About Every Casualty Worldwide

Every Casualty Worldwide (ECW, or Every Casualty for short: http://www.everycasualty.org) is an independent charitable non-governmental organisation based in London in the UK. Among its objects are to advance education and research in the practice of and procedures for recording the casualties of armed violence, in support of the principle that every life lost to armed violence should be promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged. To bring this about, Every Casualty is developing an improved understanding of the range of available casualty recording practices, along with guidance for their implementation. This has included original research into existing casualty recording work, which is contributing towards the identification and development of standards and good practice able to be implemented by a range of actors, including non-governmental organisations, states, and intergovernmental organisations. In addition to its research, ECW facilitates an international network of practitioners, the Casualty Recorders Network, and is at the forefront of integrating policy goals into existing policy frameworks at the national and international level.

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We welcome feedback and comments on our work. Please direct all enquiries about this study to standards@everycasualty.org

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8. Casualty recorders should consider using a rating scale that is open to review that grades the reliability of their sources.

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9. Casualty recorders should not reject any source that can give relevant information, even if the information given is minimal.
10. Casualty recorders should use multiple independent sources as much as possible for each entry they record.

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11. Casualty recorders must be aware of the importance of having a well-organised and consistent system for dealing with information, but also room for human judgment and flexibility in its application.

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14. Casualty recorders must have a process of corroboration in place to evaluate the data they have collected.
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19. Casualty recorders should divide up the components of a casualty recording process between different people to minimise human error and simplify the work.
20. Casualty recorders should consider having several staff members to review each other’s work before confirming an incident/individual.
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- Casualty recorders must set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria and explain their rationale for choosing them.
- Casualty recorders must choose definitions and categories appropriate to their context and the purpose of their initiative.
- Casualty recorders must determine a working set of information points to be gathered, categories, and definitions prior to starting their casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently throughout the casualty recording process.
- Casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as “uncertain” or “provisional” when sufficient levels of information are not available to make a clear decision.
- Casualty recorders should consider categorisation issues when building their database.

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- All casualty recorders must devise their data security policies according to the do no harm principle.
- A certain degree of transparency must be implemented regarding security protocols with identified key audiences.
- Casualty recorders are responsible at all times towards those whose data may put at risk.

Section 2 – Risk and the casualty recording process

29. Casualty recorders should undertake continuous risk assessment to ensure the security of the people they involve in their casualty recording activities.
30. Casualty recorders should analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data they set out to collect.
31. Casualty recorders should assess which kind of data to collect (or not) according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and according to the necessity to hold this data.
32. Casualty recorders must be aware that risks change and should identify what risks are attached to each phase of the casualty recording cycle.
33. Casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses. This must encompass all the purposes a casualty recorder will use the data for.
34. Casualty recorders should be aware of the activities of other providers of humanitarian relief and human rights support in their zone of operation to be able to redirect witnesses towards them (with issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial support etc.).

Section 3 – Standards for the safety of casualty recording staff

35. Casualty recorders should clearly define their relationship with staff members – be it through a written or oral contract – and should require confidentiality and exclusivity from them.
36. All casualty recording staff must have access to the measures put in place to guarantee their protection, and be fully aware of them and agree to them.
37. Casualty recorders must develop and provide security protocols to their staff.
38. Casualty recorders must provide their staff with security training as necessary.
39. Casualty recorders must guarantee a level of access to psychological support for their members of staff.

Section 4 – Standards for data security

40. Casualty recorders must approach data security in a holistic way, taking into account both the technological and human factors at play.
41. Casualty recorders should adopt a risk-based approach in order to design the data security measures that will be most appropriate to their own activity.

Planning

42. Casualty recorders must consider how they will store their data before they start collecting it.
43. Casualty recorders should provide for different levels of access to their data within the organisation on a need-to-know basis.
44. Casualty recorders must plan for the recovery of access to their data.
45. Casualty recorders should plan for the archiving of their data in case of the discontinuing of a project or its natural end.

46. Casualty recorders must clearly define their data security requirements when sharing data with other stakeholders.

47. Casualty recorders must consider how their activity will be affected by data protection and other laws and plan accordingly.

48. It is never possible to identify all potential threats. Casualty recorders must therefore plan for when their data security will be breached and their data compromised.

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49. Casualty recorders must thoroughly assess the tools they will be using to fit their data security purposes.

CHAPTER 5 – Publication and Sharing

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- Casualty recorders should be transparent about the data they publish.
- Casualty recorders hold the responsibility to eventually make their data available to the population affected by the violent context in which they operate.

Section 2 – Standards for publication and dissemination of data

50. Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful to inform their decisions on publication.

51. Casualty recorders should identify their reasons for not publishing certain data as well as for publishing what they do.

52. Casualty recorders should signal if/when the information they publish does not reach a level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed yet.

53. Casualty recorders should decide at which level of aggregation to publish their data according to their specific objectives, but with consideration given to the ultimate objective of the recognition of every casualty.

54. Casualty recorders should assess and identify the most effective ways of communicating their data.

55. Casualty recorders should always strive to publish their data in the native language of the region their activities are based on.

56. Casualty recorders should consider undertaking outreach activities to ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data.

Section 3 – Standards for sharing data with other professionals

57. Casualty recorders should determine the levels of detail in data that they will share with other actors on a case by case basis, based on having obtained informed consent to do so, the criteria of mitigating risk for their stakeholders, and of being in line with their objectives.

58. Casualty recorders should strive to share their data – in accordance with standard 57 – in the widest way possible in order to avoid duplicate work.

Selected Terminology
Introduction
WHY IS CASUALTY RECORDING IMPORTANT?
Casualty recording is a process of systematically and continuously attempting to document and record incident or individual level information about direct violent deaths from armed violence\(^1\). It is a crucial practice for the respect of human dignity, for the sake of surviving family members, and for the establishment of facts. It also brings additional benefits. Publicly accessible casualty records that are transparent, detailed, and reliable are critical towards providing accountability, and can positively contribute to post-conflict reconstruction and stability. Such records can humanise victims, reduce the space for dispute over numbers killed, help societies understand the true human costs of war, and support truth and reconciliation efforts. Research has shown that casualty recording is also valuable during conflict. Casualty data can feed into humanitarian response planning by helping to identify areas of risk and need, and contribute to the protection of civilians. Casualty records can also play a role in mechanisms that support increased compliance by conflict parties with the law and reductions in civilian harm from their actions.

WHY HAVE STANDARDS FOR CASUALTY RECORDING?
The profound social and other benefits of casualty recording, as briefly outlined above, remain only inconsistently realised across much of the world and for many of the victims of armed violence. A wide range of casualty recording practitioners\(^2\), as well as other stakeholders, have identified standards as a means to improve data quality and promote the more effective use of casualty recorders’ work\(^3\). *Standards for Casualty Recording* seeks to establish an agreed baseline for the practice of casualty recording that will also enable more actors to access, trust, use and/or share the data produced by casualty recorders.

These standards are not meant to be used as a strict operational guidance, but rather to encourage casualty recorders to consider key aspects of good practice and how these can be applied to their own casualty-recording projects. They aim to be implementable by all in the field and can be exceeded, while they should always be strived towards in the first instance. They have been created to help practitioners of casualty recording to adapt and, where relevant, improve the way they work, to move towards greater harmonisation of practice worldwide. They are designed to establish a standard of practice that can and should be applied across the field, whilst respecting its diversity of actors, methods and approaches. As well as assisting casualty recorders, these standards also aim to help make casualty data more straightforward to use and share.

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1. For the purpose of these standards armed violence is defined based on the Geneva Declaration definition: “the intentional use of force (actual or threatened) with arms or explosives, against a person, group, community, or state that undermines people-centred security and/or sustainable development” (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, *Global Burden of Armed Violence*, p.2) – definition itself based on the UN Secretary General definition of armed violence but excluding self-inflicted violence: the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, with arms, against oneself, another person, group, community or State that results in loss, injury, death and/or psychosocial harm to an individual or individuals and that can undermine a community’s, country’s or region’s security and development achievements and prospects (UNSG, 2009, *Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Violence*, A/64/228).
2. A casualty recording practitioner (or casualty recorder) is defined as an organisation, individual or group of individuals that undertake casualty recording as whole or part of their work.
3. The process followed to produce these standards is explained in more detail at the end of this introduction.
They provide end users with criteria that can help them to consider whether and how to use the data presented by different sources. The standards provide a means to allow discussions of casualty data to be grounded in assessments of the quality of the data, rather than in assessments of the political stance of those promoting (or criticising) particular casualty numbers.

In the process of developing these standards, it has become clear that practical aid in the form of tools and templates would support, and considerably strengthen, the effective implementation of the standards by casualty recorders. It is intended that this document will be complemented by a growing resource bank, designed to assist casualty recorders in developing and refining their practice and ensuring that it corresponds to the standards.

PRINCIPLES OF CASUALTY RECORDING
Casualty recording is a practice that, beyond all its specific benefits (outlined in the first paragraph of this introduction), is about restoring their humanity to those who have died and the loved ones who survive them. For this reason, casualty recording cannot exist without casualty recorders taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on affected populations and other stakeholders. By definition, casualty recording is a practice undertaken in difficult environments, if not always in a context of armed conflict. It can only be beneficial if casualty recorders take the responsibility to protect all those involved in the process of recording casualties, before anything else. Casualty recording is a practice that can often be misunderstood, doubted, and questioned, for lack of clear information on the way information is collected, curated, and analysed. For this reason it is a practice that benefits greatly from opening itself to scrutiny of its process. Ultimately, an inclusive and consistent process is conducive of higher levels of legitimacy and trust in the data produced, thus allowing for this data to provide and contribute to other justice and humanitarian mechanisms (see above) while maintaining the necessary levels of safety for anyone involved in casualty recording.

To support this vision of casualty recording, five core principles of casualty recording were agreed on through the process of developing these standards⁴. All the standards presented here are informed by these principles, and they should be upheld throughout the work of any project. Their application to particular aspects of practice is discussed in more detail at the beginning of each chapter. They are:

Do no harm
The do no harm principle is derived from medical ethics, and requires humanitarian organisations to minimise the harm they may inadvertently cause by being present in a particular context and providing a service. This principle applies to all organisations engaging with vulnerable people. For this reason, striving to cause no further harm to the living through their activities is the fundamental and overarching principle that all casualty recorders must uphold, and can override other principles listed here such as the application of transparency. It applies across all aspects of casualty recording, from collecting data, through devising security policies to sharing and publishing the data.

⁴ This process is explained in more details at the end of this introduction.
Transparency
Casualty recorders should be as transparent as possible about all aspects of their activities: from the details of their organisation through their methodology, definitions, exclusion and inclusion criteria, and their publication rationale, to how the security of their staff, witnesses and data is ensured (without disclosing security procedures as this would compromise safety). Transparency helps to foster trust among practitioners and between practitioners and end users, and encourages recognition of the legitimacy of data. Transparency also helps users understand how to use the data correctly based on awareness of its limits, helping to prevent the misinterpretation of the data. Transparency encourages scrutiny of a casualty recorder’s data, which can, in turn, help to improve data quality.

Inclusiveness
Casualty recorders will not necessarily be neutral, and some will be motivated by reasons which will be deemed to be politically partial. This should not invalidate their casualty recording work if they seek to uphold professional standards. Implementing the principle of inclusiveness within their recording methods is important for such organisations in particular. It means seeking to include all events and victims in their records without regard to whether this data supports an organisation’s cause, and striving to use terms and definitions in their data that apply equally to all. This is closely tied to transparency: it is important for casualty recorders to state clearly what data they exclude from their recording, if any, and why (including difficulties accessing information from communities opposed to an organisation’s political stance or community affiliation, for example).

Consistency
This principle applies mostly to the methodological aspect of a casualty recorder’s work, and in particular to their data collection and data processing. Casualty recorders operate in very different contexts and some situations will make it difficult to record all the information that a project may want to. Being consistent in the way they collect the information and process it is the minimum a casualty recorder can do to ensure that their data is usable and of the best possible quality. Where the consistency of their methodology is affected, for better or worse, due to changes in external circumstances or improvements to their methods, this should be indicated (see Transparency, above).

