
Field Guide for Civil Society

Documentation of Serious Human Rights Violations



PILPG
A Global Pro Bono Law Firm

About the Public International Law & Policy Group

The Public International Law & Policy Group, a 2005 Nobel Peace Prize nominee, operates as a non-profit, global *pro bono* law firm providing free legal assistance to its clients, which include governments, sub-state entities, and civil society groups worldwide. PILPG specializes in the following practice areas:

- **Peace Negotiations**
- **Post-Conflict Constitution Drafting**
- **Transitional Justice and War Crimes Prosecution**
- **Policy Planning**
- **Democracy and Governance**

Through its work, PILPG promotes the use of international law as an alternative to violent conflict for resolving international disputes. PILPG provides legal counsel to *pro bono* clients during peace negotiations, advises on the creation and operation of transitional justice mechanisms, provides expertise during the drafting of post-conflict constitutions, and advises on ways to strengthen the rule of law and effective institutions. To facilitate the utilization of this legal assistance, PILPG also provides policy formulation advice and training on matters related to conflict resolution.

In January 2005, a number of PILPG's *pro bono* clients nominated PILPG for the Nobel Peace Prize for "significantly contributing to the promotion of peace throughout the globe by providing crucial *pro bono* legal assistance to states and non-state entities involved in peace negotiations and in bringing war criminals to justice."

In addition to a staff of full-time attorneys that implement PILPG's programs, PILPG leverages volunteer assistance from international lawyers, diplomats, and foreign relations experts, as well as *pro bono* assistance from major international law firms. Annually, PILPG is able to provide over \$20 million worth of *pro bono* international legal services.

PILPG is based in Washington, D.C., New York, and The Hague. To date, PILPG has maintained project offices in: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Libya, Nepal, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, and Uganda.

Over the course of the past two decades, PILPG has provided assistance to *pro bono* clients in Afghanistan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burma, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur, Dutch Antilles, East Timor, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Macedonia, Mauritius, Montenegro, Nepal, Philippines, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Southern Cameroons, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. PILPG has also provided *pro bono* legal assistance to all of the international and hybrid war crimes tribunals.

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1. DISCLAIMER

PLEASE CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT MESSAGE BEFORE USING THE MATERIALS IN THIS FIELD GUIDE:

This field guide is **NOT** intended to be a comprehensive description of the investigation and documentation of serious human rights violations, nor of the law relating to such issues.

This field guide does **NOT** constitute and does **NOT** in any other way substitute legal, forensic, medical, psychological or other relevant training. They **CANNOT** be considered as equivalent to such trainings.

Before any decision to act or not to act is made, specific legal advice should be sought whenever possible in light of the relevant circumstances. **NO** reliance should be placed on the statements made or documents reproduced in this field guide alone.

This field guide explicitly encourages users to reach out to medical, forensic and legal professionals and professional investigators, to the extent circumstances permit.

The Public International Law & Policy Group disclaims all liability to any person or object in respect of anything done and the consequences of anything done or permitted to be done or omitted to be done wholly or partly in reliance upon the whole or part of the materials in this field guide.



2. USER GUIDE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this field guide is to provide practical assistance to those who encounter information of gross human rights violations on how best to document such information when (a) no professional investigative authority is immediately available **AND** (b) danger exists that the information or evidence might be damaged or lost.

Improper investigation and documentation may cause irreparable damage to information. This may negatively affect future use of such information, for example as evidence in court. If possible, always refer to a professionally trained investigator as a matter of first choice.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Staff and volunteers of local, regional or international CSOs and NGOs
- Individuals acting in their personal capacity as first responders

Individuals and staff, volunteers of CSOs and NGOs rely on different resources and logistical capacity, not least to arrange for their personal safety and the safety of others.

Therefore, not all guidelines apply equally to both users. Use the color-coding system (3. Color-Coding) to determine which guidelines apply.




Individuals acting in their own personal capacity as first-respondents should **avoid following instructions directed at CSOs and NGOs** for their own safety and the safety of others.

HANDBOOK

The instructions and best practices included in this field guide are a representation of the content of the PILPG Handbook on Civil Society Documentation of Serious Human Rights violations.



3. COLOR-CODING

IF YOU ARE:			
			
<p>An individual acting in your personal capacity</p>		<p>Staff or a volunteer of a CSO or NGO</p>	
<p>Follow the guidelines marked with this symbol:</p>		<p>Follow the guidelines marked with this symbol:</p>	

Any best practices or guidelines to avoid or refrain from certain types of behavior or action are in **RED** for ease of reference.

