

***Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver  
Extension Center Studies***



***Bible Institute of Honduras,  
Danlí, Honduras***

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Overseen by: Bear Valley Church of Christ  
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*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

2 Timothy 2:2

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## Requirements for Instructors

### 1. Sound in the Faith –

A doctrinal statement must be read and signed in agreement before one is permitted to participate in teaching in our program. This is just one of several methods we use in ensuring a doctrinally sound program. It is of the utmost importance to all associated with the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver that we uphold and proclaim nothing but the unadulterated truth of God's Holy Word. If you have not already received a copy of our doctrinal statement, please be sure to request one as it is imperative to your further involvement in this good work. Obviously, we have confidence in your dedication to the Gospel of Christ as indicated by your invitation to work with us. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated. The statement can be viewed at [www.bvbid.org](http://www.bvbid.org).

### 2. Academically Qualified –

Currently, this program is classified as a "Certificate Program." In our programs offering a Bachelors Degree, we are required to only use those men who have earned Masters Degrees. That requirement does not apply to this extension. However, we are still looking for men who have spent years in the study of God's Word and have manifested the desire and ability to evangelize the lost.

### 3. Expectations of Behavior and Evangelistic Fervor –

**We are looking for men who will serve as examples of an evangelist by setting up and conducting home Bible studies. They must exemplify a sincere love for the lost souls of Honduras. It is imperative that they be cognizant of the influence they will have on the students. They consider us examples to follow, people who are to be respected and honored. Therefore, our teaching will not be limited to the classroom, but will rather continue 24 hours a day. Special caution must be exercised when working closely with those of the opposite gender. We do not want to put ourselves in a position of being falsely accused or our actions misconstrued. The same principles we live by in the United States should be applied to our working with brothers and sisters in Christ overseas. It is important, therefore, that we maintain a gracious and humble attitude, directing praise and glory to God as the One to be exalted.**

## **Why Foreign Extension Centers?**

(From the Bear Valley Web Page: <http://www.bvbid.org/FrgnExtesions.html>)

In short, it is the best way to reach these countries with the Gospel. In the past we have attempted to do mission work by sending one or a few families into a location with the monumental task of doing all the evangelism themselves. Many of those works flourished for a time, but failed when the families returned home. Our belief is that these works failed because there was nothing left in place to perpetuate that work. Then, we sought to bring men here to train them in our schools of preaching in the United States. That was a feasible plan, but we lost several of them deciding to remain in this country and preach.

We believe the extension program solves such problems by putting a program in place to perpetuate the work of preaching the gospel. We believe that time will show this to be one of the most successful works among many good works in the brotherhood.

### **The wisdom of Extension Center concept is this:**

- We are able to train more men, since they do not have to raise expenses to come to the US.
- We are able to train them more inexpensively. Frequently we are able to fully support a man and his family for less than \$100/month.
- These men are being trained in an environment conducive to learning. They are surrounded by their countrymen who have the same cultural background, same problems, etc. The bonding between these men is astounding. They help each other and work in each other's congregations. When a man leaves Bear Valley to go into a mission field, he is virtually alone. This solves that problem.
- In our 40 years of training men, we have frequently trained men from foreign countries. Sadly, two results regularly occurred: (1) The men married an American and stayed here – never entering the ministry; (2) The men became spoiled' by American life/wealth and wanted to maintain that level when they returned home. This resulted in envy and strife among the very people they were trying to win to Christ. Now these men receive the full program offered here at Bear Valley, and never get accustomed to another way of life.
- We are able to develop a curriculum that specifically identifies their ministry needs. For example, in the Ukraine and in Africa, our students will often be starting new churches. They need training and guidance on how to do this. Therefore we have included several classes that address these needs.
- We are able to provide the same quality of education our students receive in Denver. The teachers in these extension schools are men who have advanced degrees and are Biblically sound.

## **You can help us**

If you would like to know more about this exciting facet of our work, please contact Bob Turner, our Director of Extension Center Studies at (303) 985-5800 or e-mail him at [bturner@bvid.org](mailto:bturner@bvid.org).

## **Nation Report: Honduras**

The following information is taken from the internet at: <<http://countrystudies.us/honduras/>>. This is an online version of the book by the same title published by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress as part of the Country Studies/Area Handbook Series sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Army between 1986 and 1998.

### **HONDURAS**

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## Preface

Like its predecessor, this study is an attempt to examine objectively and concisely the dominant historical, social, economic, political, and military aspects of contemporary Honduras. Sources of information included scholarly books, journals, monographs, official reports of governments and international organizations, and numerous periodicals. To the extent possible, place-names follow the system adopted by the United States Board on Geographic Names. Measurements are given in the metric system.

Although there are numerous variations, Spanish surnames for men and unmarried women usually consist of two parts: the patrilineal name followed by the matrilineal. In the instance of Roberto Suazo Córdova, for example, Suazo is his father's name; Córdova, his mother's maiden name. In informal use, the matrilineal name is often dropped. When a woman marries, she generally drops her matrilineal name and replaces it with her husband's patrilineal name preceded by a "de." Thus, when Cristina García Rodríguez married Antonio Pérez Cevallos, she became Cristina García de Pérez. In informal use, a married woman's patrilineal name is dropped (Cristina Pérez is the informal usage). Some individuals use only the patrilineal name in formal as well as informal use. The patrilineal for men and unmarried women and the husband's patrilineal for married women are used for indexing and bibliographic purposes.

The Bibliography lists sources thought to be particularly helpful to the reader.

## History

Throughout its history, Honduras has been an underdeveloped area. Its rugged topography and lack of good ports on the Pacific coast have combined to keep it relatively isolated from the mainstream of social and economic development. The capital, Tegucigalpa, is located high in the central mountains, removed from the isthmus's main north-south transportation routes.

The rugged topography and semi-isolation have provided Honduras some advantages as well as disadvantages. Unlike the neighboring republics of El Salvador and Guatemala, Honduras did not produce a totally dominant landholding oligarchy. It also escaped the turmoil over transisthmian transit routes that plagued Nicaragua and Panama. Finally, Honduras, alone among Central America's republics, is not dominated by a single city. The isolation of the capital led to the rise of San Pedro Sula in the twentieth century as the nation's commercial and industrial center.

However, lack of development produced, for much of Honduras's history, relatively weak social and political institutions. Much of the nation's history has been marked by long periods of political instability, frequent military coups, and considerable government corruption and inefficiency. External powers have consistently exploited and aggravated these problems. Neighboring Central American nations have repeatedly intervened in Honduran internal affairs, giving Hondurans a strong fear of foreign attack. Countries outside the region also have manipulated Honduran politics from time to time to suit their

own national interests. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Honduran economy was so dominated by the United Fruit Company and the Standard Fruit Company that company managers were frequently perceived as exercising as much power as the Honduran president. Increased nationalism and economic diversification have changed this situation in recent decades, but in the early 1990s, Honduras remained a nation highly sensitive to and dependent on external forces. Despite both national and international efforts, Honduras remained poor and vulnerable. In the 1980s, security concerns centered on the Nicaraguan border; in the early 1990s, concern centered on El Salvador because of its insurgency problems and its boundary dispute with Honduras.

Both a product and a victim of its past, in the mid-1990s, Honduras was striving to find some means of gaining the benefits of modernization while avoiding the violent conflicts that wracked its neighbors in the 1980s.

## **Pre-Colombian Society**

### The Mayan Heritage

Pre-Columbian Honduras was populated by a complex mixture of indigenous peoples representing a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and linguistic groups--the most advanced and notable of which were related to the Maya of the Yucatán and Guatemala. Mayan civilization had reached western Honduras in the fifth century A.D., probably spreading from lowland Mayan centers in Guatemala's Petén region. The Maya spread rapidly through the Río Motagua Valley, centering their control on the major ceremonial center of Copán, near the present-day town of Santa Rosa de Copán. For three and a half centuries, the Maya developed the city, making it one of the principal centers of their culture. At one point, Copán was probably the leading center for both astronomical studies--in which the Maya were quite advanced--and art. One of the longest Mayan hieroglyphic inscriptions ever discovered was found at Copán. The Maya also established extensive trade networks spanning as far as central Mexico.

