

# Community Service Participants Manual

2015



## INTRODUCTION

¡Bienvenido a Honduras! That means "Welcome to Honduras!".

We, in AFS Honduras are very happy to know that you will be spending your Community Service experience in Honduras. We are looking forward to meet you and to help you through the following months among us.

We are sure that at this time you are wondering about many things about your experience and probably the first one must be where is Honduras? We hope you have looked it up by now and already know that we are located right in the heart of Central America, so let us tell you that we are looking forward to have you "beat" with us.

Now that you are at home preparing for this adventure it's the best time to learn a bit of Honduras and start learning Spanish. This manual will help you have an introduction on our country and some tips that will come in handy during your experience

We thank you for choosing Honduras for your AFS experience, and hope that our country and its people will provide you with long lasting memories and a better idea of what the world we live in is about. And at the same time, you will become ambassadors of your own culture and teach those around you about it.

¡Te esperamos!







Honduras has several political parties but the two major ones are the "Partido Liberal" and the "Partido Nacional". The current president is from the "Partido Nacional" and is called Porfirio Lobo Sosa ("Pepe Lobo").

## Economy

In recent years, Honduras has been laying the economic and structural foundation necessary to offer the most receptive welcome to foreign capital. One example is the Industrial Free Zone, where raw materials and goods are allowed to be imported without limit; another is the *Zona Industrial de Procesamiento*, or ZIP (Industrial Processing Zone) which grants these fiscal benefits to foreign firms as well as domestic businesses, as long as certain conditions are met.

Up to now, the traditional Honduran economy has sustained revenues through the export of bananas, coffee, shrimp, lobsters, and minerals such as lead and zinc. The nation's principal markets are the United States, which is the destination for 54 percent of Honduras' exports, Germany, Belgium, Japan, and Italy. As for imports, the principal products that Honduras purchases from foreign countries are: transportation machinery and equipment, mineral fuels, chemical, plastic products, and resins. The major suppliers are the United States, Japan, México, Venezuela, and the Low Countries.

### Holidays and national celebrations

New Year's .....	January 1
Holy Week .....	Thursday and Easter Friday
Americas Day .....	April 14
Labor Day .....	May 1
Independence Day.....	September 15
Morazán Day .....	October 3
Columbus Day .....	October 12
Armed Forces Day .....	October 21
Christmas .....	December 25

The agricultural sector produces mainly sugarcane, tobacco, banana, corn, coffee, palm oil, sorghum, kidney beans and rice. Taken together, the livestock and crop-raising industries provide employment for 46 percent of the Honduran labor force. The nation's second-largest source of employment is public administration, which, including the Armed Forces, occupies 20 percent of the economically active population. The third-ranking employment sector is the industry, which includes the production of cement, brown sugar and beer. The principal economic activities are concentrated in the cities of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, El Progreso, and Choluteca.

## Religion

Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion of Honduras, but the country has freedom of religion and there are many other Christian churches, including Mormons, seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Assemblies of God, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and others.

## Language

The official language is Spanish. However, English is spoken throughout Honduras, particularly along the length of the northern coast and among the inhabitants of the Bay Islands; the Miskito and garífuna dialects are also spoken on the Caribbean Coast.

## People

The population of Honduras in the last census was 8,249,574. 60% of the population lives in small towns or villages in rural areas, the remaining 40% of the population lives in urban areas.

Ethnically, 86% of the population is classified as "mestizo" (a mixture of Spanish and Amerindian). Another 7% are Amerindians, 3% are Caucasians, and 4% are Afro Honduran. Most Hondurans of Indian ancestry pertain to the Spanish American culture and are not considered "Indians". Only a few Indian groups in Honduras still speak an indian language or follow indian ways of life. These isolated groups of indians are declining in number. Some indian groups, the "Payas" and the "Sumos" inhabit jungle areas in the interior of the "Mosquitia". "Misquitos" live in the Mosquitia region in the north coast and along the Río Coco, which forms the

### Did you know that?

- ★ Honduras was also known as the "Banana Republic"
- ★ The oldest working clock in America is in the city of Comayagua
- ★ Honduras fought in a war called the soccer war?
- ★ The "Copán" Mayan Ruins and the "Biosfera del Río Plátano" forest were declared human heritage by UNESCO
- ★ Honduras has the world's second Great Barrier Reef?
- ★ Every year, between May and July, there is a rain of fish in the department of "Yoro"
- ★ The first catholic mass in America took place in the city of "Trujillo"/Punta Castilla

border between Honduras and Nicaragua. Other Indian groups are the "Mayas Chortis", who live along the Honduran-Guatemalan border and speak their own language, the "Lenca", and the "Xicaque" tribes of the North Central region. "Garífunas" are a mixture of African and Carib Indians and make up around 4% of the population. They originally were transported by the British to the island of Roatán from the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent in 1797. Today, Garífuna settlements are all along the north coast of Honduras.

The people are courteous and generous to guests in their homes. If arriving at mealtime, expect a sincere invitation to eat with the family. Even people of humble circumstances will share whatever they have to make you feel welcome.

## **Gastronomy**

One of the best ways to capture the flavor of Honduras is through its food. Succulent, well-seasoned dishes are prepared throughout the country and are among the proudest traditions of the Honduran people. There are three main elements in the Honduran diet: corn, beans and rice. Not only is corn used to make "tortillas", an essential complement to any meal, it is also used in popular recipes such as "nacatamales", "posol", "atol" and "montuca". Hondurans also like to eat boiled or roasted cobs called "elotes".

You must try the "plato tipico", a plate filled with grilled beef, "chorizo" sausages, "chismol", fried plantains, refried beans, "tortillas", "mantequilla" and a slice of avocado. But the country's true culinary richness reaches beyond the "plato tipico" and varies from one region to the other according to the ingredients that are available. "Tapado Olanchano" and "Tapado Costeño", for example, are two very similar, popular soups but their ingredients vary to those common to the province.

Catholicism has had a strong influence on Honduran cuisine. On Good Friday, families enjoy the traditional "Sopa de Pescado Seco" (balls of dry fish in soup ) and "torrejas" for desert (syrupy bread slices).

Honduras' tropical zones produce a variety of exotic fruits, such as pineapples, cantaloupe, watermelon, bananas, oranges and mangos, a particular favorite of tourists who come from colder climates. Whether served fresh, in beverages or in desserts, Honduran fruits are always sweet and healthy. The hearty "mondongo" (tripe) soup, "pupusas" ("tortillas" stuffed with cheese or pork rinds), traditional baked goods and the refreshing "horchata" rice drink are among other popular foods available in Honduras.

**Welcome to our marvelous  
COUNTRY!**

## Your AFS Experience

### Your Honduran Host Family

A traditional Latin-American family it is often a big family, with lots of siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandchildren and grandparents, who may often visit each other, live in the same neighborhood or even live in the same house. As time changes, it is more common to find families that are formed just by the two parents and 3 to 4 children or single parent families.

For you everything will start with a "Hola", a hug and a kiss on the cheek (just to girls) or a hand shake. Here in Honduras when we meet someone we are kind and tender or what in other places call us very physical on our expressions.

With family and friend we are more expressive when we greet, when we meet someone older than us we shake hands and depending on what the other persons do (lean on for a kiss on the cheek or just a smile) we react doing the same.

Don't feel strange if you see that during a conversation we tend to touch you, we don't only use our words to express our selves we use our entire body (body language). No worries at the end of your experience you will also do that and act like a Honduran.

#### Keep in mind

That you are not coming to Honduras to be a guest but a new member of your Honduran family and that means that you will share the house responsibilities and family challenges, as well as joyful moments with them.

Respect the family rules and remember that in order to be treated as a family member you cannot ask for more privileges than the ones the other family members have.

You have to ask for permission and the curfew time from your Honduran parents when going out. You must also inform them about whom you are going with and where you are going. Respect the curfew and understand that they feel a great responsibility for you, your safety and your wellbeing.

