

# **Staff Safety and Security Principles**

## **Of Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA)**

**(Approved by CASA National Board on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2011)**



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## **1. Introduction of CASA**

CASA is a specialised ministry of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches in India and mandated to carry out the Humanitarian Aid, Development & Advocacy work in favour of the poor, excluded and marginalised sections of the society. CASA's history dates back to 1947, when India got independence from the British. What followed was the trauma of 'partition' between India and Pakistan! As a result of the riots, scores of people became stranded, homeless. In this hour of crisis CASA started its operations on behalf of the churches in India to provide charity and succour to the victims.

Over a period of time CASA has gone through many a changes in its understanding of development, as there has been rapid changes in the socio-economic-political situation in the country, which demanded different nature of response, as these changes also changed the context at the grassroots level.

CASA is a dynamic organisation, because we wanted to remain relevant to the changing context and at the same time expressing the Christian philosophy of love, justice. Peace and work towards restoring the dignity of life. In this context, after starting with charity, CASA shifted towards a need-based approach in the 80s, towards issue-based programmes in 90s and become more active in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to work for the rights and entitlements through a framework of the Rights Based Approach to development.

It is a fact that countries' development framework is more growth oriented and India's stand on economic globalisation has created ample opportunities for economic growth but the experience of CASA is that the benefit of such development has not reached about 70% population of this country. We have witnessed the growing gap between the rich, neo-rich and the poor of this country which has also increased the instances of unrest and conflict. Today CASA's work is mostly in the tribal and dalit dominated geographical locations, where we are witnessing far more number of unrest and conflict. It is to be mentioned that CASA staff are more and more vulnerable to various kinds of safety and security risks in today's context. CASA also works in partnership mode where it works with the member churches, partner NGOs, community based networks which have been promoted by CASA. CASA is concerned about the safety and security of its staff, and that of the constituencies mentioned above as in today's context, they are engaged in empowering the poor about their rights and entitlements which may not always be appreciated by the forces which perpetuate poverty and exclusion.

As CASA's stakeholders respond to Humanitarian Aid, Development and Advocacy issues, they need to be capacitated in the framework of the RBA. In this regard, CASA has undertaken number of consultations, both by the organisation and its stakeholders on this issue. However, the staff and the stakeholders of CASA, by virtue of their RBA work are

exposing themselves to various safety and security risks. Therefore, it is necessary to come out with a Safety and Security Policy & Guidelines for the organisation mainly to address the Safety and Security risks of its own staff and also to provide support and linkages on this issue for its stakeholders.

While working on the Policy and guidelines on Safety and Security of CASA staff and its stakeholders, we have adhered to the following **principles**.

**Summary of Principles:**

**Principle 1:** Provide leadership, guidance and capacity to ensure that staff safety and security concerns are adequately addressed.

**Principle 2:** Adopt a systematic approach towards identifying safety and security risks, and identify suitable preventive and control measures.

**Principle 3:** Build staff capacity so that they are empowered to take personal responsibility for their own security.

**Principle 4:** Ensure staff are aware of, and understand the CASA safety and security policies and relevant guidelines

**Principle 5:** Facilitate the provision of psychosocial support to CASA staff who have experienced acute or prolonged stress during the course of their work, as well as to staff that have requested additional psychosocial support.

**Principle 6 :** Ensure that as and when staff need any legal assistance, in connection to their safety and security arise out of their engagement in the organisational activities, then the organisation will facilitate all such support and guidance to the staff concerned.

**Principle 7:** Facilitate the above principle for stakeholders with clear understanding that , leadership of those organisations will follow these principles for the safety and security of their own workers. If requested, CASA would provide the partner organisations linkages with the other specialised organisations from where they can seek help and assistance.

CASA views staff safety and security as one of the first and foremost concerns in its development, humanitarian and advocacy work. The sharp increase in attacks on aid and

development workers in the past decade, particularly among humanitarian aid workers, makes it imperative that CASA and its partners have measures in place to ensure the safety and security of their programme personnel (employed or volunteers) and resources. CASA places a high priority on working in a spirit of mutual respect, collaboration and partnership with local authorities, local organisations and communities, building the trust and acceptance from which CASA partners draw the essence of their security in its programme operations.

Using the acceptance strategy as its modality of security implies that CASA prioritise security information and assessments which come continuously through local partners, local communities and information sources on the ground. Through CASA's networks, CASA seeks to promote a culture of mutual support among and between CASA partners in relation to safety and security.

