

**Earth Rights Institute  
Living & Learning Center**

**Sustainable Development Study  
Abroad Program - Senegal**

**Pre-Departure Handbook**

**2009**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step... or two... or forty?! We realize that a lot of work is involved in preparing for the program and want to make the process as simple as possible. The following handbook provides all the details you need for packing, traveling, and preparing for your trip. You will find pre-departure and packing information including tips for travel-related insurance and arrival information. We've also provided a brief cultural orientation that will be explained further upon arrival and tips of how to deal with culture shock. Carefully read the detailed description of health and safety recommendations. We hope this guide will answer many of your questions, but don't hesitate to contact us. If you have any questions, email Marian Zeitlin, [marian.zeitlin@gmail.com](mailto:marian.zeitlin@gmail.com).

## II. PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATIONS

### Passport

Your passport is your most crucial travel document. You will not be allowed to enter Senegal (and the USA upon return), without one. You can obtain passport applications at your local post office, or at any of the major passport agencies around the country. You can also download the forms, and find additional information at the State Department's web site: [http://travel.state.gov/passport\\_services.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html)

Think about how you will carry it (money belt, neck wallet, travel organizer, fanny pack). Before you arrive in Senegal, make photocopies of the main page with your photo, passport number and other vital information. While in Senegal, lock your passport in your room in your homestay family. Local authorities accept the laminated copy as your ID document, and you should keep it with you at all times. If you travel with your passport in your daypack, be sure you have it within eyesight or that a group member is keeping watch over it.

★ Important Note: If you do not have a passport valid through at least June of 2010, this should be your first order of business, as processing can take as long as four weeks. Contact your local post office for the forms and requirements. The current fee is \$55 plus a \$10 processing fee for first-time applicants.

### Visa

You will not need a visa unless you are planning on staying in Senegal over 3 months. However, you may be asked to have a round trip ticket indicating that you will indeed be leaving the country by the end of the three-month period.

### Travel-related Insurance

**Trip interruption insurance:** Since we purchase plane tickets with changeable return dates, it is not so important to get extra insurance for trip interruption. However, you may want to inquire about this and/or about insurance that protects your tuition investment in the event of withdrawal before departure. You can inquire locally, through our travel agency, through an insurance agent or your college business office, or by calling CSA at 1-800-348-9505 (the cost generally is 5% of the amount covered). You may also want to check with your credit

card company whether they offer insurance for the purchase of airplane tickets in case your tickets get lost or stolen, or your flight is cancelled.

**Tuition Insurance:** You may also want to consider purchasing tuition insurance. Once you have paid your tuition in full (due no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007), and have signed your Agreement and Release Form (sent to you in your acceptance packet), your tuition is not refundable. However, in the event that for some reason you are not able to participate on this program at the last minute, you have some way of insuring your investment. Most universities have a tuition insurance policy through Dewar or another carrier. Please check with your university's billing department to see if this is an option.

**Medical Insurance:** The EcoYoff L&L Center requires that all students carry medical insurance as a condition of registration. Prior to enrollment, students must demonstrate that they have adequate medical insurance coverage.

EcoYoff L&L Center requires that your medical insurance have evacuation coverage for the rare situation in which you might require medical treatment that cannot be obtained locally. This is provided through your International Student Exchange Card (see below). It is worth noting, however, that in 9 years of operations, EcoYoff interns and students have had commonplace health complaints and no one has required evacuation.

Students will be responsible and are fully liable for the cost of any medical treatment they require, including transportation to health care facilities. Make sure you know if and how your family policies cover you overseas and bring any necessary report forms. Some questions to ask include:

- What is and is not covered by your insurance plan? For example, high-risk sports injuries, dental care, and optical care are sometimes not covered by basic medical insurance.
- If certain, pre-existing conditions are excluded, what is their definition of "pre-existing"?
- What are the financial limits of coverage?
- Does your insurance plan cover independent travel?
- Does it include all countries?
- Are evacuation and repatriation included?
- What are the policy's start and end dates?
- Does your insurance policy provider have a 24-hour assistance phone number/hotline?
- Would you have to pay first for treatment and then be reimbursed by the insurance company?

**International Student Exchange (ISE) Card:** The L&L Center also requires that students also carry basic health-accident-evacuation coverage that comes with the International Student Exchange Card, which is an internationally recognized identification and discount card available to students of any age, faculty/teacher members, and youths between the ages of 12 and 26 years.. The ISE Card costs \$25, which is a good bargain for what the card offers (*up to \$2,000 in medical expenses and up to \$5,000 in evacuation fees*). Please purchase your card at [www.isecard.com](http://www.isecard.com).

## **PRE-PROGRAM CHECKLIST**

We have compiled the following Pre-Program Checklist to aid in your preparations. Not all of it will apply to all of you. And remember, every item you check off brings you one step closer to the journey of a lifetime.

### **q Application File Completed**

q Application Form

q Signed Agreement Form

### **q Completed Forms sent to Office**

q Medical Information Form - Physician's

q Medical Information Form - Student's

q Authorization for Medical Treatment

q Enrolment and Program Fee Agreement

q Agreement and Release Form

q Housing Questionnaire

### **q Working with Own School (if enrolled)**

q Talk with Advisor about Plans

q Confirm that Credits will Transfer

q Check in with Study Abroad Office

q Talk with Financial Aid Office (if needed)

q Talk with Registrar about Time Away

### **q Program Finances**

q \$25 Application Fee

q \$300 Deposit (2 wks from acceptance)

q Remainder of Tuition (Due by Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>)

### **q Travel**

q Get Passport (leave a copy with home contact)

- q Leave a copy with home contact
- q Get Immunizations
- q Purchase International Student Exchange Card
- q Confirm or purchase insurance plan
- q Purchase Airline Ticket (send info to listserve)
- q Practice packing
- q Set up free email account (if desired)
- q Purchase Traveler's Checks
- q Leave contact info with friends & family

**q Post-program**

- q Request transcript
- q Transfer Credit to Home Institution (if needed)

**q Join and Participate in Alumni Network**

### III. SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

You can expect generally dry weather ranging from 50s (Fahrenheit) at night to high 70s during the day. Items in italics are available locally, but your favorite brands may not be, and there will not be much time for shopping in the beginning of the program.

#### **Clothing (1 – see notes on next page)**

- 1-2 pair jeans (2)** (if you wear jeans in hot weather)
- 1-3 pair other pants** (loose, fast-drying cotton ideal)
- 2 Skirts or sarongs/wraps for women** (below the knees)
- 1 Sweater or light jacket** for evenings or near the ocean
- Light scarf** for women (long and wide enough to cover shoulders and head in mosque)
- 1-2 Nice long-sleeved cotton shirts or blouses** for meeting religious authorities or other officials
- 3-4 Tank tops** (not too low-cut or midriff baring)
- 3-4 T-shirts** or other short-sleeve shirts (loose fitting)
- Pair of shorts** (not recommended, unless knee-length)
- Bathing suit** For women a one-piece rather than a bikini.
- Underclothes** (and bras) for at least one week (please note, you are expected to wash these yourself)
- 1 Pair sturdy running or walking shoes**
- 1 Pair dress shoes** (for evenings out or dressing up)
- Cheap poncho**
- 1 Pair sturdy sandals** (rubber or Teva type for heavy use)
- 1 Pair flip flops** (for regular use and for showering)
- Sunglasses** (if you wear glasses bring either prescription sunglasses or clip-ons)
- Crushable sun hat or head covering** (if you wear these)

#### **Washing**

**Toilet articles:** biodegradable soap, shampoo, tooth-brush, toothpaste, comb or brush, deodorant, razor blades, nail clipper, etc. (also available in Senegal)

**Hand sanitizer lotion**

**Towel**, washcloth, and handkerchiefs or camp towel

## **Travel**

**Luggage (3)** (Backpack/Duffle bag & Day pack with locks)

**Bed sheet/sleep sack/pillow (4).** Many Senegalese don't use or own blankets.

**Pup tent with mesh screen** (Optional)

**Mosquito net** (although mosquito nets will be provided for village visits if needed, they tend not to be freestanding, so if you're traveling or want a freestanding one, please bring it)

**Insect repellent** Doesn't have to contain DEET, but 32% is strongest suggested. Badger is a good brand.

**Potent sunscreen** (SPF 30 or higher).

**Tampons** are available, but you may prefer a special kind

**Ear plugs** if helpful for sleeping

**Malaria tablets** (this can be bought in Senegal, as well)

**Means for water purification (5)** (iodine tablets or a good quality water filter)

*Pillow case*

## **Notebooks and school supplies**

**Laptop computer** (optional but recommended)

**Plug adapter** ("American" to "French" prong adapter)

**USB flash drive**

*Private diary* if you wish

**Miscellaneous:** pens, colored pencils, glue stick, ruler, paints, whatever you need, etc. Office and school supplies are also available in Senegal.

## **Miscellaneous Important Items**

**PASSPORT** & other documents (student ID, insurance info, traveler's checks, credit card). Please remember to carry on body while traveling.

**Personal health records:** immunization records, blood type, allergic reactions to drugs and medical insurance.

**Personal address book**

**Prescription drugs** and copies of prescriptions

**Glasses** and a copy of prescription

**Pocket knife** (DO NOT pack in carry-on luggage)

**Water-resistant wristwatch** (with alarm!)

**Belt or neck wallet** for passport and other valuables

**Money belt for cash and passport**

**Electrical adapter** if needed (local current is 220)

**Rechargeable batteries and charger** (optional)

*Small combo locks* for backpack

*Flash light* or headlamp

## **Other**

**Cell phone** that takes a SIM card if you're interested in decoding it and using it in Senegal)

**Camera** (digital is preferable. If not, bring film)

**Pictures that connect you to home** (nice to share with each other & new friends)

**Multi-vitamins**

**Gifts (6)**

**Special foods (7)**

**Things to share (8):** harmonica, songbook, hacky sack, frisbee, etc. Walkman – please use with discretion when in community and keep in mind that extras like walkmans and cameras invite theft.

