

Useful Information For New ISD Staff

New Hire Handbook
2017-18

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OVERVIEW

When organizing your shipment, tin/plastic trunks are a useful investment as they are good protection should your goods be left outside on the way here (and they most likely will!).

If you are sending a large shipment (including desks, lounge, tables and chairs and electronics etc), be prepared for a whopping great big customs bill. The amount of customs tax you pay is whimsical at best, utterly unfair and inexplicable at worst. Be aware, you should allow for 10 – 20% of your shipping bill (i.e. customs and port charges) to be charged after your shipment arrives.

Some of us had a different experience:

For example – A 3-4cubic metre shipment is reasonably small and did not pose any problems in terms of customs tax and took about 6-12+ weeks to arrive. Double check that all your shipping is fully insured.

If you are a single or just don't have much to ship, it may be better to send it air freight (excess baggage or unaccompanied). It is cheap and gets here very quickly with fewer custom delays (roughly about 3 tea chest sized boxes and 3 smaller book boxes). One teacher even sent her few items DHL (2 packing crates) and it arrived before anyone else's.

Also, be aware that some things may go missing from your shipment, so itemise your list and take photos of valuables. Put irreplaceable things in your hand luggage. Double check that all your shipping is fully insured.

Some teachers feel they could find anything they need here while others are more particular about what they want and need.

Please email us if you have any additional questions or need more clarification.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Household

- Coffee

North End coffee shop / Gloria Jean's coffee supply freshly roasted coffee which many teachers frequently visit and enjoy.

- Yummy snacks

It's nice to have a few of your favourite snacks or foodstuffs too. It may not be available here, do email and ask if you like. Muesli bars are usually available. Crisps, Doritos/Tostitos and a variety of nuts are freely available. 100 taka a bar for western chocolate – you can buy in most stores.

- Crockery, cutlery and glassware

The school provides a set of basic crockery, cutlery (including chopping knives) and glasses but you may prefer to buy/bring your own. There are very nice sets of export quality china available, so you don't really need to buy any to bring. Maids are sometimes hard on glasses and china.

- Cookware

The school gives you a basic set of fry pans and saucepans. Many teachers wish they had

brought their cooking pots, wok, and good knives. If you can find them here they are very expensive. Bring good quality utensils such as mashers, garlic pressers, non-stick spatulas and so on as they are hard to find here. Also a pepper grinder and a good peeler, you will be glad you did. Plastic storage containers (Lock N Lock brand) are available.

- **Gourmet cookery supplies**

If you cook and are shipping a container bring all those nice additions to make your food better than common and into the gourmet. For example: sun dried tomatoes, pesto, any ethnic needs, instant yeast. Dried Indian spices of all kinds are available.

- **Gardening - Herbs**

Seeds are a fun addition as most apartments have a balcony and a rooftop and fresh herbs are scarce except for mint, coriander, and sometimes lemongrass shipped in from Thailand. Parsley is available only for one month of the year. Many of us wish we had bought basil seeds as it is impossible to get here!!!

Bedding

- It is becoming easier to find **sheets** in Dhaka, but the quality is poor and the designs can be an acquired taste! Solid colours can be made to order but not the same as you may be used to at home. Bring flat king-size sheets, as they will fit any bed. Coloured sheets are best, rather than white (light colours don't seem to stay white for very long.) One set of cotton bed linen will be in your apartment. Single sheets are fine for children but they need to be flat, NOT fitted as the beds are a little bigger than in most Western countries, although some have bought fitted sheets (single and king sized) and they have been fine.
- Local **pillows** are now much easier to find. They are much softer than they used to be but if you are fussy it would be best to bring your own (and they are great for padding the shipment).
- You **will** need some warm bedding for winter, blankets are available here or bring a light duvet if you prefer.
Remember it is usually chilly for three months in the winter (it gets about as low as 5c at night but as the apartments aren't insulated, it can feel colder than that).
- Towels supplied are not very good quality. It is possible to purchase good quality in Dhaka but they are expensive so you may want to bring one set with you and ship more with your goods.
- **Mattresses are very hard.** You can ship your own mattress or bring a mattress topper or memory foam. You won't regret it even if you do like a hard bed.

