STANDARDS FOR CASUALTY RECORDING

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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 the UK. Its objectives include advancing education and research into the practice of and procedures for recording the casualties of armed violence. This is 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 improving global understanding of the range of available casualty recording practices, and developing guidance for implementing them. This includes original research into existing casualty recording work, which helps to identify and develop standards and good practice. These can 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. ECW has also established itself at the forefront of integrating casualty recording into national and international policy frameworks.

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We welcome feedback and comments. These should be emailed to enquiries@everycasualty.org, where you can also request to join our mailing list.
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CHAPTER 2 – Methodology

Section 1 – Principles behind methodology standards in casualty recording

- Casualty recorders must be transparent about their methodology. This increases confidence in their data, and allows end users and other stakeholders to make an informed decision on how to use it.
- Casualty recorders must be consistent in the way they record casualties.
- Casualty recorders must be inclusive in their recording.

Section 2 – Sources

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

Assessing and evaluating sources

7. Casualty recorders should be aware of all the potential sources that are available to them in their operating contexts, and their limitations.
8. Casualty recorders should consider using a rating scale that grades the reliability of their sources and is open to review.

Choosing sources

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.

Section 3 – Data

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

12. Casualty recorders must consider systematically recording specific points of information that helps ensure the consistency and accuracy of the information collected.

13. Casualty recorders should store every relevant document.

### Corroborating data

14. Casualty recorders must have a process of corroboration in place to evaluate the data they have collected.

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

16. Casualty recorders must plan how to deal with disagreement between sources.

### Entering data

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

18. All data entries should remain open so as to incorporate any new information.

### 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.

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

21. Casualty recorders must have ways to avoid duplicate recording.

### CHAPTER 3 – Definitions and Categorisation

#### Section 1 – Principles underpinning definitions and categorisation

- Casualty recorders should choose inclusive definitions and categories.
- Casualty recorders should be transparent about the definitions and categories they use and the sources they are drawn from.
- Casualty recorders should apply their chosen definitions and categories consistently throughout the casualty recording process.

#### 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.

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

24. Casualty recorders must determine an initial set of information points, categories, and definitions before starting the casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently in their recording process.

25. Casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as “uncertain” or “provisional” when there is insufficient information available to make a clear decision.

26. Casualty recorders should consider categorisation issues when building their database.
Section 3 – Casualty recording in case of unidentified human remains and missing persons

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

28. Casualty recorders should consult existing databases of missing persons or compile a list themselves, to help discover whether they are casualties.

CHAPTER 4 – Security

Section 1 – Principles behind security standards in casualty recording

☐ 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 for identified key audiences.

☐ Casualty recorders are responsible at all times towards those their 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 collect.

31. Casualty recorders should assess which kinds of data to collect or exclude according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and the need to hold this 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.

33. Casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses for all the purposes a casualty recorder will use their data.

34. Casualty recorders should be aware of the activities of other providers of humanitarian relief and human rights support in their zone of operation, so they can redirect witnesses to them (on issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial and support).

Section 3 – Standards for the safety of casualty recording staff

35. Casualty recorders must clearly define their relationship with staff members through a written or oral contract, and must require confidentiality and exclusivity from them.

36. All casualty recording staff must have access to the security measures put in place to guarantee their protection, 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 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 to design the data security measures that are most appropriate to their own activity.
Planning
42. Casualty recorders must consider how to 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 when a project is discontinued or comes to a natural end.
46. Casualty recorders must clearly define their data security requirements when sharing data with other stakeholders.
47. Casualty recorders must consider how data protection and other laws will affect their activity, and plan accordingly.
48. It is never possible to identify all potential threats. Casualty recorders must therefore plan for their data security being breached and their data compromised.

Implementing
49. Casualty recorders must thoroughly assess whether the tools they use meet their data security purposes.

CHAPTER 5 – Publication and Sharing

Section 1 – Principles behind publishing casualty recording data
☐ Casualty recorders should be transparent about the data they publish.
☐ Casualty recorders are responsible for eventually making their data available to the population affected by the violent context they monitor.

Section 2 – Standards for publication and dissemination of data
50. Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful when making decisions about publication.
51. Casualty recorders should identify their reasons for deciding what data not to publish.
52. Casualty recorders must signal if/when the information they publish does not yet reach a level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed.
53. Casualty recorders should use a level of aggregation that fits their specific objectives when they publish data, but always consider the ultimate objective of recognising every casualty.
54. Casualty recorders should assess and identify the most effective ways of communicating their data.
55. Casualty recorders should always try 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.
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
EVERYCASUALTY | STANDARDS FOR CASUALTY RECORDING

CHARTER FOR THE RECOGNITION OF EVERY CASUALTY OF ARMED VIOLENCE

This charter is founded on the principle that no person should die unrecorded, and calls on states to uphold this principle for the victims of armed violence.

It is a universal charter in that it applies equally to every person and encompasses every party to armed violence. Its terms are few but far-reaching.

Armed violence causes many kinds of harm to people and communities, including some that are indirect, non-lethal or delayed. This charter is for those most immediate and direct victims whose violent deaths and identities are all too often forever lost to the public record. It therefore applies equally to all forms and conditions of armed violence where victims are commonly unrecorded, be it due to armed conflict, extensive lethal criminality, or any other breakdown in civil security.

The civil society organisations and concerned parties who endorse this charter call on states, in partnership with other actors, to recognise every casualty of armed violence by ensuring that all casualties are:

• promptly recorded
• correctly identified
• publicly acknowledged

By every casualty, we mean all men, women and children, whether civilian or combatant, directly killed in armed violence anywhere in the world.

By promptly recorded, we mean immediately it is safe to do so.

By correctly identified, we mean that personal details such as their name, sex, and age be verifiably established.

And by publicly acknowledged, we mean that this information be made openly accessible to all, including the bereaved.

These tasks may be widely shared, but states bear particular responsibility for populations under their control or jurisdiction, or who are endangered by their actions. Information on deaths and the identity of the dead must be made public, after first informing bereaved families where possible. Only when there is a genuine risk of harm to the living should the implementation of these measures be delayed, but never indefinitely.
In fulfilling this call states and other actors should:

- ensure that the information produced is adequate and accessible as a basis for addressing the rights and needs of victims
- take all relevant actions at the national level
- work with others to develop an international framework for casualty recording.

While accepting that we cannot erase the harm already done to the dead, their families and friends, we are convinced that much good will flow from this initiative, which will:

- Relieve the common anguish of not knowing the fate of loved ones who are missing, presumed dead
- Enable more timely, transparent, reliable and comprehensive monitoring of armed violence, including its impact on specific groups, than has ever been achieved before
- Give a human face to the many nameless, hidden, often distant victims of armed violence
- Provide essential information for all parties to take every possible step to protect civilians from armed violence, thereby encouraging them to do so
- Uphold and advance the rights of victims of armed violence
- Bring states and parties to armed violence into better compliance with the spirit as well as the letter of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law
- Support post-conflict recovery and reconciliation, which must always be grounded in truth

From the moment its demands begin to be implemented, this initiative will assert and strengthen the recognition of our common humanity across the globe. In doing so, it may move us closer to a world where armed violence is no longer the scourge it is today.
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 deaths from armed violence. It is crucial for the respect of human dignity, for the sake of surviving family members, and for establishing the facts. Publicly accessible casualty records that are transparent, detailed, and reliable are essential for ensuring accountability, and can positively contribute to post-conflict reconstruction and stability. Such records humanise victims, reduce dispute over numbers killed, help societies understand the true human costs of war, and support truth and reconciliation efforts.

Research shows that casualty recording is also valuable during conflict. Casualty data can help humanitarian response planning and protection of civilians by identifying areas of risk and need. Casualty records can also support measures to increase legal compliance by parties to conflict and reduce civilian harm from their actions.

WHY HAVE STANDARDS FOR CASUALTY RECORDING?
The profound benefits of casualty recording, as outlined above, are not consistently realised for many victims of armed violence. Many casualty-recording practitioners and other stakeholders, agree that standards can promote improved data quality and more effective use of casualty recorders’ work. Standards for Casualty Recording establishes an agreed baseline for the practice of casualty recording. It also enables more actors to access, trust, use and/or share the data produced by casualty recorders.

The standards are not meant to be used as strict operational guidance. They aim instead to encourage casualty recorders to consider key aspects of good practice and how they can apply these to their own casualty-recording projects. These standards aim to be applicable in all field situations. In some circumstances, practitioners will exceed the standards, and we encourage that. However in situations where it is not practical or possible to meet the standards, practitioners should work continuously toward them. The standards have been created to help casualty recording practitioners adapt and improve the way they work, and to harmonise practices worldwide. They establish a standard of practice that can and should be applied across the field, while respecting its diversity of actors, methods and approaches. As well as assisting casualty-recording practitioners, these standards aim to make casualty data easier to use and share.

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 help them to consider whether and how to use the data presented by different sources. The standards allow discussions of casualty data to be based on assessments of data quality, not on the political stance of those promulgating (or criticising) particular casualty numbers.

Tools and templates will support and strengthen the effective implementation of the standards. A growing resource bank will complement this document. This will assist casualty recorders to develop and refine their practice and ensure that it corresponds to the standards.