**Fun stuff:** (games, jokes, songs, poetry - anything that celebrates the Earth, yourself, and each other)

**Spending Money (8)**

## **Packing Notes:**

**(1) Clothing:** You should bring clothing that you would be comfortable wearing at home in hot weather, but that's not too showy. Clothing styles vary greatly between urban Dakar and rural villages, and many young people in Dakar wear "Western-style" clothing (tank tops, tight jeans, etc.), especially to go out on the weekends. You are welcome to bring these types of items (with the exception of mini-skirts, shorts, or midriff-baring shirts) and wear them when it is appropriate. However, we also suggest that you bring clothes that will allow you to dress more modestly for village visits and meetings with religious and other officials. You will undoubtedly want to get at least one traditional outfit made once you've arrived in Senegal, and there are also plenty of stores and markets selling Western clothes in Dakar.

**(2) Jeans:** You may or may not want to bring jeans, because the weather is rather hot and often humid and jeans can be very heavy and confining, but it's up to you and how comfortable you feel wearing them. Many young people in Dakar wear them every day, but some toubab (white or foreign) women find that it shows off their lower body too much, an area of the body that is seen as one of the most sexually attractive for women in Africa.

**(3) Luggage:** In addition to a backpack or duffle bag, you will also need a day pack or carry-on bag for travel items like your toothbrush, journal, etc. All luggage must be able to be securely locked (using locks that can be opened by US airport security). If necessary, sew tabs onto your backpack so you can put some kind of small padlock on it. Make sure your name and address is on all of your luggage.

**(4) Bed sheets/sleep sack/pillow:** You can bring them if you have something in mind that you would like to use in the village or for traveling, etc, but they are easy to get here in Dakar, and you can leave them here when you go home, so if you would like to cut down on your baggage, they are certainly not required. Senegalese pillows are not as high quality as American pillows, so if you need a special type of support pillow, please bring it. Also, mattresses are usually thin foam pads, so no boxsprings or futons here.

**(5) Water filter:** You *can* buy bottled water in Dakar sells for about \$1 per 1.5 liter bottle in local boutiques. There's also a little device out now called the SteriPEN. This gadget, though a bit costly (US\$100), is a great tool for sterilizing drinking water. They do use batteries, so you would need to make sure you have fresh ones on hand. You can learn more about SteriPENs at: <http://www.rei.com/product/717120>.

**(6) Gifts:** It is appropriate to bring gifts for your host family, although the reality is that you probably will not know who your family is or how many people you will be living with until you get here. Senegalese families are very "fluid," and there are often people coming and going on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. Some gift suggestions include: art supplies, schoolbooks or children's books with simple English, specialty foods or other items from your region (i.e. maple syrup, postcards, portable local souvenirs such as I love NY pins, etc. that could be given to several people within the family), simple clothing (such as t-shirts or scarves), toy cars or other toys, disposable camera (can be developed in Dakar), photo albums or frames for the family, cards or other games that can be played in another language (such as Uno), etc.

**(7) Special foods:** You may also want to consider bringing some non-perishable "American"-style foods for yourself and to share you're your host family or the group (such as peanut

butter, power bars or granola bars (which are extremely difficult to find here, and very expensive), dried fruit and nuts (although cashews and peanuts are very easy to find here), pre-packaged meals (like Kraft macaroni), candy, cereal, tea, etc. You shouldn't go overboard, because part of the experience is learning to eat and appreciate Senegalese food, but most students begin to crave certain foods from home, and you can also share it with the Senegalese students (as Senegal has a very communal sharing culture). **A note for vegetarians:** you may want to bring some protein powder or another source of protein that can last while you are here, because many vegetarians find it hard to get varied sources of protein.

**(8) Things to share:** Please consider bringing books and other games/activities to pass the time with other students, especially while traveling. This could include suduko/other word games, various card games like Pit, Uno, Sets, etc

**(9) Spending Money:** Spending money will vary significantly from student to student. One student may spend as little as \$50 while another spends over \$1,000. We suggest students bring approximately \$250 for gifts, clothing, snacks, postage, paper, toiletries etc. Consider bringing an extra \$200 in case of emergency.

Traveler's checks are the safest way to carry your money. However, for greater security, banks will not cash them unless you also present the receipts that you received when you purchased them, so please bring these receipts with you. The easiest and most versatile way of having money on hand here in Dakar is to bring a debit card that will allow you to withdraw money from an ATM machine (VISA cards are the most widely accepted at Senegalese ATMs). We will introduce you to the two ATM's of the nearby banks in which we have our accounts, where we will make arrangements for the security of your ATM transactions, since not all ATM's are secure. We request you use only these two ATMs One is within walking distance of the building where the Living & Learning Center is located, and one at the airport (less than a 10-minute drive).

You can also change American currency in cash in downtown Dakar or at the airport, but like traveler's checks, the distance and limited hours of operation of banks that can carry out such transactions make traveler's checks and American dollars much less versatile than a debit/ATM card. You may also want to bring a smaller amount of money in cash. No matter what you'll want to make sure that you have a place in your luggage that where you can lock away your money and valuables if necessary while you're here or traveling. Very few businesses take credit cards, and I don't believe it's possible to get traveler's checks in CFA (it's also hard to get CFA currency from American banks, but don't worry, you can change or withdraw money when you get here). Remember when you leave to change your remaining CFA back into dollars, because it cannot be changed outside Senegal.

## IV. TRAVEL

### Arrival Information

**Flights:** Please **arrive in Dakar on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December**. Tickets should not be much higher than \$1,300. A good direct flight is on South African Airways, leaving New York JFK in the early evening and arriving in Dakar in the early morning. The cheapest tickets for this flight may be through Africa Travel Management Inc., 11 East 36th Street, 7th Floor New York, NY 10016, 212-481-3850, 212-481-3856 <http://www.senegal-online.com/anglais/>. This agency serves Senegalese traveling between New York and Dakar, booking flights on South African Airways at reduced rates. Air Senegal or Royal Air Maroc may also have cheap flights fro, JFK to Dakar via Casablanca. It may be cheaper to fly to Europe and then Dakar rather than flying directly from the U.S. to Dakar. In recent months Royal Air Maroc, Iberia, Air Portugal and others have provided low fares. Please **send your final flight information** to the program listserv as soon as you have it so that we can arrange pick up from Dakar Airport.

**Departure is on Wednesday, January 15.** Students with departure dates after the 16th are welcome to stay on with homestay families for \$15 per day. All homestay costs cover room, board, laundry, Internet and facilitation.

**Fabric for Identification:** You will receive a piece of Senegalese fabric that we would like you to use to identify yourself to both other students (especially for those that will be meeting up in JFK for the same flight) and to the L&L staff once you arrive. You can wear it around your wrist, or pin it to your shirt like a nametag (maybe cutting out a square or a design), but please display it in a fairly obvious way so that others can identify you as an L&L Center student. We don't encourage you to wear nametags or the name of the program on your shirt or clothing, because we've had problems in the past with people posing as L&L Center representatives after coming into the baggage claim area and seeing the program name on a student's nametag. The Dakar airport is rather overwhelming, but hopefully the following information will help you navigate more easily.

**Immigration Form:** It is a good idea to fill in your immigration form in the airplane before you land, if in fact it is passed out during the flight. In response to the form's question about the address at which you will be staying, please fill in your address as "Centre Vivre et Apprendre, Yoff – Layenne," or if asked for a more specific address you can give the P.O. Box 8873, Dakar-Yoff. Also, make sure you pay attention to where you put your first and last names ("Nom" or last name versus "prénom" or first name) on the form.

**Arrival Process:** Dress for summer as the temperature in Dakar will be in the 80°s F, although at night it can be as cold as 55° F. At the airport, you'll probably get off of the plane directly onto the tarmac, then take a bus to the airport terminal, where you'll have to wait in line for an official to check your passport and stamp it with an automatic 3 month visa. This may take a while if two or more flights arrive close together. Make sure you're in the left-hand line for non-ECOWAS members. They will want to see your passport and the form you filled out with your information on the plane. Again, you can tell them the L&L Center's address if necessary (make sure you have it handy). You'll hand back this paper directly after it gets stamped when you go through the door into the baggage claim.

The baggage claim area can be very busy and overwhelming, so please take your time and read all signs and instructions carefully. The young men who seek to help you with your baggage or with changing money vary from polite to somewhat aggressive. Do not let anyone

apart from our own staff help you change money! Look for free carts in the baggage area and get your own cart if possible. We recommend you refuse the help of a porter unless carts are unavailable, which can occur if several flights arrive in rapid succession.

If you let anyone touch your bags, they're going to want you to pay them something later, so just keep that in mind, but it's not the end of the world if you "hire" a porter by agreeing to let him put your bags on his cart – the L&L Center representative will pay him about the equivalent of \$1 before getting into the taxi to leave. After you get your baggage, you will go through the customs x-ray machine, which is essentially just a matter of protocol, as many people just walk in between the two machines without sending their bags along the conveyor belt, and it's unsure as to how thorough the machines actually are. After going through "customs," you'll walk out into another open room where you'll be able to see the arrivals area of the airport, and then go directly outside into the waiting crowd ... breathe!

One or two L&L Center representatives will be waiting for you. No matter what, any representative should be wearing the same fabric that you will be sent. It's a bit overwhelming (again) to exit the baggage area into a jostling crowd of people, but just take a moment to look around before leaving the arrivals area to see if you can locate a staff member (they'll probably locate you first!).

Our staff member(s) will either take you to the airport bank to change money or give you an envelope containing a small loan of spending money to tide you over, if the bank is closed. We will cover your taxi fare and introduce you to your homestay family, so that you can drop your luggage, settle in, eat and rest. We will arrange a time to come get you at your house later that day or the next morning to show you the route to the office. Everything in Yoff is within walking distance, but you'll need a guide to show you the way once or twice before you go on your own. We'll leave you with a few staples for the first night, including a bottle of water, toilet paper, and a cultural orientation sheet (if it wasn't sent by email before your departure).

