



Volunteer Statement Taker Agreement to Provide *Pro Bono* Services Minnesota Project

The following Agreement sets forth the roles and responsibilities of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (“Minnesota Advocates”) and the Volunteer Statement Taker (“Volunteer” or “Statement Taker”) as part of Minnesota Advocates’ Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Diaspora Project.

Background

1. The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Project was launched by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights on June 22, 2006. The project is designed to give Liberians living in the U.S. a role in promoting international justice and human rights as part of the truth and reconciliation process in Liberia. The project will also raise awareness of transitional justice mechanisms and the Liberian process here in the United States. Minnesota Advocates is working directly with Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission to develop this project.
2. Minnesota Advocates’ goal is to take 1,000-2,000 statements in the U.S. with the help of volunteer statement takers. Volunteer statement takers will receive training, including training by members of the TRC who will travel to the United States. In addition, volunteers will receive training on the history of Liberia and the conflict, cultural considerations for working with Liberians, and ways to avoid vicarious trauma, and training about the TRC process in Liberia.
3. The Volunteer understands that participating in this Project will involve a commitment of time, including completing interviews and timely submitting written statements in the required format; a commitment to approaching the Project with flexibility and to communicating concerns about the Project to appropriate Minnesota Advocates’ staff or volunteer team leaders; a commitment to attend all trainings and to consult provided training and resource materials. Volunteer Statement Takers will not be providing legal advice, and instead will be provided with resources for referrals. Finally, Volunteer Statement Takers will be faced with hearing difficult, often emotionally charged, stories of flight, persecution, torture, violence, and death as a necessary part of the statement-taking process.

Role and Responsibilities

Time Commitment

4. The Volunteer agrees to complete 5-10 statement taking interviews and enter the information in the Project database, or approximately 50 hours of volunteer time. Minnesota Advocates estimates that each interview will take approximately 2-3 hours, with an additional time commitment of 2-3 hours to write up the statement in the TRC’s format. The Volunteer should maintain time records and provide these records to Minnesota Advocates on a quarterly basis.



Work Product Expectations

5. The Project depends on the combined efforts of Minnesota Advocates' staff and volunteers. Each Volunteer Statement Taker will be relied upon to complete his or her work according to Project protocols and to return completed statements in a timely manner. The Volunteer should consider carefully whether they can meet this commitment. Minnesota Advocates expects that Volunteers who are lawyers and who agree to participate will treat the obligations of this *pro bono* matter with the same respect that any other case is given.

6. The Volunteer will complete 5-10 interviews during the Project period. Statements will be scheduled and taken according to the protocols established by the Project. Statement notes will be written up according to the TRC's format. Completed statements will be entered into the Project database within the specified timeframe after completion of the interview. At the end of the Project, all work product, as well as any materials gathered from statement givers, will be transferred to the TRC. Electronic records of statements should be deleted after this transfer takes place.

7. If for any reason the Volunteer cannot meet these obligations the Volunteer must immediately communicate with Minnesota Advocates and arrangements for completion of work agreed to must be made.

Vicarious Trauma

8. The Volunteer understands that the statement-taking process necessarily involves exposure to statements regarding traumatic events. A high prevalence of torture, rape, mutilation, execution of family members, and exposure to war violence is expected among the statements given. Statement-givers may be highly emotional while recounting the traumatic events they survived. The Volunteer understands that vicarious trauma (where the Volunteer may experience some of the symptoms associated with direct exposure to traumatic events) is a possibility.

9. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to assess whether this Project is suitable for the Volunteer prior to agreeing to participate.

Communication and Flexibility

10. The Liberian TRC Project is an unprecedented Project involving hundreds of volunteer lawyers and other professionals. Staff of Minnesota Advocates, together with the Law Firm *Pro Bono* Consortium, the Project's *pro bono* and community advisory committees, and the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, will be constantly assessing the operation of the Project to ensure that the Project's mission is met. While Minnesota Advocates seeks to establish clear protocols and procedures, the Volunteer must be willing to approach the Project with flexibility, to accept changes to the protocols and procedures as they arise, and to work cooperatively with other members of the team at all times.



11. Communication between Minnesota Advocates and the Volunteer is essential. Minnesota Advocates will clearly communicate protocols and procedures to the Volunteer, including any changes to the protocols or procedures. Minnesota Advocates expects that any concerns, questions, comments, or suggestions for change that the Volunteer has will be communicated in a timely and direct way to Minnesota Advocates so that they may be addressed.

Live/Video Training

12. Minnesota Advocates will provide training materials to Volunteers. The materials are also available on Minnesota Advocates website. Training topics include the History of Liberia and the Liberian Conflict; Background to the Liberian TRC Process; Background to Minnesota Advocates' Liberian TRC Project; Cultural Competency; Working with Victims of War Violence and Torture; and Statement Taking Protocols and Procedures. Training needs will be constantly monitored and additional or substitute trainings may be scheduled.

13. The Volunteer is required to attend all trainings or to view the video replay of the training. All training must be complete prior to beginning work as a Statement Taker.

Resource Materials

14. Minnesota Advocates will provide a training manual to all volunteers, including information on the protocols and procedures established by the Project.

15. The Volunteer is expected to review the contents of the Manual and to refer to the Manual with questions about the operation of the Project, protocols for taking statements, protocols for making referrals, and other operational questions. The Volunteer is expected to comply with the protocols and procedures established by the Project to ensure that statements are taken consistently in the format required by the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Legal Representation

16. While many of the Project's volunteers are attorneys, the Project requires that neither the Volunteer nor Minnesota Advocates create an attorney/client relationship with persons giving statements to the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

17. Neither Minnesota Advocates nor the Volunteer will enter into an attorney/client relationship with any person giving a statement in the course of the Liberian TRC Project. Persons giving statements will be provided by the Statement Taker with written disclosures prior to giving their statements. Volunteers may not offer legal advice to individuals giving statements as part of the Liberian TRC Project. The Volunteer must refer individuals seeking legal advice regarding whether to give a statement, whether a statement may have a negative impact on their immigration status, and any other questions that may arise, regardless of whether the Volunteer has the legal knowledge and expertise necessary to advise the individual.



Referral for Legal, Mental Health, Medical, or Social Services

18. Minnesota Advocates will provide Volunteer Statement Takers with resources to refer people in need of legal advice or mental health, medical, social services, or other services. Volunteers are expected to refer individuals in need of services to appropriate, available services.

Publicity and Communications Regarding the Project

19. Communications regarding the Project must be coordinated with and approved by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. The Volunteer agrees not to speak on behalf of the Project without specific authorization. Any requests from the media or the public should be forwarded to Minnesota Advocates.

Non-disclosure of Information Relating to TRC Statements

20. **Volunteers agree to keep all information obtained through this project confidential.** Volunteers may not disclose any information about statement givers or the content of their statements to anyone other than the TRC of Liberia Minnesota Advocates Project Staff, or members of their statement taking team. Under no circumstances may the Volunteer release information about statement givers or information revealed in TRC statements to the media. The Volunteer shall not use any information gathered as part of the TRC process for any purpose other than those purposes specifically authorized by the TRC of Liberia or Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.

I have read the foregoing roles and responsibilities. I understand that by agreeing to serve as a Volunteer Statement Taker I am agreeing to undertake to meet these responsibilities.

Volunteer Statement Taker

Date

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____