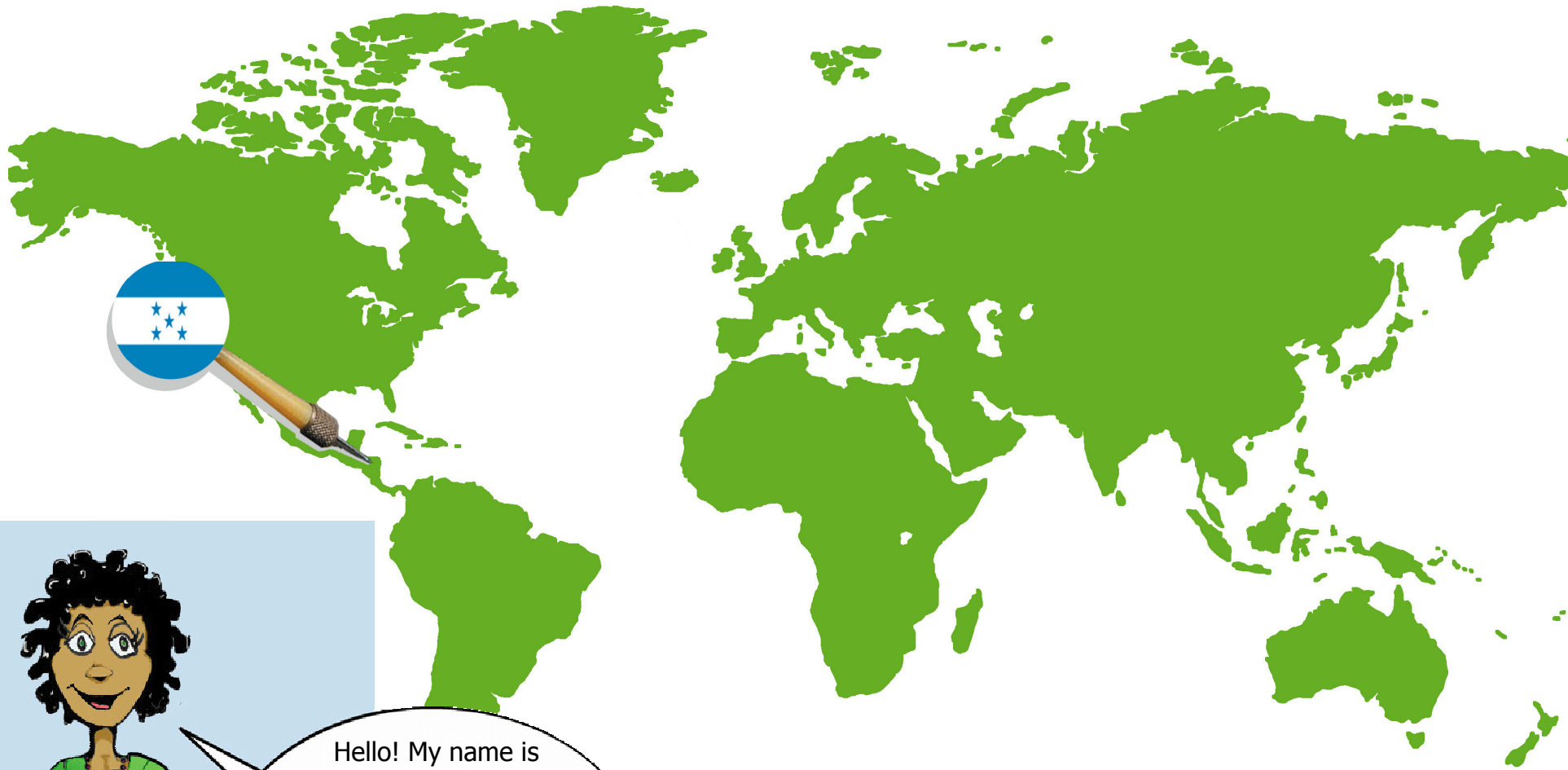


# HONDURAS



Hello! My name is Francesca and I'm Honduran. It is important to me that I introduce you to my country. Let me invite you to chose a heading and begin exploring Honduras!

