



LEARNING FROM CASUALTY RECORDING EXPERIENCE

Nigeria Watch 2015

About Every Casualty Worldwide

Every Casualty Worldwide (ECW, or Every Casualty for short: <http://www.everycasualty.org>) is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation based in London in the UK. Among its objects are to advance education and research in the practice of and procedures for recording the casualties of armed violence, in support of the principle that every life lost to armed violence should be promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged.

To bring this about, Every Casualty is developing an improved understanding of the range of available casualty recording practices, along with guidance for their implementation. This has included original research into existing casualty recording work, which is contributing towards the identification and development of standards and good practice able to be implemented by a range of actors, including non-governmental organisations, states, and intergovernmental organisations.

In addition to its research, ECW facilitates an international network of practitioners, the Casualty Recorders Network, and is at the forefront of integrating policy goals into existing policy frameworks at the national and international level.

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Cover photo

Burnt out truck near Abuja, Nigeria 2012
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Synopsis

This report is the first in a series providing a detailed insight into the working methods of individual members of the Every Casualty Casualty Recorders Network (CRN). These reports are primarily written for other casualty recorders and those thinking of setting up their own casualty recording initiative. They aim to provide a detailed knowledge of how others conduct their casualty recording activities, while striving to underline common good practice which can be replicated across the field. They are designed to provide practitioners with real examples of the challenges they might face and how these can be overcome, to help them develop their own practice.

End-users of casualty recording data may also find these reports of interest as they lay out in detail the way casualty recorders acquire their data and how others use it. It is hoped that this will increase awareness of areas of cooperation which exist between casualty recorders and other actors, leading to a wider use of casualty recording data.

More generally, everyone with an interest in casualty recording will find in this series information relating to casualty recording's practice and its impact, through the in-depth analysis of individual casualty recorders' work.

The first study, carried out in late 2014, was of Nigeria Watch, an NGO founded in France in 2006 and relocated to Nigeria in 2013, now operating as a research project of the Institut de Recherche Français en Afrique (IFRA) at the University of Ibadan, with financial support from DFID and the British Council through the Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP). Two members of the Every Casualty Team spent two weeks observing and interviewing staff of the project as well as meeting with key end-users. Costs of the study, including publication and dissemination costs were covered by a grant from the ifa/zivik programme funded by the Foreign Ministry of Germany.

Emerging from the analysis of Nigeria Watch's work, Every Casualty identifies the following six conclusions as broadly relevant to practice in the field¹:

1. Casualty recording requires providing for change.

As the Nigeria Watch project was started remotely by an academic in France and only later relocated to Nigeria, it provides a good example of how such a project can evolve over time. As time goes by, casualty recorders may find that they can increase their access to or diversify their sources, and promote new uses of their data. Since its relocation to Nigeria, the project has been able to increase its outreach activities. These include raising awareness of its database and how it can be used not only by researchers working within the academic sphere – its original audience – but also by policy makers, with the goal of eventually reaching and impacting upon the wider Nigerian society. Relocation of the project also provided the opportunity to rethink the categories used to record incidents, with the team proposing to create sub-categories within the existing categories to capture more details (see section 4.6.).

Providing for change is important for all casualty recording initiatives, as they are often undertaken in very volatile contexts, and subject to the fluctuation of levels of resources available. Over time, casualty recorders should expect that their activity will be affected by changes in the level and nature of violence, the political context, and the sources and amounts of funding available. A worsening of the political context may involve a reduction in operations and the requirement to use other sources if usual channels are rendered not easily and safely accessible; on the other hand, an improvement in the political and security context may mean that a casualty recording activity can expand to include new types of sources which were previously inaccessible. Shifts in funding may have similar effects on a project's capacity and scope.

¹ All recommendations are informed by Every Casualty's past research and the wider consultation process started in 2013 to develop standards for the field of casualty recording.

2. The goals of a casualty recording project determine its scope: that is, what it will be recording, which in turns influences the methodology a casualty recorder will choose.

The Nigeria Watch project is based on a large scope, monitoring all violent causes of death within the country (see section 4.1.). By capturing the picture of all violent deaths in Nigeria, the project aims to better inform policy-making, so that the most important causes of sudden death can be tackled – rather than those that are merely perceived to be the most important causes. Nigeria Watch's data shows for example that road accidents are responsible for more fatalities than criminal acts, contrary to perceptions reflected in the political discourse.

The scope chosen by a casualty recorder will correspond to its objectives. Some casualty recorders might want to have a narrower scope with a higher level of detail (recording at individual level rather than incident level for example) to inform judicial investigations at a later stage, while others – as is the case with Nigeria Watch – might prefer to record trends for a wider range of events in order to influence policy making and better understand the dynamics of violence. A scope should be chosen in light of a project's objectives – e.g. influence policy-making, influence trends, memorialise, provide evidence in a judicial investigation – taking into account the limitations on a casualty recording project that might affect the achievement of these objectives.

3. Casualty recording must be a systematic process.

Despite the several limitations the Nigeria Watch project is subject to, it implements its activity in a systematic way through set methodological steps which are designed to ensure the accuracy of the data recorded and to avoid human error as much as possible (see section 4.2.).

This practice should be implemented across the field, and Every Casualty recommends that this is done through the production of internal standard operational procedures – which could take the form of a single

document, sometimes called a codebook, detailing the structure, contents and layout of the database, directions as to how to use or fill it in, as well as the definitions for the different categories – to ensure the consistency of the data recorded.

4. External factors play an important role in shaping a casualty recording activity and are important to identify as early as possible.

The shape of casualty recording at the Nigeria Watch project has been influenced by several practical and external challenges that the founder and the team have had to overcome (see section 4.5.). The major challenge that is impacting Nigeria Watch's activity currently is the state of the telecommunications network in Nigeria. Its poor performance was what influenced the founder to work remotely at first. Once he identified that the level became satisfactory to operate from within Nigeria he relocated the project. Poor internet connectivity has also meant that an external offline server had to be acquired and set up to store the data recorded in Nigeria, with periodic upload to the web. This meant obtaining expensive pieces of equipment, requiring specialised engineering knowledge to be installed. Simpler online storage solutions were not accessible because of unreliable internet access. Nigeria Watch also faces challenges to its outreach efforts because of its location in the city of Ibadan. Lagos was originally identified as a better option for the relocation of Nigeria Watch to Nigeria, with the best opportunities for building connections with other institutions and policymakers. It was however impossible to find a suitable partner to host the project in Lagos, without which relocation would not have been possible at all.

At the global level, casualty recorders are operating in very different contexts and may face very different challenges. Each will need to identify the external factors that will affect their recording activities and find the best ways to work around or mitigate their consequence. Their early identification and analysis will help in setting up the best possible project given its circumstances.

