



Short Term Mission Team Manual

Everything you need to know to make your trip a success.

Purpose:

1. To expose participants to God's activity in a place vastly different from home.
2. To encourage participants to explore the opportunities God may present for their continued involvement in missions.
3. To provide an opportunity for God to cultivate a deeper commitment and greater faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in the lives of participants.
4. To participate in the experience of serving among the poor in a third world country.
5. To learn what it would be like to live in a different culture and to speak a different language.

Activities:

The ministry of Manos Extendidas is varied and therefore offers the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities and in a variety of ways. If your team has specific skills you would like to use to serve the people of Honduras (i.e. medical training, carpentry, mechanics, teachers) we can tailor your visit to best utilize your skills. Some of the activities teams are involved in:

1. Building homes for Honduran families in need.
2. Painting the feeding centers or government orphanage facilities.
3. Distribute food to youth living on the streets.
4. Spend time singing, playing, and reading God's word with the children in the feeding centers and government orphanage.
5. Conducting outreaches with the teens in the juvenile detention center.
6. Participation in the church services.
7. Distributing diapers and clothing to the newborns in the maternity ward at the local hospital.
8. Distributing water to those working in the city dump.

Eligibility:

1. Applicant must be in good health, have parental permission if under 18, and hold a valid passport or any required visas.
2. Applicant should have a spirit of adventure, a willingness to learn, be a hard worker, and be prepared to adapt to a different culture and living experience (NO WHINING ALLOWED).

Accommodations:

All participants will be housed at the mission bunkhouse located on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Most of your meals will be served at the mission house located next to the bunkhouse. Bedding and towels are provided, you will need to bring all other toiletry items.

Medical Care:

First-rate medical care is available at multiple hospitals throughout the city. The Honduras Medical Center and Hospital Dime are both staffed by doctors trained in American medical schools. Manos Extendidas does not assume any responsibility for this medical care or the costs involved; however, assistance will be given to mission team members in securing these services. Every effort is made to keep you safe. We do recommend you purchase travel insurance which is readily available for a nominal cost.

Recommended but not required are Hep A and Tetanus vaccinations.

Dress:

Because of the culture of Honduras, dress codes are very important. Shorts for either sex should only be worn with discretion and only when they are knee length and fit well. We ask that you dress modestly. Comfortable walking shoes and hiking boots are recommended. Bring clothes appropriate for church and other special events - such as dresses for the ladies and shirts with collars for the guys. If you are coming for a construction or service project be sure to bring work clothes (you will get dirty!) and work gloves.

We encourage visitors to bring clothes that can be left behind. The ministry always has a need to provide clothing to needy families. By leaving some of your clothing behind you bless a family and travel home much lighter.

Cost:

Your stay with Manos Extendidas will cost \$55US a day per person. This covers all of your meals, lodging, transportation, and interpreters.

Not included:

1. Spending money is the responsibility of each person. You will not have a need for a large amount of spending money. Usually, \$100 is more than enough. There may be times you want to purchase additional snacks or sodas during a stop at a gas station. We usually reserve one day of a trip for a free day where you will have an opportunity to purchase some gifts and souvenirs.
2. Gift to the ministry. Many teams choose to include a gift to the ministry in addition to the cost of their trip. These gifts help fund this vital ministry.
3. Airport exit tax: Before you board your plane to leave the country you must pay an exit tax of \$37US.

Reservations:

We have many teams that book their trips months in advance. The first step is to fill out the application online at <http://mehonduras.com/mission-teams/mission-team-application/>. Once your application is accepted we require a \$150 non-refundable deposit to reserve your dates. The deposit will be applied to the total cost of your trip.

Prayer:

The most important thing you can do is pray. Pray that your heart will be yielded totally to Jesus. Pray about your involvement with Manos Extendidas. Pray for those working full time in the ministry of Manos Extendidas. Pray for the people of Honduras. Pray that God use you to have an impact on the lives of those we touch.

Thank you for considering participating in this ministry effort.

