

Aawaz II

Inclusion, Accountability, Reducing Exploitation

Community-led Early Warning and Response Systems: The Aawaz II Social Cohesion Model in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

In-Depth Case Study

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Acronyms

AAC	Aawaz Aagahi Centre
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CM	Child Marriage
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DF	District Forum
DSP	Downstream Partner
EWS-ERM	Early Warning System/Early Response Mechanism
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Focal Person
GBV	Gender-based Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RP	Resource Person
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
VF	Village Forum

1. Introduction

Aawaz II, funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and implemented by the British Council, operates in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to address persistent forms of exclusion, intolerance and localised conflict. The programme focuses on reducing child marriage (CM), gender-based violence (GBV) and social exclusion through behaviour change, peaceful dispute resolution and structured community engagement with state institutions. Particular emphasis is placed on groups that experience heightened exposure to conflict and limited access to formal protection mechanisms, including women, religious minorities, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and transgender persons.¹

The Aawaz II Early Warning System/Early Response Mechanism (EWS-ERM) functions as a preventive intervention designed to identify emerging risks and enable a timely response. It relies on community-level information to support early action, pre-empt escalation, and, where necessary, facilitate referrals to government institutions. In practice, the mechanism addresses recurrent sources of tension, including disputes related to land and shared resource use, inter-communal relations and inheritance.²

In Pakistan, early warning systems are largely concentrated in climate and disaster risk management, coordinated through national and provincial disaster management authorities and supported by technical agencies such as the Pakistan Meteorological Department. While these systems are effective in forecasting and responding to natural hazards, they are not designed to identify or respond to emerging social cohesion risks or localised conflicts. In the conflict prevention and internal security domain, preparedness remains largely reactive, relying on administrative or law enforcement responses once disputes have already escalated. Although district-

¹ British Council. Aawaz II Programme: Inclusion, Accountability and Reducing Exploitation. Programme documentation and design framework.

² British Council. Aawaz II Early Warning System and Early Response Mechanism: Standard Operating Procedures. August 2024.

level mechanisms such as District Peace Committees exist, they are primarily oriented towards maintaining public order rather than systematically detecting and addressing early warning signals at the community level.

Pakistan's national and domestic policy frameworks provide a normative basis for preventive and inclusive approaches to managing conflict and discrimination. These include Pakistan's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)³ as well as national policy commitments related to minority protection, inclusive governance and social cohesion, reflected in instruments such as the National Action Plan on Human Rights and provincial social welfare and protection mandates.⁴ As a state party to CERD, Pakistan is obligated to address discrimination-related risks proactively. However, the absence of formal, community-anchored early warning systems limits the ability of public institutions to detect and respond to emerging tensions at an early stage. This gap highlights the relevance of community-based systems that can complement existing administrative and security functions by linking early identification at the local level with coordinated district response.

This in-depth case study examines how the Aawaz II EWS-ERM functions as a community-based system for early conflict prevention and the promotion of social cohesion. It documents how the mechanism operates, and analyses observed outcomes, differences in access and response across social groups, and the conditions under which it is most effective. It also considers its potential for integration within provincial and district government systems and its relevance as a scalable approach to managing localised conflict risk.

3 United Nations, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (New York: United Nations, 1965)

4 Government of Pakistan, National Action Plan on Human Rights (Islamabad: Ministry of Human Rights, 2016).

2.Context and Problem Statement

Social cohesion, defined by the Council of Europe as “the framework of values and principles ensuring that all citizens, without discrimination, have equal access to fundamental social and economic rights”⁵ remains fragile in Pakistan. Persistent inequalities, exclusionary social norms and uneven access to justice undermine trust within and between communities, as well as public confidence in government institutions. These conditions increase the incidence of unresolved grievances and reduce the effectiveness of dispute resolution, particularly in contexts where preventive mechanisms are limited or absent.⁶

In Punjab and KP, these dynamics manifest in recurring localised tensions driven by sectarian divides, ethnic disparities and competition over natural resources. Disputes related to land, irrigation water, forest resources and grazing rights have intensified over the past decade due to population growth, environmental degradation and increasing pressure on livelihoods.⁷ In 2022, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported that more than one-third of rural households had experienced land-related disputes within the preceding five years, underscoring the scale of resource-based conflicts.⁸ Inter-faith tensions and identity-based disputes further compound these risks, particularly for religious minorities, where fear of reprisal and limited confidence in informal mediation mechanisms can delay reporting and increase the likelihood of rapid escalation.⁹

5 Council of Europe, Concerted Development of Social Cohesion Indicators: Methodological Guide (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2005), 23.