**PRINCIPLES OF CASUALTY RECORDING**

As outlined above, casualty recording restores humanity to those who have died, and this includes the loved ones who survive them. For this reason, casualty recording must take responsibility for the impact of their activities on affected populations and other stakeholders. By definition, casualty recording is undertaken in difficult environments, if not always in a context of armed conflict. It is only beneficial if casualty recorders take the responsibility to protect all those involved in the process of recording casualties, before anything else.

People often misunderstand, doubt, and question casualty recording because they lack clear information about how practitioners collect, curate, and analyse information. For this reason it benefits greatly from opening itself to scrutiny of its processes. Ultimately, an inclusive and consistent process increases legitimacy of and trust in the data produced. This allows for the data to contribute to other justice and humanitarian mechanisms, while maintaining the necessary levels of personal safety.

To support this vision of casualty recording, five core principles were agreed on during the development of these standards\(^4\). 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. It 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. Avoiding further harm to the living is the fundamental and overarching principle that all casualty recorders must uphold. It can override the other four principles. It applies across all aspects of casualty recording, from collecting data, through devising security policies, to sharing and publishing the data.

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\(^4\) This process is explained in more detail at the end of this introduction.
Transparency
Casualty recorders should be as transparent as possible about all aspects of their activities. They should be transparent about the details of their organisation, their methodology, the definitions they use, their exclusion and inclusion criteria, and their publication rationale. This principle also applies to how they ensure the security of their staff, witnesses and data (without disclosing security procedures if 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. This helps prevent 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 are not necessarily politically neutral, and some are motivated by reasons which can be considered 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 particularly important for such organisations. It means seeking to include all events and victims in their records whether or not this data supports an organisation’s cause, and striving to use terms and definitions in the data that apply equally to all. This is closely tied to transparency. Casualty recorders should state clearly what data, if any, they exclude from their recording and why. This includes noting difficulties accessing information from communities opposed to an organisation’s political stance or community affiliation.

Consistency
This principle applies mostly to the methodological aspect of a casualty recorder’s work, and in particular to their data collection and processing. Casualty recorders operate in diverse contexts and some situations 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. They should indicate if the consistency of their methodology is affected, for better or worse, due to changes in external circumstances or improvements to their methods (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. It 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. This helps ensure they are trusted by those providing information and using their data.
BASIC POINTS OF INFORMATION FOR CASUALTY RECORDING

Each casualty recorder will set the scope of their project according to their goals and defines their own categories to sort the information collected. However there are some key data points that all casualty recorders should record. These constitute a minimum standard for the field, but many casualty recorders may exceed them. They are:

- **Location of incident:** This can be recorded at different levels of detail, for example from name of town or village to GPS coordinates. Casualty recorders should always strive to record the highest level of detail available, for accuracy and comparison with other data.

- **Date or time of incident:** The highest level of available detail should be recorded.

- **Source:** At minimum, the type of source from which the record was created should be noted for internal use. Possible categories include news reports, official documents, crowdsourcing, or witness testimony. Casualty recorders should keep a record of (and possibly link to) the specific document. Casualty recorders should carefully assess the risks of recording the personal data of a witness who gives testimony, and the available means to mitigate these risks.

- **Numbers killed:** The minimal level of detail required to record a casualty incident, when information about individual victims (name, age, sex) is not available.

- **Name:** This often requires close knowledge of local naming conventions, and the facility to include different names for the same individual where necessary (for example, nicknames or noms de guerre).

- **Age:** The age of the person at the time of death (or disappearance in the case of missing persons, 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 indicate whether the person was a child or an adult. They should define the age at which a person is considered an adult and make this definition available. They may also use additional broad categories, such as baby, infant, teenager, or elder.

- **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 / or individuals reported to have been involved in the incident which caused the deaths. This includes conflict parties present, groups or individuals that initiated or claimed responsibility for violent acts.

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1 Through research and discussions with practitioners and end users during the process of developing these standards.
IMPLEMENTING THESE STANDARDS AND LIMITATIONS
Casualty recorders working in different contexts will implement these standards in different ways. The importance of particular standards may also vary according to the context. 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 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 might only be achieved over time. In some of the contexts in which they operate (such as high levels of violence, or limited financial and technical resources), casualty recorders may only be able to work towards achieving those standards. This does not mean that they should disregard the “shoulds.” Instead, casualty recorders must show what they are doing to achieve them.

All the standards are meant to be implemented. They represent a baseline that practising casualty recorders aspire to implement as soon as possible. Casualty recorders work in a wide variety of contexts with very different levels of resources. These factors affect the methodologies and procedures that organisations are able to use. The standards aim 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. However, casualty recorders should indicate their adherence to the standards in principle and their 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 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.
Each standard is accompanied by an explanatory note. These notes elaborate upon the underlying principles and provide justifications for each standard. They outline the main challenges the standard addresses, their limitations and constraints, as well as the dilemmas they might pose to casualty recorders. They also cover some practical considerations as to their application. These explanatory notes resulted from an extensive consultative process\(^6\), but they do not claim to be exhaustive. Rather, they aim to be illustrative. The notes are not an operational manual on applying the standards or conducting casualty recording activities. It is the responsibility of each casualty recorder to decide how to incorporate these standards into their own operational practice.

The standards are organised to enable anyone inquiring into a specific topic to consult the most appropriate chapter. However, it is important to read the entire document to properly understand the parameters of casualty recording, and to accurately assess the casualty data provided by a particular organisation.

Some actors will have the expertise and capacity needed to conduct casualty recording work to higher levels than those specified here. In these cases, the higher levels should take precedence.

**HOW THESE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED**

The need and the will to harmonise casualty recording practices first emerged at the global conference of the Casualty Recorders Network\(^7\), hosted by Every Casualty in London in 2011. Key parameters of good practice have since been defined in a series of original research studies. The first was Every Casualty’s comprehensive 2012 study\(^8\) of 40 casualty-recording NGOs. This was followed by studies of state and UN practice. The findings and implications have been progressively shared with state, UN, and civil society representatives. They have been particularly, but not exclusively, connected to the work of the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Positive feedback has clarified and strengthened the central role of standards in promoting effective casualty recording and the uptake and use of its outputs. A wide range of stakeholders has encouraged and supported the publication and broad dissemination of such standards.

The standards in this document are the result of a two-year consultative phase initiated in 2013 and a review phase initiated in 2016. The first consultative phase brought together a core group of practitioners and end users in a plenary meeting in Bogotá, co-hosted by Every Casualty and Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC). Here, participants decided to form smaller working groups in which specialists would discuss the content of the standards on a thematic basis. These working groups met between 2013 and 2015. Building on the discussions and outputs of the working groups, a first draft of this document was reviewed by the original core group at a plenary meeting in September 2015 cohosted by Every Casualty and Iraq Body Count in London. The review phase involved consultation with a wider range of stakeholders, selected for

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\(^6\) Details about this process can be found below at the end of this introduction.

\(^7\) See http://www.everycasualty.org/practice/ipn

their expertise or particular interest in casualty recording. This review was designed to verify the extent to which the common perspectives reflected in these standards command broad support among relevant actors in the international arena. The entire Standards process made intensive use of the expertise and commitment of the growing membership of the Casualty Recorders Network. The Casualty Recorders Network was convened and facilitated by Every Casualty, in support of the principles contained in the Charter and Call of the Every Casualty Campaign.

Every Casualty managed and facilitated the consultative and drafting process. Every Casualty began as a programme of Oxford Research Group, but became an independent NGO (full name Every Casualty Worldwide) in September 2014. The work on the Standards has been financially supported by grants to Every Casualty provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Zivik programme of the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA) with means of the German Foreign Ministry, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. These grants have covered staffing and administration costs of Every Casualty, and travel and accommodation expenses of some external participants. Participating organisations gave the time of personnel contributing to the process, none of whom were paid any fee or honorarium by Every Casualty.

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9 See http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign/charter
10 See http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign
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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 ensure that casualty recorders 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 especially important. Transparency can help ensure that their data is trusted by the media, international organisations, governments, and the public.

Organisational transparency in casualty recording includes providing accessible and transparent information to stakeholders on methodology, operations, and political and funding affiliations. It therefore calls for a continuous dialogue between casualty recorders and their stakeholders.

This chapter sets out the standards for casualty recorders to present their organisations and projects in the most transparent way possible. Applying these standards makes casualty recorders accountable for the information they produce to the communities in which they work and the end users of their data.

The first section of this chapter discusses how casualty recorders can balance casualty recording principles to demonstrate organisational transparency.

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

Section 1 – Principles behind organisational transparency standards

The following principles are the most relevant to this area of practice and are presented here in detail:

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

Casualty recording organisations must consider how publishing information about their structure, funders, methodology and other procedures may endanger their staff or sources. They must therefore always balance the principles of transparency and ‘do no harm’. Guaranteeing the safety of all stakeholders is always more important than the need for transparency. Casualty recorders should base their choices on a risk assessment. However, casualty recorders should not use this principle as a reason to avoid disclosing information about their organisation.
When security reasons prevent full transparency casualty recorders should acknowledge this. Being transparent about the reasons that prevent them from sharing certain information (such as the nature of their sources) is 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 is for casualty recorders to present their organisation clearly. They should be particularly clear about their objectives and their reasons for recording deaths from armed violence. Only when these objectives are clear can data end users and other partners assess the validity of the information presented. Before considering the methodology, many actors will want to evaluate the organisation itself. Transparency about those who started a casualty recording initiative and why they did so can help confront possible suspicions and mistrust.

