everycasualty

Practitioner conformance with the Standards for Casualty Recording

A study of four casualty recording organisations




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Cover images
Clockwise from top left:
Airwars staff discuss a civilian harm incident recently added to their database. (Photo – Kat Brealey)
Crisis Tracker staff in DRC receive reports of armed group activity via a high-frequency radio network. (Photo – Invisible Children)
Staff at Nigeria Watch review the daily newspapers for stories involving casualties. (Photo – Kat Brealey)
A forensic anthropologist sorts and examines human remains at the FAFG lab in Guatemala City. (Photo – Kat Brealey)

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Executive Summary

Every Casualty Worldwide (ECW) is dedicated to ensuring that every life lost to armed violence is promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged. This work is rooted in the moral imperative to recognise the unique value of every human life, and the practical, legal and societal benefits associated with robust and credible casualty recording.

In 2016, following a three-year consultation, ECW launched the Standards for Casualty Recording. These allow casualty recording organisations to evaluate and develop their practices against 58 agreed standards. At the same time, users of casualty data benefit from a set of criteria against which to evaluate its quality.

Understanding whether and how the Standards are implemented is the next step towards greater consistency among practitioners, which in turn will encourage wider use of casualty data by states and IGOs. This research project pilots a process for measuring conformance to the Standards, by evaluating four organisations – Nigeria Watch, Airwars, the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG) and the Crisis Tracker, all members of the Casualty Recorders Network which ECW facilitates. In doing so it demonstrates a methodology for reviewing existing practice to identify strengths and areas for further development. The successful deployment of this during four field studies proves that conformance to each individual standard is measurable, and can be assessed in a rigorous and collaborative fashion. As such, this methodology could form the basis of a future process of accreditation for casualty recording organisations.

Overall, this research reveals an encouraging but not comprehensive degree of conformance to the Standards. 26% of these are conformed to by all four organisations, 21% are conformed to by the majority of the organisations, 48% have mixed levels of conformance across the organisations, and 5% are not conformed to by any of the organisations. This suggests that the Standards do reflect and formalise the state of the field and best practice within it, as opposed to setting an impossibly high bar. However it is also clear they are not overly forgiving and therefore can act to encourage increased standardisation, with measurement of existing practice against them indicating areas for improvement.

Beyond the headline figures, this report also reviews the findings of the four field studies to identify patterns in conformance. Conformance is not consistent across the chapters of the Standards. Rather, those addressing 'Methodology' and 'Definitions and Categories' generally see the strongest conformance. Standards relating to 'Transparency' and 'Publishing' see mixed conformance, while those on 'Security' see the lowest levels of conformance.

Given the small sample size, this is not a decisive insight into the situation across the whole field. However the participating organisations were diverse in both context and approach, so the existence of common themes suggests areas which merit further attention.

Introduction

ABOUT EVERY CASUALTY WORLDWIDE

Every Casualty Worldwide (ECW) is a UK-based, charitable non-governmental organisation dedicated to ensuring that every life lost to armed violence is promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged. Its work is based on the moral imperative to recognise the unique value of every human life, and the practical, legal and societal benefits which result from robust and credible casualty recording.

To bring this about, ECW is improving global understanding of the range of available casualty recording practices and developing guidance for implementing them. This has included original research into existing good practices and the development of common standards for use by a range of actors, including non-governmental organisations, states, and intergovernmental organisations. In addition, ECW facilitates an international network of practitioners, the Casualty Recorders Network (CRN), the majority of whom are based in civil society. ECW is also at the forefront of integrating professional casualty recording into national and international policy frameworks.

Since ECW began its work in 2007, the value of casualty recording has been increasingly recognised. These diverse benefits span the entire conflict cycle and include:

- Early warning of likely atrocities and mass deaths;
- Facilitating humanitarian response planning by identifying areas of risk and need;
- Monitoring the compliance of conflict parties with International Humanitarian Law;
- Real time evidence of developing crises to support advocacy for political action (nationally and internationally);
- Ending uncertainty for families regarding missing persons;
- Assisting survivors claiming asylum, compensation, or war benefits;
- Contributing to effective transitional justice and truth and reconciliation processes;
- Ensuring a dignified, victim-centred process of memorialisation which reflects the inherent humanity of every casualty;
- Impeding manipulation of casualty figures for political purposes (including genocide denial).

THE STANDARDS FOR CASUALTY RECORDING

In 2013 ECW began engaging with a wide range of international entities over the outcomes and implications of ***its major research project into existing casualty recording practice around the world***. Much good practice was identified among the forty practitioner organisations studied, but work remained to be done to generalise this to apply to the widest range of contexts. A related question was how an understanding of the nature and benefits of high quality casualty recording could be brought to a broader audience.

A key recommendation arising from the research was that the development of common standards could strengthen and give greater legitimacy and recognition to the field of casualty recording. It was recognised that documenting deaths in situations of armed violence requires both methodological and ethical standards, to improve the quality of documentation and promote better understanding of this practice among those who use casualty data.

In 2016, after a three year consultative process involving thirty organisations worldwide, ECW launched the Standards for Casualty Recording with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is these standards, articulated in greater depth below, which enabled and underpin the research outlined in this report. They can be found on the ECW website, in ***English, Plain English, Arabic, French, Spanish,*** as well as in ***Turkish*** courtesy of CRN member Hafiza Merkezi.

For the first time there now exists a means by which casualty recording organisations can evaluate and develop their practices against known and agreed standards. At the same time, both existing and future users of their data can have a set of criteria against which to evaluate the quality and utility of the work being presented. The Standards also serve as a unique and increasingly accepted tool in ongoing international advocacy by ECW and partners.

It should be noted that the Standards were compiled as a reflection of existing good practice. As such, many organisations within the CRN, including those involved in this research, will choose to work towards them rather than claim to have implemented them in full. For this reason the term 'conformance' is used throughout this report, rather than 'compliance'.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This research project was designed to pilot a process for measuring how the Standards for Casualty Recording, which were developed on the basis of practitioner experience as outlined above, manifest in the work of specific organisations. Now that agreed standards have been codified, a focus on whether and how these are implemented is important as the next step towards greater consistency among practitioners, thus encouraging wider use of casualty data by states and IGOs. As such, a key aim of this study is to showcase a methodology for auditing existing practice and identifying areas of strength and further development needed, and provide a "proof of concept" that such assessments can be carried out in a rigorous and collaborative fashion. This methodology could form the basis of a future process of accreditation for casualty recording organisations who want to discover and demonstrate their level of conformance.

A further aim of this study is to identify common barriers to conformance with the Standards, as well as discerning whether and how the Standards are evident in and adding value to the work of casualty recorders. The process is intended to be mutually beneficial, with each participating organisation receiving tailored feedback on their work and recommendations for improvement. This can serve to inform discussion about what actions could be taken in order to become more Standards conformant, and which should be prioritised.

More broadly, the findings across all four studies provide a record of common difficulties or obstacles in implementation, as well as demonstrating the benefits of implementing particular practices. Given the small sample size, this cannot be claimed as a decisive insight into the situation across the whole field – however the organisations selected were intentionally diverse. This means the common themes identified merit further attention to see if they are also present more widely, and if

so what interventions in these areas would be valuable. As such, the findings will inform ongoing efforts to enable and encourage high quality casualty recording in all contexts affected by armed violence.

This report draws together the findings of the four field studies, to highlight common themes. As such, it has two intended audiences. The first is casualty recording practitioners, who we hope will benefit from the findings as an aid to reflection on their own work and the extent to which their experience is shared by other organisations. In addition, the report will be of interest to those doing other work in or on conflict-affected settings, who may be considering developing a casualty recording project and wondering how the Standards might benefit them. The second is the wider audience whose work and concerns relate to casualty recording and the data it can provide on the lethal effects of armed violence on individuals and communities. This encompasses states, IGOs, academics and researchers, humanitarian actors, and journalists. We hope these readers will be encouraged to see that standardised casualty recording is possible and that tools are emerging to measure and encourage this.

METHODOLOGY

Between November 2019 and April 2020, four field studies were conducted with members of the Casualty Recorders Network. Three of these were carried out in person, while the fourth took place remotely due to travel restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Diverse organisations were deliberately chosen, to demonstrate the relevance of the Standards to casualty recorders with different contexts, sizes and aims.

The purpose of the field studies was to carry out a collaborative assessment of the extent to which the organisation in question is in conformance with the Standards for Casualty Recording, as well as to identify where this has been deemed either not possible or desirable. This was done by interviewing key members of staff, using a set of questions which relate to the 58 standards. These can be found in Appendix 1. The interviews were supplemented by directly observing the various aspects of the organisation's work (in three cases) and engaging in further conversations prompted by this. Methodological documents and code books were also supplied in advance.

