSAF analysis?
- In what ways does the intervention engage key stakeholders?
- How does it affect the conflict attitudes of the parties and relations between them?

Types of Tools	Operational Prevention Response Options	Structural Prevention Response Options
Communication	Early warning reports (targeted dissemination) Public statements / press releases Media training	Early warning reports
Cross-border initiatives	Cross-border security governance and socio-economic development	Capacity building for Joint Border Commissions
Diplomatic / Political	Mediation Negotiation Political dialogue Good offices Fact-finding / observer mission Public diplomacy /pressure Threat/use of diplomatic sanctions Recognition/normalization Control mechanisms: - Divided control (redrawing of territorial boundaries for land conflicts)	Capacity building on ECOWAS Dialogue and Mediation Handbook

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Horse trading (change one issue for another) - Shared control (power sharing) - Leave control to others (international protectorate) 	
Education and Training	Conflict resolution training	Peace education in schools
Governance and Rule of Law	<p>Elections support Electoral violence prevention Promoting appropriate use of national judicial structures</p>	<p>Elections support Constitutional reform Formal power sharing mechanisms Anti-corruption measures Rule of law strengthening Political party strengthening Human rights advocacy and education Strengthening service delivery Transitional justice mechanisms</p>
Humanitarian Assistance	Emergency relief	Humanitarian threat assessment reports
Military / Security	<p>Security guarantees Confidence-building measures Arms embargos Preventive military/police deployment Threat of force/deterrence</p>	<p>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Security Sector Reform (SSR)</p>
Socio-economic	<p>Multi-stakeholder dialogue Leveraging local dispute resolution mechanisms Leveraging traditional and religious leaders</p>	<p>Youth empowerment Women's empowerment Empowerment of marginalized minorities Economic development</p>