This is particularly relevant for the populations affected by violence. Casualty recorders should make their data available to affected communities. Transparency about their organisation has proven important in helping casualty recorders convey their legitimacy.

Ultimately, being transparent about their mission and motivation for recording casualty data helps casualty recorders improve the quality of their data, by encouraging more feedback and sharing with other stakeholders.

Such information should therefore be publicly available – for example on an organisation's website – and should be kept up-to-date, accurate, and complete.

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

Inclusiveness is an overarching principle of casualty recording. The concept of inclusiveness in itself does not preclude organisations from having political motivations. However these should not affect their choice of sources and methodology. In many conflicts, casualty recording initiatives may come from the desire to hold certain actors in the conflict to account. Regardless of any such motivations, casualty recorders should record all individuals killed. This inclusive methodology should apply regardless of victims’ political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious or gender affiliation. It should also apply regardless of which party to the conflict is known or suspected to have killed them.
It is important to be open about what others could see as bias. Organisations should therefore declare all their affiliations. This, together with transparency about methodology and sources, is the only way for casualty recorders to address perceptions of bias and partiality. Casualty recorders should bear in mind that being transparent about their political affiliations can affect their operations. Such affiliations can discourage some from sharing information with them. This can make it more difficult to achieve inclusiveness effectively. However, casualty recorders should not avoid being transparent about their political affiliations because of this. Hiding their affiliations would compromise their integrity. Instead, casualty recorders should attempt to address such consequences by, for example, showing stakeholders their transparent and inclusive methodology. They should also mention when publishing their information that no one was deliberately excluded from the recording process, although self-exclusions may have occurred.

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

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

Casualty recorders must also publish definitions for the categories used in their database and explain their inclusion and exclusion criteria (see chapter 3). Together, these explanations allow stakeholders to identify how the casualty recorder collected, managed and curated the data. This enables them to assess how to engage with it. For this information to be useful, casualty recorders must monitor and update it regularly so that it is always accurate, current, and complete.

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

Casualty recorders should explain the structure of their organisation clearly. This includes information about staff (without endangering them), governance structure, programmes, and policies. Casualty recorders should update this information consistently to ensure it remains accurate, and make it easily and publicly accessible. Such transparency helps consolidate a casualty recorder’s legitimacy. It allows end users and other stakeholders to assess if and how they want to use the data produced. Ultimately, such information and openness helps to build 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, publicly available (preferably on the organisation’s website) and updated regularly. Casualty recorders can apply different levels of transparency according to the limitations their situation places upon them. In some cases funders might require anonymity, or be too numerous to list, as with crowdfunding\(^1\) for example. In these cases, casualty recorders may prefer instead to indicate the type of funding sources, such as government funding, private donations, or consultancy fees. If a casualty recorder engages in an activity that generates financial profit at any point, they should be transparent about that too.

\(^1\) 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

A casualty recorder’s methodology is at the core of all their activities. It is the collection of steps and rules that informs how casualty recording is done. Therefore, a casualty recorder’s methodology is the foundation on which casualty recording is built. To work effectively, casualty recorders must base their activities on a robust methodology. The standards in this chapter focus on two approaches to casualty recording. Both are intended to ensure a defensible logic and replicable methods. These approaches are:

- documentary source-based recording; and
- documentary source-based recording combined with on-the-ground investigation.12

Standards on methodology prevent common mistakes, point to good practice and uphold the principles that should govern casualty recording. Methodology standards are also important for end users as they help to create a shared understanding of the process of casualty recording and assure them that its results are replicable.

These standards are designed to help casualty recorders create a sound methodology. This will help them improve data quality, engage more end users and increase the potential for sharing their data (which can further enhance data quality). As noted above, many casualty recorders start their activities for reasons that hold political significance. However, such organisations can still meet the standards described in this document if their methodology follows its guiding principles and good practice elements.

This chapter presents the principles that govern all casualty recording methodologies. It relates these principles to the five different points in the casualty recording cycle:

- collecting data;
- assessing and evaluating sources;
- corroborating data;
- entering data; and
- maintaining quality control.

Depending on how data is recorded, these steps do not have to happen in a specific order and they may happen simultaneously. Each casualty recorder may proceed in different ways. However, these standards outline good practice that is applicable to all casualty recording projects.

The first section of this chapter outlines the principles that determine casualty recording methodologies and how their application affects practice.

The second section focuses on how to deal with the sources informing a casualty recording activity.

The third section focuses on data treatment, collection, corroboration and codification in a database.

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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 presented here in detail:

Casualty recorders must be transparent about their methodology. This increases confidence in their data, and allows end users and other stakeholders to make an informed decision on how to use it.

A clear and transparent methodology enables data end users to evaluate a casualty recorder’s work. This includes how they assembled their data, how consistently they have applied definitions, and how they have reached their conclusions. Many casualty recorders are motivated by political or human rights causes. Allowing users to assess their methodology is important for establishing the credibility of their data. A transparent methodology helps others assess if the data is biased or partial, the limitations that apply to it, and whether and how to use it.

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

- **The types of sources used**, being as specific as possible. For example, distinguishing official documents or media reports for documentary sources, or eyewitnesses, officials, or humanitarian workers for human sources. Explain if a particular type of source has been used more than others or excluded, and if so why.
- **How the casualty recorder evaluated their sources**, considering any possible biases from the sources and their evaluation. If such biases exist, explain how they were minimised.
- **How the casualty recorder collected information**. For documentary sources, explain how the source was accessed. For official documents, state whether they had official permission to access these. For human sources, explain how interviews were conducted (for example, face to face or over the phone). They should state who conducted the interviews (for example, a staff member from the organisation, or intermediaries such as a church or aid organisation). They should also describe the interview technique they used (for example, structured or informal interviews). If using structured interviews they may decide to publish the questionnaire used, if it is safe to do so.
- **The steps taken to ensure that information is accurate** and how the casualty recorder handled ambiguous or conflicting accounts.
- **How the casualty recorder checked its work** to minimise human and data entry errors, inconsistencies, and possible biases.
Casualty recorders must be consistent 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 by defining a clear scope from the beginning. This includes choosing sources carefully, defining the method to confirm incidents or individual deaths, setting standard operational procedures, and providing guidelines and training to all involved. Standardising operations is important to increase the accuracy of the data returned through the consistent application of a process. Casualty recorders should define and share standard operational procedures internally, for example in a codebook. They may share this publicly to explain their methodology. This does not prevent changes to a methodology as long as the application of the processes remains consistent and any changes are indicated.

Casualty recorders must be inclusive in their recording.

It is important for casualty recorders to avoid bias. It is generally recommended they should aim to record all deaths from armed conflict or violence. However, some organisations may decide to only record deaths caused by a specific weapon or the casualties of one party to a conflict. In these cases, the principle of transparency requires casualty recorders to clearly define the limitations to their data, and their inclusion and exclusion criteria (see also chapter 3). This can also increase the information casualty recorders are given access to.

Casualty recording organisations can also apply the principle of inclusiveness internally. For example, they can ensure that staff represent all communities affected by a conflict, or all ethnic groups in the population. This inclusiveness can help to reassure potential sources or data users that the data collected is impartial.

Section 2 – Sources

Sources of information can be people, organisations, or the documentary evidence (narratives or documentation) that they produce.

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

Source material will include documentary evidence and witness statements. This applies even if a casualty recorder does not have the same access to people as it does to documentary evidence. This may happen for example if casualty recording is conducted remotely, outside the region or country affected by violence.
Documentary and witness sources overlap because all useful documentary evidence must come from an identifiable person or organisation. Similarly, people and organisations are only useful sources if the information they provide can be documented, stored and analysed.

In some situations, only one of the two source types may be available initially. However, casualty recording contexts and initiatives can evolve. For example, while witnesses might not be accessible at first, this could change over time. Casualty recorders should therefore understand how to deal with both types of source. They may need to store information that they cannot immediately deal with in a separate database. Alternatively, they may need to set up procedures to integrate additional information from new sources into their existing casualty recording methodology.

Assessing and evaluating sources

7. Casualty recorders should be aware of all the potential sources that are available to them in their operating contexts, and their limitations.

It is recommended that casualty recorders map all the different sources available in the context where they operate and identify their value. As indicated above, this should include both witness statements and documentary evidence.

Casualty recorders should consider if, when, and how to supplement documentary evidence with direct witness testimony. Testimony may come from people who witnessed the fatal incident, or who knew the victim personally and the circumstances of his or her death.

Casualty recorders should first review all available documentary evidence and at later date (whenever this is possible and safe) use witness testimonies and on-site investigation to address any remaining information gaps. By using both types of source 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 (such as the police, the military and, to the extent that it is available, intelligence services; hospitals; medico-legal institutions; and courts). It also includes reports by intergovernmental organisations (such as the ICMP or some UN agencies). These incident-based reports are usually produced by specific agencies as part of their own internal procedures. Such agencies may also publish integrative reports that provide aggregated casualty data for a specific area or period.