5. Local ownership of a project is a valuable goal in itself for casualty recorders.

The Nigeria Watch project started remotely because of poor internet connectivity within Nigeria but relocated as soon as external circumstances allowed it. Local ownership has since then contributed to improve the perceived levels of legitimacy of the project and its data, and has also contributed to make it more visible to various actors (humanitarian staff, policy makers, local NGOs, the Nigerian academic community).

Every Casualty generally recommends that all casualty recorders strive to relocate their initiative within the country if it is at all practicable to do so. The advantages range from closer proximity and better access to the sources – including witnesses – of the events being recorded, and making the data more available to local populations. If relocation of a project begun remotely is not (or not yet) possible, Every Casualty recommends that the casualty recorder seeks to ensure that its findings are fed back to the affected communities and capable of being used to maximum local benefit.

6. Despite challenges and limitations, casualty recording and the data it returns is generally worthwhile.

In the data poverty that characterises Nigeria (see section 5.1.), the work done by the Nigeria Watch team, despite all the limitations it is subject to, is recognised as very important and provides a consistent record of trends of violence since 2006. This in itself is of great value as it can provide the basis for further investigation in the future, and also for further development of the methodology to answer new desires to know within Nigerian society.

This applies to all casualty recording initiatives. Even in conflict, where it is difficult to implement high levels of accuracy, or even to have access to sources or verify them, data collected to an adequate standard will be crucial to any further initiatives taken once the context allows for it – which can include amongst other benefits memorialisation efforts, truth and reconciliation processes, and informed policy-making.

Research method employed by Every Casualty in this case study

This case study is based on a set of semi-structured interviews conducted with all the members of the Nigeria Watch team as well as the director of their host organisation IFRA Nigeria. These interviews were held in person in Paris and during a field trip to Nigeria where the authors shadowed the team during several days to obtain operational understanding of the casualty recording that is being done at Nigeria Watch. The field trip was completed by a visit to Abuja where the authors conducted informal interviews with five persons representing organisations that use Nigeria Watch data.

The interviews with end-users of Nigeria Watch data were chosen by snowball sampling. After having identified through the team the different users with password access to the database who would be important to interview the authors arranged to meet additional people based on recommendations.

The semi-structured questionnaires used to interview members of the team asked about: their role and

responsibilities; the purpose of their casualty recording work; what changed in the relocation of the project from Paris to Ibadan; details on sources, methodology and challenges/advantages in doing the work; and details on technical systems and guidance/training for staff. End-users were asked about: their role and responsibilities; the objectives of their organisation and the role of casualty and other information in their work; where they get casualty information from if they used it, their assessment of this information, and how they acted on it; sharing of information and interactions with other organisations.

A draft of this report was shared with Nigeria Watch and other interviewees, and comments invited. However, the content of this report, including all analysis and conclusions, as well as any errors in fact or interpretation, are the responsibility of the author and Every Casualty, and not of Nigeria Watch or any of the interviewees in this study.

Country Summary

Nigeria is one of the African countries most severely affected by violence. It was ranked 151 out of 162 countries worldwide in the Global Peace Index 2014, a multi-dimensional report of violence, security, and criminality². It was ranked 17th in the Fund for Peace Fragile States Index 2014³.

In 2011, Human Rights Watch estimated that over 15,700 people had been killed in intercommunal, political and sectarian violence in Nigeria since the country transitioned to civilian rule in 1999⁴.

While the civilian government has remained in power since the transition from military rule, elections have been marked by spikes in armed violence, many casualties, and subsequent population displacement⁵.

More recently, Nigeria has been widely covered by the international media because of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of the country. The violence in the North East has caused large numbers of casualties, and captures international attention because of Boko Haram's proclaimed allegiance to the extremist organisation the Islamic State of the Levant.

Facts about Nigeria

(taken from the World Bank, the CIA World Factbook and UN Data)

Territory: Nigeria, with a territory of 923,768 km², shares borders with Chad and Benin to the East, Niger to the North, and Cameroon to the West.

Population (2012): 168,834 (estimated)

Density (2012): 182.8/km²

GDP (2013): \$478.5 billion (estimated)

GINI (2011): 31.2

Religion: Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 10%

Corruption perceptions index rank (2014): 136 (out of 175)



² Institute for Economics and Peace Vision of Humanity project, Global Peace Index, available at: <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#/page/indexes/global-peace-index>

³ Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index 2014, available at: <http://library.fundforpeace.org/library/cfsir1423-fragilestatesindex2014-06d.pdf>

⁴ The National Working Group on Armed Violence in Nigeria and Action on Armed Violence, *The Violent Road: An overview of armed violence in Nigeria*, p. 3, 2014, available at: <http://aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/The-Violent-Road.pdf>

⁵ For more information on the state of violence in Nigeria see *The Violent Road*, above note 4

Background

About the “Learning from Casualty Recording Experience” project

In 2014, Every Casualty Worldwide (hereafter Every Casualty) began a new initiative under the general title of ‘Learning from Casualty Recording Experience’. It aims to gain a deeper understanding of casualty recording as it is practiced by the members of the Casualty Recorders Network (CRN), by conducting detailed collaborative case studies of their work. Each case study involved a concentrated period of field work in which Every Casualty staff visit the practitioner, observe their work, and interact with project staff and key end-users. A report is produced in consultation with the host organisation, which is published and disseminated to the wider global community. Through this project we are striving to identify useful practices and operational experiences that can be shared with others and contribute to the global development and promotion of casualty recording and its promotion. Importantly, the project includes a process of knowledge exchange which allows the host practitioner to receive more detailed and tailored advice and recommendations from us. The first casualty recorder to be the focus of this initiative was Nigeria Watch.

About CRN member Nigeria Watch

Nigeria Watch is a project which started in Paris in 2006 and was relocated to Nigeria in 2013. A particular aspect of interest for the wider field of practice is how this project has changed over time as a result of its recent relocation to the country whose casualties it records. It provides an example of how a project initially located outside of country can be transformed with the intention of achieving an increased impact on the country whose violence is being recorded.

The Nigeria Watch project was originally the idea and creation of one French academic – Professor Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (hitherto described as the founder) – who identified an important gap in the study of violence in Nigeria. The result of his own need for data, the Nigeria Watch database and methodology was designed according to what he identified as important indicators to monitor. At the time he chose these,

he was not aware of other similar initiatives from which he could draw any common standards of practice. It will be helpful to bear in mind how the original design of the project influences Nigeria Watch in its present form.