Responsibility
Responsibility refers to the need for casualty recorders to consider the rights and needs of different stakeholders affected by or involved in a project. An organisation can show responsibility in the protection of sources, staff and other people affected by the data collected, but can also exercise responsibility by being transparent about the fact that this is done. Applying the principles listed here throughout their practice is a marker of responsibility on the part of a casualty recorder, which will support their being trusted by those providing information and using their data.
BASIC POINTS OF INFORMATION FOR CASUALTY RECORDING

While each casualty recorder will set the scope of their project according to their goals and define their own categories to sort the information collected, a number of key points of information that all casualty recorders should collect have been identified5. Constituting a minimum standard for the field, these will be exceeded by many casualty recorders. They are:

- **Location of incident:** this can be recorded to different levels of detail, for example from town or village down to GPS coordinates. Casualty recorders should always strive to record at the highest level of detail that is available to them, for accuracy and comparison with other data.
- **Date or time of incident:** the highest level of available detail should again be recorded.
- **Source:** at a minimum, the type of source from which the record was created (a news report, official documents, crowdsourcing, witness testimony, etc.) should be recorded for internal use, with a record of (and possibly link to) the specific document. In cases of witness testimonies, the casualty recorder should make a careful assessment of the risks attached to recording the personal data of a witness and the means available to them to mitigate these risks.
- **Numbers killed:** this is the lowest level of detail about casualties required for the recording of an incident. When the minimum information about an individual victim (name, age, sex) is not available, recording this information constitutes the minimal acceptable level of casualty recording.
  - **Name:** this will often require close knowledge of local naming conventions, as well as the ability to accommodate different names for the same individual where necessary (nicknames, noms de guerre)
  - **Age:** this means the age of the person at the time of the incident – whether it is the time of death or in case of missing persons the time of disappearance (as the time of disappearance and time of death might differ). Date of birth may be recorded if available. If the exact age is unknown, a casualty recorder may choose to give an indication as to whether the person was a child or an adult (defining the age at which a person is considered an adult and making this definition available), or use additional broad categories, e.g. baby, infant, teenager, elder etc.
  - **Sex/gender:** how a victim was identified at the time of their death
- **Type of death:** how those involved in an incident died. Casualty recorders may approach this in different ways, for example by describing the weapons used, a medical cause of death, or a description of the incident.
- **Involved actors:** the groups and individuals that are reported to have been involved in the incident which incurred deaths, e.g. conflict parties present, groups or individuals that initiated or claimed responsibility for violent acts, and their level of involvement in the incident when it is possible to determine.

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5 Through research and discussions with practitioners and end users during the process of developing these standards.
IMPLEMENTING THESE STANDARDS AND LIMITATIONS
The standards in this document may not be implemented in the same way by casualty recorders working in different contexts, and not all of the standards have the same level of importance. Different degrees of necessity are expressed by the use of “must” and “should” in the standards. A standard written with the word “must” means that it is a requirement that applies to all casualty recorders, no matter their context of operation, methodology, or other circumstances. These represent core issues of methodology and safety. Standards written with the word “should” indicate standards that may only be achieved over time. Thus, casualty recorders may have to work towards their achievement, given for example the context (in particular the level of violence) within which they are operating or their resources (financial, technical, etc.). This does not mean that these standards should be disregarded, but rather that casualty recorders must show what they are doing to achieve them.

All the standards are meant to be implemented, and represent a baseline of requirements that practicing casualty recorders aspire to implement as soon as it is possible for them to do so. Casualty recorders work in a wide variety of contexts with considerable resource differentials. These factors affect the methodologies and procedures that organisations are able to use. The standards have sought to be inclusive of all practitioners, in order to further unify and improve the field. They recognise that some requirements may be harder to comply with for some practitioners, particularly under certain conditions such as during conflict, but ask casualty recorders to indicate their adherence to the standards in principle and aspiration to implement them fully as soon as possible.

HOW TO USE THESE STANDARDS
The Standards for Casualty Recording are divided into five chapters which address specific areas of a casualty recording activity. Each chapter is divided into thematic sections. The document comprises 58 numbered standards. In addition to these standards, the first section of each chapter presents how the principles detailed in this introduction apply more specifically to each area.

Casualty recording core areas and principles
Each standard is accompanied by an explanatory note. These notes are intended to capture the main elements that sustain and justify each standard. They outline the main challenges the standards are designed to tackle, the limitations and constraints, as well as the dilemmas they might pose to casualty recorders. They also cover some practical considerations as to their application. Despite having benefited from an extensive consultative process, these explanatory notes do not claim to be exhaustive, but aim rather to be illustrative. They do not constitute an operational manual on the application of the standards, or on conducting casualty recording activities. It is the responsibility of each casualty recorder to determine how to incorporate these standards into their own operational practice.

The standards have been organised to enable anyone inquiring into a specific topic to consult the most appropriate chapter. Nevertheless, it is recommended that this document be read in its entirety in order to properly understand the parameters of casualty recording and to be able to accurately assess the casualty data provided by a particular organisation.

It is likely that some actors will be able to establish standards at a higher level than those to be found here, owing to the expertise and capacities they possess and their approach to casualty recording work. In these cases, the higher standards should take precedence.

**HOW THESE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED**

The need and the will to harmonise practice within the field of casualty recording first emerged with clarity as a principal consensual outcome of the first global conference of the Casualty Recorders Network hosted in London by Every Casualty in 2011. Key parameters of good practice have since been investigated and systematised in a series of original research studies, beginning with Every Casualty’s comprehensive 2012 study of 40 casualty recording NGOs, and extending to more recent studies of state and UN practice. The findings and implications have been progressively shared with state, UN, and civil society representatives, particularly but not exclusively, connected to the work of the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Positive feedback from these interlocutors has clarified and strengthened perception of the central role that standards can play in the greater worldwide implementation of effective casualty recording and the uptake and usage of its outputs. Encouragement and support has been received from a wide range of stakeholders to move forward to the publication and broad dissemination of such standards.

The standards articulated in this document are the result of the combination of a two-year consultative phase initiated in 2013 and a review phase initiated in the first half of 2016. The first consultative phase has brought together a core group of practitioners and end users who decided, in a first plenary meeting in Bogota co-hosted by Every Casualty and CERAC, to form smaller working groups in which specialists would discuss

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6 Details about this process can be found below at the end of this introduction.
7 See http://www.everycasuality.org/practice/ipn
the content of the standards on a thematic basis. Building on the discussions and outputs of these working groups, which met between 2013 and 2015, a first draft of this document was reviewed by the original core group at a plenary meeting in September 2015 co-hosted by Every Casualty and Iraq Body Count in London. The review phase involved consultation with a wider range of stakeholders, selected for their expertise or particular interest in casualty recording. This review was designed to verify the extent to which the shared thinking and common perspectives reflected in these standards can command broad support among relevant actors in the international arena. Overall the process made intensive use of the expertise and commitment of the growing membership of the Casualty Recorders Network convened and facilitated by Every Casualty, in support of the principles contained in the Charter9 and Call of the Every Casualty Campaign10.

The consultative and drafting process has been managed and facilitated by Every Casualty (a programme of Oxford Research Group until September 2014, when it became the independent NGO, Every Casualty Worldwide). The work has been financially supported by grants to Every Casualty from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the zivik programme of the Institute of Foreign & Cultural Affairs with means of the German Foreign Ministry, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. These grants have covered staffing and administration costs of Every Casualty, as well as travel and accommodation expenses of some consultees for attendance at meetings. Participating organisations contributed the time of personnel contributing to the process, none of whom were paid any fee or honorarium by Every Casualty for their contributions.

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9 See http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign/charter
10 See http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign
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All participants in the working groups, plenary meetings, and review phase participated in a personal capacity, based on their experience and expertise of casualty data acquired within their agencies and organisations.

Participants to the first consultative phase are:

**Article 36:** Elizabeth Minor  
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**Documenta:** Igor Roginek, Slaven Raskovic  
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**Handicap International:** Rashmi Thapa  
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**Human Rights Watch:** James Ross  
**Independent technical consultant:** Ashraf Kheir  
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**International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):** Guilhem Ravier  
**International Criminal Court:** Christophe Billen

Participants to the review phase include:

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**Action on Armed Violence (AOAV):** Iain Overton  
**Harvard Humanitarian Initiative:** Rob Grace  
**HURIDOCS:** Bert Verstappen  
**Independent military consultant:** Brigadier General Richard Iron  
**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):** Francesca Marotta, Ahmed Motala, Sonia Muller-Rappard  
**The Sphere Project:** Cecilia Furtade  
**World Health Organisation (WHO):** Erin Kenney
Iraqi Mahdi Nawaf shows photographs of dead family members during a funeral ceremony in Ramadi, © Anja Niedringhaus/AP image.
Chapter 1

Organisational Transparency
Introduction

Transparency is essential to ensuring that casualty recorders and their organisations are trusted sources of information and that they manage their data responsibly. The sensitive and often political nature of the information casualty recorders collect makes transparency surrounding recording methods, operations, and affiliations especially critical. By being transparent about how, where and why they operate, casualty recording organisations can help ensure that their data is trusted for use by the media, international organisations, governments and the public at large.

Organisational transparency in casualty recording encompasses the provision of accessible and transparent information to stakeholders on methodology, operations, and political and funding affiliations. In this way transparency calls for a continuous dialogue between casualty recording organisations and their stakeholders.

This chapter sets out the standards for casualty recorders to use in ensuring that they can present their organisations and projects in the most transparent way desirable.

Implementation of these standards will ensure that recording organisations are accountable to their stakeholders, specifically the communities in which they work and the end users of their data, for the information they produce.

The first section of this chapter discusses how casualty recorders should balance casualty recording principles in the objective of demonstrating organisational transparency.

The second section outlines the five key standards for organisational transparency in casualty recording. These will help casualty recorders to develop and implement a culture of transparency within their organisations.

Section 1 – Principles behind organisational transparency standards

The following principles were identified as the most relevant to this area of practice and are therefore presented here in more detail:

Casualty recorders must find the right balance between the principles of transparency and do no harm.

Casualty recorders must consider how the effects of publishing information about their organisation – its structure, funders, methodology and other procedures – may endanger members of their staff or their sources. The principle of transparency must thus always be balanced with that of do no harm, since guaranteeing the safety of all stakeholders will always take precedence over the need to be transparent. These choices should be made as a result of an assessment by the casualty recorder.
Casualty recorders should however not use this principle to avoid disclosing information about their organisation. When there is a security reason that prevents a casualty recorder from providing the level of transparency about their organisation that would be required to – for example the nature of its sources – it is advisable for the casualty recorder to be open about it. Being transparent about the reasons that prevent certain information from being shared will generally be better practice than withholding this information without acknowledging the associated limitations.

Section 2 – Standards for organisational transparency

1. Casualty recorders must be transparent about their mission and motivations for recording.

An important aspect of building trust with stakeholders for casualty recorders is to present their organisation clearly, and in particular be clear about the objectives they have set for themselves and their rationale for recording events or individuals who died from armed violence. Only by making these objectives clear will it be possible for users and other partners to assess the validity of the data they are presented with. Before even looking at methodology, many actors will indeed want to evaluate the organisation itself. Transparency about those who started a casualty recording initiative and why they did so can go a long way towards confronting possible suspicions and distrust.

This is particularly relevant when it comes to the populations affected by violence. It is an important objective for casualty recorders to make their data available to affected communities. Being transparent about their organisations has proved highly important for casualty recorders in conveying legitimacy to affected populations.

Ultimately, being transparent about their mission and motivations for recording casualty data will help casualty recorders enhance the quality of their data, by encouraging higher levels of feedback and sharing with other stakeholders.

Such information should therefore be made publicly available – e.g. on an organisation’s website where it has one – and should be managed so that it is up-to-date, accurate and complete.

2. Casualty recorders should provide information about political or other affiliations which might compromise their commitment to being inclusive in their recording.

Inclusiveness is an overarching principle of casualty recording. The concept of inclusiveness in itself does not preclude organisations from having political motivations so long as these are not reflected in their choice of sources and methodology. In many conflicts, casualty recording initiatives may be born from the desire to hold certain
actors in the conflict to account. Regardless of any such affiliations, casualty recorders should have an inclusive methodology which encompasses all individuals killed no matter their political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious or gender affiliation, and no matter which party to a conflict is known or suspected to have killed them.