**In case of problems:** If you should encounter any problems, need to get in touch with one of the staff right away, or for some reason you arrive at a different time or don't see a staff member, the best way to get in touch with us is by cell phone. **The office cell phone number is 77 780 29 29.** You can either go to a telecenter (there's one on the second floor in the airport off of the arrivals area, take the stairs to the right of the CBAO bank and Western Union) or you can borrow someone's cell phone. You will need to pay whomever loans you the cell phone for making the call; if you are still inside the airport and can't change money, you can pay them in American dollars. Otherwise, when you exit the gate, if you need to change money, there are plenty of people walking around saying "change, change." (The exchange rate is around 475 cfa per dollar). You should pay the person about \$1 or 500 CFA, or you can also offer to buy them phone credit on a rechargeable card (the smallest amount is a 1000 CFA card, or about \$2). There are young men hawking these cards just outside the airport doors as well, although they probably will not take American money. Bring some small American bills and have them on hand just in case.

## V. COMMUNICATIONS

### Keeping in touch with family and friends

#### Email, IM, Skype and other VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) options

#### **Remember that Senegal is 5 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.**

During the 9-10 days you will be in Yoff, in the capital city of Dakar, email and Skype are the best ways for students to remain in contact with friends and family. Most American students bring their own laptops, headphones and webcams, although PC's are also available for student use and headphones and webcams can be purchased locally. The L&L Center in which you begin and end your village visits is fully equipped with cable and wireless DSL high-speed Internet connections. You can set up your choice of instant messenger, Yahoo, MSN, Skype and others. During village stays, however, your communications may be limited to occasional pay phone shops and cell phones capable of placing international calls.

**Trunk-line and cellular phones:** It is not possible to make international phone calls from your homestay family or from the L&L Center's telephones, because itemized phone bills are not available until 6 months after the phone call. However, small phone shops (télécentres) are readily available and when traveling away from L&L Center students use them to call home, paying in cash (approx. \$2/minute). It is best to plan calls ahead via email so that parents/friends from the USA can call students at an agreed upon time. You may want to suggest that parents/friends check their calling plans and/or purchase an international pre-paid calling card, as calls to Senegal can be expensive. Where cell phone network coverage is available, cell phones are the most reliable method of phoning in and out of villages.

**Mail:** Regular mail is reliable and arrives within 7 – 10 days. For mailing valuables such as credit cards, checks, CDs, etc. you will need to use a courier service. We have had good luck only with FEDEX, DHL and UPS, with costs close to \$75. A good resource for comparing options is the USPS International Calculator at <http://ircalc.usps.gov/>.

#### **For all categories of mail, your address will be:**

<Your Name>

ONG, Centre Vivre et Apprendre, BP 8873  
Dakar-Yoff  
Senegal

**Weblog:** A weblog (a.k.a. "blog") is an online journal that students and faculty will create together. It is a wonderful way for students to share thoughts, news and photos with the wider world and for parents and friends to keep up-to-date on program activities. We will email you the URL once it becomes set up and you should also be able to access it through our web site.

#### **Street Address and Telephone:**

EcoYoff Centre Vivre et Apprendre  
Avenue Seydina Limamou Laye (ex route de l'Aéroport)  
Avenue Seydina Issa Rouhou Laye (ex Route des Cimetières musulmans)  
Dakar - Yoff, Senegal

**Tel:** 221 - 33 - 820 - 5484, Fax: 22 - 33 - 820 - 6549

## VI. CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

A full cultural orientation will take place during the first week of your program, along with an additional sheet of cultural orientation information when you arrive, but we want you to have some initial information about what to expect in your living and working situations since you will be brought directly to your host family's home from the airport.

### Homestays

Students will live in a traditional family setting both in Yoff and, sometimes, in other ecovillages. This is the best way to get to know the culture and the people who live here. GENSEN staff negotiate and supervise these homestays with families who are well known to us. For some families, this may be the first time a “toubab” (white person) has spent time with them and they don’t always know what to expect. Don't be embarrassed to ask for a tour of the house so you can get your bearings.

The key to a positive homestay experience is to not be afraid to ask questions. Yet, make sure you ask these questions to the right person! Usually this will be the head of the household or perhaps a young adult in the family. A good rule of thumb is to observe what other members of your family are doing to get a sense of what is culturally appropriate.

**Language:** Most families in Dakar speak Wolof, but there will also be at least one French-speaking member of the family as well (French is the official language in Senegal, but Wolof is spoken by almost 80% of the population, and by most people in Dakar).

**Opposite sex visitors:** If you would like to invite a friend of the opposite sex to your family’s home, tell your host mother in advance. He or she should never enter your room: they are expected to sit and discuss with all of the family in a common space in the house. In general, relationships between men and women are much more hidden; you will never see a couple kissing in the street, and in some places it is even rare to see them holding hands. You should learn the phrase, “Ana sa jeker” or “Amnga jeker,” which means “where is your husband?” or “are you married?” If someone in the street proposes marriage to you, take it lightly. You can learn the phrase “Amna fooki jeker!” – I have ten husbands! This will be sure to get a laugh.

**Personal belongings and space:** There is a much more communal attitude towards physical belongings and space in Senegal than in the U.S. Don’t bring out items such as nail polish, shampoo, food, etc. that you aren’t willing to share. But do try to be open about your things; nail-painting or sharing a snack can be a great opportunity for opening a conversation! If you need time alone, it is easy to say you have homework. People will give you space. Otherwise, it might seem strange to be spending time alone, since Senegalese culture is extremely social and people rarely do things alone.

**Laundry:** All clothes are washed by hand here, and your homestay family expects to do your laundry, with the exception of underwear and bras, which people generally wash for themselves. You can either wash these by hand in the shower each day (hint: do so at the end

of your shower as you will be less likely to run out), or ask for a bucket and buy a packet of Omo in the boutique and do it yourself. If you are unfamiliar with the technique of washing clothes by hand and are interested in learning, pull up a bench on a laundry day! Some interns have preferred to do their own laundry, usually side by side with the women in their host family when they are doing it. Families frequently do laundry each week, or they may have someone come to the house to do it. Ask what you should do when you need laundry to be done. It may just be leaving your laundry bag out near the washtubs or it may be letting someone specific know a few days ahead of time.

**Bathing:** While some families have a working showerhead, others use buckets and a small cup to splash water on yourself (you do get used to it). Ask where to find the bathing bucket and what water to use. Beware! The water is not always on 24 hours a day here. You can ask to heat water for your bath. Take as many showers as you want; don't feel like you are wasting water, because cleanliness is extremely important in Senegalese culture. Remember that this water is for everyone in the house so take care about contamination - i.e. don't put lid on the floor, dip dirty cups into water or put your hands in the water. Also, wash your face in the morning before greeting people.

**Toilets:** Many families will have Western-style toilets (called "chaise anglaise") in the house, but you will undoubtedly have occasion to use traditional Senegalese-style latrines (called "wanekk" in Wolof) as well. With the latter, you should put your feet on either side of the hole, squat down, and try to balance!!! Senegalese households don't use toilet paper; instead, you'll find a bucket with a small cup and water, with which you can wash yourself (thus why people only eat with the right hand, because the left hand is used for ... other things). You can also bring toilet paper with you into the latrine if you wish. Toilet paper can be tossed into the latrine, but feminine hygiene products should be put in a small plastic bag and then in the family's large trash can.

**Garbage:** Find out where the family's large garbage pail is so that you can take out any trash when the small pail in your room gets full. Outside, you may frequently see people throwing trash on the ground rather than waiting to find a trash can. Often, maids or street cleaners will clean in front of houses each morning. However, you're welcome to wait to find a trashcan rather than throwing trash on the ground.

## Eating

Mealtimes and eating are probably one of our biggest cultural differences. This can be one of the most enjoyable aspects of your visit, especially if you love fish!

A description of the three main meals can help to illustrate the differences you will encounter and what to expect. With a few regional differences, this description is widely applicable across Senegal.

**Breakfast:** This meal will almost always consist of bread and a hot beverage. Every house will be a little different in the timing, but it is usually early - before 9am. With the bread, you will probably have the choice of butter, chocolate or even spicy tuna spread with fresh mayonnaise. According to your preference, the beverage may be either instant coffee or

kinkiliba, a tea brewed from local leaves. Unless you specify to the contrary, both will be made very sweet and often with powdered milk. Unlike in the US where we vary our breakfasts, here it is almost always the same. So beware when you say what you want for breakfast the first morning - you will be eating that for the duration! Of course, if you do want to change, just let someone in your house know.

**Lunch:** This is the main meal of the day and is usually eaten between 1 and 2 in the afternoon. It will always be rice and there are two versions upon which several variations derive: “tieb” and “nyari cin”.

The “tieb” is the tiebou diene, the national dish, which is made with rice cooked in a broth of vegetables and the oil that the fish has been cooked in. The two forms of this dish are the “tiebou xonq (red)” and the “tiebou wer (white)”. The red rice is made with tomato paste and the white isn’t. The white rice is often served with a green sauce made from fresh byssap (a type of hibiscus) leaves. The vegetables usually found in this dish are carrot, cabbage, eggplant, manioc, sweet potato, squash and turnip. Other ingredients include yeet (the meat of the conch shell), dried or smoked fish and tamarind.

Nyari cin (two pot) dishes are also known as rice and sauce. So as the name implies, there is steamed white rice served with a sauce. This sauce can be a variation on mafe, a yummy sauce made with peanut butter and tomatoes; yassa, an onion sauce with a touch of mustard and vinegar; thiou, a tomato and onion sauce often made with red palm oil; or everyone’s favorite - soupe khandia - a rich sauce made from red palm oil and okra. (All right, it is not everyone’s favorite, but definitely try it more than once. The taste grows on you!) These dishes are usually made with fish and occasionally with meat (sheep or beef) or chicken.

Fruit may be served (usually mangoes) after this meal. A little later, someone starts making strong green tea (ataaya), Arab style. It is common to rest after lunch. During the hot season, it is probably a good idea to follow suit and lie down or do quiet, low-activity work for a few hours in the afternoon otherwise you risk wearing out your body! The heat is constant and while you might not feel too uncomfortable during the day, you may find you sleep more and get physically exhausted with mild energy exertion.