Furniture

Some people have been happy they brought favourite items of furniture, including beds, chairs, etc to create a homely atmosphere in their apartment and to feel more comfortable. Good quality furniture can also be bought or made locally. Local crafts and artworks can be bought depending on your taste. If you like rustic and brightly coloured artworks there are lots here. There are wonderful fabrics for decorating and cloth and labour is very cheap so you can decorate as much as you want. Picture framing is very cheap here.

ELECTRONICS

Electronic Equipment: the voltage is 220

- You will have no problem bringing your **laptop** computer with you but other electronics i.e. stereo systems may be subject to an import tax. Some people have brought DVD players in their hand luggage with no problems.

****THIS IS WHERE CUSTOMS WILL GET YOU. ONLY BRING THE NECESSITIES****

- Australian & UK appliances are fine but North Americans will need a converter for small appliances such as blenders, DVD players etc. If they are 110-220 compatible they will be fine.
- You can buy most electrical goods here, ranging from cheap to well known brand names.
- Bottom line: if you have a particular electronic item that you would miss, add it in anyway. For example: **coffee makers, stereo, DVD players, coffee grinders, blenders, juicers, cake mixers, bread makers**, etc, but be aware of customs duty.
- Bring **transformers/adapters**. They are available here, but are not good quality.
- Bring your **rechargeable batteries** with you in your check-in suitcase rather than shipping to ensure they arrive.
- If you really feel the cold then you may want to bring portable electric heaters. A few teachers have bought them here for those two-three cold/cooler months. They are not very good and don't heat more than the area around one chair.

SPORTING GOODS

- If you are a keen and adventurous **cyclist**, you may want to bring your mountain bike. However, there are stores here that sell a variety of bikes at a reasonable price. If your bike requires specialised parts bring them along, they are impossible to find here.
- **Tennis and squash** are popular here. If you like to play/want to learn you could you can buy a racket here but they are a little more expensive. If you are a member of an International club, you can get access to a court and lessons.
- There are two nice and cheap **golf** courses and some teachers play on the weekends.
- Bring your **swimsuit**, as swimming is very popular. Some teachers swim in the afternoons or on the weekends at the school, or visit the pools at the clubs. One piece bathers or bikinis are common and acceptable at the clubs. At school teachers tend to wear either a one piece or board shorts and a rashie over the top of their bathers.
- **Yoga** mats are available here and variety of classes are offered

BUG ISSUES

- Mosquitoes are everywhere all year round. Dengue fever can be contracted too so you really need to bring some repellent with you and bring more in your shipping. Tropical strength is best. (North Americans: try "Deep Woods".) Lots of teachers use local mosquito repellent cream Odomos and find it cheap and effective. „Knock down□ spray for rooms, mosquito coils and plug in liquid mosquito repellents are also easily available.
- There are no cockroach „hotel□ box trays so if you are coming from a country that carries these, throw a bunch into the shipment – you□ll be grateful. Surface spray has proven to be useful; you can find it here in some shops.

TOILETRIES

- Bring enough sunscreen, makeup and perfumes etc. to last until the next trip to a country with a decent duty free or shops.
- Lots of beauty products here have whiteners. If fair skin is not your thing bring your creams with you.
- Imported (multinational) brands of personal grooming products like shampoo, conditioner, facial cleanser, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, mouthwash, dental floss, deodorant, shaving cream, cotton swabs, cotton balls, etc. All are available, though selection may be limited. If you have certain brands that you like bring it in your shipment.
- If you are a light sleeper bring good earplugs
- Tampons and condoms are available but small variety

CLOTHES

Tailoring

It is very cheap to get clothes copied here (men's and women's) so you can get clothes made up in cotton, silk or linen. Copies work out best if the fabric used is the same as the original, so if you have pure cotton or linen garments, they are ideal. Wonderful cottons are available so get things made up here for the hot months.

Work Clothes Be smart and cool.

- **MEN:** Smart casual with closed shoes – but no jeans
- **WOMEN:** Short-sleeved tops/shirts/blouses with trousers or skirts. Open or closed smart shoes.
- It is cold/cool weather for around three months in the winter and some teachers wished they had brought more **warm clothes** for teaching in. Tights, long socks and stockings would help, as the floors are cold and draffy. (This all depends on your cold tolerance. Some of the teachers LOVE the break from the heat and found a ¾ length shirt was fine during the cool months.)