It is important to be open about what could be construed by others as a bias. All political and other affiliations of an organisation should therefore be openly declared. Doing so, together with being transparent about methodology and sources is the only way for casualty recorders to address perceptions of bias and partiality. Casualty recorders should be aware how being transparent about their political affiliations can impact their operations. Such affiliations can discourage some from sharing information with them and thus make it more difficult to effectively achieve inclusiveness. This should however not be a reason for a casualty recorder to avoid being transparent about its political affiliations. Casualty recorders should attempt to address such consequences not through hiding their affiliations, which would compromise their integrity, but through measures such as showing stakeholders their transparent and inclusive methodology, and noting at the point of publication that no one was deliberately excluded from the recording process, though self-exclusions did occur.

3. Casualty recorders must make information about their methodology transparent and publicly accessible.

Casualty recorders must describe the approach to their work in a clear and transparent methodology that is available to the public. This methodology should include details on the five areas of casualty recording as they are identified in the methodology section of these standards (see chapter 2): types of sources used, the collection process, source and information evaluation, corroboration process and quality control.

Additionally casualty recorders must publish definitions for the categories that comprise their database and explain their inclusion and exclusion criteria (see chapter 3). Together, these clarifications will allow stakeholders to identify how the data was gathered, how it is managed and curated; thus allowing them to assess how to engage with it.

For it to be valuable, this information must be monitored and updated so that it is accurate, up-to-date and complete at all times.

4. The organisational structure of casualty recording organisations should be made transparent and accessible to all stakeholders.

Casualty recorders should explain in clear language the structure of their organisation, including information on staff (to the extent that security permits), governance structure, programmes and policies. This information should be consistently updated to reflect accurate information and must be publicly and easily accessible. Such levels of transparency will help consolidate a casualty recorder’s legitimacy, by giving end users and other stakeholders the possibility to make their own assessments as to whether and how they want to use the data produced. Ultimately, such information and openness will help building higher levels of trust.
5. **Information on funders should be transparent and publicly accessible.**

Casualty recording organisations should publish information about their sources of funding. Information on funders should be transparent, made publicly available (preferably on the organisation’s website) and updated regularly. Different levels of transparency can be implemented depending on what limitations weigh on casualty recorders. In some cases, funders might require anonymity, or be too many to list them all – in the case of crowdfunding\(^1\) for example. In this case casualty recorders may prefer to indicate the type of sources of funding which allow them to practice – for example: government funding, private donations, consultancy fees, etc. If a casualty recorder engages in an activity that will generate profit at any point in their activity they should be transparent about that too.

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\(^{11}\) Crowdfunding is the practice of getting funding by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.
Families of people killed in the conflict in Kosovo providing information about their loved one, at a public presentation by the Humanitarian Law Center in Prizren, © Humanitarian Law Center
Chapter 2

Methodology
Introduction

At the core of all casualty recording practice is a practitioner’s methodology. The methodology is the collection of steps and rules that informs the way in which casualty recording is being done. Therefore a casualty recorder’s methodology is the foundation on which casualty recording is built. It is critical to sound practice that casualty recorders build their recording around a robust methodology. Focused on two approaches to casualty recording ((a) documentary source-based recording and (b) documentary source-based recording combined with on the ground investigation\textsuperscript{12}) the standards in this chapter are intended to ensure that a practitioner’s methodology is built around a defensible logic that can be replicated.

Standards on methodology prevent common methodological mistakes, give guidance on good practice and uphold the principles that should underpin every casualty recording activity. Methodology standards are also important for end users, allowing a shared understanding of the process of casualty recording and providing assurance that its results will be replicable.

These standards are designed to help casualty recorders create a sound methodology, which will help them to improve data quality, engage more end users and increase their potential for sharing data (which can further enhance data quality in turn). It is recognised that many casualty recorders start to record with a purpose that holds political significance, because of the context in which they operate and their relation to it. However, such organisations’ methodologies can still meet the standards set out in this document so long as they follow the underpinning principles and good practice elements laid out in the following.

This chapter presents the principles that underpin all casualty recording methodologies and examines the different areas of a casualty recording cycle in detail. The different areas outlined here are thus: collecting data, assessing and evaluating sources, designing a process of corroboration of the data, entering data, and conducting quality control of the data. These areas, which represent components of casualty recording, need not happen in a specific order and may happen simultaneously depending on how data is being recorded. Each casualty recorder may proceed in different ways. However these standards will outline good practice that is applicable to guide all projects.

The first section of this chapter will outline the principles that underpin a casualty recording methodology and how their application impacts practice.

The second section will focus particularly on how to deal with the sources that will inform a casualty recording activity.

The third section will focus on the treatment of data, its collection, corroboration and codification into a database.

Section 1 – Principles behind methodology standards in casualty recording

The following principles were identified as the most relevant to this area of practice and are therefore presented here in more detail:

Casualty recorders must be transparent about the methodology they use in order to enhance confidence in their data and to allow end users and other stakeholders to make an informed judgement on how they can use this data.

A clearly and transparently presented methodology enables other practitioners, stakeholders and the general public to evaluate how a casualty recorder has assembled their data, how consistently they have applied definitions, and how they have reached the conclusions they have reached. Although many casualty recorders are motivated by political or human rights causes, a robust and transparent methodology allows others to assess whether the data itself is biased or partial, what limitations it is subject to, and make decisions on whether and how to use the data themselves based on this.

A methodology should explain, in as much detail as possible:

- The types of sources used, being as specific as possible about the particular sources that have been used – e.g. official documents, media reports for documentary sources or eyewitnesses, officials, humanitarian workers for human sources – and laying out whether a particular type of source has either been particularly relied on or excluded, and if so why.
- How sources were evaluated, considering any possible biases from the sources themselves as well as from the way they were evaluated, and addressing how, if such biases existed, they have been mitigated.
- How information was gathered. For documentary sources that can mean how the source was accessed or whether official documents were accessed with official sanction or not. For people this means explaining how interviews were conducted (e.g. face to face or over the phone), by whom (e.g. a researcher from within the organisation, through intermediaries such as a church or an aid organisation) and according to which method (e.g. structured or informal interviews. If structured, publishing the questionnaire used can be an option if it is safe to do so).
- The steps taken to ensure that information is accurate and how ambiguous accounts or incidents where sources disagree are handled.
- How the casualty recorder checks its work to minimise human and inputting errors, inconsistencies and possible biases.

Casualty recorders must show consistency in the way they record casualties.

For casualty data to be trustworthy and usable, casualty recorders must strive to collect it in a consistent way. This is done by defining a clear scope from the
In casualty recording, sources of information can mean people (or organisations containing people) as well as the documentary evidence (narratives or documentation) that those people or organisations produce.

6. All casualty recorders must have clear means of dealing with both documentary evidence and witness statements.

Documentary evidence and witness statements are inseparable components of all source material, even if sometimes a casualty recorder will not have the same access to people as it will to documentary evidence (this is particularly true of casualty recording conducted remotely, from outside the region or country affected by violence).
Both kinds of sources overlap as all useful documentary evidence must originate from some identifiable person or organisation, and no person or organisation can be considered a useful source unless the information they hold can be converted into documentary evidence that can be stored and analysed.

A casualty recorder may use only one kind. This does not mean that the other kind should be completely disregarded. Casualty recording initiatives are evolving, so, for example, while witnesses might not be accessible at first, this could change over time. Casualty recorders therefore should have a clear understanding of how they will deal with both types of sources. This can mean storing sources of information that cannot be dealt with in a first instance in a separate database, or setting up procedures to integrate new information from new sources into the current casualty recording methodology.

Assessing and evaluating sources

7. Casualty recorders should be aware of all the potential sources that are available to them in a given context and of the limitations that are attached to these.

It is recommended that casualty recorders map all the different sources they could be using in the context they are operating in and identify the value each has. As indicated above, this mapping will require looking into both types of sources: witness statements and documentary evidence.

Casualty recorders, even those who can obtain extensive documentary evidence, should consider if, when, and how, to supplement that data with the direct testimony of individuals who have witnessed the fatal incident directly, or who have a particularly close relationship to the victim and knowledge of the circumstances of his or her death.

Thus, casualty recorders should scope or review all documentary evidence in a first phase and later on use witness testimonies and on-the-ground investigation to fill in the gaps that appeared from the available documents. By accommodating both – whenever this is possible and safe – casualty recorders can achieve higher levels of accuracy in the data they record.

Casualty recorders should consider different categories of documentary evidence such as:

- **Official reports and data**: these include all incident-based reports produced by state agencies (e.g. the police, the military and, to the extent that it is made available, intelligence services; hospitals, medico-legal institutions and courts), or by inter-governmental organisations (such as the ICMP or some UN agencies). These incident-based reports are most of the time documents produced by specific agencies as part of their own bureaucratic procedures. Such agencies also sometimes publish integrative reports in which aggregated casualty data over a given area or period of time is provided.

- **Civil society reports and data**: these include press and media reports, NGO reports and other information from civil society – in particular human rights organisations,
victims and veterans organisations, and religious communities and leaders – as well as social media.

- **Images**, videos and audio recordings: these are used increasingly to document violations and will be a useful source for casualty recorders to consider, although they should be aware that such media can, like others, be manipulated and cannot necessarily be relied upon on their own.

They should consider different categories in terms of people and organisations such as:

- **Official sources**: these include state agencies (the police, the military and intelligence, hospitals, etc.) and the individuals that work for them. Information can be obtained both through official and unofficial relationships with these individuals.
- **Civil society sources**: these include press and media organisations (and personal relationships with trusted journalists, which can give access to their primary data, including unpublished details) and both local and international NGOs – assessing the potential for cooperation and data sharing with those.
- **Individuals**: these are all other individuals who are not connected to any organisation. They are family members of a victim, witnesses to an incident, or citizens with specific local information to add.

**8. Casualty recorders should consider using a rating scale that grades the reliability of their sources and is open to review.**

To assess the reliability of a source (whether an institution or individual) and the credibility of a particular piece of documentary evidence – or set of documents – casualty recorders should consider designing and using a formal rating scale. This practice is particularly useful to make source assessment more systematic and strengthen the whole process of casualty recording.

It is important to note however that the assessment of sources and the credibility of information they provide is a process whose results are never fixed – a source that was deemed reliable may become unreliable, while information that was considered credible may turn out to be false upon collection of additional information. For this reason casualty recorders should code separately the reliability of a source and the credibility of the information provided by that source.

**Choosing sources**

**9. Casualty recorders should not reject any source that can give relevant information, even if the information given is minimal.**

When mapping out the different sources available to inform its activity, a casualty recorder should not exclude sources because they give limited levels of information. Any relevant information should be included in the casualty recording activity, even if it is minimal, as it might be critical later to make sense of further information, or to be the base on which more investigations will be conducted.

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13 Images can include photographs or satellite imagery.
10. Casualty recorders should use multiple independent sources as much as possible for each entry they record.

Using multiple independent sources is beneficial and this is true whichever approach to casualty recording a recorder is using, not just for those using a combination of document-based and on-the-ground investigation. Thus, a recorder using only media reports will benefit from collecting as many reports as possible on the same incident, because these may have different primary sources or provide different details. All types of sources can potentially be unreliable and have biases, from government sources to NGOs to eyewitnesses. Using multiple independent sources can help identify and correct these biases and give a more complete picture of an incident. This can also help resolve contradictions between different documentary evidence or identify fabrication by sources.

Section 3 – Data

11. Casualty recorders must be aware of the importance of having a well-organised and consistent system for dealing with information, but also room for human judgment and flexibility in its application.

In any methodology used, a casualty recorder should strive to record data consistently through set procedures. However, this system should always provide for flexibility in the recording process so as to allow human judgement to weigh in, when there might be doubts as to how to record the information identified.

Collecting data

12. Casualty recorders must consider systematically recording specific points of information that will be beneficial for ensuring the consistency and accuracy of the information collected.

Forms can assist casualty recorders in the consistent collection of specific points of information, increasing the consistency and credibility of the information collected. This applies to both documentary evidence and witness statements.