Internal references to other pages of this field guide are in **GREY** for ease of reference



4. DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION

Examples

- Government or corporate documents
- Letters written by government officials or soldiers
- Financial records
- Medical reports
- Printed images
- Maps
- Digital content

Collection

- Determine and document in detail **what** was produced **when, where, by whom** and for what **purpose**
- Ask any previous owner for answers to these question
- Record data about data (metadata) according to the Dublin Core Standards (18. Metadata)

Management

- **Catalogue** consistently and **store** securely
- Use standard forms, templates and case sheets for consistent cataloguing
- Store safe from sun, rain, wind and unauthorized access
- Use portable storage devices (external hard drive) for secure transportation of electronic or digital content, but be aware of security risks (24. Security Measures | Storage)
- Be aware of the risks of carrying storage devices with you
- **Minimize access to and transfers of data** and keep a log detailing **who** accessed the information **when** and for what **purpose**

Usage

- Unless if shared with professionally trained investigator, **avoid sharing original copies** of documentary information, use photocopies instead



5. PHYSICAL/FORENSIC INFORMATION

Examples

- Piece of clothing
- Hair fragments
- Bullet shells
- Weapons
- Objects

Collection

- **Do no harm to any person you obtain information from**
- Always obtain informed consent before undertaking any information-gathering activity
- Secure any potential crime scene before entering (14. Security Measures | Crime Scene)
- **Take pictures** or make sketches of the crime scene as you find it (16. Photographic/Moving Images)
- **Avoid contaminating forensic information by wearing gloves**
- Bag and seal each piece of information individually and include a statement detailing exactly **what, when, where,** and **by whom** it was found (15. Chain of Custody)
- **Do not conduct or suggest conducting a medical examination**

Management

- **Minimize access** and keep an active log detailing who accessed the information **when** and for **what purpose**
- Hand information over to professional investigators where and as soon as possible

Usage

- Ensure chain of custody is maintained in case pieces of forensic information are handed over to a new owner or custodian (15. Chain of Custody)



6. TESTIMONIAL INFORMATION

Examples

- Written or oral account of a victims and witnesses
- Hearsay testimony

Collection

- Implement **PEACE**: Prepare and Plan; Engage with the victim or witness; obtain the Account; Close an interview appropriately; and conduct an Evaluation
- Conduct a risk assessment (11. Risk Assessment) before conducting any interview
- Identify local **assistance and support services** (immediate medical, psychosocial or security assistance as well as health, psychological, legal and social services)
- Pick a **secure and comfortable location**
- Carefully vet and select interpreters or intermediaries (22. Interpreters and 23. Intermediaries)
- Obtain prior **informed consent** from the victim or witness, including specific consent to any audio or visual recordings (19. Informed Consent)
- **Refer the victim or witness** before, during or after an interview to (health) service providers if immediate assistance is required
- Encourage an open and uninterrupted narrative with open-ended questions (21. Interviewing Questions)
- **Do not ask leading or suggestive questions** (21 Interviewing Questions)
- Follow-up with questions about context
- **Avoid re-traumatization or forcing information**
- **Do not offer or provide financial or other benefits for participating**