Still, the family is the foundation of the Honduran society. Family loyalty is an ingrained and unquestioned virtue; from early childhood, individuals learn that relatives are to be trusted and relied on; therefore the members of the family tend to depend on a great level on one another. Even after children finish their careers and start working they keep living with their parents. Children are only expected to "leave the nest" once they get married and not in all cases.

No shame accrues to the man who fathers many children and maintains several women as mistresses. Public disapproval follows only if the man fails to assume the role of "head of the family" and to support his children. When a free union dissolves, a woman typically receives only the house that she and her mate inhabited. The children receive support only if they have been legally recognized by their father.

In keeping with the tradition of machismo, males usually play a dominant role within the family, and they receive the deference due to the head of the household. There is wide variation in practice, however. Where a man is absent, has limited economic assets, or is simply unassertive, a woman assumes the role of head of the family.

Parent-child relationships are markedly different depending on the sex of the parent. Mothers openly display affection for their children; the mother-child tie is virtually inviolate. Father-child relationships vary more depending on the family. Ideally, the father is an authority figure to be obeyed and respected; however, fathers are typically more removed from daily family affairs than mothers.

Honduran families are rather conservative and you will often find that the father is the one who will have the final word. Children have a lot of respect for the parents, and their authority is not to be challenged. They do not have to give you a justification for all their decisions, and if you want to go out you don't tell them, you ask for their permission. If you at first find your family to be strict you must remember that it is because they care about you, and they feel a great responsibility for you. After all they are the best guides to the local culture.

There are different ways to address people in Honduras, we use **USTED** with parents, elder people or someone we do not know and the well known **VOS**, this is used with our siblings, friends even if at large with all those we are close to.

Hondurans generally are not very straight forward or direct in our way of communicating, we try to be polite and take into consideration other people's feelings and therefore if someone comes very directly to us we find it a little rude.



You will need to understand and be patience with our way of communication; don't feel frustrated if you see that host family does not tell you what they want from you and that you find it out throughout third parties. What we do in order to not offend others is to give hints of what we think.

## Your bedroom

For Honduran families every bedroom is part of the house and therefore, they may enter without asking for permission or knocking. This also means that even if you have a bedroom on your own, you must keep it tidy and clean, and your Honduran parents will remind you of that!

Normally the doors are kept open and are only closed when sleeping or studying. It is not accepted to take guests or friends to the bedroom, so any time you have a visitor you must use the common areas as the living room, the porch or the kitchen.

## The Honduran hour

The Honduran families in general are very laid back in terms of time. Don't be surprised if your family plans an activity at certain time and then take more than half hour to actually start! Though we are not very punctual and take advantage of the "Honduran hour" (which means almost an hour later than the time we agreed), Honduran parents are very strict about curfew time and will not accept an excuse if you are not on time back home.

## What will we eat?

Honduras cuisine is based around beans, rice, tortillas, fried bananas, meat (specially poultry), pastas, mantequilla (Honduran sour cream) and fresh cheese. Being a tropical and an agricultural country gives us the privilege to have fresh vegetables and fruits all year round and at a very un-expensive price, but that does not necessarily makes us veggie lovers! In fact, we are not very prone to eating healthy and love carbohydrates and deep-fry food. Vegetables (except for our so beloved bean and corn transformed into our adored tortillas) are just considered a side dish for lunch that is often prepared in the same way: boiled, steamed or in a salad.

In general Hondurans take a hearty breakfast that consists of eggs, fried mashed beans, fried bananas, tortillas, mantequilla, cheese and coffee. For lunch we often have poultry, rice, potatoes or a pasta made the Honduran way. Dinner is the lighter meal of the day.

Meal time varies in every family but in general these are the times in which every meal is taken:

Breakfast	between	6:00 and 7:00 AM
Lunch	between	12:00 and 1:00 PM
Dinner	between	6:00 and 7:00 PM

We do not place a great importance on food as a social event, we see it as a basic need that has to be fulfilled so, is really common that we eat very fast and that we don't eat together in family (except when there is a special event). However, not accepting a drink or a meal in Honduras is considered rude, as well as not finishing what is in your plate.



## A clean look... and a clean smell



We place a great importance on personal hygiene and aspect. We shower every day before our daily activities and sometimes even take a second shower when returning home after a hot day. The use of deodorant and clean clothes is a must when living in such a warm weather.

Most houses have running water but during summer time water is scarce due to Government's saving policy. In that case you may have to shower out of a bucket.

It is also common that most houses do not have hot water, but who needs it if there is 30° C or more outside?

In regards to washing your clothes, most of Honduran families do not have a washing machine and wash their clothes in a cement built washboard located outside the house. Regardless of the washing method, you should ask your family about their laundry habits. In most of the cases your family will wash your clothes with the other family members clothing, but you are expected to wash your underwear yourself.

Although we have given you an idea about the Honduran family way of life, you should keep in mind that all families have different set of rules, values and habits. Keep the communication open and ask them when you have not understood something or think that you have done something wrong. At the beginning of your experience, it is possible that your family won't tell you about what you should and should not do to avoid hurting your feelings, but after some days you will start to learn how things work and what are their feelings about certain issues.

#### **Remember...**

Just like in your own family, there will be misunderstandings, disagreements and problems.

Here are a few tips that previous exchange students have found helpful for their adaptation in their Honduran family:

- Begin the day with a friendly "Buenos Dias" to anyone in the family and close with a happy "Buenas Noches".
- Take the initiative!
- Respect the property rights of others. Do not open their mail or use their clothes or sporting goods without permission.
- Share in keeping your home the sort of place in which you would like to live. This includes picking up your own clothes; keeping your room tidy; Putting away games, books or other articles you use; helping with the dish washing or other household chores that must be done daily.
- Be observant of house rules, manners at the table, curfew and every detail that might be important to your hosting family members.
- Ask always if you can take food out of the fridge or pantry.
- When inviting a friend home, consult with your Honduran parents if this is OK. A phone call in most of the cases might be enough.
- Keep up your share of the conversation at the table or in the living room or when engaging in any sort of activity (i.e. work, games, etc) with other family members.
- Show appreciation for the work of other members in your family whose efforts help to make your family well thought of - such as father's singing in the choir; mother's planning church activity; brother's soccer progress; sister's friendliness, etc.
- Learn to enjoy time with your family by playing games, watching TV, listening to music or simply by reading in their company. The family has agreed to host you because they want to get to know you.
- Express your gratitude warmly, either orally or by sending "THANK YOU NOTES" for every gift, favour, hospitality or attention received.

Maybe most important: Keep your sense of humour on top. USE IT! Don't be afraid to laugh of yourself.

## **You and your friends**



Getting to know new people is seldom hard in Honduras - they will find you! Hondurans are generally social and easy to get in touch with. You should, however, be aware that the fact that people act friendly does not necessarily make them friends, it is just the Latin American way of being. It is up to you to find who is indeed a real friend. Remember its particularly harder to make friends in a program for volunteers, you will work almost all day with people not always your age, but difficult doesn't mean impossible.

Being often with other foreigners will hinder you from getting truly involved in the hosting country's culture. It'd also be better for participants to avoid speaking in English or any other native foreign language while in a group with Hondurans. By doing so, you will be building a wall between the people here and you.



## Here are a few tips that we hope will help you in the social jungle of Honduras:

### *Friendliness.*

Body contact is seen and accepted socially among friends. When you meet people is customary to give a kiss on the cheek, often also when you meet someone for the first time. When males meet they shake hands.

### *Outings in groups.*

Honduran youngsters tend rather to go out in groups to parties, trips, and other social gatherings than to date like in other countries.

### *Friends dropping in your house.*

Relation among friends is very casual/quite informal. However with unknown people, adults or girls, one is compelled to observe certain manners/social conventionalist. Always ask your host family if it is **OK** to invite friends home. A boy and a girl may never be in the room alone, no matter what their relationship is.