6 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), States of Fragility 2022 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022).

7 World Bank, Pakistan: Pathways to Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2021).

8 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM), 2022.

9 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Concluding Observations on the Combined Twenty-First to Twenty-Third Periodic Reports of Pakistan. United Nations, Geneva.

The impacts of these disputes vary significantly across different social groups. Land and inheritance conflicts frequently intersect with family dynamics and gendered patterns of ownership, disproportionately affecting women while limiting their ability to seek redress¹⁰. For religious minorities, such disputes often intersect with broader patterns of exclusion and insecurity, constraining access to both informal mediation and formal administrative remedies. PWDs and transgender persons encounter additional barriers linked to stigma, limited mobility, documentation challenges and fear of reprisal¹¹. As a result, conflicts affecting these groups are more likely to remain unreported or unresolved until they reach an advanced stage, reinforcing exclusion and heightening community-level risk¹².

10 UN Women, Gender, Justice and Access to Legal Protection in Pakistan (Islamabad: UN Women, 2022).

11 National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Pakistan (Islamabad: NCHR, 2023).

12 Sarbajit Chatterjee, Marie Gassier, and Nandar Myint, Leveraging Social Cohesion for Development Outcomes (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023).

3.Theoretical and Analytical Framework

This case study is informed by an integrated analytical framework drawing on early warning and conflict prevention theory, conflict transformation and inclusive, community-based security approaches. Together, these perspectives are used to examine how the Aawaz II EWS-ERM functions as a preventive governance system, how it links community-level observation with institutional response, and how inclusion shapes system performance, institutional effectiveness and policy relevance.

Early warning and conflict prevention literature emphasises the importance of timely information, local verification and proportionate response in preventing the escalation of localised disputes. Matveeva (2006) and Rohwerder (2015) emphasise that effective early warning systems depend not only on information collection but on clearly defined roles, communication pathways and the capacity to act on early signals¹³. Within this context, the EWS-ERM is analysed as a structured process that connects community-level identification of risks with defined response and referral pathways, allowing assessment of whether early signals lead to timely preventive action or delayed institutional response.

The analysis also draws on conflict transformation theory, particularly the work of John Paul Lederach, which conceptualises conflict as embedded within broader relational and structural patterns rather than as isolated incidents. Lederach's notion of 'peace infrastructure' is used to examine the EWS-ERM as a standing, process-oriented mechanism embedded within routine community and institutional practice, capable of interfacing with formal governance structures

13 Matveeva, Anna. Early Warning and Early Response: Conceptual and Empirical Dilemmas. The Hague: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 2006. Rohwerder, Brigitte. Early Warning Systems for Preventing Violent Conflict. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2015.

rather than as a stand-alone or ad hoc response mechanism.¹⁴ In analytical terms, the EWS-ERM operationalises this framework through differentiated functions across various levels, including community-based detection and mediation at the grassroots level, verification and coordination at the intermediary level, and escalation and institutional referral at the district level. This enables analysis of how conflict transformation theory is operationalised through system design and institutional practice.

Finally, the framework incorporates insights from inclusive and community-based security approaches, particularly feminist and participatory perspectives that emphasise local legitimacy and the inclusion of marginalised groups in conflict prevention systems¹⁵. This perspective informs analysis of differential access, reporting and response patterns across social groups, including women, religious minorities, PWDs and transgender persons. Inclusion is analysed as a core factor shaping system performance and preventive capacity.

These perspectives provide a coherent analytical basis for interpreting the key findings presented later in the case study, particularly those related to preventive effectiveness, inclusion and institutional relevance.

¹⁴ Lederach, John Paul. *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003.

¹⁵ Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi. *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

4.Objectives

- This case study aims to examine the Aawaz II EWS-ERM as a preventive, community-based system for identifying and responding to emerging social cohesion and conflict-related risks. Specifically, the study seeks to:
- Document how the EWS-ERM functions as a preventive system, including the identification, verification, response and referral of early warning alerts.
- Assess the effectiveness of the EWS-ERM, with particular attention to timeliness, proportionality of response and follow-through.
- Examine differential access, reporting and response patterns across social groups.
- Analyse institutional linkages and referral pathways, including how the EWS-ERM interfaces with district administration, law enforcement and relevant government departments.