Following each study, the organisation was provided with a written report highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. These four organisational reports, which were confidential, form the basis of this one. In what follows, common themes are drawn out and discussed. The organisations are kept anonymous within the report, in terms of particular comments, but are named here to indicate the breadth of casualty recording work which informed it.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The project findings are shaped by the organisations which participated in the research. These were selected from within the Casualty Recorders Network on the basis of having an active relationship with ECW, the capacity to engage in a field study, and being located in a context where travel is possible. Within the pool of possible organisations, there was a deliberate choice to select a diverse range of participants. This meant including both remote and proximate casualty recorders, different

approaches from media monitoring to radio networks to forensics, and different purposes and primary audiences – academic, policymakers, or affected communities. The four organisations are described below to illustrate this, but are anonymised in the report that follows. Given that the selection criteria discounted some organisations, the impact of this should be acknowledged in two ways.

Firstly, the organisations were already aware of the Standards and some had contributed to their development. As such, a greater degree of conformance can be expected than might be the case among organisations not familiar with the Standards in advance. Indeed we might expect that organisations willing to take part anticipated their evaluation having a favourable result. However the fact that areas of improvement were still found for all organisations show that it was a meaningful process – and worthwhile even for those who are familiar with the Standards.

Secondly, many CRN members are located in places experiencing active violent conflict, where field studies could not be conducted for security reasons. However to mitigate this, two of the participants are remote monitors – recording casualties in places of active conflict while being physically located elsewhere. This meant that those involved in the research include casualty recording at a range of points in the conflict cycle, which is important in terms of understanding which standards are more challenging to fulfil in different circumstances.

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

Nigeria Watch is a research project monitoring lethal violence, conflicts, and human security in Nigeria. It began in July 2006 in Paris, France, and since 2013 has been hosted by the French Institute for Research in Africa on the campus of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. Nigeria Watch is a media monitoring project, recording all casualties reported in ten national daily newspapers – whether these are a result of armed conflict, road traffic accidents, domestic violence or another cause.

Airwars is an organisation founded in 2014 which tracks civilian harm resulting from military action in countries including Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia. They use a range of sources, with a focus on local media and social media reports. Their headquarters are in the UK, where they are affiliated with the Department of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. They also have a satellite office in the Netherlands plus staff based elsewhere in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and North America.

The Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG) is an organisation established over twenty years ago to locate and identify victims of the internal armed conflict of 1960-1996. They use archaeology, anthropology and genetics to match human remains to profiles supplied by family members, so that bodies can be returned to them for burial. They are based in two premises in Guatemala City, and conduct field work all over the country as well as supporting forensic anthropology internationally.

The Crisis Tracker is a geospatial database and reporting project that tracks armed group activity and conflict-related incidents in the remote region encompassing Haut Mbomou, Mbomou, and Haute Kotto prefectures in the Central African Republic and

Bas Uele and Haut Uele provinces in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Their data is drawn primarily from a community-based high-frequency radio network that connects more than 120 communities, and complemented by reports from other sources. The Crisis Tracker is a project of Invisible Children, an international NGO headquartered in Washington D.C. with country offices in CAR and DRC.

FINDINGS BY CHAPTER
In the following sections, each chapter of the Standards is discussed in turn.

UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS
Most chapters are also subdivided along thematic lines, and this is made clear at the outset. For each section, a table is provided which indicates how the relevant standards manifest in the practice of the four organisations – whether there was no conformance, partial conformance or full conformance. Within the Standards there are some things that casualty recorders 'must' do and others which they 'should' do, and the table indicates this. (This aspect of standards conformance is discussed in more detail in the conclusion.)

Where the numbers in a single row of the table add up to less than four, this is accompanied by an asterisk which points to a note that the standard in question was not applicable to all the organisations surveyed. For example, **Std.33** states that **"casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses"** – however two organisations do not utilise witness testimonies and therefore this standard does not apply to them.

The headline text of each standard is shown in the table, and these are also quoted in the narrative report found beneath each table. The narrative report contains comments on conformance, and useful additional details. Where specific standards are referenced in the text, the abbreviation 'Std.' is followed by the relevant number. There are also occasional quotes from the explanatory notes found alongside the headline text in the published Standards.

Not every standard is dealt with individually in the narrative, as the focus is on highlighting themes and trends across all four organisations. Where there is good conformance, this is noted; however the report pays particular attention to areas where there is mixed or no conformance and considers why this might be the case based on interview data.

Chapter 1

Organisational Transparency

After looking at how the principles of casualty recording relate to organisational transparency, the first chapter of the Standards contains a single section comprising five standards (**Stds.1-5**).

Organisational Transparency		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.1	Casualty recorders must be transparent about their mission and motivations for recording.			4
Std.3	Casualty recorders must make information about their methodology transparent and publicly accessible.		2	2
	Should			
Std.2	Casualty recorders should provide information about political or other affiliations which might compromise their commitment to being inclusive with their recording.		1	3
Std.4	The organisational structure of casualty recording organisations should be made transparent and accessible to all stakeholders.	1	2	1
Std.5	Information on funders should be transparent and publicly accessible.	1	1	2

"Casualty recorders must be transparent about their mission and motivations for recording" (**Std.1**). All four organisations are transparent in this regard. Generally this is demonstrated on their websites, in their publications, and in legal documentation such as articles of association.

However conformance across the other standards in this chapter varies. **Std.2** states that **"casualty recorders should provide information about political or other affiliations which might compromise their commitment to being inclusive in their recording"**. All four organisations reported no formal affiliations, and do not allow their political stance to influence their recording or negatively affect its inclusiveness.

However not all make this explicit, and even those that do so report also choosing to keep references to their political persuasions more generally to a minimum, to avoid creating opportunities for detractors to undermine their work. While the impact of such disclosures varies depending on the political context, all organisations are aware of the risk of their politics overshadowing their work and limiting its impact.

The Standards do recognise this possibility, but ultimately conclude that the response to opposition should be greater transparency, noting that:

"Casualty recorders should be aware how being transparent about their political affiliations can impact their operations…this should not however be a reason for a casualty recorder to avoid being transparent about its political affiliations. Casualty recorders should attempt to address such consequences not through hiding their affiliations, which would compromise their integrity, but through measures such as showing stakeholders their transparent and inclusive methodology."

While the organisations studied do not have affiliations to hide, discussions with them indicate that transparency around methodology is not always sufficient to dissuade people from accusations of bias. This is particularly the case in contexts where perpetrators of past or ongoing violence maintain political power or influence, and thus are both opposed to attempts to document casualties and able to take action against those who do so. All the organisations had encountered suspicion about their underlying motives, and for some this manifested in sustained campaigns or threats against them.

This is a reminder that casualty recording continues to be a contentious activity, even when conducted with a clearly defensible methodology. As such the existence of independent standards is significant. These can function as a tool for organisations to bolster their legitimacy, by showing their alignment with a framework which stands apart from the political context in question. Although those intent on undermining a casualty recording effort may not be convinced by this, it may reduce the impact of their claims, as other stakeholders in and outside the country are less likely to accept them as accurate or significant.

Connected to the point above, this chapter of the Standards also states that **"casualty recorders must make information about their methodology transparent and publicly accessible"** (**Std.3**), including detailed information on how data is gathered, managed and curated. The organisations vary in their response to this, with two making their full methodology available on their website and two choosing to provide a more general overview. These more general overviews are pitched at a non-specialist audience, and as such do not cover all the recommended material – namely the five aspects of a casualty recording methodology; types of sources used, the collection process, source and information evaluation, corroboration and quality control. This should be accompanied by published definitions for the categories used, which again not all organisations do. Where this information is not available to end users, there is a risk of data being misused or misinterpreted, or at least not used to its full potential.

"The organisational structure of casualty recording organisations should be made accessible" (**Std.4**), including information about staffing and governance. Here too there is divergence in practice. One organisation does this in full, two do so partially, and one does not do so at all. Finally in this chapter, **"information on funders should be transparent and publicly accessible"** (**Std.5**). Two conform fully to this, and one does so partially – all of these with the exception of funders who request anonymity or where sharing funding information would endanger operations.

In discussion about **Std.3** and **Std.4**, and to some extent **Std.5**, organisations questioned the relevance of making all this information available externally, and the extent to which end users would value or consult it. In addition, the requirement to ensure that any information made public is also kept up to date and revised as necessary was not always felt to be practical given limited capacity. This indicates the extent to which casualty recording organisations conduct frequent cost-benefit analyses, either formally or informally, to determine where resources should be deployed. At present the organisations generally feel that publishing all the suggested information would not be the most effective use of staff time.