- **Civil society reports and data**: these include press and media reports, NGO reports and other information from civil society, particularly human rights organisations, victims’ and veterans’ organisations, religious communities and leaders, and social media.
• Images\textsuperscript{13}, videos and audio recordings: these are increasingly used to document violations. They are a useful source to consider but casualty recorders should be aware that such media can, like others, be manipulated. They are not necessarily reliable on their own.

Casualty recorders should also consider different categories of people and organisations, such as:
• Official sources: these include state agencies, such as the police, the military and intelligence agencies, and hospitals. It also includes the people that work for them. Official and unofficial relationships with these individuals can be used to obtain information.
• Civil society sources: these include press and media organisations, and trusted journalists who can give access to their primary data, including unpublished details. It also includes local and international NGOs that offer the potential for cooperation and data sharing.
• Individuals: these are people who are not connected to any organisation. They can be 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.

A formal rating scale is a useful way to assess the reliability of a source (whether this is an organisation or an individual) and the credibility of documentary evidence. This makes source assessment more systematic and strengthens the whole process of casualty recording.

However, the evaluation of sources and the credibility of information they provide is an ongoing process. A source that was considered reliable may become unreliable, and information that was considered credible may turn out to be false after collecting additional information. For this reason, casualty recorders should code sources separately based on their reliability and the credibility of the information they provide.

Choosing sources

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

When mapping the different sources available, a casualty recorder should not exclude sources because they only provide limited levels of information. Any relevant information should be included in the casualty recording activity, even if it is minimal. It may be essential to understanding information that emerges later, or form the basis of further investigations.

\textsuperscript{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 for all approaches to casualty recording. This applies not just to those using a combination of document-based and on-the-ground investigations. For example, a recorder using only media reports will benefit from collecting as many reports as possible on the same incident, as these may have different primary sources or provide different details. All types of sources can potentially be unreliable and biased, whether government sources, NGOs or 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 in the evidence or identify fabrication.

Section 3 – Data

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

Whatever their methodology, casualty recorders should record data consistently using established procedures. However, this system should always be flexible enough to allow human judgement to determine how to record the information in case of doubt.

Collecting data

12. Casualty recorders must consider systematically recording specific points of information that helps ensure the consistency and accuracy of the information collected.

Forms can help casualty recorders collect specific information consistently and credibly. This applies to both documentary evidence and witness statements.

Copying the information contained in a document into a form is a good way to ensure accurate data processing. It also makes it easier for different staff members to review different entries in order to reduce human error.

Forms can be a particularly useful tool for on-the-ground investigation. Failure to collect all available information in the first instance can lead to costly additional work following up with informants, or permanent loss of information. Completing forms during or directly after an interview reduces this risk. However, casualty recorders should limit the type of questions asked during witness interviews according to their risk assessments (see chapter 4 on maintaining security of staff and other stakeholders in casualty recording).

Forms should not be rigid questionnaires but rather guidelines to prompt the recorder on all the important categories of information they need to record. Forms that are too strict can restrict the interview process and even prevent recorders from obtaining the necessary information.
13. Casualty recorders should store every relevant document.

Casualty recorders may discover information that they cannot immediately analyse (or fully analyse), for a variety of reasons. They should therefore be prepared to store this information so that it is not lost or inaccessible later when it is possible to do the necessary analysis.

The decision to record or store such data and documents should comply with security considerations as explained in chapter 4 of this document. As a general rule, casualty recorders should only collect information that they need and intend to use (see standards 30 and 31).

**Corroborating data**

Casualty recording needs to evaluate different aspects of an incident. The fact of a death can be easy to confirm, for example if there is a hospital record of a body in the morgue. However other information relating to the death may be harder to confirm. This includes:

- the identity of the deceased;
- whether they were a civilian or belonged to an armed group;
- who killed them; and
- how they died.

Casualty recorders need to investigate, corroborate, and evaluate the credibility of these data they have collected from multiple sources until they consider it satisfactory. While not all aspects of an event will be "confirmed" at first, this will become progressively possible as more information becomes available. If data is not fully confirmed immediately, it does not mean that it is not credible or false. An open-ended process of corroboration reassures end users that they can place a significant degree of trust on the casualty data.

The term "corroboration" has been used here over "verification". In legal use, data can only be "verified" with the involvement of institutional actors such as courts of justice. Such data also follows particular standards of proof. Unless casualty recorders themselves are part of these processes, or use specific data resulting from them, they cannot claim that their data is "verified". 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 usually includes two steps. The first step is to determine the internal coherence of the information provided; the second is to crosscheck it with information provided by other sources.

Written or oral information becomes internally coherent when the connections between the arguments in it are logical, which is when it becomes meaningful in a real world context. Internal coherence means, among other things, that the information
provided is free of contradictions and logical (or similar) inconsistencies which damage its credibility.

Crosschecking is the attempt to confirm information with other sources. It attempts to confirm one piece of information by obtaining information on the same topic from other independent sources. This includes different sources of the same type (for example, news articles from three different news outlets, each by different authors using different primary sources). It also includes different types of sources (for example, comparing video, media reports, and witness testimonies of a single event).

The corroboration process can have several outcomes. It may:

- confirm the original information;
- suggest that no definitive conclusion is possible at present as different perspectives emerge and appear equally possible; or
- lead to a decision to reject the initial piece of information.

This process should be undertaken in parallel with the evaluation of sources (see standard 8) to reach a satisfactory level of corroboration.

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

Using multiple independent sources to corroborate information helps casualty recorders to assess it better. Casualty recorders should corroborate information about an incident or death by crosschecking it with other sources. They should also use contextual information in their assessment, and sometimes their own knowledge of established facts about the dynamics of the violence or conflict.

Having information on one event from multiple independent sources facilitates the corroboration process (see standard 10). If this is not possible, a single particularly reliable and credible source may be accepted. Casualty recorders should such highlight single-source entries in order to be transparent about the limitations of their data. This allows end users of the data to decide how to consider these cases.

16. Casualty recorders must plan how to deal with disagreement between sources.

When using multiple sources to corroborate data, casualty recorders often need to deal with differing information about the same event or victim.

How casualty recorders resolve disagreements depends on their access to sources and other factors. Solutions include:

- **Prioritising certain sources:** this relates to source evaluation. Casualty recorders can choose to record the information provided by the source they consider the most reliable among the disagreeing sources.
- **Reporting disagreement:** for example, casualty recorders can use numerical ranges where different numbers of deaths are reported for one event. This allows the recording of the lowest to the highest possible number of casualties.
• Using categories that avoid or defer resolution of the disagreement: this includes terms such as “unknown,” “unconfirmed,” or “uncorroborated.”
• Keeping cases open until there is more information: casualty recorders can keep track of an event pending new information that could clarify details and allow confirmation in accordance with their minimum standards.
• Dialogue with sources: this is not always possible and must follow safety standards for both staff and witnesses.

Casualty recorders should always keep an incident in their database even when sources disagree or it is not possible to fully confirm the incident immediately. Publishing uncorroborated data is a different matter, which should not influence decisions about recording and retaining information (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.

Casualty recorders should enter information into their database consistently to avoid human error. This increases the accuracy of the data collected and ensures that all entries are equally valid. Developing standard operational procedures and codifying the process of data entry helps to achieve this consistency. Procedures and codes can take the shape of a codebook. This is a single document that describes:

• the contents and structure of the database;
• how to use or fill in the database; and
• the definitions of the different categories used.

Such a document ensures that data is entered in a consistent and accurate way, including by new staff and should include clear instructions for avoiding duplicate data entries and modifying existing ones.

18. All data entries should remain open so as to incorporate new information.

Casualty recorders should keep their records open and provisional to allow for the addition of new information and its corroboration. By keeping records open, casualty recorders allow for constant improvement of their database in terms of quality and extent.

Casualty recorders should, if applicable and achievable, use version control software to ensure the correct management of new information on existing entries. This allows them to track changes made to the database and see who made them. It can also allow them to revert to older versions of the database if necessary. Keeping track of the information and its sources is also good practice and creates a chain of custody and chronology of the documents for legal purposes.
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.

Ensuring data quality is easier if it is a multistage process, ideally involving different people at different stages. Separating a complex task into manageable steps simplifies the work and helps minimise human error. Different staff members should review the work after each stage, to identify and resolve mistakes or disputes in the interpretation of information.

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

Staff should not distort, lose or discard information that is, or may be, casualty-related. Coding results may differ slightly depending on who does it. To achieve greater data coding quality, it is good practice for several people to review an entry before it is confirmed. This reduces the chance that information has been overlooked or given too high (or too low) a priority.

21. Casualty recorders must have ways to avoid duplicate recording.

Collecting information from independent sources about the same event is crucial to establishing the credibility of an incident. However, it must not lead to duplicate recording. This would inadvertently increase the total number of recorded casualties or incidents. To avoid double-counting, it is important to identify which casualty or incident is being described. This can be done at regular intervals or once the collection process has ended. This is typically called a ‘deduplication’ process. It can either be done manually or with the assistance of computer algorithms, depending on the amount of information collected.
Improvised Explosive Device found in Eastern Baghdad, 2005.
Chapter 3

Definitions and Categorisation
Introduction

The terminology used by casualty recorders and the way they categorise information is a crucial part of their methodology. This concerns the collection and entry of information in particular (as defined and presented in chapter 2 section 3 of this document). For this reason, it is crucial for casualty recorders to choose categorisations and definitions that meet standardised minimum requirements.