Explore potential for institutionalisation, including the conditions under which the EWS-ERM could be recognised, embedded and sustained within existing government systems.

5. Methodology

5.1 Study Design

Informed by research approaches articulated by Robert K. Yin and Robert E. Stake, this case study adopts a qualitative single-case embedded design¹⁶. The Aawaz II EWS-ERM is examined as a system of preventive governance, with embedded units of analysis at the community level (VFs and AACs), district level (DFs), and programme level (Downstream Partners and Programme Management Unit). This design enables examination of how preventive functions operate across multiple institutional layers within a single system, while capturing variation across different district contexts in Punjab and KP. Comparative insights are used to identify recurring patterns, contextual adaptations, and structural constraints, while maintaining analytical coherence within a single case.

5.2 Literature Review

- A targeted review of relevant literature and programme documents was undertaken to inform analysis of the EWS-ERM. Documents reviewed included:
- Aawaz II programme documents, progress reports and Monitoring and Evaluation records.
- EWS-ERM -related documents, including the *EWS-ERM: Guide for Practitioners (2024–27)* and associated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- National and provincial frameworks relevant to conflict prevention, social cohesion, minority protection and inclusive governance.
- International literature on early warning systems, conflict prevention and community-based and inclusive security approaches.

¹⁶ Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018. Stake, Robert E. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995.

5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The study examines system functioning and response pathways through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in Sheikhpura, Sialkot, Sahiwal, Abbottabad, and Nowshera. KIIs were undertaken with EWS-ERM FPs, Downstream Partners (DSPs), and selected government counterparts involved in referral or response processes. FGDs were conducted with community members engaged through VFs and AACs, with a particular focus on capturing perspectives from women and other vulnerable groups. District-wise details of all participants of KIIs and FGDs have been provided in Annex A.

Programme documentation (see Section 5.2) was used as secondary evidence to triangulate primary qualitative data and assess alignment between documented system design and observed practice.

5.4 Analytical Framework

Data analysis followed a system-level, process-focused approach, examining information flows, decision pathways, and coordination across institutional levels.

The following qualitative techniques were applied:

- f. **Process Tracing:** to map early warning alerts across the EWS-ERM cycle, from identification to referral.
- g. **Pattern Matching:** to assess alignment between observed practices and SOP-defined procedures.
- h. **Cross-Case Synthesis:** to identify recurring patterns and contextual variation within a common system architecture.

An intersectional lens was used to examine differences in access, responsiveness, and escalation across social groups, including women, religious minorities, PWDs and transgender persons.

5.5 Challenges/Limitations

This case study is subject to limitations related to geographic coverage and sample size. Primary data was collected from five selected districts (3 in Punjab and 2 in KP), and findings are, therefore, illustrative rather than exhaustive. Reliance on self-reported accounts may introduce recall or attribution bias, although triangulation across multiple data sources and respondent categories strengthens the credibility of the analysis.

The study also recognises that group dynamics within FGDs, including gender, age and social hierarchies, may have influenced participation and disclosure. In addition, the positionality of facilitators and their perceived authority may have shaped responses in some settings. These factors are particularly relevant for vulnerable groups. Mitigation measures included the use of trained facilitators, targeted FGDs where appropriate, and systematic triangulation across stakeholder groups.

9. Aawaz II EWS-ERM

This section outlines the functional architecture and system logic of the Aawaz II EWS-ERM, including its institutional configuration, response pathways, and operational scope. The EWS-ERM is a community-based preventive system for early identification and response to emerging social cohesion and conflict-related risks, operating across 37 Aawaz II districts in Punjab (23) and KP (14). The system enables early detection, proportionate response, and referral through defined institutional pathways and is governed by SOPs that specify roles, decision points, timelines and documentation requirements across village, district and provincial levels. Together, these elements translate community-level risk signals into coordinated preventive action.

6.1 Institutional Architecture

The EWS-ERM operates through a layered system architecture that structures how early warning information is generated, verified, coordinated, and referred across community and district levels. It is operationalised through Aawaz II's multi-tiered community infrastructure, which provides defined entry points for early warning, verification and response.