Generally the older boys in the family prepare and distribute the tea, which is poured back and forth from pot to demitasse glass from a high distance until a fine foam decorates the top. Prepared and served in three separate rounds of decreasing strength, of which the third is mainly from mint leaves, the tea sets the stage for relaxed conversation.

**Dinner:** The evening meal is always served at some time after sunset, usually between 8 and 10 in most households. Here you will find a variety of meals in different households. The traditional dinner is a fine-grained couscous made from millet (cere) served with a tomato-based sauce and fish. Fried fish with salad is popular as well as “farcy”, a dish made from spicy, ground fish served with an onion sauce. Occasionally families eat a porridge such as sombia (made from rice) or fonde (made from millet) for dinner. Other dishes include variations on soft-cooked rice - mbakhal, dakhine, ngourbane. You’ll quickly learn the differences between them.

Dinner is not generally a filling meal. This is usually a good thing since lunch is so big! However, if you feel hungry, find out where to buy snack foods - women on the street often sell fillings for sandwiches, like “ndambe” which is spicy black-eyed peas. Fried treats such

as fatayas (fried fish dumplings), beignets (similar to doughnuts) and fried sweet potatoes can also be found. Fruits and peanuts are also available on almost every corner.

Relax and enjoy “teranga”, the term for Senegalese hospitality. Guests are expected to eat a lot (learn the phrase “soor-na” (I’m full) quickly!) and complements are always appreciated (“anye bi nhar-na!” Lunch is delicious) but should be said quietly to the cook near the end of the meal.

**Meal Etiquette:** Senegalese families typically eat together and will use their hands or a spoon to scoop up any of the traditional meals (usually rice with fish, chicken, or meat, or couscous with sauce). It is typical to share one bowl or platter with everybody sitting on a mat and eating around the bowl. If you are eating apart, you can say you want to eat together with the family. Often the women and children eat with their hands and men use spoons, but this varies from house to house. Either the person who prepared the meal or the head of household who is present usually signals the beginning of the meal. Just watch for when everyone starts.

First take off your shoes (never step on a mat with shoes). There will be one large plate at the center of the mat, and sometimes a bowl of water aside to wash your hands. Sit around the bowl, resting on your legs with one knee up (for men), or legs slightly to left or right (for women). Don’t put your left hand on the ground while eating. If not comfortable ask for a small bench. Hold onto the bowl with your left hand so that the bowl doesn’t turn, but usually the children should hold the bowl. Only use your right hand to eat, and never put your left hand in the bowl. You can ask for a spoon, or, if you are given a spoon and don’t want to use it, tell your family that you prefer to eat with your hands!

The vegetables and fish or meat (the “good stuff”) is found in the center of the bowl and is for everyone’s consumption. Eat in front of yourself (imagine a wedge-shape for each person), but don’t leave a large barrier between your section and that of the person next to you. Often somebody dishes out the middle part, or just the fish or meat, especially when there is a guest present. Again, this is something that will vary from house to house. Always start with a handful or spoonful of rice before starting for the better stuff, and watch to see if you will be served or not. In most houses, people do not talk during the mealtime (and if you do talk, there is a chance you are going to miss most of the available food!) It is also taboo to look at other people while they are eating. Just keep your focus on what is in front of you. However, be aware of what your specific family is like because the variations between the strict traditional households and the more modern families will play a role here. Another thing to remember or notice is that in the larger households, men and women eat separately and often children will have their own bowl as well. As a “toubab” you have freer range over where to eat (i.e. a female can eat at the men’s bowl if invited and vice versa for males) so choose to eat where you are most comfortable.

Get up and leave when you finish eating. Lick your hand clean before you get up and wash your hands. Leave the fish bones on the mat in front of the bowl.

If you are given an individual plate, you shouldn’t eat everything on the plate. If you finish your plate they will offer you more. Also, what you don’t finish is usually given to younger children or ‘talibé’ children who come to the door. Nothing goes to waste!

If your family serves a dish that you don’t like or don’t want to eat, you can try to be polite and take a few bites, but if they ask you why you’re not eating, you can say that you have a sensitive stomach. You can later buy a snack in the boutique if you are still hungry (but don’t

let your family see you doing so). In general, if you bring food into the house, you should be prepared to share it with others. If you don't have enough for everyone, eat it in private.

If you want to invite a friend over during mealtime, you should ask your family in advance. If you're not going to be at home for a meal, tell your family this as well so that they don't wait for you to eat. When a friend has come to visit you, take the time to walk them to the front gate. If you are invited to eat somewhere but you have already eaten, it is polite to have a bite or two.

## **Prayer and Religion**

In Senegal, more than 90% of people are Muslim. Although there are several Islamic brotherhoods, the majority of Muslims pray at least five times daily. Don't be surprised if, for example, your family suddenly all gets up while watching TV and leaves to go pray.

You will often see people, mostly men, praying in the street in front of a boutique or in front of a mosque. If you have to pass them, walk behind the group. Don't walk in front of them or make noise that would disturb them while praying. Sometimes this is hard to avoid, so try to walk by as quickly as possible if you have to walk in front of them.

An interesting visit for newcomers to Yoff is the mausoleum of the founder of the Layene Islamic brotherhood, an impressive building on the beach. Have a Senegalese friend take you inside to walk seven times around the tomb in the cleanest, coolest sand you will find in Yoff! Shoes are taken off at the entrance of the enclosed yard. This is also the time for conservative dress - long pants for men and floor-length dress or skirt, long-sleeves and a head covering scarf for women. Women are forbidden to enter the building if they are having their period.

For people who are not Muslim or are not religious, be aware that you will get into many conversations about religion here. Religion is such a part of everyday life and activities, unlike the usual one day, one hour a week Christian ritual, that people talk about it frequently, especially with foreigners. The inevitable questions about your stance on polygamy (four wives are permitted by the Koran) and your desire to convert should be answered honestly. In general, answering that you are religious is better than saying you are not.

You may also notice people wearing Gris-gris, which are like good luck charms, or signs of protection. People of all ages may wear them around their upper arm or around their waist. They are often leather pouches with printed verses from the Quran within.

## **Greetings**

One major difference between Senegalese and American culture is the importance of greetings. Starting when they get up in the morning, Senegalese family members and those living with them all are expected to greet each other. When you approach someone on the street, in a store, or in class, you should always greet them before asking a question or starting a conversation. If you pass a group of people sitting outside, you should greet them verbally, but you don't necessarily need to shake hands. In the workplace, greet everybody when you come in- even if this means going from office to office- don't feel like you're disturbing anyone by doing so. . Even when people are in the middle of work or in a conversation, there is always time to greet someone passing by. Forgetting this frequent ritual will get you some good-humored teasing at first, but can cause bad feelings if it continues

Here are some useful Wolof phrases used in greetings:

*Q: Nan ge def? A: Mangi fi rekk.* (How are you? I'm fine - literally, I'm here.)

This phrase is probably one of the most important phrases to know and you will probably ask and answer it a million times a day. This is used for greeting an individual. When you are greeting a group of more than 4 or 5 people, the following phrase is more appropriate:

*Q: As salaam aleykum. A: Aleykum salaam.* (Peace be with you. And to you, peace.)

Knowing those two exchanges will get you pretty far. Other common phrases include:

*Q: Ana wa ker ga? A: Nunga fa.* (How is everyone at your house? They are there.)

*Q: Nanga tuud da? A: Mangi tuud da \_\_\_\_.* (What is your name? My name is \_\_\_\_.)

*Q: Foyee dukk? A: Mangi dukk \_\_\_\_.* (Where do you live? *or* Where do you come from? I live \_\_\_\_.)

Foreigners should be aware that some Muslims here do not touch persons of the opposite sex. So if you extend your hand to someone and that person refuses your hand, don't be offended. That person, or someone else, will probably explain the reasoning for this at that time. Yet, it is better to extend your hand and not be received than to not extend your hand at all. It is also good practice not to accept or give things using your left hand. Oh, it is considered bad luck to tell someone when a baby is due, so try not to talk about pregnancies.

### **Dealing with Money**

**Shopping:** In the markets, there is no such thing as a fixed price. Although the prices of food sellers do not vary by much, other prices often are more than twice as high as the final price at which the vendor will sell. Generally you can divide by 3 for your "counter-offer". If the vendor doesn't come down to your price, walk away slowly to look at other items, and see whether he or she comes after you. You will go back and forth like this until you agree upon a price. However, try not to enter into discussions unless you really intend to buy something. People will usually accept a fair price- if they are saying "no" even as you walk away, you can know that it is really too little for the value of the item. This goes for taxis as well. In boutiques, prices are fixed. Generally older people have the right to be served before children. If you are taking money out of your wallet to pay for something, do it discretely and out of public sight if possible. Don't go out with all your money. Just take what you need.

**Lending money:** If you decide to lend someone money, be prepared for the possibility that they will not pay you back simply because in Senegal people think that white people are rich

**Begging:** Many people have the impression that all white people and especially Americans are wealthy. You will be asked many times over for money or a gift ("toubab, maay ma xalis" or "toubab/white person, give me money"). This begging is socially unacceptable. It is better never to encourage begging by normal people (including children) by giving them anything. This behavior supposedly started with Festivals held by the French colonists,

during which they threw money to crowds of children and watched them crawl on the ground to pick up the coins.

You will also see talibé (beggar children, usually sent from villages to stay with a marabout to learn the Qur'an and beg on their behalf), as well as handicapped people. The begging of these groups is socially acceptable. You can give small coins (25, or 50 cfa coins) or, if you don't wish to, just say, "bal ma ba bennen" (Excuse me until next time)

**Hustling:** Sometimes people that you don't know may come to you will false medical prescriptions, or to share their financial problems. You may be surprised to notice how much they know about you. One simple strategy is just not to talk with people you don't know. Better is to acknowledge their presence in a friendly way but with distancing body language.