Clear definitions and categories are a key aspect of good practice in casualty recording. Specifically, the choice of definitions and their consistent application are crucial to ensure the quality of data produced. This is particularly important because of the nature of the information and the circumstances in which it is collected. Definitions and categories will have political and possibly legal significance. In turn, consistent, transparent definitions and categories enhance understanding of casualty recording data by end users.

This chapter provides a framework to help casualty recorders choose relevant definitions for their project. It also gives guidance on 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. It explains what should guide casualty recorders when making these decisions.

The third section explores how casualty recorders should specifically treat information about unidentified and missing persons.

Section 1 – Principles underpinning definitions and categorisation

The following principles have been identified the most relevant to this area of practice and are presented here in detail:

Casualty recorders should choose inclusive definitions and categories

Casualty recorders should choose definitions and categories that do not directly or indirectly imply support for any side in the conflict or situation of armed violence. This means they should avoid using terms or categories that may show bias to a particular ideology, group, organisation, individual or entity. Therefore, as far as possible, casualty recorders should use existing, well elaborated terms in fields such as law, or academic sources.
The choice made by casualty recorders over who to include in their scope of work also contributes to demonstrating their inclusivity. Inclusion criteria should be as wide as possible and ideally include all casualties of armed violence in a given context. However, depending on the purpose of the casualty recorder’s project it is not always possible or desirable to have such a wide scope. In these cases, casualty recorders must be transparent about this and publish their inclusion and exclusion criteria. They should explain the reasons for their choices, whether strategic or purely pragmatic.

**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 clearly state the definitions they use. They should also state the source of the definitions if they are taken from other fields such as national or international law, or academic sources. They should publish the reasoning behind their categorisation of individuals and incidents, and explain how these decisions were arrived at. This is especially important in cases which could be controversial or uncertain.

Casualty recorders should make these definitions and categories accessible to other stakeholders in the casualty recording process and those who engage with their data. They should also be explained in all internal documents about casualty recording methodology so that all staff understand them. This also allows casualty recorders to share the definitions and categories with specific partners on request.

**Casualty recorders should apply their chosen definitions and categories consistently throughout the casualty recording process.**

Casualty recorders should apply definitions and categories consistently and accurately to ensure the quality of the data recorded. Using standardised definitions and categories throughout the recording process produces more sound data, which potential users consider more reliable.

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

Definitions and categories may change over time because of the changing nature of the violence monitored. For example, the concept of “combatant” is inadequate in a context of violence towards protesters as this concept specifically relates to the laws of armed conflict. However, in a non-international armed conflict, violence involving protesters could potentially call for the use of the term “combatant”.

Casualty recorders should note the precise time of any change to their definitions and categories and explain how and why they were modified. It may be difficult to determine such changes precisely. Therefore, to avoid being drawn into debates around legal concepts, casualty recorders may alternatively choose a generic term unconstrained by international humanitarian law, for example ‘fighter’.

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 and exclusion criteria set the scope of the casualty recording project. They define who and what the initiative covers. They could include criteria such as the individuals and groups being recorded (for example, civilians only, or both fighters and civilians); how they died (the type of weapon or violence involved, e.g. air attack); the time span and geographic areas covered.

In deciding their inclusion and exclusion criteria, casualty recorders should as specific as possible about such things as:
- time span;
- geographic area or areas;
- the conflict covered (there may be multiple conflicts in the same country or region);
- conflict actors;
- whether recording all deaths, only civilians, or only combatants;
- all or only some sections of the population (along e.g. religious, ethnic or political lines);
- and deaths from all types of violence or only those caused by specific weapons.

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

It is key for casualty recording projects to choose categories and definitions appropriate to the purposes of the project. It is important that these can be understood both by the recorders and end users. Definitions and categories will be strongly influenced by whether, for example, the project intends simply to raise awareness of an issue, highlight violations in law, or help provide compensation to victims’ families. Similarly, the type of violence recorded and its nature (international or national) will affect the definitions and categories used. The choice of definitions must also meet any specific purpose of the casualty recorder, for example monitoring vulnerable groups (such as women or children).
Deciding how to define the different categories into which the raw data will be placed is therefore a key element in the design of a casualty recording initiative.

It is also important to consider what definitions and categories the accessible sources can support in the data collection phase. For example, the limitations imposed by using reports lacking in detail might make it difficult to apply categorisations that require more information (such as whether an individual was participating in fighting). However, this does not mean that casualty recorders should avoid such categories entirely. In general it is better to choose definitions and categories which maximise the credibility and impact of casualty data with the widest possible audience.

If casualty recording aims to highlight the impact of a specific weapon or the impact of conflict on a specific population group (e.g. men, women or children), it is recommended that casualty recorders consult and use internationally recognised sources for definitions and categories.

It is also recommended that casualty recorders consult relevant legal experts when developing these categories. This will help them to use all applicable legal concepts or categories as accurately as possible. It will also help casualty recorders know and understand the human rights or similar broader contexts they operate in and which their activities affect.

24. Casualty recorders must determine an initial set of information points, categories, and definitions before starting the casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently in their recording process.

Casualty recorders must determine which categories and definitions to use at the beginning of the casualty recording project, and train all staff on how to apply them. This ensures that the casualty data produced is consistent and accurate at every stage. It is important to apply definitions consistently in categorising the raw data at every stage of a casualty recorder’s methodology, and especially during data entry and quality control. Having different staff enter data and review how categories and definitions are applied helps achieve this goal (see more on data entry and quality control in chapter 2, section 3).

Casualty recording is often done in volatile contexts. The definitions and categories created at the beginning of the activity may not fit the casualty recorders’ purpose or context at a later time. 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. They should explain why definitions, categories, or both have changed, and specify the exact date of the change.
25. Casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as “uncertain” or “provisional” when there is insufficient information available to make a clear decision.

Categories such as those referring to an individual’s combat status are often difficult to determine, especially if the source information is incomplete or unclear about the details of an individual’s involvement with or membership of a known armed group. Uncertainty can also apply elsewhere: determining whether to categorise an individual as an adult or a child can also be problematic. One way to deal with this is to create internal procedures or forums to discuss difficult cases.

It is important to keep in review incomplete entries with unconfirmed data points because it may be possible to confirm these details later. They are also important in piecing together a fuller picture of the impact of violence. It is good practice to mark these cases (or specific details within them) as “uncertain” or “unconfirmed”, or to list them separately from confirmed cases. Storing these entries allows all available data and sources to be stored, with the hope that more information may be added later. This may be possible when conflict ends and such cases can be investigated further.

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

A casualty recording database should be designed not to exclude any relevant information. Such exclusion can happen if the database’s structure is too exacting or rigid for the type of data obtained. For example, a database where the “age” category requires a specific number of years may exclude the categorisation of individuals whose exact age is not known. Using more flexible choices (such as “adult”, “child”, or “unknown”, as well as the option to enter a specific age) is a useful way to maximise the detail and still allow for useful analysis. Being as specific as possible is valuable, but casualty recorders should be careful not to make it harder than necessary to record the information they have. This could hinder their analysis and limit their ability to make good use of the database later.

Casualty recorders should build their databases around the broadest levels of useful detail for each data point, while providing options to record more detailed data if available. For example, a casualty recorder can create categories for recording the kind of weapon used in an incident. The broadest level might use categories such as “explosive weapons” or “small arms” or “chemical weapons”. If a recorder knows the specific kind of weapon used, they could add this information in an optional sub-category. For example, if an individual was killed by a barrel bomb, it could go into the appropriate subcategory of “explosive weapons”.

Section 3 – Casualty recording in case of unidentified human remains and missing persons

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

Human remains, including entire bodies, can be discovered either during or after armed conflict. If the competent authorities cannot properly identify a body, the individual is classified as an "unidentified body". Even without specific identification such as the person's name or date of birth, casualty recorders can still record available information about the location, time, and cause of death if known. These details can help distinguish between casualties whose personal information is not immediately available.

This information is important for keeping track of the overall count of victims in the conflict, as well as for potential identification at a later stage, possibly after conflict. For instance, information held elsewhere about the reported circumstances of disappearance or last known whereabouts of persons, these data on unidentified bodies can also be useful for a relevant authority to identify them.

Not knowing a person's identity can make it more difficult to get more details on the specific circumstances of the death. However, leaving some categories blank or “unknown” does not affect the other data returned by the database and helps further investigations when the context allows it.

28. Casualty recorders should consult external databases of missing persons or compile a list themselves, to help discover whether they are casualties.

Missing persons are those reported missing or whose families have no news of them. They remain 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 to record people reported missing. Some casualty recorders can also keep databases of missing persons.

Casualty recording initiatives can help in the search for missing persons, as they can help establish comprehensive lists of all missing persons in a given situation.

Confirming that a missing person is in fact dead may often require investigation by the competent authorities, supported where necessary by other concerned organisations.
Woman stands inside the shell of her home in Sri Lanka © Conor Ashleigh/AusAID.
Chapter 4

Security
Introduction

This chapter underlines the importance of stakeholder security. This includes staff, affected populations and witnesses. It explains why and how casualty recorders must acknowledge and fulfil their responsibility to guarantee the security of all stakeholders. Implementing these standards supports data quality and legitimacy by ensuring that casualty recorders collect and keep data in a proper manner.