Safety considerations while in Honduras

1. Do not wear expensive jewelry, bracelets, or watches. Do not wear hoop earrings or earrings that dangle.
2. Carry your wallet in your front pocket. Girls, don't carry a purse. Keep your money in your front pockets at all times.
3. Never count your money out in the open.
4. Do not carry a large amount of money with you. Carry what you need for the day and leave the rest in the bunkhouse.
5. Always wear enclosed shoes. No sandals or flip-flops when away from the mission house.
6. Dress modestly. Try not to wear expensive clothes or fashions that will be inappropriate.
7. Always be in a group. You should never be off by yourself.
8. Wear sunscreen! The sun is hot and during long days you will get burned if you are not careful.
9. Don't drink the water! Only drink from approved drinking sources! If in doubt, don't!
10. Be careful what you eat. Avoid salads, fruits, vegetables, etc. as they may have been washed with unpurified water. If in doubt, don't!
11. Eat only at approved places. Do not eat at local restaurants or street stands without checking with the group leader. If in doubt, don't!
12. Don't eat foods from stands that cannot be peeled or sliced. For example, apples should not be eaten; bananas or oranges can be eaten. Don't eat pre-sliced melons or pineapple, instead buy uncut ones and take them back with you and clean and cut them yourself.
13. In crowded areas, wear your backpack in front.
14. No use or possession of any alcohol or tobacco products is permitted.
15. Only the use of approved medications and drugs is allowed.
16. While in Honduras your passport, airline tickets, and any other important documents should be left in the bunkhouse. Take a photocopy of your passport to carry with you any time you are away from the mission house.
17. Never give away items in your backpack unless cleared by your group leader. This is important for crowd control.
18. Do not bring valuable or sentimental items with you on the trip. Even though we are in a controlled environment, things can turn up missing.
19. If you think you are getting sick, deal with it immediately! Do not assume it is nothing or that it might go away. See a group leader to find out what needs to be done.
20. Never give money or gifts to a Honduran without clearing it with the group leader. In most cases it is best not to give a gift directly but to give it through the local pastor. You will see many instances of need and will feel a deep desire to help; however, you must help in the right way. In some cases what seems like help might actually be hurting (for more information see the Gift Giving Guidelines).

Additional Considerations

Team T-Shirts

Consider creating a team t-shirt that you can wear on your trip to Honduras. It is not absolutely necessary, but does help make team members easily recognizable as you move through airports, and helps make going through customs in Honduras quicker and easier.

- Choose shirts that are 100% cotton so that they are cooler to wear in the Honduras heat.
- Consider using Spanish for all wording on the t-shirt, in recognition of those you are serving. If you are planning to leave shirts behind as tokens of appreciation for pastors, translators, and local congregations members who work with you, all the more reason to use Spanish.
- Like all donations, please give all extra team shirts to your in country coordinator to be distributed.

Communications Expectations

- Don't expect to phone home or e-mail. Best to tell the family of team members left behind that team members will not be able to communicate with them while in Honduras. It just is not possible sometimes. Some sites do not have phones. Even though some sites have internet cafes nearby, a team's free time is limited. If family is not expecting to hear from the team, then it will be an extra treat if it does happen.
- In case of emergency, the MEH coordinators will be able to contact both the team and the team's emergency contacts from the team's data form. The team leader will receive the phone numbers of the MEH coordinator and local pastors in the weeks before the arrival date.
- If a team wants to send word to family members after they arrive in Honduras, announcing their safe arrival, it is much appreciated if the team leader plans ahead before the team departs. Ask one person who will be checking email in the US if they will receive a short email from the MEH coordinator, then forward it on to a list of email addresses of family members. Before leaving, the team member should send an email to the MEH coordinator with the email address of this one contact person.

Leadership

- Please encourage less emphasis on the tasks, and more emphasis on relationships with locals. It is always helpful to reiterate with team members that the actual construction work may be the task of the group, but is not the most important reason a team is in Honduras. It is tempting for North Americans to forget the importance of relating, of listening, of taking opportunities to show the love of Christ because the task gets in the way.
- The team leaders who model flexibility generally have the most flexible, easy-going teams. (This is true for many team characteristics, not just flexibility.) Practice recognizing that an unexpected (potentially frustrating) pause in the work is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work—in a conversation, in spontaneous playing or singing fun songs. Unexpected pauses are a great opportunity to have a conversation with a local person. The teams that connect with Hondurans are the ones remembered most fondly—not the team who laid the most bricks.

Passport Copies

Two complete copies should be made of each team member's passport. Have each team member carry one copy of their passport separately from the original passport (like tucked in a piece of luggage), and the team leader should carry the other copy of everyone's passports—in their carry-on.

Alcohol and Smoking Policy

It is better to clearly inform team members sooner than later about the Honduras MEH policy of no smoking or drinking alcohol at any time during the mission team's stay in Honduras. Please remind each team member that ANY alcohol use or cigarette-smoking by any team member at ANY time during your stay in Honduras damages the church's reputation in the communities in a very real way, and is strictly prohibited. Drinking alcohol and smoking, even in moderation, are not Christian activities in Honduras. This is a cultural reality in Honduras, and MEH teams must take this reality seriously.

If a team member cannot follow this rule, he or she should not participate in the mission to Honduras.

Team leaders should decide if they will extend this rule to the travel times to and from Honduras, to the team's conduct in airports.

Roles for Team Members

Assign specific roles and jobs to individual team members on the mission team. Here are some team roles that have worked well in the past:

- Team medical advisor. Someone who is prepared to give first aid during the trip. She or he should create and carry the team's first aid kit, and remind team members to drink water and use sunblock, etc.
- Daily devotional leader. Or someone to organize a schedule so that different team members lead daily devotionals.
- Luggage coordinator. Knows total number of checked bags, creates and carries general inventory list of bags, provides identification ribbon or tag for all luggage before bags are checked.
- Other roles include: Money-Manager or Treasurer, T-shirt acquirer (see section on team t-shirts below), Team photographer, Team journal-keeper, Air-travel coordinator, Donations coordinator (includes gathering used suitcases to pack donated items in, and the actual packing of the donations).