Then, at the height of the Mayan civilization, Copán was apparently abandoned. The last dated hieroglyph in Copán is A.D. 800. Much of the population evidently remained in the area after that, but the educated class--the priests and rulers who built the temples, inscribed the glyphs, and developed the astronomy and mathematics--suddenly vanished. Copán fell into ruin, and the descendants of the Maya who remained had no memory of the meanings of the inscriptions or of the reasons for the sudden fall.

### Other Indigenous Groups

Following the period of Mayan dominance, the area that would eventually comprise Honduras was occupied by a multiplicity of indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups related to the Toltec of central Mexico migrated from the northwest into parts of what became western and southern Honduras. Most notable were the Toltec speaking Chorotega, who established themselves near the present-day city of Choluteca. Later enclaves of Nahuatl-speaking peoples, such as the Pipil, whose language was related to that of the Aztec,

established themselves at various locations from the Caribbean coast to the Golfo de Fonseca on the Pacific coast.

While groups related to indigenous peoples of Mexico moved into western and southern Honduras, other peoples with languages related to those of the Chibcha of Colombia were establishing themselves in areas that became northeastern Honduras. Most prominent among these were the Ulva and Paya speakers. Along the Caribbean coast, a variety of groups settled. Most important were the Sumu, who were also located in Nicaragua, and the Jicaque, whose language family has been a source of debate among scholars. Finally, in parts of what is now west-central Honduras were the Lenca, who also were believed to have migrated north from Colombia but whose language shows little relation to any other indigenous group. Although divided into numerous distinct and frequently hostile groups, the indigenous inhabitants of pre-conquest Honduras (before the early 1500s) carried on considerable trade with other parts of their immediate region as well as with areas as far away as Panama and Mexico. Although it appears that no major cities were in existence at the time of the conquest, the total population was nevertheless fairly high. Estimates range up to 2 million, although the actual figure was probably nearer to 500,000.

## **Spanish Conquest and Settlement**

### **The Initial Explorations**

European contacts with the indigenous population of Honduras began with the final voyage of Christopher Columbus. In 1502 Columbus sailed past the *Islas de la Bahía* (Bay Islands) and shortly thereafter reached the mainland of Central America. While at one of the islands, Columbus discovered and seized a large canoe loaded with a wide variety of trade goods. Evidence seems to indicate that the canoe's occupants were Mayan traders and that their encounter with Columbus marked his first direct contact with the civilizations of Mexican and northern Central America. Despite the fact that the canoe had been observed coming from the west, Columbus turned east and then south, sailing away from the civilizations and doing little exploring on the Honduran coast. His only direct legacy was the assigning of a few place names on the Caribbean coast, notably Guanaja for one of the *Islas de la Bahía*, Cabo Gracias a Dios for the eastern extremity of Honduras, and Honduras (depths in Spanish) for the overall region. The latter name suggests the deep waters off the northern coast. Little exploration took place for the next two decades. Spanish navigators Juan Díaz de Solís and Vicente Yáñez Pinzón probably touched on part of the Honduran coast in 1508, but devoted most of their efforts to exploring farther north. Some expeditions from the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola may have reached the mainland and certainly began to decimate the population of the *Islas de la Bahía* in the second decade of the century, but otherwise the Honduran Caribbean coast was a neglected area.

Interest in the mainland was dramatically revived as a result of the expedition of Hernán Cortés to Mexico. While Cortés was completing his conquest of the Aztec, expeditions from Mexico, Panama, and the Caribbean began to move into Central America. In 1523 part of an expedition headed by Gil González Dávila discovered the Golfo de Fonseca on the Pacific

coast, naming it in honor of Bishop Rodríguez de Fonseca. The following year, four separate Spanish land expeditions began the conquest of Honduras.

### The Era of the Conquistadores

The nearly simultaneous invasions of Honduras in 1524 by rival Spanish expeditions began an era of conflict among rival Spanish claimants as well as with the indigenous population. The major initial expeditions were led by González Dávila, who hoped to carve out a territory for his own rule, and by Cristóbal de Olid, who was dispatched from Cuba by Cortés. Once in Honduras, however, Olid succumbed to personal ambition and attempted to establish his own independent authority. Word of this reached Cortés in Mexico, and to restore his own authority, he ordered yet another expedition, this one under the command of Francisco de Las Casas. Then, doubting the trustworthiness of any subordinate, Cortés set out for Honduras himself. The situation was further complicated by the entry into Honduras of expeditions from Guatemala under Pedro de Alvarado and from Nicaragua under Hernando de Soto.

In the initial struggle for power, Olid seemed to gain the upper hand, capturing both González Dávila and Las Casas. His captives, however, having managed to subvert the loyalty of some of Olid's men, took Olid prisoner, and then promptly beheaded him. Although later condemned for this action by a Mexican court, none of the conspirators ever suffered any real punishment.

The arrival of Cortés in Honduras in 1525 temporarily restored some order to the Spanish conquest. He established his own authority over the rival claimants, obtained the submission of numerous indigenous chiefs, and tried to promote the creation of Spanish towns. His own headquarters was located at Trujillo on the Caribbean coast. In April 1526, Cortés returned to Mexico, and the remaining Spaniards resumed their strife.

Some order was again restored in October of that year when the first royal governor, Diego López de Salcedo, arrived. López de Salcedo's policies, however, drove many indigenous people, once pacified by Cortés, into open revolt. His attempt to extend his jurisdiction into Nicaragua resulted in his imprisonment by the authorities there. After agreeing to a Nicaraguan-imposed definition of the boundary between the two provinces, López de Salcedo was released but did not return to Honduras until 1529.

The early 1530s were not prosperous for Honduras. Renewed fighting among the Spaniards, revolts, and decimation of the settled indigenous population through disease, mistreatment, and exportation of large numbers to the Caribbean islands as slaves left the colony on the edge of collapse by 1534. The Spanish crown renamed the depressed province as Honduras-Higueras, subdividing it into two districts. Higueras encompassed the western part while the rest remained known as Honduras. The decline in population of the province continued, and only the direct intervention of Pedro de Alvarado from Guatemala in 1536 kept Higueras from being abandoned. Alvarado was attracted by the prospect of gold in the region, and, with the help of native Guatemalans who accompanied him, he soon developed a profitable gold-mining industry centered in the newly established town of Gracias.

The discovery of gold and silver deposits attracted new settlers and increased the demand for indigenous labor. The enforced labor, however, led to renewed resistance by the native people that culminated in a major uprising in 1537. The leader of the uprising was a capable young Lenca chieftain known as Lempira (after whom the Honduran national monetary unit would eventually be named). Lempira established his base on a fortified hill known as the Peñol de Cerquín and until 1538 successfully defeated all efforts to subdue him. Inspired by his examples, other native inhabitants began revolting, and the entire district of Higueras seemed imperiled. Lempira was ultimately murdered while negotiating with the Spaniards. After his death, resistance rapidly disintegrated, although some fighting continued through 1539.

The defeat of Lempira's revolt accelerated the decimation of the indigenous population. In 1539 an estimated 15,000 native Americans remained under Spanish control; two years later, there were only 8,000. Most of these were divided into encomiendas, a system that left the native people in their villages but placed them under the control of individual Spanish settlers. Under terms of the encomienda system, the Spaniards were supposed to provide the indigenous people with religious instruction and collect tribute from them for the crown. In return, the Spaniards were entitled to a supposedly limited use of indigenous labor. As the native population declined, the settlers exploited those remaining even more ruthlessly. This exploitation led to a clash between the Spanish settlers and authorities on one side and on the other side the Roman Catholic Church led by Father Cristóbal de Pedraza, who, in 1542 became the first bishop of Honduras. Bishop Pedraza, like others after him, had little success in his efforts to protect the native people.

[For more information on the history of Honduras, visit:  
<<http://countrystudies.us/honduras/>>]

## **Geography**

### **Boundary Disputes**

A two-centuries-old border dispute between El Salvador and Honduras appears to have been resolved in 1993. At issue in this territorial dispute was ownership of six contested bolsones (pockets) of land encompassing a total area of 436.9 square kilometers as well as two islands (Meanguera and El Tigre) in the Golfo de Fonseca, and right of passage for Honduras to the Pacific Ocean from its southern coast.

