



HOME VISIT GUIDE

Team Trips offer the unique opportunity for team members to participate in a Home Visit. This is what ANLM calls the event where you get to be welcomed into the home of the child that you sponsor. At its basic level, the Home Visit is a time to get to know your sponsored child better and to meet the parents, siblings, guardians, (and maybe neighbors!) of that child. At a deeper level, we see this time as a chance to **encourage** your sponsored child, **esteem and respect** the child's caretakers and **share** Christ's love with all present.

Most travelers return to the United States and say their Home Visit was the highlight of their trip because they deepened the relationship with their sponsored child.

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you first arrive at a Home Visit you may feel a bit nervous, excited, or anxious. Don't worry; these emotions are very normal and be assured, your sponsored child feels the same way about meeting you.

You will have the support of a Missions Officer and a Child Development Officer during this visit. They will help with facilitation, translation, and cultural navigation.

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS

- You will be warmly received and welcomed into the home with a hug or handshake.
- There may be scarce seating, but if you are offered a seat, please take it! The hosts want to give you their best (just like we would), and that means one of the seats in the home. Sometimes these seats are borrowed from neighbors for this occasion, and it is inappropriate to refuse the seat.
- In the excitement, you may forget to introduce yourself! As you sit down, restate who you are and your introduce your friends.
- The child may be incredibly shy. This is for a couple of reasons. First, the child may be overwhelmed at the idea of meeting you. Second, in Rwandan culture children defer to their parents to speak when they are around other adults. Their shyness is not a reflection on their excitement to meet you, but rather a cultural response to the situation.
- The adults will think of you as family and are deeply grateful for your love and gifts to their family. They look at you (the sponsor) as providing something for their children that they are unable to; not for lack of desire, but for lack of resources.
- You may be presented with a gift – culturally gifts are exchanged at first meetings. Often a family cannot afford this, but some families are able to give something. Please receive gifts warmly.
- It is common for little children to not fully understand the concept of sponsorship. That is OK! Take this time to foster a relationship with the parents as well. After all, this is a long-term relationship, and it involves more than just the child.

APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

Often sponsors can be overwhelmed at a Home Visit. There is so much to process: excitement about the meeting, nervousness about cultural differences, navigating the conversation through a translator, and facing material poverty in an intimate way. In the midst of many emotions, we still want you to engage and really enjoy this time with your sponsored child and family.



CHILD

- Will you please introduce me to your family and friends that are here?
- Tell me how you are doing in school?
- What is your favorite subject?
- What are the games you like to play – and with whom do you play?
- How can I be praying for you?
- What questions do you have for me?

ADULT

- How is the health of your family? Is everybody well?
- What kind of work do you do?
- Do you have a garden? And what do you plant in it?
- You must be very proud of all that _(child's name)_ is doing in school!?
- How can I be praying for you?
- Did you build this home?
- Do you attend a church in the area?
- Please tell me more about your community, landscape, weather, etc.?
- Do you have family that lives close by?
- How many children do you have in the family? How many are boys/girls? Where does my sponsored child fit into the line?
- Are all of your children in school?
- What questions do you have for me?

ACTIVITIES

- Go through photos of your family and home to help introduce them to your life.
 - o **This is a great activity that the whole family will want to engage with.**
- Pray for the family and allow the family to pray for you if they are comfortable doing so.
- Present a gift (if you have brought one from home) and explain anything that may be new.
- Play a small game in front of the home (blow bubbles, jump rope, soccer, etc.).
- Take a picture with the family and their home.
 - o **Capture one photo of just the family. These photos are a great inclusion in your next written letter.**

INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

When communicating cross-culturally there may be things that are tough to translate or are inappropriate to ask. Here are a few conversations to NOT initiate.

- Experience in the genocide – only if they willingly share their story is it appropriate to ask one or two questions.
- Where is your family originally from – this question may be perceived as a question regarding family heritage/ethnicity. Additionally, it may imply a previous displacement. All questions that have reference to ethnicity are considered inappropriate.
- Where do you vacation to – these families have no funds to vacation.
- If any of the family members are HIV positive.



- Home Tours – in Rwanda it is very intimate to show one’s bedroom. Commonly these homes have just a few rooms, and those that are closed off by a door or curtain are where the family presumably sleeps.
- Household Pets – dogs, cats, hamsters, etc. are not common in Rwanda and it is very hard for them to understand why one would pay money for an animal that is not for consumption.
- Politics – best to stay clear of this topic with regard to U.S. or Rwandan concerns.

General sensitivity to the following topics:

- Family planning
- Income
- Education level
- Do not give out cash, or impromptu gifts or commitments
- Culturally, in Rwanda parents will take on the name of their firstborn (i.e. Mama Sifa). They prefer this greeting and may be reluctant to share their given names.
- In American culture, we are quick to compliment the host’s home. If the child’s home is in extreme disrepair, do not compliment the dwelling. In these extreme instances, the families are aware of the home’s condition.