At the village level, Village Forums (VFs) function as the primary risk detection layer of the system, where emerging disputes and social cohesion risks are first identified. Aawaz Aagahi Centres (AACs) serve as the verification and coordination layer, consolidating information from VFs, supporting initial analysis, and facilitating early response actions or referrals. At the district level, District Forums (DFs) provide coordination and escalation oversight, supporting decisions on escalation, referral to government institutions, and follow-up. DFs also act as the interface between the EWS-ERM and district administration, law enforcement agencies, and relevant government departments.

In accordance with the SOPs, each VF, AAC, and DF designates two EWS-ERM focal persons (FPs), including at least one woman, responsible for receiving, documenting, and transmitting early warning information using standardised tools. This creates defined accountability points for information flow and system reliability. DSPs provide technical and operational support, including FP training, data management, case tracking, and reporting, while the PMU provides system-level oversight, quality assurance, and coordination on systemic or escalated issues¹⁷.

The EWS-ERM is designed as a preventive and referral-oriented system and does not replace formal judicial, administrative, or law enforcement mechanisms.

6.2 Process Flow: From Early Warning to Response

The EWS-ERM follows a standardised process that defines responsibilities and decision points for timely identification, verification, and response. Early warning alerts are identified through routine engagement within VFs, AACs, and related community interactions, and are reported to designated FPs. Reported alerts commonly relate to land and inheritance disputes, inter-faith or sectarian tensions, family-level conflicts, GBV-related risks, potential CMs and discrimination against vulnerable groups.

All alerts are documented using standardised formats and transmitted through AACs to DFs for verification. Review processes assess credibility, severity and escalation risk. Where issues are manageable at the community level, responses include facilitated dialogue, mediation and local engagement. Where risks exceed community-level capacity, cases are escalated to relevant government institutions or authorities.

In line with operational guidance, alerts are assessed according to

¹⁷ British Council, Aawaz II Early Warning System and Early Response Mechanism: Standard Operating Procedures (Islamabad: British Council, 31 August 2024).

the phase of dispute (latent, surface, or open conflict), informing whether responses prioritise pre-emption, de-escalation, or referral.¹⁸ SOPs specify indicative timelines for verification and escalation to maintain the preventive intent of the system. All actions and referrals are recorded and tracked, enabling follow-up, consolidated reporting to the PMU, and ongoing system learning and refinement. Figure 1 illustrates the end-to-end operational flow of the EWS-ERM.



Figure 1 Aawaz II EWS-ERM Process Flow

¹⁸ British Council. Aawaz II Early Warning System and Early Response Mechanism: Guide for Practitioners 2024–2027. Islamabad: British Council, 2024.

6.3 Scale, Coverage and Reported Outputs

Table 1: Summary of EWS-ERM System Outputs

Indicator	Total
Districts covered	37
Early warnings received	28,634
Cases reported as pre-empted	20,403

EWS-ERM records early warning alerts and response actions through regular documentation and reporting processes, capturing early warning indicators, community-level responses, mediation actions and referrals to government institutions. Reported outputs include alerts received and verified, responses initiated at community level, referrals to relevant departments or authorities, and mediation outcomes. Together, these outputs illustrate the operational scope of the EWS-ERM across diverse district contexts as well as the range of risks the system is able to detect and address at early stages. Table 1 presents a consolidated summary of key EWS-ERM cases received and conflicts prevented. These represent indicators of system functionality and preventive governance capacity rather than activity-level performance metrics.

7. Key Findings

This section presents the key findings from the analysis of the Aawaz II EWS-ERM, drawing on FGDs, KIIs and programme documentation. The findings assess system performance in relation to Aawaz II's core objectives of early risk identification, preventive and proportionate response, inclusive participation, and strengthened community-state linkages. The section interprets how the EWS-ERM functions as a preventive governance mechanism in practice and what this implies for conflict prevention and social cohesion in district contexts in Punjab and KP.

"If it isn't resolved in the village, the matter goes to the AAC and onwards to the DF, but most issues are resolved before that."

Focal person, Sialkot, Male, Muslim, Age: 45

7.1 Early Warning and Preventive Response

Evidence from Punjab and KP indicates that the EWS-ERM has substantively strengthened early identification of emerging disputes, enabling intervention prior to escalation into violence, formal legal processes or security responses. Across districts, disputes that previously surfaced only after police involvement, such as land-related conflicts, inter-faith tensions or domestic disputes, are now flagged earlier through VFs and EWS-ERM FPs and addressed through dialogue or mediation.