### *A lot of teasing goes on.*

Friends will practically "die" to teach you bad words. You should realize this is their way to express friendliness and want to make you a part of the group. You should also be careful to whom you talk in such a language. Bad words, of course, are not to be mentioned before parents or adults, at work, otherwise, you might not be showing respect towards that particular person.

### Key phrases

What's your name	¿Cómo se llama?
Pleased to meet you	Gusto en conocerlo/ Mucho gusto
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Muchas gracias
I would like...	Yo quisiera... (me gustaría...)
I don't understand	No entiendo
I'm hungry	Tengo hambre

### *Bad companies.*

Accept advice given by your parents or close friends about other persons. Remember they are well acquainted with surrounding environment and you are not. They won't try to hurt you they care for you and feel responsible specially your host family, listen to them it makes a difference and it prevents you from bad experiences.

### *Be open-minded.*

It is always better to keep a broad mentality in order to accept friends easier. Keep in mind, that when being from a different background it is normal that friends behave and also think differently.

### *Smile always.*

Of all the advices this is the best we can give! This is definitely the best manner to make friends and as well the best know medicine to cheer oneself up in times of hardship.



## You and Volunteer Work

Your decision to become a Community Service participant was based on trying to help others throughout volunteerism therefore your work is the main task in the following months. The Organization where you will be working is an excellent arena to use your Spanish.

- Each organization has their own working schedule but the common denominator in Honduras is to work from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Schools start earlier and end earlier too.
- You are used to another kind of speed when it comes to work, in Honduras is different, things are more relax, you will experience the coffee breaks and you will think everything is in slow motion.
- If you want to have a successful work experience, prepare yourself on creating work project for the organization, with new ideas. Many



of the organizations have their own working plan but in some cases is not like that and it is good if you think ahead and have some projects of your own for that place.

- Punctuality at your work is very important; even if others are not.

**All participants of this program must participate in the work site activities as required and are expected to fulfil the tasks as projected.**

## Tips about the culture and customs

You will come to Honduras to experience a new culture. And we are certain that you in our country will find both things that surprise you, and things that are not that different from what you are used to. The key in most occasions is to be curious, eager to learn and generous with the smile.

### A general look

- Honduran culture is quite conservative; however this is less obvious in large cities.
- MACHISMO has strong influence in a large range of attitudes and ways of thinking among Latin Americans.
- Friends are for the most part very close, warm, talkative and generally noisy.
- Honduran teens enjoy going out to cinema, social gathering, discos or simply visiting friends. Just a few of them are sport-minded.
- “Hora Hondureña”: Punctuality is not strictly observed among friends and for informal reunions, getting together, meetings, etc. Yet one must be in time for school, curfew, church, special occasions, weddings, etc.



### Courtesy

- Politeness is advisable. Show care, esteem and appreciation towards all sorts of people especially elderly people, women and children.
  - Being called a GRINGO is not whatsoever an insult. It is just shortening for “American” or any person (foreigner) with blond hair and light-colored eyes. Europeans, Aussies and Kiwis are all called so. It is up to you to make clear that you are not from the US if this is the case. On the other hand most Asiatic descendants would be called CHINO, but again this is not an insult. Many Hondurans with those physical characteristics might also be called Gringo/Chele or Chino.
- Having long chats on the telephone may upset your family. The telephone service is expensive in this country.
  - Open the door for older people to enter a room. Rise when older people enter the room. This shows respects and good manners.

### Relationships between the sexes

- Many Honduran girls like and even enjoy flirting. This however does not necessarily mean they'd like to have sex with the boy in question, girls might just feel more “womanly” by doing so.
- Having a steady relationship with a boy or girl might be assumed to be a quite formal commitment. Be sure how far you want to go and make this well understood to the other part involved.
- Dating as understood in other countries is seldom seen in Honduras unless the relationship is rather formal. Teenagers are more used to outings in groups where they chat, dance and tease every boy and girl in the group.



## Being safe

- Accept guidance from the AFS committee (they're more experienced than you and will always try to help you).
- Beggars and homeless people are often found in the downtown area of large cities. This is a thing one just has to get accustomed to. Also be careful about thieves hanging around in those areas specially, with your camera and wallet, purse and jewelry.
- In Honduras there is a drinking age. You cannot consume alcoholic beverages if you are younger than 18 years old.
- We recommend that you do not walk alone at night, and it would be wise to make sure you have a ride home every time you go out, especially at night. If you are live in the coast walks on the beach at night are not advisable.



### Being on the safe side

One of the best advice we can give you, in order for you to be safe for your whole stay, is that you should carefully read the safety manual that we have enclosed in your preparation materials. You should bring it with you so you can review it anytime that you are in doubt about certain situations.

Once you arrive to Honduras, we also recommend you to listen to your Honduran family advice. They have lived in the area for years and are the ones that can tell you how to be safe in your neighborhood.

## AFS Responsibilities and Rules

When welcoming you as an AFS student, AFS Honduras and AFS International take a great responsibility for you and your safety. Your safety will always be our priority and therefore we have some rules, guidelines and practical information that it is crucial that you make yourself familiar with.

AFS International has three golden rules that are enforced with great strictness in all AFS Countries. Student can **NOT**:

1. Drive motor vehicles (Cars, trucks, motor scooters, tractors, fly air planes or helicopters).
2. Hitchhike.
3. Take any form of non-prescribed drugs or be involved with people who do so.

Violation of any of these three rules will lead to an **Early Return** to the home country. No questions will be asked. In addition there are other important rules which, if broken, can lead to other forms of sanction or an Early Return:

1. Abuse of alcoholic beverages.
2. Skipping your work responsibilities
3. Fly on non-commercial flights.
4. Travelling without authorization.
5. Repeated adaptation problems such as family changes and work changes, and behaviour problems.

## Travel Permissions

You, your natural parents (in the case of minors) and AFS have signed a participation agreement that we all must honour. The legal age for travelling as an adult in Honduras is 21 if you are under that age, bring with you a travel waiver signed by your natural parents, guardians or tutors allowing you to travel during the whole experience and hand it over to the AFS staff during the first orientation.



Every participant under the age of 21 years needs to bring an Affidavit signed by natural parents, notarized and apostilled for the duration of the program to be able to travel inside and outside the country. Without this document our migration laws prohibit underage participants to travel outside the country.

The following travel guidelines apply to AFS participants in Honduras:

### **Trips within the country with the host family**

Regarding permission from AFS, there is no problem if the participant is travelling with the host family. Travel permission form must be filled out if you are travelling for more than one night. Please make sure to drop off, scan or fax your “Autorización de Viaje” to our National Office at least two days in advance.

### **Trips within the country with the host organization**

Regarding permission from AFS, there is no problem if the participant is travelling in a supervised trip organized by the hosting organization. Please make sure to drop off, scan or fax your “Autorización de Viaje” to our National Office at least two days in advance.

#### **Activities and sports**

If you are going to take part in certain activities or sports that may be of risk for you, you will need to sign a special waiver. Either if you plan to take part in this activity or sport for your whole experience or just during a short period of time when travelling, you need this Activity or Sports waiver. If in doubt if a permission is needed you should contact us.

### **Other travel (Independent Travel)**

#### **Rules... Rule!**

##### **Independent travel rules exist because...**

- ... AFS guarantees that we can reach all participants within 24 h.
- ... The AFS program is not a travel program. Too much travelling will prevent you to adapt to your host community and Honduran family
- ... You do not know this country. AFS needs to know that your plans for travelling are safe.
- ... You are insured as a participant, not as a backpacker.

AFS Honduras discourages independent travel within or outside of the country. We would like you to keep in mind the main subject during your AFS experience should be your family, work and community.

Independent travel won't be authorized the first month upon arrival, if you have work (that means no travelling during the week).

**When are you allowed to have an independent travel?** As this is an adult program you have all authorization to travel on weekends, vacations or holidays.