The origins of the boundary dispute date back to the eighteenth century when colonial boundaries were ill defined. In the late nineteenth century, numerous attempts at mediation failed to settle the dispute. The issue continued to fester in the twentieth century and was a contributing factor in the outbreak of war between the two countries in 1969. The General Peace Treaty, signed by El Salvador and Honduras on October 30, 1980, in Lima, Peru, represented the first real breakthrough on this border dispute. The peace treaty stated that the two parties agreed to submit the boundary dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague if they failed to reach a border agreement after five years of negotiations. By 1985 the two countries had not reached an agreement. In 1986 the case reached the ICJ, which handed down a ruling on September 11, 1992. Both countries accepted the ICJ

decision, and a commission was established to decide the citizenship of residents of the bolsones.

Of the 436.9 square kilometers in dispute, 300.6 square kilometers were granted to Honduras, and 136.3 were granted to El Salvador. Of the six bolsones, Honduras was awarded complete control of one and approximately 80 percent of another. The remaining four were split with El Salvador. El Salvador was awarded possession of the island of Meanguera, and Honduras was awarded control of the island of El Tigre. More importantly for Honduras, the ICJ ruling assured Honduras's free passage to the Pacific Ocean. The ICJ also decided that the Golfo de Fonseca does not represent international waters because of the two countries' shared history as provinces of the same colonial power and subsequent membership in the United Provinces of Central America. The court ruled, rather, that the Golfo de Fonseca is a condominium, with control being shared by El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The latter country also has a coastline on the gulf. The decision allowed for the possibility that the three nations could divide the waters at a later date if they wished to do so.

### Topography

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#### The Caribbean Lowlands

This area of river valleys and coastal plains, which most Honduras call "the north coast," or simply "the coast," has traditionally been Honduras's most exploited region. The central part of the Caribbean lowlands, east of La Ceiba, is a narrow coastal plain only a few kilometers wide. To the east and west of this section, however, the Caribbean lowlands widen and in places extend inland a considerable distance along broad river valleys. The broadest river valley, along the Río Ulúa near the Guatemalan border, is Honduras's most developed area. Both Puerto Cortés, the country's largest port, and San Pedro Sula, Honduras's industrial capital, are located here.

To the east, near the Nicaraguan border, the Caribbean lowlands broaden to an extensive area known as the Mosquitia. Unlike the western part of the Caribbean lowlands, the Mosquitia is Honduras's least-developed area. Underpopulated and culturally distinct from the rest of the country, the area consists of inland savannah with swamps and mangrove near the coast. During times of heavy rainfall, much of the savannah area is covered by shallow water, making transportation by means other than a shallow-draft boat almost impossible.

#### Pacific Lowlands

The smallest physiographic region of Honduras, the Pacific lowlands, is a strip of land averaging twenty-five kilometers wide on the north shore of the Golfo de Fonseca. The land is flat, becoming swampy near the shores of the gulf, and is composed mostly of alluvial soils washed down from the mountains. The gulf is shallow and the water rich in fish and mollusks. Mangroves along the shore make shrimp and shellfish particularly abundant by providing safe and abundant breeding areas amid their extensive networks of underwater roots.

Several islands in the gulf fall under Honduras's jurisdiction. The two largest, Zacate Grande and El Tigre, are eroded volcanoes, part of the chain of volcanoes that extends along the Pacific coast of Central America. Both islands have volcanic cones more than 700 meters in elevation that serve as markers for vessels entering Honduras's Pacific ports.

#### Climate

Although all of Honduras lies within the tropics, the climatic types of each of the three physiographic regions differ. The Caribbean lowlands have a tropical wet climate with consistently high temperatures and humidity, and rainfall fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. The Pacific lowlands have a tropical wet and dry climate with high temperatures but a distinct dry season from November through April. The interior highlands also have a distinct dry season, but, as is characteristic of a tropical highland climate, temperatures in this region decrease as elevation increases.

Unlike in more northerly latitudes, temperatures in the tropics vary primarily with elevation instead of with the season. Land below 1,000 meters is commonly known as tierra caliente (hot land), between 1,000 and 2,000 meters tierra templada (temperate land), and above 2,000 meters tierra fría (cold land). Both the Caribbean and Pacific lowlands are tierra caliente, with daytime highs averaging between 28° C and 32° C throughout the year. In the Pacific lowlands, April, the last month of the dry season, brings the warmest temperatures; the rainy season is slightly cooler, although higher humidity during the rainy season makes these months feel more uncomfortable. In the Caribbean lowlands, the only relief from the year-round heat and humidity comes during December or January when an occasional strong cold front from the north (a norte) brings several days of strong northwest winds and slightly cooler temperatures.

The interior highlands range from tierra templada to tierra fría. Tegucigalpa, in a sheltered valley and at an elevation of 1,000 meters, has a pleasant climate, with an average high temperature ranging from 30° C in April, the warmest month, to 25° C in January, the coolest. Above 2,000 meters, temperatures can fall to near freezing at night, and frost sometimes occurs.

Rain falls year round in the Caribbean lowlands but is seasonal throughout the rest of the country. Amounts are copious along the north coast, especially in the Mosquitia, where the average rainfall is 2,400 millimeters. Nearer San Pedro Sula, amounts are slightly less from November to April, but each month still has considerable precipitation. The interior highlands and Pacific lowlands have a dry season, known locally as "summer," from November to April. Almost all the rain in these regions falls during the "winter," from May to September. Total yearly amounts depend on surrounding topography; Tegucigalpa, in a sheltered valley, averages only 1,000 millimeters of precipitation.

Honduras lies within the hurricane belt, and the Caribbean coast is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes or tropical storms that travel inland from the Caribbean. Hurricane Francelia in 1969 and Tropical Storm Alleta in 1982 affected thousands of people and caused extensive damage to crops. Hurricane Fifi in 1974 was the worst natural disaster in recent Honduran history; more than 8,000 people were killed, and nearly the entire banana crop was destroyed. Hurricanes occasionally form over the Pacific and move north to affect southern Honduras, but Pacific storms are generally less severe and their landfall rarer.

[Honduras is hot and humid almost year-round. Temperatures vary by altitude rather than season. The average high temperature nationwide is 32°C (90°F) and the average low is 20°C (68°F). Temperatures are coolest in mountain areas.

<http://www.southtravels.com/america/honduras/weather.html>]

## Rivers

Honduras is a water-rich country. The most important river in Honduras is the Ulúa, which flows 400 kilometers to the Caribbean through the economically important Valle de Sula. Numerous other rivers drain the interior highlands and empty north into the Caribbean. These

other rivers are important, not as transportation routes, but because of the broad fertile valleys they have produced.

Rivers also define about half of Honduras's international borders. The Río Goascorán, flowing to the Golfo de Fonseca, and the Río Lempa define part of the border between El Salvador and Honduras. The Río Coco marks about half of the border between Nicaragua and Honduras.

Despite an abundance of rivers, large bodies of water are rare. Lago de Yojoa, located in the west-central part of the country, is the sole natural lake in Honduras. This lake is twenty-two kilometers long and at its widest point measures fourteen kilometers. Several large, brackish lagoons open onto the Caribbean in northeast Honduras. These shallow bodies of water allow limited transportation to points along the coast.

## **The Society**

### Population

#### Population Density

Although Honduras, with forty-six inhabitants per square kilometer, has a relatively low population density, especially when compared to its neighbors to the west, uneven distribution has contributed to overpopulation in certain areas. The five mountainous departments bordering El Salvador (Ocotepeque, Lempira, Intibucá, La Paz, and Valle) have a much higher population density than the four sparsely populated departments in the east (Colón, Olancho, Gracias a Dios, and El Paraíso). The country's second-largest and least-populated department, Gracias a Dios, had a population density of only 2.5 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1989. Honduras's only densely populated lowland area is the Río Ulúa valley. In 1989 the department of Cortés, on the west bank of the Río Ulúa, had a population density of 188 inhabitants per square kilometer.

Honduras is the only country in Central America with an urban population distributed between two large centers. Whereas other Central American capitals are home to more than 50 percent of their countries' urban populations, Tegucigalpa's percentage of total urban population is considerably lower. The difference is accounted for by the growth of San Pedro Sula. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula are projected to account for nearly 73 percent of the population living in urban areas. The two cities are also projected to account for 25 percent of the total population of Honduras by the end of the twentieth century.