Having a form in which to enter the information disseminated throughout a document is a good way to make sure that data is later processed accurately. It also makes it easier for different members of staff to review different entries in the effort to reduce human error.

Forms can be particularly useful when it comes to on-the-ground investigation. Failure to gain all the information that is needed on the first encounter could lead to costly additional work or the loss of the information if it is impossible to find or contact the informant again. Consistently filling in forms either directly after an interview, or during, will help reduce this risk. The use of forms during witness interviews should however be restricted within the limits of what a casualty recorder has assessed as safe (see
chapter 4 on maintaining security of staff and other stakeholders in casualty recording. Forms need not be rigid questionnaires but should rather be documents that guide and remind the recorder of all the important categories of information he needs to record. Having forms that are too strict can restrict the conducting of an interview and even prevent recorders from obtaining the information needed. Forms should rather act as guidance.

13. Casualty recorders should store every relevant document.

Casualty recorders may be presented with information that they find themselves unable to analyse or fully analyse straight away for a variety or reasons. Therefore, casualty recorders should prepare to provide means to store this information as it may otherwise be lost or inaccessible at a later stage, when the means and capacity to undertake the necessary analysis are available.

The decision to record such data, or store such documents should be subject to security considerations as highlighted in chapter 4 of these standards. As a general rule it is safest for casualty recorders to only collect information that they intend to use and require (see in particular standards 30 and 31).

Corroborating data

Different aspects of an incident need to be evaluated in casualty recording. While the fact of a death can be easy to confirm – if there is hospital record of a body in the morgue for example – other information relating to the death of this person will not be easily confirmed in the same way. Confirming the identity of the dead, whether they belonged to an armed group or the civilian population, and how or by whom they were killed, will prove more difficult and will require casualty recorders to go through a process of investigation and corroboration during which they will evaluate the credibility of the data they have collected from multiple sources until they consider this satisfactory. While all aspects of an event will not all be “confirmed” at first, this will be possible progressively as new information is gathered. That such data is not fully confirmed does not mean that it is not credible or that it is false; the open-ended process of corroboration provides reassurance to end users of casualty data that a significant degree of trust can be placed in it.

The term “process of corroboration” has been used here over “process of verification”. Particularly in jurisprudential usage, for data to be labelled “verified” requires the involvement of institutional actors such as courts of justice and particular standards of proof. Unless they themselves are part of these very exacting processes (or use specific data resulting from them), casualty recorders cannot claim such levels of verification for the often very large sets of data they collect. However, they can provide data that is credible, and corroborated to a level that makes it useful to end users.
14. Casualty recorders must have a process of corroboration in place to evaluate the data they have collected.

A process of corroboration will typically include two steps: the first step will be to assess the internal coherence of the information provided; the second to crosscheck the information with information provided by other sources.

When the connections between the arguments in a written or oral piece of information are logically assembled and make the information meaningful in a real world context, this is when a piece of information can be assessed as being internally coherent. Internal coherence implies, among other things, that the provided information is free of contradictions and avoids logical and similar fallacies which are damaging to the credibility of the information provided.

Crosschecking is the attempt to confirm information with other information from independent sources. It seeks to confirm one piece of information by seeking to obtain information on the same topic from multiple other sources which are independent from one another. This includes different sources of the same type (for example three news articles from three different news outlets by different authors using different primary sources) but also different types of sources (for example corroboration through the comparison of video, media reports, and witness testimonies).

The corroboration process can have a number of outcomes: it may confirm the original piece of information; lead to the assessment that no definitive conclusion is possible as different perspectives emerge and appear equally possible; or lead to a decision to reject the initial piece of information.

This evaluation work is to be done in parallel with the evaluation of sources (see standard 8 of this chapter) in order to attain a satisfactory level of corroboration.

15. Casualty recorders should seek to corroborate their data through the use of multiple independent sources.

In the process of corroborating data, using multiple independent sources will facilitate better assessment of the information itself. Casualty recorders should corroborate information by crosschecking other reports and documents for a same incident or death, as well as base this assessment on contextual information and sometimes on their own knowledge of established facts about the dynamics of violence or conflict.

Having information from multiple independent sources for one event is generally recommended to facilitate the corroboration process (see the advantages of multiple independent sources in standard 10 of this chapter) however where it is impossible to obtain, a single source considered particularly reliable, and the information it provides being deemed credible, may be accepted. It is recommended for casualty recorders to flag these entries in order to be transparent about what the limitations of the data might be. For this reason casualty recorders should consider flagging single sourced entries in public materials to allow their readers and users of the data to make their own judgments about how these cases should be considered.
16. Casualty recorders must plan how they will deal with disagreement between sources.

When using multiple sources to corroborate data, casualty recorders will need means of dealing with differing information about the same event or victim within a set of source documents.

Casualty recorders should resolve disagreements depending on their access to sources and other factors. Solutions include:

- **Prioritising certain sources**: this links back to source evaluation. Casualty recorders can choose to report the information provided by the source they consider the most reliable out of the disagreeing sources.

- **Reporting disagreement**: this can be done for example through the use of numerical ranges where there are discrepancies in the number of deaths reported for one event, allowing the reporting of the lowest to the highest number of casualties.

- **Using categories that avoid or defer resolution of the disagreement**: this would include terms such as "unknown" or "unconfirmed" or "uncorroborated".

- **Keeping cases pending until there is more information**: this allows casualty recorders to not lose track of an event but provide for the emergence of new information which could help clarify details and so reach the recorder’s minimum standards confirmation.

- **Dialogue with sources**: this will not be possible in all cases and must be subjected to standards of safety both for staff and witnesses.

In any case, even in the event of source disagreement meaning that it is not possible to confirm an incident or certain aspects of it straight away, casualty recorders should always keep it in their database. Whether or not to publish uncorroborated data is a different question which should not influence the recording and retention of this data (see chapter 6 on publication).

**Entering data**

17. Casualty recorders should establish standard operational procedures to ensure the consistent entry of data into their database.

To increase the levels of accuracy of the data collected, casualty recorders should enter data into their database consistently to avoid human error and ensure that all entries have the same validity. Developing standard operational procedures and codifying the process of data entry will contribute to achieving this consistency. These can take the shape of a codebook – a single document detailing the structure, contents and layout of the database, directions as to how to use or fill it in, as well as the definitions for the different categories used. Such a document will ensure that data is entered in a consistent way but also that data entry is not subject to turnover of staff – ensuring that any new member of staff can enter data accurately and consistently using the precise guidance of this document.

Such guidelines should include clear indications on avoiding the duplication of events at the point of data entry and devise steps for the recorder to make sure that they do not create a new entry for an event that already exists in the database and should be modified to include the new information.
18. All data entries should remain open so as to incorporate new information.

Casualty recorders should keep their records provisional and open to further input, allowing for the addition of new information and corroboration. By keeping records open, casualty recorders allow for their database to be constantly improved in both its quality and extent.

To ensure that additional information on existing entries is properly dealt with and managed, it is recommended, when applicable and achievable, that casualty recorders use version control software, which allows them to track the changes that are being made to the database (and who is making these changes) at all times, and which can allow them to revert to older versions of the database if necessary. This is also good practice in keeping track of the information and its sources, which in turn can be useful to keep the chain of custody (i.e. the chronology of the custody or location of a document) for legal processes.

Quality control

19. Casualty recorders should divide up the components of a casualty recording process between different people to minimise human error and simplify the work.

The process of ensuring data quality is easier if it is made a multi-stage process, ideally involving different people at different stages. By breaking up a complex task into manageable steps the work is simplified and this helps minimise human error. At each stage, the work of the previous stage should be reviewed by other team members and mistakes or disputes in interpretation of information can be identified and resolved.

20. Casualty recorders should consider having several staff members to review each other’s work before confirming an incident/individual.

Staff should strive not to distort, lose or discard information that is, or may be, casualty-related. To achieve greater data coding quality (since coding results may differ slightly depending on who is coding), it is good practice to have several persons reviewing each other’s work before it is confirmed, to make sure no information from the sources has been overlooked, or given too high (or too low) a priority.

21. Casualty recorders must provide for ways to avoid duplicate recording.

Collecting information from independent sources about the same event, while crucial to establishing the veracity of one incident, must not lead to the duplication of findings, thereby inadvertently augmenting the total number of recorded casualties or incidents. At regular intervals in time, or once the collection process has ended, it is important to identify which pieces of collected information describe the same event in order not to double-count them. This is typically called a deduplication process that, depending on the number of pieces of information collected, can be done either completely manually or with the assistance of computer algorithms.
Improvised Explosive Device found in Eastern Baghdad, 2005.
Introduction

The terminology used by casualty recorders and the way they categorise information is an integral part of a casualty recorder’s methodology, particularly concerning the collection of information and data entry (as defined and presented in chapter 2 section 3 of these standards). For this reason, categorisation and definitions of these categories chosen by a casualty recorder are a crucial aspect of a casualty recording activity and must meet standardised minimum requirements.

Clear definitions and categories are a key aspect of good practice in casualty recording. More specifically, the choice of definitions and their consistent application are crucial to ensuring the quality of data produced by a casualty recording initiative. This is particularly important because of the nature of and circumstances in which the information is collected: definitions and categories will have political and possibly legal significance. In turn, having rigorous definitions and categories and being transparent about them will enhance understanding of casualty recording data by end users.

This chapter aims at providing casualty recorders with a framework for how to choose relevant definitions for their casualty-recording project as well as how to make decisions regarding categorisation and how to employ these categories adequately.

The first section of this chapter presents the underlying principles that must guide the choice and use of definitions and categories by casualty recorders.

The second section focuses on how to choose definitions and categories when setting up a casualty recording project and what should guide casualty recorders when making these decisions.

The third section explores the specific case of unknown and missing persons, and how casualty recorders should treat the information they receive about such individuals.

Section 1 – Principles underpinning definitions and categorisation

The following principles were identified as the most relevant to this area of practice and are therefore presented here in more detail:

**Casualty recorders should choose inclusive definitions and categories**

Casualty recorders should choose definitions and categories that do not directly or indirectly imply the support for any side in the conflict or situation of armed violence. This means that they should avoid using terms or categories that may show bias to a particular ideology, group, organisation, individual or entity. According to this principle a casualty recorder should as much as possible use existing terms and definitions that are already well elaborated in various fields such as international law, national law or academic sources.
The choice made by casualty recorders towards who should be included in their scope of work also contributes to showing their inclusivity. Inclusion criteria should be as wide as possible – ideally including all casualties of armed violence – in a given context. It will not always be possible – or desirable depending on the purpose a casualty recorder has set for itself – to have such a wide scope however, in which case casualty recorders need to be transparent about this through the publication of inclusion and exclusion criteria, stating their reasons – be they strategic or purely pragmatic – for these choices.

**Casualty recorders should be transparent about the definitions and categories they use and the sources they are drawn from.**

As a key aspect of transparency, casualty recorders should state clearly what definitions they are using and what the sources for these definitions are if they are taken from other fields such as international law, national law or academic sources. They should also publish the basis on which they categorise individuals and incidents and as much as possible explain the reasons why these decisions were made, especially in cases which are potentially controversial or uncertain.

To make sure that other stakeholders in the casualty recording process, and that those who engage with the casualty data are presented with such information, casualty recorders should make this material public. These should also be made clear in all internal documents related to their methodology so that all staff members understand these definitions and categories, and so that it can be shared upon request with specific partners.

**Casualty recorders should apply consistently the definitions and categories they have set for themselves through the casualty recording process.**

Definitions and categories chosen by casualty recorders should be applied consistently and accurately to ensure an adequate level of quality of the data recorded. Consistency in the recording process through a standardised application of definitions and categories provide for sounder data which will be considered as more reliable by potential users.

In cases that are potentially controversial, casualty recorders should be able to note – at least internally – why individuals were classified in a certain way. This is applicable to cases which are difficult to categorise because of a lack of information and which should not be treated in the same way as fully corroborated information.

Definitions and categories may change over time because of the changing nature of the violence monitored (e.g. from a context of violence towards protesters in which the concept of “combatant” is inadequate as it relates specifically to the laws of armed conflict, to the characterisation of this violence in a
Section 2 – Choice and application of definitions and categories for casualty recording

22. Casualty recorders must set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria and explain their rationale for choosing them.