Casual Clothes

- You can wear what you like once inside the clubs; so cool, poolside wear is good to have (handy for beach holidays, too).
- You will be able to supplement this wardrobe if necessary, by going to clothing sales organized by various organizations. These sales are fairly common fundraisers for NGOs: they get clothes donated from garment manufacturers, and then sell them cheaply. It's possible to get good stuff at these sales, but you have to be willing to fight the crowds and search through the piles. Another option is going to places like Banga Bazaar, where "seconds" from the garment factories are sold in a market setting. These experiences are definitely not for everyone, so plan accordingly. At these sales you can get men's, women's and some children's clothes.
- Some women find local dress more comfortable (you can buy it easily when you arrive), plenty of us wear western clothes which is fine, but the more flesh showing and the tighter the fit, the more attention you will receive from people. Some women on staff and around Dhaka wear light scarves over their shoulders.
- Casual clothing is available and cheap, but there isn't a great variety; the sizes are small and the style may not be to your taste. You will not go short of t-shirts here, but the sizes are often

more Asian than Western and more robust people may struggle to find t-shirts that fit in Dhaka.

- Decent boxer shorts, bras and pants are hard to find. Bring enough for the year.
- Throughout the year there are often dress-up parties. Eg: Halloween, 70's, Book Week, etc. You can get costumes made easily, but may want to bring a few fun items.

Evening wear

Hard to find for ladies unless you are very small, but the tailors can make dresses for formal occasions. If you like to party, bring some or experience your local tailor and have them made.

Winter clothes

It does get cold here in winter and apartments don't have heating, so you **will need** fleeces/jumpers/sweaters (also useful for mountain holidays in Nepal) warm pants, skirts and some closed shoes. Most would have killed for those cosy sheepskin slippers in the cold season. Some people thought neck scarves were needed.

Footwear

- Shoes need to be sturdy and practical since some of the roads and pavements are tough on footwear. The quality and variety of the sports footwear is not great, especially for women. Most of us bring trainers or running shoes from overseas
- There are Bata and Hush Puppy shoe shops selling modern and comfortable styles at western prices.
- Children's trainers or sizes under a UK 4, USA 5 or 37 are not available unless with Velcro and are not good brands.
- It's hard to find shoes or trainers for the larger foot (UK 7+ ladies/UK 10+ men).

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Clothing

- Bring at least a basic wardrobe to last the whole year. Remember to bring long sleeves and long pants to keep the mosquitoes away, and a couple of warmer items for winter.

Toys

- Pack some toys and books in your suitcases when you come in August!! Do not put everything in your shipment and expect it to arrive in a timely manner.
- The toy selection here mostly consists of very expensive imports, very cheap Chinese toys of poor quality, and a small selection of nice, local handmade items. In other words, the selection is not ideal. Plan ahead and bring toys and books to last the whole year, beginning to end. *Unless you know for certain that you will be going home at winter break – or somewhere with good shopping, like Thailand – bring at least a couple of birthday and holiday gifts along.
- If your child likes play-doh, bring cream of tartar to make your own, as play-doh is very expensive here.
- You may want to bring a few extra generic toys to give as gifts when your child is invited to birthday parties. You may be relieved to have something different and interesting to give a child, considering the limited variety of potential gifts here.
- Bring formula powder and disposable nappies in your shipment as they are expensive to buy.

Books

- E-books work great for many of us. Bring your e-reader with you.
- There are a couple of bookstores, but the selection is extremely slim. Plan ahead for your child's development and bring books, activity books, crafts, etc to stimulate and entertain him/her throughout the year.
- The school has a library with over 30,000 books for all ages, including some board books for babies. The selection is decent, but not what one would find in a good library in an industrialized country. We brought a small personal library for our child – about 100 books – and we supplement with books from the school library.
- Some teachers order books from Amazon that are delivered to school through DHL mail system
- You may want to consider bringing books about moving and a new culture. Two that suit preschool-aged children are *Moving House* by Stephen Cartwright (Usborne Books) and *We're Moving* by Heather Maisner (Kingfisher). Similarly, one multicultural book that may be useful is *My First Ramadan* by Karen Katz (Henry Holt).