It might therefore be valuable to conduct research with end users about the information which is most beneficial in enabling them to interpret and utilise casualty data. For example, to what extent, and why, does lack of organisational detail actually matter to them? For **Std.3**, it remains to be determined whether end users expect to know the step-by-step process employed by casualty recorders or if a more general overview of methods is sufficient. Similarly, for **Std.4** a brief organisational description might satisfy some end users, with others considering further details necessary. For **Std.5**, declaring only major funders and not every small, private donation may afford sufficient transparency for most end users.

The limited resources of many casualty recording organisations mean that often to conform to **Std.3**, **Std.4** and **Std.5** in full would not be a case of simply committing to publishing additional details, but rather a change in organisational priorities so other areas receive less attention. As such these decisions need to be informed by reliable feedback from end users. While it would seem reasonable for standards which are 'musts' to be given greater priority than those which are 'shoulds', the level of detail necessary to fulfil end user requirements may also be a useful factor in determining the allocation of resources.

Chapter 2

Methodology

After looking at how the principles of casualty recording relate to methodological issues, the chapter of the Standards on methodology is split into a further two sections; the first covers sources (**Stds.6-10**) and the second looks at data (**Stds.11-21**).

Methodology – Sources		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.6	All casualty recorders must have clear means of dealing with both documentary evidence and witness statements.*			2
	Should			
Std.7	Casualty recorders should be aware of all the sources that are available to them in a given context and of the limitations that are attached to these.		2	2
Std.8	Casualty recorders should consider using a rating scale that is open to review that grades the reliability of their sources.	4		
Std.9	Casualty recorders should not reject any source that can give relevant information, even if the information given is minimal.		1	3
Std.10	Casualty recorders should use multiple independent sources as much as possible for each entry they record.		1	3

**Note – Std. 6 is N/A to two organisations.*

When it comes to sources, there are some areas of divergence in organisational practice. **Std.6** says that **"all casualty recorders must have clear means of dealing with both documentary evidence and witness statements"**. Two organisations do, whereas two only use one type of source, so this standard is not relevant to their current practice. Despite this, they all conform fully or partially to **Std.10** – **"casualty recorders should use multiple independent sources as much as possible for each entry they record"** – although two organisations noted situations where this was often not possible, because of the remote location of incidents. In addition, **"casualty recorders should not reject any source that can give relevant information, even if the information given is minimal"** (**Std.9**). All four do this, although one

organisation noted that they only add an additional source to their database if it includes a detail not found elsewhere.

As for the reliability of sources, **"casualty recorders should be aware of all the potential sources that are available to them in a given context and of the limitations that are attached to these"** (**Std.7**). Two organisations demonstrate this awareness while the other two have not assessed the possible limitations of their sources, and as such face more challenges in understanding the impact of this on their data. In addition, **"casualty recorders should consider using a rating scale that grades the reliability of their sources and is open to review"** (**Std.8**), but at present none of the organisations do.

The limited conformance with **Std.7** and **Std.8** is worthy of comment. In **Std.7** it is **"recommended that casualty recorders map all the different sources they could be using"**, and a list is provided of categories which may be available. This exercise paves the way for establishing the rating scale proposed in **Std.8**. In the absence of a rating scale, the organisations demonstrate varying degrees of non-formalised awareness of the reliability of different sources. This is potentially problematic, as assumptions about sources which have not been made explicit, interrogated, and communicated to all members of the team can lead to inconsistency in recording. While **Std.8** recognises that **"the assessment of sources and the credibility of information they provide is a process whose results are never fixed"**, creating and using a provisional rating scale strengthens the casualty recording process and the data it generates. As such, casualty recorders might benefit from a practical resource focussed on the process of mapping and rating sources, to aid organisations in conforming to these two standards.

Methodology – Data		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.11	Casualty recorders must be aware of the importance of having a well-organised and consistent system for dealing with information, but also room for human judgement and flexibility in its application.			4
Std.12	Casualty recorders must consider systematically recording specific points of information during their data collection which will be beneficial for the consistency and the accuracy of the information collected.			4

Methodology – Data (continued)		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.14	Casualty recorders must have a process of corroboration in place to evaluate the data they have collected.			4
Std.16	Casualty recorders must plan how they will deal with disagreement between sources.			4
Std.21	Casualty recorders must provide for ways to avoid duplicate recording.			4
	Should			
Std.13	Casualty recorders should store every relevant document.			4
Std.15	Casualty recorders should seek to corroborate their data through the use of multiple independent sources.		2	2
Std.17	Casualty recorders should establish standard operational procedures to ensure the consistent entry of data into their database.			4
Std.18	All data entries should remain open so as to incorporate any new information.			4
Std.19	Casualty recorders should divide up the components of a casualty recording process between different people to minimise human error and simplify the work.		2	2
Std.20	Casualty recorders should consider having several staff members to review each other's work before confirming an incident/individual.		2	2

All four organisations demonstrate excellent conformance to those standards in the data section of this chapter which are described as 'musts'. Each organisation understands the importance of **"having a well-organised and consistent system for dealing with information, but also room for human judgment and flexibility**

in its application" (**Std.11**). Though the systems vary according to the type of casualty recording work being conducted, they all **"systematically record specific points of information that will be beneficial for ensuring the consistency and accuracy of the information collected"** (**Std.12**), and **"a process of corroboration in place to evaluate the data they have collected"** (**Std.14**), tailored to their work. As well as using multiple sources where possible, these include a multi-disciplinary methodology where the findings of different teams confirm or query one another, tracing reports back to their original source, and using networks in the field to seek additional sources. All four organisations also have **"plan[ned] how they will deal with disagreement between sources"** (**Std.16**) and **"provide for ways to avoid duplicate recording"** (**Std.21**). It is clear that all these measures contribute to the production of high quality casualty data.

In general there is also good conformance with the standards which are described as 'shoulds', although this is not as comprehensive as above. All four organisations **"store every relevant document"** (**Std.13**), **"have establish[ed] standard operational procedures to ensure the consistent entry of data into their database"** (**Std.17**) and **"ensure all data entries remain open so as to incorporate new information"** (**Std.18**).

However, **"casualty recorders should seek to corroborate their data through the use of multiple independent sources"** (**Std.15**) and given that for two organisations multiple sources are not always available, this is not possible. The Standards recognise that multiple sourcing is not always feasible, especially in fragile contexts, but it should remain an aim. In light of this, the text accompanying this standard proposes that **"casualty recorders should consider flagging single sourced entries in public materials to allow their readers and users of the data to make their own judgements about how these cases should be considered"**. At present those organisations which regularly record single-sourced incidents do not do this explicitly, though it is made clear either in the list of sources or the narrative.

Finally, in relation to the process of gathering and entering data, **"casualty recorders should divide up the components of a casualty recording process between different people to minimise human error and simplify the work"** (**Std.19**). The organisations with larger teams are able to do this but those with small teams are restricted in their implementation of this standard, and their processes either have fewer stages, and/or several of these are carried out by the same person. When it comes to reviewing data, **"casualty recorders should consider having several staff members to review each other's work before confirming an incident or individual"** (**Std.20**). Two organisations have multiple opportunities for review before an incident is confirmed, one organisation has a single review before confirmation, and one opts to review incidents after publication.

In light of these findings, it may be valuable to conduct some further assessment of the correlation between the size of a casualty recording project, and the extent of conformance to the Standards. This study suggests that while the Standards are a valuable resource for organisations of all scales and budgets, smaller organisations with more limited resources may find engaging with some aspects to be a challenge.

Chapter 3

Definitions and Categorisation

After looking at how the principles of casualty recording relate to definitions and categories, this chapter of the Standards is divided into a further two sections. The first covers choice and application of definitions and categories for casualty recording (**Stds.22-26**) while the second deals with casualty recording in case of unidentified human remains and missing persons (**Stds.27-28**).

Choice and application of definitions and categories		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.22	Casualty recorders must set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria and explain their rationale for choosing them.			4
Std.23	Casualty recorders must choose definitions and categories appropriate to their context and the purpose of their initiative.			4
Std.24	Casualty recorders must determine a working set of information points to be gathered, categories, and definitions, prior to starting their casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently throughout the casualty recording process.		1	3
	Should			
Std.25	Casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as "uncertain" or "provisional" when sufficient levels of information are not available to make a clear decision.			4
Std.26	Casualty recorders should consider categorisation issues when building their database.		2	2

All four organisations have **"set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria and explain their rationale for choosing them"** (**Std.22**). In addition, each organisation has sought to **"choose definitions and categories appropriate to their context and the purpose of their initiative"** (**Std.23**). However in relation to both of these standards

there have been changes over time, to a greater or lesser degree. For example, one organisation has added new conflicts to its monitoring, while another has introduced additional actors and types of incidents. This connects to **Std.24**, which states that **"casualty recorders must determine a working set of information points to be gathered, categories, and definitions prior to starting their casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently throughout the casualty recording process"**.