Being accountable to the people with whom CASA works and complying with key CASA codes of conduct and policies serves as a foundation to building more responsible ways of working. This requires CASA's development and humanitarian workers to adhere to the following (where relevant):

- CASA Code of Conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power
- CASA Code of Good Practice
- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief
- Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards

CASA further encourages its partners to incorporate accountability principles and benchmarks into their organisational standards, such as the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) benchmarks, which cut across humanitarian and development work. (CASA is currently a member of HAP and in the process of starting different steps towards certification.)

CASA recommends that CASA partners who work in conflict or post conflict regions, read and adopt the principles of the 'Do No Harm' & 'Local Capacities for Peace' and do not engage in violent activities.

CASA is equally concerned about the safety and security of the people and communities with whom it works and these principles address their concerns too.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

The “*Staff Safety and Security Principles for CASA*” outlines the key principles of CASA’s approach to staff safety and security. The principles commit the management of CASA and its different offices to take responsibility and hold themselves accountable for ensuring the safety and security of its staff. They equally commit each staff person to take personal responsibility for her/his own safety and security.

The principles apply to CASA “staff”, including consultants and volunteers who have been contracted to work in CASA’s development and humanitarian field programmes. The term “staff” will be used in this document hereinafter for all of the above mentioned persons.

CASA partners are encouraged to pay greater attention to staff safety and security in their organisations and are welcome to use the CASA policy and guidance in their work towards achieving this goal.

The “*Staff Safety and Security Principles for CASA*” (hereinafter referred to as the SSS-principles) seek to lay the foundation for CASA to establish and build upon institutional approaches to security and safety of their staff. They reflect not only the conscientious way CASA manages programmes, but also serve as a statement of commitment to the well-being of aid workers and community facilitators, that often risk their personal security to administer to the needs of others. They are complemented by the *CASA Staff Safety and Security Guidelines* which provide detailed guidance on all aspects of safety and security. However, it is important that this guidance is contextualised to the local context.

## 3. Definitions

CASA differentiates between the terms “safety” and “security” as follows:

- *Safety* refers to one’s ability to take preventive measures against accidental events.
- *Security* refers to putting measures in place to protect staff against acts of violence.

## 4. CASA Safety and Security Principles

CASA has adopted the following seven principles that guide the CASA approach to staff safety and security.

**Principle 1:** Provide leadership, guidance and capacity to ensure that staff safety and security concerns are adequately addressed.

The senior management of CASA are responsible for ensuring a safe environment for staff and promoting a culture of safety and security awareness and understanding within its organisation.

Therefore, CASA would aim to :

- Have a policy and procedures addressing key security and safety issues. This will demonstrate that CASA as an organisation is addressing its duty of care. Policies and procedures should acknowledge the special security needs and threats that may be linked with gender, age and diversity, and will ensure that such specific needs and vulnerabilities are taken into account when deciding on safety and security measures and procedures.
- Develop a clear Crisis Management Plan (CMP), with strict protocols for handling crisis situations, including clearly documented lines of authority and division of labour in a crisis situation. Regular Crisis Management Training within the organisation is essential to support implementation of the plan.
- The CMP should clearly indicate who is responsible for incident handling. Specialised training should be given to incident handling focal points on how to handle diverse crisis scenarios. Alternatively, procedures should be in place to use external experts for handling major security events.
- Irrespective of whether internal or external expertise is used, establish clear lines of authority and decision-making mechanisms on safety and security-related issues to ensure an effective and efficient response in an emergency. Ensure...
  - The provision of a list of actions that must be taken in an emergency with clear indications as to their priority.
  - The assignment of the persons who shall be responsible for taking the aforementioned actions, and the assurance that these persons are competent to undertake their role
  - The provision of communication channels essential to the co-ordination of tasks needed to deal with an emergency.
  - The specification of required personnel, equipment and materials to carry out the measures to be undertaken in an emergency.
  - The Crisis Management Plans have clear actions for office-based and field staff
- Formally and regularly discuss and explain security plans and procedures to office-based staff as well as to programme field staff.
- Have security plans at national and zonal level - which are regularly updated based on risk assessment.
- Ensure that the organisation has human and financial capacity to adequately implement policies and procedures, or co-opt external support if necessary.