In the event of an independent travel we will require a program waiver from you, releasing AFS from any costs, arrangements or responsibility for any actions during the travel period.

No Participant will be allowed to travel if the waiver is not received or signed in the AFS Honduras office (during office working hours, from Monday through Friday) one week previous to the departure date.

If you engage in a sport and/or activity that it can be consider dangerous (i.e. diving, horseback riding and others), you should also send a sport & activity waiver.

In the event of an emergency, it is necessary for us to know where you can be reached at all times. Your main responsibility here is to your host community, so please understand that we cannot allow you to travel around on your own.

We recommend you not to stay in hotels on your own, only when you are in the company of host family members, hosting Organization, friends or during AFS activities.

**For the Year program participant, they won't be allowed to travel outside Honduras until the residency process have been finished.**

## Travel guidelines for parents, friends, or relatives visits



Parents, friends or other relatives' visits must be discussed and authorized by both, hosting and sending, AFS offices. AFS will not allow the participant to travel with or travel to meet natural parents or to visit friends or relatives. Lengthy visits by any friend or relative will be discouraged by AFS.

We strongly discourage visits from natural family and friends. Such visits can be a source of stress and confusion for the participant, who must handle his/her emotional involvement with both families at once. Also, members of the family often find themselves in an awkward position in their role relationship with the students, because of the presence of the natural family.

AFS will not allow the participant to leave his/her host family in order to stay with friends or natural family.

Experience has shown us that visits from natural family members can be disruptive and can jeopardize the aims of the AFS experience. Therefore, we ask natural families not to make plans to visit their child during the AFS experience. Under no circumstances should relatives or friends consider visiting unless they have obtained prior consent from their AFS office.

## Participant moves/family changes

When a Honduran family decides to host an exchange participant it is because they want to share our culture, their home and their way of life; and learn about other countries and culture by having a new member in the family. This does not mean that by hosting an AFS participant they have to change their rules and way of living, you are the one that decided to embark on this great adventure to experience something different and therefore are the one that would learn about Honduras by living it!

We understand that the AFS experience is not always easy and that there will be times in which you may feel that a family change is the solution for your problems. But family changing is a very serious issue and it will take some time for AFS to decide whether the change will be granted or not. In addition:

- **A family move will take place only after all means of reaching an agreement have been unsuccessful and will be determined only by the National Office.**
- **While AFS is looking for a new home the participant will remain in the original family. Therefore the participant should keep a good relationship for as long as possible.**
- **A participant will be placed in a temporary family only when the National Office thinks it is convenient.**

## General Practical Information

### A stamp for the old days...

You can also keep in touch with the ones you love abroad by regular mail. You'll just have to write your letter and take it to the Post Office in your Host Community, which in most of the cases is located downtown. There, they will weigh your letter, post card or package and give you the necessary stamps according to the weight and destination. It might take some time to get to the final destination but it will get there and your beloved ones will surely appreciate to have news from you in a more personal way!

### Telephone calls/mobile services and Internet

Due to its cost, the use of the telephone should always be the last resort. Nowadays, it is becoming more common to call abroad from an Internet Café. The costs of a call to United States, Europe or the Pacific vary from L. 2.00 to L.10.00 a minute making it very affordable.

*Collect calls can only be made through the 197 International Operators and to the following countries: Canada, Italy, United States, Spain, United Kingdom, Mexico and Central America. Telephone companies such as AT&T, MCI and Sprint have 800 numbers to place collect calls only to the United States. Calling cards are not used.*

Three companies provide mobile services in Honduras: Tigo®, Claro® and Digicel® who offer roaming services, pre-paid plans and post-paid plans. If you are buying a mobile in Honduras we suggest you to buy the most non-expensive and basic phone you can get and manage your budget with a pre-paid plan. You will be able to receive and make calls abroad without paying extra charges for roaming.

Internet is available all around the world but in our country is still a luxury. Not all families own a computer and have access to Internet. If your family has Internet at home always ask for permission to use it and do not use it for too long or too often, use it only if it's really necessary. In case that your Honduran family does not have Internet at home you will be able to find an Internet café just around the corner. These cafes charge by the minute or the hour. An hour rate should cost you no more than L.20.00, but in Internet cafes located at malls or shopping centers the rate could go up to twice as much.

## Taking care of your money

Honduras is a relatively inexpensive country. Many of you will therefore experience that you can buy a lot with your money. It is therefore important that you make sure to adapt your spending to only the necessary. We recommend that you bring about US \$100.00 for each month in pocket money.

Only legal residents can open a bank account in Honduras, You can withdrawn money with your credit card at an ATM. MasterCard and Visa credit cards are accepted in most ATM's, Plus and American Express and Maestro are accepted just in a few. In addition to this we also recommend you to find about the procedures to cancel a credit card in case it is lost.

AFS Honduras will not be held responsible for money stolen or lost if you do not take proper care of your money that is why we are recommending you to:

- Do not leave your money in a drawer without a lock. Save at least US \$50.00 for your return trip.
- Withdraw the same amount every month, and try to stay within your budget until the end of the month. It would be wise to go only once a month to the bank to make your withdrawals.
- Try not to eat out of your home too often and do not invite your friends / relatives too often to places and things, they might think that you have a lot of money to spend. In addition spending more money than your host brother / sister, could make them feel uncomfortable, so avoid uncomfortable situations with your host family by not spending more money than necessary.
- Do not borrow and do not lend money.



### ¿Cuánto cuesta?

A ticket to the cinema	-	80 Lempiras
A Bimac	-	60 Lempiras
An edition of daily newspaper	-	6 Lempiras
A bottle of 0,5l with water	-	12 Lempiras
A can of coke	-	12 Lempiras
A cup of 8oz latte coffee	-	12 Lempiras
A pair of brand-name jeans	-	900 Lempiras
A post card to Europe	-	25 Lempiras

## Costs covered by AFS during your stay

### Medical care

AFS will pay for most of your medical expenses that may occur during your stay in Honduras. We do not reimburse routine vision care, routine dental care or preexisting conditions and vaccinations. You should bring extra money for these cases – and to be on the safe side, have a check-up at your dentist and eye doctor before you leave home.

To ask for medical reimbursement be sure to have a **medical report** (AFS will provide a form to you upon arrival) signed by the Doctor and hand it to AFS along with the medications prescription and the bills of their purchase. Reimbursement cannot be granted without this medical report and original bills and receipts should be submitted **no later than 30 days after the expenses are made**.

You may see your Honduran family doctor if you prefer. If either you or your family does not have the money for the doctor fee and prescribed medications or exams, contact our Office Administrator from 09:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Monday to Friday.



Remember you will have to pay the doctor and medicines and then AFS will reimburse all your money if you send the documentation on time.

**In case of an accident or serious illness, make sure that we are informed.**



## MEDICAL REPORT / REPORTE MEDICO

### INSTRUCTIONS/ INSTRUCCIONES:

- ☒ Please write or print CLEARLY. (Por favor escriba o imprima CLARAMENTE)
- ☒ If medical care is required over a length of time, a completed form should be sent to AFS/International immediately upon each treatment. (Si el cuidado médico es requerido durante un largo periodo de tiempo, deberá enviar un reporte completo al término de cada tratamiento administrado)
- ☒ All other reports should be sent as promptly as possible. (Todos los reportes deberán ser enviados a la brevedad posible)

### I. TO BE COMPLETED BY PHYSICIAN (A SER COMPLETADO POR EL MEDICO):

Name of the patient (Nombre del paciente): \_\_\_\_\_ Country (País): \_\_\_\_\_ Program (Programa): \_\_\_\_\_

Diagnosis of illness or accident (Diagnóstico de enfermedad o accidente): \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning (comenzó): \_\_\_\_\_ Final Treatment (Tratamiento final): \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of medical treatment: consultation, examination, laboratory test, medications, etc.) :  
(Descripción breve del tratamiento médico: consulta, examinación, pruebas de laboratorio, medicamentos, etc.)