Medications and safety:

The school arranges to have bottled water delivered to teachers' apartments, but the water is not fluoridated. Before coming, you may like to get a prescription from your paediatrician for multivitamins with fluoride, and bring a year's supply with you. (This would apply mostly to children under 6, who benefit most from fluoride.)

If there are brands of medicine that your child will take, e.g., strawberry Calpol, bring it with you. At 2am, you will be glad you did!

SHIPPING

Your shipping can take as long as 8 –14 weeks to arrive so it is a good idea to pack enough clothes, medication and toiletries in your cabin and hold luggage to last you until it all arrives.

Good rule of thumb: if it's important or precious, BRING IT WITH YOU ON THE PLANE.

Here are the basics that will keep you in good stead until your shipment arrives:

FAMILY ITEMS

For those of you with children it's a good idea to bring a few of their favourite toys and DVDs with you until your shipment arrives. As part of the school uniform your children will need white socks (both for everyday use & for sport) and black shoes. Some people have found these items difficult to get, so bring them with you. Your children will be measured up for uniforms when you arrive. Bring school records and reports with you – not in your shipping.

OTHER THINGS YOU MAY NEED

Passport Photographs

Bring a supply of passport size photos with you, 16-20 at least. You can get them here quite cheaply

but it will save you the hassle of rushing around when you first arrive, as you will need them for the entire initial form filling. Another handy hint is to scan a set of 4 photos and keep them on file. Then you can just print off more as and when you need them.

Alcohol (aka Medicine)

Bring your duty free alcohol allowance. Beer, wine, vodka, gin and whiskey are relatively easy to find, depending on the political situation but we have to buy duty paid at the Diplomatic Warehouse. Expats will not have any hassle bringing 1 litre (possibly 2) of spirits each into the country - if you don't drink but are willing to bring in some to sell to colleagues then gin/vodka/rum would all be easily sold.

Many also pack wine or spirits in checked bags. Technically these bags could be checked, but no one has ever had a problem bringing alcohol into Dhaka in their checked luggage.

Mobile Phones

You can bring your mobile phone with you and get a SIM card here. You can also buy your phone here from basic Nokia to smart phones (Androids or iPhones). A cheap basic mobile will set you back about \$50 USD. Some teachers have chosen to use global roaming as well as a local phone but obviously this is an expensive option (some found it handy for when they travelled to other destinations although you can pick up a SIM card in most countries easily).

School provides you with the SIM card on the day you arrive. You can add unlimited internet access.

First Aid Kits

Some teachers brought along their first aid kits. A good first aid kit has the basics you need and saves you searching for good quality antiseptic etc. It would also be a good idea to bring a traveller's first aid kit, they have a few things that really came in handy for some.

VACCINATIONS AND MEDICATION

Vaccinations

Please follow the guidelines set out by World Health Authorities (www.who.int/en) and suggestions by your own doctor. Many teachers get their vaccinations here at the Apollo Hospital. The cost in most cases is cheaper due to the vaccines being subsidized by World Health Organization.

Medication

You can get almost all medications here (under a different brand name and sometimes out of date). Painkillers and antihistamines are cheap. If you have a prescription for something specific or less commonly used you may want to bring a supply of that with you or ask if it is available. You can buy vitamins here, but good quality vitamins are not always available.

MONEY AND BANKING

Money

On arrival, the school provides a cash advance of \$1,000 that will be taken out of your pay over three months. It is recommended that you bring an additional US\$500 as a safety net if you wish. There are ATMs. Don't bring travellers cheques. If you have hard currency, bring it as you can use it

on your holidays outside the country.

Banking

If you don't have one, you should set up your home bank account (where you are a passport holder) before you leave, this will be for your dollar salary. Make sure you have all the correct account numbers and bank IDs (IBAN, SWIFT number, routing address etc) for depositing money. School will help you organize an bank account in which your local salary is deposited but this can take 3 months. You can legally remit up to 75% of your monthly salary back to your home account but ensure that you have sufficient funds in your account to meet any loan repayments prior to setting up your bank account here in Dhaka.

Local Salary

You will be given your local salary by 25th of each month in cash (a lot of cash!) until your account is set up. You have a safe in your apartment for cash and valuables. It may take several months to set up your account because of visa issues. So if you have mortgage commitments that cannot be covered by the overseas element of your salary either negotiate with your provider for delayed payment or leave sufficient funds in the account to cover until October/November.

