

Cross-Cultural Visits

1. Good communication makes all things possible; bad communication ensures frustration.

- Cross-cultural communication works best when you have someone who understands both cultures to serve as a facilitator.
- Plan your visits several months in advance. Establish a schedule, but remain open to changes.
- If the visit is between two groups, identify a leader of each who will serve as the group's single point of contact during the planning, thus avoiding mixed or uncoordinated messages.
- Clarify what each party (hosts and guests) is gaining from the visit and the responsibilities each has. Ensure that each is getting valued benefits.

2. An attitude of genuine humility opens the door to learning and growing.

- Seek to be shaped by the host culture; concentrate on listening and observing more than speaking.
- Study the host culture before the visit, its language, history, politics, values, customs, etc.
- Consider asking your host to identify 1-2 locals to join your group for the duration of your stay.
- Go outside your comfort zone; taste the food, take off your watch, try the dance, etc.

3. Relationships come first, everything else comes second.

- Demonstrate trust by following your host leader; adhere to his/her priorities and plans.
- Projects should facilitate relationship-building; don't let a project prevent conversations.
- Where you stay counts: the home of a local person or a local guesthouse is best; the last resorts are a hotel chain or the home of an expatriate.
- In some cultures, conflict is addressed with the help of a third party. If that is so in the host country, work with your host before the visit to identify someone who will serve in that role if needed between the host and guests.

4. Showing respect often means following someone else's rules.

- Before the visit, have the visiting group agree to a code of conduct (including attire, language, alcohol, smoking, displays of affection, and more). The group leader should be prepared to correct a group member who strays from the agreed upon behaviors.
- Give special attention to keeping all male-female interactions appropriate to the host culture, both within the group and between the visitors and anyone else in the host country.
- Consider in advance what you will say to politely decline food you think might make you sick.

5. The best relationships don't end after the visit.

- Evaluate the visit both during and afterwards; both within the group and with the host.
- After returning home, follow-up with thank you notes to the host leadership.
- Consider planning another visit to build on the relationships formed.
- Consider helping the hosts to become guests in the visitors' home country and community.



These principles were developed by **africarising** - building relationships with effective grassroots African organizations. www.africarising.org