In fact, while organisations generally did determine what they would record in advance, all have made changes since beginning their work. As such there is a tension between ensuring consistency within the data and staying abreast of changing conflict contexts. Each organisation is at a different place on this spectrum, depending on their particular aims for recording. The explanatory note accompanying this standard states;

"Casualty recording is an activity often undertaken in very volatile contexts, which means that over time the definitions and categories created at the beginning of the activity will not fit…definitions and categories can and should change if a contextual analysis calls for it. In this case, casualty recorders should make this information publicly available, explaining why definitions and/or categories have changed and specifying the exact date when the change was enacted."

Yet while there is no sense that the four organisations wish to hide the alterations to their projects, these are not publicised as clearly as the Standards suggest. Again, this relates to the discussion above about what is prioritised, and what end users require or value.

All organisations have either partially or fully **"consider[ed] categorisation issues when building their database[s]"** (**Std.26**). Given the developments to the projects over time, the important thing has been that databases are flexible and able to accommodate new data fields as they are added. Two of the four organisations have databases customised for their needs, which they continue to develop to include additional data points and enable more complex analysis. One organisation does not add extra fields to their database, but rather includes additional information in the narrative. For the fourth, the database is not central to their internal operation, but rather a tool for public use – while staff capture and store data on separate files. This highlights that although a database is at the heart of their work of many casualty recorders, this is not the case universally – and organisations such as the one in question here are still able to utilise and benefit from the Standards.

Finally, **"casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as 'uncertain' or 'provisional' when sufficient levels of information are not available to make a clear decision"** (**Std.25**). All the organisations have processes for dealing with difficult cases requiring discussion and where it may be challenging to come to a decision about the details of an incident. Three of the organisations opt to keep uncertain events internal until greater clarity is reached, while one has made provision in their methodology for these to be published but clearly labelled.

Unidentified human remains and missing persons		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Should			
Std.27	Casualty recorders should record the deaths of individuals who are not identified, to the level of detail possible.		1	3
Std.28	Casualty recorders should consult existing databases or compile a separate list themselves of missing persons in order to help identify whether they are casualties or not.*	1		1

**Std.28 is N/A to two organisations.*

All four organisations **"record the deaths of those individuals who are not identified, to the level of detail possible"** (**Std.27**), though attitudes to identification vary. For one organisation, it is their main purpose, for two it is desirable but not essential, and for the fourth it is not part of their work. Related to this, **"casualty recorders should consult existing databases or compile a separate list themselves of missing persons in order to help identify whether they are casualties or not"** (**Std.28**). Only two organisations do this – and while one does so to help with identification of the deceased, the other uses this information as part of other projects they are involved in besides casualty recording.

This is a reminder that identification of those killed fits more naturally with some casualty recording projects than others. Identification of individuals has been a foundational goal of Every Casualty Worldwide, evident in the ***campaign call*** that every casualty be promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged. However this is more feasible at some stages of the conflict cycle than others, and therefore is not a primary aim for all the organisations involved in this work. That said, it is important to know not just how many people were killed in a conflict, but who they were. As well as recognising the worth and dignity of every human life, this enables memorialisation, support and restitution for bereaved families and affected communities. As such, ECW will continue to advocate for the identification of every casualty and make a persuasive case for the value of doing so. Organisations working in places where identification is currently not possible should revisit the notion once their context reaches a later or post-conflict phase.

Chapter 4

Security

The chapter on security, both of people and data, is the longest in the Standards. After looking at how the principles of casualty recording relate to security, it is divided into a further three sections – the first addresses risk and the casualty recording process (**Stds.29-34**), the second details standards for the safety of casualty recording staff (**Stds.35-39**), while the third covers data security (**Stds.40-49**).

Risks and the casualty recording process		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.32	**Casualty recorders must be aware that risks change and should identify what risks are attached to each phase of the casualty recording cycle.**	**1**		**3**
Std.33	**Casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses. This must encompass all the purposes a casualty recorder will use the data for.***	**1**		**1**
	Should			
Std.29	**Casualty recorders should undertake continuous risks assessment to ensure the security of the people they involve in their casualty recording activities.**	**2**	**1**	**1**
Std.30	**Casualty recorders should analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data they set out to collect.**		**2**	**2**
Std.31	**Casualty recorders should assess which kind of data to collect (or not) according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and according to the necessity to hold this data.***		**1**	**1**
Std.34	**Casualty recorders should be aware of the activities of other providers of humanitarian relief and human rights support in their zone of operation to be able to redirect witnesses towards them (with issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial support, etc.).***		**1**	**1**

**Stds.31, 33 and 34 are N/A to two organisations*

The initial standard in this section, which underpins all the others, is **Std.29** – **"casualty recorders should undertake continuous risk assessment to ensure the security of the people they involve in their casualty recording activities"**. One organisation reports doing this, while another carries out local and national risk assessments with varying regularity. The other two do not carry out any formal risk assessment at all. **Std.30** is more specific, stating that **"casualty recorders should analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data they set out to collect"**. Two organisations do so, while a third shows an awareness of risk but no active analysis, and the fourth considers there to be no risk attached to the data they collect. In addition, **"casualty recorders must be aware that risks change and should identify what risks are attached to each phase of the casualty recording cycle"** (**Std.32**). Three of the four organisations demonstrate an awareness of this and for all three, the initial collection and transmission is felt to carry the most risks and hence is where security efforts are most crucial.

Despite this consensus, the mixed engagement with these core security standards raises questions. It seems that some organisations should review their approach to security. Might the concept be better framed so that all casualty recorders see it as relevant, whatever their context, and interpret it appropriately? It may also be that casualty recorders are in fact making risk assessments, but in an informal fashion without labelling them as such. If so, broadening definitions of risk which have become too narrow might be useful. Differing working arrangements are also clearly a factor. How can general principles around security and risk be most helpfully articulated when some casualty recorders work in conflict-affected contexts and others do so remotely? The findings of this research suggest that further consultation and resources on security in casualty recording would be valuable.

"Casualty recorders should assess which kind of data to collect (or not) according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and according to the necessity to hold this data" (**Std.31**). This standard elicited a range of interesting responses. Two organisations only collect data which is already in the public domain, and although this does not remove the responsibility to store it securely, it does minimise the implications of not doing so. The other two organisations do collect data which is otherwise not publicly available, storing this internally until it is appropriate to publish some or all of it. However they take different approaches to this standard – one prioritises data collection, and would never be content to suspend or limit this given its high degree of necessity to their work. This means that guaranteeing its security is crucial. The other is comfortable with pausing data collection in order to ensure the security of information and those who collect it. This means that while high standards of security are still important to this organisation, they have other options in terms of risk mitigation. Again, this speaks to the diversity of organisations working in the field and the way that the purpose and scope of a casualty recording project results in different decisions and priorities.

When it comes to protection of people who casualty recorders might come into contact with as witnesses to incidents, **"casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses. This must encompass all the purposes a casualty recorder will use the data for"** (**Std.33**). The question of informed consent

when providing information is relevant to two organisations. Of these, one has an informed consent policy and process, and one does not. The other two organisations do not receive incident reports from witnesses or other direct sources.

The other issue relating to the protection of witnesses and others supplying evidence is covered by **Std.34**, which states that **"casualty recorders should be aware of the activities of other providers of humanitarian relief and human rights support in their zone of operation, to be able to redirect witnesses towards them (with issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial support etc.)"**. As with informed consent, this standard is addressed by the two organisations for whom it is relevant. One provides a range of other services themselves, and the other is able to offer suggestions in some instances, depending on how well the staff members involved in recording the information knows the area and what is available.