SOCIAL LIFE & KEEPING BUSY

Your social life in Dhaka will be what you make it. It might not be on your doorstep, but it's there if you want to find it! The clubs have regular parties and barbecues and people get together in each other's houses. There are concerts and art exhibitions, trade fairs and festivals, so the opportunities are there...

Most people are able to join an expat club in Dhaka although this does take time for some people. Depending on nationality this can be quick and simple or frustrating and drawn out. There is a one-time membership fee and clubs also charge regular monthly fees. When you first arrive, other staff members can sign you into their clubs, though most people can only sign in two people. Returning teachers will be able to tell you where to go to make applications when you arrive. In the clubs if you are not a member you pay with tabs. This means you must buy a booklet for each club and pay with these papers. (You will receive more information during your initial orientation, too.)

Both the school and the tower have fitness centres with basics such as cardio equipment as well as weights and benches.

Some things to do include:

Dining - There are some great restaurants in Dhaka, including Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Turkish and western style. There is also Movenpick Ice-cream, Club Gelato and Andersen's Ice-cream. Mmmmm!

Running/HASH - there is a bunch of people from school who run before/after work and the HASH is a group of runners that get together and run I guess?

Ultimate Frisbee

Cycling

Cinema

Latino Party

Spanish Party

Tennis – at the clubs

Football aka Soccer

The Book Club - mainly ISD related people

Softball – weekend games

Dhaka Stage

International sporting events, e.g. World Cup Cricket, South East Asian Games

You might like to bring some of the following:

- Decks of cards
- Poker kit
- Board Games
- Sporting equipment (golf clubs, tennis/squash racket etc)
- Camping Gear (especially if you plan to hike and travel around India/Nepal)
- Wigs and dress up clothes for parties
- Mountain bikes (people who have brought them have been grateful they did) On Dhaka roads , road bikes are not so practical!
- Any hobbies you have, it's a good idea to bring anything you may need e.g. art supplies, scrapbooking, sewing machines, darts/dartboard...
- Good books are hard to come by so make sure you bring some with you. Many of us tend to share them around and borrow from the school library and teacher library; it's nice to have something different to read.

Some words from current staff members:

(Please keep in mind these opinions are not representative of the school, the board or the social committee as a whole).

Upfront, Dhaka is about choices and whether you enjoy your time here largely depends on your attitude. If you focus on the negatives you will more than likely hate it here. Dhaka may not be the most glamorous or clean city but the people here know how to have a good time. Let your hair down, let go of the things that could possibly get on your nerves and let the good times roll!

You can choose to look at the mind numbing poverty, or you can be part of local charity actions and see how far the numerous NGO's have come in helping people get back on their feet.

You can choose to choke on the pollution that surrounds the heavy traffic snarls or you can kick your feet up with a glass of wine at a club and breathe the grass filled air.

You can get angry about the way men stare at you, open mouthed and practically drooling, or you can feel safe in the knowledge that no one will hurt you here; that as a woman, you can walk at night unharmed. It is purely curiosity and I have never felt malicious intent in the staring.

You can get fed up with the lack of access to culture (theatre, live music, good shopping etc) or you can relish the challenge that having to make your own fun brings. It also makes for a large amount of self-reflection, good for every soul.

You can fret over the exchange rate and wonder where the hell all your money goes or you can have holidays in places that work off the US\$. (No, the pay from the school end does not fluctuate - they send home US\$ to your home country account and your bank then changes it into your own currency - then you will see some fluctuation. There is a clause in your contract to safeguard against any huge fluctuation in currency.)

Rent a car and driver! You will be glad you have the freedom and flexibility! The transport allowance allows for this and many people car and driver share. No need to worry about this until after you arrive however.

Yes, Dhaka living is a challenge; no one is going to hide that from you. It's noisy, dirty, hot and busy.

Yet, many are happy here. Why? Because the ISD people ROCK.

YOU'VE ARRIVED!

HOUSEHOLD STAFF/ LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

Maids/Cooks

Most people employ someone to clean, cook etc.

Most expats pay more than local employers for their staff.