Used Luggage for Donations

Airline luggage policies have changed recently so you will want to check with your airline for their policy. In the past, teams have checked an extra piece of luggage for each member with supplies for the ministry. Many purchase a used piece of luggage from Goodwill or take old luggage they don't mind leaving behind.

Practice Spanish

The experience of each team member will be enriched by even a minimal knowledge of Spanish. We encourage each person to explore ways to learn, or review, some basic Spanish before you leave for Honduras .

- Please actively recruit Spanish speakers to be team members. The more Spanish-speakers on a team, the more opportunity for deeper connections with your Honduran brothers and sisters.
- When you are in Honduras, boldly use all the Spanish words and phrases you have! Have fun with it! Your trying to connect in this way is greatly appreciated by the local people.

Gift-Giving Guidelines

It is often difficult for North Americans with generous hearts to realize the long-term problems that giving certain gifts can cause. For this reason, Manos Extendidas Honduras (MEH) has established guidelines for gift-giving.

- Please do not independently or indiscriminately give money, clothes, candy, or gifts directly to local people in the community or congregation, either during or at the end of your mission experience. The best gift is sharing love, joy, and kindness with your new friends.
- Donations are wonderful, and many ministries of the local Honduran churches are made possible by donations brought by mission teams! Please give all donations your team carries to Honduras directly to the MEH coordinators or to the local pastor. We encourage that this be done quietly, without fanfare. The pastor will then distribute or use the items as part of the church's ongoing ministry and programs. Never give ANY donated items directly to local people. This includes tools and work clothes you leave at the end of your trip.
- Giving candy to Honduran children is not appropriate. Both professional dental care and personal dental hygiene are almost non-existent in many communities. The momentary pleasure of a piece of candy can cause problems in the long run.
- Do not give toys, candy, or other gifts directly to children in the church or community. (This includes teams who do VBS with local children.) These kinds of items are wonderful to give directly to the local pastor, who can distribute them at special times. As a team, brainstorm other ways to show your love for the local kids, besides "giving things". Be prepared with songs & games that don't need the trappings not usually found in poor communities—or come prepared to learn their songs and games—a big hit!! If you do bring special items to use while playing with kids, but not to give away (like bubbles, frisbees, folding paper, jump-ropes, balls), please watch these items carefully so they don't "walk away" with certain children. More than anything, be ready with hugs, smiles, and open hearts.

Here are some narrow exceptions to the above guidelines:

- If a team desires, it is appropriate to leave a remembrance for the host congregation (it is not a gift to an individual member), but teams should avoid extravagant gifts. Examples include: a banner for worship; a piece of art from your area, a cross, or a framed poster for the wall of the church. Remember—art and banners should either be without words or with words in Spanish, please.
- If the team desires, tipping a driver, translator, cooks, and regular housekeeping staff is appropriate within reason. Tell the MEH coordinator you are tipping to keep things transparent.

Other gift-giving related guidelines:

- It is not appropriate for anyone you are working with to ask you to help them personally, no matter if they are lay people, translators, construction workers, or drivers. For example, a church member at the site where you're working may ask you to pay for a bike, for school, for the help with medical bills, etc. You should respond that 1) team members are not allowed to give gifts or money, and that 2) the local pastor has items and funds to help people in need. Inform the MEH coordinators or local pastor of any situations of people asking for things.
- It is also not appropriate for team members to make comments that can be construed as offers of assistance in the future. This happens all the time! North Americans do this without thinking, so be careful! Things like: "You'd love the USA—it is so pretty this time of year!" or "It would be awesome if you had the money to go to college!" These types of things are said as extensions of a developing friendship, but leave Hondurans disappointed and bewildered as to why these new friends offered something that they don't follow through on.
- Don't offer to write or send pictures if you are not going to do it. Giving out your phone number or street address is not a good idea—nor is handing out your business card indiscriminately. Don't give your e-mail address unless you are prepared for correspondence.
- The MEH coordinators and pastors can help you find appropriate channels to give gifts that will benefit entire communities rather than just individuals. Teams sometimes want to make a donations that will benefit a particular individual, like a scholarship for a particular person the teams meets on the worksite. What helps the church and pastor much more, is to give a donation to the church for that need in general, i.e. for scholarships to the congregation, in general. Then the church can determine who has the most need. The local people who the team gets to know are not always the people in the congregation with the most need.
- If you feel the urge to give a special gift, ALWAYS check first with a MEH coordinator or the local pastor to discuss its appropriateness.

By asking that you don't give gifts, we are hoping to avoid:

- Expectations of possible handouts that get in the way of authentic relationships.
- Unintentionally creating jealousy and division in a community.
- The dynamics of paternalism and power imbalance that inevitably occur when one group hands out and the other group only receives.
- Skewed expectations of the next group of North Americans that might come.
- The temptation of short-term fixes in a community instead of examining the root causes of poverty.
- The immediate awkwardness that comes when a group starts giving out things in a community. Inevitably, a mob scene happens, with North Americans feeling overwhelmed and Hondurans either feeling left out, or that they need to push to get something. The opportunity to receive something for free creates a huge "splash" in poor communities, but does little to address the underlying reasons for the poverty. We suggest that you work as a group, before or during your trip, to think about what you have to give as a team and where you would like it to be used by a community.