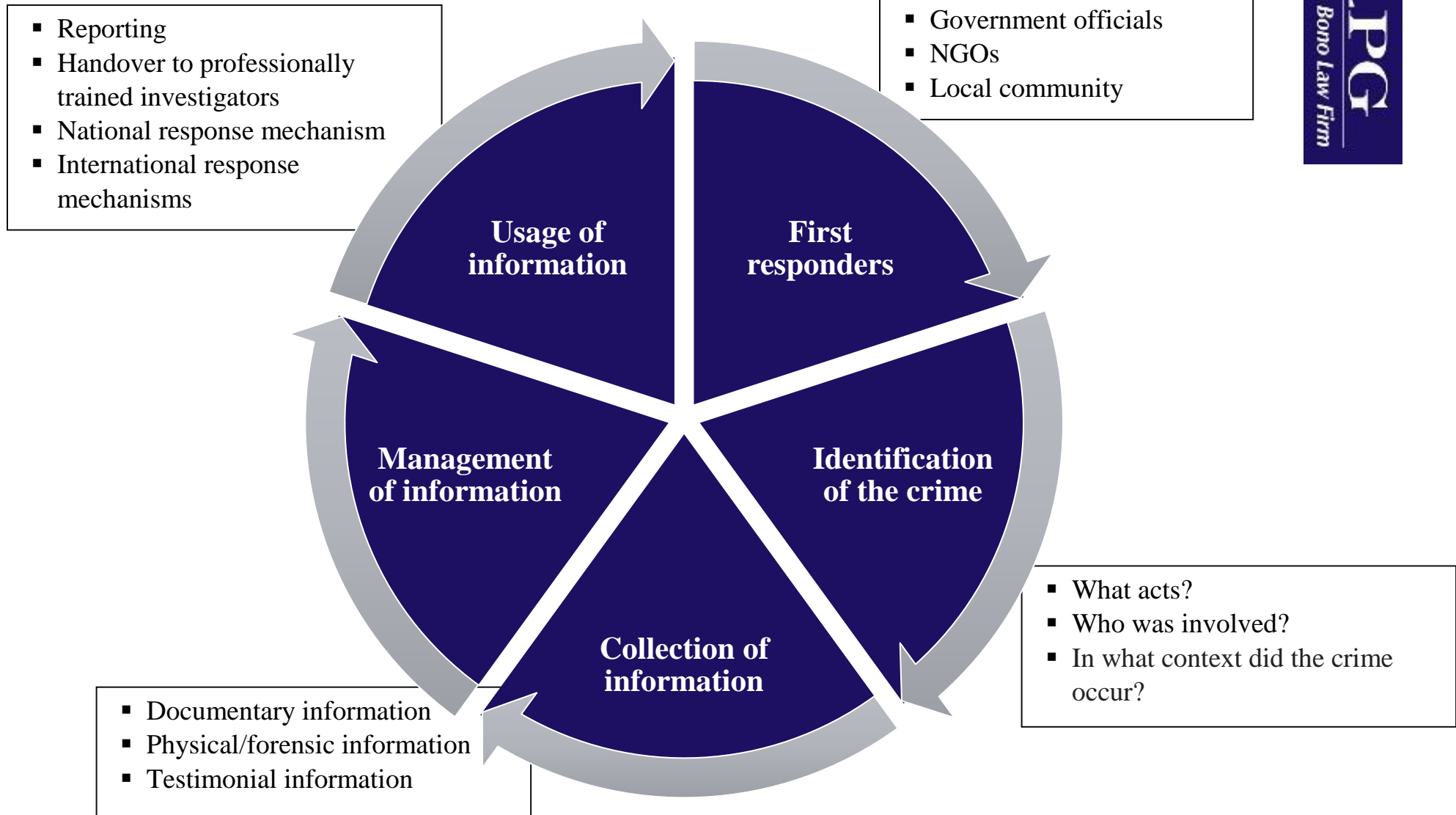
Management

- Treat testimonial information as **confidential** unless informed consent authorizing disclosure has been obtained (9. Confidentiality)
- Replace references to names by codes and redact information that may reveal the identity of the source
- Ensure any information is stored securely (24. Secure Storage)

Usage

- Obtain **recorded oral** or **signed written consent** from the victims or witnesses before disclosing for whatever purpose, including criminal legal proceedings.

7. DOCUMENTATION PROCESS



Disclaimer. These best practices and guidelines are a selection of those contained in the PILPG Investigation and Documentation Handbook. They do not constitute legal advice and do not replace the need for proper training.



8. DO NO HARM

DO NO HARM EXPLAINED

Preventing and minimizing any unintended negative effects of activities that can increase people's vulnerability to physical and/or psychosocial risks

Do no harm to victims/witnesses

- Offer or **arrange for immediate** professionally trained **(health)care** as first priority
- Conduct a risk assessment before undertaking any information-gathering exercise (11. Risk Assessment)
- Obtain informed consent prior to collection of information (19. Informed Consent)
- Protect the identity and safety of the victim/witness as well as the information documented (9. Confidentiality)
- Act with respect, professionalism and empathy towards others, always with their safety and security in mind
- Watch for signs of emotional distress or re-traumatization and stop, pause or postpone interview as required
- **Do not collect information from particularly vulnerable persons** (children showing signs of psychological trauma)

Prevent harm to yourself or others

- Secure scene from potential hazards before entering (14. Security Measures | Crime Scene)
- Plan and prepare



9. CONFIDENTIALITY

CONFIDENTIALITY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirm all involved understand and apply the agreed confidentiality measures applicable to the documentation exercise 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure measures are in place to protect: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any information revealing the identity of the provider of information ○ Any information or testimony provided by a victim or witness ○ Any information about referral options or protective measures in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use coded language and passwords to anonymize information 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Store information regarding the identity of the source of the information or any key to unlock codes used separately from the information 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fully and clearly explain to providers of information the conditions and limits of confidentiality, including: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What confidentiality measures are in place and how the information and their identity will be protected ○ Limitations of assuring confidentiality as a legal right ○ Limitation of confidentiality in case of risk of self-harm or loss of life of the provider of the information ○ Disclosure of information upon prior informed consent of the provider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not discuss details of information collected with family, friends or colleagues who are not involved in the documentation process. 	