The **Country Fact Sheets** series is presented to you by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif and produced with the support of the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency



Canadian International  
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de  
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# COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

My country is situated in Central America. As you can see from the map, it is bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the north and east, Nicaragua to the south, the Pacific Ocean and El Salvador to the south-east, and Guatemala to the west.

My country's relief is dominated by volcanic mountains and deep valleys. The whole Honduran countryside is covered with forest.

It measure more than 112 090 km<sup>2</sup>! Of course, in comparison to Canada, Honduras is a small country, but for this region of the world it is big! More than 7 million people live in my country.

The capital of my country is called Tegucigalpa. It's an Amerindian name that means « silver hill » because the city was developed on the site of an ancient silver mine. More than 800,000 people live in this city which was hit hard by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. In fact, more than three quarters of my country's agricultural production was destroyed by this natural disaster, and thousands of people were killed.

San Pedro Sula, Choluteca, and La Ceiba are other major cities in Honduras.

The coffee that your parents drink, or the bananas and pineapples that you eat might have come from my country. We are major producers of these products and we send them to northern countries like yours. Thanks to the fact that we have access to the sea, fishing is an important economic activity in my country.

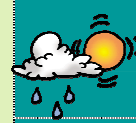
## Did you know that?

My country's original name was *Higüeras*. This is the name of a plant. It was Christopher Columbus who named it "Honduras". This word means "deep water" in Spanish (hondo = deep).



### Surface Area

112 090 km<sup>2</sup> (Canada : 9 984 670 km<sup>2</sup>)  
Did you know that Honduras is 89 times smaller than Canada?



### Climate

Varies from temperate in the south to frigid in the north.



### Temperature

From -25°C during winter to 35°C in the summer.



### Relief

Mountainous in the west, vast plains in the centre, and diverse relief in the east.



### Natural Resources

Fruits (pineapples, bananas), fish, etc.

# COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

# Population

Firstly, I would like to tell you that almost 90% of Hondurans are mestizos. That means that their origins are both Spanish and Indian; the rest of the inhabitants are black or white.

The majority of Hondurans speak Spanish. Honduran Spanish is similar to the Spanish that is spoken in other Central American countries, except for a few words and popular sayings that vary from one region to another. Some of my friends also use many English words; North-American culture has been influencing Honduras more and more over the past few decades.

Regardless of where you are in Honduras, you will see children. Four out of ten people in my country are less than 15 years old! Here, women have between three and four children each. I have three sisters and two brothers. Do you have large families in your country?

If you ever visit Honduras, you will notice that people are not as punctual as you likely are when it comes to appointments and meetings. To Hondurans, relationships and friendships between people are more important than schedules.



Tegucigalpa



# Population

## Did you know that?

Hondurans are very courageous. After Hurricane Mitch hit in 1998 and destroyed a good part of my country's agriculture and **infrastructure**, the people pulled together and worked hard to rebuild Honduras.

Here are a few words in Spanish with their pronunciations. This way you'll be able to greet people, this being a mark of respect and courtesy in my country.

**Hello : Buenos dias**  
(boo-eh-nose dee-as)

**Good evening : Buenas noches**  
(boo-eh-nas not-cheys)

**How are you doing? : Como esta?**  
(Coh-moh es-tah)

**Thank you : Gracias**  
(Grah-see-as)

## Facts at a Glance



**Number of Inhabitants**

7,2 million (2005)



**Density (number of people per Km<sup>2</sup>)**

11 Hondurans /km<sup>2</sup>(2005)



**Life Expectancy**

68 (2004)



**Purchasing Power<sup>1</sup>**

US\$ 2 710 (2004)



**People Without a job**

55% (2003)



**People who can read and write**

80% (2004)



**Mortality rate under 5 years of age**

41 per 1000 child (2004)



**Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>2</sup>**

116<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries (2003)



**Ecological Footprint<sup>3</sup>**

1,4 (2001)



# History

Let me briefly explain my country's history to you.