The inclusion/exclusion criterion refers to the scope of the casualty recording project, meaning who and what is included or excluded in the casualty recording initiative. This includes which individuals and groups are being recorded (e.g. civilians only, both fighters and civilians), how they died (e.g. by a certain kind of weapon, or as a result of a certain type of violence such as an air attack, etc.) what time period and what geographic regions are being covered.

Casualty recorders should be as specific as possible with their inclusion and exclusion criteria and include: the time span that their recording covers; the geographical area/areas; the specific conflict they are covering (sometimes there are multiple conflicts in the same country or region); the actors in the conflict; whether they are recording all deaths, or only the deaths of civilians or combatants; whether they are recording all or only some sections of the population (based on religious, ethnic or political lines for example); and whether they are recording deaths from all types of violence or those caused by specific weapons.

23. Casualty recorders must choose definitions and categories appropriate to their context and the purpose of their initiative.

Choosing definitions and categories that are appropriate to the purpose of a casualty recording project, and which will be understood by those casualty recorders as well as end users of their data is key when choosing and formulating definitions and categories. Definitions and categories will be heavily influenced by the purpose of the casualty recording project; depending on whether a casualty recorder aims to highlight violations in law, or simply raise awareness of an issue, or help provide compensation to victims’ families, the categories used will vary and their definitions will be taken from different sources. Similarly, the type of violence which will be recorded through the casualty recording work, and its nature (whether international or national) will have a direct impact on the definitions and categories used. Deciding how to define the different categories into which the raw data will be placed is therefore a key step in

non-international armed conflict, which would potentially call for the use of the “combatant” concept). The precise time of this change and how categories and definitions have subsequently been modified should be noted and an explanation given. As it is sometimes difficult to determine such change precisely, and as casualty recorders may not wish to be involved in debates around legal concepts, an alternative would be to choose a more generic category which is not so constrained by international humanitarian law – e.g. “fighter”.

the designing of a casualty recording initiative. Where a casualty recorder also wants to fulfil a more specific purpose – such as the monitoring of vulnerable groups (e.g. women and children) – the choice of definitions must be done so that they will correspond to the requirements of this specific purpose.

It is also important to give consideration to what definitions and categories can be supported by the sources accessible when in the data collection phase. This means, for example, that when recording casualties primarily using reports lacking in detail, the limitations that this imposes might make it difficult to apply certain categorisations (for example regarding participation in fighting) that require more information. This is not to say that choosing such categories should be entirely discouraged. In general it is advised to choose definitions and categories which will maximise the credibility and impact of casualty data with the widest possible audience.

If the purpose of casualty recording is to highlight through casualty data the impact of the use of a certain kind of weapon, or the impact of conflict on a certain kind of victim (e.g. men, women or children) it is recommended to consult and apply other internationally recognised sources for definitions and categories.

It is also recommended for casualty recorders to consult relevant legal experts when developing these categories so that any applicable legal concepts or categories are used as accurately as possible. This will also help casualty recorders understand and know the human rights or similar broader contexts within which they operate and which their activity will impact.

24. Casualty recorders must determine a working set of information points to be gathered, categories, and definitions prior to starting their casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently throughout the casualty recording process.

Determining which categories and definitions will be used at the beginning of the casualty recording project, and training all those who are working on recording casualties on how to apply them, is key to ensuring consistency and accuracy of the casualty data produced. The consistent application of definitions in categorising the raw data is important to apply at every stage of a casualty recorder’s methodology, especially at data entry point, and quality control. Having different staff members inputting and reviewing how the data has been categorised and how definitions have been applied will be very helpful to achieving this goal (see more on data entry and quality control in chapter 2, section 3).

Casualty recording is an activity often undertaken in very volatile contexts, which means that over time the definitions and categories created at the beginning of the activity will not fit a casualty recorders’ purpose or the context anymore. Definitions and categories can and should change if a contextual analysis calls for it. In this case, casualty recorders should make this information publicly available, explaining why definitions and/or categories have changed and specifying the exact date when the change was enacted.
25. Casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as "uncertain" or "provisional" when sufficient levels of information are not available to make a clear decision.

Categories such as those referring to combat status are often the subject of uncertainty, especially if the source information is incomplete or vague about the details of an individual’s involvement or their membership of a known armed group. Uncertainty is not limited to this point of information, and determining whether an individual is to be categorised as an adult or a child can prove equally problematic. One way for casualty recorders to deal with this is to create internal procedures or forums for the discussion of difficult cases.

It is important not to disregard incomplete entries where some data points are unconfirmed, as it may be possible to confirm details at a later stage, and they are important to piecing together a fuller picture of the impact of violence. For this reason, it is good practice for dealing with these cases to tag them (or specific details within them) as "uncertain" or "unconfirmed" or to group these cases in a separate list. This allows the retention of information and sources of information on these cases for the filling in of gaps as new information arises, including when conflict ends and further investigation can be undertaken.

26. Casualty recorders must consider categorisation issues when building their database.

A casualty recording database should be built in such a way as to avoid excluding the inputting of information that a casualty recorder has collected, which can occur if the database’s structure is too exacting or rigid for the data obtained. For example, a database where the “age” category can only be filled in with a specific number of years may exclude the categorisation of many individuals whose exact age is not known for lack of information. Deploying a range of more flexible choices (e.g. a choice between adult, child or unknown as well as the opportunity to enter a specific age) can be useful in order to capture the maximum amount of data whilst still facilitating useful analysis. While it is valuable to be specific wherever possible, casualty recorders should be wary of making it harder to record the information they have, as this could hinder their analysis and ability to make useful database queries later on.

One approach for casualty recorders to deal with this problem is to build their databases around the most general level of useful detail for each data point, while still providing for the capacity to record finer levels of detail within that category. For example, a casualty recorder can create categories for recording the kind of weapon used in an incident. The first level might yield categories such as “explosive weapons” or “small arms” or “chemical weapons”, etc. If a recorder knew the specific kind of weapon used then they could add this information into sub-categories: for example, if an individual was killed by a barrel bomb, it could go into a subcategory of “explosive weapons”.

27. Casualty recorders should record the deaths of those individuals who are not identified, to the level of detail possible.

In many cases of armed conflict, human remains including entire bodies can be discovered either during or after the conflict. If a person’s body remains unidentified because no proper identification could be carried out by competent authorities, then he or she is classified as unidentified body. Despite not having specific identification such as the name or date of birth of the person, casualty recorders can still record information pertaining to the location where they died, the time and the cause if this is possible to find out, as these other variables can provide ways of distinguishing between those casualties for whom personal information is not (or not immediately) available. Any information, or more generally the reported circumstances of disappearance and information on the last time the person was seen, that could help the appropriate entity to identify the body is useful to record and can be used in the future. It is very important to record this information to keep track of the overall count of victims in the conflict and because it could be useful for further investigation and potential identification of the person at a later stage, possibly after conflict.

Not knowing the identity of a person will impact other points of information in the database. It may be difficult to get more details on the specific circumstances of the death. However, recording the individual and leaving categories blank or “unknown” will not impact upon the other data returned by the database and will be helpful to further investigations when the context allows it.

28. Casualty recorders should consult existing databases or compile a separate list themselves of missing persons in order to help identify whether they are casualties or not.

Missing persons are those whose families are without news of them or are reported missing, until they are located and their well-being or death is established. Some organisations, such as the organisations of the Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent or the International Commission on Missing Persons, work on recording those people who are reported missing. Casualty recorders can also sometimes keep their own database of missing persons as they become known to them.

Casualty recording initiatives can be very helpful in the search for missing persons as they can contribute to the establishment of comprehensive lists of all persons missing in a given situation.

Often, to confirm that a missing person is in fact dead, further investigation by the competent authorities, supported if necessary by specific organisations will be needed.
Woman stands inside the shell of her home in Sri Lanka
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Chapter 4

Security
Introduction

This chapter underlines the importance that casualty recorders acknowledge and prepare to fulfil their responsibility to guarantee the security of all stakeholders involved in their work (staff, affected populations and witnesses). Implementation of these standards supports data quality and data legitimacy by ensuring that the data is acquired and kept in a proper manner.

Considering the various levels of security and resources available to casualty recorders, these standards recommend adopting an assessment and evaluation approach to the design of a security policy. Using this, casualty recorders will be able to adapt their approach in the most appropriate way depending on the constraints and threats they face. As a general principle, casualty recorders should curb their objectives or activities rather than their standards of security where changes in conditions (such as increased violence) compel them to re-evaluate the safety of the work they are carrying out.

These security standards aim to raise casualty recorders’ awareness of the importance of security planning and assessment prior to beginning their activities. If casualty recorders start collecting data without having planned and devised the adequate security provisions, the security of their data would be put at risk and with it the safety of those who provided information, as well as members of staff, and possibly the wider community in which they operate. Like any other aspect of a casualty recording initiative, planning for security prior to the beginning of activities is necessary for its success. In the case of planning for data security, casualty recorders should consider developing this along with their methodology.

In addition to ensuring that casualty recorders do not put people at risk through their activity, implementation of these standards will facilitate the confidence required for higher levels of data sharing, in turn supporting the production through collaboration of harmonised and thus more authoritative data. Being able to guarantee sufficient levels of security is key to building trust between organisations and encouraging cooperation as well as sharing across the field.

The first section in this chapter presents the underlying principles that must guide the design of any security policy for casualty recorders.

The second section looks into the inherent risk attached to holding information about individuals and how risk evolves throughout the casualty recording cycle. It gives recommendation on how to assess this risk.

The third section outlines standards for the protection of casualty recording staff and focuses on ways for casualty recorders to mitigate the risk for them, as no casualty recording should be done at the expense of staff.

The fourth section focuses more specifically on data security, looking into key aspects of planning and implementation, making sure that, despite operating in different contexts and with different purposes, casualty recorders will have asked all the necessary questions and answered them before starting their casualty recording activity.
In addition to these standards, casualty recorders are advised to look into the ICRC Protection Standards, in particular chapter 1 (The overarching principles in protection work) and chapter 6 (Managing sensitive protection information).

**Section 1 – Principles behind security standards in casualty recording**

The following principles were identified as the most relevant to this area of practice and are therefore presented here in more detail:

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**All casualty recorders must devise their data security policies according to the do no harm principle.**

All decisions made regarding security should be made in alignment with the principle to do no harm. It is a fundamental principle that must be at the heart of the casualty recording activity as a whole, but even more so regarding security.

This principle should also provide the rationale for basing any security decision on periodic, systematic risk assessments which are necessary to identify emerging threats and prepare for their potential consequences.

**A certain degree of transparency must be implemented regarding security protocols with identified key audiences.**

Transparency must be circumscribed when it comes to security measures. Casualty recorders should not share their entire security framework with the public as a rule, but should consider how being transparent with specific audiences can be beneficial to their activities.

For this reason, casualty recorders should be transparent with their staff on the risks they are taking and the means that exist within the organisation to mitigate these risks. With their sources, they should be transparent on what kind of use will be made of the information they contribute and what will be shared or revealed concerning their personal data. With the rest of the community and the general public transparency should come through providing access to the data, as affected populations hold the right to be informed. That right must be balanced at all times with the right to privacy of persons the data concerns.

More specifically regarding data security, casualty recorders may encourage end users to independently evaluate the efficacy of their security measures in order to encourage more engagement with their data, and so may disclose the kind of tools they are using. Casualty recorders should be prepared to potentially share some of their protocols – e.g. what is the protocol if security has been breached and data may be compromised – in order to build trust with those with whom they want to share and exchange data.
Casualty recorders are responsible at all times towards those their data may put at risk.

Because of the nature of the data collected by casualty recorders, they have a constant responsibility to protect their sources, staff and other directly affected stakeholders. This principle is closely linked to the do no harm principle and such responsibility is implemented by applying the principle of transparency.

Casualty recorders must be responsible at all times towards those who might be affected by their data. This means they are responsible for devising security procedures and informing all relevant stakeholders of the risks they are taking, as well as the means that exist to mitigate these risks. It also means that, when becoming aware of a vulnerability in their security framework, casualty recorders must be transparent and inform in the best way possible those who might be affected by this change. Although some may think communicating a breach in a protocol will damage their legitimacy, this concern should never be put before the security of stakeholders. In case of data being compromised, casualty recorders are responsible for communicating in the most effective way possible with those who are put at risk.