Safety of casualty recording staff

		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.36	**All casualty recording staff must have access to the measures put in place to guarantee their protection, and be fully aware of them and agree to them.**	**2**	**1**	**1**
Std.37	**Casualty recorders must develop and provide security protocols for their staff.**	**1**	**1**	**2**
Std.38	**Casualty recorders must provide their staff with security training as necessary.**	**3**		**1**
Std.39	**Casualty recorders must guarantee a level of access to psychological support for their members of staff.**	**1**	**1**	**2**
	Should			
Std.35	**Casualty recorders should clearly define their relationships with staff members – be it through written or oral contract – and should require confidentiality and exclusivity from them.**		**4**	

As for security measures relating to staff, **"casualty recorders must develop and provide security protocols for staff"** (**Std.37**), **"ensure all casualty recording staff must have access to the measures put in place to guarantee their protection, and be fully aware of them and agree to them"** (**Std.36**), and **"provide security training as necessary"** (**Std.38**). Two of the organisations have security protocols in place, while another has done some thinking on security but not formalised this into protocols. These three also have security measures for staff – however only one communicates these to all staff, while another shares specifics with field-based staff only. Only one organisation provides security training for staff; in some cases the absence of this is because it has been deemed unnecessary while in others it is recognised as necessary but just not implemented. Either way, this gap should be addressed.

In addition, **"casualty recorders must guarantee access to psychological support for staff"** (**Std.39**). Despite the gaps in provision for physical security outlined above, three organisations offer psychological support through a mixture of staff wellbeing measures and counselling provision, with one also providing training on trauma mitigation.

Finally, **"casualty recorders should clearly define their relationship with staff members – be it through a written or oral contract – and should require confidentiality and exclusivity from them"** (**Std.35**). While all organisations require staff to sign contracts which require confidentiality, none include a clause about exclusivity, which the standard also recommends. Indeed one actively encourages their staff to share their experience and expertise with other projects and organisations through partnerships, secondments or volunteering.

Data security		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.40	Casualty recorders must approach data security in a holistic way, taking into account both the technological and human factors at play.		1	3
Std.42	Casualty recorders must consider how they will store their data before they start collecting it.		2	2
Std.44	CRs must plan for the recovery of access to their data.		1	3

Data security (continued)		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.46	Casualty recorders must clearly define their data security requirements when sharing data with other stakeholders.*		1	2
Std.47	Casualty recorders must consider how their activity will be affected by data protection and other laws and plan accordingly.	2		2
Std.48	It is never possible to identify all potential threats. Casualty recorders must therefore plan for when their data security will be breached and their data compromised.	1	1	2
Std.49	Casualty recorders must thoroughly assess the tools they will be using to fit their data security purposes.		3	1
	Should			
Std.41	Casualty recorders should adopt a risk-based approach in order to design the data security measures that will be most appropriate to their own activity.		1	3
Std.43	Casualty recorders should provide for different levels of access to their data within the organisation on a need-to-know basis.			4
Std.45	Casualty recorders should plan for the archiving of their data in case of the discontinuing of a project or its natural end.		3	1

**Std.46 is N/A to one organisation*

The other significant area covered by this chapter of the Standards is data security. There are a number of standards where all four organisations are in full or partial conformance. They **"approach data security in a holistic way, taking into account both the technological and human factors at play"** (**Std.40**) and **"adopt a risk-based approach in order to design the data security measures that will be**

most appropriate to their own activity" (**Std.41**). In addition, each organisation **"provides for different levels of access to their data within the organisation on a need-to-know basis"** (**Std.43**) and they have some sort of **"plan for the recovery of access to their data"** (**Std.44**). Those who share their data, **"clearly define their data security requirements when sharing data with other stakeholders"** (**Std.46**).

However there are also several areas where some or all of the organisations do not take measures recommended by the Standards. **"Casualty recorders should plan for the archiving of their data in case of the discontinuing of a project or its natural end"** states (**Std.45**). Yet most do not have a plan in place for this scenario. In addition, **"casualty recorders must consider how their activity will be affected by data protection and other laws and plan accordingly"** (**Std.47**). While two of the organisations have an awareness of the relevant data protection laws and act accordingly, two do not. Furthermore, **"it is never possible to identify all potential threats. Casualty recorders must therefore plan for when their data security will be breached and their data compromised"** (**Std.48**). Two organisations have a plan for a data breach, though this is not necessarily formalised, a third is planning to create one, while the fourth would simply outsource this to their IT provider if required.

Finally, on choice and design of databases, **"casualty recorders must consider how they will store their data before they start collecting it" (Std.42**). While all did so, as discussed above most of the projects have developed in unforeseen ways – whether in terms of size or scope. In addition, **"casualty recorders must thoroughly assess the tools they will be using to fit their data security purposes"** (**Std.49**). While security is clearly a factor in choosing which tools to use, for three out of four organisations a more important, or at least equally important aspect, is ease of use and accessibility for staff. Although this chapter of the Standards is the longest by some way, discussion with casualty recording organisations demonstrates that not all practitioners place such an emphasis on security in its various forms.

Chapter 5

Publication and Sharing

The final chapter of the Standards covers publication and sharing. After looking at how the principles of casualty recording relate to this topic, the chapter is divided into a further two sections. The first addresses standards for publication and dissemination of data (**Stds.50-56**) while the second looks at standards for sharing data with other professionals (**Stds.57-58**).

Publication and dissemination of data		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Must			
Std.52	**Casualty recorders should signal if/when the information they publish does not reach a certain level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed yet.***		**1**	**2**
Std.50	**Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful to inform their decisions on publication.**		**2**	**2**
	Should			
Std.51	**Casualty recorders should identify their reasons for not publishing certain data as well as for publishing what they do.***		**2**	**1**
Std.53	**Casualty recorders should decide at which level of aggregation to publish their data according to their specific objectives, but with consideration given to the ultimate objective of the recognition of every casualty.**		**1**	**3**
Std.54	**Casualty recorders should assess and identify the most effective ways of communicating their data.**		**2**	**2**
Std.55	**Casualty recorders should always strive to publish their data in the native language of the region their activities are based on.**	**1**	**1**	**2**
Std.56	**Casualty recorders should consider undertaking outreach activities to ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data.**		**2**	**2**

**Stds.51 and 52 are N/A to one organisation*

"Casualty recorders should decide at which level of aggregation to publish their data according to their specific objectives, but with consideration given to the ultimate objective of the recognition of every casualty" (**Std.53**). Having considered what level of aggregation would best suit their purposes, three organisations publish at event/incident level on their databases, while the fourth does so at the level of individual casualties. The organisations vary as to their primary audience, with one focussed primarily on affected communities while the others prioritise policy-makers and academics.

"Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful, to inform their decisions on publication" (**Std.50**). While generally organisations have considered how their data may be useful, it seems that this is not the only or even the most important factor in informing decisions about publication – rather this is often a question of capacity. While **"casualty recorders should consider undertaking outreach activities to ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data"** (**Std.56**), constraints of time and funding mean organisations are generally limited in the extent to which they can do this. However it is not easy to suggest a solution, beyond reminding casualty recorders not to overlook the value of their work to those beyond their primary audiences.

At present, in some cases the data is not being utilised as much as it could be. For example, publication and sharing takes place locally while this is neglected at the international policy and academic level, limiting their impact in these arenas. Alternatively, there may be frequent international publishing, but opportunities to share data locally are not capitalised upon as affected communities are not considered a key audience. This also connects to the question of language – **"casualty recorders should always strive to publish their data in the native language of the region their activities are based on"** (**Std.55**). Yet while one organisation publishes some of their material in the language of the affected community, and is seeking to do more, for others this is not seen to be a priority because their primary audience is elsewhere.

In terms of what is not published, **"casualty recorders should identify their reasons for not publishing certain data as well as for publishing what they do"** (**Std.51**). Three organisations have things they code for or collect but do not publish, either for security or capacity reasons. One publishes everything they code for. **"Casualty recorders must signal if/when the information they publish does not reach a level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed yet"** (**Std.52**). Where events are unconfirmed, one organisation has included in their methodology a way to publish these, marked as 'contested', while the others keep them internally until sufficient clarification is received.

Sharing data with other professionals		No conformance	Partial conformance	Full conformance
	Should			
Std.57	Casualty recorders should determine the levels of detail in data that they will share with other actors on a case by case basis, based on having obtained informed consent to do so, the criteria of mitigating risks for their stakeholders, and of being in line with their objectives.			**4**
Std.58	Casualty recorders should strive to share their data - in accordance with standard 57 – in the widest way possible to avoid duplicate work.		**3**	**1**

All the organisations that took part in this research respond appropriately to requests to share data, **"determin[ing] the levels of detail in data that they will share with other actors on a case by case basis, based on having obtained informed consent to do so, the criteria of mitigating risk for their stakeholders, and of being in line with their objectives"** (**Std.57**). However it is also the case that **"casualty recorders should strive to share their data – in accordance with standard 57 – in the widest way possible in order to avoid duplicate work"** (**Std.58**). As noted above, capacity issues mean that this proactive sharing is not as widespread.