Six years later, the founder decided to seize the funding opportunity offered by the launch of the DFID (Department for International Development)-funded Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (administered through the British Council) and the willingness of IFRA (Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique) to act as a partner, to relocate all activities inside Nigeria, putting Nigerians in charge of the project. The new Nigeria Watch office was subsequently set up on the campus of the University of Ibadan where IFRA is located, while a link to Paris remains through the oversight of the founder. Through this decision, the original purpose of the database was given the potential to be redefined offering an opportunity for the data’s impact to move beyond the purely academic towards informing and benefiting Nigerian society more generally. The process to achieve this is still on-going and will require a period of time to be effectively achieved. Current outreach efforts by Nigeria Watch to engage with policy-makers by members of staff are already a first sign of this change in orientation.

The Nigeria Watch example gives a good illustration of how purpose and objectives evolve in casualty recording. It shows how the evolution of circumstances and context can prevent or allow for a project to advance towards local ownership even if it started remotely. It also shows how a methodology itself can evolve to fit new purposes without affecting what has been achieved since a project’s creation. What started as an academic initiative can now become a means to influence policy-making, and more actively seek to have an impact on local society.

Connection to affected populations, either through detailed knowledge of the local context or collaboration with local people and organisations, is a key feature of accurate and effective casualty recording.⁶ The Nigeria Watch case also shows how a locally owned casualty

recording project can present many advantages over a remote one. Operations being led by local staff allow for higher levels of responsiveness to changes in the environment and provide direct knowledge of the local context. Local ownership has contributed to making look the Nigeria Watch initiative, and the data it returns, increasingly impartial and reliable. It is far more difficult to convey to Nigerians the legitimacy of a project that is managed in Paris. The Nigeria-based operation can also benefit from increased connectedness with the local communities, contributing to facilitating a broader use of the data and ultimately higher levels of accuracy through regular and more immediate feedback.

Nigeria Watch in brief

Team: 1 Project Coordinator, 1 Assistant Project Coordinator, 2 Information Retrieval Specialists

Budget: (around £120,000 over three years)

Type of CR: Media-based documentation

Scope: Recording all violent deaths

Location: Hosted by IFRA at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria with on-going oversight from founder in Paris

⁶ E. Minor, *Toward the Recording of Every Casualty: Policy recommendations and Analysis From a Study of 40 Casualty Recorders*, Oxford Research Group, 2012, available at: http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/TowardsTheRecordingOfEveryCasualty_0.pdf

The Nigeria Watch methodology

4.1 What is being recorded

Nigeria Watch is a project which records all incidents of violent deaths in Nigeria as they appear in a selection of ten national daily newspapers. It stands out among other casualty recording projects carried out by members of the CRN because of the broad scope of the types of violence it includes. The Nigeria Watch database is inclusive of all cases of violent deaths within Nigeria, not only insurgent or political violence but also road accidents, deaths related to sorcery⁷, deaths from fires, stabbings, etc. It excludes suicides and deaths from disease and related causes. Having such a broad scope allows the Nigeria Watch team to capture a comprehensive picture of violence across the country. Because the information recorded is at incident level and focuses on yielding trends, such a scope is effective for producing information which fulfills the purpose of analysing patterns of violence broadly. This choice of a broad scope makes sense in the Nigerian context as casualty recording focusing on armed conflict would not accurately capture the wider violence issue that exists, and which itself needs to be put into perspective with the high number of casualties resulting from road accidents. Choosing a broad scope can however present challenges for casualty recorders and their methodology. Nigeria Watch's sources being limited to a fixed number of newspapers, it is perhaps easier for them to scan a broad range of incidents than for an initiative relying on other types of sources, for which the resource commitment of recording a large range of incidents could become unmanageable. Field investigation-based methodologies are less accommodating to as wide a scope of incidents as encompassed by Nigeria Watch, and would require much greater capacity and resources to carry out. Casualty recording projects need in general to be careful to balance their objectives against stretching their project over too wide a scope.

The essential purpose of the Nigeria Watch project is to address the general absence of data with regard to violence and its casualties in Nigeria. While being an important problem in Nigeria, and sometimes used rhetorically for political gains by officials⁸, the evolution

of violence in the country has never been properly quantified. Nigeria Watch aims to compile data consistently and over the long term in order to be able to interpret the trends, patterns, changes and developments in violence in the country, based on analysis of this data.

The history of Nigeria Watch, and its original purpose of trend analysis, accounts for the choice of sources and methodology.

These explain why the sources chosen are limited to ten national daily newspapers. Being a remote initiative, the founder had only a limited access to sources from the beginning. It was important to use the paper versions of these newspapers which are significantly less comprehensive online, especially concerning the reporting of the many criminal acts occurring in Nigeria. The ten national dailies were therefore chosen because they were the easiest to procure on a regular basis and be sent to Paris for thorough scrutiny and analysis. In the interest of consistency, the founder preferred to work with a smaller number of sources that were reliably accessible rather than increasing their number at the risk of less regular access. A carefully-limited range of sources also provided for a better way to account for and manage the level of bias which might be attached to the chosen newspapers. When the project started, it did include additional sources – three regional dailies and two national weeklies – but they were excluded in 2007. It was decided to exclude these sources because they were unreliably accessible and thus presented the risk to offset the consistency that was so important to returning credible trends; additionally, the team identified that the events reported in those papers were always reflected in the national dailies, thus not providing very valuable additional information. While it might seem difficult to have an accurate vision of trends of violence by harvesting the data uniquely from national dailies, these have been chosen carefully for their regional focus – as explained by members of the team – and were a necessary choice for undertaking the activity remotely. Despite being national outlets each

⁷ In the Nigeria Watch methodology "sorcery" includes cult societies, human sacrifices and witchcraft. Such practices are common in Nigeria and the cause of a considerable number of deaths.

⁸ As reported by members of the Nigeria Watch team through interviews.

newspaper covers more specific regions in more detail – helping to achieve an acceptable regional spread and representation.

The objective of long-term trend analysis is also the reason why the categories originally created to sort the data have remained the same. Any change in categories would lead to the skewing of trends and hinder consistent monitoring of the evolution of violence over time.



The scope of a casualty recording activity is defined by its objectives, what the casualty recorder has the capacity to achieve, and the general context. Nigeria Watch chose a wide scope which includes all violent direct deaths because it makes sense in a country where violence and its definition (e.g. do armed conflicts exist or not) is a very political issue and is discussed in a paucity of data. Such an inclusive approach will not always be appropriate however.