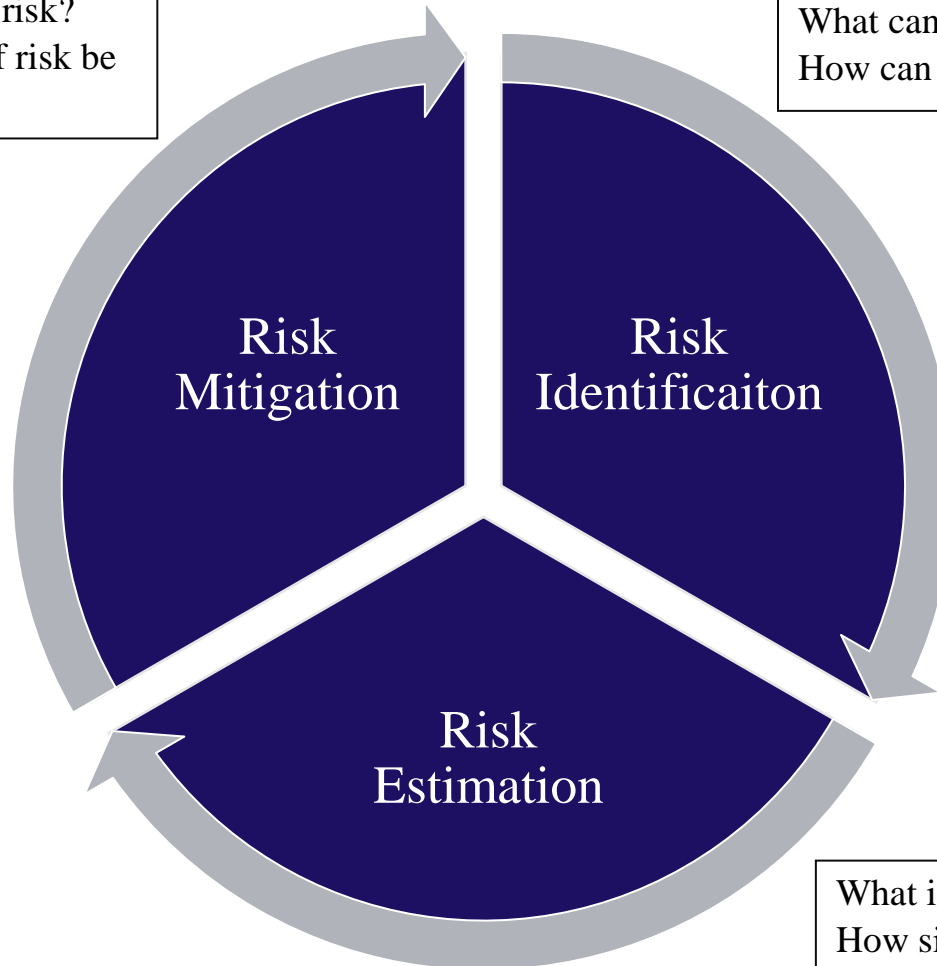
10. PREPARATION

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST			
Investigation and Documentation A Field Guide for Civil Society	<input type="checkbox"/>	Measurement instruments (tape measure, ruler etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing implements (pens, pencils, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flashlight/torch	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pocketknife	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camera (with extra batteries, storage etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gloves/Shoe covers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio and/or video recording device	<input type="checkbox"/>	All-weather gear to protect from the sun, cold or rain	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication equipment (phone with pre-paid SIM card)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plastic, sealable bags	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encrypted list of important phone numbers (preferably memorized)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tape and/or rubber bands	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch (preferably with compass)	<input type="checkbox"/>	First aid kit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local maps	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disinfectant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hand lens (magnifying glass)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterless hand wash	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

What can be done to reduce the risk?
How can the effective control of risk be monitored and evaluated?

What can go wrong?
How can it go wrong?



What is the likelihood of occurrence?
How significant are the consequences?



12. RISK IDENTIFICATION

RISK IDENTIFICATION VICTIMS AND WITNESSES	
Is there a risk of retaliation/intimidation/threats by alleged perpetrators/their families/their supporters against victims/witnesses and/or their families?	Yes No
Is there a risk of loss of livelihood, arrest or arbitrary arrest?	Yes No
Is there a risk of punishment, including physical violence, by members of the immediate community/family?	Yes No
Is there a risk of coercive pressure to force victims/witnesses to reconcile with perpetrators?	Yes No
Is there a risk of attempts to secure financial gains for families of victims/witnesses take priority over justice for victims/witnesses?	Yes No
Is there a risk of re-traumatization?	Yes No
Is there a risk of loss of access to schools and vocational opportunities for children?	Yes No
Is there a risk of arrest and punishment by the police or government forces?	Yes No
Is there a nearby medical facility, and, if so, can you access it? Will it serve all the victims/witnesses you are interacting with?	Yes No
Will visiting particular crime scenes risk placing individuals who told you about these locations in additional danger?	Yes No

Answering “**Yes**” indicates a security risk. Complete a risk estimation and identify appropriate risk mitigating strategy (which includes refraining from further action)



12. RISK IDENTIFICATION

RISK IDENTIFICATION CONTEXTUAL RISKS	
Are you located in an active armed conflict situation?	Yes No
Are you located in a situation with frequent exposure to violence?	Yes No
Are you located in a situation of severe political instability?	Yes No
Are you located in a situation with a breakdown of law enforcement?	Yes No
Are you located in a situation with severe restrictions on the freedom of information?	Yes No
Are you a member of an ethnic, national, religious, cultural, political or other minority?	Yes No
Do you represent an organization with a tense relationship with the local community?	Yes No
Are your activities/actions likely to attract attention and/or give rise to tension?	Yes No
Is there an individual/group of individuals that poses a particular threat to you?	Yes No
Are these individuals likely to be under the influence of alcohol/drugs?	Yes No
Are these individuals likely to be in the possession of a weapon?	Yes No
Will you be operating alone?	Yes No
Will you be able to contact someone in case of an emergency?	Yes No

Answering “Yes” indicates a security risk. Complete a risk estimation and identify appropriate risk mitigation (which includes refraining from further action).



