



Statement-Taking Instructions



Overview of the Interview Protocol

There are five main parts of a TRC interview. Parts 2-4 need not be completed in any particular order. However, by the end of the interview you must have collected the information and recorded the details as specified on the forms listed below to the best of your ability. Remember that statement givers need not answer any questions they are not familiar with.

1. PRELIMINARY INFORMATION: Volunteers welcome the statement-giver and talk with him or her about the purpose of the TRC project, what will happen to their statement, and options for follow-up. Statement-giver is asked to sign a form indicating that he or she promises to give an accurate and truthful statement.

➔ Use **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT GIVING A TRC STATEMENT** form and instructions

2. PERSONAL INFORMATION: Volunteers collect basic demographic information (name, address, age, tribe, etc.) mirroring what the TRC is collecting in Liberia.

➔ Use **PERSONAL INFORMATION** form and instructions

3. STATEMENT-GIVER'S NARRATIVE: The statement-giver tells her/his story. Volunteers will ask follow-up questions about details, and help direct the interview using open-ended questions.

➔ Use the **STATEMENT-GIVER'S NARRATIVE** instructions and your own pen & paper (or laptop)



4. STATEMENT-GIVER'S OPINIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS: The TRC has requested that volunteers ask statement-givers about their opinions regarding reconciliation, the TRC process, and any recommendations they have for the government of Liberia. Volunteers will also ask some questions about how reconciliation should proceed in the United States.

➔ Use instructions for documenting the **STATEMENT-GIVER'S OPINIONS**

5. CLOSING: Volunteers thank the statement-giver, ask them if they know of anyone else who wishes to give a statement and how they felt about giving their statement and inform them about next steps.

➔ Use **Statement-Giver's Take-Home Packet** and **CLOSING** Instructions

ADMINISTRATION: Volunteers need to record administrative information for record keeping purposes. You may be able to complete some sections of the **INTERVIEW DETAILS** and **PERSONAL INFORMATION** before the interview. *After* the interview is complete, please record any observations about the statement-giver's physical and emotional state in the space on the **INTERVIEW DETAILS** form or in your notes. Please also record your general comments about the interview. You will be asked to enter that information into the database.

➔ Use **INTERVIEW DETAILS** form



Instructions for Providing Preliminary Information

- **As you begin the interview you will want to introduce yourselves, welcome the statement giver, and affirm the importance of the act of giving a statement.**

Thank you for coming today. You are playing an important role in helping Liberia to heal and build a better future. Giving a TRC statement is a chance for you to tell YOUR story. As volunteers we are here to help you do that. We are honoured that you are willing to share your experiences with us.

- **Before documenting the statement-giver's story, you must discuss the project's policies on anonymous statements, immigration and mental health referrals, and amnesty from prosecution with the statement giver. These policies are outlined in the 2 sided IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT GIVING A TRC STATEMENT document. You will need to:**

- Ask the statement giver whether they would like to read the information or whether they would like you to summarize it or read it to them.**
- Ask them if they have any questions about what you just read/summarized.**
- Review the back side, part 1 of this form with the statement giver.**
- Ask the statement-giver to sign and/or initial the front of the form.**
- Statement-givers making anonymous statements or those not wishing to sign the form for any reason may make a verbal attestation of truthfulness and you can initial the form for them.**

- **Keep this form easily accessible as you will need it at the end of the interview.**

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION INSTRUCTIONS



Instructions for Completing the PERSONAL INFORMATION Form

- **You do not need to gather all of the personal information at the beginning of the interview – it can be done throughout, or at the end.**
- **Statement-givers may refuse to answer personal information questions – do not press them if they do not wish to provide information.**
- **If you are taking an anonymous statement do not complete the Personal Information: Contact Form, only complete the Personal Information: Demographic Form.**
- **You may want to preface the collection of this information with:**

The TRC has asked that we collect certain personal information about you to help them analyze the statements and make effective recommendations to the government. Would you like to do that now, or at the end of the interview?