Date or dates of medical treatment (Fecha o fechas del tratamiento médico): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and stamp/seal of attending physician (Firma y sello del médico): \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Dirección): \_\_\_\_\_ Date (fecha): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of expense: Regular medical expense (Gastos médicos regulares) : Lps. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Tipo de gastos) Pre-existing condition (Gastos por condición pre-existente) : Lps. \_\_\_\_\_

### II. TO BE COMPLETED BY NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (A SER COMPLETADO POR EL REPRESENTANTE LOCAL):

- ☒ Attach to this form all bills, receipts and reports. (Adjunte a este formato todos los recibos, facturas y reportes)
- ☒ List all bills included here on the Imprest Fund. (Enumere todos los recibos aquí adjuntados)

List bills below: from, name and address (Enumere los recibo que adjunta: nombre, dirección, emisor)

1	_____	AMOUNT (CANTIDAD):	_____
2	_____		_____
3	_____		_____
4	_____		_____

TOTAL AMOUNT (TOTAL): Lps. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of National Representative (Firma del Representante Local): \_\_\_\_\_ Date (fecha): \_\_\_\_\_

AFS Programas Interculturales de Honduras, Colonia El Castaño, Casa 2941, Avenida Los Castaños, Tegucigalpa, M.D.C. o Apartado Postal 1300, Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., Honduras C.A. Tel. (504) 2232-5202 Fax: (504) 2239-5130 e-mail: [info-honduras@afs.org](mailto:info-honduras@afs.org) Web: <http://www.afs.org> <http://www.afs.hn>

## Work expenses

AFS Honduras will be covering: Transportation, AFS Honduras will pay the transportation costs to and from work when applied.

The first week you will have to pay your own transportation, you will do a budget of how much you spend in a day send the information to AFS and we will be sending you the money for the rest of the experience.

## How to contact the AFS office

Participant not staying in Tegucigalpa should get in contact with their local representative in case they want to discuss any situation. They are the ones most able to help you, and even if you contact the national office first, the local representatives will be the ones who will handle your case.

If you have problems getting in touch with the local representatives or if a second opinion is wanted you should write a letter, send an e-mail or call the national office in Tegucigalpa.

Should I write a letter or an e-mail?

Whenever it's not an emergency the answer will always be: **YES, WRITE A LETTER OR AN E-MAIL.**

### In case of an Emergency

**If an emergency that needs to be handled immediately occurs, please call the AFS Honduras emergency phone: 9990-1680.**

On this phone a staff member of AFS Honduras will be available at all times. It is, however, important that the phone is used only in case of a real **EMERGENCY**. For all other matters you should wait until the office is open.

AFS programs and operations depend heavily on long distance communications and a good understanding of this is necessary in order to communicate as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. Normally, the method of communication you choose will depend upon the urgency of the message. However, bear in mind the relative cost of your message to its urgency.

Since mail is opened by a variety of people in any office confidential or personal letters should be marked as such clearly on the outside of the envelope.

### Street address:

Colonia El Castaño  
Avenida Los Castaños, Casa # 2941  
Tegucigalpa M.D.C.  
Honduras, C.A.  
E-mail: [info-honduras@afs.org](mailto:info-honduras@afs.org)  
Telephone: 2232-5202 Fax: 2239-5130

### Send mail to:

AFS HONDURAS  
Apartado Postal 1300  
Tegucigalpa M.D.C  
Honduras, C.A

# ONCE AGAIN ¡BIENVENIDOS A HONDURAS!





# AFS Educational Content and Learning Objectives

## Intercultural Learning Key Concepts

### 1. AFS Educational Content and Learning Objectives

AFS is committed to intercultural learning. Through AFS programs of all types, people are removed temporarily from their home environments and introduced to differing values, ways of life, and patterns of thought in completely new environments. This experience enables AFS participants to acquire skills, attitudes, and knowledge useful throughout their lives as they attempt to cope sensitively and intelligently with the urgent challenges of the world of tomorrow. Similar learning often is acquired by others who come into close contact with participants on AFS programs.

Learning through an AFS experience involves growth and change in terms of personal values and skills, interpersonal relationship building, intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, and global issues awareness.

#### A. PERSONAL VALUES AND SKILLS

At the core of all AFS experiences is the removal of people from their familiar environment and their placement in a new environment. In such unusual circumstances, participants are confronted repeatedly with crises of varying dimensions. They must make

judgments and embark on actions in the absence of familiar cues. But AFS participants are well prepared in advance, and they are assured of support and guidance on an as needed basis. Thus, participants are able to turn these crises into opportunities for reassessing their values, stretching their capacities, and practicing new skills. AFS participants also gain awareness of previously hidden aspects of themselves because of their constant contact with others who organize their lives on the basis of different assumptions. Due to situations such as these, most participants attain the following learning objectives:

1. To think creatively, demonstrated by an ability to view ordinary things, events, and values from a fresh perspective and to generate innovative ideas and solutions.
2. To think critically, demonstrated by an unwillingness to accept superficial appearances and by skepticism of stereotypes.
3. To accept more responsibility for oneself, demonstrated by increased ability to exercise self-

control within the context of social norms and expectations.

4. To de-emphasize the importance of material things, demonstrated by an increasing tendency to define one's worth and goals in terms of ideals instead of possessions.

5. To be more fully aware of oneself, demonstrated by increased willingness and ability to view oneself objectively and to see oneself as deeply influenced by one's native culture.

#### B. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

Every AFS participant becomes fully involved in daily living and working arrangements with a variety of people in the new environment. Whether a participant's placement is as an individual or as a member of a group of exchange visitors, he or she must develop and maintain relationships with others from diverse backgrounds. The interpersonal skills developed in this intercultural context are transferable to many other settings during the participant's lifetime. Host nationals often gain similar benefits from their contacts with the AFS participants. Most AFS participants are able to gain the following learning objectives:

1. To deepen concern for and sensitivity to others, demonstrated by increased ability and willingness to "put oneself in the other person's place," that is, to empathize.
2. To increase adaptability to changing social circumstances, demonstrated by greater flexibility in the process of adjusting to new people, social situations and cultural norms.
3. To value human diversity, demonstrated by an eagerness for communication, mutual respect, and friendship with others from a variety of backgrounds different from one's own.
4. To communicate with others using their ways of expression, demonstrated by the ability to carry on extended conversations with hosts in their native language, and by the ability to use and to react appropriately to non-verbal signals common in the host culture.
5. To enjoy oneself in the company of others, demonstrated by a diminishing of self-consciousness and an increase in readiness to

participate joyfully and wholeheartedly in many varieties of social gatherings.

## C. INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND SENSITIVITY

During the course of their immersion in the host culture, AFS participants are exposed to innumerable dimensions of that culture. These dimensions range from the simple acquisition of the necessities of daily life to the complex and subtle distinctions made by host among alternative values, social norms, and patterns of thought. In addition, most AFS exchanges include a formal learning component in which host national explains the social, political, economic, and religious structures of their country. In the case of exchanges involving adult professionals, hosts and visitors both gain new skills and alternative concepts, leading to sharpening of their talents. The experience of actually being involved in so many dimensions of life has the effect of deepening participants' insights into their home culture as well as their knowledge of their host culture. Most people on an AFS exchange attain these learning objectives:

1. To increase knowledge of the host country and culture, demonstrated by an ability to explain key dimensions of that culture from the perspective of the host national.
2. To increase in sensitivity to subtle features of the home culture, demonstrated by an ability to see aspects of that culture not previously recognized, and to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of an outsider.
3. To understand the nature of cultural differences, demonstrated by an ability to describe some of the fundamental concerns that must be addressed by all human beings, and by a readiness to accept that a wide variety of solutions to those concerns are possible.
4. To broaden one's skills and concepts, demonstrated by the ability to think and to act in ways that are characteristic of the host culture but transferable to other environments.