Cultural Considerations

Being and living in another culture can offer many insights into your own culture, your own faith journey, and is an opportunity to hear the voice of God. Even though it can be challenging and disorienting to be in another culture, an attitude of open eyes and an open heart can bring rich rewards. Experiencing a different culture helps volunteers become global Christians who better understand the rest of the world.

Culture exerts a powerful influence on our day-to-day living and wields most of its influence upon us unconsciously. To encounter a culture different from our own requires careful preparation.

Here are some helpful things to know about Honduran culture:

- **Alcohol and Smoking Taboo:** In Honduras, both drinking alcohol and smoking—even in moderation—are behaviors that not compatible with being a Christian. Yes, the Honduran perception of these acts is really this strong and negative! For this reason, drinking and smoking by MEH team members reflects very poorly on the local Honduran Church. Please do not smoke or drink alcohol at ANY time during your stay in Honduras. If this is a problem for a team member, he or she should not participate in the mission trip to Honduras.
- **Greetings:** Both men and women will shake your hand but the handshake is often light or limp. The Honduran people are very warm and friendly. It is common to receive a hug from a male and women will often greet you by touching your right cheek and a light kiss.
- **Gestures:** The “okay” sign of the U.S. is obscene in Honduras. A thumbs-up sign is much more accepted.
- **How to Dress:** Shorts are not generally part of the culture in most of Honduras, even on a worksite. Sleeveless shirts are fine. Dress simply for worship: skirts for women, short-sleeve collar shirts (knit or otherwise) for men. Leave all jewelry, or at least all but the most simple jewelry, at home.
- **Conversation:** North Americans are quick to “get to the point”, and are often perceived as being too direct and open. Diplomacy and tact are useful to avoid giving offense.
- **Personal space:** In Honduras, people stand closer when conversing. Honduran friends, both men and women, often walk arm in arm along the street.
- **Sense of time:** Living by the clock is not as important in Honduras as in North America. There is a general understanding that meeting and starting times are flexible. See unexpected waiting times as opportunities to connect with others!
- **Attention from community:** The act of watching others (what North Americans might call “staring”) is acceptable in the Honduran culture, especially watching people who are interesting and different, like mission team members. Try not to take offense.
- **Photography:** Try to ask permission before taking someone’s picture. (“Puedo?” while pointing to your camera usually works to communicate. It means: “May I?”) Whenever possible, establish a relationship with people before asking to take their picture. Even eye contact and smiles can warm your subjects to the idea of having their picture taken. Be sensitive—private moments deserve to be kept private.
- **Here’s one idea:** some groups choose one or two group photographers for the team. Some groups would rather not have each member carry a camera for two reasons: security and appearing ostentatious. One camera can be worth more than a whole year’s wages for most Hondurans. Once home, the team can have desired photos duplicated.
- **Almost everyone** whose picture you take would like copies of the photos that you take of them. Don’t promise to send them a copy unless you really will! People will remember your promises to send photos. Write down names and information and send pictures if you say you are going to do it.

- The MEH coordinators are always looking for digital photos taken by the team! Please send them electronically or a burned CD in the mail! They'll be used on the MEH website and in other publications.
- Expect less than first-class accommodations. There may be a water shortage, bugs, lack of privacy, cold showers, dusty car/bus rides, monotonous menus, a cracked toilet seat, etc. Before you complain, think about how your complaints can sound to local folks who live in these conditions all the time. Please be a gracious guest in the spirit of Christ .
- Expect differences in sanitation and personal hygiene.
- Use the waste can next to the toilet for toilet tissue. Paper will clog the toilet.
- Pedestrians do NOT have the right-of-way. Watch for cars and bikes—they won't slow down for you!
- Many in Honduras point with their lips to direct attention quickly and easily. It's not blowing kisses, but part of the culture in Honduras.
- Hondurans are accustomed to using terms of respect. Pastor/Pastora, Don/Doña, Maestro (foreman), hermano/hermana with first names. It is common for children to call you Tia or Tio (Auntie or Uncle).
- Honduras has a culture of machismo, so gender issues sometimes surface. Sometimes there are cat-calls and whistles toward young North American women from men outside the congregation. Best to ignore it. If there is a time when a woman on the team feels strange about attention received, please let someone know.
- Play with, hug, and have fun with the local kids—enjoy them! Do not give things away to them like candy. Be aware of the rules about kids on the construction site. If the foreman or pastor says no kids allowed, or only certain kids allowed on the construction site (usually for their own safety, or as a consequence of their past misconduct), please respect and try to understand this.