#### Rural-to-Urban Migration

The vast majority of the rural-to-urban population shift has been the result of migration from the southwestern departments (Ocotepeque, Lempira, Intibucá, La Paz, and Valle) to cities in the departments on or near the Caribbean coast (Cortés, Yoro, Atlántida, and Colón) and to Tegucigalpa (in Francisco Morazán department in the central highlands). During the earlier

part of the twentieth century, employment opportunities in the newly established banana plantations attracted many people from southern and western Honduras to the Caribbean coast. Cities on the banks of the Río Ulúa, especially El Progreso, experienced impressive growth as a result of this migration from the south. Migration from the mountainous southwest sparked tremendous development in the city of San Pedro Sula. The search for employment also led many to Tegucigalpa, even though the capital has never been a center for industry or agriculture.

Demographers have predicted that, unless significant social and economic reforms are instituted, the rural-to-urban migration trend so prevalent in the twentieth century not only will continue but also will probably increase. Although Honduras is still primarily an agrarian society, urban centers have grown considerably since the 1920s. Analysts speculate that urban centers will continue to expand as a result of internal migration and national population growth.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Tegucigalpa in particular experienced sharp increases in its population. During the 1950s, Tegucigalpa's population increased nearly 75 percent. The following decade brought a population rate increase of more than 80 percent. In 1980 Tegucigalpa had a population of 400,000. By 1989 the population had soared to 576,661. This increase in population has practically crippled the already fragile infrastructure of the city. Housing is woefully inadequate, and a large percentage of the residents either lack running water altogether or receive inadequate amounts.

During the period between 1950 and 1980, San Pedro Sula had a population growth rate that exceeded that of Tegucigalpa. In the 1980s, the annual growth rate dropped somewhat and was less than that of Tegucigalpa (3.7 percent and 4.4 percent, respectively). In 1988 the population of San Pedro Sula stood at 287,350. Whereas San Pedro Sula has dealt more successfully with its population growth, it is nonetheless challenged to meet the housing, services, and employment needs of new inhabitants.

Other urban centers experiencing a high population growth rate are La Ceiba, on the Caribbean, and El Progreso, in the agricultural valley of the Río Ulúa. La Ceiba is the third-largest city in Honduras. In 1988 it had a population of 68,764 and an annual population growth rate of 3.2 percent. El Progreso is the country's fourth-largest city. The 1988 population of this city was 60,058 and the annual growth rate 4.5 percent. The populations of both La Ceiba and El Progreso are expected to exceed 100,000 by the year 2000.

The majority of migrants in Honduras are very young, ranging from their teens to their early twenties. Most male migrants gravitate toward developing agricultural areas, especially the Caribbean coast. Because women traditionally have a more limited choice of employment, their occupational skills are similarly limited. Among the many incentives for their migration are escape from economic hardship, as well as escape from marriage and childbearing at a very young age. The majority of women migrants seek domestic employment or work as street vendors in urban areas. In the early 1990s, an increasing number of women have been seeking employment in the maquiladoras, or assembly factories. Many others become prostitutes. Male urban migrants seek jobs in artisan shops, with merchants, and as laborers.

Employment opportunities for the new migrants remain spotty, however, as the industrial and commercial sectors in Honduras have not created enough jobs to absorb the population coming from the rural areas.

## **Social Sectors**

### Background

Although the class structure in Honduras is similar to that in other Latin American countries, the manner in which these classes interact presents less conflict than is exhibited by Honduras's immediate neighbors. The relative lack of tension in class relations raises the possibility that Honduras might avoid the social and political violence that has plagued Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Political dynamics peculiar to Honduras tend to lessen social pressures, although it is still possible that class tensions, growing poverty among the majority of the population, and increased concentration of wealth in a minority could result in violence in the future.

The low level of social tension in Honduras has its origins in the country's colonial and early republican history. During the colonial period, the province that later became Honduras was a backwater in the territories held by Spain. Because much of the indigenous population either had been exterminated or had died of disease, the province was sparsely populated. Ethnically, this meant that Honduras had a more homogeneous mestizo culture than most other Spanish colonies. The area was isolated because the majority of Honduras's population settled in the central and western highlands, far from the main transportation route that linked the southern and northern regions of the Spanish Empire. Furthermore, the area lacked any significant mineral deposits or other easily exploitable wealth. Consequently, the colonial elite in Honduras came to be defined by their control of the province's political system rather than by their accumulation of wealth. In later centuries, the absence of coffee exporting concerns in Honduras became another factor differentiating it from its neighbors. In most of Central America, large coffee plantations resulted in a wealthy elite. The accumulation of large fortunes by a land-owning minority took place much later in Honduras--during the twentieth century, when much of the wealth from the new banana businesses went to foreign investors who owned the banana companies.

### Advocates for Social Change

During the twentieth century, the corporatist system of politics that has emerged has eased the intensity of the demands placed on the state by the rural and urban poor. The relative openness of Honduran politics and the degree of legitimacy given to working class demands have resulted in a system in which the organizations representing lower sectors of society can be highly organized and even militant without calling for the overthrow of the system itself. This militancy has made organized labor a political force since the 1950s and has resulted in many labor reforms. Peasant militancy, for example, has made possible the agrarian reform movement. According to some analysts, Honduras has achieved a level of political organization on the part of labor unions and peasant organizations that remains unparalleled in most of Central America. Reform has been uneven, however, and political and social

reform movements stagnated in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1990s, the central problems of poverty and underdevelopment remained pervasive.

The military's participation in Honduran politics has been, in one sense, the action of another interest group. The military in Honduras has not emerged as an organization for the sons of the elite, as has been the case in most of Latin America, but rather as an organization that cuts across economic and class lines. This fact has meant a greater divergence of purpose and interests between the traditional Honduran elite and the armed forces. The decision-making structure within the military also allows for a degree of dissent within the organization, resulting in less resistance to social reforms.

The relatively open political discourse found in Honduras is aided by the ability of other social institutions to take advantage of the country's freedom of expression. Although in general the Honduran press tends toward conservative positions, it is free of direct government control. Control of the press is exercised more through cooptation than by censorship. Several independent radio stations are powerful forces in Honduras, a country that has a high illiteracy rate. The independent position of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras--UNAH), which as a rule holds liberal positions, also contributes to the variety of opinions that can be heard. The Honduran Roman Catholic Church also has been a force pressing for social change and reform, although its role has varied and, in many instances, has been contradictory throughout the years. The role of the church as advocate for change gained ground in the late 1960s after Vatican Council II. The church's role gathered momentum after the meeting of the Latin American Conference of Bishops in Medellín, Colombia in 1968. The Roman Catholic Church in Honduras came to hold the view that its members should become active agents of social change. In Honduras, foreign clergy in particular played a major role in social activism. By the 1970s, the Roman Catholic Church in Honduras had come to be perceived as radical, and in 1971 various Roman Catholic Church organizations joined with those of the Christian Democratic Movement of Honduras (Movimiento Demócrata Cristiano de Honduras-- MDCH) to form the Coordinating Council for Development (Consejo Coordinador de Desarrollo--Concorde). The impact of this activism was felt down to the parish level.

Differences of opinion emerged within the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1970s, however, regarding its approach to social change. Certain orders of clergy, particularly the Jesuits (Society of Jesus) and various priests, advocated even greater activism than the church hierarchy supported. The hierarchy's opposition to further change was evident when it withdrew Roman Catholic organizations from the Concorde. As Central America took central stage in the Cold War in the 1970s and 1980s because of events in Nicaragua and El Salvador, activist priests were accused of being communists. Tensions between the church's hierarchy and activist priests eased in the 1990s, however, with the decline of insurgency in the area.

Increased political conservatism and repression during the 1980s resulted in the emergence of a great number of grass-roots organizations. Along with labor unions and peasant

organizations, the emerging groups advocated vigilance concerning human rights and exerted pressure on the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of disappeared citizens.

These new grass-roots groups, as well as the press, the UNAH, and the Roman Catholic Church, all contributed to the preservation of a political system with relative freedom of expression. The attempts at reform initiated by these groups, however, have not met with complete success. Although the government and military have at times opted for compromise in the face of reform demands, the organizations have also had to endure periods of threatened and real repression.

### The Upper Class

Although the upper class has enjoyed privileges and wealth far greater than the general population, the Honduran elite has been both economically and politically the weakest oligarchy in Central America. This relative lack of power is partly the result of the dominant role of foreign investment in Honduras since the early twentieth century. Until about 1900, the Honduran elite was involved in rural landholding in the interior highlands and valleys. To this day, some hacendados (large hacienda owners) continue to live on their rural estates. Until the arrival of the banana companies, Hondurans had avoided the underpopulated, inhospitable Caribbean lowlands infamous for their heat and pestilence. Even after banana plantations were established in the Caribbean lowlands at the turn of the century, the interior highlands elite largely maintained its status quo.