This shift represents a functional transition from reactive dispute management to preventive conflict governance, aligning with core early warning theory that emphasises timely signal detection and proportionate response as critical to preventing escalation (Matveeva; Rohwerder). In system terms, the EWS-ERM has increased the sensitivity of local risk detection and shortened response timelines,

directly supporting Aawaz II's preventive objective.

"EWS is the first warning for any dispute; through which matters get resolved before a major dispute erupts."

Focal Person, Sahiwal, Male, Christian, Age: 42

In operational terms, these patterns demonstrate that the EWS-ERM is functioning as an **upstream intervention mechanism**, shifting conflict response away from post-escalation enforcement towards early-stage mediation and dialogue. Preventive capacity emerges from the routine operations of VFs, FPs and verification structures that translate everyday community observations into actionable response pathways. In practice, this means disputes enter structured resolution processes earlier, with reduced reliance on police or judicial escalation.

7.2 Strengthening Verification, Escalation, and Proportionate Response

Findings indicate that the EWS-ERM has strengthened how emerging disputes are verified, assessed, and addressed through graduated response pathways, reducing both delayed action and unnecessary escalation. FGDs and KIs consistently highlight clearer internal checks that distinguish between low-risk disputes, moderate tensions and high-risk cases requiring institutional intervention.

In districts such as Sheikhpura, verification at AAC and DF levels was described as critical for assessing the credibility, severity and escalation potential of reported alerts. This process enables early warnings to be acted upon without immediate involvement of law enforcement agencies, while preserving escalation pathways for higher-risk cases. Respondents also emphasised that incremental escalation is particularly important in sensitive cases involving women and marginalised groups, where premature exposure or institutional intervention can deter reporting or exacerbate harm.

"After receiving early warning alerts, several disputes between Muslims and Christians have been resolved through mediation. In case the matter has already escalated and cannot be resolved at the community level, then it is referred to the Meesaq Centre."

Focal Person, Sheikhpura, Male, Christian, Age: 38

Evidence suggests that the organised structure of verification and response has strengthened system performance by:

- filtering incomplete or exaggerated reports;
- enabling community-level dialogue and mediation for low to moderate-risk cases; and
- supporting timely escalation where disputes show signs of widening, politicisation or potential violence.

This tiered approach operationalises core principles of conflict transformation by sequencing engagement across multiple levels and preventing premature hardening of disputes into entrenched conflict. Preventive effectiveness is thus generated through calibrated response, not merely early detection.

From a system-performance perspective, the EWS-ERM functions as a risk-filtering system, not simply a reporting mechanism. By matching response intensity to conflict stage, it increases system efficiency, reduces unnecessary institutionalisation of disputes, and strengthens preventive governance capacity. This demonstrates that escalation management is as central to prevention as early detection.

7.3 Differential Access, Reporting, and Response

Findings indicate that access to the EWS-ERM and patterns of reporting and response vary significantly across social groups,

shaping which risks surface early and how they are addressed. Gender norms, social status, disability, and religious identity influence both willingness to report concerns and the pathways through which cases are handled.



Across districts, women were frequently identified as early informants, particularly in relation to household disputes and CM risks, especially where trusted female FPs were present. At the same time,

fear of backlash, reputational harm, and household pressure constrained disclosure in cases involving GBV and inheritance disputes. Religious minorities were more likely to raise concerns related to inter-faith tensions where local forums were perceived as neutral and reporting could remain discreet.

PWDs and transgender persons faced additional barriers linked to mobility, stigma and fear of reprisal. Reporting improved in contexts where representatives from these groups were engaged in forums or where FPs had received targeted sensitisation. Across all groups, trust in FPs and forum members responsible for handling early warnings emerged as a decisive factor in determining whether concerns were raised early or remained unreported until escalation.

“PWDs continue to face stigma and discrimination, but attitudes are changing slowly, especially through involvement and sensitisation of influential community members, mothers, and schoolteachers.”

Focal Person, Abbottabad, Male, Christian, Age: 55

At a system level, inclusion operates as a system performance variable, not merely a normative principle. Where representation, trust and sensitisation are present, the system detects a wider range

of risks at earlier stages. Where they are absent, early warning capacity is structurally constrained. Preventive effectiveness is, therefore, directly shaped by who is able to access the system and how safely concerns can be raised. This reflects participatory and inclusive security approaches that treat access, trust and representation as functional conditions for system effectiveness.