Conclusion

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE GENERAL FINDINGS

Overall, this research reveals an encouraging though not comprehensive degree of conformance to the Standards among a sample of casualty recording organisations. This suggests that the Standards do reflect and formalise the state of the field and best practice within it, as opposed to setting an impossibly high bar. However the fact that measurement of existing practice against them also indicates there is room for improvement shows that they are not overly forgiving. In addition, it is clear that the Standards can be usefully applied to diverse organisations with different contexts, approaches and audiences.

More specifically, when the data from the tables in each section above is collated, it is possible to draw conclusions about the degree of standards conformance across all four organisations. The table below shows the conformance scores assigned to each standard when an organisation fully conforming is worth two points, partial conformance is worth one point, and no conformance is worth nil points. The numbers of standards which receive each score are shown in the table below, and a table showing which the score for each individual standard can be found in Appendix 2. Where a standard was not relevant to one or more organisations, scores have been scaled up to allow comparison.

CONFORMANCE SCORES FOR STANDARDS

Total score	Gained by how many 'musts'	Gained by how many 'shoulds'
8	9	6
7	4	7
6	3	9
5	4	4
4	2	5
3	1	1
2	1	0
1	0	1
0	0	1

TABLE KEY

The specific scenarios which result in each score are as follows –

- A score of eight points means a standard sees full conformance by all four organisations.
- A score of seven points means a standard sees full conformance by three organisations and partial conformance by the fourth.

- A score of six points means a standard sees full conformance by three organisations and no conformance by one OR full conformance by two organisations and partial conformance by two.
- A score of five points means a standard sees full conformance by one organisation and partial conformance by three OR full conformance by two, partial conformance by one, and no conformance by one.
- A score of four points means a standard sees full conformance by one organisation, partial conformance by two and no conformance by one OR full conformance by two and no conformance by two OR partial conformance by all four organisations.
- A score of three points means an organisation sees full conformance by one organisation, partial conformance by one and no conformance by two OR partial conformance by three and no conformance by one.
- A score of two points means a standard sees full conformance by one organisation and no conformance by three OR partial conformance by two and no conformance by two.
- A score of one point means that a standard sees partial conformance by one organisation and no conformance by three.
- A score of nil points means that a standard sees no conformance by any organisation.

Taking these scenarios, we can now categorise the numerical scores into descriptive categories to better illustrate the degree of conformance across the Standards. Before doing so, it's important to reiterate that each standard is either a 'must' or a 'should' and this distinction is important. The introduction to the Standards states that;

"A standard written with the word "must" means that it is a requirement that applies to all casualty recorders, no matter their context of operation, methodology or other circumstances. These represent core issues of methodology and safety. Standards written with the word "should" indicate standards that may only be achieved over time."

Of the 58 standards, 24 of these are 'must' while 34 are 'should'. As such, if total conformance is not (yet) possible for an organisation, then the priority is implementing those which are 'must' – and the findings could be expected to reflect this.

The table below shows what percentage of 'musts' and 'shoulds' fall into four categories of conformance with the Standards. Again, a table showing which category has been assigned to each standard can be found in Appendix 2. The categories are mutually exclusive, and are as follows:

A. A score of 8 = all organisations show full conformance
B. A score of 7 = majority conformance
C. A score of 3-6 = mixed conformance
D. A score of 2-0 = limited conformance

CATEGORIES OF CONFORMANCE TO 'MUSTS' AND 'SHOULDS' AND OVERALL

	Of 24 musts	Of 34 shoulds*	Of all 58 standards
Category A	37% (9)	18% (6)	26% (15)
Category B	17% (4)	21% (7)	19% (11)
Category C	42% (10)	56% (19)	50% (29)
Category D	4% (1)	6% (2)	5% (3)

**Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.*

The figures in the table above provoke several observations. Category D is negligible, with three standards in it across both 'must' and 'should'. This is positive as it demonstrates that all the standards bar three see some degree of conformance.

Beyond this though, categorising the findings in this way illustrates a hierarchy of conformance. With both the 'musts' and 'shoulds', there is a top tier of standards which all organisations are in conformance with – these make up Category A. Next there is a tier of standards which the majority of organisations conform to in full, and the other partially – making up Category B. For 'musts', Category A is more than double Category B, whereas for 'shoulds' Category B is slightly larger than Category A – a point which will be revisited below. Thirdly there is a tier where conformance is mixed, Category C, which for both 'musts' and 'shoulds' is the largest both numerically and in terms of the possible scenarios it encompasses. Given the small sample size in this study, it would be interesting to know whether evaluating more organisations would challenge or confirm the pattern of conformance displayed here.

On a related note, this table allows comparison of conformance to 'musts' and 'shoulds' – the formal hierarchy which is explicitly set out within the Standards. For the 'musts', it is evident that while full conformance across the board is common, it is not the case for the majority of standards. Among 'shoulds', full conformance across the board is less common. When Category A and B are totalled, 54% of 'must' standards are in this bracket and 39% of 'shoulds'. However Category C makes up another 42% of 'musts' and 56% of 'shoulds'. This means there is mixed evidence as to whether 'musts' are conformed to more than 'shoulds', even though the Standards propose that the former are more important.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE FINDINGS BY CHAPTER

In addition to general findings about conformance, there are also conclusions which can be drawn about specific aspects of casualty recording.

Conformance is not consistent across the chapters of the Standards. Rather, those addressing 'Methodology' and 'Definitions and Categories' generally see the strongest conformance. Those relating to 'Transparency' and 'Publishing' see mixed conformance, while standards on 'Security' see the lowest levels of conformance.

Given the small sample size, this is not a decisive insight into the situation across the whole field. However as the participating organisations were diverse in context and approach, the existence of common themes suggests areas which may merit further attention.

TRANSPARENCY

Conformance to the standards in this chapter is mixed. A significant challenge for organisations is decisions about publishing political affiliations and stances, given concerns about creating opportunities for detractors to undermine their work. In addition, the Standards indicate it is necessary or advisable to make detailed information about methodology, organisational structure, staffing and funders publicly available. Currently organisations do not tend to do this in full, citing limited capacity and querying whether such material is valued by end users.

METHODOLOGY

In general there is strong conformance to the standards in this chapter, particularly those in the section relating to data. This is encouraging given that a rigorous methodology forms the basis of casualty recording work. However there are instances where smaller organisations struggle to conform to the standards which recommend multiple stages for data entry and review, given their limited numbers of staff.

There is more divergence in conformance to the standards in the section relating to sources. This is particularly noticeable on questions of mapping sources and the degree of awareness of their possible limitations. Linked to this is **Std.8**, the only standard which no organisation conformed to, which proposes casualty recorders use a rating scale for the reliability of sources. This has the potential to lead to inconsistency in recording, if assumptions about sources exist but have not been made explicit and communicated to all staff.

DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORISATION

Conformance is also generally very strong in this chapter, particularly in relation to the standards on choice and application of definitions and categories. Here all but one standard see full or majority conformance. However there is a tension between ensuring consistency within the data by maintaining the originally established definitions and categories, and adjusting or adding to these in order to stay abreast of changing conflict contexts. Where each of the four organisations falls on this spectrum relates in large part to the aims for recording as well as the volatility of their casualty recording context.

When it comes to the recording of unidentified human remains, all four organisations record the deaths of unidentified casualties. Yet attitudes to identification vary, with one organisation seeing this as their main purpose, two viewing it as desirable but not essential, and the fourth not considering it part of their work. While identification is more feasible at some stages of the conflict cycle than others, ECW will continue to advocate for the identification of every casualty as the ultimate goal.

SECURITY

The chapter on security includes the areas with the lowest conformance identified by this research. There is mixed engagement with the concept of risk and associated processes, suggesting there is more work to be done to frame risk and security in ways which are accessible and relevant to casualty recorders across diverse contexts. As for security measures relating to staff, conformance also varies – including some concerning findings regarding the limited provision of security training and protocols.

The other significant area covered by this chapter is data security. While a number of standards see all or the majority of organisations in full conformance, there are several areas for improvement. In particular, there is an absence of planning for archiving in the case of the discontinuation or natural end of casualty recording, and mixed awareness of the implications of data protection laws. Furthermore, while the Standards stress the importance of casualty recorders assessing the tools they use for recording from a data security perspective, the majority of organisations state that accessibility and ease of use are at least equally important to them.

PUBLISHING

Conformance to standards in this chapter is mixed. The organisations vary as to their primary audience, which include affected communities, policy-makers and academics. However all find that their biggest challenge in relation to publishing is capacity. Decisions about what to publish and for whom are often constrained by the reality of constraints on time and funding. This means that at present, the data produced by casualty recording organisations is often not being utilised to its full potential – whether locally, nationally or internationally.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS

The smooth implementation of the methodology and the findings it has produced indicate that this process works. Feedback from participants indicates that casualty recording organisations find it straightforward to engage with, and have benefitted from the opportunity to reflect on their adherence to the Standards in a structured format. In addition, it identifies areas of relative strength, and those where more work could usefully be done, as summarised above.