With the development of cotton and livestock export businesses following World War II, the traditional Honduran elite became more economically active. In response to the beef markets that opened after the war, commercial production of cattle also became quite profitable. Between 1950 and 1980, cattle production more than tripled in Honduras. This period witnessed a marked acceleration in the concentration of land holdings and wealth. These changes took place mostly at the expense of lands formerly used for food production. As land title disputes and seizures proliferated, social tensions in rural Honduras increased drastically. With wealth its only defining criterion, the upper class in Honduras is not particularly cohesive and has often split into divergent groups over political and economic issues. Competing business associations have served as vehicles for the disputing factions. Certain factions of the elite are more conservative, whereas others advocate a more liberal and open path to economic development. As a result of their differences, members of the upper class are willing to participate in an open dialogue and form alliances with other sectors and classes. In the 1950s, business interests supported striking workers in foreign-owned corporations. At times, factions of the elite have supported social change while their conservative counterparts have fiercely opposed it. In the 1970s, the military, labor, and peasant organizations joined forces with the more progressive faction of the elite to support a military regime with a reform platform. Probably because all sectors keep a stake in the system, Honduras has avoided fundamental challenges to its social structure and overthrow of its political system.

The twentieth century has seen the military become a part of Honduras's elite. In the mid-1950s, the armed forces in Honduras underwent a transformation. With aid and training

primarily from the United States, the military went from being what was, in effect, an array of provincial militias to a modern national institution. Because the military in Honduras had never been an institution favored by the traditional elite, the military has emerged as an independent member of the upper sector of society.

### The Middle Class

In 1993 the middle class in Honduras is still a small, albeit growing, sector. Inclusion in this sector is best defined by economic factors and by occupation. Except for merchants, an equally important factor in classifying a person as middle class appears to be completion of a higher education. Included among middle class ranks are professionals, students, farmers, merchants, business employees, and civil servants. Although a well-paying occupation is crucial for movement up to the middle sector, incomes for this group are still relatively low. One factor limiting the size of the middle class is the slow growth of industry and commerce in Honduras. Employment opportunities are scarce. The growth of the middle class in the Caribbean coast region has been directly tied to that area's industries and foreign enterprises. The success of merchants in the north has resulted from the markets created by workers employed in the area's agribusinesses. The middle class in Honduras has not been politically active as a unified group, although many in its ranks are politically active through unions, church groups, or other organizations.

### The Lower Class

Traditionally, the poor in Honduras have lived predominantly in rural areas. The lack of economic opportunity in rural areas and the subsequent migration to the cities have led to an increasing number of urban poor.

During the colonial period, the low population density in the country made land readily available for small subsistence farmers. When the concentration of land for cotton and cattle export began in the 1950s, the situation in the rural areas changed. By the 1960s, poor rural families were struggling for survival on smaller parcels of land that had ever-decreasing rates of fertility and productivity. By 1965 landlessness had become a problem.

The increase in the number of landless peasants led to even greater numbers migrating to cities in search of employment and in the emergence of a peasant movement in national politics. The majority of those unable to practice subsistence farming remained in rural areas, however, and sought work as farm workers; 62 percent of the labor force in 1993 was in agriculture. Other displaced peasants migrated to the cities in search of employment in the service sector (20 percent of the total labor force in 1993), manufacturing (9 percent of the total labor force), and construction (3 percent of the total labor force). Still others joined the peasant movement and migrated to areas where cooperative enterprises were being established or to areas where members of militant peasant groups were appropriating land. The poorest peasants still practice subsistence farming in plots of five hectares or less. Many others work as sharecroppers or rent land for cash. The majority of peasants are forced to seek work as full-time or part-time laborers, depending on the season and the size of the farms on which they are employed. At best, this work provides income to supplement the

meager earnings from their own small parcels of land. At worst, this work represents their sole source of income.

Although official unemployment figures are not very high, underemployment is widespread in the countryside and is increasingly a problem in urban centers as well. Underemployment (ranging between 15 and 75 percent) is usually a result of the seasonal nature of most of the available agricultural work. During the 1980s, the level of underemployment also rose in areas of the Caribbean coast where banana and sugarcane plantations are located. Although work in sugarcane fields is seasonal, banana plantations are a source of long-term contracts or even permanent employment. The labor surplus in the interior highlands is evidence of the severe economic plight of most Hondurans.

In the 1980s, land pressures, an increasing number of landless peasants, and the declining standard of living of the peasantry and working class galvanized the ranks of peasant organizations and labor unions. The first national peasant group to organize, in the 1950s, was the National Federation of Honduran Peasants (Federación Nacional de Campesinos de Honduras--Fenach). The National Association of Honduran Peasants (Asociación Nacional de Campesinos de Honduras--Anach) was established in 1962 as a competing association. By the time of the economic crisis of the 1980s, both associations had become equally militant and confrontational. The National Union of Peasants (Unión Nacional de Campesinos--UNC) was formed in the 1960s. It began as a militant organization with roots in the international Christian socialist movement, but by 1993 it was a less combative association. Many other politically active peasant organizations operated in Honduras. Their roles and strategies have varied from alienating the government and military with land takeovers and other militant tactics to a joint agricultural project with the military in 1989.

Since the 1954 banana workers' strike, the labor movement in Honduras has been the strongest in Central America; in 1992, 40 percent of urban labor and 20 percent of rural labor were unionized. Unions are strongest in the public sector, the agricultural sector, and the manufacturing sector. Strategies used by the labor movement range from providing crucial support to sympathetic administrations to adopting more combative positions during general strikes.

Although the labor and peasant movements represent interest groups that cannot be politically ignored, their influence has varied considerably since the 1950s. The two movements were weakened somewhat by repeated government attempts to divide the organizations. They were also weakened by internal divisions and the presence of opportunistic individuals in leadership positions. The economic crisis of the 1980s and the imposition of the economic adjustment policies during that decade have also taken a toll on these organizations. Confrontations between these groups and the government were frequent in the early 1990s. On more than one occasion, strikes in key sectors of the economy led to the government's calling in the army.

## Family

The family is the fundamental social unit in Honduras, providing a bulwark in the midst of political upheavals and economic reversals. People emphasize the trust, the assistance, and the solidarity that kin owe to one another. Family loyalty is an ingrained and unquestioned virtue; from early childhood, individuals learn that relatives are to be trusted and relied on, whereas those outside the family are, implicitly at least, suspect. In all areas of life and at every level of society, a person looks to family and kin for both social identity and assistance. In general, the extent to which families interact, and the people with whom they interact, depends on their degree of prosperity. Families with relatively equal resources share and cooperate. Where there is marked disparity in the wealth of various branches of a family, the more prosperous branches try to limit the demands made by the poorer ones. On the one hand, generosity is held in high esteem, and failure to care for kin in need is disparaged; but, on the other hand, families prefer to help their immediate relatives and to bestow favors on those who are able to reciprocate. A needy relative might receive the loan of a piece of land, some wage labor, or occasional gifts of food. Another type of assistance is a form of adoption by which poorer families give a child to more affluent relatives to raise. The adopting family is expected to care for the child and to see that he or she receives a proper upbringing. The children, however, are frequently little better than unpaid domestic help. Implicit in the arrangement is the understanding that the child's biological family, too, will receive assistance from the adopting family.

Kinship serves as metaphor for relations of trust in general. Where a kin tie is lacking, or where individuals wish to reinforce one, a relationship of *compadrazgo* is often established. Those so linked are *compadres* (co-parents or godparents). In common with much of Latin America, strong emotional bonds link *compadres*. *Compadres* use the formal *usted* instead of *tú* in addressing one another, even if they are kin. Sexual relations between *compadres* are regarded as incestuous. *Compadres* are commonly chosen at baptism and marriage, but the relationship extends to the two sets of parents. The tie between the two sets of parents is expected to be strong and enduring. Any breach of trust merits the strongest community censure.