One could say that Honduras is an 'unstable country'. Over the past 150 years, we have lived through 160 changes in government, 24 wars, and 260 armed rebellions. Don't worry, things have been calmer for the past few years.

The Mayans formed the first great civilization of Central America. This empire existed during the first millennium (this means between year 0 and year 1000 A.D). You can see from the pictures the Copán pyramid located in the west which represents the genius and grandeur of this civilization that disappeared mysteriously.

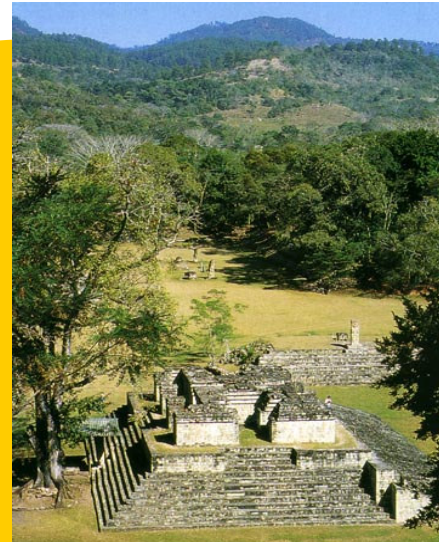
Like almost everywhere in Latin America, the Spanish colonized my country. The conquistador Hernan Cortes arrived around 1523. The indigenous population was decimated by the Spanish conquest and the diseases that the colonizers brought with them.

In 1821, my country gained its independence from Spain. Nonetheless, it remained dependent on countries like the United States. At one point, Americans owned up to 80% of the cultivable land in Honduras! Can you imagine a foreign country controlling almost all the agricultural land in Honduras?!

There have been numerous coups d'état in the 20th century in Honduras. A coup d'état is a sudden change in power, imposed by a group that uses force and surprise to overthrow the government. In my country, it has often been the military that has forced changes in power through the use of violence. My parents and grandparents told me that the peasants are the ones that suffer most during these struggles for power.

Thankfully, democracy is steadily taking root despite the poverty in my country that was exacerbated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

My grandmother tells me that knowing our past helps us to understand our present and build our future. What do you think?



# History



15th Birthday celebrations –  
the Quinceanera



Tortillas



Soccer

# Culture

Our national holiday is the 15th of September to commemorate my country's independence from Spain in 1821. There are always plenty of festivities on this day!

In Honduras the majority of people are Roman Catholic. Religious holidays are the important events of the year.

My younger sisters and I help my mother around the house a lot, while my father works and my brothers go to school. Gender roles are still very strict for men and women, especially in the countryside.

A special birthday party will be organized in my honour when I turn 15. It is called the Quinceanera. In my country, much like other parts of Latin America, this party represents the passage from childhood to womanhood for the young woman celebrating her fifteenth birthday. I can't wait!

The most popular sport in Honduras is football. The street in front of my house becomes a veritable football field where friends in the community gather to play football at the end of each day. I'm told that you call this sport soccer in your country. If you want to hear the national anthem of Honduras, check out the following link : [www.david.national-anthems.net/hn.htm](http://www.david.national-anthems.net/hn.htm)