4.2 The recording cycle at Nigeria Watch

i. Reading newspapers and identifying casualties

The first step in recording casualties at Nigeria Watch requires the team to work from the paper version of their sources, which are distributed among the team. The team goes through all articles to identify the incidents that will later be recorded in the database. Working from the print version of the newspapers is more practical for the team but is also part of the effort for consistency. Although many articles can be found in online editions, the hard copy papers contain all published articles so are more comprehensive, and are more precise on regional events. Additionally, procuring the paper version of all newspapers is more easily guaranteed than relying on the poor Nigerian internet network. Once an incident has been identified, the content of the article is reviewed and key elements are colour-

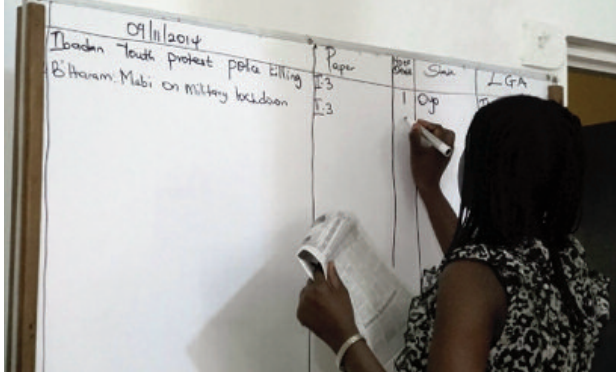
coded to facilitate data entry at a later stage. The number of deaths is coded in red – this colour will also be used for victims' names if they appear; the location of the incident (State, local government area, up to village if known) is coded in blue; the date of the incident is coded in green; and the protagonists (that is those who are the parties to the incident) are coded in black if they are mentioned.

ii. Verifying that an event has not already been reported

Once all incidents have been identified and colour-coded within the papers, the Assistant Coordinator verifies them against existing entries in the database. This step is crucial to avoid duplication of the data and ensure its accuracy. Journalists may report or refer to an event which has already been reported on in the past and therefore already been recorded. It is important to identify the existing data entry in order to check the number of deaths reported in the past against the number reported in the new article. If the number is the same then the Assistant Coordinator flags the article so that no one enters the incident again in the database. If the number differs then he updates the entry to reflect the new information. The update can be of two sorts: a new source reported a number which differs from the one entered at the first time of recording, in which case the new number is added to the list of numbers reported by source; or the same source may be publishing a new count from one it reported in a previous article, in which case it is assumed that the later information is the more accurate and must supersede the earlier.



Identifying incidents and colour-coding articles (4.2.i.), © Every Casualty



Reporting incidents onto the board before data entry (4.2.iii.),
© Every Casualty

iii. Putting all events on the board

Once potential duplicates have been identified and flagged, one member of the team writes up all incidents reported that day on a white board. On this board are included information about the date of publication, the title of the article, the number of dead reported by each newspaper, the state and the local government area. This process has two objectives: first to cross-check and corroborate each incident as well as identify variations in reports; second to assign events to different members of the staff so that the subsequent data entry will be faster and to avoid duplication.

iv. Entering the information into the database

After attribution of the workload each member of the team starts recording incidents into the database, based on the original paper articles and their colour coding. The entry form on the database is comprised of specific fields to classify the raw data and categorise it according to a pre-set list of causes, actors, etc. in addition to fields for the location, date and number of deaths. Any additional information goes into the "description" box which is the only free text entry point. This is where team members can enter the name of a victim, his/her gender, or his/her age; this is also where geographical information going beyond local government area can be entered. The number reported by each newspaper mentioning the event is also entered in the database for each incident. Finally for each source a scan is made of the article and attached to the event so that users with a password can directly refer to all articles from which data was extracted onto the database.

v. Final verification of all data entry by the Coordinator

At the end of each day, the Coordinator of the team gathers the newspapers and checks all entries of the day against the colour-coded paper articles to make sure that the information has been correctly recorded in order to offset human error as much as possible.

4.3 The database

The Nigeria Watch database has been designed specifically for the project and what it had set out to monitor by a professional software engineer. This means it is an advanced database with various features built directly into it. It also means that any changes to it today would require important financial resources to reconstruct the model without affecting the trends it has returned until the day of the changes.

The Nigeria Watch database is publicly available online but features more advanced options for holders of a password, which can be obtained for free upon request. Among these: password holders can access a breakdown of reported casualty figures per event if sources differ; they also have the possibility to export the database into Excel to run analyses more tailored to their specific needs.

The database also includes a built-in mechanism which processes the data into graphs and maps according to a variety of factors. When an event includes different counts the number used to generate trends and maps is an average of the numbers available so that each event can be used in the calculation as a single number. This number is also the number published on the public database – only password access allows a user to see the different numbers reported for the event.

When conflicting numbers are reported for a single event and it proves impossible for casualty recorders to determine which one is accurate, Every Casualty recommends recording the range of the numbers of deaths reported (e.g. 3 to 10) rather than an average. This is because ranges allow casualty recorders to stick closer to the direct reporting of their evidence, and so be relatively more accurate compared to averages, which could be unrepresentative of the documented situation

(see sidebar). In the case of Nigeria Watch the choice was made to use averages because of the geographical information science (GIS) system to which the data was integrated to return mappings of violence. This kind of system works best with single numbers and provided the rationale for opting for averages rather than ranges for incidents. It would be possible to return maps based on ranges rather than averages but this would imply using more complicated algorithms. Today, this would incur additional costs if Nigeria Watch wanted to change this feature of their mapping and is therefore a resources constraint.

The use of ranges

Every Casualty recommends that casualty recorders use ranges to report number of deaths from differing reports and that in any case the original differing numbers remain accessible, i.e. visible within the recording system. Using ranges allows a casualty recorder to avoid obscuring the discrepancies in reported deaths: for example while the two ranges 9-11 and 3-17 show a very different picture of the harm done and of the certainty of the number of casualties, both will return the same average of 10. Using ranges also allows an easier identification of the incident and its sources on the basis of its casualty toll as reported by the casualty recorder.

4.4 Nigeria Watch and best practice

Every Casualty is currently involved in a process of developing standards for the field of casualty recording, based on best practice as it is being identified in the field and in broad consultation with practitioners and stakeholders of casualty recording.⁹

Through this developmental work, which is also supported by past research on casualty recording practice¹⁰, a consensus among practitioners has begun to emerge regarding the desirable minimum pieces of information required to fulfill both the wide-ranging goals of casualty recording initiatives (which include memorialisation

efforts, truth and reconciliation, the basis for evidence in trials, supporting humanitarian work, advocacy and mapping the dynamics of violence), and the need for data-sharing with others. The categories of information that are currently recommended to be always recorded if available include: the number of deaths (and where available details of the victims including name, age, sex), the date of the incident, its location, the type of weapon used (cause of death), and the perpetrator. It may not always be possible to record all of this information due to prevailing circumstances (such as affect recorders who operate in conflict, for example), or because the information is simply unavailable or unable to be verified: however casualty recorders are encouraged to design their projects to include these in their databases to the extent that they can.