Understanding whether and how the Standards are implemented is the next step towards greater consistency among practitioners, which in turn will encourage wider use of casualty data by states and IGOs. As such, this research project provides a process for measuring conformance to the Standards. Its successful deployment during four field studies proves that conformance to each individual standard is measurable, and can be assessed in a rigorous and collaborative fashion. As such, this methodology could form the basis of a future process of accreditation for casualty recording organisations.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions for Field Visits

CHAPTER 1 – ORGANISATIONAL TRANSPARENCY QUESTIONS

How do you demonstrate transparency about your mission and motivations for recording? To whom do you particularly need to demonstrate this, in your context?

Do you have any political or other affiliations which might compromise (or be perceived to compromise) your commitment to being inclusive in your recording? How do you mitigate this? How/Where do you share information about this so people are informed?

Do you make information about your methodology transparent and publicly accessible? How? Do you monitor this information so it is accurate, up-to-date and complete?

How is your organisational structure made transparent and accessible to all stakeholders? Does this include the structure of the organisation, information on staff (to the extent that security permits), governance structure, programmes and policies? Is this regularly updated? Where can it be accessed?

Do you publish information about your sources of funding? Do you list specific donors, or just the types of sources of funding, or a mixture? Is this information on your website or elsewhere? Is it regularly updated? Do you generate profit? If so, is this made clear?

How do you balance the principles of transparency and do no harm in your work? What assessments do you use to make this decision?

CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY QUESTIONS

Do you use documentary evidence, witness statements or both? Does the way you handle information from these differ? Does your database have room for both?

What categories of sources are available to you (e.g. media, official documents etc.)? Have you assessed the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Do you have a rating scale to grade the reliability of your sources? Do you review how sources are graded and adjust if needed?

How do you treat sources that give only some relevant information?

Do you use multiple sources of information for each entry? How are these used to build up a fuller picture?

How do your recording processes allow for human judgement and flexibility?

What pieces of information do you record? Do you use a form to do this? If so, are these used in witness interviews or filled in afterwards? How flexible is the form?

What do you do with data that you can't use straight away? How is it stored? Do you have lots of this data or do you generally only collect what you need and can use immediately?

How do you corroborate the data you collect? How do you assess its internal coherence? How do you then cross check it with other sources?

Are there situations where you rely on a single source? If so, do you make it clear when publishing that this is the case?

How do you deal with disagreement between sources? If you can't confirm an incident, due to disagreement among sources, do you keep it in your database? Do you publish it?

What is the process for entering data into your database? Do you have a codebook to ensure consistency? How do you minimise human error?

Do you keep data entries open so you can incorporate new information? Do you use version control software to track changes made to the database, or have another way of tracking changes and who made them?

Is the process divided up between different people to minimise human error? If so, how?

How many people review work before it is confirmed?

How do you avoid double counting casualties or incidents? Do you have a deduplication process? Is this manual or computer aided?

How are you transparent about your methodology? Does this include the types of sources used and not used, how these are evaluated, how information is gathered, the steps taken to ensure information is accurate, and how you check your work to minimise errors?

How do you ensure data is collected in a consistent manner? Do you have a clear scope and procedures? Do you train staff on these? Do you have a codebook of standard operational procedures? Is this publicly available?

Do you record all deaths? If not, what are your criteria? Are you transparent about this? How do you approach inclusion in the workplace? Do the staff in your organisation represent all communities affected by conflict, or all ethnic groups in the population?

CHAPTER 3 – DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORISATION QUESTIONS

What is the scope of your project? Why?

How are your definitions and categories appropriate to your context and purpose as an organisation, and the sources available?

Did you determine your categories and definitions prior to beginning recording? Have you trained staff on how to apply these consistently? Have your definitions and categories changed over time? If so, why – and is this information publicly available?

Is there an option to tag something as uncertain or provisional if insufficient information is available, so further information be added at a later stage? Is there a process or forum internally for discussing difficult cases?

How flexible are the database categories? Is there space for ranges or uncertainty? Are subcategories used to allow more details where it is available without making this the basic level recorded?

When a casualty is unidentified, what other data is recorded about the individual or circumstances of death?

Do you consult databases of missing persons to assist in identifying victims? Do you keep a list of missing persons to check against casualties?

What definitions and categories have you chosen? Why? Are these inclusive? Do you use existing terms and definitions already elaborated in law or academic sources?

Do you share your definitions and categories, and the rationale and sources for them, clearly internally and with stakeholders?

Do you apply the definitions and categories consistently? When there are controversial or difficult cases, do you note why a particular classification was made?

CHAPTER 4 – SECURITY QUESTIONS

What risk assessment do you do to ensure the security of the people involved in your casualty recording activities? Is this ongoing? How does it inform your policies?

How do you analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data you set out to collect?

How does risk assessment inform your choices about what data is recorded? How do you ensure that you are not processing more data than is necessary to achieve your objectives? What information do you collect beyond the minimum recommended?

Have you identified ways the risks change at each phase of the casualty recording cycle?

Do you obtain informed consent of your witnesses? What is your procedure? Are they aware of all the purposes the data will be used for? Are they aware of the risks? Are they informed of their right to withdraw consent until the data has been used? Which language is used?

Are you in touch with other providers of help and support in your area, and do you signpost people to these if needed?

Do staff have a contract? Is this written or oral? Does it require confidentiality and exclusivity from them?

Are staff aware of the security measures in place to protect them? How do you ensure this?

What security protocols do you have for your staff? Do these outline the different possible security contexts, how they affect your activities, and at what point operations would be suspended? Who is responsible for determining the security level? Do your security protocols take into account the different risks to local and international staff? Do your staff receive security training? Does this include physical and data security? Is this in person or delivered remotely?

How do you prepare your staff for what they will be dealing with? Do you have regular debriefs for people to share their feelings? If so, how is this structured? Does it utilise an outline developed by psychologists? Do you have any additional measures for psychological safety – partnerships with other NGOs who provide this or access to other sources of support internally/externally?

How do you approach data security? Do you take into account technological and human factors?

Do you have a risk-based approach to data security? What are the particular risks of your context and how are these mitigated? How do you make sure your security remains up to date?

Before you collect data, do/did you know how it will/would be stored i.e. on or offline? What have been the determining factors in your context for deciding on storage methods?

Do you have different levels of access? Do some people have full access? How do you decide who has what level of access? Is this on a need to know basis?

Do you have a plan for recovering access to your data if the one or two people with full access disappear/disengage? Was this formulated by the person with the highest access, so their passwords etc. could be transferred if necessary?

What is your plan for archiving the data if your project comes to an end? Is there any data that you would destroy?

Do you take security into account when deciding to share data, even with an organisation you trust? When sharing data with other stakeholders, do you clearly define in writing your data security requirements? If they can't meet these, do you share or not?

Do you know which jurisdictions you fall under (where you are registered, where you operate, where you store data)? Do you know all the ways that the data protection laws may affect your work and what the result of not obeying these might be? Do you monitor how the law develops?

Do you have a plan for when your security is breached and data compromised? How would you notify those who might be affected? How would you reset passwords etc. to limit damage? How could you identify the person responsible, and if they were internal what would be done?

What assessment do you do before selecting tools like software, communication, storage, archiving? How do you ensure what you are using is still fit for purpose/the best solution available?

How do you ensure that your data security policies take into account the do no harm principle?

How do you ensure your security protocols are appropriately transparent – not sharing everything with the public, but with staff, and with sources, affected communities and end users as appropriate?

How are you responsible towards those your data may put at risk? What measures are in place? If there is a breach, do you tell people?

CHAPTER 5 - PUBLICATION AND SHARING QUESTIONS

How are your decisions about publication (frequency, format, aggregation) shaped by thinking about the various ways your data may be useful and to whom?

Are there some things you don't publish? Why?

Do you publish information which has not been corroborated? If so, how do you flag this?

At which level of aggregation do you publish, and why? How does the ultimate objective of recording every casualty fit with this? Do you store disaggregated data even if you don't publish it at the moment?

How do you ensure you are communicating your data in the most effective way for your context? Do you consult with victims associations or other organisations in affected populations? How do you publish online and/or offline? Why?

Do you publish your data in the native language/s of the region where you are recording? If not, is this because an international language is more politically inclusive? Do you publish in English as well, or at least your categories, so they can be used by the international community?

Do you do outreach to affected populations? If so, what? If you can't finance these at the moment, do you have plans for what you would like to do in future?