Here are a few hints to help you avoid some of the common blunders of volunteer teams:

Turning Down Food: You may be offered food that you know is risky for you. Here are some polite ways to turn it down. Simply "No gracias" and a smile suffice. It's ok to turn down food or drink, just try to do it as graciously as possible. If you think they will see you eating or drinking shortly afterwards you might say, "No, gracias. Tengo un estomago Norteamericano" meaning "No thank you, I have a North American stomach." They will chuckle and usually understand that your system is not used to the food.

The Pila: These are concrete waist-high washtubs divided in 2 sides. One side is a deep basin, which holds water. The other is a scrub board. The water in the basin is to be kept clean. Do not dip your hands, clothes, or dishes in it. There should be a plastic bowl available to dip out water and pour it on whatever you are washing on or over the scrub board. Watch how the locals do it.

Being a Guest: You are a guest of the community and as such the same rules apply anywhere. Simply, you want to leave the place as clean and neat as you found it, or more so. As a guest, you can be most helpful by staying with the group and managing your individual needs without asking for special considerations. Transportation and communications are difficult. Don't separate from the group and then get in a situation where you need to be picked up later or sought for. Be on time for meals, bus departures and meetings. If you do leave the group, be sure to tell the group leader or other member and tell them when you will be back.

Language: If you are not a Spanish speaker, learn as many words and phrases as you can before traveling. Bring a pocket dictionary. The Central Americans are greatly appreciative and very patient.

Bathrooms: Most bathrooms in Central America have a trashcan beside the toilet. All sanitary paper is deposited in the trash cans and not down the toilet.

Essential Keys to Intercultural Communication:

- Travel in a spirit of humility, respect, and with a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people.
- Show empathy for the feelings, values, needs, and insights of others.
- Be aware of the feelings of the local people to prevent what might be offensive behavior.
- Make your communication is positive and pleasant, with group members and locals, an evidence of your goodwill and sincerity.
- Realize that other people may have concepts of time and thought patterns that are not like yours—not inferior, just different.
- Instead of seeing only the “different” and “strange”, discover the richness of another culture and way of life.
- Rather than showing that you know all the answers, cultivate the habit of listening.
- Where possible, suspend judgment until all the facts are in.
- Remember that you are only one among many visitors—do not expect special privileges.
- Regarding accommodations and conveniences, if you want “a home-away-from-home”, why bother traveling?
- Get acquainted with local customs and respect them.
- Make no promises to local new friends that you cannot or will not keep.
- Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in order to deepen your understanding.

Tips for Living in Honduras...

We don't want to ruin the surprises and the new ways of seeing things that you will discover in Honduras. We do, however, want to prepare you for some differences and discomforts ahead of time, so that they won't detract from the overall experience.

- Conserve water: Water from the tap is often more scarce and precious in Honduras than it is in the U.S. This is especially true when a group is sharing facilities. While showering, turn the water off while soaping up, and try to shower no more than once a day. The water sitting in the basins of pilas (the concrete basin-and-washboard structure commonly behind buildings) is also precious. Always scoop water out with a clean bowl, instead of contaminating the water with your soapy hands or dirty cup. Watch the locals if in doubt.
- Don't drink the tap water: Team members should drink purified, bottled drinking water that is made available to teams by local staff, and is readily available at stores and gas stations in Honduras. Brush your teeth with purified water also. Restaurants that MEH and pastors suggest are usually more conscientious about pure water, but if you're ever in doubt about the water or the ice, please ask. Or bring your own water with you to a restaurant. Stay hydrated during your stay. It is an easy way to prevent ill health.
- Don't waste food: Take what you want; eat what you take. If you are being served, it is okay to say "just a little, please" (un poco, por favor), or "no more, thank you" (no más, gracias). If plates are served already prepared, take a count of how many on the team prefers smaller portions, and report this to the cook. You can always go back for more! Avoid food purchased from street vendors. The local pastor will advise your group about which are the safe restaurants and local food stands. Don't eat raw vegetables or unpeeled fruit unless you know they have been washed or have been treated in a water and chlorine solution.
- Some showers only have cold water: Complaining about it (or even making jokes about it) can be insensitive to locals who don't have a choice but to shower in cold water all the time.
- Follow the leader and the plan, working enthusiastically, but flexibly!
- The local pastor is your host: Go to him or her with questions, requests, or problems. The MEH staff can help with many things also.
- Not everything will start on time: Waiting time is a marvelous opportunity for personal connection with fellow Hondurans and for the movement of the Spirit. Take the time to inquire about their families, lives, and history, and to pray or sing! Be flexible!
- Expect to be watched: By kids and adults. Gringos (a term used for all North Americans) are a novelty and are interesting entertainment, and there aren't the cultural restrictions against staring. Expect less time for individual needs and privacy.
- Many areas are dusty in the dry season and muddy in the rainy season.
- Electrical current is 110 in Honduras, the same as the U.S.
- Honduras is on either Central Time or Mountain Time, depending on the time of year.
- Most places in Honduras serve soda pop from glass bottles that have a deposit on them. So don't throw away glass bottles. Diet Coca-Cola is more and more available. It is called "Coca Light".
- Pedestrians, beware: Be more vigilant than you're used to when walking along streets in Honduras. Pedestrians do NOT have the right-of-way like they do in the U.S. Don't assume a car is planning to slow or stop for you. They probably aren't.
- Manos Extendidas Honduras welcomes gifts and donations, but please leave them discreetly with the pastor or with an MEH coordinator.
- There will be both unexpected developments, and times when what you expected would happen, won't. Remember the Spirit works in these times! The unexpected is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to move!
- Go to Honduras as a loving servant and representative of Jesus, always ready to accompany others in the spirit of Christ.