Nigeria Watch, a documents-based casualty recorder, records deaths at incident level rather than individual level. Recording names where available is not required by their data entry categories, and is not part of their methodology (though staff may enter them in the free text field). The purpose of Nigeria Watch being to track and map trends of violence in Nigeria, recording names was not seen as adding value to the database, particularly given that this could not be done consistently. It cannot be expected from news articles that all reported deaths will be accompanied by the name of the victim – often even numbers will be approximate.

Of the other pieces of information recommended above, Nigeria Watch records the number of deaths for each incident it comes across, the date of the incident and its detailed location. The database includes fields to record the State and local government area where the incident happened, but it is also part of the methodology to add any additional geographical detail in the free text box called “description”. Identifying causes of death is also part of the Nigeria Watch methodology as it records direct deaths beyond armed violence. As

⁹ See the latest brief on the Every Casualty standards process at: <http://ref.ec/standards>

¹⁰ E. Minor, above note 6; E. Minor & J. Beswick, *The UN and Casualty Recording: Good Practice and the Need for Action*, Oxford Research Group, 2014, available at: <http://oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/u11/ORG-UN-and-CR.pdf>; E. Minor and S. Oliati, *Casualty Recording: Assessing State and United Nations Practices*, Action on Armed Violence and Oxford Research Group, 2014, available at: <http://oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/u11/AOAV%2BORG%20joint%20summary%20on%20CR.pdf>; M. Miceli and S. Oliati, *Counting the Cost: Casualty Recording Practices and Realities around the World*, Action on Armed Violence, 2014, available at: <http://aoav.org.uk/2014/counting-the-cost/>

Causes of violence		Number
Type in the four letters (4 Results)		
an accident		3025
coffee grating		119
growth execution		42
crime		3608
terrorism		1223
land issue		308
market issue		106
natural disaster		242
distribution		565
or production		261
after accident		1154
public dispute		5531
edge of war		748
society		395

Data entry: causes of violence (4.2.iv.), © Every Casualty

such, incidents are classified by causes of deaths (road accident, sorcery, crime...) but do not go down to recording the type of weapons used if any.

What does not appear consistently in the Nigeria Watch database is information about age or sex of the victims because the information was not available consistently from the sources used and limited resources meant that it made it very difficult from the beginning to include these. Numbers rather than demographics were also the core interest of the project.

Since its relocation to Nigeria however, the new Nigeria Watch team has expressed an interest in tracking these indicators, seeing how beneficial it could be for Nigerian society to be aware of who the victims of violence have been (adults or children, men or women). The minimum pieces of demographic information Every Casualty recommends recorders should collect are useful because they allow the tracking not only of patterns of violence across a territory but also to identify if certain groups – who might benefit from specific protection in law like women and children – are specifically targeted and thus inform better ways to counter these trends. Age and sex information have been inconsistently entered into the description free text field of the Nigeria Watch database – meaning they are registered but cannot be easily analysed or extracted automatically from the database to create tables or maps. Following our visit, it was agreed with the team that this information should be recorded consistently in the description with the view that it might be reintegrated later if new fields were added to the database.

Further to suggesting the minimum categories of information that are recommended for casualty recording, the standards process has led to the identification of a set of core principles guiding casualty recording. These are:

Impartiality. Casualty recorders should aim to be as impartial as possible in their recording of casualties. This means recording all individuals killed no matter their race, religion, or ethnic or political affiliation. In addition to impartiality vis-à-vis who is recorded, recorders should take steps to avoid bias in their methodology and sources.

Nigeria Watch systematically records all reported deaths as they appear in its ten newspaper sources, regardless of any kind of affiliation, thus following the principle of impartiality. On the question of bias within these sources, the Nigeria Watch staff are aware that their methodology is subject to the bias of journalists, and of various newspapers using the same primary source in their reporting of an incident, thus not providing the multi-source verification that would be wished for. While this bias is unavoidable because it occurs at the level of sources, what Nigeria Watch can do – and does – is to highlight it to the database users. This points to our second principle.

Transparency. *Casualty recorders should aim to be as transparent as possible about all aspects of their work and publish their motivations, goals, methodology and sources of funding.*

Nigeria Watch publishes its methodology along with the definitions it uses for each of its categories of classification on its website. This is where they highlight the limitations of the methodology they use, allowing their users to be aware of the level of bias attached to the numbers returned and to make allowances for it. Nigeria Watch's website also includes a presentation of the team in Ibadan and their institutional relationships with IFRA Nigeria and the founder in Paris. This is important, as the team has experienced criticism and suspicion that they are a French project implementing some unspecified French agenda. Suspicion of foreign interests is strong in the political culture of Nigeria¹¹, and any initiative which might not seem fully locally owned can

be subject to such criticisms. The way the team has managed these accusations has been by pointing to the level of transparency which guides all aspects of their work, and by directing critics to the website to learn about the origin of the project as the product of an individual academic without a political agenda, and not an organisation or representative of France. It could also be helpful for Nigeria Watch to avail more information on funding for end-users to see that it is coming from the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Project (NSRP) – itself funded by DFID – rather than a French source, IFRA Nigeria's role being to act as a host organisation, providing for the legal status the Nigeria Watch project does not have by itself (making it more complicated to receive funds).

Accuracy. *A robust and rigorous methodology is another key principle of casualty recording. Such a methodology would include, amongst other things, the evaluation and corroboration of multiple sources, checking procedures, contextual understanding of the conflict, and the incorporation of corrections and updates.*

Nigeria Watch's methodology includes different procedures of verification to ensure the lowest possible levels of human error and provides for updates as new information becomes available (see section 4). It relies on multiple sources even though they are all of the same type – newspapers – and acknowledges the potential bias emerging from this choice. Finally, accuracy has improved since the project has been brought back to Nigeria and is being performed by Nigerians – names of locations have been corrected, political parties updated and any sudden changes in the environment can be promptly responded to.

Do no harm. *Casualty recording activities should not jeopardise the safety of the living or put them at risk of further harm. Casualty recorders must ensure that they have the means and appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of victims, their families, witnesses and others with whom they come into contact, in particular through confidentiality and secure data storage procedures.*

Nigeria Watch records deaths at incident level, they do not store or record any personal data of relatives to victims or other witnesses. All the information which is available in the Nigeria Watch database is already in the public domain at the time of its recording. If Nigeria Watch was to modify its methodology to incorporate witness or similar original testimony it would then need to conduct a risk assessment before designing specific security procedures and protocols to protect this data and those who provided it. Casualty recorders should note though that integrating the “do no harm” principle into their methods is not limited to practitioners who use on-the-ground investigations. Risks are also present in collating data from social media sources – e.g. from individual twitter accounts – and that even identifying consistent press informants can put individuals at risk.

Good practice

- Transparency on the methodology, its limits, and the organisation's governance.
- Cross-checking, updates and corrections of the data.
- Consistency in recording.
- Comprehensive vision of the evolution of violence through the monitoring of trends.