13. RISK ESTIMATION | MITIGATION

RISK ESTIMATION MATRIX					
Likelihood	Consequence				
	1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Catastrophic
E Certain	11	16	20	23	25
D Likely	7	12	17	21	24
C Possible	4	8	13	18	22
B Unlikely	2	5	9	14	19
A Rare	1	3	6	10	15

Risk Consequence Rating		
Rating	Socio-economic environment	Health and Safety
1	Minor or no inconvenience to the community. No socio-economic change.	First Aid
2	Public disturbance in the affected community. Minor socio-economic change.	Simple Medical Treatment
3	Limited local media attention and/or public disturbance in the affected community. Limited socio-economic change.	Extended Medical Treatment
4	National headlines, serious community relations impact. High levels of NGO attention. Significant socio-economic change.	Single Fatality or Permanent Disability (physical and psychological)
5	International headlines, disastrous community relations. Significant levels of NGO attention. Massive socio-economic change.	Multiple fatalities or long-term disabilities

Risk Mitigation	
Risk Estimation	Risk mitigation
1-5	Proceed with caution
6-10	Identify risk reduction methods
11-17	Consult with local (health)care and security providers before proceeding
18-25	Refrain from further action

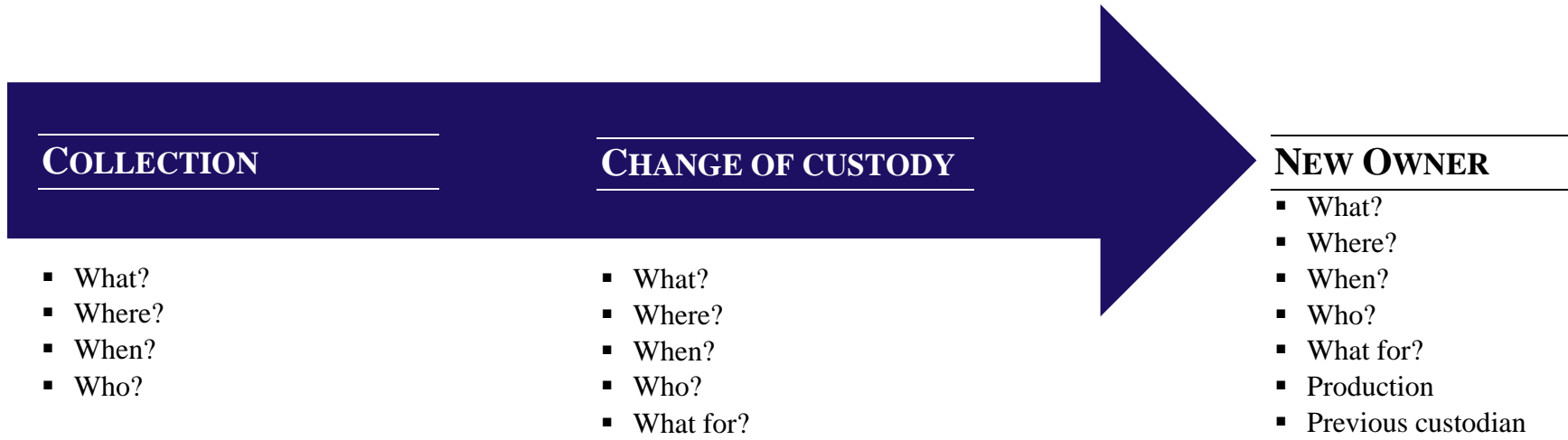
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14. SECURITY MEASURES | CRIME SCENE

SECURING A CRIME SCENE	
Pack all necessary tools and equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>
If possible, refer scene to a professional investigator	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perform risk assessment to ensure your personal safety and the safety of others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine whether the scene can be safely entered and identify a common approach path and escape route	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remain alert and attentive	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do no harm and provide first aid where required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Define, restrict access to and protect the scene, if possible using physical barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain information on who entered the scene and begin recording who enters and leaves the scene at the common approach path	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure the scene, including any items in it, is left untouched	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not contaminate the scene, use personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, protective clothing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Document the scene as you encountered it using photography or moving images (if possible use a data collection and preservation application like eyeWitness)	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. CHAIN OF CUSTODY



EVIDENCE		CHAIN OF CUSTODY
Submitting Agency: _____	Description of collected evidence: _____	Received from: _____
Date collected: _____	_____	Received by: _____
Time collected: _____	_____	Date: _____ Time: _____
Collected by: _____	_____	Purpose: _____
Location where collected: _____	_____	Received from: _____
_____	_____	Received by: _____
_____	_____	Date: _____ Time: _____
_____	_____	Purpose: _____

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16. PHOTOGRAPHIC/MOVING IMAGES

PHOTOGRAPHIC/MOVING IMAGES CHECKLIST

Check internal date/time settings of device	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check internal GPS settings of device	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check storage capacity available	<input type="checkbox"/>
If at a crime scene, secure the scene and check for any hazards. Try to leave the scene undisturbed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do no harm to person(s) photographed/filmed and obtain prior informed consent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not take photographs of/film private parts of an individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
If possible use a secure data collection and preservation application (e.g. eyeWitness, CameraV)	<input type="checkbox"/>

PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

Take series of overlapping, scenic photographs. If possible, include marker indicating north	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take mid-range close-up photograph, showing location of detail in relation to scenic photograph	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take close-up photograph with detail filling full shot and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep back of camera parallel to detail ▪ Use ruler or other object for seize reference ▪ Avoid over-exposure or under-exposure to light 	<input type="checkbox"/>

MOVING IMAGES

Keep elbows close to the body and knees slightly bent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include real life markers (e.g. signs, time)	<input type="checkbox"/>



17. DOCUMENTING PHYSICAL INJURY

DETAILS

Victim identification number: _____

Do not use the name of the victim for confidentiality and safety reasons

Gender: Male | Female | Other

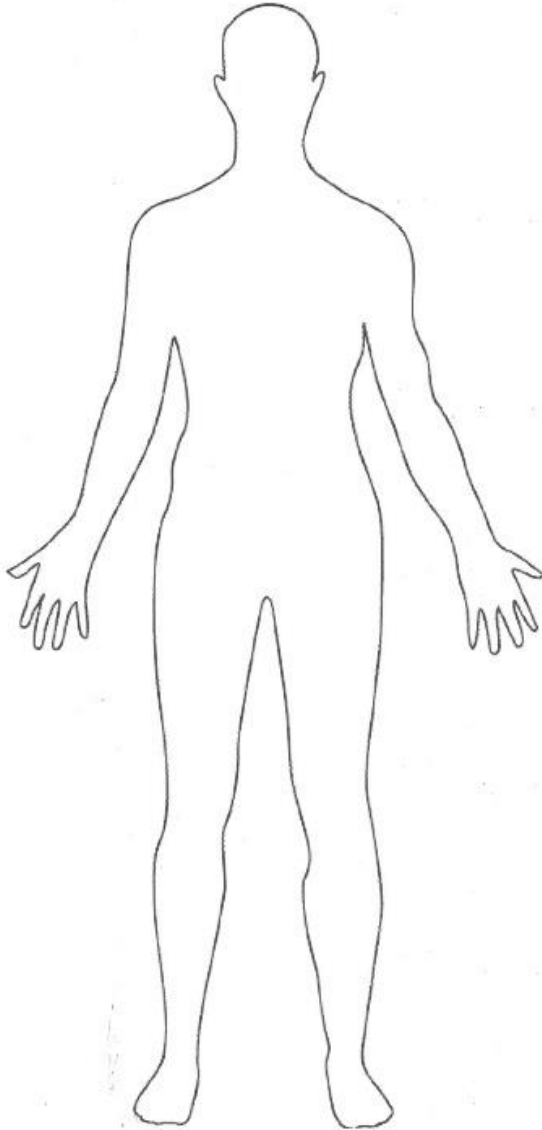
Completed by: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

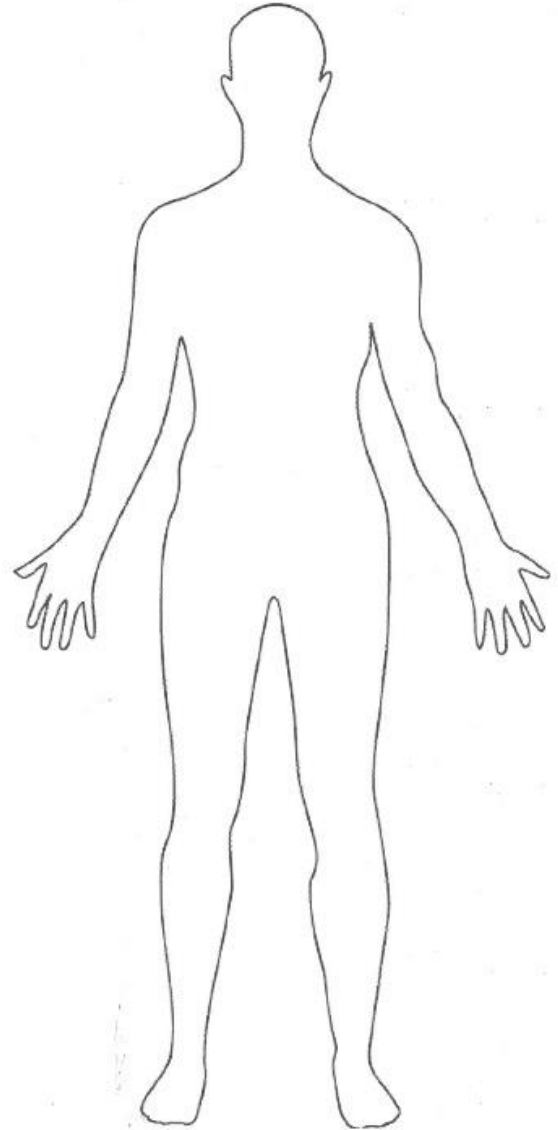
Location: _____

Additional Notes: _____

Front



Back



Use to document physical injury from external observation only. **Do not perform a medical examination. Do not ask to reveal any private body parts.**