Section 2 – Risk and the casualty recording process

29. Casualty recorders should undertake continuous risk assessment to ensure the security of the people they involve in their casualty recording activities.

All security frameworks must be grounded in continuous assessment of the situation in which casualty recording activities are undertaken. This assessment must be made taking into account the purpose that a casualty recorder has set for their work, and must, in turn, inform modifications or changes to this purpose. Such assessments are a good way for casualty recorders to map the different risks and threats attached to their activity, including legal threats, which are often overlooked.

Especially in the case of casualty recording as it is done in times of conflict, casualty recorders must provide for a highly volatile situation in which security conditions will be subject to change. This is why it is important that mechanisms be put in place to make sure that an assessment is made and policies developed accordingly to allow casualty recorders to react, for example to an attack on their data, and have procedures in place to keep data secure should this happen (e.g. deciding how to degrade the data so it cannot be used by the attacker).

Whilst guaranteeing the safety of those who contribute data and the security of their information, casualty recorders should not forget to consider how the behaviour of
their informants may affect them and their activity – for example by bringing the attention of antagonistic actors to the activities of a casualty recording organisation and thus putting its staff and data at risk – and make sure that this is included in their assessments.

30. Casualty recorders should analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data they set out to collect.

Before looking at ways to secure their data, casualty recorders must consider what impact the nature of this data itself might have on all those who were involved in the process of collecting it and those who will be using it. This means that casualty recorders must assess the risk attached to the action of collecting certain kinds of data – information on ethnicity for example.

Casualty recorders must be aware of the security risks and threats attached to the data they collect by reviewing those carefully prior to starting collecting it. Always recording more identifying data may not be an appropriate strategy to adopt, as it could lead to an increased threat to the source if not properly managed for example. It is important for casualty recorders to assess the level of detail they should gather with the do no harm principle in mind, to make sure that this data will not have harmful effects on those who contributed it. Ultimately, data processing must be in line with a casualty recorder’s stated objectives. Thus, it is always necessary to ensure that not more data, in particular personal data, is processed than is necessary to attain those objectives.

Recording a testimony anonymously can still put a witness at risk. It is often easy, despite anonymity, to identify the witness from the information s/he gave. In such cases, an anonymous record will not provide protection. An assessment of the risk attached to an anonymous testimony must be made before a decision is taken to document it, and anonymity should not be considered an automatically effective way of protecting a witness. Rather, it is a way to respect their desire for anonymity.

Beyond data being collected through the recording of direct testimonies, casualty recorders must also consider such issues of risk and privacy when collecting and re-publishing information that they have found in the public domain.

31. Casualty recorders should assess which kind of data to collect (or not) according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and according to the necessity to hold this data.

As more detailed data is collected, the level of protection for this data has to increase accordingly. Where it is not possible for casualty recorders to provide adequate protection, certain data should not be collected, as this would risk endangering those who collected the information, those who provided it, and other persons.

This assessment is particularly important when it comes to the collection of sensitive data on the basis of which people are discriminated against (e.g. religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, kinship). Such data can be very important in a post-conflict setting.
when truth and reconciliation efforts start being put into place, and much of the data which can be crucial to making these efforts successful might be irretrievably lost if they are not collected at the point of first collection, which might be during conflict. There may therefore be strong incentives for casualty recorders to collect highly sensitive information. However a casualty recorder must collect only the data that is needed for its specific objectives and that it has the resources and procedures to ensure the adequate protection of in the given context – if not, their objectives in terms of the information to be collected must be revised.

Because of the risks attached to sensitive data – such as manipulation or the data being used to discriminate against people, and even criminal acts such as extortion or even extrajudicial killings – it calls for heightened precautions in the decision made to collect it or not, and a high level of scrutiny with regard to whether collecting such data is necessary or proportional to the stated objectives or purposes of data processing.

Although, ultimately, the decision over which pieces of information to collect or not rests with casualty recorders, these standards indicate a baseline which aims at harmonising datasets across the field and facilitating data exchange between casualty recorders and end users. The minimum pieces of information these standards recommend casualty recorders to collect include: numbers killed, location of the incident, date of the incident, source, and whenever available name, age, sex, type of death and involved actors (see the introduction to these standards for more details on these points of information).

32. Casualty recorders must be aware that risks change and should identify what risks are attached to each phase of the casualty recording cycle.

As outlined in chapter 2 of these standards, there are five identified components in a casualty recording methodology: collection of information, evaluation of sources, corroboration, data entry, and internal quality control.

As casualty recorders progress through these different components – in no particular order – the data they collect will not necessarily be subject to the same vulnerabilities, and will therefore require different levels or kinds of attention. For example, a general pattern that can be identified with casualty recorders who do on the ground investigation is the decrease of the risk attached to the data as it goes from collection point, when smaller amounts of data are at higher risk, to storage, when security levels increase but the risk is attached to larger amounts of data. Risk varies between methodologies, as crowdsourced casualty recording, for example, will require casualty recorders to deal with large amounts of information that are not necessarily related to their organisation’s purpose and that they do not want to hold. This means casualty recorders working with a crowdsourcing14 methodology must look into managing unwanted levels of data that carry potential risks to their sources.

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14 Crowdsourcing allows individuals to report an incident that they have witnessed or been the victim of. This is made possible by sharing text, photo or video reports via email or any other chosen cellular network or internet-based platform.
33. Casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses. This must encompass all the purposes a casualty recorder will use the data for.

Whenever recording a testimony – whether this testimony is given anonymously or not – casualty recorders must make clear to the witness how they will use their information, and obtain consent for each specific purpose they plan to use the data for (e.g. storing it on their database, publishing it in a report, use it for advocacy purposes, or transferring it to a court). The casualty recorder also needs to make clear to the witness what risks are attached to them giving a testimony. While it is crucial and necessary for the casualty recorder to make sure that the witness has understood what kind of risks are attached to her/him giving a testimony, casualty recorders should respect a witness’ willingness to take such risks. When acquiring informed consent from their witnesses, casualty recorders must also inform them about their right to withdraw this consent at any time, except once the data has already been put to use (e.g. once data has been transferred to a court, after obtaining consent to do so, it cannot be withdrawn, except as stipulated under law).

Informed consent procedures, which may include written, signed forms – dependent on risk assessment – must be devised by all casualty recorders.

A comprehensive list of all the possible uses that could be made of data gathered through casualty recording would be very long. Thus, these standards advise casualty recorders to create their own informed consent procedure in view of their objectives. The informed consent procedure should provide for all the specific uses a casualty recorder plans to make of the data accumulated, even if some uses might not be immediate and might be conditional to certain developments in terms of funding or the conflict situation. Such purposes could include: immediate or future publication, the handing over of data to a transitional justice mechanism or a court, or the sharing of data with humanitarian or human rights actors. It is recommended that all planned uses of the data are included in the original form, as it may prove difficult to find a witness again to ask for their consent for a new use of their data. In any case, casualty recording relying on direct testimonies requires that witnesses have given free, informed and express consent on all the kinds of uses that will be made of their data.

Obtaining informed consent from witnesses is part of a casualty recorder’s ethics and best practice. To make sure that informed consent has been properly acquired, casualty recorders will need to ensure that consent is given by an individual who understands fully what s/he commits to. A general recommendation in that regard will be to either draft the document in the witness’ native language, or to at least have an interpreter in the room to go through the document with the witness and make sure that s/he understands all the different uses that will be made of her/his testimony. In this process it will also be important to make clear to the witness how and when they can still withdraw this consent.

\[15\] In this case it is useful to specify whether the testimony could be transferred to prosecution or defense, or both.
34. Casualty recorders should be aware of the activities of other providers of humanitarian relief and human rights support in their zone of operation, to be able to redirect witnesses towards them (with issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial support etc.).

In their work with witnesses and the affected populations, casualty recorders may be confronted with queries regarding needs that these people will have. Although a casualty recorder is not expected to provide for such needs, they should play a role as much as possible in acting as a point of liaison to help people access further help after they have contributed information.

To do so casualty recorders should try to map the presence of other service providers (from the state, international organisations and civil society) in their region or area, and the relevant international organisations, and seek to build linkages with those as far as possible in order to establish referral pathways. In this respect UNOCHA can be a useful source as it conducts such mappings in crisis regions.

Section 3 – Standards for the safety of casualty recording staff

35. Casualty recorders should clearly define their relationship with staff members – be it through a written or oral contract – and should require confidentiality and exclusivity from them.

In all circumstances, casualty recorders must clearly define the relationship that ties them with all members of their staff. This is why a contract will always be necessary, to establish what the rights of the staff are, what kind of protection they can expect, but also to define how they should manage the sensitive knowledge they will acquire through their dealing with the casualty data. Contractual ties also create a legal chain of responsibility both for the employer and the employee.

The choice to define this relationship through a written contract or to keep it as an oral binding contract requires a risk assessment. By choosing to hold a written contract, casualty recorders should consider the possibility that the document might put the contractor at risk by acknowledging the relationship which exists between them. Thus if a casualty recorder does not have the capacity to keep such documents secure, it should decide against drawing them in the first place. An oral contract can be equally binding and ensure the physical safety of members of staff. However, it may not be sufficient to secure the confidentiality of sensitive personal data.

Similarly, casualty recorders should ensure the safety of their sources by clearly establishing the uses its members of staff are allowed to make of the data. To this end, it will

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16 Considering a number of casualty recorders use crowdsourcing to gather information, it is important to address the question of the definition of the term “staff”. For the purpose of these standards, the status of “staff” does not apply to any individual volunteering information to a casualty recorder – especially in the framework of a crowdsourcing initiative. “Staff member/staff” designates all those undertaking casualty recording activities on behalf of and duly designated by an organisation, including paid workers, volunteers, consultants and so on.
be very important to include a clause of confidentiality in the contract, but also an exclusivity clause to prevent past employees from disclosing the data through other channels than the casualty recorder. This will be an important issue to consider especially when working with journalists.

36. All casualty recording staff must have access to the measures put in place to guarantee their protection, and be fully aware of them and agree to them.

The minimum requirement to ensure the security of staff is to make all information about security measures easily accessible to them. This information should be made readily available, in order for staff members to be fully aware of it and to have the capacity to agree to it. While some casualty recorders will have the necessary resources to provide safety nets for their employees (such as insurance), it is often the case that resources are scarce. This should not however impact casualty recording staff’s security. Adequately informing staff is a non-resource intensive way of guaranteeing this minimum level of security. It is reinforced through implementation of standards 37 and 38.

37. Casualty recorders must develop and provide security protocols to their staff.

All casualty recorders must produce security protocols. These will be adapted to each casualty recorder given available resources. A security protocol should outline different levels of security, planning from the best up to the worst possible security context to operate in. The casualty recorder should determine at which point security conditions are so deteriorated that it should cancel all operations to guarantee the security of all staff and witnesses. The protocol should also determine who will be responsible for establishing a change in the level of security, incurring changes in the way activities are undertaken. Finally, the protocol should include provisions for each security level on how activities might be affected. It should for example set how movement of staff might be affected at each level or what kind of data should be collected at each level (bearing in mind what is outlined in standard 31).

When applicable, casualty recorders should apply the principle of equitability in designing their protocols, considering that international and local staff will not be provided with the same possibilities to prevent them from being harmed. Despite a more limited array of choices for ensuring the security of local staff (who cannot be relocated abroad for example), it is important to provide solutions. These might include identifying a safe haven where staff and their immediate family could be relocated. This relocation might be at the regional level, or at national level if it is deemed more secure.

38. Casualty recorders must provide their staff with security training as necessary.

Staff training is the minimum requirement that all casualty recorders must undertake. Such training includes not only physical security but also all other aspects of a casualty
recorder’s security, in particular data security. No matter the level of resources, all employees of a casualty recorder must be trained in the objectives of the organisation and in its security policies. Awareness of the implications of casualty recording work is the baseline for ensuring the security both of staff members and witnesses.