There are three accepted forms of marriage: civil, religious, and free unions. Both serial monogamy and polygamous unions are socially accepted. Annulment is difficult to obtain through the Roman Catholic Church; this fact, in addition to the expense involved, makes couples reluctant to undertake a religious marriage. Civil marriage is relatively common. Divorce in this case is relatively easy and uncomplicated. Marriage forms also reflect the individual's life cycle. Most opt for free unions when they are younger and then settle into more formal marriages as they grow older and enjoy more economic security. Class also plays a role: religious marriage is favored by middle-class and upper-class groups; thus, it signifies higher socioeconomic status. The ideal marriage for most Hondurans involves a formal engagement and religious wedding, followed by an elaborate *fiesta*.

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.

Families are usually more stable in the countryside. Since the partners are usually residing in the midst of their kin, a man cannot desert his wife without disrupting his work relationship with her family. A woman enjoys greater leverage when she can rely on her family to assist if a union fails or when she owns her own land and thus has a measure of financial independence.

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.

Sex role differentiation begins early: young boys are allowed to run about unclothed, while girls are much more carefully groomed and dressed. Bands of boys play unwatched; girls are carefully chaperoned. Girls are expected to be quiet and helpful; boys enjoy much greater freedom, and they are given considerable latitude in their behavior. Boys and men are expected to have premarital and extramarital sexual adventures. Men expect, however, that their brides be virgins. Parents go to considerable lengths to shelter their daughters in order to protect their chances of making a favorable marriage.

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.

## **Living Conditions**

### **Rural Life**

Because Honduras has traditionally been an agrarian country and, in spite of rapid rates of urban growth, is still one of the least urbanized countries of Central America, conditions of life in the countryside are a major concern. Rural residents are farmers, although about 60 percent of Honduran land remains forested and only 25 percent of the total is available for agriculture or pastureland. A vast majority of rural dwellers are small farmers who till their own plots or landless laborers who work for wages on estates or smaller farms. Many peasants with plots of their own also seek part-time wage labor to supplement their incomes. In a typical case, a man may work his father's land, rent additional land of his own, and do occasional day labor.

The trend toward small farms in marginal areas increased rapidly after 1960 as the population increased explosively. Because land inheritance among the peasantry is divided among all the sons, a farmer with six manzanas (one manzana equals approximately 0.7 hectare) of land and six sons would have only one manzana of land for each child to work as his own as an

adult. In addition, escalating land prices have increasingly forced small farmers to migrate to more and more marginal land because of population pressure and the rapid development of commercial agriculture and livestock estates since World War II. The steepness of the marginal mountain slopes, however, often makes agriculture impossible or at least extremely difficult. It is estimated that almost 90 percent of the mountainous area of Honduras has slopes with gradients that range from marginal for agriculture to those that do not permit agriculture or even decent pasturage. Obviously, small farmers attempting to cultivate the mountainsides have a difficult task.

Deterioration of the mountain environment, poor productivity, and crop losses result in poverty for small farmers. Soil erosion and the loss of soil fertility is caused by the marginality of the available slopes and the methods used in farming. Cultivation techniques are slash-and-mulch or slash-and-burn employing simple tools, such as machetes, hoes, axes, digging sticks, and possibly wooden plows, without the use of fertilizer. The rudimentary storage facilities of most farm households also contribute to the loss of a sizable percentage of crops to rodents and pests.

Most of the rural population live in one- or two-room thatched huts (bahareques) built of adobe or sugarcane stalks and mud with dirt floors. As plantation agriculture and livestock raising have increased, many peasants have found it increasingly difficult to find a plot of land suitable for a house. Many who formerly lived on the edges of larger estates found themselves forced off the land by enclosure, or the fencing off of private property. Consequently, there is much "fence housing" in Honduras, in which a squatter and his family, squeezed off land by the development of plantation crops, live in a tiny hut in the narrow space between a public road and the landowner's fence.

Poor food productivity and low incomes lead to a very low standard of living in the countryside, where illness and poor diets are endemic. The typical diet of the rural population consists of corn--by far the primary staple and most widely planted crop--made into tortillas, beans--the main source of protein--cassava, plantains, rice, and coffee, with only occasional supplements of meat or fish. Although pigs and chickens are widely raised (each rural household usually has a few), meat is infrequent in most rural diets, as are green vegetables. Given the nature of the typical diet and the fact that food production has been insufficient for the country's needs, widespread malnutrition complicates the population's fragile health. Population growth exacerbates the problem, creating a vicious cycle of more mouths to be fed, yet lower agricultural productivity, as well as transportation and distribution difficulties. Indeed, a general attitude has evolved in which most of the affected population has related few of its health problems to their real causes, such as malnutrition and environmental hazards. Instead, given a state of affairs where, for example, there is not a dramatic shortage of food but only a continuously inadequate diet, the population fails to relate infectious diseases, mental retardation, and low productivity to conditions of poor diet and lack of sanitation. Because these problems have always existed for the affected population, they tend to be accepted as normal.

## Urban Life

Urban life in Honduras, as in many developing countries, highlights the contrasts between the life-styles of the rich and the poor. For the wealthy and powerful elite, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula offer blocks of elegant apparel shops and jewelry stores. Tall office buildings provide headquarters for business and professional people. Comfortable homes shelter well-to-do families; a good education and family contacts secure promising future careers for their children.

For the vast majority of Tegucigalpa's urban population, however, living conditions are dismal. Migrants to Tegucigalpa initially settled in the slums of the center city. When these became inadequate to house the numbers arriving, the migrants began to invade land on the periphery of the city. A majority of these barrio residents live in *cuarterías* (rows) of connected rooms. Some *cuarterías* face the street, while others are arranged in double rows facing each other across a block-long alley, barely wide enough for a person to walk through. Usually windowless, the substandard rooms are generally constructed of wood, with dirt floors. The average household contains about seven persons, who attend to all functions of daily living in the single room, although sometimes a small kitchen stands in the rear covered by the overhang of the tile roof. For those living in the rooms facing an alley, the narrow passageway between buildings serves both as a sewage and waste disposal area and as a courtyard for as many as 150 persons.

The major survival tactic for some of this population seems to lie in the large and extended families that deliberately cluster together into a single room, sharing a roof, a kitchen, and their incomes. Both relatives and unrelated individuals may be involved in such a network of social, psychological, and economic support. Others, however, have not been so fortunate. Given migratory labor, high unemployment, and income insecurity, male-female relationships often are unstable. Fathers frequently desert their families, leaving the care and support of children entirely to mothers who struggle to earn enough for survival. Some children are abandoned to live on the streets, particularly if the mother has become sick, has died, or has been unable to find work.

The diet of lower-sector urban dwellers when they can afford to buy what they need is somewhat better than that of their rural counterparts. In times of economic hardship, however, urban families, who must pay for all the food they consume, most likely reduce or alter their food consumption habits. Speaking of a potentially better diet in urban areas can, therefore, be misleading. When urban families have the cash to purchase basic foods, their per capita daily average consumption of calories, protein, and carbohydrates are all likely to be higher than the average in rural settings. However, the consumption of calories, and carbohydrates in particular, still falls significantly below the minimum daily recommended allowance. Other foods sold mainly in city markets, especially meat such as poultry, are consumed primarily by the middle- and upper-class population and do not benefit the lower class.

## Ethnic Groups

Around 90 percent of the population in Honduras is racially mestizo (people of mixed indigenous and European ancestry). The remainder of the population is composed of indigenous natives (7 percent); people of African descent, or blacks (2 percent); and those of European descent, or whites (1 percent). Mestizos, whites, and most blacks are culturally ladinos (those who practice Hispanic cultural patterns). Ladinos speak Spanish, and the majority are members of the Roman Catholic Church, although Protestant denominations made significant gains in membership among this group in the 1980s, especially in the larger cities.

### Indigenous Groups

The Lenca, the largest indigenous group (numbering about 50,000), live in the west and in the southwestern interior. Some anthropologists argue that the Lenca still practice some traditional customs and that they are the survivors of a once extensive indigenous population that lived in the departments of Lempira, Intibucá, La Paz, Valle, Comayagua, and Francisco Morazán. Controversy has arisen, however, regarding the identification of this community as indigenous because their native language is no longer spoken and their culture is to a large extent similar to the ladino majority.