Expect to pay a full time maid between Tk9000-12000 / per month depending on the hours and duties worked.

Examples of current starting salaries for domestic help:

- 3 days for a couple mainly cleaning, no cooking - Tk 5000 / month
- 5 days for a family of 3, mostly cleaning, some food shopping and cooking Tk 12000 / month

It is a requirement to give an annual one month salary bonus/gift to your household staff. If he/she is a Muslim they usually get this at Eid. If he/she is a Christian, they like to receive this at Christmas. In most cases it is a month's salary. The starting salary will be negotiated and you should set a trial period of three months to safeguard both parties. It is a good idea to give a second bonus and the second eid or at Easter.

If you have a part-time maid or cook you need to negotiate depending on the number of days/hours worked.

Try to employ someone who has already worked for a teacher here or an expat in the community. Much help will be given finding a maid from existing staff.

Our maids and drivers have no superannuation fund so when you leave you should give 1 month wages for every year of service.

Rickshaw Drivers

Some teachers employ a rickshaw driver although we do not advise this as a suitable long term transport solution. It is nice to have someone who you can trust and is available when you need them. The usual wage is Tk4000 per month (you negotiate this) although this can be shared with another household.

TRANSPORT

Rickshaws, taxis etc

- A typical journey to school from Gulshan in a rickshaw should cost 100 - 120 Tk.
- From Baridhara the cost would be 60-80tk.
- CNG's have a flag fall of Tk12 and from Baridhara to ISD it would cost about Tk 20. However, some CNG drivers refuse to take such a small fare and expect you to negotiate a fare.
- Baby taxis are more expensive (Tk30) and black or yellow cabs from Tk35-40 for the same journey, but they do have a meter. Many people do advise against taxis but always remember safety in numbers.

School van drivers

Each time you have an evening van you pay Tk150 to the driver for his dinner. The overtime rate is Tk 150/ per hour after 10pm. This will be explained in greater detail during your orientation when you first arrive.

Cars

Many teachers rent a car with or without a driver instead of using school van system. If you decide to do so, school will pay you 15000 taka a month transportation allowance. To rent a car with a driver will cost you approximately 30-40,000 taka a month. Some teachers share the car to split the cost.

SHOPPING

The school drivers will know many more than the suggestions below, so ask them, too.

DIT 2 Market: (Small Square containing some useful shops)

- A pharmacy - in the back left-hand corner, which stocks many Western medicines
- There are several leather shops that will make shoes, belts, bags etc to your design
- Jewellery shops selling pearls and local antiques
- Several small grocers
- Hardware stores
- Sports World
- Two decent (small) supermarkets in either corner selling a wide range of western foods/goods at western imported prices. One now has an Australian butcher – at last!
- Around the DIT 2 traffic lights there are several money changers and small electrical shops, which sell transformers etc.

Uni Mart, Agora, Lavender, Dhali and Gourmen bazaar – Supermarkets with a reasonable selection of all necessary goods

Gulshan 1 market:

This is similar in layout to DIT 2, has a range of tailors and clothing outlets as well as many other small shops of all types.

DVDs and music:

Rifles Square has the best selection, but there are many small local shops, expect to pay Tk 100-120/- for a good copy, but you can return it if it doesn't work. Fahim's and Music Mania are two pretty popular stores.

Beauty:Aveera

Plot 13, Road No. 12, Baridhara

Tel. 01764480024

Hair, massage, manicure & pedicure, facials

Total Care Salon

Tel:029861581

House #61, Road #27, Block-F, Banani

Hair, massage, manicure etc, catering for both sexes, not cheap, but very good.

Suci's Spa

Rd. 118, House 22 Apt. 4A, Gulshan 2

01756-589366 (Has facebook page)

Nordic Club: The Spa

<http://www.nordicbd.org/Spa.php>

tel. 8823021 / 8821331 01760314418

Road 55, House 18 Gulshan 2

Other places include Nelo's and La Femme

Dentist:

- Dr. Milan P. Moskala, Adventist Dental Clinic, Rd. 4, House 2, Unit C Block K, Baridhara tel.(02) 8822529, 01741680677
- Dr Roy at Johnson's Place, Rd 11, Banani Closed Saturday (02) 8822849
- Dr Mahfujul Haq Khan, Aiko Dental Clinic, House No. 150/E, Road No.10, Banani, Dhaka.
- Maple Dental Care, Dr. Kaniz Khan, Road 63, House 35/B, 3rd floor C-1 017966365