### **Time Management**

Time is flexible in Senegal- things frequently start late, and people take it easy. This can be frustrating, but now that, for instance, if someone is late for a meeting with you, it is probably because they saw an old friend or a relative with whom they must stop and catch up. Relationships are extremely important in Senegalese culture, more than punctuality.

Marian Zeitlin, the director of the Living and Learning Center, suggests the following about time management and general expectations for the course:

"The less you expect in terms of luxury and efficient time management the more satisfied you will be by this course. You have chosen to discover Africa in Senegal. Please be prepared to discover that efficient time management tends to be scarce, or a real 'stretch.' More than half of the country's population has not yet had the privilege of learning to read and write. Without a history of using written records or daily minders, people organize meetings in age-old ways or on a more generous time schedule than we are used to in the US. When you are working in the villages, someone will go from house to house an hour before meeting time to inform people to get ready. Your defense is a good book, meditative observation, your iPod, or whatever absorbs and edifies you and keeps you happy until scheduled activities begin. We sincerely invite you to take responsibility for discovering and valuing African time, even in our program, which is locally managed. We do our best to keep things crisp, but by American or European standards you'll find them slower than at home. You will experience the opposite of one of our Yoff young people who visited Paris, and discovered that French people walking at French speed pushed him off the sidewalk.

On the plus side, based on past experience, you may reclaim in Senegal a déjà vu of your pre-industrial heritage and a portal into expanded reality, community, self-knowledge and identity."

## **VII. HEALTH**

We run a very safe, healthy, and conscientious program, with skilled, responsible resource and medical people in all of the communities that we visit. At the same time, one must recognize that travel involves risks as well as rewards. Please think carefully, realistically, and positively about your participation on this program and discuss it openly and thoroughly with your parents and/or partners. And of course, please don't hesitate to call with any questions or concerns.

It is likely that individuals will experience illness at some point in any long-term stay in a developing country. The combination of travel, a new bacterial environment, unfamiliar foods and living conditions, as well as the overall pace and intensity of the program can overwhelm the senses and the immune system of even generally healthy individuals.

With this in mind, we feel that it is important for students entering the program to have an understanding of the body-mind connection and how this may affect your experience in Senegal. The immune system is inextricably linked to and responds to your emotions and your state of mind as well as to your external environment. As you are likely to experience a variety of emotional and mental states during the next few months, it is also likely that your susceptibility to illness will fluctuate. This may mean, for example, that the nausea or diarrhea you are experiencing is caused by an exposure to bacteria, AND that your body is telling you to pay closer attention not just to what you are eating, but also to what you may or may not be “digesting” emotionally.

The faculty will focus a great deal on preventative measures to ensure student health. At the same time, we believe that illness or dis-ease can be a useful teacher, can force us to slow down and pay attention to our bodies and our environment, and can engender compassion for our selves and for each other during our time together. Please reflect on where and how you hold stress or emotion in your body, and what support you may need when you are feeling ill so that we can collectively create an environment of well-being and compassion within the community. If you are willing to allow physical ailments (both your own and that of others) to guide you to greater self-awareness, then you may also be able to see them as a part of the experience of Senegal rather than detracting from it.

### **Special Medical Conditions and Medications**

If you have any allergies or special conditions that might lead to sudden illness (such as asthma, diabetes, bee sting or penicillin allergies, etc.), you must inform the faculty of your possible reactions. You should also discuss these with the rest of your class during the orientation period so that other people will know how to react in case you need assistance. Critical medications must be with you at all times and should be reported on your medical form. Let each faculty member know where you carry or store these medications, how to administer them, and the dosage. We also recommend that you consider wearing a medical alert bracelet describing any special conditions.

Bring all medications that you might need because they could be difficult to obtain in Senegal. Make sure any prescription is noted on the medical form. Bring enough medication along to last the entire program. You should pack it in your carry-on luggage in a way that it will not be damaged by wetness or travel. Pack all medications in their original bottles with proper labels for customs. Bring your written prescriptions from your doctor for customs and in case of loss.

In addition, The Center for Disease Control makes the following recommendations:

“Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers’ diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Make sure your food and drinking water are safe.

## **Health Tips**

### **To Stay Healthy, Do:**

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an “absolute 1-micron or less” filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. “Absolute 1-micron filters” are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- If you are going to visit areas where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go except indoors in rooms where shoes are prohibited and along the waterline of the ocean.
- Students are advised to avoid sexual intercourse because of the risk of HIV/AIDS. If not following this advice, always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

### **To Avoid Getting Sick:**

- Don’t eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don’t drink beverages with ice.
- Don’t eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don’t share needles with anyone.
- Don’t handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague)
- Don’t swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer.

**For more information, please visit the CDC website at**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/wafrica.htm>

## **Health Resources:**

U.S. Passport Services 900-225-5674

CDC Travel Health Information (voice) 888-232-3228

(fax) 888-232-3299

CDC Malaria Hotline for Physicians 770-488-7788

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

WHO International Travel & Vaccination <http://jupiter.who.ch/yellow/welcome.html>

Med Info for Americans Traveling Abroad <http://travel.state.gov/medical.html>

Shoreland's Travel Health Online <http://www.tripprep.com>

Department of State <http://www.state.gov/index.html>

State Department Passport Information [http://www.travel.state.gov/passport\\_services.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport_services.html)

State Department Travel Warnings <http://travel.state.gov/trav.warnings.html>

Bureau of Consular Affairs <http://travel.state.gov/index2.html>

US Embassies & Consulates <http://travel.state.gov/links.html>

Assistance for Canadians Overseas <http://dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/CONSULAR/web.htm>

Health Canada <http://www.hwc.ca/hpb/lcdc>

<http://fhss.byu.edu/kenncent/publications/Global>

Weather <http://www.weather.yahoo.com>

## **Immunizations for Senegal**

Travel to Senegal exposes you to health risks, which are not normally encountered in temperate and more industrialized countries. Regulations and recommendations for healthy travel change and there is often not a clear consensus among medical practitioners. GENSEN has several years of successful experience in advising and monitoring our participants' health. Students will receive a thorough introduction to health and hygiene during orientation at EcoYoff. We expect participants to obtain the required immunizations listed below. You may consult us for additional health questions, but ultimately each of you must use your own judgment, in consultation with your family doctor, as to what you actually do. It is essential (and good sustainability training) to educate yourself. You may want to consult some of the sources that follow, but please be cautious about travel clinics or physicians who recommend more than we do. (You may also notice that availability and high costs for some of these immunizations are heavily controlled by US pharmaceutical companies and travel clinics, try accessing your university clinic first.)

A good source book for traveling is International Travel Health Guide by Stuart Rose, which is available from Travel Medicine, Inc., 351 Pleasant St., Suite 312, Northampton, MA 01060. You can also call them at 1-800-TRAVMED or email them at [travel@travmed.com](mailto:travel@travmed.com). Another excellent source is the Centers for Disease Control where much of the information in this document has come from. They have a detailed web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/> and publish Health Information for International Travel. To obtain a copy, you can write to them at P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954 or call them at 202-512-1800. You or your

physician may check with the CDC International Travelers Hotline 404-332-4559 or the US Public Health Service 716-754-4883.

The CDC recommends and EcoYoff *requires* that students be vaccinated against Yellow Fever and take prophylactics for Malaria. The CDC also recommends that all travelers to Senegal have current immunizations against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), tetanus/diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Rabies, Typhoid Fever, and Cholera prophylactics are also worth considering, but are low-incidence in the areas we will be traveling. More detailed info about these diseases and travelers diarrhea follows.

**MALARIA** is a serious parasitic infection transmitted to humans by infective mosquitoes. Mosquitoes in Africa carry strains of malaria that are deadly and that are a major cause of infant mortality even among groups with high levels of immunity. With that in mind, make sure you are diligent about taking anti-malaria pills. If you run out when you are here, the prescriptions can be bought over the counter at any pharmacy, of which there are 4 in Yoff. (In fact, most medications are available without prescriptions, including antibiotics.) Any fever should be taken seriously. Often, malaria comes in the “back-door” when your system is weakened by another sickness (diarrhea or the “toubab flu”).

The mosquitoes carrying the most dangerous falciparum malaria bite from late at night from to dawn. Symptoms range from fever and flu-like symptoms, to chills, general achiness, and tiredness. If left untreated, malaria can cause anemia, kidney failure, coma, and death. Preventative measures can be taken, and malaria can be effectively treated in its early stages. Delaying treatment can have serious consequences.

**RISK:** Malaria is endemic in Senegal and all travelers are at some risk. In January, the nights are cool and the season is dry so there are relatively fewer mosquitoes than at other times of the year.

**PREVENTION:** Your antimalarial medication will help prevent you falling ill from malaria. You may also wish to protect yourself from mosquito bites by using an effective repellent, and wearing long sleeves and pants in the evening. If you like camping, you can also choose to bring a pup tent with mesh to protect yourself from mosquitoes at night. If you tolerate insect-repellent skin products and are not worried about their side effects, you may also wish to use some of the low-DEET, "activated" repellents such as Ultrathon or DEET-PLUS. These are available through local stores or Travel Medicine at 800-872-8633. Do not use DEET in higher than 32% concentration. We like the natural repellents but they don't last as long and are not as effective in malaria regions.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The CDC recommends all travelers to West Africa take one of the following antimalarial drugs: atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone), doxycycline, or primaquine. Lariam (mefloquine) is also recommended by CDC, but is expensive and has had some unpleasant side effects in our experiences. Doxycycline has the disadvantage of increasing your sensitivity to sunlight. An effective brand Savarine (a mixture of chloroquine and proguanil) is available inexpensively in Senegal. A number of American students have taken Malarone before arriving and switched to Savarine, to save money, after arrival. For more information about the risk of malaria, contact the CDC's Malaria Hotline (404-332-4555).