PERSONAL INFORMATION INSTRUCTIONS



Instructions for Documenting the STATEMENT-GIVER'S NARRATIVE

☞ **You may want to transition into this portion of the interview by reviewing some or all of the following information with the statement giver. This information need not be read word-for-word, but you can summarize it to meet the needs of each statement-giver:**

- The purpose of this TRC statement is for you to clear your heart and tell the TRC what you would like them to know.
- The TRC is most interested in human rights and humanitarian violations that occurred between 1979 and 2003. The TRC would also like to know your opinion about the roots of the conflict in Liberia, and your recommendations for the TRC and the government. You may want to talk about some or all of the following topics:
 - What happened to you between 1979 and 2003
 - What happened to friends, family, and others you knew then
 - What happened to your property during the conflict

STATEMENT GIVER'S NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS



- We will be taking notes and asking some follow-up questions. When you are describing specific events, the TRC would like to know:
 - Who were the victims?
 - What happened, when and where?
 - Who committed the violations?
 - How were the violations committed?
 - Why were the acts committed?

➔ **Some simple ways to invite the statement-giver to begin are to ask:**

- *Where would you like to begin your story?*
- *What would you like the TRC to know about your experiences?*

➔ **Please use the checklist that follows as a guide for recording the details of the statement. You may want to refer to the follow-up questions throughout the interview, or you may want to use the checklist as a way to review the details of the statement-giver's story with them at the end of the interview.**

➔ **If you are taking an anonymous statement, please note that you should not record certain details. Specifically, do not ask for or record victims' relationship to the statement giver.**

STATEMENT GIVER'S NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS



STATEMENT TAKER'S CHECKLIST:

➤ **Details About People:** Please collect as many details as are known – be aware that statement givers simply may not have detailed information about alleged perpetrators.

- Victims
 - Full name
 - Date of Birth
 - Sex
 - Relationship to statement giver (Not for anonymous statement)
- Alleged Perpetrators
 - Full name
 - Nickname/alias
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Tribe
 - Language spoken
 - Physical identifiers including scars, clothes, insignias
 - Was the alleged perpetrator of the attack acting alone or in a group? Was there a chain of command?
- Witnesses
 - Full name
 - Date of Birth
 - Sex
 - Current whereabouts

DETAILS CHECKLIST



➔ Details About Events

- Location

Please be as detailed as possible including:

- County
 - Town
 - If in Monrovia, which neighborhood/quarter and street
 - Names of buildings, checkpoints, major landmarks
 - Refer to your map, keywords list, or ASK about spellings
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- What took place
 - Full details: If the statement-giver is willing, gather as many details as possible. For example do not simply document an incident of torture, but document how the torture was carried out, what methods were used, for how long, etc.
 - Targeting: Was the victim of the event specifically targeted? Did the perpetrator know the victim? For what reasons was the victim targeted: tribe, religion, affiliation, political, etc.?
 - Attack: Was the attack deliberate or spontaneous? Was it systematic? Did the attack fit a modus operandi?

DETAILS CHECKLIST



- Dates: Survivors of trauma often have trouble pinpointing dates. You may want to provide the statement giver with some date benchmarks from the list below to help narrow the date range. For example, you might ask, “*Did this event occur after Operation Octopus or before? Operation Octopus was in October 1992. Does that help you remember the date?*”

April 12, 1980:	Assassination of President Tolbert
April 22, 1980:	Execution of 13 gov’t officials by firing squad
October 15, 1985:	Samuel Doe wins presidential election
December 1989:	NPFL starts war, invades through Nimba Co.
July 1990:	Lutheran Church massacre
September 1990:	Capture and assassination of President Doe
October 1992:	Operation Octopus in and around Monrovia
April 1996:	Third battle for Monrovia
July 19, 1997:	Charles Taylor wins presidential
Nov. 1997	Murder of Samuel Dokie and family
Sept. 1998:	Camp Johnson Road uprising
Sept. 2000:	LURD launches offensive through Lofa Co.
June – July 2003:	Three LURD offensives to take Monrovia
July 6, 2003:	Charles Taylor flees Liberia

DATE BENCHMARKS



➔ Other suggestions for follow-up questions:

- At the time of the violation/abuse were you a member of any organization, faction, or group?
- Were you sick, injured, captured or surrendered at the time of the violation?
- Did anybody witness the violations and abuses you suffered?
- Would they be willing to make a statement to the TRC?
- Are you able to confirm that other people have suffered human rights violations and/or abuses with you in the same incident?
- Did you sustain any physical or mental injury, damage or loss as a result of the violation or abuses?
- Have you received any compensation for the loss or damage you sustained?
- What impact did the human rights violation have on you?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS



Instructions for Documenting the STATEMENT GIVER'S OPINIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **You may want to transition into gathering information about the statement-giver's opinions regarding reconciliation, restitution, and their experience in the U.S. by explaining the following:**

The TRC has been charged with making recommendations about reconciliation and restitution, and also is responsible for investigating the root causes of the conflict in Liberia. Could I ask you a few questions about that now?

A. RECONCILIATION & RESTITUTION:

- Have you taken part in any traditional healing or reconciliation ceremonies?
Yes No
 - If so, how? Where?
- Would you be willing to reconcile with the person(s) who committed violations against you?
Yes No
- What do you think would be necessary to restore you to the full social and economic life of the community? Are there any ways that the perpetrator could assist?
- What types of processes or services would help Liberians in the United States achieve truth & reconciliation?

STATEMENT GIVER'S OPINIONS INSTRUCTIONS



B. DIASPORA INFORMATION:

- How were you able to get out of Liberia and come to the United States?
- Do you want to return to Liberia to live? Under what conditions?
- Has your experience in the United States changed your perspective on the Liberian conflict? How?
- How would you like to participate in the TRC process from this point forward?

C. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TRC AND GOVERNMENT:

- In your opinion, what caused the conflict in Liberia?
- How can reconciliation be achieved?
- What is your opinion about reconciliation?
- What recommendations do you have for the TRC?
- What recommendations do you have for the government of Liberia?

STATEMENT GIVER'S OPINIONS INSTRUCTIONS



Instructions for CLOSING

➔ **When the statement-giver is ready to conclude the interview, we ask that you do the following:**

- **Express your thanks. Give them the Statement-giver's Take Home Packet and briefly explain to them what each document is:**
 - Letter from Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the TRC Chairman
 - **Please review the bolded paragraph in this letter with them**
 - A copy of “Important Information About Giving a TRC Statement”
 - Immigration and Mental Health Resources
 - Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights Contact information
- **Tell them what you will do next:**
 - *We will compile our notes into a document that, along with your personal information, will be entered into a computer database. When statement taking in the U.S. is completed, all the information in the database will be sent to the TRC in Liberia. It will become part of the permanent historical record of the TRC.*
- Review the Important Information About Giving Your TRC Statement with the statement giver, in particular the confidentiality and follow-up checklists.
- Ask if they know of others who may be interested in giving a statement to the TRC. If so, have them fill out as much information on the attached intake form about the interested person, or they may take the form with them to give away. Submit any names and contact information to Minnesota Advocates.
- **Express your thanks again and help them find their way out if needed**



Liberian Truth & Reconciliation Commission
Appointment Request Form

1. Return the completed form to:
 - a. Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
650 Third Avenue South #550
Minneapolis, MN 55402-1940
Fax: 612-341-2971
2. OR Email to Liberia-trc@mnadvocates.org.
3. OR Call the TRC Appointment Line at 612-776-7788 or 1-800-799-3688

Statement-Giver Information

1. First Name(s): _____
2. Family Name/Last Name: _____
3. Name you would like to be called: _____
4. Address: _____
Street Apartment #

City State Zip
5. Telephone Numbers:
Work: _____
Home: _____
Mobile: _____
6. Email address: _____
7. Contact Person Name: _____ Phone: _____
8. Dates & Times you could be available to give a statement:

9. Are you: Male Female
10. **Language Information** – Please indicate your preferred language for the statement giving process.

I am most comfortable giving my statement in: ENGLISH LIBERIAN-ENGLISH
Another language: _____