## D. GLOBAL ISSUES-AWARENESS

Living in a place other than one's home community often helps people to recognize that the world is one large community, a global island, in which certain problems are shared by everyone everywhere. AFS participants become able to empathize with their hosts' perspective on some of these problems, and thus to appreciate that workable solutions must be culturally sensitive, not merely technologically feasible. Such awareness well prepares the AFS participant to take his or her place among those who are addressing the crises

facing humankind. Most people exchanged by AFS attain the following learning objectives:

1. To deepen interest in and concern about world affairs, demonstrated by a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources with respect to the problems commonly facing all human beings.
2. To be aware of worldwide linkages, demonstrated by a willingness and ability to make personal choices in certain ways because one cares about the effect of one's choices on people in other communities throughout the world.
3. To gain in commitment to the search for solutions to worldwide problems, demonstrated by the giving of one's personal resources (time, energy, and money), whether in a professional or voluntary capacity, to the search for culturally sensitive and technologically feasible solutions.

## 2. Key Concepts

### THE "UNFINISHED PRODUCT" CONCEPT

Participants should be viewed as **unfinished products**; the image should be of a "product" (the AFSer) passing through cumulative phases of development that begin at selection and continue even after he or she leaves the program.

The participant is provided with Orientations to prepare him or her to cope with an intercultural experience in the host country, but they can encounter many unexpected difficulties, and will need assistance from the support person.

### THE VALUE OF CRISES IN LEARNING

It is not accurate to conceive of participant orientation and support as aiming toward a crisis-free intercultural experience. Personal crises are bound to occur throughout an AFS experience because the participant is continuously compelled to act and react in the absence of familiar cues. When they remain manageable, such crises become highly productive bases for intercultural learning because they force the participant to challenge old assumptions, to think creatively, and to acquire new knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Participant orientation and support do an effort to provide AFSers with knowledge, awareness, and skills that will better enable them to seize, cope with, recover from, and above all **learn** through the succession of personal crises that inevitably will occur throughout their intercultural experience.

### 3. Intercultural Learning

This chapter does not pretend to offer any kind of “truth” about intercultural learning, but it is rather an attempt to provide a – necessarily biased – overview of some different theories and concepts that have been connected to intercultural learning.

#### What is *learning*?

Learning is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's of Current English dictionary as “gaining knowledge of or skill in, by study, practice or being taught”. Starting from this very general definition, various discussions can be identified.

#### Learning on different levels

Learning takes place on three different, interrelated levels: on a cognitive, an emotional, and a behavioral level.

*Cognitive learning* is the acquirement of knowledge or beliefs: knowing that 3 plus 3 is 6, that the earth is conceived of having the shape of a ball, or that there are currently 27 member states in the Federal Republic of Brazil.

*Emotional learning* is more difficult as a concept to grasp. Perhaps you can look back and remember how you have learned to express your feelings, and how these feelings have changed through time. What has made you afraid twenty years ago might not make you afraid any more, persons you did not like in the first place might now be your best friends, etc.

*Behavioral learning* is what is visible of learning: Being able to hammer a nail straight into a piece of wood, to write with a pen, to eat with chopsticks, or to welcome somebody in the “right” way. Real learning involves all three levels, the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. If you want to learn how to eat with chopsticks, you need to know how you have to hold them and you need to learn the right movements. But both will not have a lasting effect if you do not learn to like eating with them – or at least see an advantage in so doing.

#### Learning as an (un) structured process

Learning can happen both by accident and as a result of a planned process. If we look back, we realize that we have learned many things from experiences that we did not engage in order to learn.

On the other hand, most of the time learning involves some kind of structured, or at least intentional, process. We will not learn from accidental experience if we do not intentionally reflect upon it.

#### What is *culture*?

The second term we look at incorporated into “intercultural learning” is culture. All ideas about intercultural learning build on an implicit or explicit idea about culture. They all have in common that they perceive culture as something human-made. Culture has been referred to as the “software” which people use in daily life; it is commonly described as being about basic assumptions, values and norms that people hold. There are many theoretical and practical arguments and discussions about concepts of culture.

Is culture necessarily linked to a group of people, or does “individual culture” exist? What are elements of culture? Can one establish a “cultural map” of the world? Do cultures change? Why and how? How strong is the link between culture and actual behavior of individuals and groups? Can one have several cultural backgrounds – and what does that imply? How flexible is culture, how open for individual interpretation?

Very often, looking at culture implies looking at the interaction of cultures. Many authors have stated that, if it were not for the existence of more than one culture, we would not think about culture at all. The apparent differences of how humans can think, feel and act are what make us aware of culture.

Culture, therefore, cannot be thought of simply as “culture”, it has to be thought of as “cultures”. Consequently, it makes sense to advance in this chapter from ideas that are mainly focused on culture in itself to ideas that focus more on the interaction of cultures, on intercultural experiences.

Some terms are at times used to replace “intercultural”, such as “cross cultural” or “multi-cultural”. For some authors, these terms are identical; some others connect largely different meanings to these words. These differences will be discussed later in this chapter.

### Looking at Culture

#### A. The Iceberg Model of Culture

One of the most well known models of culture is the iceberg. Its main focus is on the elements that make up culture, and on the fact, that some of these elements are very visible, whereas others are hard to discover.

The idea behind this model is that culture can be pictured as an iceberg: only a very small portion of the iceberg can be seen above the water line. This top of the iceberg is supported by the much larger part of the iceberg, underneath the water line and therefore invisible. Nonetheless, this lower part of the iceberg is the powerful foundation. Also in culture, there are some visible parts: architecture,



art, cooking, music, and language, just to name a few. But the powerful foundations of culture are more difficult to spot: the history of the group of people that hold the culture, their norms, values, basic assumptions

about space, nature, time, etc. The iceberg model implies that the visible parts of culture are just expressions of its invisible parts. It also points out, how difficult it is at times to understand people with different cultural backgrounds – because we may spot the visible parts of “their iceberg”, but we cannot immediately see what are the foundations that these parts rest upon.

On the other hand, the iceberg model leaves a number of the questions raised above unanswered. Most of the time, it is used as a starting point for a more indepth look at culture, a first visualization of why sometimes it is so difficult to understand and “see” culture.

## **B. Geert Hofstede’s model of cultural dimensions**

Geert Hofstede’s idea about culture is based on one of the largest empirical studies ever done on cultural differences. In the 1970s, he was asked by IBM (already then a very international company) to advise them on the fact that in spite of all attempts by IBM to establish world-wide common procedures and standards, there were still vast differences in the way the plants in e.g. Brazil and Japan were running. Hofstede researched the differences in how IBM was running. In several stages, including in-depth interviews and questionnaires sent out to all employees of IBM worldwide, he tried to put his finger on the differences that existed in the various plants.

Since the educational background of IBM’s employees was roughly the same everywhere, and since the structure of the organization, the rules and the procedures were the same, he concluded that any difference found between the different locations had to be based on the culture of the employees in a particular plant and by that, largely on the culture of the host country. Hofstede describes culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of the human group from one another”.

After several rounds of research, he reduced the differences in culture to four basic dimensions. All other differences, he stated, could be traced back to one or several of these four basic dimensions of culture. The four dimensions Hofstede identified were what he called power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. After some additional research, he added the dimension of time orientation.

**Power distance** indicates the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally among individuals. Power distance is about hierarchy, about, for instance, what is considered a normal decision-making process in a youth organization. Should everybody have a say on an equal level? Or is the chairman of the board considered to be able to make decisions by him/herself, when necessary?

**Uncertainty avoidance** indicates the extent to which a society feels threatened by ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them by providing rules or other means of security. Uncertainty avoidance relates e.g. to the extent in which people like to take risks, or how much detail members of a prep-team would like to discuss in planning a training course. How much room is there for chance, improvisation, or things just going the way they go (and then maybe wrong)?