7.4 Linkages with Government Institutions

Findings indicate that the EWS-ERM has strengthened practical linkages between community-level early warning and district government institutions, particularly in cases that exceed local mediation capacity. Rather than replacing formal systems, the mechanism operates as a complementary pathway enabling earlier and more structured engagement by authorities. In this sense, the EWS-ERM functions as a connective mechanism between community-level peace infrastructure and formal administrative authority.

In districts such as Sialkot and Sahiwal, referrals from DFs to district administration, police and Social Welfare departments¹⁹ were reported in cases involving land disputes, CM risks and family-level conflicts. Early documentation and verification through the EWS-ERM improved case credibility and reduced delays in administrative response. In Abbottabad and Nowshera, DFs played a significant role in channelling socially or politically sensitive cases to district authorities in ways that reduced escalation and supported coordinated response.

“Government officials have become more cooperative. An issue related to a Christian graveyard site was recently resolved through the Office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC)”

- Focal Person, Sialkot, Female, Muslim, Age: 45

¹⁹ Social Welfare and Baitul Maal Department in Punjab and Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department in KP.

Government engagement was strongest where EWS-ERM cases aligned with existing state functions, including:

- administrative dispute resolution,
- preventive policing,
- child protection, and
- safeguarding and social protection referral.

While referrals remain largely ad hoc, respondents identified clear scope for formalisation through formal notification protocols and institutional recognition of community-based early warning roles.

In governance terms, the EWS-ERM demonstrates how community-based early warning can function as a preventive extension of district administration, strengthening state capacity for early intervention without creating parallel systems. Institutional relevance is, therefore, derived not from organisational integration but from functional alignment with existing governance mandates. This reflects governance approaches that understand preventive state capacity as extending through community-based mechanisms rather than bureaucratic expansion alone.

7.5 Key Lessons for Preventive Conflict Management

Findings across districts generate the following system-level lessons for preventive conflict governance:

- Prevention depends on routine community governance, not episodic reporting. Embedding EWS-ERM within existing forums enables risks to surface earlier and more reliably than ad hoc mechanisms.
- Response calibration is as important as early detection. Verification and escalation pathways are central to preventing premature institutionalisation while preserving protection functions.

- Inclusion determines system sensitivity. Representation, trust and safe reporting conditions directly shape what risks are detected and when. Where these conditions are absent, early warning signals are more likely to remain latent.
- Community-based early warning strengthens state capacity. When aligned with existing administrative functions, early warning systems operate as low-cost preventive extensions of district governance rather than parallel structures.
- Sustainability depends on institutional recognition, not replication. Long-term viability requires formal recognition of community-level early warning roles, clear referral authority, and functional embedding within district governance systems.

7.6 From Early Warning to Preventive Governance: Analytical Integration



Read as a whole, the findings indicate that the Aawaz II EWS-ERM operates not as a project-based alert mechanism but as a preventive governance system embedded in routine community and

district practices. Early warning functions generate timely risk signals, verification structures filter credibility and severity, graduated response pathways calibrate intervention, and institutional linkages connect community prevention to formal state functions.

In analytical terms, preventive effectiveness emerges from system design rather than isolated interventions. Early warning theory explains how embedded detection increases preventive reach and reduces escalation risk; conflict transformation theory explains how layered response pathways prevent disputes from hardening into

entrenched conflict; and inclusive governance approaches explain how access, trust and representation shape system sensitivity and performance.

In governance terms, the EWS-ERM demonstrates how community-based mechanisms can extend preventive state capacity without creating parallel institutions. By aligning community monitoring and mediation functions with district-level administrative, safeguarding and dispute-resolution mandates, the system strengthens early intervention capacity through functional integration rather than organisational integration.

8. Recommendations

This section outlines key recommendations informed by the findings of the case study. The recommendations focus on strengthening the effectiveness, inclusion and institutional sustainability of the Aawaz II EWS-ERM by embedding early warning, preventive response and referral functions into routine district governance systems in Punjab and KP. This model leverages existing district staff, coordination platforms, training systems and operational budget heads, making preventive governance financially and administratively viable without institutional expansion.

A. Integrate community-level early warning functions into district governance systems

Lead Authority: Office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC)

- DC Offices should integrate community-based early warning and referral functions into routine district administrative systems for preventive conflict management.
- District-level mediation, dispute resolution and protection mechanisms should serve as institutional entry points for identifying and referring emerging social cohesion and conflict-related risks.