- Ensure that staff are trained to cope with the safety and security issues at their posts of assignment, support them during their service, and address post assignment security sequel related issues.
- Ensure that all staff being deployed are given a security briefing relevant to their location and are debriefed on return for the purpose of improving security procedures.
- Lead by example by putting the safety and security principles into practice in their own lives and particularly in the work environment.

**Principle 2:** Adopt a systematic approach towards identifying safety and security risks, and identify suitable preventive and control measures.

A comprehensive risk, threat and vulnerability assessment should be at the heart of all CASA security management. This applies to development, humanitarian and advocacy work at national, zonal and local level of all CASA offices. Assessing and addressing risk demonstrates an organisation's commitment to safeguarding staff by reducing the chances of those risks actually arising. When working with partner organisations, CASA partners, if they so desired, should seek advice of CASA regarding local safety and security management issues.

CASA recognises that *risk* cannot be eliminated altogether. But it can be reduced, in two main ways, by: a) reducing the *threat*; and, b) reducing a person's *vulnerability* to the threat.

Therefore, at a minimum, CASA would aim at...

- Ensure that programme decisions are informed by appropriate safety and security considerations at all levels from programme identification, design, planning, implementation and, and monitoring and evaluation phases.
- Recognising that staff have a high risk of being involved in vehicle / boat accidents and that 60% of security incidents happen while NGO staff are travelling, ensure that there are...
  - Strict travel and vehicle procedures in place; all CASA vehicles equipped with functioning seat belts which all staff wear; CASA vehicles that are well-maintained with regular maintenance checks; and drivers that are well trained and drive with care.
  - Special travel safety procedures in place for the use of boats and especially the use of lifejackets at all times.
  - Helmets are worn when using motorcycles.
- Undertake a comprehensive risk, threat and vulnerabilities security assessment prior to...

- Initiating any development or humanitarian programme in any region
  - Visiting a potentially insecure operational area or any area that is recognised as volatile
  - Expanding activities to a new location
  - Making public advocacy statements.
- Recognize that sometimes staff in the field develop a degree of complacency towards danger due to continuous exposure. Ensure health and safety risk assessments are updated regularly in each field office. At a minimum,
    - Ensure that staff are aware that in many cases health threats (e.g. malaria, HIV) pose the most serious risk to life, and staff should take precautions accordingly.
    - Efforts must be made to reduce the risk of sexual and gender based violence as the most immediate and dangerous security concern for female staff is sexual violence
    - Make sure that fire prevention and response measures are in place as fire poses a significant risk to health and safety.
    - In earthquake prone regions, have regular earthquake drills for staff in preparation for rapid and safe evacuation from the workplace.
  - Develop a comprehensive, realistic plan for risk reduction and control measures.
  - Have a joint crisis management team when a serious threat occurs, having both office as well as field staff as perspectives on level of risk will differ.

**Principle 3** Build staff capacity so that they are empowered to take personal responsibility for their own security

CASA recognises that safety and security is everyone's responsibility. It also recognizes that it is management's responsibility to ensure that all staff are equipped and receive adequate training on safety and security issues to better prepare them for insecure situations.

Therefore, CASA management and staff should...

- Have the possibility to attend formal training on personal security and First Aid.
- Not be deployed to an insecure area without having received formal security training and security briefings particularly geared to the priority risks in the receiving area.
- Ensure staff are equipped with or have access to functioning communications equipment during deployment.
- Identify a 'security' focal point within each offices of CASA organisation and ensure that security focal points have additional and specialized training on a range of safety and security issues.



- Have a clear understanding of the responsibilities and duties of all staff and address what are acceptable and unacceptable levels of risk.

**Principle 4:** Ensure staff are aware of and understand the CASA safety and security policies and relevant guidelines

The *CASA Staff Safety and Security Guidelines* is being developed by the CASA Working Group to provide security and safety guidelines to CASA and suggestions to its partner organisations. CASA encourages that partner organisations should have crisis management procedures for their own organisational staff.

All CASA staff should:

- Know “what to do” and, where appropriate, “what not to do” about the most common security threats in the given environment
- Know how to report an incident or potential incidents.

**Principle 5:** Facilitate the provision of psychosocial support to CASA staff who have experienced acute or prolonged stress during the course of their work, as well as to staff that have requested additional psychosocial support.