Packing Considerations:

The following cannot be over-emphasized: Pack as little as you can—less is best. Taking less will avoid your feeling out-of-place culturally while surrounded by new friends who have so little. Less luggage also means more freedom and the ability to take more supplies and donations.

Please be prepared with all that you need when you arrive. Don't ask your hosts to take time to run by the store in Honduras so that you can buy a personal item.

- Pack what you need to get through one or two days in your carry-on bag, in case your luggage gets lost. Include prescription medications, reading glasses, and other essentials.
- A small Bible and devotional items to share.
- A journal or notebook to record in, with pens.
- A wide-mouth water bottle with lid (for easier filling from a huge jug)
- Insect repellent with DEET (more than 30% DEET is not needed)
- Sun block
- A hat (with all-around brim) and one long-sleeve, light-weight shirt for sun protection.
- Compact flashlight with extra batteries
- Good work shoes (lace-up tennis shoes or boots) and/or good walking shoes.
- Washcloth & soap.
- Travel alarm clock.
- Earplugs can be very helpful. Nights and early mornings can be loud, whether it is the snoring of other team members, dogs barking, roosters, or music from a party close by.
- Pepto-Bismol tablets, some band-aids, any personal medications in original container, contact lenses and cleaning solution to last the entire trip.
- A Kleenex travel pack in your pocket is handy for restrooms without toilet paper.
- Digital camera with charger and extra memory.
- Small Spanish-English dictionary/phrase book, if desired.
- A few photos of your family is a good way to connect with Honduran friends.
- Extra pair of prescription glasses, if you can't get by very well without them.
- A couple zip lock bags, and a couple garbage bags.
- Some cash for personal spending money. You should not need more than \$100. Don't take travelers checks, as they are not accepted at very many places.
- Your passport in a safe place (many wear money belts around their waist for this purpose) and 2 complete photocopies of your passport. One photocopy goes in a separate place, like your luggage; and the other photocopy goes to the team leader.
- Light rain jacket during the rainy season (May-July or Sept-Oct)
- One sweatshirt or jacket. The evenings can cool off especially during the cold season (Dec.-Feb.).
- Clothes. Comfortable, modest work clothes. Many find that natural fibers are cooler, and synthetics like polyester & spandex are very hot.
- Shorts should be modest shorts (down to the knee) are acceptable if they're more comfortable in the heat.
- For church, plan on dressing simply. Simple skirts and tops for women are common. Hose and heels are not necessary. Coats and ties for men are neither common nor necessary. Short-sleeve collared shirts (knit is fine), for men, and pants.
- Sleeveless tops are fine.
- Scrubs work well for daily wear at a medical clinic.
- Consider leaving as many of your personal clothes and shoes as you can in Honduras at the end of your mission trip. Many team members shop at Goodwill/Salvation Army for the trip with this in mind. Please leave any donated clothing (both clean and dirty clothes are welcome) with the local pastor or MEH team coordinators to distribute.

Items to pack for the entire team to use:

- One first aid kit for the entire MEH team. (It would be a welcome donation to the local pastor at the conclusion of your trip.)
- Mission teams have found that a canister of Gatorade/Sports Drink in powder form is easy to carry to Honduras. It can be mixed with purified water (which is provided), and is valuable for team members working in the heat.
- Duct tape. One roll can help in many ways!
- A couple permanent markers. Lots of uses.
- An entire package of earplugs to share around the team.

Tips for packing:

- In addition to the regular identification tags, mark each piece of checked luggage for the entire team with a unique pattern of colored duct tape, or matching colored ribbons, or matching bright tags, so that any team member can recognize and retrieve any piece of luggage from the team. This speeds up the long process upon arrival in Honduras .
- For teams carrying donations of medicines, please create an inventory list of all that you are bringing and the expiration date of each. E-mail this list to the MEH coordinator and place a copy of the entire list in each piece of luggage that has inside any item on the list.
- If you are checking cardboard boxes, check ahead of time with the airline about the likelihood that it will arrive with the team. Consider using second-hand suitcases to haul donations and medicines instead of boxes.
- Did we mention pack light?

Money considerations

US Dollars

In Honduras, US Dollars are only accepted in airports and in Valle de Angeles (artisan tourist village). Other than these, US dollars are not accepted anywhere.

Teams have had problems in the past with certain US dollars not being accepted here because they are written on, have stains, or are ripped. This has happened at tourist stores in Valle de Angeles, with money-changers, at banks, and even at the airport counter where you pay your exit fees of \$37. So team members should leave their old, battered bills at home.