**YELLOW FEVER:** Yellow fever is a mosquito-borne viral disease. Illness ranges in severity from an influenza-like syndrome to severe hepatitis and hemorrhagic fever. Yellow fever is caused by a zoonotic virus that is maintained in nature by transmission between nonhuman primates and mosquito vectors. Yellow fever vaccination is required for entry into Senegal and many other African countries. Vaccinees should insist on receiving a completed

International Certificate of Vaccination, signed and validated with the center's stamp where the vaccine was given. This yellow certificate should be carried with your passport. It is valid 10 days after vaccination and for a subsequent period of 10 years. Therefore, as in the case of other vaccines, it is best to receive your immunizations at least a couple of weeks before departure.

**SCHISTOSOMIASIS** may be a danger in the villages along the Lac de Guiers, where you will carry out your field studies. It's caused by flukes, which have complex life cycles involving specific fresh-water snail species as intermediate hosts. Infected snails release large numbers of minute, free-swimming larvae (cercariae) that are capable of penetrating the unbroken skin of the human host. Even brief exposure to contaminated fresh water, such as wading, swimming, or bathing, can result in infection. Human schistosomiasis cannot be acquired by wading or swimming in salt water (oceans or seas). The cercariae of birds and aquatic mammals can penetrate the skin of human beings who enter infested fresh or salt water in many parts of the world, including cool temperate areas. The cercariae die in the skin but may elicit a pruritic rash ("swimmer's itch" or "clam-digger's itch").

**PREVENTION:** No vaccine is available, nor are any drugs recommended as chemoprophylactic agents at this time. Because there is no practical way for the traveler to distinguish infested from noninfested water, travelers should be advised to avoid fresh-water wading or swimming in rural areas of endemic countries. In such areas, heating bathing water to 50° C (122° F) for 5 minutes or treating it with iodine or chlorine in a manner similar to the precautions recommended for preparing drinking water will destroy cercariae and make the water safe. Both in the field and at EcoYoff students will be provided with butagas burners and pots for boiling water for drinking and heating water for bathing.

**TREATMENT:** Safe and effective oral drugs are available for the treatment of schistosomiasis. Praziquantel is the drug of choice for all species of *Schistosoma*. Oxamniquine has been effective in treating infections caused by *S. mansoni* in some areas where praziquantel is less effective.

**MMR:** You should have had two doses since age 14 months unless you were born before 1957, in which case you are considered naturally immune. CDC recommends a second dose for all travelers born after 1956 unless you are sure that you had two doses of vaccine produced after 1980.

**TETANUS:** EcoYoff recommends a booster within the past 5 years unless your doctor is okay with 10. If your tetanus immunization is due to expire soon, discuss early revaccination with your physician.

**POLIO:** EcoYoff recommends an "IPV (inactivated polio vaccine) enhanced" booster shot before departure (instead of OPV which has reported side effects for adults)

**HEPATITIS A** is a viral infection of the liver passed by ingesting contaminated food and water, and through direct person to person contact. Symptoms include fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, dark urine, jaundice, and vomiting.

**RISK:** According to the CDC, non-immune travelers are at high risk for Hepatitis A, especially if visiting rural areas and the backcountry.

**PREVENTION:** The virus is inactivated by boiling or cooking to 85 degrees centigrade for one minute, therefore eating thoroughly cooked foods and treated water serve as precautions. Havrix or Vaqta, the Hepatitis A vaccines currently licensed for use in the US are recommended for protection against Hepatitis A. Immune globulin (IG) may also be taken, although it carries a very low risk of transmitting viral infections.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** For travelers over 18 years of age, Hepatitis A vaccine should be given in a two-dose series with the second dose administered 6-12 months after the first. For those aged 2-18 years, a three-dose series is recommended. Travelers can be considered to be protected four weeks after receiving the initial vaccine dose.

**TYPHOID FEVER** is a bacterial infection transmitted through contaminated food and/or water or directly between people. Symptoms include fever, headaches, tiredness, loss of appetite, and constipation more often than diarrhea. Typhoid fever can be effectively treated with antibiotics.

**RISK:** Risk is greatest for travelers who will have prolonged exposure to potentially contaminated food and drink. Vaccination is particularly recommended for those who will be traveling in smaller cities, villages and rural areas off the usual tourist itineraries.

**PREVENTION:** Careful preparation of food, and treatment of water, lowers the risk of infection. Currently available vaccines have been shown to protect 50-80% of recipients. Two current vaccines provide equivalent protection against typhoid fever.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The live oral vaccine, Vivotif (Ty21a) lasts for five years. Avoid the older injectable vaccine due to high incidence of side effects. A new one-dose shot (Typhim Vi) is also available. It is very important to follow the directions for taking the oral vaccine. Don't take them if you are on antibiotics or on the same day as a dose of lariam.

**RABIES** is a viral infection that affects the central nervous system. Rabies is contracted through contact with body fluids of an infected animal, generally via a bite. If the post-exposure treatment is started immediately, full recovery from an exposure is generally the outcome, but if the disease develops, it is almost always fatal.

**RISK:** Rabies is found on all continents except Antarctica. According to the CDC, there is a risk of rabies in Senegal, but it is not highly endemic.

**PREVENTION:** Do not handle any animals! When animal-infected wounds are thoroughly cleaned, the risk of rabies infection is reduced. Exposed individuals should receive prompt medical attention.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The CDC recommends preexposure vaccination for veterinarians, animal handlers, field biologists, spelunkers, missionaries, and certain laboratory workers. Preexposure vaccination does not eliminate the need for additional medical attention after a rabies exposure, but simplifies postexposure treatment. Any animal bite or scratch should receive prompt local treatment by thorough cleansing of the wound with soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution if available.

### ***Upon Your Return...***

Some tropical diseases you could be exposed to in Senegal might not surface until well after your return (rarely, although sometimes years later). If you experience any problems when you return to the USA, please get a check-up and stool test from your physician or a tropical medicine expert.

## VIII. SAFETY GUIDELINES

The EcoYoff L&L Center has had an excellent safety record in all the programs that we have run. We intend to continue this record and believe our success is primarily due to pre-departure counseling and students and faculty acting responsibly toward themselves and each other and being aware of their collective health and safety. Below you will find an outline of some safety policies that we have developed as a guideline for your behavior and for decisions about safety systems. Please read through this and make sure that you are clear about the parameters.

The program faculty are the principal persons responsible for risk management issues, health and safety. They will always have the final say, if a situation is ever questionable. Where specific guidelines are absent, the L&L Center advises both students and faculty to be prudent and conservative in their assessment of appropriate behavior.

### Personal Safety

Your visit here will most likely be free of any problems, but it is definitely important to practice safe behaviors. The first thing that should be remembered is to lock up all of your valuables (especially money and plane tickets). In a society where there is much more communal space and property, valuable personal possessions are always kept under lock and key. This may seem strange at first, but you will see that everyone does it. Families are large and there is often high-traffic through rooms. Anything that is out, or within view, may be asked for or shared. This is why there is “just-in-time” management of small supplies, which may resemble a shortage of things such as candles, blank paper, pens, matches, and small change and is why butter is bought by the pat rather than the stick, sugar bought by the cube and laundry soap sold in single-use sizes. Understanding differences in the rules that regulate shared vs. private property distinctions is a research project in itself and will be a part of your cultural orientation after arrival in Yoff.

Senegalese are generally very friendly to strangers. It is common to get into conversations with people in the street, on the beach, or when visiting friends. This is a great way to learn about the culture and the everyday life around here. However, don't invite strangers to your home if you are alone and don't feel obligated to set a date to meet this person at another time. While the majority of people you meet are honest, caring, interested people, there will be some who want to find out where “the toubab” lives and what is in their room.

A related topic has to do with people who will ask you about help for a visa so they can travel to the US and for monetary support. This is a difficult subject to broach since so many of us are students without a lot of extra income to dispose of. If you are not in the position to help in these situations, briefly explain why - especially that you are a student, you receive no income for your work here and traveling to Senegal costs a lot of money. It is wonderful if you want to help someone who becomes a close friend here to have the chance to visit you at home, but it is not an obligation to write a letter of invitation to every person who asks you!

While Yoff is full of friendly people, almost all of whom you can greet without problems, traveling to Dakar is another story. There are lots of stories about pickpockets, thieves and scam artists that people are more than willing to share. As in any big city, be aware

of what is going on around you. If you are uncomfortable, get out of the situation. You will probably have no problems if you visit the city with a local person. Yet, if you are alone, pay special attention.

A good practice is to photocopy your passport - both the photo and the page showing your entry stamp. Carrying the copy around with you when you leave Yoff will help for random

“controls” by the police and will gain you entry to places where an ID card may be needed. If this copy is lost or stolen, it is significantly less of a problem than losing your passport!

**Health and Safety Guidelines:** The following was adapted from NAFSA’s web site (<http://www.secussa.nafsa.org/safetyabroad/safetyabroad.gif>)

“Because the health and safety of study abroad participants are primary concerns, these guidelines have been developed to provide useful practical guidance to institutions, participants, and parents/guardians/families. The guidelines are intended to be aspirational in nature. Although no set of guidelines can guarantee the health and safety needs of each individual involved in a study abroad program, these guidelines address issues that merit attention and thoughtful judgment. Although they address general considerations, they cannot possibly account for all the inevitable variations in actual cases that arise. Therefore, as specific situations arise, those involved must also rely upon their collective experience and judgment while considering the unique circumstances of each situation.

**Guidelines for Program Sponsors:** To the extent reasonably possible, all program sponsors should endeavor to implement these guidelines as applicable. At the same time, it must be noted that the structure of study abroad programs varies widely and that study abroad is usually a cooperative venture that can involve multiple sponsors. The term "sponsors" refers to all the entities that together develop, offer, and administer study abroad programs. Sponsors include sending institutions, host institutions, program administrators, and placement organizations. The role of an organization in a study abroad program varies considerably from case to case, and it is not possible to specify a division of efforts that will be applicable to all cases. All entities should apply the guidelines in ways consistent with their respective roles.