Doctor:

- Apollo Hospital is across the road from school and is an Interantional standard facility
- Dr. Wahab, Rd 12, Baridhara
- Traveller's Clinic is part of the ICDDRDB, but they have an office at American school in Baridhara.
- Dr. Dawn Rees - a British general practitioner, does exams, immunizations and referrals. Tel. Land Line (the best number to call): 02-989-9620 Clinic Mobile: 0173-001-9695
<http://www.icddrb.org/what-we-do/our-services/travellers-clinic>

Handicrafts:

- Folk International, Aranya, Aarong, Jatra, Sally Anne

Bread and bakery products:

- Hot Breads and the German Bakery in Banani
- Holey Bakery at Gourmet bazaar
- Loteria the Korean Bakery in Gulshan 1
- Coopers Bakery, Gulshan 2, opposite DIT2 Market.
- Mr Baker in DIT2 for yummy croissants and cakes
- London Sausage Company for wholegrain bread

Books:

- Omni books, Boi Bichitra , Words 'n' Pages

Plants:

Plants are very cheap and can be bought from the nurseries in Road 6, Block B, Bashundhara, on the shores of Gulshan Lake, and Park Road Baridhara. They can be transported home by flat-bed rickshaw.

GROCERY ITEMS IN BANGLADESH

NOTE: List is limited to non-perishables, for the purposes of decisions related to overseas shipments.

Things that are **easily available** all the time:

- Tofu and soymilk
- Beans (chick peas, kidney beans, white beans, black beans, and occasionally pinto beans and black-eyed peas, though these can be harder to find)
- Some spices (cumin, coriander, cinnamon, nutmeg, rosemary, dried basil, oregano, thyme)
- Peanut butter, nutella
- Condiments (ketchup, yellow mustard, mayonnaise) and sauces (soy sauce, BBQ sauce, Worcestershire sauce, Thai fish sauce)
- Couscous

Things that are available but that may be harder to find. Vegemite

- Golden Syrup
- Pesto
- Nori, pickled ginger, and sushi rice (usually available in Korean market)
- Vinegar other than white (red wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, apple cider vinegar, etc.)
- Other cereals (an Australian Honey O's, Fruit n Fibre, etc.)
- Grains like barley and cracked wheat
- Herbal tea (very limited selection, mostly only chamomile and peppermint)
- Most other spices
- Quinoa

Things that are never available:

- Real (i.e., not imitation) vanilla extract
- Real chocolate chips (i.e. not mostly vegetable oil)

- Cornstarch and cornmeal
- Cream of Tartar (if you want to make play-doh)

COMMUNICATION

Post

If you like to send 'real post', bring UK stamps if you can. You can buy them from school but supplies are limited. Envelopes are very cheap. You cannot buy Jiffy bags (padded envelopes) here. So if you think you will want to send items home from another country, bring a few. We cannot receive or send anything other than envelopes with paper inside as all our mail is sent via a CIS bag from London and any size parcels are not allowed due to customs rules. Anything else has to be sent by you using DHL or similar shipping company.

Internet Connections

You can be connected to the internet in your apartment. Once connected it costs around 3000-6000 taka per month, depending on the speed. Towers apartments have the Internet provided through ISD through an arrangement with our ISP. The monthly charge is the same and you will also need to purchase a router. More details about this will be provided once you arrive and know where you are living.

Questions and Answers

LIVING IN DHAKA

- Is Dhaka safe as a modern city? Do I need to be careful not to get mugged?
- Are there cultural venues to go to in Dhaka?
- What is the climate like? Is flooding a problem?
- Can I drink the water from the tap?
- What is the accommodation like? Would I be close to other staff?
- Reasonable furniture?
- What is the voltage in Dhaka? 220v or 110v?
- Are most electrical appliances available?
- Is there anything that you wish you had brought but didn't?
- Is buying a car feasible in Dhaka?
- Is public transport doable in the city?
- Are there brown-outs all the time and how will this affect us?
- Does the average person in the street speak enough English to communicate?
- Are the apartments close to the school? How will I get there and back?
- Do most of the teachers have satellite television in their apartments?
- Do most of the teachers have broadband internet connections in their apartments? Is there 24 hour running water supply, so that I could take a shower at any time in the day?
- Is there a reliable post office service?
- Are the supermarkets westernised or is it a case of going to the market and negotiating the price of a lime?
- What are the common annoyances?