4.5 Challenges and limitations

Being a small casualty recorder, Nigeria Watch has to face a variety of challenges which apply to many doing casualty recording.

Limitations to Nigeria Watch's methodology mainly come from its sources and categories. These were designed by the founder based on his instincts of what would be useful and make sense to monitor in the Nigerian context. The project was launched in 2006. At the time, the founder did not know of any other organisation undertaking the same kind of work and had therefore no opportunity to discuss or consult with

¹¹ As expressed during an informal interview with an international NGO operating in Nigeria.



Three months worth of archive of Nigeria Watch sources,
© Every Casualty

others. The convening of the CRN and the creation of a set of standards for the field aims to ameliorate such challenges for future casualty recording “start-ups”, who will be able to benefit both from the advice of their peers and a more thoroughly tested set of methods and standards.

In 2005, the founder devised categories that would be useful for himself and his target audience which consisted mainly of scholars. Today, the Nigeria Watch team finds itself in a situation where their target audience has changed, spanning not only the academic world but also policy-makers and the public in Nigeria. Priorities changed after relocation to Nigeria as objectives beyond the provision of data to academics became possible to reach and as the project became appropriated by local actors with different motivations – e.g. to use this data to change the status quo regarding violence in Nigeria. Relocation – and the changes it implies – thus affects how the project’s methodology will evolve. The team has for example identified new categories they would like to see consistently documented – such as the kind of weapon used, when relevant – and would like to improve the mapping system, going further than Local Government Area (LGA) level. These changes can be made by adjusting and adding to the existing methodology and categories, and would in no way compromise the monitoring and analysis of trends since 2006. Implementing these changes will mainly depend upon adequate funding for the necessary modification to the database software.

The daily recording work at Nigeria Watch can often become very challenging because of practical limitations. The poor internet network in Nigeria means that the process of finding the article to attach to an event online can be delayed or takes a long time simply because of slow connectivity. More importantly it means that all the data has to be stored on an offline server and that uploads are only done monthly – taking up to a day to complete successfully – which in itself creates problems for end-users (see section 5.4.). While having an offline server has allowed the work to continue within Nigeria (if the data had to be entered online everyday this would prove impossible), it comes with its own set of challenges. The server is a complicated piece of hardware which requires the help of an engineer to set up whenever it is moved. Finding engineers capable of manipulating this specific piece of hardware is difficult in Nigeria and it has proven equally difficult to find foreign engineers willing to travel to Nigeria. Other working conditions – regarding the provision of water and electricity for example, with the team obliged to use a generator after 4pm every day – also prove to be challenges faced by the team, being based on the campus of the University of Ibadan.

Funding has been a challenge for Nigeria Watch as it looks into making itself sustainable. Any interruption of activities would heavily hinder its biggest achievement, which is to be able to understand current trends of violence within the perspective of nine years worth of data. Finding the necessary funding to continue and upscale outreach activities is therefore crucial to the future of Nigeria Watch.

Limits

- Limited sources which are subject to bias.
- Categories which could be refined.
- Connectivity problems which make the work more difficult.

4.6 Building on Nigeria Watch's methodology

The Nigeria Watch example shows that it is possible to successfully expand the scope of a casualty recording project and its methodology even years after its creation.

Even when the original framework and categories may no longer satisfy all that is desired by a project team, it can be relatively straightforward to build on existing categories to record at a finer level of detail. This can be achieved through the creation of hierarchies within categories, i.e. by creating sub-categories within already existing categories. Within a broad category called "crime" for example, it is possible to create various sub-categories specifying the type of crime, such as "murder by knife", "murder by firearm", etc. While it might not be possible or even advisable to create very detailed and extensive categories when starting up a casualty recording initiative, the Nigeria Watch example shows that it is entirely possible to make improvements within a clear and consistent framework once the opportunity or the will arises.

Similarly, the method for the collection of the data itself may be evolved. In the case of Nigeria Watch, what started as a documents-based methodology because it was undertaken remotely could, in principle, be transformed into an initiative relying more on field investigation and witness testimonies. In the specific case of Nigeria this would require a very wide network, possibly coordinated through regional hubs, of individuals undertaking such documentation work. It would require a much higher level of funding than Nigeria Watch obtains at the time of writing. Alternatively, the Nigeria Watch team could grow its cooperation with existing networks of NGOs or other capacities such as humanitarian or medical actors. This itself is subject to limitations as it would require high levels of coordination and training of the staff to manage such relationships. The vast size of Nigeria would present a particularly daunting challenge to such an endeavour, but not outside the realms of possibility as communications and other infrastructures improve.

4.7 Concluding remarks on Nigeria Watch's methodology

The consistency with which data has been recorded by Nigeria Watch since 2006 offers the possibility to understand, analyse and forecast the dynamics of violence in Nigeria. While it does not record individual deaths and will under-represent the overall number of deaths because of the limitations of sources, the Nigeria Watch database provides some reference regarding trends of violence in Nigeria against a prevailing context of a complete absence of such data. It also provides a basis from which to promote more evidence-based policy-making and increased accountability, and has the potential to provide a means for avoiding harm by being able to predict its occurrence or understand its causes. Publishing the database online with free access to its content will prove valuable as the team progresses in its outreach efforts and their data gains in visibility.



- Casualty recording is always a work in progress. A methodology can be refined over time as strengths and weaknesses are identified.
- Providing for change when starting a casualty recording project is important. The location, the political situation, and access to sources, etc. might change over time.
- Taking advantage of the experiences from casualty recorders through the CRN and the resources that exist to harmonise practice can be helpful.

The users of Nigeria Watch data: an impact analysis

5.1 Data sensitivity in Nigeria

In Nigeria, data has not customarily been used as a tool to support or justify policy and therefore tends to be disregarded. For this reason, advocacy based on casualty data can be a challenging process. In some official circles there is a lack of transparency about the data that may be being collected. As an example, observers believe that casualty data is probably being collected by the armed forces, although such data is never shared with the public¹². Because key areas of Nigerian politics operate and evolve in a paucity of data, Nigeria Watch offers and aims to provide more of it by collecting casualty data and encouraging its use by policymakers.

“ *But in Nigeria there is not much information out there and it is often conflicting.* An INGO staff

In addition to the general undervaluing of data in everyday political life in Nigeria, the Nigeria Watch team has to deal with distrust from various actors. The French origin of the project plays an important role in this. The team reported suspicion on the part of some institutional actors because the project was originally started in Paris and is now hosted by a research institute directly under the control of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Despite efforts by the team to be transparent about the organisation's structure and methodology on their website, perceptions appear difficult to shake and remain an important challenge for the team to reach their objectives.