**Program sponsors should:**

- Conduct periodic assessments of health and safety conditions for the program, and develop and maintain emergency preparedness processes and a crisis response plan.
- Provide health and safety information for prospective participants so that they and their parents/guardians/families can make informed decisions concerning preparation, participation and behavior while on the program.
- Provide orientation to participants prior to the program and as needed on site, which includes information on safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the host country, dealing with health and safety issues, potential health and safety risks, and appropriate emergency response measures.
- Consider health and safety issues in evaluating the appropriateness of an individual's participation in a study abroad program.
- Either provide appropriate health and travel accident (emergency evacuation, repatriation) insurance to participants, or provide information about how to obtain appropriate coverage. Require participants to show evidence of appropriate coverage.
- Conduct appropriate inquiry regarding the potential health and safety risks of the local environment of the program, including program-sponsored accommodation, events, excursions and other activities, on an ongoing basis and provide information and assistance to participants and their parents / guardians / families as needed.

- Conduct appropriate inquiry regarding available medical and professional services, provide information for participants and their parents /guardians / families, and help participants obtain the services they may need.
- Provide appropriate and ongoing health and safety training for program directors and staff, including guidelines with respect to intervention and referral, and working within the limitations of their own competencies.
- Communicate applicable codes of conduct and the consequences of noncompliance to participants. Take appropriate action when aware that participants are in violation.
- Obtain current and reliable information concerning health and safety risks, and provide that information to program administrators and participants.
- In cases of serious health problems, injury, or other significant health and safety circumstances, maintain good communication among all program sponsors and others who need to know.
- Provide information for participants and their parents / guardians / families regarding when and where the sponsor's responsibility ends, and the range of aspects of participants' overseas experiences that are beyond the sponsor's control. In particular, program sponsors generally:
  - Cannot guarantee or assure the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from the study abroad environments.
  - Cannot monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants.
  - Cannot prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities.
  - Cannot assure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings or provide or pay for legal representation for participants.
  - Cannot assume responsibility for the actions of persons not employed or otherwise engaged by the program sponsor, for events that are not part of the program, or that are beyond the control of the sponsor, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.
  - Cannot assure that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country.

**Responsibilities of Participants:** In Study Abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own health and safety abroad through the decisions they make before and during the program and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

**Program participants should:**

- Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the sponsor that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in host countries.
- Consider their health and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program.
- Make available to the sponsor accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.

- Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
- Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
- Inform parents/guardians/families, and any others who may need to know, about their participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.
- Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the program, and obey host-country laws.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
- Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
- Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in host country.
- Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well-being.

### **Recommendations to Parents/Guardians/Families.**

- In Study Abroad as in other settings, parents, guardians, and families can play an important role in the health and safety of participants by helping them make decisions and by influencing their behavior overseas.
- When appropriate, parents/guardians/families should:
  - Obtain and carefully evaluate health and safety information related to the program, as provided by the sponsor and other sources.
  - Be involved in the decision of the participant to enroll in a particular program.
  - Engage the participant in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues, insurance needs, and emergency procedures related to living abroad.
  - Be responsive to requests from the program sponsor for information regarding the participant.
  - Keep in touch with the participant.
  - Be aware that some information may most appropriately be provided by the participant rather than the program.”

## **Student Safety Policies**

**Urban Activities:** When in large cities you will use a buddy system. i.e. traveling with at least one other person. Each situation should be discussed, especially if it means being out after dark and arriving home after dark.

**Swimming:** Most Senegalese beaches are not safe for swimming out further than waste-deep in the ocean. This being said, you can do a great deal of pleasant paddling and surfing without going deeper. When no lifeguard is present at a swimming area, it is essential that at least one member of the group is out of the water, watching swimmers and warning them to stay close to shore at all times. Faculty must be involved in approving the site and parameters of a swimming situation. Swimming without a faculty member present is possible when the site is a known one, but discussion with a faculty member must precede it.

**Boating:** Students will not go boating unless it is a planned activity approved by faculty. When traveling overseas it is difficult if not impossible to find life jackets or other safety items. Assess the situation carefully, know your group's swimming ability and make a decision together. When life jackets are available, they will be worn at all times when in the boat.

**Vehicles:** Students will not ride on mopeds or motorcycles at any time during the program. This is the standard of practice (Peace Corps) and is not negotiable. Students may not ride in any private car in Senegal that is not approved by faculty first. Public transportation (taxis, buses, vans) is the only form of approved transportation. Travel by night is strongly discouraged. Use reputable drivers and check for intoxication.

**Climbing:** Rock climbing, cliff climbing, and/or tree climbing is not allowed without a professional rock climber to teach the skill. Faculty reserves the right to interrupt a situation they feel is potentially dangerous.

**In the Backcountry:** A hiking system in which each participant understands his/her responsibility to the group must be established before students and faculty enters the backcountry. A faculty (or otherwise GENSEN approved person) will accompany the group on all backpacks and day hikes.

**Power Tools:** Use of power tools by students is at the discretion and judgment of the faculty. Students may not use chain saws, weed cutters, or tools with whirling blades.

**Hitch-hiking:** No student may hitch-hike during the program.

## **Sexual Harassment Policy**

GENSEN, in keeping with college and university procedure, has an official sexual harassment policy. For your information we have described the policy below, and outlined the attending grievance procedure.

“Sexual advances, expression or implied, for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct to a sexual nature constitute as sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made wither explicitly or implicitly a term of condition of an individual’s education;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis of academic decisions affecting that individual;
3. Such conduct had the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual’s academic or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment, or affects such an individual’s freedoms within such educational environment.

**Grievance procedure:** If you think you or someone else is being sexually harassed, seek help. Any student wishing to file a grievance related to the above policy should talk to an appropriate faculty member or the Executive Director. Faculty are directed to notify the Director immediately upon receiving such a complaint. The Director has been designated by the Board to answer questions and respond to concerns relating to sexual harassment. We suggest that all students, especially females, stay with at least one other group member until they become accustomed to the area, and understand which places are safer to be in than others. Faculty and the Director of Programs should be notified immediately if any incident occurs.

**Removal from the Program:** The faculty, in consultation with the Director, reserves the right to ask a student to leave the program if they are in any way jeopardizing their own safety, the safety of the group, or the safety of other people. Safety is defined as both physical and emotional safety.

## IX. CULTURE SHOCK

While your Senegal program will start with a cultural orientation, the following information may be helpful. The following was adapted from the USC Center For Global Education's Safety Abroad Handbook:

(<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/safetyhandbook.html>).

“Experiencing new cultures, and obtaining a better understanding of your own culture, can result in some of the most positive, life-altering experiences students have while studying abroad. When going abroad, students will experience differences in manners, beliefs, customs, laws, language, art, religion, values, concept of self, family organization, social organization, government, behavior, etc. All of these elements combine to form culture.

While the introduction to new and foreign cultures greatly benefits students, it can also be overwhelming. Cultural differences can be so great that a student may need extra time to adjust. This is normal. The new cultural elements a student encounters may be so different that they seem “shocking” in comparison to cultural norms they are used to at home. A student’s reaction of feeling “shocked” by a culture’s attributes can manifest itself in mood swings ranging from anger, to depression, to panic. It can be difficult to explain culture shock, especially if you have never been through it. As Bruce La Brack wrote in his article “The Missing Linkage: The Process of Integrating Orientation and Reentry”:

"Just as you can't really describe the taste of a hot fudge sundae to someone who has never experienced one, it is difficult to actually convey just how disorienting entering another culture can be to a student without any cross-cultural experience."

Prepare yourself for some down times; they happen to practically everyone trying to make it in a culture they have never lived in before. Realizing that what you are feeling is natural, and that other students are probably experiencing the same thing, will help you to avoid discouragement. Culture shock has its ups and downs, good days and bad—but you will pull through. Many students studying abroad experience times when they feel depressed. However, the overwhelming majority comes away from their experience abroad even stronger and better adapted for living and working with others.

Culture shock and its effects can occur in a number of stages. However, culture shock is not an exact step-by-step process; every student doesn't experience culture shock the same way or at the same time. When things are going well, a student may feel comfortable, adjusted and relaxed. When negative or stressful situations spring up, a student often lapses back into feeling depressed rather than happy and well-adjusted. Sometimes a “normal” level of stress that a student can easily deal with at home suddenly turns into a high-stress situation abroad because a student is outside of his/her comfort zone. The following 10 steps of cultural adjustment outlined by Steven Rhinesmith show how culture shock can be like a roller coaster ride of emotions:

### **Rhinesmith's Ten Stages of Adjustment**

1. initial anxiety
2. initial elation
3. initial culture shock
4. superficial adjustment
5. depression-frustration
6. acceptance of host culture
7. return anxiety
8. return elation
9. re-entry shock
10. reintegration

Riding the roller coaster of culture shock, a student follows a natural pattern of hitting peaks and valleys. The high points of excitement and interest are succeeded by lower points of depression, disorientation, or frustration. Each student will experience these ups and downs in different degrees of intensity and for different lengths of time. The process is necessary in order to make the transition from one culture to another; it helps a student or traveler to balance out and adjust.

Prior to going abroad, students may be excited about new adventures to come. The student arrives and perhaps begins to develop increasing independence as he/she starts to experience a country's culture. At first, a student's expectations may be too high. Through close contact with orientation advisors, introduction to housing, and supported group tours, a student may see things almost as a tourist would during the first few weeks abroad.

A student may be comparing and contrasting his/her home culture with the culture abroad. It is common to focus on what they see as weaknesses in foreign cultures. Students tend to point out what a foreign culture lacks; this often leads to frustration over what is "missing" or what can't be obtained abroad the same way as at home. Students may be challenged on a regular basis by different ways of living abroad (banking, eating, relationships, etc.). Negative feelings and frustrations may reach a level where you begin to recognize you are going through "culture shock".

As a student gets used to the ways abroad, things that seemed like a "crisis" may now simply be seen as different ways of doing things. Most students gradually adjust their lifestyles to be balanced with a country's own cultural norms. The cultural traits that once annoyed or bothered a student generally come to be accepted as normal. Students usually begin to understand and appreciate the cultural differences between the U.S. and abroad. However, if problems arise, a student may briefly return to the "frustration" stage of culture shock.