Ideally, training should be given in person; however this will not prove necessary for all casualty recorders, depending on the nature of their activity. In any case, it will always be possible to undertake a minimum level of training through remote means – including for example via the phone, or via Skype.

39. Casualty recorders must guarantee a level of access to psychological support for their members of staff.

An important requirement for casualty recorders is to provide a form of psychological support through preparing their staff for the kind of information and visuals they will have to deal with so that it does not come as a shock to them. Further, they should institute internal regular debriefings – ideally based on an outline developed by qualified psychologists – between all members of staff, so that they can share their feelings on the work they are undertaking – both positive and negative. These two measures only require time, and no additional resources, and will guarantee that staff members receive a minimum level of psychological protection, as well as guarantee the identification of a psychological threat for a staff member, which in turn would become a risk for the casualty recording activities.

It is recommended for casualty recorders to put additional measures in place to guarantee their employees’ psychological safety. Such measures may include: creating partnerships with other NGOs which might specialise in providing psychological support (these partnerships should always be formalised through the signature of a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations providing for strict confidentiality and professional qualifications), or even provide access to psychological support internally by hiring specialised staff.

Section 4 – Standards for data security

40. Casualty recorders must approach data security in a holistic way, taking into account both the technological and human factors at play.

No security framework can be complete if it only includes provisions for the technological aspect of data protection. The human factor plays a very important part in protecting sensitive data and is sometimes the most vulnerable aspect of a security framework. While technology and its rapid evolution offer casualty recorders with an increasing number of resources to access more and better tools constantly, these tools will prove effective only if they are used in tandem with other measures offsetting human risk. Thus, the best technology in use to protect data can easily be overcome if the people who control it are attacked, prove disloyal and breach their confidentiality clause, or simply prove careless with their hardware or basic security measures such as passwords.
For this reason, these standards aim to stress how important it is for casualty recorders to identify, assess, and implement holistic security measures that will protect casualty data from all threats.

41. Casualty recorders should adopt a risk-based approach in order to design the data security measures that will be most appropriate to their own activity.

Casualty recording is undertaken for various purposes and can be done by using different methodologies. As such no one security framework will adequately fit all the different forms a casualty recording activity could take. This is why a risk-based approach will allow casualty recorders to design the security framework that corresponds best to their own organisation.

A risk-based approach calls for an evaluation of the unique risks associated with the particular environment that the casualty recorder operates in. Each casualty recorder is best placed to assess the risk their data is subject to, and to know the political environment they operate in. For this reason they will be able to determine the risks that need to be offset and mitigated better than any external provider. Indeed, casualty recorders should be aware that external security firms may tend to be overly risk averse and design heavy policies which might be impossible for those with few resources to sustain, or which might be impractical to carry out in some specific contexts. Additionally, the rapid and constant evolution of technology and the changing political environments within which casualty recorders work call for a flexible approach which will prevent their data security from becoming obsolete – for this reason it is advised that casualty recorders keep themselves informed of the evolutions in the field.17

Only a risk-based approach will yield the most appropriate, tailored, and light framework that all casualty recorders need to have in place. In terms of security, casualty recorders should use frameworks which are unique to them rather than trying to replicate what others have done, as each context and its associated risks will be slightly different. They may however find useful inspiration in the practice of other casualty recorders which have been established longer and which they can learn from.

Planning

42. Casualty recorders must consider how they will store their data before they start collecting it.

Prior to collecting data, casualty recorders must provide for a secure and appropriate storage system. The most important elements to consider relate to the mode of storage, and whether it is better to store data online or offline.

Many options are available to practitioners today and all should be assessed for the benefits and risks that are attached to them. The context of operation of a casualty

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17 The Responsible Data Forum is an example of such a source of information.
recorder will have great impact on the choice eventually made, but is not the only factor to consider. For example, casualty recorders operating in environments with unreliable network connection will not find online storage appropriate, however, online storage will not always be a better option, regardless of network accessibility. Other important issues when choosing a storage facility and method also include the legal and security impact of the storage method, the consequences in terms of training of staff, and the effect on the casualty recording work in general. For example, resorting to the use of a cloud-based online storage asks the question of access to sensitive data by a third party who is not part of the casualty recording activity – the provider; alternatively, using intricate pieces of technology for storage means providing more training to the staff to make sure they are able to deal with the technology, thus ensuring that the data is regularly and adequately backed up.

43. Casualty recorders should provide for different levels of access to their data within the organisation on a need-to-know basis.

As stated in advocating for a holistic approach to data security (see standard 40), the human factor can sometimes be underestimated by organisations trying to implement data security. However, a human action can easily undo many layers of technological security. Passwords can be communicated and anyone with access to a database can provide third parties with such access. While those with access could prove disloyal to the organisation by willingly communicating information to threatening actors, they can also be coerced (not only by force but also by law) into providing such information. For this reason the question of access is a vital one. In general, it is advised for only a limited number of persons to have full access to the data. Creating levels of access reinforces data security as it diminishes the amount of vulnerable entry points within the organisation. Access must be granted based on the need-to-know principle. This principle demands that access to certain levels of information should not be granted unless the person has a specific need to know in order to properly conduct their duties.

It is of course important to create good levels of protection through other technologies preventing hacking and cyber infiltration, and only a combination of access policies and use of technology will yield a satisfactory level of data security.

44. Casualty recorders must plan for the recovery of access to their data.

The previous standard asks for full access to be limited to a small number of persons (ideally one or two at most). This means that casualty recorders need to provide for a protocol to deal with the disappearance, passing away or disengagement of these chosen persons, the risk being if they do not that all the data will be lost because no one has any way of retrieving the necessary accreditations (IDs, passwords or other) to access it.

The responsibility to design such protocol rests with the person with the highest level of access to the data and the disappearance of whom would jeopardise the whole casualty recording initiative. This person must create a special security protocol which will provide for transfer of responsibilities and necessary passwords and other accreditations.
This provision is particularly relevant to casualty recorders operating in sensitive contexts, but also applies to casualty recorders undertaking their activity remotely, from a country deemed secure.

45. Casualty recorders should plan for the archiving of their data in case of the discontinuing of a project or its natural end.

Projects can stop for different reasons: because of a worsening of the operational environment, or because the necessary funds to continue the activity could not be secured, among other possibilities. Projects will also come to a natural end: this is true of casualty-recording projects too. Casualty recorders should therefore plan and decide what will become of the data once the project stops. In general practice, data may be either destroyed or archived.

Most casualty recording initiatives however go beyond simply giving a picture of harm at a set point in time and provide data that can be useful in the longer term for reconciliation, memorialisation or other efforts: destroying entire databases will therefore seldom be appropriate in casualty recording. However, some parts of a database may need to be destroyed where data is non-essential or where security risks are attached to it. This is true of paper records for example, which should be destroyed as soon as the data contained has been digitised and backed up. It will also be true of digital data, in particular in the case of crowdsourcing, where security may demand the destruction of data that could endanger sources or is not essential to the casualty recording work.

Given that the destruction of entire databases will not generally apply to casualty recording, casualty recorders should look into archiving solutions to properly conserve their data. Archiving solutions should, as much as possible, be assessed and decided on prior to starting a casualty recording project. Casualty recorders need to make sure that archived data will be afforded at least the same level of protection that they were providing, as archiving will often involve handing data over to another entity. With this in mind, casualty recorders should consider that they are not obliged to hand over everything they have – for example they might decide that it is safer to not hand over information on sources.

46. Casualty recorders must clearly define their data security requirements when sharing data with other stakeholders.

Although sharing is also dealt with in another part of these standards (see chapter 6), there is a specific data security aspect that needs to be considered by all casualty recorders when deciding to share data. Experience has shown that some end users or donors do not apply a high enough security level to the data with which they were entrusted, thus putting sources and staff members at risk. It is therefore very important for casualty recorders to consider their rationale for sharing data with other organisations, even with donors and other trusted actors.
To this end, casualty recorders should make clear in writing what they expect from partner organisations in terms of the security that should accompany the data and the level of confidentiality it should be subject to. If the partner organisation cannot guarantee these, the casualty recorder should reconsider sharing the data.

47. Casualty recorders must consider how their activity will be affected by data protection and other laws and plan accordingly.

All casualty recorders operate within a territory that is subjected to specific laws. The first thing a casualty recorder should do in that regard is identify all the jurisdictions its activity can potentially fall under – it can be the jurisdiction in which the organisation is registered, the jurisdiction in which the violence is monitored (which can be different from the location where the organisation is registered), the jurisdiction in which the database is stored, etc.

It is also important to identify all the ways the law, specifically related to data protection and data privacy, may affect a casualty recorder’s activity. It can affect the data itself (which may be seized), the organisation (which could potentially be shut down) or individuals working for the organisation (who could be sent to jail).

The law itself is subject to evolutions, particularly when it comes to data privacy. It is a casualty recorder’s responsibility to be aware of and monitor how the law affects their activity in general, their data and those who contributed it more specifically, if their security is to be adequate.

48. It is never possible to identify all potential threats. Casualty recorders must therefore plan for when their data security will be breached and their data compromised.

Despite all the planning that can be done prior to starting a casualty recording activity, the rapid evolution of technological threats and the changing political environments in which casualty recorders work mean that it will be impossible to prevent a successful attack in all cases.

It is therefore important that casualty recorders put in place specific measures and protocols which will be applied when their data security is breached and the data potentially compromised. Contingency planning is vital and will also be key in building trust with partners by showing that every eventuality has been planned for.

Such contingency plans should include a way to notify those directly concerned by a breach of security, to warn them about potential repercussions for their safety. When possible this means informing all sources affected by the breach. Where this is impossible (because a casualty recorder is unable to contact these people again), all available directly affected stakeholders such as staff and partner organisations (with whom data is being exchanged) must be informed. These plans should also include
provisions for quickly resetting all technological security such as passwords and other encryptions to limit the damage done by the intruder; in the case of harm done by an individual, contingency plans should provide for the identification of the person, their dismissal, and further actions (potentially legal) if warranted.

**Implementing**

49. Casualty recorders must thoroughly assess the tools they will be using to fit their data security purposes.

After thorough planning and assessment, casualty recorders may start their activity and implement their security framework. The planning phase should already include some assessment of the tools that could be used – this is particularly true of storage and archive options. Other tools used on a daily basis – such as communication tools and other software – need to be chosen carefully and updated constantly. Updating hardware and software, although it might not seem crucial, is the first element of implementing a comprehensive data security framework.
Srebrenica memorial listing the names of the dead © Elizabeth Minor.
Chapter 5

Publication and Sharing
Introduction

This chapter sets out standards for casualty recorders to use in developing policies for the publication, dissemination, and sharing of data that has been gathered through their work. These standards intend to support casualty recorders in demonstrating their credibility and that of the content they publish, and should help to enable their data to be used to benefit violence-affected populations in the greatest possible number of ways.

One of the main purposes of publication should be to provide a public record of all those who have died through armed violence. While there are many purposes for publishing data generated as a result of casualty recording, consideration should always be given to targeting the affected population. The effort to feed back information to violence-affected populations is a core value of casualty recording.

Publication of casualty recording data by NGOs and others should also be used as a tool to encourage and enable states to undertake casualty recording themselves and properly recognise every casualty of armed violence, as the Every Casualty Campaign proposes is their responsibility, by demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of casualty recording and contributing data to the public record that states should themselves be gathering. Global efforts to enshrine casualty recording in state practice are supported by effective and harmonised practice in existing casualty recording, and can be particularly supported by casualty recorders publishing their data according to the standards asked of states, providing the means for civil society to advocate for the implementation of transparent casualty-recording mechanisms.

One purpose of developing publication standards is the benefit that arises from the harmonisation of data publication within global casualty recording practice. Adherence to publication standards designed to meet a variety of end user needs facilitates the efficient use of the data collected by a wide variety of actors with very different purposes and objectives. These range from providing humanitarian aid to the most affected populations in an effective and efficient way, to supporting global advocacy efforts for collective measures and analysing the dynamics of violence and identifying patterns in conflict.

The first section of this chapter outlines the principles that must guide casualty recorders when creating their publication policy.

The second section outlines the standards that should guide casualty recorders regarding the publication and dissemination of their data to the affected population. They point to the most important aspects of publication which casualty recorders will need to consider when developing their policy.