Various levels of security and resources are available to casualty recorders. These standards recommend an assessment and evaluation approach to designing a security policy. This allows casualty recorders to adapt their approach in the most appropriate way depending on the constraints and threats they face. In general, casualty recorders should curb their objectives or activities rather than their security standards where changed conditions (such as increased violence) force them to re-evaluate the safety of their work.

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

Implementing these standards will also encourage higher levels of data sharing. This will promote collaboration and thereby produce more harmonised and authoritative data. Being able to guarantee adequate security is key to building trust between organisations and encouraging cooperation and 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 recommendations on how to assess this risk.

The third section outlines standards for protecting casualty recorders. It focuses on ways for casualty recorders to mitigate the risk to them, as no casualty recording should endanger staff.

The fourth section focuses more specifically on key aspects of planning and implementing data security. It ensures that, despite operating in different contexts and with different purposes, all casualty recorders ask and answer the necessary questions before starting their recording activity.
In addition to these standards, casualty recorders are advised to look into the ICRC Professional Standards for Protection Work. Chapter 1 (The overarching principles in protection work) and chapter 6 (Managing sensitive protection information) are particularly relevant.

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:

Casualty recorders must devise their data security policies according to the “do-no-harm” principle.

The do-no-harm principle requires any security decision to be based on periodic, systematic risk assessments. These are necessary to identify emerging threats and prepare for their potential consequences.

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

Transparency must be circumscribed when it comes to security measures. Casualty recorders are not required to share their entire security framework with the public. However, they need to consider how being transparent with specific audiences can benefit their activities.

Casualty recorders should be transparent with their staff on the risks they are taking and the ways the organisation tries to mitigate these risks. They should be transparent with their sources on how the organisation will use the information they contribute. This includes explaining what personal data will be shared or revealed. For the rest of the community and the general public, transparency comes through providing access to the data. Affected populations have the right to be informed, but that right must always be balanced with the right to privacy of the persons the data concerns.

Casualty recorders may encourage end users to independently evaluate the effectiveness of their security measures, thereby encouraging greater engagement with their data, which may require them to disclose the kind of tools they are using. Casualty recorders should be prepared to share some of their protocols to build trust with others with whom they want to exchange data. For example, they may need to explain the protocol if security has been breached and data may be compromised.

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. 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. When becoming aware of a vulnerability in their security framework, it is the casualty recorder’s responsibility to be transparent about this and inform those who might be affected in the best way possible. 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.

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 a continuous assessment of the situation in which casualty recording activities are undertaken. This assessment must consider the casualty recorder’s purpose, 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. This includes legal threats, which are often overlooked.

Casualty recorders operating in an active conflict environment are in a particularly volatile situation. As their security conditions will be subject to change, it is important that they make security assessments and develop policies accordingly. For example casualty recorders should have procedures in place to secure data that might come under attack. This might include deciding how to degrade the data so the attacker cannot use it.

Casualty recorders should guarantee the safety of those who contribute data and the security of their information. They should also consider how their informants’ behaviour may affect the organisation and its activity, and include this in their risk assessments. For example informants may bring the attention of antagonistic actors to the casualty recorders’ activities, putting its staff and data at risk.
30. Casualty recorders should analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data they collect.

Before considering how 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 collecting it, and those who will use it. This means that casualty recorders must assess the risk of collecting certain kinds of data – for example, information on ethnicity.

Casualty recorders must be aware of the security risks and threats attached to the data they collect, and review them carefully before collecting the data. For example, always recording additional identifying data may not be an appropriate strategy as it could lead to an increased threat to the source if not properly managed. It is important for casualty recorders to assess the level of detail they gather with the “do-no-harm” principle in mind. This helps to ensure this data has no harmful effects on those who contributed it. Ultimately, data processing must be in line with a casualty recorder’s stated objectives. Casualty recorders should ensure that only the minimum data needed to attain those objectives, particularly personal data, is processed.

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 does not provide protection. An assessment of the risk attached to an anonymous testimony must be made before deciding to document it. Anonymity should not be considered an automatically effective way of protecting a witness. Rather, it is a way to respect their desire for anonymity. Casualty recorders must also consider issues of risk and privacy when collecting and re-publishing publicly available information.

31. Casualty recorders should assess which kinds of data to collect or exclude according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and the need to hold this information.

As more detailed data is collected, the level of protection must increase accordingly. If it is not possible for casualty recorders to provide adequate protection, certain data should not be collected as it could endanger those who collected it, those who provided it, and others.

This assessment is particularly important when collecting sensitive data about e.g. religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, kinship on the basis of which people are often discriminated against. Such data can be very important in a post-conflict setting when truth and reconciliation efforts start being put into place. Much of the data which can be crucial to making these efforts successful may be irretrievably lost if not collected at the first opportunity, which might be during conflict. There may therefore be strong incentives for casualty recorders to collect highly sensitive information. However casualty recorders must collect only the data required for their specific objectives and that it can protect in the given context. If they cannot ensure such protection, they should revise these objectives.
The risks attached to sensitive data include it being manipulated or used to discriminate against people. It can also be used in criminal acts such as extortion or even extrajudicial killings. Such risks call for heightened precautions in deciding whether to collect or exclude such data. They also require a high level of scrutiny regarding whether collecting such data is necessary or proportional to the stated objectives or purposes of data processing.

Although the decision over which data to collect 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 information these standards recommend casualty recorders collect include:

- numbers killed;
- location of the incident;
- date of the incident; and
- source of information.

The standards also recommend collecting, when available:

- name, age, sex of the casualty;
- the means by which they were killed; and
- the actors involved.

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 process:

- collecting information;
- evaluating sources;
- corroboration;
- data entry; and
- internal quality control.

As casualty recorders progress through these different components – not necessarily in this order – the data they collect will have different vulnerabilities. It therefore requires different levels or kinds of attention. For example, a general pattern identified by casualty recorders who do on the ground investigation is that at the collection point small amounts of data (limited to that collection point) are at high risk. When it reaches storage, increased security reduces the risk, but this risk involves larger amounts of data.

Risk also varies between methodologies. For example, crowdsourced casualty recording requires casualty recorders to deal with large amounts of information that is not necessarily related to their organisation’s purpose, and which they do not want to hold. This means casualty recorders working with a crowdsourcing\textsuperscript{15} methodology must manage unwanted data that carry potential risks to their sources.

\textsuperscript{15} 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 for all the purposes a casualty recorder will use their data.

When recording a testimony – whether this testimony is given anonymously or not – casualty recorders must make clear to the witness how they plan to use their information and obtain their consent for each specific purpose. These could include storing it on their database, publishing it in a report, using it for advocacy purposes, or transferring it to a court. The casualty recorder must also make clear to the witness what risks are attached to giving their testimony. It is crucial for the casualty recorder to make sure that the witness understands these risks. However, casualty recorders should respect a witness’ willingness to take such risks. When acquiring informed consent, casualty recorders must also inform witnesses about their right to withdraw this consent, except when the data has already been used. For example, once data has been transferred within consent to a court it cannot be withdrawn, except as determined in law.

All casualty recorders must devise informed consent procedures. This may include written, signed forms, depending on risk assessment.

A comprehensive list of all the possible uses that could be made of data gathered through casualty recording would be very long. Casualty recorders should create their own informed consent procedure in view of their objectives. The informed consent procedure should provide for all the specific uses they plan to make of the data collected. This is required, even if some uses might not be immediate and might be conditional on certain developments in funding or the conflict situation. Such uses could include: immediate or future publication; transferring data to a transitional justice mechanism or a court\(^\text{16}\); or sharing it with humanitarian or human rights actors.

It may be difficult to find a witness again to get consent for a new use of their data so all planned uses should be included in the original form. In any case, casualty recording relying on direct testimonies requires that witnesses have given free, informed and express consent on all these planned uses.

Obtaining informed consent from witnesses is part of a casualty recorder’s ethics and best practice. To properly acquire informed consent, casualty recorders need to ensure that consent is given by an individual who fully understands what s/he commits to. A general recommendation is to give the witness a translated version of the document in their preferred language. Alternatively, an interpreter or cultural mediator should be present when the casualty recorder explains the document to the witness, as well as all the different uses that will be made of her/his testimony. It is also important to make clear to the witness how and when they can withdraw this consent.

\(^{16}\) In this case it is useful to specify whether the testimony could be transferred to prosecution or defence, 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, so they can redirect witnesses to them (on issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial and support).

Casualty recorders may get questions about support from the witnesses and violence-affected populations they work with. Although casualty recorders are not expected to provide for such needs, whenever possible they should act as a point of liaison to help people access further support.

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. They should aim to establish referral pathways with such organisations. UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) can be a useful source of contact information as it conducts such mappings in crisis regions.

Section 3 – Standards for the safety of casualty recording staff

35. Casualty recorders must clearly define their relationship with staff members through a written or oral contract, and must 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. A contract is always necessary to establish the rights of the staff and the kind of protection they can expect. A contract must also define how staff should manage the sensitive information they will acquire through their work. A contract creates a legal chain of responsibility for both the employer and the employee.