As a student begins to adapt more and more, he/she may have a new set of friends, may be traveling more, and may even be dreaming in another language. The culture abroad may now become the "normal" way of living. The challenge here is that the better a student becomes integrated to the ways of a country's culture, the more difficult it may be to re-adapt to the U.S. upon return home. The U.S. just won't look the same way it did before leaving to study abroad; a student may see home with new eyes and may also be more critical of U.S. cultural traditions once thought to be "normal". This is called reverse culture shock. Fear of reverse culture shock should not deter students from trying to integrate as fully as possible while abroad. No matter how integrated a student becomes while abroad, he or she will probably still be "shocked" by differences noted at home after so much time spent abroad

**Making Friends:** While abroad, try to make friends with locals. These people can help explain cultural practices and customs. Learning about a country's culture firsthand from the locals may make you more tolerant and lessen your culture shock. They can help you with the language and introduce you to things that tourists and vacationers never experience. They also protect you from the worst blows of culture shock that come from the temptation to only hang around with other Americans. Above all, pay attention to the unique viewpoints you bring with you. Just as a foreign culture will offer new insight to you, so too can you offer new insight to locals you meet. Making friends while abroad helps foster the international camaraderie that overseas living is all about.

**Stress:** Stress has many definitions. Stress affects everyone differently. The additional/new kinds of stress you may encounter abroad may lead to anxiety/panic disorders, depression,

paranoia, eating disorders, and other phobias. Any mental health challenges you have prior to going abroad may become more severe once you experience the effects of culture shock. Even mental fatigue from constant language immersion and time change may cause the symptoms of culture shock to seem overwhelming.

**Worldwide Concern:** The symptoms of cultural adjustment a student experiences may be more intense due to the events of September 11th and other worldwide threats. Students, parents and administrators may have additional anxiety; they may also take studying abroad and safety abroad more seriously than they did prior to September 11th. Any added feelings of panic or fear related to the international war against terrorism can directly affect how well a student deals with culture shock. Because terrorism is an international phenomenon, terrorist threats in one part of the world--away from where you are studying--may create a chain reaction with consequences for the country in which you are studying. A threat to one country may be taken as a threat to all.

It is important to remember not to fear another country's culture; no culture is wrong or bad—it's just different from your own. If you let world events turn your culture shock into culture fear, you will not be able to fully adapt or integrate into the culture of the country in which you are studying. Remember, counseling is always a good option; talking to someone can usually help to work through anxiety or fears. Students can also talk to a study abroad staff member about their challenges in cultural adjustment abroad. For some students, the process is relatively simple, others may need counseling to help deal with their mental health challenges and stress abroad.

**Reverse Culture Shock:** One of the biggest challenges for students who participate in study abroad can be the difficulty in re-adapting to the realities in the U.S. Many students who study abroad go through many changes, re-examining their priorities, their values, and what they think of themselves and the U.S. Reverse culture shock may be more difficult than the culture shock they felt when abroad. If severe, it is important that students are able to seek help/counseling to help them through this.

So what is reverse culture shock? First, let's examine the process of re-entry. There are usually two elements that characterize a study abroad student's re-entry:

1. An idealized view of home
2. The expectation of total familiarity (that nothing at home has changed while you have been away)

Often students expect to be able to pick up exactly where they left off. A problem arises when reality doesn't meet these expectations. Home may fall short of what you envisioned, and things may have changed at home: your friends and family have their own lives, and things have happened since you've been gone. This is part of why home may feel so foreign.

**Feelings You May Experience:** The inconsistency between expectations and reality, plus the lack of interest on the part of family and friends (nobody seems to really care about all of your "when I was abroad" stories) may result in: frustration, feelings of alienation, and mutual misunderstandings between study abroad students and their friends and family. Of course, the difficulty of readjustment will vary for different individuals, but, in general, the better integrated you have become to the culture abroad and overseas lifestyle, the harder it is to readjust during re-entry.

Reverse culture shock is usually described in four stages:

1. Disengagement
2. Initial euphoria
3. Irritability and hostility
4. Readjustment and adaptation

**Stage 1** begins before you leave the host country. You begin thinking about re-entry and making your preparations for your return home. You also begin to realize that it's time to say good-bye to your overseas friends and to the place you've come to call home. The hustle and bustle of finals, good-bye parties, and packing can intensify your feelings of sadness and frustration. You already miss the friends you've made, and you are reluctant to leave. Or, you may make your last few days fly by so fast that you don't have time to reflect on your emotions and experiences.

**Stage 2** usually begins shortly before departure, and it is characterized by feelings of excitement and anticipation – even euphoria – about returning home. This is very similar to the initial feelings of fascination and excitement you may have when you first entered the country where you studied. You may be very happy to see your family and friends again, and they are also happy to see you. The length of this stage varies, and often ends with the realization that most people are not as interested in your experiences abroad as you had hoped. They will politely listen to your stories for a while, but you may find that soon they are ready to move on to the next topic of conversation.

This is often one of the transitions to **Stage 3** of Reverse Culture Shock, which parallels the Culture Shock you may have experienced when you first entered the country where you studied. In fact, your transition into Stage 3 might occur sooner than it did when you first went overseas. You may experience feelings of frustration, anger, alienation, loneliness, disorientation, and helplessness and not understand exactly why. You might quickly become irritated or critical of others and of American culture. Depression, feeling like a stranger at home, and the longing to go back overseas are also not uncommon reactions. You may also feel less independent than you were abroad.

Most people are then able to move onto **Stage 4**, which is a gradual readjustment to life at home. Things will start to seem a little more normal again, and you will probably fall back into some old routines, but things won't be exactly the same as how you left them. You have most likely developed new attitudes, beliefs, habits, as well as personal and professional goals, and you will see things differently now. The important thing is to try to incorporate the positive aspects of your international experience with the positive aspects of your life at home.

## X. Making a Study Abroad Experience Count at Home

**Post-study Abroad Advisement:** After you begin to readjust to being back home, visit your academic advisor. S/he will be able to inform you of whether your study abroad credits have transferred properly. Even if you are not planning on using those credits toward your graduation, the records are still important and may be needed if you decide to go on and pursue a higher level of education. You should also check with your academic advisor to make sure that you are registered for all of the courses that you need for the upcoming semester, and that you have filled out any financial aid or tuition forms that you will need for that year.

Sometimes studying abroad will affect you to the point where you may decide to pursue another area of study. This meeting with your academic advisor is a good time to discuss any changes that you might want to make to your class selection or even your current major. Your advisor will be able to discuss your options with you and help you decide what the best academic path for you may be.

**Career Development:** If you are considering a career with an international component, or looking for a job overseas, we also recommend that you visit your campus Career Center. The Career Center often provides various services for students seeking employment, and this is generally a good place to start looking for international job opportunities. If your career plans require a higher degree of education, you might consider graduate school, either in the U.S. or abroad. Your U.S. university's academic and career counselors can be helpful in providing you with information about career requirements and a headstart on your job search.

**Careers and Resumes:** When you start looking for a job or career, think of the professional and personal growth you've undergone while overseas. If you can present these skills on your resume and in your interview(s) well, you can impress almost any employer. IES, Institute for the International Education of Students, has a useful website that will help you learn to "market" your international experience (a link to this site is provided in the "Resources" section). To sum up IES's resume tips: Make sure your international experience gets noticed by formatting your resume to highlight the overseas institutions at which you studied, or with separate categories such as "International Education" or "International Experience". List any languages that you speak, internships, major projects, or field experience you had, in the appropriate categories. Also briefly describe what you did and the skills and attributes you learned while abroad. If possible, try to incorporate into your interview some of the significant learning, communication, problem-solving, etc. experiences you had.

**Study Abroad Re-Visited:** Some students choose to continue participation in study abroad, either through the same program or through a new program or location. If you are unable to go abroad for another whole semester, there are a variety of programs offered during the summer that range from 3 days to 3 months. If your experience was a positive one, consider our other January, Summer or Semester programs in ecovillages around the world or talk to your academic advisor about what other programs might benefit you. For more help, refer to our "Choosing a Program" section.

Also, if you're interested in continuing your study abroad experience, there are many ways to fund research or post-undergraduate studies. For example, the Department of State Fulbright Program, the National Security Education Program (NSEP), Rotary International, the Rhodes Scholarship Program, the Luce Scholarship Program, and the Marshall Scholarship Program

are excellent ways to fund your studies overseas. There are many other scholarships out there, as well as on-line scholarship search engines (some of which you can find in the "Resources" section of this handbook).

**Independent Travel:** Independent travel is an option for students who feel that they are confident enough to tour on their own. If you decide to travel independently, your student travel office or a travel agent can be helpful. There are numerous travel guidebooks and resources on the Internet. Also, ask friends who have traveled independently to find the best places to go and tips on what to do while you're there. See our "Resources" section for links to purchasing guidebooks and booking tours.

**Internships Abroad:** Some students have such a positive study abroad experience that they decide that they would enjoy a career that would give them an opportunity to live and work overseas. There are several ways to go about this. One way is to investigate the possibility of doing an internship abroad. This can be an excellent way to not only be able to live abroad again, but also to get experience in a field in which you are interested. Many internships are paid; others can count towards college credit.

**Careers Abroad:** Some students decide to change their field of study to an area such as international relations, which includes a broad background in international policies, politics and history. If changing your major is a little extreme, try taking some international studies classes or focus in on an aspect of your major that could somehow be incorporated into a career overseas. Many international career opportunities lie in the areas of industry, education, government and the non-profit sector. In many cases, you can begin by seeking employment domestically with a company, firm, or group that has international branches. To gain information on career opportunities abroad, talk with a career counselor at your university, and figure out what path will work best for you as an individual.

**Volunteering:** Volunteering is another great way to go abroad again. There are opportunities available worldwide. In many cases, only short-term commitments are required. However, there are organizations, such as the Peace Corps, that can allow for years of rewarding work abroad. Volunteering can be a good way to defer college loans for a while. Some volunteerships even give you a modest monthly stipend.

**Alumni Network:** The class listserv that was set up prior to the program will not end after the program, but rather provide an easy way for alumni to continue to stay in touch with each other and learn about alumni gatherings such as reunions.