Changing US Dollars into Honduran Lempira (current exchange is 19L to 1USD)

The airport is a good place to change dollars into lempira before you leave for the site. There are money-changers at the airport terminal exits. The money changers are typically honest but it is always good to be prepared to check their calculations. However, if you have a large team or are planning to change a large sum of money, several hundred dollars, we request you do not do this at the airport. We want to avoid the appearance and assumption that North Americans always have large sums of money.

If your team is planning to change money, please let the coordinator know how much you will be changing before arriving in Honduras. We will make arrangements to have change your money offsite in the privacy and security of the ministry base.

ATM Machines

The airports have an ATM machine and so do most gas stations. This is an excellent way to get your Honduran Lempiras. This way you will not need to carry a large amount of money for your trip or worry about exchanging your foreign currency. Again, we ask that if you have a large team that no everyone use the cash machine in any one location at the same time. Also, most cash machines have a 2,000 to 5,000 Lempira limit per transaction.

Credit Cards

Credit Cards are accepted in Honduras. Most grocery stores, hotels, and mid-level restaurants accept them. Some tourist shops accept them, but not all. Some tourist shops charge an extra percentage to accept them. In Valle de Angeles, all the Cooperative Pavilions accept them at no extra charge.

Tipping

Tipping in restaurants is customarily 10% in Honduras and is often included in the bill (propina).

Gifts or tips to translators, drivers, and kitchen help are appropriate, but completely voluntary. A small gift that is representative of the team is a nice option. If you choose to tip, please ask for guidance from the local pastor or MEH coordinator on the amount to tip. If you do tip, please let the local pastor know you are doing so. Over-tipping causes problems.

Medical teams should consider giving a small tip or token gift to the people from the local congregation who are asked by the pastor to work with the medical team all week. They usually have made a sacrifice of some sort to support the team in this way. Again, consult the local pastor for guidance on this.

Left-over Lempiras

Left-over lempiras can be exchanged back into dollars at the airport, with the same money-changers, on departure day.

Some teams donate left-over lempiras to work of the ministry of MEH.

Security

As with all valuables, it is best not to be obvious with your money. Don't flash a wad of cash when making a purchase. Carry large quantities of cash in a security waist pouch under your clothes. Carry smaller quantities of money to use in your pocket.

At each site, teams stay in a place that is secure for the team's valuables. The only people who will enter your rooms are either team members or trusted local individuals who will enter to clean. Team members can tuck their cash and passport in an out-of-the-way corner of their suitcase and leave it there during work.

Sight-Seeing Costs

Some teams choose to sight-see at the end of their time in Honduras. There are many options and some do have additional costs. Teams are often brought to Valley of Angels to do their gift shopping.

Sending Money to Honduras

All team donations for construction materials should be in the hands of the treasurer in Honduras 30 days before the team's arrival date. At least 15% of the team fees (\$55 per person per day) should also be paid before arrival date. This allows for necessary materials to be purchased ahead of time and arrangements to be made to accommodate the team.

When you send the money, please send the MEH coordinator an email telling:

- the date you mailed the check
- the total amount, and
- the breakdown on how you calculated the total amount (per diem, construction, designated donation, etc.)

This will help the church treasurer track and distribute the funds.

It is best to send checks through O.C.F.: (Outreach Christian Fellowship)

Please make checks payable to Manos Extendidas and mail to:

Outreach Christian Fellowship
P.O. Box 7637
Tyler, Texas
75711-7637

The climate in Honduras

Honduras is located in the tropics, but temperatures are defined both by altitude and by season.

Most of Central Honduras, at altitudes of 2000 to 6000 feet (Tegucigalpa is at 3000 feet), is called tierra templada, or temperate land, with pleasantly warm days, and cool nights. Average highs range from 75-85 degrees, and the lows from 60-68 degrees.

Temperatures change slightly from season to season, depending on the time of year. December, January, February are the coolest months, and March and April are the hottest and most dry.

The rainy season begins in late-May or early-June, and brings a refreshing break to the heat that precedes it. The typical pattern of the rainy season is to have clear, sunny weather in the mornings, and clouds and rain in the afternoon/evenings. Occasionally, the rain may continue for several days at a time. The rainy season lasts through July, then occurs again September through October, although there are dry periods during that time.

How MEH teams can be prepared for the Honduran climate:

November through February

Even during these cool months, the heaviest clothes needed is one sweater or sweatshirt. Some throw in a long-underwear shirt for protection against any unusual cold because it is not too bulky. Another reason to bring a long-sleeve shirt is for sun or mosquito protection.

Mid-May through July, and September through October

A very light nylon jacket is appropriate for the rainy season. The rain does not usually bring cold temperatures. Bring footwear for work that can get muddy and another pair of shoes for relaxing. Prepare to be wet occasionally. Road conditions, particularly off the main highways, often deteriorate markedly during the rainy season.

Although Honduras is out of the usual Caribbean hurricane path, major storms appear every decade or so and severe flooding can occur. September through November is hurricane season.