Other smaller indigenous groups are scattered throughout Honduras. Several hundred Chortí, a lowland Maya community, formerly lived in the departments of Copán and Ocotepeque in western Honduras. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Chortí migrated to the northeast coastal area, and by the early 1990s, they were practically extinct. The Chorotega migrated south from Mexico in pre-Columbian times and settled in the department of Choluteca. Like the Chortí, the Chorotega speak Spanish, but they retain distinct cultural and religious traits. A population of Maya live in the western departments of Copán and Ocotepeque and still speak a Mayan dialect. Several hundred Pipil live mainly in the isolated northeast coastal region in the departments of Gracias a Dios and parts of Yoro and Olancho. About 300 Tol or Hicaque are found in an isolated mountainous area of rain forests.

### Non-Ladino Groups

The non-Hispanic (nonladino) groups in Honduras consist of the Black Carib, the Miskito, the black population in the Islas de la Bahía, and a sizeable number of Arab immigrants. The Black Carib (also known as Garifuna in Belize and Guatemala) settled in the early 1800s in coastal villages along the Caribbean. Originally descendants of freed black slaves and native Carib from the island of Saint Vincent in the Caribbean, they arrived in Honduras when they were deported from Saint Vincent by the British in 1797 and resettled in the Islas de la Bahía off the coast of Honduras. From there, they moved to the mainland coast of northern Honduras. Their language, which they continue to speak, is a Carib-based creole. Their cultural practices are similar to those of the Black Carib who live in Belize and Guatemala. The approximately 10,000 Miskito are a racially mixed population of indigenous, African, and European origin. Their language, still spoken by several thousand, is a creole based on Bahwika (in the Misumalpan family of languages), with contributions from West African

languages as well as Spanish, English, and German. Spain's failure to conquer and colonize the eastern Caribbean lowlands of Central America made this area attractive to English-speaking buccaneers, traders, woodcutters, and planters during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This remote area also became a refuge for black slaves and freed slaves. In the northern coasts of Honduras and Nicaragua, unions of indigenous people and the African and British immigrants produced a racially mixed group known as Miskito, who have a predominantly indigenous language and culture. Miskito settlements are situated near the Laguna de Caratasca and the banks of the Río Patuca in northeasternmost Honduras and are an extension of the larger Miskito communities in eastern Nicaragua. When the Nicaraguan Miskito population near the Río Coco was uprooted by the Nicaraguan government for security reasons in the early 1980s, many Nicaraguan Miskito migrated to Honduras.

Interestingly, although the Miskito and Black Carib peoples have similar racial origins, the Miskito are generally considered by Hondurans to be indigenous people, whereas the Black Carib are generally considered to be black. This difference in ethnic identification is probably a reflection of the different cultures of the two groups; Black Carib culture retains more African elements in its folklore, religion, and music than does the culture of the Miskito. The Miskito and Black Carib peoples have traditionally been economically self-sufficient through subsistence agriculture and fishing. In the early 1990s, the men, however, were often forced to seek supplementary income by working outside their own regions. Thus, Miskito and Black Carib men often spend long periods separated from their families.

The population of the Islas de la Bahía is a black or mixed white-black population. The inhabitants are descendants of Englishspeaking whites and of blacks who came from Belize and the Cayman Islands during the middle of the nineteenth century. This population speaks mostly creole or Caribbean English, and their traditions are distinctly West Indian. Another distinct ethnic group is the thriving Arab community. Arab immigrants from the Middle East (especially Palestine and Lebanon) began arriving in Honduras during the early part of the twentieth century. Because they held passports issued by the Ottoman Empire, they came to be called turcos in Honduras. This community retains many of its traditions and continues to be perceived as culturally distinct, although this distinctiveness is becoming blurred through increased intermarriages with other groups. Economically, the Arab community prospered first as merchants in the area of the banana plantations on the Caribbean coast. Following their success, many moved to the larger cities, where they became powerful economically, especially in manufacturing and commerce.

### **Religion**

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and the separation of church and state; however, the Roman Catholic Church has been a powerful institution in Honduras since colonial times. As a result of various tensions between the church and the state throughout the centuries, in the 1880s the Roman Catholic Church was stripped of some of its economic and political power. Nevertheless, in the twentieth century the church has remained an important social actor, and the vast majority of Hondurans have remained Roman Catholic.

Church schools receive government subsidies, and religious instruction is part of the public school curriculum.

The Roman Catholic Church in Honduras launched an ambitious evangelical campaign in the 1950s. The program's aim was to invigorate church membership and encourage more active participation in church activities. By the 1960s and 1970s, this activism had grown among certain sectors of the church into denunciations of the military's repression and the government's exploitation of the poor. This social activist phase in the Roman Catholic Church ended after large landowners in Olancho brutally murdered ten peasants, two students, and two priests in 1975. After this incident, the government took measures to dissuade the more activist factions in the church from continuing their actions. Expulsions and arrests of foreign priests took place, and some peasant centers with ties to the church were forced to close. The Roman Catholic Church retreated from its emphasis on social activism during the last half of the 1970s but resumed its criticism of government policies during the 1980s.

Protestant, especially evangelical, churches have undergone a tremendous growth in membership during the 1980s. The largest numbers are found in Methodist, Church of God, Seventh Day Adventist, and Assemblies of God denominations. These churches sponsor social service programs in many communities, making them attractive to the lower classes. The evangelical leadership generally exerts a conservative influence on the political process. Although Protestant membership was estimated at only 100,000 in 1990, growth of Protestant churches is apparently seen as a threat by Roman Catholic leaders. Instances of criticism leveled at evangelicals by Roman Catholic leaders have increased; however, such criticisms have generally been ineffective in stemming the rise of converts to Protestant denominations.

## **Education**

Honduras lacked a national education system until the late 1950s. Before the reforms of 1957, education was the exclusive privilege of those who could afford to send their children to private institutions. The government of Ramón Villeda Morales (1957-63) introduced reforms that led to the establishment of a national public education system and began a school construction program.

The Honduran constitution states that a free primary education is obligatory for every child between the ages of seven and fourteen. The reality of the Honduran educational system is much more grim. Because of a lack of schools, understaffed schools, the high cost of materials needed for these schools, and the poor quality of public education, a good education is still largely the privilege of the few who can afford to send their children to private institutions.

Statistical information shows that the state of the public education system remains poor. Figures cited by the Ministry of Education suggest that Honduras suffers from widespread illiteracy (more than 40 percent of the total population and more than 80 percent in rural areas). A significant percentage of children do not receive formal education. Especially in

rural areas, schools are not readily accessible. When they are accessible, they often consist of joint-grade instruction through only the third grade. Schools are so understaffed that some teachers have up to eighty children in one classroom.

Only 43 percent of children enrolled in public schools complete the primary level. Of all children entering the first grade, only 30 percent go on to secondary school, and only 8 percent continue to the university.

The quality of instruction in Honduran public schools is greatly impaired by poor teacher training. The situation is worsened by the extremely low wages paid to teachers, lack of effective and up-to-date instruction materials, outdated teaching methods, poor administration, and lack of physical facilities.

Because of the deficiencies of public education, the years since 1970 have seen the proliferation of private schools. With few exceptions, however, private education is popularly viewed as a profit-making enterprise. Great skepticism remains regarding the quality of the education that private schools offer.

The National Autonomous University of Honduras (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras--UNAH) is the primary institution of higher learning. Located in Tegucigalpa, the UNAH was founded in 1847 and became an autonomous institution in 1957. The university has approximately 30,000 students, with branches in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba. Honduras counts three private universities, none of which is yet considered a credible educational alternative to the prestigious UNAH. One is the extremely small José Cecilio del Valle University in Tegucigalpa. Another private university is the Central American Technological University, also in Tegucigalpa. The third private university is the University of San Pedro Sula.

## **Health**

In Honduras the quality of and access to health care are directly tied to income levels. Adequate health care is available to those able to pay the high cost. Health care for the urban and rural poor is extremely limited. The lack of health care for the majority of the population is starkly apparent in its poor health. Widespread malnutrition is responsible for 34 percent of children experiencing stunting when they are between two and five years of age. In addition, most of the population lacks access to running water and sanitation facilities--all key contributing factors to the country's high infant mortality rate (63 per 1,000 live births) and to a relatively low life expectancy rate (64.9 years) in 1992.

Health services are not readily accessible to a majority of the population. An estimated 1.3 million Hondurans were without access to health care in 1990. In the isolated regions of Honduras, there are almost no physicians. The ratio of doctor to population in 1984 was one to 1,510. Government clinics often are empty shells lacking adequate personnel, equipment, and medicines.