The third section outlines standards to guide the efficient sharing of data with other professionals in the fields of human rights and humanitarian aid. These will help casualty recorders in harmonising the way they present their data so that it can easily be shared between these actors dealing with affected populations.
Section 1 – Principles behind publishing casualty recording data

The following principles were identified as the most relevant to this area of practice and are therefore presented here in more detail:

Casualty recorders should be transparent about the data they publish.

Casualty recorders should provide their audiences with explanations of the information they are publishing. In addition to the information that will be available through the publication of a transparent methodology, casualty recorders should explain the rationale for the level of aggregation chosen for the data's presentation, and for the choice of categories used in the published data. A casualty recorder may decide not to publish some of the data they have collected for reasons ranging from security — ensuring that what is published does not endanger the lives of any source, staff or other stakeholder — to efficacy — certain analytical purposes being better served through higher levels of aggregation. They should also present what they consider to be the limits of the data alongside any information published (as well as in their methodology) — what they were not able to confirm or even collect, how they evaluated the reliability of their sources and the credibility of the information coded (see chapter 2), and any factor which might have influenced the quality of the data. By doing so casualty recorders will reduce the risk of misinterpretation and misuse of their data.

Casualty recorders should also provide appropriate and effective mechanisms for the correction of their data, including from submissions made by audiences following publication. As a major target audience, the affected populations offer the potential to enhance the data greatly if they are given the appropriate means to flag and make corrections to the data published. All casualty-recording initiatives will find it difficult to ensure that every single casualty is included when collecting their data. By providing the affected populations with the means to understand and access the data, they can then reach back to the casualty recorder with new information, thus contributing to enhancing the quality and comprehensiveness of the data.

Casualty recorders hold the responsibility to eventually make their data available to the population affected by the violent context in which they operate.

Although casualty recorders might at first publish for a different audience according to their objectives, they should seek to eventually make their data available to those who are directly concerned by this information — sometimes also referred to as a process of ‘restitution’. This means finding ways for this data to reach the affected population — which might come at a later stage for casualty recorders undertaking their activities remotely — but also sharing the data
Section 2 – Standards for publication and dissemination of data

50. Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful, to inform their decisions on publication.

Casualty data can help to inform or support many institutional activities, be they humanitarian or related to policy-making. But casualty data can above all have public value and casualty recorders should reflect on and assess how their data can serve the public interest.

This consideration will weigh on a casualty recorder’s decision on the frequency with which they will publish data, the form under which they will publish it (e.g. as a searchable database, through reports, mapping, etc.), and the level of aggregation of the data itself. These standards do not recommend any specific answer to all these questions. It will always be the casualty recorder who will need to assess the impact of their data and the various uses it can serve.

51. Casualty recorders should identify their reasons for not publishing certain data as well as for publishing what they do.

When designing their publication policies, casualty recorders should not only consider and address the question of what they will publish, but they should also consider their rationale for not publishing some of the data they have gathered.
The principle of do no harm requires casualty recorders to do a risk and threat assessment regarding the data they will publish in order to prevent harmful consequences for the affected population – and in particular to the effects it can have on vulnerable groups such as women and children – or their own casualty recording work/staff.

For example, sensitive data regarding religion or ethnicity might be collected but not published during conflict under circumstances where it is judged that it could fuel tensions and put many at risk. However, such data may be useful and indeed necessary post-conflict to efforts of truth and reconciliation. In any case, all recorded data, the risks attached to it and the way a casualty recorder intends to use (or not use) it need to be made clear to the source at the point of collection and due informed consent obtained if such data is ever to be published (see standards 30, 31, 33).

52. Casualty recorders must signal if/when the information they publish does not reach a level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed yet.

It is possible that some casualty recorders decide to publish all events they record – as long as it is safe to do so – without having been able to corroborate the information that all events are based on. In some circumstances it may be extremely difficult to determine the facts, given conflicting accounts or because of missing information, until a later time, prompting the casualty recorder to decide to publish what is known about an event in the interim. In these circumstances, it is important that casualty recorders flag events/individuals whose data is not confirmed to the level that they can usually provide so that users know how to treat such cases. This applies to casualty recorders who use ranges when they are unable to resolve conflicting information and thus provide end users with minimum and maximum estimates in the number of casualties for an event, for example. It is crucial that important elements of a practitioner’s methodology which impact the uses that can be made of their data is always reflected in the various ways they choose to publish their data – be it on a website, or in reports or broadcasts, etc.

53. Casualty recorders should decide at which level of aggregation to publish their data according to their specific objectives, but with consideration given to the ultimate objective of the recognition of every casualty.

Though the ultimate objective of casualty recording should be the individual, public recognition of every casualty, these standards do not specify a given level of disaggregation at which data should always be published. Casualty recorders start their activities for a very wide array of reasons and to serve very different objectives. No one level of aggregation can be recommended to best serve all these objectives. Casualty recorders may not always wish to publish fully disaggregated data (i.e. data given at an incident or individual level) for strategic reasons. For example, if the primary purpose of a recorder’s data is to serve advocacy objectives, they may decide that data will be more powerful and will yield more results if it is published as trends to draw attention to patterns of harm rather than as incidents. However, to serve memorialisation efforts it
will be of the utmost importance to have the highest level of disaggregation possible in publication to allow for the element of recognition and respect that such initiatives aim to fulfil to be achieved.

Casualty recorders should decide which level of aggregation will best serve the purpose and objective of a specific publication, while respecting security standards as outlined in chapter 4 of these standards.

If collected, it is recommended that casualty recorders safeguard disaggregated data even if they decide not to publish it. This will allow future corroboration efforts should new information become available, sharing with suitable third party organisations, or future publication should the organisation’s objective or strategy change.

54. Casualty recorders should assess and identify the most effective ways of communicating their data.

Considering the responsibility casualty recorders hold to publish their data and make it available to the affected population, they should assess what the best way will be to do this in the context in which they operate.

This will be better done if it involves those who are the subject of this publication. Consulting victims' associations or civil society organisations involved with affected populations may be a useful practice. If possible, interacting directly with the population to assess their expectations is useful.

Accessibility of the technical means through which the data will be communicated is important to consider. While setting up a website and sharing the data through this medium will generally be a useful practice in order to reach a variety of audience groups nationally and internationally, this will not be the only solution needed to effectively reach affected populations in many cases. Internet connectivity can be an issue in certain regions where infrastructure is poor or where many individuals do not have access to internet-connected devices. On the other hand, in some conflict settings connectivity may be high through widespread use of smartphones, and web platforms might be the most reliable way to reach a large proportion of the population. Where connectivity is bad, casualty recorders should consider alternatives such as publishing in print and devising a way to distribute the paper copies; or setting up a mobile phone communication channel (which works with any kind of mobile phone – not just smartphones); or using the radio. This last option might be particularly useful when the target audience has high levels of illiteracy.

55. Casualty recorders should always strive to publish their data in the native language of the region their activities are based on.

This choice should result from an evaluation of which language(s) are the least problematic and most accessible for publication, given a casualty recorder’s target audiences and the need to consider communication to the affected population.
For the latter objective, in most cases this will be the native language(s) of the region/country of which the casualties are recorded. Deciding to publish primarily in English or French might unhelpfully indicate the imposition of an outside agenda to the target group. On the other hand, a careful assessment of the political implications which accompany the choice of a language – and its consequences for inclusiveness – should be considered as they might indicate that choosing an ‘international’ language might be more helpful.

Publication in English is something which all casualty recorders must consider. Although it is not specifically recommended that it should be the primary language of publication (except where it is the native language), publication in English may support other objectives. If a purpose of the casualty recorder is to attract international attention for example, or undertake any form of advocacy at the international level, having the data published in English (as an internationally spoken language) will be necessary.

Comprehensively publishing data both in the native language and in English might be resource intensive and thus not chosen by many casualty recorders. However, they should consider translating the framework for recording data into English (i.e. the categories used in their database/tables) as it might in any case make sharing easier and allow response to queries by members of the international community who are interested in the work undertaken.

56. Casualty recorders should consider undertaking outreach activities to ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data.

In order to effectively reach target audiences including the affected population, it is highly likely that casualty recorders will have to undertake outreach activities further to the act of publication, for example with the media and through working with other organisations such as victims’ associations to reach affected populations. Such activities will allow casualty recorders to not only ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data, but to design context-appropriate mechanisms for these target audiences to provide feedback on the data itself and on the ways to make it more useful to them.

Outreach activities can be costly and limited resources may prevent casualty recorders from undertaking outreach effectively. However, it is recommended that casualty recorders consider the development of outreach strategies, even if they cannot be implemented straight away. The development of such strategies will help casualty recorders to clarify what they hope to and might in fact be able to achieve through their activities. Furthermore, the opportunity to implement them may present itself at a later stage (if for example an organisation’s budget increases) in which case it should be seized.
Section 3 – Standards for sharing data with other professionals

57. Casualty recorders should determine the levels of detail in data that they will share with other actors on a case by case basis, based on having obtained informed consent to do so, the criteria of mitigating risk for their stakeholders, and of being in line with their objectives.

Regarding levels of aggregation at which to share data with other actors, the context and objectives of a casualty recorder should inform their choice, and there is no best level of aggregation which can possibly fit all casualty recorders and those they work with.

If for example the purpose of sharing is for the data to be corroborated further and improved, then sharing will be undertaken at the level of aggregation used by the partner – this can mean a high level of disaggregation. However, sharing data at such a level of disaggregation might not be desirable or advisable in all cases and for all casualty recorders. The way the data will be shared needs to be clearly and strictly defined by a casualty recorder in order to avoid the misuse of their data.

It is recommended that all the decisions made on the level of data aggregation, categories and details that will be shared between a casualty recorder and another professional actor is always put into a data sharing agreement which will bind both parties to the uses of the data they have agreed to.

58. Casualty recorders should strive to share their data – in accordance with standard 57 – in the widest way possible in order to avoid duplicate work.

It is a common observation that much energy is wasted on collecting data that has already been collected by other organisations. This is not only a waste of resources but it also contributes to interview fatigue on the part of the population interviewed in this way. Interview fatigue can lead to altered data but also to growing discontent within the population which may come to see the various organisations as ineffective and unreliable. It can also increase the risks of re-traumatising witnesses through the repeated recounting of their stories.

The information gathered by casualty recorders might thus be very useful to humanitarian and other professional actors and it should be shared as much as possible with them. This links back to the effort of mapping that casualty recorders should undertake in order to be able to redirect people towards organisations which will have the capacities to respond to their needs (see standard 34 in chapter 4). The development of partnerships with other organisations to share their information with casualty recorders is also encouraged to avoid the duplication of efforts to the detriment of the affected population.
Selected Terminology

Armed violence:
For the purpose of these standards armed violence is defined based on the Geneva Declaration definition: “the intentional use of force (actual or threatened) with arms or explosives, against a person, group, community, or state that undermines people-centred security and/or sustainable development.” (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, Global Burden of Armed Violence, p.2) – definition itself based on the UN Secretary General definition of armed violence but excluding self-inflicted violence: the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, with arms, against oneself, another person, group, community or State that results in loss, injury, death and/or psychosocial harm to an individual or individuals and that can undermine a community’s, country’s or region’s security and development achievements and prospects (UNSG, 2009, Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Violence, A/64/228.

Casualty recording:
Is a process of systematically and continuously attempting to document and record incident or individual level information about direct violent deaths from armed violence.

Casualty recording practitioner/casualty recorder:
Is defined as an organisation, individual or group of individuals that undertake casualty recording as whole or part of their work.

Chain of custody:
The chronology of the custody or location of a document.

Crowdfunding:
Is the practice of getting funding by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.

Crowdsourcing:
Allows individuals to report an incident that they have witnessed or been the victim of. This is made possible by sharing text, photo or video reports via email or any other chosen cellular network or internet-based platform.

Staff:
For the purpose of these standards, the status of “staff” does not apply to any individual volunteering information to a casualty recorder – especially in the framework of a crowdsourcing initiative. “Staff member/staff” designates all those undertaking casualty recording activities on behalf of and duly designated by an organisation, including paid workers, volunteers, consultants and so on.

Version control software:
Software that allows tracking of changes and who initiated such changes in a database at all times.
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