Individualism/Collectivism indicates the extent to which a society is a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care only of themselves and their immediate families, instead of a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups and expect their in-group to look after them.

In collectivist cultures, for example, people feel strongly related and responsible for their families, and preferably look at themselves as member of various groups.

**Masculinity/Femininity** indicates the extent to which gender determines the roles men and women have in society. Is there, for instance, an almost “natural” division of tasks between the male and female participants in a seminar that demands some household tasks should be taken over by everybody?

Time orientation indicates the extent to which a society bases its decisions on tradition and events in the past, or on short term, present-tense gains, or on what is perceived desirable for the future. How important, for example, do you think is the history of your region for today, and for the future? When people try to show off with where they come from: Do they talk about the past, the present, or the future?

Hofstede provides for several grids in which he places different societies (nations) on values along these dimensions. These values are based on the evaluation of the questionnaires and repeated research on the basis of this model.

Hofstede’s model has been praised for its empirical basis; hardly any other study or theory of culture can offer a similar quantitative support. On the other hand, the model gives no explanation why

exactly there should be only five dimensions, and why only these dimensions are the basic components of culture.

Furthermore, the model implies culture to be static rather than dynamic, why or how cultures develop cannot be explained within the model. In addition, Hofstede has been criticized for focusing only on culture as a trait of nations, and having no eye for the cultural diversity that prevails in most modern societies, for sub-cultures, mixed cultures, and individual development. The description of the dimensions, at times, has the danger of implicitly valuing some cultures as being “better” than others. Still, for many readers, the model's five dimensions seem intuitively very relevant to the make-up of societies.

### **C. Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall behavioral components of culture**

This couple developed their model of culture from a very practical point of view: They wanted to give good advice to US-American businessmen who were to travel and work abroad. In their study that involved many in-depth, openended interviews with people in different cultures that US-American business- men were likely to co-operate with, they focused on those, sometimes subtle, differences in behaviour that usually accounted for conflicts in intercultural communication. On the basis of their study they developed several dimensions of difference. These dimensions were all associated with either communication patterns, or with space, or time:

**Fast and Slow Messages** refer to “the speed with which a particular message can be decoded and acted on”. Examples of fast messages include headlines, advertisements and television. Becoming easily familiar is also typical of people who tend more towards fast messages. Whereas in essence, it takes time to get to know people well (they are “slow messages”), in some cultures it takes less time to make friends than in others, easy familiarity is thus an example of a fast message. Slow messages are e.g. art, a TV-documentary, deep relation- ships, etc.

**High and Low Context** are about the information that surrounds an event. If in the actually transmitted message at a given time only little information is given, and most of the information is already present in the persons who communicate, the situation is one of high context. For example, communication between a couple that has lived together for several years tends to be very high context: only little information needs to be exchanged at any given time in order for them to understand each other. The message may be very short, but is decoded with the help of the

information about each other that both have acquired in the years of living together.

Typical high context cultures are, according to Hall & Hall (1990), the Japanese, Arab, and Mediterranean cultures with extensive information networks and involvement in many close personal relationships. Consequently, not a lot of background information is needed in daily life, nor is it expected. One keeps oneself informed about everything having to do with the persons important to oneself.

Typical low context cultures are the US American, German, Swiss and Scandinavian cultures. Personal relationships tend to be split up more according to the different areas of one's involvement, and there is a higher need for background information in normal transactions.

Misunderstandings can arise from not taking into account the different communication styles in terms of high and low context. A person with a low context style, for example, may be perceived by a high-context person as talking too much, being over-precise, and providing unnecessary information.

Inversely, a low-context person may perceive a person with a high-context style as not truthful (since information is “hidden”), and not co-operative. In order to make decisions, low-context persons want a fairly large amount of background information, whereas high context persons would base decisions on less background information at a given time, since they have constantly kept themselves up with the process of what is going on. The paradoxical situation however arises when high context persons are asked to evaluate a new enterprise and then they want to know everything, since they have not been part of the context of that new idea.

**Territoriality** relates to the organization of physical space, e.g. in an office. Is the president's office on the top floor of the building, or somewhere in the middle? If, for example, one considers the pens on one's desk as part of personal territory others are not appreciated when just borrowing these pens without asking. Territoriality is about the sense people have developed of the space and the material things around them, and is also an indication of power.

**Personal Space** is the distance to other people one needs to feel comfortable. The Halls describe personal space as a “bubble” each person carries around at all times. It changes its size according to the situation and the people one interacts with (people you are close friends with are allowed closer than others). The “bubble” indicates what one feels is an appropriate distance to another person. Somebody standing further away is

considered distanced, somebody trying to get closer than what is perceived as the appropriate distance might seem offending, intimidating, or simply rude. If the normal conversational distance of

one culture is rather close so that it overlaps with what is considered an intimate distance in a different culture, a problem in communication might just arise from the different interpretations of what the chosen physical distance to one another means.

**Monochronic and Polychronic Time** relate to the structuring of one's time. Monochronic timing means to do one thing at a time, working with schedules where one thing follows the other, where different tasks have their time assigned to them. Time for monochronic cultures is very hands-on, it can almost be touched and is talked about as a resource: spending, wasting, and saving time. Time is linear; it extends as one line from the past through the present into the future.

Time is used as a tool to structure the day, and to decide levels of importance, e.g. not "having time" to meet somebody. Polychronic timing means the opposite: many tasks are done at the same time; there is high involvement with people, which implies more emphasis on relating to others than on holding to a schedule. Polychronic time is not so much perceived as a resource, and could rather be compared to a point than to a line.

Hall & Hall perceive some of these dimensions we have described as being inter-related. Monochronic time in their research is closely linked to low-context and to a design of space that allows the compartmentalization of life (a structure where different areas of involvements are separated from one another, or put into different "compartments"). In addition to the dimensions mentioned, Hall & Hall introduce several other concepts as important to be attentive to, e.g. how scheduling in a culture works, how much time ahead meetings should be arranged, what is considered appropriate in terms of punctuality, and how fast information flows in a system – is the flow bound to an hierarchical system (up/down), or does it flow more like a large network in all directions?

In dealing with other cultures, Hall & Hall suggest to their target group, US American businessmen, to recognize the cultural differences and, if possible, to adapt to the different ways of behaving in the culture they work in.

Hall & Hall's key concepts when describing different cultures point out some significant differences that people experience in intercultural encounters and therefore are very recognizable to many readers. However, some criticism has been raised as well. Hall & Hall design their dimensions as independent

from one another in the first place, but develop them into a model of culture that eventually is only one-dimensional. It orders cultures on a continuum between monochronic, low-context cultures on the one hand, and polychronic, high context cultures on the other hand. All other categories are related to this continuum. The question is if this very simple way of categorizing cultures is a reflection of reality.

In addition, only a little is said about the why behind these cultural characteristics, about how cultures develop (are they static or dynamic), or about how individuals deal with their cultural background in intercultural situations. The usefulness in Hall & Hall's approach is clearly in its very practical consequences. The dimensions – very much along the same lines as the Hofstede model – give a framework in which to recognize and interpret cultural differences.

## Looking at Intercultural Learning

### Milton J. Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity

Bennett (1993) defines intercultural sensitivity in terms of stages of personal growth. His developmental model posits a continuum of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from ethnocentrism through stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference, which Bennett calls "ethnorelativism". The main underlying concept of Bennett's model is what he calls "differentiation", and how one develops the ability to recognize and live with difference. "Differentiation" then refers to two phenomena: first, that people view one and the same thing in a variety of ways, and second, that "cultures differ from one another in the way that they maintain patterns of differentiation or worldviews". This second aspect refers to the fact that in Bennett's view, cultures offer ways on how to interpret reality, how one should perceive the world around us. This interpretation of reality, or worldview, is different from one culture to the other. Developing intercultural sensitivity then means in essence to learn to recognize and deal with, the fundamental difference between cultures in perceiving the world.