Some end-users¹³ of data that we spoke to for this project seemed to hold very high standards for accepting data as relevant. This meant that distrust of Nigeria Watch data also came from its methodology being purely based on newspaper monitoring. They expressed their reservations with regard to journalists and asserted a tendency of the press to inflate numbers to sell more newspapers. Anything short of data directly collected from witnesses was seen as untrustworthy by some observers. This evaluation of data quality means that the Nigeria

Watch team has to work harder at convincing potential end-users that despite the limitations inherent to their methodology, their data is valuable, especially when it comes to painting the bigger picture of violence in Nigeria.

It is important here to recognise the value of Nigeria Watch's work as the data it returns, though it has clear limitations, is instrumental in enabling violence trend analysis and providing information where there is none. Every Casualty has underlined in its first research that to obtain comprehensive casualty recording it is crucial that whatever recording is possible under the circumstances is done, as some information always has value over none, and more detailed investigations can build on information collected at an earlier stage by other approaches¹⁴. Nigeria Watch is one of many casualty recorders basing their documentation on media reports, and members of the CRN who practice the comparable kinds of casualty recording could also be used to defend the legitimacy and the results returned by such methods.

5.2 End-users of the Nigeria Watch database

The founder originally created the Nigeria Watch database to fulfil his own research needs after he identified a gap in studies about security and violence in Nigeria, which were never based on hard data. The database and methodology were therefore primarily designed to answer the needs of the academic research community. Private companies also subscribed to get access to the more advanced functionalities of the database. These firms were mostly corporations trading and running an activity in Nigeria and they used the database as a tool to produce risk and security assessments. The Nigeria Watch team does not know exactly how else their public data might have been used as they never received any feedback on it. Today these partnerships with private companies have stopped and no private actor is involved in the funding of the project. However, engagement with the research community remains high as the Nigeria Watch project includes a grant-making component for selected research projects which would either make use of the Nigeria Watch database or study an aspect of violence, or its occurrence in a

¹² As expressed during key informant informal interviews.

¹³ Interviewees from Nigerian civil society organisations.

¹⁴ E. Minor, above note 6

region, that is underrepresented on the database because of the limitations of the sources used. Research fellows at IFRA and other researchers at the University of Ibadan also use Nigeria Watch data to feed into their research.

Moving the Nigeria Watch project from Paris to Nigeria broadened the scope of possible uses made of the data. Nigeria Watch is now a project with the potential to influence policy-making and causes of violence as it holds the capacity to take part into national initiatives forecasting and preparing for the mitigation of violence. This has the potential to increase over time, and Nigeria Watch plans to develop a programme of advocacy with policymakers at all levels and through all sectors of society. Already, since summer 2013 Nigeria Watch has succeeded in positioning itself as a key actor of violence analysis through its participation in the Peace and Security Working Group (PSWG) – a group formed primarily of local and international NGOs, one of whose projects is to look into the potential for violence in the 2015 elections (presidential, legislative [at federal and state levels], and gubernatorial). Nigeria Watch has worked with others in the group to design scenarios and produce recommendations to mitigate violence effectively during the elections. Originally the group wanted to collect its own data, but as this proved impossible to do, Nigeria Watch has been instrumental in carrying out analysis as one of the key sources informing the projection of election-related violence and subsequent creation of scenarios and recommendations.

Casualty data from Nigeria Watch also contributes to programme design and peacebuilding efforts. The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) – funded by DFID and the British Council – is the organisation that funds Nigeria Watch and uses its data extensively both for designing and monitoring their interventions. NSRP believes that if key conflict management institutions share data and are better coordinated they will be able to manage more conflicts through non-violent means. NSRP interventions focus on ensuring broader societal participation in and oversight of conflict management mechanisms, reducing grievances around economic opportunities and distribution of resources,

increasing participation of, and reducing violence against, women and girls and improving conflict prevention policy and practice. NSRP bases all its programmes on evidence; for this reason, Nigeria Watch data is primarily used to make decisions regarding implementation – in particular to decide where a response is most needed, helping to identify the most vulnerable locations. It is also used to monitor and evaluate the progress of interventions, by tracking levels of violence, looking for variations between the data returned prior to implementation and the data returned after. If the trend shows that there is no decrease in violence where an intervention is being implemented, this prompts an analysis of the situation in order to re-adapt the intervention to make it more effective and impactful.

“ *Nigeria Watch is one of the very few organisations who are consistent in compiling comprehensive casualty data in Nigeria.* NSRP senior staff member

In 2010, as major flooding displaced millions in Nigeria, some national and international NGOs (INGOs) in the country were compelled to shift their ways of working from a development focus to a humanitarian one. The events in relation to the Boko Haram insurgency have made this humanitarian approach more necessary than ever and have given an important new use to Nigeria Watch data. It is very difficult for NGOs in Nigeria to access any kind of sensitive data such as security data, which is necessary in terms of geographic programming. Additionally, humanitarian NGOs, especially humanitarian INGOs operating in the North-East, are concerned with their neutrality in a conflict context and have to rely on available public data. The UN agency responsible for the coordination of information in humanitarian crises – OCHA – has been present in Nigeria since 2012 and a full-fledged office deployed at the beginning of 2015. Mechanisms are thus not yet fully operational yet and INGOs need a variety of open sources to inform their programming – among which the Nigeria Watch database. Nigeria Watch data gives

INGOs information about the security environment. Other sources used by INGOs include the Nigeria Social Violence Project (collaborative effort in the African Studies Program at John Hopkins SAIS), and the Peace Building map (a P4P initiative) which itself draws part of its data from the Nigeria Watch database. To those are added specialist open reports published by various think tanks, NGOs and academics on the security situation in Nigeria. This information, among other sources and processes involved in security management, helps INGOs identify regions where it is possible to operate usefully and effectively. Most recently the emphasis has mainly been put on the impact the Boko Haram insurgency has had on the North-Eastern region of the country. In this case, data relating to violence can help determine where aid will be most needed, by identifying locations where it is likely that large swathes of the population have been displaced or areas that have had no access to basic services (food, shelter, health, water, protection, etc.) following attacks.

“ *The Nigeria Watch database and the Peace Building Map are the only available open data sources to us. An INGO staff*

5.3 How Nigeria Watch is reaching out

Since the Nigeria Watch project has been relocated to Nigeria it has broadened the scope for the use of its data. While academics and other researchers are still a central target for the Nigeria Watch team, an increased effort has been put on reaching out to policy-makers and security agencies, in order to have more direct impact on the causes of the violence that is recorded in the Nigeria Watch database.

Institutes other than IFRA at the University of Ibadan are becoming increasingly aware and interested in the database. Most recently Nigeria Watch is trying to strike a broader partnership with the Institute for Peace and Conflict studies, by granting higher-level database access to the Institute as a whole, thus providing access to all students who are part of it.