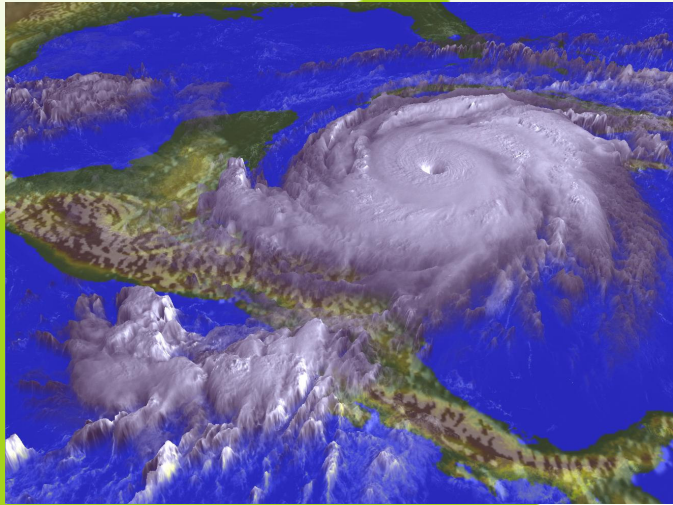
## Did you know that?

A typical dish is called *casamiento* which means marriage in English! It is made up of fava beans and rice. It is the most common daily meal for Hondurans. My mouth is watering!



# Culture





**Hurricane Mitch**



# Challenges

Poverty and malnutrition remain prevalent throughout my country. Imagine, in the countryside, almost half of the inhabitants live in need. Many of them work as labourers in vast banana, pineapple, and coffee plantations. There, they receive very low salaries in exchange for the long, hard hours they spend working in the fields. Yet, the owners of these plantations make huge profits. It is really unjust that profits are not distributed more equitably!

This overwhelming poverty causes a climate of insecurity and violence, especially in the big cities where the youth form gangs that are called "maras". Some figures estimate that there are more than 30,000 youths that are involved in street gangs in my country. In certain neighbourhoods in my city, it has become too dangerous to walk in the streets at night.

Like in other countries in the region, Honduras is subject to natural disasters (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and droughts). In 1998, when I was small, a terrible Hurricane called Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras and caused a lot of damage and many deaths. Some people say that our country retreated 50 years after Hurricane Mitch because of all the destruction it caused (for example to agricultural land, bridges, roads, and schools).

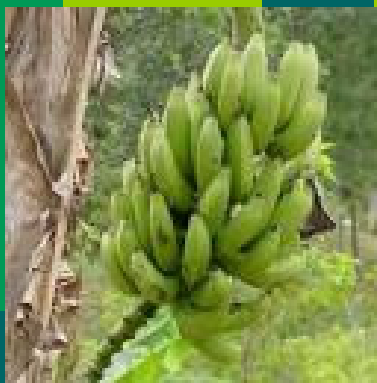
With regards to education, did you know that only 9% of the total Honduran population has finished primary school<sup>1</sup>. This is a big obstacle to my country's development. We have the second-lowest working adult education rate in Latin America. I can attest to this since my mother does not know how to read or write. Nevertheless, we feel lucky to have to chance to attend primary school. My parents and I make many sacrifices for this opportunity.

Lastly, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is also a serious challenge for the people of my country.

Despite these difficulties my people are full of spirit, and are warm and welcoming. I hope you will visit us one day.

<sup>1</sup> International Monetary Fund

# Challenges



Bananas



Source : SUCO

# Solutions

You must wonder if foreign countries send aide to Honduras. Many Canadian organizations, often in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), set up projects that benefit my country. Here is an interesting example!

The Canadian organization SUCO (Solidarity, Unity, and Co-operation) has been working in Honduras since 2004. SUCO's presence and work in Honduras aims primarily to improve the living conditions of **rural** populations. SUCO works to help rural populations improve their farming and ranching practices, while protecting, conserving, and improving the natural environment.

For this project, SUCO works in partnership with the Organization of Honduran Peasants (Organización Campesina Hondureña), a peasant organization in my country. Together, they are working to disseminate a small educational manual called El Machete Verde (The Green Machete). This educational tool aims to teach peasants about different farming techniques in order to improve agricultural productivity.

The educational tool "*El Machete Verde*" is like a comic book made out of different coloured sheets of paper with over 400 pictures accompanied by text. Twenty-one themes are covered, including the environment, trees, seeds, tree nurseries, the conservation of soils, **horticulture**, organic fertilizer, raising livestock and barnyard animals, etc. The *Machete Verde* contributes to the training programs on these topics that already exist in the country.