Stress is a risk to health, and to security. Managers and staff should aim to prevent stress, and should be alert for signs of it among their team. It affects different people, and people from different cultures, in different ways. Staff can become stressed for many reasons, such as: personal loss, overwork, or high-pressure work environment, conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors to name but a few. Traumatic stress can be brought on by exposure to emotionally powerful events or “critical incidents”. It can produce a very intense response, including fear and/or helplessness, which may overwhelm the individual’s coping mechanisms. Such a response is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. It does not necessarily indicate that the person has developed a psychiatric disorder. Nonetheless, in a small number of cases, such exposure can lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Therefore, to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage stress, CASA management and staff should...

- Seek to provide adequate physical, emotional and spiritual care for all staff at all times.
- Be aware of the dangers of excessive or prolonged stress, and understand signs of it in colleagues for whom they are responsible.

- To have a rotation policy on staff deployment in emergency situations, away from home, during humanitarian aid interventions, in order to reduce staff stress – both physical and psychological
- Managers should try to ensure that staff have adequate working conditions, take annual leave due to them in a timely way, have realistic work plans and working hours, and know that they have the full support and encouragement of their manager in their work environment. Building a positive team spirit is central to the stress reduction process.
- Debriefing during and at the end of deployments should be done by a trained person if possible and improvements made where necessary based on feedback received.
- Ensure that staff who have been in, or witnessed, traumatic incidents receive specialist and professional support.
- Within certain limits, CASA management is encouraged to cover the cost of counselling for staff who have suffered stress as a result of their work, where this is appropriate and possible.
- If an accident, injury, illness, death or other serious event happens to a staff member, and if that person is unable to contact their next of kin, in most cases the employing organisation has at least an ethical duty to inform them, preferably in person. This is obviously a very sensitive process, and it is important that organisations have a clear procedure for it.

**Principle 6 :** Ensure that as and when staff need any legal assistance, in connection to their safety and security arise out of their engagement in the organisational activities, then the organisation will facilitate all such support and guidance to the staff concerned.

In today's conflict and unrest situation, CASA as a faith based organisation and its staff are always prone to various kinds of security risks. We would like to overemphasise that CASA has shifted away in its work culture from that of providing and doling out resources to that of empowering communities to fight for their rights and entitlements. Also our programme strategies involve very strongly negotiating with the state, rich & powerful. And while doing so, it puts the organisation and the staff of the organisation more at risk.

Most of CASA's work today in the RB framework is through the critical mass base and at times when the gatherings are large, there could always be a risk of also mass movements taking a more tougher route including the violence, which CASA does not subscribe to. Neither we would ever allow such mass gatherings called in the behest of CASA to go for any violent action. However, the risk remains and at times it could be beyond the control of CASA when undesired events can take place. Which also brings further risks for the safety and security of CASA and its community members. Even in today's context CASA's humanitarian aid & DRR work are also being carried out in the RB framework. And hence it is not only the



development & advocacy work of CASA which are likely to bring risks to the Safety and Security of CASA staff but at the same time the HA & DRR work can also put the organisation and staff into the same level of risk.

- CASA would make it clear to all its constituencies that violence in any form and for any reason is not acceptable.
- While CASA will provide help and assistance in the legal battles arising out of the staff’s engagement in any of the APPROVED activities within the value premise of CASA .
- However, CASA will not be obliged to provide any such help or assistance, if the staff or organisation concerned has not adhered to the value premises of CASA, including that of non-violent protest, etc.

**Principle 7:** Facilitate the same above principle for stakeholders with clear understanding that, leadership of those organisations will follow these principles for the safety and security of their own workers. If requested, CASA would provide the partner organisations linkages with the other specialised organisations from where they can seek help and assistance.

CASA has over 350 partner organisations across the country. CASA would encourage the partner organisations to take their safety and security concerns seriously and develop their own Safety and Security Policies / principles in line with that of CASA’s .

- At the time of developing partnership or renewing partnership, CASA would encourage the partner organisations to develop the safety and security policies / principles at their organisational levels.
- CASA would encourage these organisations/ stakeholders to follow the safety & security principles / policies strictly.
- CASA would also encourage its community members and partner organisations to take their safety and security seriously and try to have a risk assessment of every activities they may initiate collectively or individually.
- CASA would provide assistance to its partners, on request, to develop the safety and security policies / principles at their own organisation levels.
- CASA will provide linkages to these organisations, if requested, with other specialised agencies to provide them help and assistance.

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*(Substantially adapted from the ACT Staff Safety and Security Principles)*