Sun

Protect yourself from the intense, tropical sun. Yes, the sun is DIFFERENT in Honduras . It burns skin more quickly closer to the equator, especially winter-white skin from the north! Some work sites are in the sun, so bring a wide, all-around-brim hat (a baseball cap leaves your ears and neck exposed); good, powerful sun block that you reapply often; and a light-weight shirt for sun protection. Don't count on buying a hat in Honduras. They are not available everywhere and there is not always time and personnel to make the necessary shopping trip.

Be prepared for a period of a couple of days to adjust to heat and to altitude change. Drink water often, take breaks, and give your body time to adjust. Wear 100% natural fibers (like cotton), and avoid synthetic fabrics like lycra, polyester, and spandex.

Upon arrival in Honduras...

MEH teams are met at the airport by someone from the MEH staff or your local hosts. They will be waiting outside the terminal building with an identifying sign.

Here is some basic information that you will need upon entry to Honduras. Immigration will require that you fill out several pieces of paper that contain information about who you are, what you are doing here in Honduras, and where you will be staying. You will receive these forms to fill out on the plane just before you land in Honduras. It is recommended that you take the following information with you for filling out the immigration forms:

- Make sure you carry a pen to fill out all the forms
- Personal Information (i.e Date of Birth)
- Flight Information
- Passport Information
- Physical address of where you will be staying while in Honduras
 - Villa Vieja, antes La Poste de Policia, en frente del colegio Nuevo Horizonte, Casa Blanca
- Telephone Numbers:
 - Alvin's Phone Number: 32042299 or 97413813
 - Chad Baron's Number: 33142756
- Name of the Ministry: Manos Extendidas

Immigration:

After disembarking and entering the airport terminal, you'll come first to the line for the immigration desks. Stand in an appropriate line (the line for those who aren't Honduran citizens or diplomats). Each team member should be ready with passports and their immigration paper they filled out on the plane. Tell the immigration official where you are from, where you are going, and what you will be doing. Everyone can stow their passport securely away after passing through immigration.

Claim your luggage:

If you have put an identifying ribbon or tag on each piece of luggage this process will go much easier. Grabbing bags can be a crowded affair so it is best to designate 2 individuals who will grab the luggage and bring it to a central place where it is watched by the rest of the team. Once all luggage has been collected, each team member must have their customs declaration slip and their luggage claim tickets in their hands. As a team, move towards the luggage scanners.

Customs:

This is the final step. You must hand the customs agent your declaration slip and your luggage claim tickets. They will verify you have the correct luggage and then ask you to put your luggage on the conveyor belt where it will be scanned one more time. After this you may collect your luggage and leave the baggage claim area and enter the main terminal where your MEH representative will meet you.

Leaving the airport building:

There will be many offers to carry your bags by the airport porters. Some can be very assertive. You are welcome to use these men to help. The going rate is around \$1 per bag. If you prefer not to use their help a simple, "No gracias" and a smile should suffice.

Manos Extendidas Honduras (MEH) Short Term Missions Team Agreement

Please realize that the following elements are crucial to the effectiveness, quality, and safety of a short term missions team. Team leaders are responsible to make sure all members of your team have read and understand this agreement.

As a representative of this short term missions team, you agree to:

1. Remember that you are a guest working at the invitation of a local missionary, pastor, medical clinic, etc. If your hosts are offended by bare arms, shirtless backs, and exposed legs, you'll cover them. I'll remember the missionaries' prayer: "Where you lead me, I will follow; what you feed me, I will swallow!"
2. Remember that you have come to learn, not to teach. You may run across procedures that you feel are inefficient, or attitudes that you find closed-minded. Be open to learning about other people's methods and ideas.
3. Respect the host's view of Christianity. Recognize that Christianity has many faces throughout the world, and that the purpose of this trip is to witness and experience faith lived out in a new setting.
4. Develop and maintain a servant attitude toward all nationals, your teammates and MEH staff.
5. Respect must be evident towards the team leader and his or her decisions.
6. Refrain from complaining. Travel can present numerous unexpected and undesired circumstances, but the rewards of conquering such circumstances are innumerable.
7. Respect the work that is going on in Honduras with the particular church, agency, or person that you are working with. Realize that your team is here for just a short while, but that the missionary and local churches are here for the long term. Respect their knowledge, insights, and instructions.
8. Fulfill all logistical requirements. Comply with all requirements regarding passports, finances, shots, and so on.
9. Refrain from negative political comments concerning Honduras politics.
10. Remember not to be exclusive in relationships. If a team member is attracted to a teammate, they should not attempt to pursue a romantic relationship while in the mission field.
11. Refrain from any activity that could be construed as romantic interest toward a national. Realize certain activities that seem innocent in your own culture may seem inappropriate in others.
12. Abstain from the consumption of alcoholic beverages, the use of tobacco or the use of illegal drugs while on the trip.
13. MEH has the right to request that a member(s) of your team be confronted regarding any of the above. As a last resort, if deemed necessary, the team member may be asked to return home. Air ticket change-date fees will be the responsibility of the team leader.