#### The ethnocentric stages

Ethnocentrism is understood by Bennett as a stage where the individual assumes that his/her view of the world is essentially central to reality. **Denial** is at the very basic of an ethnocentric worldview, and means that an individual denies that there is any difference, that other views of reality do exist. This denial can be based on isolation, where there are little or no chances to be confronted with difference, so that its existence cannot be experienced; or it

can be based on separation, where difference is intentionally separated, where an individual or a group set up barriers between people that are "different" on purpose, in order not to be confronted with difference. Separation, therefore, needs at least a moment of recognition of difference, and is a development for that reason over isolation. The racial segregation that can still be found in the world is an example of this stage of separation.

People of oppressed groups tend not to experience the stage of denial, since it is hard to deny that there is a difference, if it is your being different or viewing the world differently that is being denied.

As a second stage, Bennett describes **defense**. Cultural difference can be perceived as threatening, since it offers alternatives to one's own sense of reality and thus to one's identity. In the defense stage, therefore, difference is perceived, but it is fought against.

The most common strategy of that fighting is denigration, where the differing worldview is evaluated negatively. Stereotyping and, in its extreme form, racism are examples of strategies of denigration. The other side of denigration is superiority, where the emphasis is more on the positive attributes of one's own culture, and no or little attention to the other, which implicitly is valued lower. Sometimes also a third strategy to deal with the threatening part of difference is encountered; this is called "reversal" by Bennett. Reversal means that one values the other culture as the superior one, denigrating one's own cultural background. This strategy may appear more sensitive at the first sight, but practically only means the replacement of one centre of ethnocentrism (one's own cultural background) with another.

The last stage of ethnocentrism Bennett calls **minimization**. Difference is acknowledged, it may not be fought any more by strategies of denigration or superiority, but an attempt is made to minimize its meaning. Similarities are pointed out as far outweighing cultural difference, which by that is trivialized. Many organizations, Bennett points out, seem to perceive what he calls minimization as the final stage of intercultural development, and work towards a world of shared values and common grounds. These common grounds are built on physical universalism that is on the basic biological similarities between humans. We all must eat, digest and die. If culture is just a sort of continuation of biology, its meaning is minimized.

### The ethnorelative stages

"Fundamental to ethnorelativism is the assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context". In the

ethnorelative stages, difference is not any more perceived as a threat but as a challenge. An attempt is made to develop new categories for understanding rather than to preserve existing ones.

Ethnorelativism begins with the **acceptance** of cultural difference. First, this acceptance begins with accepting that verbal and non-verbal behavior varies across cultures and that all of these variations deserve respect. Second, this acceptance is enlarged to the underlying views of the world and values. This second stage implies knowledge of one's own values, and the perception of these values as culturally made. Values are understood as process and as a tool to organize the world, rather than as something one "has". Even values that imply the denigration of a particular group can then be viewed as having a function in organizing the world, without excluding that one has an opinion about that value.

Building on accepting cultural difference, **adaptation** is the following stage. Adaptation has to be seen in contrast to assimilation, where different values, worldviews, or behaviors are taken over while giving up one's own identity. Adaptation is a process of addition. New behavior that is appropriate to a different worldview is learned and added to one's repertoire of behaving, with new styles of communication being at the forefront. Culture here needs to be seen as a process, something that develops and flows, rather than a static thing.

Central to adaptation is empathy, the ability to experience a situation different from that presented by one's own cultural background. It is the attempt to understand the other by taking up his or her perspective.

In the stage of pluralism, empathy is enlarged so that an individual can rely on several distinct frames of reference, or multiple cultural frames. The development of these frames usually necessitates living in a different cultural context for a longer time. Difference is then perceived as part of one's normal self, as one has internalized it in two or more different cultural frames.

Bennett calls his final set of stages **integration**. Whereas in the adaptation stage several frames of reference exist next to each other within one person, in the integration-stage an attempt is made to integrate the various frames to one that is not a re-establishment of one culture, nor a simple comfort with peaceful co-existence of different worldviews. Integration demands an ongoing definition of one's own identity in terms of lived experiences. It can lead to not belonging to any



culture any more, but being an integrated outsider always.

Contextual evaluation as the first stage of integration is about the ability to evaluate different situations and worldviews from one or more cultural backgrounds. In all other stages, evaluation has been avoided in order to overcome ethnocentric evaluations. In the stage of contextual evaluation individuals are able to shift between cultural contexts, depending on the circumstances. The evaluation made is one of relative goodness. Bennett gives the example of an intercultural choice: "Is it good to refer directly to a mistake you made by yourself or someone else? In most American contexts, it is good. In most Japanese contexts, it is bad. However, it might be good in some cases to use an American style in Japan, and vice versa. The ability to use both styles is part adaptation. The ethical consideration of context in making a choice is part of integration".

As a final stage, constructive marginality is described by Bennett as some sort of arrival point, and not as the end of learning. It implies a state of total self-reflectiveness, of not belonging to any culture but being an outsider. Reaching that stage, on the other hand, allows for true intercultural mediation, the ability to operate within different worldviews.

Bennett's model has proven to be a good starting point for the design of trainings and orientations that deal with developing intercultural sensitivity. It underlines the importance of difference in intercultural learning, and points out some of the (non-efficient) strategies of how to deal with difference.

Bennett implies that intercultural learning is a process that is characterized by continuous advancement (with the possibility of moving back and forth in that process), and that it is possible to measure the stage an individual has reached in terms of intercultural sensitivity. One may want to ask, however, if the process of intercultural learning will always follow exactly this sequence, with one step being the pre-condition for the next one. But if then interpreted less strictly in terms of stages that have to follow each other, and rather in terms of different strategies to deal with difference that are applied according to circumstances and abilities, the model reveals essential obstacles and helpful ways in intercultural learning.

## Summary

Having looked at different ideas about learning, culture, and intercultural experiences, it may have become clear that intercultural learning is a process. This process demands that you know yourself, and where you come from, before being

able to understand others. It is a challenging process as it involves very deeply rooted ideas about what is good and bad, about structuring the world and your life. In intercultural learning, what we take for granted and feel is necessary to hold on to, is put into question. Intercultural learning is a challenge to one's identity – but it can become a way of living, a way of enriching one's identity at the same time, as Bennett has pointed out.

Bennett has also given his model a more political outlook: whereas intercultural learning is an individual process, it is essentially about learning how to live together, learning how to live in a diverse world. Intercultural learning seen in this perspective is the starting point of living together peacefully.

*This paper contains excerpts of articles from Milton Bennett, Arne Gillert, Geert Hofstede, Edward Hall, The (AFS) Montreal Workshop. No copyrights acknowledged, so please keep it to internal use.*

## Everyday ICL Definitions

### **Educational Organization**

An organization that has stated learning goals (AFS Educational Goals) and clear learning methodologies (AFS Orientation Framework +) used by learning providers (trained AFS volunteers & staff) in order to aid learners (AFS Participants, Host Families) reach these goals.

### **Intercultural Competence**

The willingness and ability to engage appropriately and effectively with cultural difference (people, settings, constructs).

### **Intercultural Learning**

The processes by which one acquires Intercultural Competence. Topics might include: definitions & concepts of culture, cultural values & dimensions, communication styles, cultural adaption, culture specific insights, cognitive styles & learning styles.

### **Experiential Education**

A process through which knowledge is created, rather than acquired, via one's own experiences.

### **Non-formal Education**

Education that is outside of a degree-bearing school setting, but has some elements of structure. Can include but is not only experiential learning.

### **Global Education**

Education related to a globalizing world encompassing Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Learning.

### **Learning Organization**

An organization that encourages and facilitates the learning of all its members and thus continually transforms itself, in order to remain competitive in its environment.

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**PUBLISHED BY AFS HONDURAS**

**June 2015**