Another objective of the project is to create human resources in the country by training people, so that they in turn can train other people to use the teaching tool. Recently, my uncle received this training course and now he is the resource person in the neighbouring villages. Right now, the *Machete Verde* is used primarily by **agronomists**, technicians, rural training centres, and schools.

Do you know the expression that talks about giving someone a fish, or teaching them to fish instead? This expression says that if you give a fish to a person, they will eat for a day. If you teach them how to fish, they will always have food. I believe that the *Machete Verde* project is a great example of local populations taking development into their own hands.

# Solutions

# Glossary

## Agronomists:

Specialists in the scientific knowledge related to agriculture.

## Colonized :

Person who was, or remains subjected to the colonization of their country by a foreign power.

## Horticulture:

The cultivation of fruits, and vegetables.

## Infrastructure:

The fundamental, underlying facilities and systems serving a country or region. *Transportation infrastructure. A country's tourist, cultural Infrastructure. Communication infrastructures.*

## Rural:

Related to the countryside, peasants, their mode of life.

## Purchasing Power<sup>1</sup>:

Purchasing power is the capacity to buy goods and services with a given income.

## Human Development Index <sup>2</sup> :

The Human Development Report issued by the UN, which classifies 177 countries according to life-expectancy, education, literacy, and income.

## Ecological Footprint<sup>3</sup> :

It measures how much land and water area is necessary to provide one person's sustenance.

# Glossary



Don't forget that you can do something to improve our world. You and your friends in school can get involved. Become aware of the important issues around the world. All together, we can change things for the better!



**To learn more about Honduras, check out the following web sites:**

- ✓ [www.in-terre-actif.com/english](http://www.in-terre-actif.com/english)
- ✓ [www.ethiquette.ca](http://www.ethiquette.ca)
- ✓ [www.equiterre.org/en](http://www.equiterre.org/en)
- ✓ [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- ✓ [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone)



# La piñata

## Make your own Piñata

A piñata is a hollow sculpture made with papier-mâché, which is filled with candy and little surprises. It can have many shapes such as a balloon, a star, animals and even different characters. The piñata is used during holidays and birthday parties in various Latin American countries.

You can fill the piñata with toys, confetti, rice, messages or even money. To get what is inside, kids or adults break the piñata by hitting it with a stick (it could be a broom handle) while blindfolded. The piñata is attached by a rope to a support (like a tree branch) to make the piñata move up and down. Each person may have their turn to try breaking it or the honor may be reserved only for the person celebrating a birthday

### TO MAKE YOUR OWN PIÑATA YOU WILL NEED:

- A balloon
- A newspaper
- White glue
- Scissors
- Tempera paint
- Water
- Water

1. Fill the balloon with air and make a knot to prevent the air from escaping. The ize of your piñata will be determined by the size and shape of your balloon. Do not hesitate to show your creativity! By attaching crumpled newspaper balls to your balloon you can modify the shape of your piñata! Make sure to stick them well to the balloon by using many strips.
2. Take the newspaper and cut it into strips.
3. Mix equal parts of water and glue into a container
4. Dip the newspaper strips in the mixture and then cover the balloon with them as if you were making a mummy! Apply 3 or 4 layers of newspaper all over the surface of the balloon.
5. By attacking crumpled newspaper balls to your balloon, you can modify the shape of your piñata! Make sure to stick them well to the balloon by using many strips.
6. Put your balloon in a safe place for 2 or 3 days so that the glue can dry properly. Once dried, make a hole on the outside of the balloon with scissors. The hole has to be large enough to introduce candies and other small surprises into it.
7. The last step is to give colour to your piñata. Apply several coats of your favourite colors to it.
8. Let it dry a few hours. Now you are ready to fill your piñata! When you are finished, close the hole by inserting a piece of cardboard over the opening. Attach a string to the piñata to later hang it.



# Activity