How do you decide what level of data to share with other actors? What factors are taken into account? Do you create data sharing agreements?

How much do you share your data? Does this avoid duplication of work in your context?

Are you transparent about what you publish – giving a rationale for the level of aggregation and the choice of categories used, as well as methodology, any limitations of the data, evaluation of sources? Do you provide mechanisms for the correction of your data following publication, especially by affected populations?

Do you make your data available to affected populations? Are you working towards this even if they are not your primary audience? If you no longer had the resources to analyse and publish your data, do you have a plan for passing it to another organisation?

Appendix 2

Table of Standards with Numerical Score and Category

TABLE OF STANDARDS WITH NUMERICAL SCORE AND CATEGORY

The specific scenarios which result in each score are as follows –

- A score of eight points means a standard sees full conformance by all four organisations.
- A score of seven points means a standard sees full conformance by three organisations and partial conformance by the fourth.
- A score of six points means a standard sees full conformance by three organisations and no conformance by one OR full conformance by two organisations and partial conformance by two.
- A score of five points means a standard sees full conformance by one organisation and partial conformance by three OR full conformance by two, partial conformance by one, and no conformance by one.
- A score of four points means a standard sees full conformance by one organisation, partial conformance by two and no conformance by one OR full conformance by two and no conformance by two OR partial conformance by all four organisations.
- A score of three points means an organisation sees full conformance by one organisation, partial conformance by one and no conformance by two OR partial conformance by three and no conformance by one.
- A score of two points means a standard sees full conformance by one organisation and no conformance by three OR partial conformance by two and no conformance by two.
- A score of one point means that a standard sees partial conformance by one organisation and no conformance by three.
- A score of nil points means that a standard sees no conformance by any organisation.

Taking these scenarios, we can now categorise the numerical scores into descriptive categories to better illustrate the degree of conformance across the Standards. The categories are mutually exclusive, and are as follows:

A. A score of 8 = all organisations show full conformance
B. A score of 7 = majority conformance
C. A score of 3-6 = mixed conformance
D. A score of 2-0 = limited conformance

Standard	Score	Category
ORGANISATIONAL TRANSPARENCY		
1. Casualty recorders must be transparent about their mission and motivations for recording.	8	A
2. Casualty recorders should provide information about political or other affiliations which might compromise their commitment to being inclusive with their recording.	7	B
3. Casualty recorders must make information about their methodology transparent and publicly accessible.	6	C
4. The organisational structure of casualty recording organisations should be made transparent and accessible to all stakeholders.	4	C
5. Information on funders should be transparent and publicly accessible.	5	C
METHODOLOGY		
6. All casualty recorders must have clear means of dealing with both documentary evidence and witness statements.	8	A
7. Casualty recorders should be aware of all the sources that are available to them in a given context and of the limitations that are attached to these.	6	C
8. Casualty recorders should consider using a rating scale that is open to review that grades the reliability of their sources.	0	D
9. Casualty recorders should not reject any source that can give relevant information, even if the information given is minimal.	7	B
10. Casualty recorders should use multiple independent sources as much as possible for each entry they record.	7	B
11. Casualty recorders must be aware of the importance of having a well-organised and consistent system for dealing with information, but also room for human judgement and flexibility in its application.	8	A

Standard	Score	Category
METHODOLOGY (continued)		
12. Casualty recorders must consider systematically recording specific points of information during their data collection which will be beneficial for the consistency and the accuracy of the information collected.	8	A
13. Casualty recorders should store every relevant document.	8	A
14. Casualty recorders must have a process of corroboration in place to evaluate the data they have collected.	8	A
15. Casualty recorders should seek to corroborate their data through the use of multiple independent sources.	6	C
16. Casualty recorders must plan how they will deal with disagreement between sources.	8	A
17. Casualty recorders should establish standard operational procedures to ensure the consistent entry of data into their database.	8	A
18. All data entries should remain open so as to incorporate any new information.	8	A
19. Casualty recorders should divide up the components of a casualty recording process between different people to minimise human error and simplify the work.	6	C
20. Casualty recorders should consider having several staff members to review each other's work before confirming an incident/individual.	6	C
21. Casualty recorders must provide for ways to avoid duplicate recording.	8	A
DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORISATION		
22. Casualty recorders must set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria and explain their rationale for choosing them.	8	A
23. Casualty recorders must choose definitions and categories appropriate to their context and the purpose of their initiative.	8	A

Standard	Score	Category
DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORISATION (continued)		
24. Casualty recorders must determine a working set of information points to be gathered, categories, and definitions prior to starting their casualty recording initiative and apply these consistently throughout the casualty recording process.	7	B
25. Casualty recorders should have the option to characterise information as "uncertain" or "provisional" when sufficient levels of information are not available to make a clear decision.	8	A
26. Casualty recorders should consider categorisation issues when building their database.	6	C
27. Casualty recorders should record the deaths of individuals who are not identified, to the level of detail possible.	7	B
28. Casualty recorders should consult existing databases or compile a separate list themselves of missing persons in order to help identify whether they are casualties or not.	4	C
SECURITY		
29. Casualty recorders should undertake continuous risk assessment to ensure the security of the people they involve in their casualty recording activities.	3	C
30. Casualty recorders should analyse what risk is attached to the kind of data they set out to collect.	6	C
31. Casualty recorders should assess which kind of data to collect (or not) according to the levels of protection they can guarantee it and according to the necessity to hold this data.	4	C
32. Casualty recorders must be aware that risks change and should identify what risks are attached to each phase of the casualty recording cycle.	6	C
33. Casualty recorders must obtain the informed consent of their witnesses. This must encompass all the purposes a casualty recorder will use the data for.	4	C

Standard	Score	Category
SECURITY (continued)		
34. Casualty recorders should be aware of the activities of other providers of humanitarian relief and human rights support in their zone of operation to be able to redirect witnesses towards them (with issues such as shelter, education, food, psychosocial support etc.).	4	C
35. Casualty recorders should clearly define their relationships with staff members – be it through a written or oral contract – and should require confidentiality and exclusivity from them.	4	C
36. All casualty recording staff must have access the measures put in place to guarantee their to protection, and be fully aware of them and agree to them.	3	C
37. Casualty recorders must develop and provide security protocols to their staff.	5	C
38. Casualty recorders must provide their staff with security training as necessary.	2	D
39. Casualty recorders must guarantee a level of access to psychological support for their members of staff.	5	C
40. Casualty recorders must approach data security in a holistic way, taking into account both the technological and human factors at play.	7	B
41. Casualty recorders should adopt a risk-based approach in order to design the data security measures that will be most appropriate to their own activity.	7	B
42. Casualty recorders must consider how they will store their data before they start collecting it.	6	C
43. Casualty recorders should provide for different levels of access to their data within the organisation on a need-to-know basis.	8	A
44. Casualty recorders must plan for the recovery of access to their data.	7	B
45. Casualty recorders should plan for the archiving of their data in case of the discontinuing of a project or its natural end.	1	D

Standard	Score	Category
SECURITY (continued)		
46. Casualty recorders must clearly define their data security requirements when sharing data with other stakeholders.	7	B
47. Casualty recorders must consider how their activity will be affected by data protection and other laws and plan accordingly.	4	C
48. It is never possible to identify all potential threats. Casualty recorders must therefore plan for when their data security will be breached and their data compromised.	5	C
49. Casualty recorders must thoroughly assess the tools they will be using to fit their data security purposes.	5	C
PUBLICATION/SHARING		
50. Casualty recorders should consider the various ways their data may be useful to inform their decisions on publication.	6	C
51. Casualty recorders should identify their reasons for not publishing certain data as well as for publishing what they do.	5	C
52. Casualty recorders should signal if/when the information they publish does not reach a certain level of corroboration that allows the event to be fully confirmed yet.	7	B
53. Casualty recorders should decide at which level of aggregation to publish their data according to their specific objectives, but with consideration given to the ultimate objective of the recognition of every casualty.	7	B
54. Casualty recorders should assess and identify the most effective ways of communicating their data.	6	C
55. Casualty recorders should always strive to publish their data in the native language of the region their activities are based on.	5	C

Standard	Score	Category
PUBLICATION/SHARING (continued)		
56. Casualty recorders should consider undertaking outreach activities to ensure that target audiences are aware of and use their data.	6	C
57. Casualty recorders should determine the levels of detail in data that they will share with other actors on a case by case basis, based on having obtained informed consent to do so, the criteria of mitigating risks for their stakeholders and of being in line with their objectives.	8	A
58. Casualty recorders should strive to share their data – in accordance with standard 57 – in the widest way possible to avoid duplicate work.	5	C

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