The choice to define this relationship through a written contract or to keep it as a binding oral contract requires a risk assessment. Casualty recorders should consider the possibility that a written contract might put the contractor at risk by acknowledging the relationship which exists between them. If a casualty recorder does not have the capacity to keep such documents secure, a written contract is not appropriate. An oral contract can be equally binding and protect 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 how staff may use their data. It is important to include both a confidentiality clause and an exclusivity clause in the contract. This prevents past employees from

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17 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, and consultants.
disclosing the data through other channels than the casualty recorder. This is especially important when working with journalists.

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

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

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 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 is responsible for establishing a change in the level of security which changes the way activities are undertaken. Finally, the protocol should include provisions for how each security level might affect activities. For example, it should state how each level might affect movement of staff or what kind of data they should collect. This also relates to standard 31 on assessing the need for specific data.

Where possible, casualty recorders should apply the principle of equitability in designing their protocols. International and local staff will cannot be given the same protections from harm. It is important to provide solutions, despite more limited choices for ensuring the security of local staff (who cannot be relocated abroad, for example). These might include identifying a safe haven where staff and their immediate family could be relocated. This relocation might be at regional or national level if it is deemed more secure.

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

Staff training is a 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, including data security. No matter the level of resources, all casualty recording staff 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 is not necessary for all casualty recorders, depending on the nature of their activity. In any case, it will always be possible to provide a minimum level of training through remote means – including for example via phone, Skype or similar.

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

Casualty recorders must provide psychological support for staff by preparing them for the kind of information and visuals they have to deal with. This is so that it does not come as a shock to them. They should also schedule regular internal debriefings. Ideally, they should base these debriefings on an outline developed by qualified psychologists. The debriefings should be 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, but they guarantee a minimum level of psychological protection for staff. They can identify a psychological threat for a staff member, which in turn would become a risk for the casualty recording activities.

Casualty recorders should consider additional measures to guarantee their employees’ psychological safety. Such measures may include creating partnerships with other NGOs which specialise in providing psychological support. These partnerships should always be formalised through a signed memorandum of understanding between the two organisations providing for strict confidentiality and professional qualifications. Casualty recorders could also hire specialised staff to provide access to psychological support within the organisation.

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.

A data security framework should not only provide for the technological aspect of data protection. The human factor plays an important part in protecting sensitive data and is sometimes the most vulnerable aspect of a security framework. Rapid technological evolution offers casualty recorders increasing resources. However, these tools are effective only if casualty recorders use them with other measures offsetting human risk. The best technology to protect data will be ineffective if the people who control it are attacked, prove disloyal by for instance breaching their confidentiality clause, or are careless with their hardware or basic security measures such as passwords.

For this reason it is important for casualty recorders to identify, assess, and implement holistic security measures to protect their data from all threats.
41. Casualty recorders should adopt a risk-based approach to design the data security measures that are most appropriate to their own activity.

Casualty recording has various purposes and methodologies. As such, no single security framework adequately fits all the different forms a casualty recording activity could take. This is why a risk-based approach allows casualty recorders to design the security framework that corresponds best to their own activities.

A risk-based approach calls for an evaluation of the unique risks associated with the specific 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 can 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 be overly risk averse. They may design burdensome policies which might be impossible for organisations with few resources to sustain, or which might prove impractical in some specific contexts. The rapid and constant evolution of technology and the changing political environments within which casualty recorders work also call for a flexible approach to prevent data security measures from becoming obsolete. Casualty recorders should therefore stay informed of developments in the field.  

Only a risk-based approach yields the most appropriate, tailored, and lightweight framework that all casualty recorders need to have in place. In terms of security, casualty recorders should use frameworks unique to them rather than replicating 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 longer-established casualty recorders from whom they can learn.

Planning

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

Before collecting data, casualty recorders must establish 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 currently available to casualty recorders and all should be assessed for the benefits and risks that are attached to them. The operational context of a casualty recorder will affect the choice made but is not the only factor to consider. For example, casualty recorders operating in environments with an unreliable internet connection will not find online storage appropriate. Indeed, online storage is not always the best option, regardless of network accessibility. Other important issues

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18 The Responsible Data Forum is an example of such a source of information.
when choosing a storage facility and method include the legal and security impact of the storage method, the consequences for staff training, and the effect on the casualty recording work in general. For example, online storage raises the question of third-party access to sensitive data by its provider, who is not part of the casualty recording activity. Alternatively, intricate storage technology requires more staff training to ensure they can use it and keep the data 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.

Organisations trying to implement a holistic approach to data security (see standard 40) sometimes underestimate the human factor. 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 by force or by law to provide such information. For this reason the question of access is vital. In general, it is advised that only a limited number of people should have full access to the data. Creating levels of access reinforces data security as it diminishes the number of vulnerable entry points within the organisation. Access must be granted on the need-to-know principle. This principle demands that access to certain levels of information should only be granted to a person who has a specific need to know it in order to carry out their duties. It is important to create good levels of protection through other technologies preventing hacking and cyber infiltration. Only a combined use of access policies and 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 must develop a protocol to deal with the disappearance, death or disengagement of people with full data access. Otherwise, all the data could be lost because no one else has any way of retrieving the accreditations needed to access it (for example IDs or passwords).

The person with the highest level of access to the data, and whose disappearance would jeopardise the whole casualty recording project, has the responsibility to design such a protocol. This protocol will provide for the transfer of responsibilities, 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.
45. Casualty recorders should plan for the archiving of their data when a project is discontinued or comes to a natural end.

Projects can stop for different reasons. These could include that the operational environment may worsen, or the funds needed to continue are unable to be secured. Casualty-recording projects may also come to a natural end. Casualty recorders should therefore plan what to do with the data once the project stops. Generally speaking data may be either destroyed or archived.

Most casualty recording initiatives go beyond simply giving a picture of harm at a set point in time. They provide data that can be useful in the longer term for reconciliation, memorialisation and other efforts. Destroying entire databases is therefore seldom appropriate in casualty recording. However, some parts of a database may need to be destroyed where data is not essential or a security risk. This means, for example, that certain paper records should be destroyed as soon as they have been digitised and backed up. Digital data, particularly crowdsourcing, may also need to be destroyed if it could endanger sources or is not essential to the casualty recording work.

Casualty recorders should look into archiving solutions to properly conserve their data. Ideally, archiving solutions should be assessed and decided on before starting a casualty recording project. Casualty recorders must ensure that archived data maintains at least the same level of protection that they were providing, as archiving often involves giving data to another entity. Casualty recorders should note that they are not obliged to share all their data. For example, they might decide it is safer not to hand over information on sources.

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

Sharing is dealt with in chapter 5 of this document. However casualty recorders must consider a specific data security aspect 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 shared with them. This puts 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 if they are donors or other trusted actors.

To this end, casualty recorders should make their security expectations of partner organisations clear in writing. They should specify 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 data protection and other laws will affect their activity, and plan accordingly.

All casualty recorders operate within a territory that is subjected to specific laws. They should identify all the jurisdictions their activity can potentially fall under. This can include the jurisdiction where:

- the organisation is registered;
- the violence is taking place; and / or
- the database is stored.

It is also important to identify all the ways the law, specifically as it relates to data protection and data privacy, may affect a casualty recorder’s activity. It can affect the data itself (which could be seized), the organisation (which could be shut down) or members of staff (who could be jailed).

Most laws are evolving, particularly those relating to data privacy. To ensure adequate security, casualty recorders must monitor how changing laws affect their activity, their data and those who contributed the data.

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

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

Casualty recorders must therefore put in place specific measures and protocols to apply when their data security is breached and the data potentially compromised. Contingency planning is vital. It is also key in building trust with partners.

Such contingency plans should include a way to notify those directly potentially affected by a security breach to warn them about potential repercussions for their safety. When possible this means informing all sources affected by the breach. If this is not possible, casualty recorders should inform all available directly affected stakeholders, including staff and partner organisations with whom data is being exchanged. Contingency 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 their identification, dismissal (if relevant), and further actions (potentially legal) if warranted.
Implementing

49. Casualty recorders must thoroughly assess whether the tools they use meet 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 daily (such as for communication and 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 the standards that casualty recorders should use to develop policies for the publication, dissemination, and sharing of the data that they have collected. These standards help casualty recorders demonstrate their credibility and that of the information they publish. They also help their data to be used to benefit violence-affected populations in the greatest number of ways possible.

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

Publication of casualty recording data by NGOs and others is also a means to encourage and assist states to undertake casualty recording themselves, since it demonstrates the feasibility and benefits of doing so. The Charter for the Recognition of Every Casualty of Armed Violence asserts that states have a responsibility to gather this data and thereby contribute to the public record. Effective, transparent and standardised practice in existing casualty recording helps support global efforts to establish casualty recording in state practice. By publishing their data according to the standards asked of states, casualty recorders strengthen advocacy efforts directed at states to do likewise.

One purpose of developing publication standards is that it makes casualty data more consistent globally. By adhering to publication standards which meet a variety of end user needs, casualty recorders can share their data efficiently with a wide range of actors with different purposes and objectives. These include providing humanitarian aid effectively and efficiently to the most affected populations, and supporting global advocacy efforts for collective interventions. They also include analysing the dynamics of violence and identifying patterns of 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 for casualty recorders regarding the publication and dissemination of their data to the affected population. They highlight the most important aspects of publication which casualty recorders 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 help casualty recorders standardise the way they present their data to make it easier to share among 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 presented here in detail:

Casualty recorders should be transparent about the data they publish.