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18. METADATA

METADATA	
Metadata is data about data. It describes characteristics of data using standardized categories and responses. Metadata can be used to determine the reliability, originality and accuracy of data.	
Creator: _____	full family and given names of any person, organization primarily responsible for making the content
Contributor: _____	full family and given names of any person, organization making a contribution to a resource
Publisher: _____	full family and given names of any person, organization responsible for making the resource available
Title: _____	name or names by which a resource will be recognized
Date created: _____	description of dates in the lifecycle of the piece of digital information, as listed, if known and applicable. The Dublin Core Standards prescribe the use of the following format for recording dates: YYYY/MM/DD
Date available: _____	
Date modified: _____	
Date submitted: _____	
Date accepted: _____	
Type: _____	refers to a description of the nature of the resource (still image, motion picture, etc.)
Format: _____	refers to the file format or the data storage medium of a resource, relevant in order to determine the equipment needed to display or operate the resource (i.e. .word, .jpg)
Extent: _____	refers to the size or duration of the original resources
Medium: _____	refers to the specifications of the medium used to create the resources (i.e. brand of laptop, brand of camera)
Description: _____ _____	refers to the extended topic of a resource by means of several full sentences
Provenance: _____	refers to a description of the changes in ownership and custody of a resource
Coverage: _____	refers to any spatial location relevant to a resource



19. INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT CHECKLIST	
Provide your name , name of the organization and mandate of the organization to the participant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain the purpose and content of the information collection exercise to the participant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that consent is given voluntarily , based on free will	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain explicit consent for specific activities (e.g. audio/visual recordings, photographs, notes)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain the meaning of confidentiality and how it may or may not apply to the participant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain the structure and procedures to be followed, including that the information may need to be disclosed and its intended use	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide the risks and benefits of participating, including those to the safety and security of the participant and his/her family	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mention the right of the participant to decline or refuse to answer any question or provide any information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mention that declining or refusing to answer/participate does not affect access to care or justice to the participant	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a child is participating, ensure that the consent of their parent or legal guardian is obtained and that they are present (specialist knowledge required)	<input type="checkbox"/>



20. INTERVIEWING

STAGES OF AN INTERVIEW

| P | Planning and Preparation

- Conduct a Risk Assessment
- Prepare an interview plan and questions
- Identify care and support providers for referral
- Consider language to be used
- Familiarize yourself with the context
- Prepare documents, diagrams, photographs, maps to show
- Bring pens, paper, camera and ruler to document external injuries
- Engage and carefully select reliable interpreters and/or intermediary
- Choose a safe, private, culturally appropriate and comfortable location
- Determine safe and confidential system of recording information
- Bring recording device
- Bring drinking water for everyone

| E | Engaging with the Victim/Witness

- Obtain informed consent (19. Informed Consent)
- Introduce everyone present and their roles, address any concerns
- Discuss how long the interview will be and that they can ask for breaks at any time
- Give the person power to agree/disagree, answer/not answer, ask questions or have information repeated.
- *My name is... I work for... Do you know what we do?*
- *How would you like me to call you?*
- *Could you tell me something about yourself?*
- *Would you like something to drink some water?*
- *What do you think of this building?*

Continues onto next page.



20. INTERVIEWING

| **A** | Account

- Set scene and initiate free recall
- **Do not interrupt** the free recall
- **Do not ask leading or suggestive questions**
- Take notes of points for further clarification
- Obtain full description of identifying physical characteristics of any person described during interview
- Identify and expand topics raised by the witness
- Be aware of your demeanor (and that of interpreter) including pitch and tone of voice. Remain polite, respectful, patient and attentive. Show empathy, **not pity**
- **Never assume feelings, thoughts, facts, preferences or impact of trauma**

| **C** | Closing an Interview

- Summarize using witness's own words
- Confirm everything has been covered
- Ask witness whether they have any questions
- Reconfirm informed consent and allow them to change their minds or withdraw consent if they wish
- Offer to refer witness to care providers
- Ensure you can contact them and that they can contact you
- Try to bring them back to the present and a positive frame of mind. End on a positive, neutral topic and note
- Use culturally appropriate gestures when departing (e.g. shaking hands)

| **E** | Evaluation

- Follow-ups
- Points for improvement

21. INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

TEDS		Probing 5 W's + How	
Tell	<i>Could you tell me exactly what happened?</i>	What	<i>What happened?</i>
Explain	<i>Could you explain to me what happened afterwards?</i>	Where	<i>Where did this happen?</i>
Describe	<i>Could you describe what that person looked like?</i>	When	<i>When did this happen?</i>
Show	<i>Could you show me on this map where this happened?</i>	Who	<i>Who else was there?</i>
		Why	<i>Why do you think they did that?</i>
		How	<i>How did you know?</i>

Do not ask leading or suggestive questions, such as:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Has someone been hurting you?</i> ▪ <i>Where you in his house on the day of the crime?</i> ▪ <i>Was he wearing a military uniform?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Could you tell me whether this person was big or small?</i> ▪ <i>Did that scare you?</i> ▪ <i>Would you say this happened often?</i> |
|---|---|