Infectious and parasitic diseases are the leading causes of death. Gastroenteritis and tuberculosis are serious problems. Diseases such as influenza, malaria, typhoid, and pneumonia, once believed to be under control, have returned in force because of a lack of preventive measures. The foreign-exchange crisis of the 1980s has resulted in periods when vaccines and other preventive medicines were not available. Alcoholism and drug addiction are other health concerns mentioned by the Ministry of Health. The rapid spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is also of great concern to Honduran health authorities. The incidence of AIDS appears to be particularly high in San Pedro Sula.

The cholera epidemic that originated in Peru hit Honduras in late 1991. Because of poor sanitation conditions, health officials were frightened that the disease would quickly spread throughout the country. The government launched an educational campaign months before the first case was reported, stressing personal hygiene as a prophylaxis against cholera. By the middle of 1992, however, more than 100 people had been diagnosed as having cholera. Although the country's national public health system was created in 1959, the date when the Honduran Social Security Institute (Instituto Hondureño del Seguro Social--IHSS) began to operate, the proliferation of health services to all regions of the country has been painfully slow. For years, people have had to travel to Tegucigalpa to avail themselves of public health service. During the 1970s, when the government made an effort to expand health services, the INSS opened a medical center in San Pedro Sula. However, in El Progreso, only fifty kilometers away and the third largest city in the country, IHSS services were not available until 1992. Population growth, the implementation of economic austerity measures by the government in the 1990s, and the present lack of facilities seem to suggest that public health services in Honduras are likely to remain inadequate in the near future.

### **Travel Tips**

1. Bring clean money (no tear marks)
  - \$100.00 bills usually bring the best exchange rates
  - The exchange rate as of November 2009 is: \$1.00 US = 18.89 Lps. (Lempiras) and you can exchange money at the front desk at the Hotel Granada in Danlí at that rate.
  - You will need to pay an exit tax of approximately \$35.00. You may pay it in Lempiras or Dollars.
2. Do not bring items of great value such as jewelry or numerous credit cards.
3. Use caution when using credit cards outside the United States.
4. Pack sufficient appropriate clothing.
  - Comfortable walking shoes (no canvas or sport shoes)
  - No shorts
  - Shirts and ties are worn in the classroom by students and teachers alike
5. Accommodations at the Hotel Granada in Danlí are comfortable, but the following points should be noted:

- Rooms in the newer part of the hotel are large with air conditioning and the rate as of November 2009 was 933 Lps. per night (\$49.39/night); seven nights at that rate is expensive, so plan to have enough money. Credit cards such as VISA are accepted.
- Rooms in the older part of the hotel are smaller with few amenities, but the rate is lower; as of November 2009 the rate was 460 Lps. per night (\$24.35/night). There is no air conditioning, but both types of rooms have hot water for showering.
- Most electronic equipment today (such as computers, camera and phone chargers, etc.) will use either 110v or 220v; check your equipment to make sure. Most outlets in the Hotel Granada will accommodate American-type two and three prong plugs, but bringing along adapters is not a bad idea just to make sure.
- The hotel has a nice restaurant with good food; breakfasts run around \$5.00 and lunch and dinner \$7.00 - \$10.00. Meals will be charged to your room and settled with your account at the end of your stay.
- Tipping is not practiced in Honduras; it is a North American custom.
- Do not drink the water from the tap. A large bottle of water can be purchased in the restaurant (and it is recommended that this be done immediately upon checking in). This water should be used for everything from drinking to brushing your teeth; when that bottle is empty, you may take it to the front desk of the hotel and they will refill it for you from their treated drinking water. There is also a treated water cooler and dispenser at the institute.
- The Hotel Granada now has a computer with internet access which costs approximately \$1.00 per hour. As of November 2009 there is no internet service at the institute.

### **Passport and Visa Requirements**

A U.S. passport is required to travel outside the United States. If you do not have a current passport, begin the process of acquiring one now, as the requirements and time needed have changed.

An entrance and exit visa (or tourist visa) will be distributed by the airline on the way to Honduras, along with a customs declaration card. These are to be filled out on the plane and given to the appropriate officials at immigration and customs in the airport. The exit visa will be attached to your passport and not to be removed until your exit. You **MUST** keep this exit card with your passport until it is removed by the airport officials at your departure.

### **Medicines and Shots**

There are no required shots that must be taken before entering Honduras. However, it is a good idea to make sure you are current on things such as Hepatitis and Tetanus vaccines. It is also a good idea to bring along a good antibiotic medication. Your local doctor can make a recommendation. It is always a good idea to bring along anti-diarrheal medication such as Imodium when traveling.

## **Estimated Expenses**

**Airfare:** Airfares vary from airline to airline and from date to date. We suggest flying Continental Airlines which has one flight per day into Tegucigalpa, Honduras from Houston, Texas, which arrives in Tegucigalpa at 12:15 p.m. CST and departs for its return to Houston at 1:05 p.m. CST. Currently (November 2009) airfares from cities such as Oklahoma City, Dallas and Denver are averaging approximately \$500.00 - \$600.00 for a round trip ticket. We recommend you check often with the airline as these rates sometimes change on a daily basis.

**Hotel:** Expenses for hotels and meals at the hotel restaurant can be calculated using the information above.

**Meals outside the hotel:** There is a Chester's Fried Chicken about a 5-10 minute walk from both the hotel and the institute where breakfast can be purchased for approximately \$5.00 and lunch and dinner can be purchased for approximately \$5.00 - \$7.00. Meals can also be eaten with the students at the institute at no cost to the teacher; however, since feeding the visiting teachers is not part of the food budget, we ask that this be limited to the breakfast and lunch. This meal will be provided at no charge to the teacher; all we ask is that a contribution be made to the institute's library in the form of a donated book or books; these books need to be in Spanish and can be on the subject of the class you are teaching, or you may check with the coordinator for suggestions of other needed books.

## **Travel Insurance**

Check with your airline or travel agent or insurance agent as to the availability of travel insurance.

## **Instituto Bíblico de Honduras**

**The Bear Valley Extension School in Danlí, Honduras**



The Bible Institute of Honduras, located in Danlí, Honduras, is a brand new school of the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver's Extension Center Studies program. Classes began on April 13, 2009. The opening of the Bible Institute of Honduras is actually a re-opening of a school that had existed at this location in years past.

In April 2008 a survey trip was made by Bear Valley staff along with two of the elders of the Hillcrest church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri to examine the feasibility of re-opening the school. The result was that one year later, men are again being trained to preach the saving Gospel of Christ.

Nery Antonio Irías serves as the director of the school. He also teaches Jesús Paguaga, Luis David Argeñal and Cesar Tábor are our other teachers, Cesar Tabora also serves as our interpreter for visiting teachers; he lives in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, which is about a two hour drive away from Danlí. Cesar travels one day a week to the school.

Our current needs are an additional \$500.00/month to operate this school. The Hillcrest church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri serves as the sponsoring congregation for the school, overseeing the collection and distribution of the funds needed.

If you would like more information, please contact Donnie Bates, who serves as the Bear Valley coordinator for the school at:

(580) 326-1914  
dbates@bvbid.org

For more up-to-date reports, visit: <http://donniebatesreports.blogspot.com>

If you would like to contribute to the financial needs of the Bible Institute of Honduras, please send your checks to:

Hillcrest church of Christ  
1037 West South Street  
Neosho, MO 64850 (Please indicate on your check that the money is for the Bible Institute of Honduras)

## **Some Spanish Words/Phrases**

### **Greetings**

¡Hola! (Hello)  
¡Buenos Días! (Good morning)  
¡Buenas Tardes! (Good afternoon)  
¡Buenas Noches! (Good night)  
¡Mucho Gusto! (Pleased to meet you)  
¡Que Dios le bendiga! (May God bless you – said by everyone at church)

### **Days of the Week**

Sunday – Domingo  
Monday – Lunes  
Tuesday – Martes  
Wednesday – Miércoles  
Thursday – Jueves  
Friday – Viernes  
Saturday – Sábado

### **Useful Phrases**

How much is it? – ¿Cuánta cuesta?  
Where is it? – ¿Dónde está?  
I would like... – Quisiera...  
I want... – Quiero...  
My name is... – Me llamo...  
The check, please – La cuenta, por favor