As part of its new local impulse, the Nigeria Watch project has taken steps to expand its reach and have a more direct impact on violence reduction. To achieve this they have identified policy-makers and security agencies as the essential targets to be reached and made aware of the existence of Nigeria Watch data. Practically, this has meant reaching out to individual MPs and Governors – first within Oyo State where the University of Ibadan campus is located – and exploiting contacts with different parts of the Ministry of Defence on occasions when the team is present in Abuja to participate in the PSWG or give training to those requesting it. To date this has included meeting with the provost of the Nigeria College for Defence in Abuja.

One obstacle beyond the lack of recognition of the value that data provides in policy-making has been that the Nigeria Watch database returns all reported cases of violent deaths. These include deaths from police or army brutality and political violence, carrying the risk that those inside government and security forces will be unwilling to recognise the data if it goes against their rhetoric and political interests. Advocacy that emphasises the advantages of improving conduct to fulfil security objectives and increase public trust, messages that Nigeria Watch intends to use, may only go so far.

Ultimately, it is clear that the objective for the Nigeria Watch team is to see their data permeate society and be used directly by Nigerians. This means that a later step will be to reach out even more widely to the public. One way the team has identified for doing this will be to reach out to the media, and raise awareness of journalists of the existence of their database and what it shows about trends of violence in Nigeria since 2006. Such outreach necessitates increased levels of resources – particularly because this would entail the organisation of conferences or meetings to present the database to journalists involving hospitality expenses – without which journalists will not attend – which are currently beyond Nigeria Watch's extremely limited budget. It is therefore a plan the team has but which is not being implemented just yet.

5.4 Challenges to engaging new users

In their efforts to reach out to key users, the Nigeria Watch team is confronted with a widespread lack of political will for accountability in some government and security circles. The team is very aware of the reality of politicians driven by their personal interest rather than the greater good. As long as a lack of transparency is a predominant characteristic of Nigerian politics, it will be hard for casualty data recorded by Nigeria Watch to be used for all the purposes it would like to fulfil. The only thing the team can do to mitigate this is to reach out to as many political actors as possible in order to start making evidence-based claims and provoke more use of data in the political debate and more broadly in the public space.

The geography of Nigeria also presents a challenge to the team's objective of appealing to all Nigerians and getting them to engage with the data. Nigeria is a vast country over which it is difficult to exercise influence uniformly. Security concerns limit the ability of people to access certain parts of the country - which is already a challenge to the data collection process. These factors will make it hard for Nigeria Watch to conduct outreach beyond Ibadan and Abuja, even with an increase in capacity, networks and partners. A more strategic location for the Nigeria Watch project would have been Lagos – a much more vibrant hub where a lot of the economic and other activities are conducted in Nigeria – which the founder had originally chosen for relocating the project. However this was not possible because no suitable partner was found to host the project in the way IFRA Nigeria now does. It is not always possible to operate from the most desirable location because of external constraints and factors, and it has been a limitation for the Nigeria Watch project, but it is a point that casualty recorders should carefully consider when starting an initiative.

Use by humanitarian actors has been restricted because of time lag in the publication of the data on the Nigeria Watch database. Because of slow internet

connections the data is only updated monthly, which creates a delay between the time an incident is recorded and the time it is publicly available online. For this reason, the Nigeria Watch database does not give a real-time vision of the situation on the ground, which humanitarians need. This challenge, which already weighs on data processing, is again out of the control of the team and the only thing that could offset these limitations would be a general improvement of telecommunication networks in Nigeria. This has already improved since the creation of the project in 2006, when it was decided to locate it in Paris partly for this reason, as internet connectivity was so poor and unreliable it would not have been possible to manage the database adequately. The relocation in 2013 followed improvement of the networks and it is possible to imagine that this trend will continue in the future and allow for a more timely publication of the events recorded in the Nigeria Watch database.

It was mentioned earlier that other NGOs operating in Nigeria could have reservations about the quality of Nigeria Watch's data because of its sources. The representative of a local NGO key informant in this study mentioned that they had contemplated undertaking a casualty recording activity based on an on-the-ground investigation methodology. The collection of data was planned to rely on a network of staff and volunteers across the country who would document deaths through testimonies. The NGO assessed that they would not have the resources to fund and pay for the required capacity to carry the work out and therefore decided to not implement it. Their assessment was that if data could not be obtained from witness testimonies then it was subject to a bias that would make the final data unreliable. Given such assessments, Nigeria Watch needs to further invest in communicating about the value of its data to demonstrate its worth, defend its reliability and show how it can be complementary to other data and methodologies towards an evidence-based response to violence in Nigeria, which is the common goal that these different NGOs share.

5.5 Sharing data for collaborative or integrating purposes

It is always valuable for casualty recorders to identify other actors who might be recording casualty data and to try to exchange and possibly integrate datasets in order to increase the accuracy of the overall data returned. However, as data is sparsely collected and used in Nigeria, it has been difficult for the Nigeria Watch team to identify other organisations undertaking casualty recording with whom to exchange information.

There is a general lack of data collection on the side of the government, with the police systematically under-reporting and the security forces refusing to share or publish any figures they might have. The only government data that is used systematically by the Nigeria Watch team to check their own findings comes from the Road Federal Security Commission which publishes regular reports on road fatalities which have been praised for their level of accuracy. Good practice such as this in a specific area of government could be highlighted in the advocacy and public outreach that Nigeria Watch undertakes, in support of a gradual culture change across government more broadly.

The climate of suspicion that exists within Nigeria also plays an important part in the general lack of data sharing. The communication between INGOs and local NGOs is poor, as INGOs feel threatened by the government, which has the power to discontinue their work by expelling them from the country. INGO actors therefore tend to be wary of sharing information with other actors who are not subject to the same threat.

Lack of data, and the perception of what its quality should be seem to have hindered so far the possibility to actually reach higher levels of accuracy by sharing data collected by different actors and through different methodologies. At this point, Nigeria Watch is therefore not in the position of sharing its data with any other organisation. Higher levels of cooperation will come from the sustained effort by the Nigeria Watch team to reach out to new potential users.



- It is possible to change the scope of uses for casualty data. For Nigeria Watch this meant broadening from the academic sphere to the Nigerian political sphere.
- Developing networks is key to achieving many worthwhile goals, be these to influence policy-making, support humanitarian efforts, or make the wider population engage with the data.
- Proactive outreach and a clear strategy is needed to influence policymakers and other actors with casualty data. Achieving this may take some time, and entail building up contacts, awareness and acceptance of the value and utility of the data.
- Challenges to outreach can be material: limited resources, poor communication networks in this case.
- Challenges can also be rooted in perceptions and are therefore more difficult to overcome: for Nigeria Watch these challenges are suspicion, lack of will, and the impact of personal interest on policy-making.

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