

Table 2. UN information sources and their advantages/disadvantages for UN early warning and conflict management.

Information Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN Member States have a duty to provide UN with information - no financial cost to receive such information - specific information may not be available elsewhere - important to know and understand government policies and assumptions for UN policy development, contingency planning and action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national bias and self-interest - dominance of Western intelligence capabilities - incomplete and selective info. provided (on a "national interest" and "need to know" basis) - often only analyses are provided without raw data and vice-versa - restrictions may be placed on use and dissemination of information provided (e.g., to avoid compromising intelligence sources)
The Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wide-ranging - minimum costs - non-intrusive for UN - usually up-to-date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media bias; sensationalistic approach - danger that information is factually incorrect (due to rush deadlines and dependence on oral interviews) - Western (US) media dominance
UN Personnel on-site (UN Agencies, Information Centres and verification/peace-keeping missions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - first-hand observation, physical proximity - generally, more objective than above sources, but usually more cautious - direct communications with locals - possibility of meeting directly with protagonists - permits better targetting of desired information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may overextend capacity of the UN agencies/centres - may displease host state, which might accuse UN of spying - may compromise other functions (e.g., development work, UN publicity role) - is dependent on consent and cooperation of the host state and local authorities - requires caution to avoid accepting staged events - may be dangerous
NGOs and Individuals (e.g., humanitarian aid organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - generally less biased - inside sources and contacts possible - less sensitive to criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - members states may protest to UN (re. role of non-state actors in UN) - danger of lack of professionalism and accountability