Casualty recorders should explain their methodology, they should provide the rationale for the level of aggregation chosen in their presentation of the data, and the categories used.

A casualty recorder may decide not to publish some of the data they have collected for several reasons. This may be to avoid endangering any source, staff member or other stakeholder. It may also include efficacy, as higher levels of aggregation are better for some analytical purposes.

Casualty recorders should also explain the limitations of their data alongside any information they publish (as well as in their general methodology). This includes specifying what they were not able to confirm or collect, how they evaluated the reliability of their sources and the credibility of the information recorded (see chapter 2). It also includes any factor which might have influenced the quality of the data. This reduces the risk of misinterpretation and misuse of the casualty recorder’s data.

Casualty recorders should also provide mechanisms to correct their data, including after publication. As a major target audience, the affected populations may improve the data published if there is a way for them to flag errors or omissions, and suggest corrections. All casualty recorders will find difficult to include every single casualty when collecting their data. If affected populations can understand and access the data, they can contact the casualty recorder with new information, thereby contributing to enhancing the data’s quality and range.

Casualty recorders are responsible for eventually making their data available to the population affected by the violent context they monitor.

Even if the initial target audience was a different one, casualty recorders should always try to make their information available to the affected population. This process of providing information to the affected population is sometimes called “restitution”. Such sharing might happen at a later stage if the casualty recorder undertakes their activities remotely. Casualty recorders should also share their data in a meaningful way with other humanitarian actors. This can help inform and enhance the humanitarian response in the affected region.
It is important for casualty recorders to consider and prepare for the possibility that they may not have the resources to carry out and publish analyses of their data. They still have a responsibility to publish and share the data in these situations. Practical problems should not prevent useful information from being shared publicly. Casualty recorders should therefore plan how to share their data with another organisation that could complete and publish it, if necessary. By planning for such cases, casualty recorders can ensure that their data best serves the affected population.

These considerations also apply to organisations (for example, UN entities) that collect information on casualties but not for the purpose of public acknowledgement. If they have information which is vitally important for the public recognition of every casualty they should share it with other suitable actors so it can be published at an appropriate time. There should always be strict agreements about sharing such data so that casualty recorders keep control of their data and its effects (see also standard 57).

Section 2 – Standards for publication and dissemination of data

50. Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful when making decisions about publication.

Casualty data can help to inform or support many institutional activities, whether humanitarian or policy-related. Above all, casualty data can have public value. Casualty recorders should carefully consider how their data can serve the public interest.

This consideration will influence a casualty recorder’s decision on how often they publish data and in what form (for example, as a searchable database, reports, or mapping). It also affects the level of aggregation of the data itself. These standards do not provide a specific answer to these questions. It will always be the casualty recorder who must assess the impact of their data and its various possible uses.

51. Casualty recorders should identify their reasons for deciding what data not to publish.

When designing their publication policies, casualty recorders should consider not only what to publish but also their reasons for not publishing any of the data they have gathered.

The principle of “do no harm” requires casualty recorders to do a risk and threat analysis regarding the data they publish. This is to avoid harmful consequences for the affected population – particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children – and the casualty recording staff themselves.

For example, sensitive data regarding religion or ethnicity might be collected but not published during conflict in cases where the casualty recorder believes this information...
could fuel tensions and put many at risk. However, such data may be useful and even necessary in post-conflict truth and reconciliation initiatives. In any case, all recorded data, the risks attached to it, and the way a casualty recorder intends to use it (or not) must be made clear to the source when it is collected. Due informed consent must be 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 yet reach a level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed.

Some casualty recorders decide to publish all events they record – as long as it is safe to do so – without being able to corroborate all the information. It may be difficult to determine the facts immediately due to conflicting accounts or missing information. A casualty recorder may decide to publish what is known about an event at the time. In these circumstances, casualty recorders must flag events or individuals whose data is not confirmed to the usual level. This allows users to decide how to treat such cases. This applies, for example, to casualty recorders who give a minimum and maximum range for estimated casualties in an event when they cannot resolve conflicting information. Important elements of a practitioner’s methodology that affect how the data can be used must always be reflected in the way the data is published. This includes websites, reports and broadcasts.

53. Casualty recorders should use a level of aggregation that fits their specific objectives when they publish data, but always consider the ultimate objective of recognising every casualty.

The ultimate objective of casualty recording should be the individual and public recognition of every casualty. However, these standards do not specify a level of disaggregation for publishing data. Casualty recorders operate for a wide variety of reasons and with different objectives. No single level of aggregation can serve all of them effectively. Casualty recorders may not always wish to publish fully disaggregated data (meaning data given at an incident or individual level) for strategic reasons. For example, if the main purpose of a recorder’s data is supporting advocacy, they may decide that data is more powerful and produces more results if it is published as trends rather than as incidents, to draw attention to patterns of harm. However, it is essential for memorialisation efforts to have the highest level of disaggregation possible in publication. This fulfils the element of recognition and respect that such initiatives aim to achieve.

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

If casualty recorders collect disaggregated data they should safeguard it, even if they decide not to publish it. This allows future corroboration if new information becomes available and sharing with suitable partners. It also allows for future publication should the organisation’s objectives or strategy change.
54. Casualty recorders should assess and identify the most effective ways of communicating their data.

Casualty recorders are responsible for publishing their data and making it available to the affected population, and should determine the best way to do this in the context in which they operate.

This should involve those who are directly concerned by the publication. It may be helpful to consult victims’ associations or civil society organisations involved with affected populations. If possible, it is useful to interact directly with the population to measure their expectations.

It is important to consider the accessibility of the technical means used to publish the data. Sharing the data through a website is generally useful for reaching national and international audiences. However in many cases this is not the only solution needed to reach affected populations effectively. Internet connectivity can be an issue in certain regions with poor infrastructure 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 distributing paper copies of their information. Other options include using radio or setting up a mobile phone communication channel (which works with any kind of mobile phone, not just smartphones). This might be particularly useful for target audiences with high levels of illiteracy.

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

The choice of language should result from an evaluation of which language(s) are the least problematic and most accessible for publication. This depends on a casualty recorder’s target audience and the need to consider communication with the affected population.

In most cases this will be the native language(s) of the region/country where the casualties occurred. Publishing primarily in English or French might unhelpfully suggest the imposition of an outside agenda to the target group. On the other hand, the political implications of the language choice (and its consequences for inclusiveness) might make a neutral “international” language more acceptable.

All casualty recorders must consider publishing in English, as it can support various objectives. For example, if a casualty recorder wants to attract international attention or conduct international advocacy, publishing their data in English will be necessary. However, English is not specifically recommended as the main language of publication except where it is the official language of the affected population.
Many casualty recorders choose not to publish comprehensive data in both the local language and English due to the resources it might demand. However, they should consider translating their methodology into English (particularly the categories and definitions). This makes it easier to share and helps with responding to questions from the international community.

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

In order to reach target audiences effectively, including the affected population, casualty recorders often need to conduct outreach activities after publishing their data. This may include working with the media and other organisations, such as victims’ associations, to reach affected populations. This allows casualty recorders to ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data. It also enables them to design context-appropriate mechanisms for these target audiences to provide feedback on the data itself and ways to make it more useful.

Outreach activities can be expensive and limited resources may prevent casualty recorders from carrying them out effectively. However, it recommended that they consider developing outreach strategies even if they cannot implement them immediately. This helps casualty recorders to clarify what they hope or could realistically expect to achieve through their activities. The opportunity to implement these strategies may come at a later stage, and should be used if possible (for example, if an organisation’s budget increases).

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.

The context and objectives of a casualty recorder should inform the levels of aggregation at which they share their data with other actors. There is no ideal level of aggregation that suits all casualty recorders and their partners.

Casualty recorders should only share data if doing so aligns with their objectives and if they have received informed consent to do so. They should also have assessed and mitigated the risk to stakeholders posed by the information being shared.

If the purpose of sharing is to corroborate and improve the data, then casualty recorders should share data at the same level of aggregation that the partner uses. This can mean a high level of disaggregation. However, sharing highly disaggregated data might not be desirable or advisable in all cases and for all casualty recorders. A casualty recorder must clearly and strictly define the way they share data to avoid others misusing it.
Decisions about the level of data aggregation, categories and details that will be shared between the casualty recorder and other professional actors should always be put into a formal data sharing agreement. This binds 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.

Much energy is often wasted by organisations collecting data that others have already collected. This not only wastes resources but it also contributes to interview fatigue among the population interviewed. Interview fatigue can lead to altered data and growing discontent within the population, which may start seeing the various organisations as ineffective and unreliable. It can also increase the risk of re-traumatising witnesses through the repeated recounting of their stories.

Casualty recorders should share their data as much as possible with humanitarian and other professional partners. This links to the mapping that casualty recorders should do to allow them to redirect people to organisations that can respond to their needs (see standard 34). Casualty recorders should develop partnerships with other organisations for the mutual sharing of information. This helps avoid causing detriment to the affected population by duplicating efforts.
Selected Terminology

Armed violence\textsuperscript{19}:  
For the purpose of these standards, armed violence is defined according to the Geneva Declaration as: “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).

Casualty recording:  
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:  
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:  
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.

\textsuperscript{19} This definition itself is based on the UN Secretary General’s definition of armed violence but excludes 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.)
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