- Integration should be formalised through district-level administrative instruments, including notifications and district SOPs, which:
 - Define referral categories (e.g., land disputes, family conflicts, interfaith tensions, child protection risks); and
 - Specify institutional pathways for receipt, screening, and response.
- Social Welfare Departments should support integration through technical guidance and safeguarding frameworks, particularly for vulnerable groups.

B. Assign clear institutional responsibility for referrals

Lead Authority: DC Office

- DC Offices should assign designated coordination staff within existing district administration structures to receive, record and coordinate early warning referrals.
- Police, Social Welfare and Child Protection Units (CPUs) should designate responsible officers for timely response to referrals within their mandates.
- Referral roles, procedures and response pathways should be formalised through district-level SOPs.

C. Build capacity for preventive response and coordination

Lead Authority: DC Office

- DC Offices should lead integration of orientation on early warning, preventive response and referral protocols into existing training programmes for district officials and community representatives, with defined technical inputs from Police, Social Welfare Departments and CPUs.

- Refresher training should be delivered through routine in-service programmes and departmental capacity-building activities, ensuring continuity through existing government systems.
- Training content should include guidance on addressing confidentiality, inclusion and protection from retaliation, particularly in cases involving women, religious minorities, PWDs and transgender persons.
- DC Offices should ensure district-level staff are trained on identifying early-stage social cohesion risks and applying proportionate responses, prioritising mediation and administrative measures before escalation.

D. Secure planning and budgetary alignment

Lead authorities: Planning and Development Departments (provincial); DC Offices (district)

Supporting authorities: Social Welfare Departments; Home Departments

- Provincial governments should absorb preventive early warning functions into ongoing programmes related to dispute resolution, social protection and community engagement.
- Planning and Development Departments²⁰ should issue guidance or notices requiring relevant departments to incorporate community-based early warning and preventive response functions into relevant sectoral plans, with DC Offices as the focal point for district-level coordination.
- Social Welfare Departments, in coordination with Home Departments, should include routine EWS-ERM functions (coordination, referral logging, documentation and follow-up) within existing operational budget heads. Relevant budget heads include existing allocations for district coordination, dispute

²⁰ Planning and Development Board in Punjab / and Planning and Development Department in KP

resolution, safeguarding, documentation, social protection and administrative services.

- DC Offices should incorporate early warning coordination responsibilities into district annual workplans and routine administrative processes.

E. Strengthen monitoring and learning mechanisms

Lead authority: DC Offices

Supporting authority: Social Welfare Departments

- DC Offices should integrate routine summaries of early warning alerts, referrals and outcomes into existing district reporting and coordination processes, including regular administrative and coordination meetings.
- DC Offices, with technical support from Social Welfare Departments, should consolidate district-level information on referrals and outcomes to identify recurring social cohesion risks and inform preventive planning and targeted administrative action.
- Existing district coordination forums should regularly review early warning trends to support local problem-solving, mediation and preventive engagement.

F. Policy alignment for preventive conflict management

Lead authority: Planning and Development Departments

- Planning and Development Departments should integrate preventive, community-based early warning and referral functions into existing policy and strategic instruments, including:
- Social Welfare policies (community protection, social cohesion and dispute resolution),
 - Human Rights policies or action plans (early identification of

discrimination, inter-faith tensions and exclusion-related risks) and

- Child Protection policies and strategy documents (institutionalising early warning for CM).
- Where formal policy revision is not immediately feasible, this integration should be operationalised through administrative instruments, including provincial or departmental notifications, implementation guidelines or SOPs issued by Planning and Development, Social Welfare and Home Departments, with DC Offices responsible for district-level application.

9. Conclusion

The Aawaz II EWS-ERM demonstrates the value of institutionalised early warning as a preventive governance approach to managing localised conflict and social cohesion risks in Punjab and KP. By embedding early identification, verification and response functions within routine community engagement structures, the EWS-ERM has enabled earlier intervention in disputes related to land, inter-faith relations, family conflict and CM, thereby reducing reliance on reactive enforcement and formal legal processes.

The case study highlights that the effectiveness of the EWS-ERM lies in the interaction between trusted community platforms, clearly sequenced response pathways, and functional linkages with district government institutions. At the same time, sustaining these gains beyond the Aawaz II programme will require deliberate institutional integration. This includes formal recognition of referral authority, clear allocation of administrative responsibility within district governance structures, and alignment with planning, training, budgeting and policy frameworks to embed preventive governance functions within routine state practice.

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