22. INTERPRETERS

SELECTING INTERPRETERS

Interpreters must:

- Be trained in interpretation, working with victims/witnesses of gross human rights violations and, where relevant, with vulnerable individuals
- Provide the correct linguistic and cultural interpretation of key words or expressions
- Fully understand the meaning and importance of informed consent
- Abide by the relevant codes of confidentiality
- Work professionally, with care and an eye for detail
- Work according to the ethical principle of “do no harm”

Interpreters should:

- Be comfortable in and understand the local context, but remain objective and neutral
- Be comfortable with the subject matter of gross human rights violations and its terminology
- Show empathy
- Be aware of the impact of their presence and composure
- Use only the words of the victims, witnesses and the interviewer

Interpreters should not:

- Intimidate or threaten a victim or witness
- Show pity, shock or judgment
- Use their own words instead of the words of the victim, witness or interviewer or change the meaning of words or expressions
- Discussing any information obtained from victims or witnesses with others
- Explain anything to victims or witnesses unless instructed to do so by the interviewer
- Omit anything said

Select interpreters based on:

- Independence and professional experience, where possible
- Assessment of impartiality, trustworthiness, criminal records and reliability
- Assessment of views on human rights (in the local context)
- Availability of both male and female interpreters
- Comfort with the terminology of gross human rights violations, sexual violence in particular
- Awareness of special needs of vulnerable victims and witnesses (children and victims of sexual violence in particular)
- Consideration of ethnicity or cultural affiliation in local context



23. INTERMEDIARIES

INTERACTING WITH INTERMEDIARIES

Intermediaries can be:

- Member of local grassroots organizations
- National and international non-governmental organizations
- Community support networks
- Service and healthcare providers
- Support structures such as religious communities, victim support groups and women support groups

When to consider interacting with intermediaries:

- If unfamiliar with the local community, its members and dynamics
- If victims and witnesses may be in danger for interacting with you directly
- If victims and witnesses may be apprehensive about interacting with individuals from outside the community

Interact with intermediaries to:

- Identify and liaise with members of the local community
- Overcome cultural and social barriers with local community
- Identify and establish contact with victims and witnesses

Select intermediaries based on:

- Willingness and ability to respect confidentiality and to act with integrity and respect for local diversity and well-being of others
- Appropriate availability, knowledge and experience
- Accessibility in local community
- Cultural, social and linguistic affiliation with local community
- Experienced in working with victims and witnesses
- Availability of resources (financial, infrastructural, logistical and other)

When interacting with intermediaries:

- Assess any risks to victims, witnesses and the intermediary as a result of the interaction
- Ensure intermediaries abide by all ethical principles, including “do no harm”
- **Avoid creating a perception of offering anything of value in exchange for information**
- Clarify the role and limitations of the role of intermediaries
- Keep a record of any interaction with intermediaries
- Limit sharing of information to a minimum
- **Do not allow intermediaries to coach or otherwise influence victims or witnesses**

24. SECURITY MEASURES | STORAGE



GUIDELINES SECURE STORAGE	
Hide phone/tablet applications (apps) used for storing information from main screen of mobile device	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use password protected, external storage devices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not label or store information in a way that reveals its confidential content	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not store confidential and non-confidential information together	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use code names instead of actual names as much as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share copies of information with trusted others, without putting them at risk	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be aware of the risks of carrying external storage devices with you	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use a virtual private network (VPN) to connect to the internet and regularly delete browser history	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make back-up copies of important documents and store separately	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use programs such as GNU Privacy Guard and GPG4Win to protect your files and online activity through passwords and public encryption keys (more encryption and cyber-security tools are available free of charge on https://securityinabox.org/en/tools)	<input type="checkbox"/>



CIVIL SOCIETY DOCUMENTATION FIELD GUIDE

NOTES

Keep an actively log of any activities undertaken, in as much detail as possible.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Note (what, why and how):

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Note (what, why and how):

CIVIL SOCIETY DOCUMENTATION FIELD GUIDE

NOTES

Keep an actively log of any activities undertaken, in as much detail as possible.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Note (what, why and how):

Increasingly, civil society actors engage in documentation and investigation processes, seeking to collect evidence against those responsible for serious human rights violations. **PILPG's Field Guide on Civil Society Documentation of Serious Human Rights Violations** provides a practical and portable overview of the guidelines and best practices detailed in **PILPG's Handbook on Civil Society Documentation of Serious Human Rights Violations** on the collection and management of information on serious human rights situations for those that are not professionally trained in such documentation practices. While the Field Guide and the Handbook strongly emphasize the need to refrain from investigating human rights abuses and to refer to professionals, practice shows that this is not always possible. Only under such circumstances and as a last resort may civil society actors consider engaging in certain documentation practices and not in others, always seeking to include professionals when and where possible. They may however only do so by adhering to the ethical principles and documentation guidelines that are provided in this Field Guide. These enable unofficial investigators to do no harm, identify security risks, preserve crime scenes, prevent the loss of evidence, and manage the information in a manner that preserves confidentiality, security and probative value, with an eye to possible use in later redress processes.

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