MONEY

Is it expensive in Dhaka compared to western countries

Can I save money (a reasonable amount) and still travel?

Can I send money home easily from the city? Are there restrictions on money transfers?

You mentioned the customs people. Does that mean that when you arrive they will take your suitcases apart and charge you for every DVD or electrical device that you possess?

TRAVEL

Is it easy to travel to other locations?

Is it easy to travel to India during the holidays?

SCHOOL

Is the staff inclusive and social?

Are work visas a problem? Or do we enter on tourist visas?

What is the level of discipline in the students? Are they generally of the quiet and thirsty for knowledge variety or are they of the wild, noisy, and westernised variety? Is the school well resourced?

**(Answered by two Primary teachers – everything is open to interpretation!
Please keep in mind these opinions are of the authors only and not
representative of the school, the board or the social committee as a whole).**

Is Dhaka safe as a modern city? Do I need to be careful not to get mugged?

You do not need to be concerned, just sensible and vigilant. We (foreigners) are becoming more of a target along with the rich locals. An honest note of caution: rickshaw muggings do and have happened. A few teachers have recently been victims of rickshaw robberies (bags stolen whilst riding in a rickshaw). A good rule of thumb is to only carry necessities (no credit cards/valuables) and keep handbags hidden under the seat.

During festival times everyone is a little more cautious of their belongings because the locals need money to take back to their families in the villages.

Would I need to have vaccinations for anything?

Personal choice as nothing is obligatory for Bangladesh. Get your Hepatitis shots and a tetanus boost but anything above and beyond that is personal choice, not required. See your travel doctor for more information.

Are there cultural venues to go to in Dhaka?

There is culture here if you look for it. In no way does it compare to Bangkok or Singapore but there is STUFF out there. Live local music is fairly common. Everything pretty much emanates from the club scene – on weekends you may find a fancy dress party, a band, a play, a ball, a banquet or some other fundraising event to keep yourself busy. If you attempt the language, you will probably have more luck accessing local culture.

What is the climate like? Is flooding a problem?

It's hot and humid for ten months of the year and cool (not cold) for the other two. Flooding is a massive problem for the poor and homeless but for us; it is simply an annoyance on our way to work.

Can I drink the water from the tap?

Absolutely not. However, the purified water is cheap. It is delivered to your door by the school with the cost deducted from monthly salaries.

What is the accommodation like? Would I be close to other staff?

Most staff are now housed in a purpose built tower block of 2 and three bedroom modern apartments. The towers is a pet free block so teachers coming with pets would need to be housed in apartments leased from private landlords. The block is a five minute walk to school. The apartments are designed to western standards and any maintenance issues are taken care of by the school's maintenance team. For those staff not living in the towers, most of the leased apartments are big and spacious but may not be so modern as the towers. Most are in Bashundhara and so relatively close to school.

Reasonable furniture?

Depends on how picky you are... Some staff brought all their stuff with them from their last posting/home. Within the school provided apartments, everything works and is relatively new. Occasionally, it can be quite comfortable and modern, but is functional rather than beautiful. . Extra furniture (cane) is reasonably priced and easily bought locally.

What is the voltage in Dhaka? 220v or 110v?

220V. There are adapters of all shapes and sizes everywhere, very cheap. This means basically nothing though as in our apartment, there are four types of plugs and holes so it is difficult to keep track of all the different adapters we own! Very bizarre. There is no earthing/grounding in any of the buildings here so if you have any kind of surge protection on your special electronics, we recommend bringing it or buying it locally.

Are most electrical appliances available?

Yes, but it's not always great quality. Apartments come with all basic white goods including washing machine, dryer, microwave, electric kettle and toaster. Good quality is here if you look REALLY hard and you are prepared to pay big bucks. The customs guys hit you HARD for electronics but if you have some things you really love (coffee maker etc), just bring them. It can make all the difference in the world on a bad Dhaka day.

Is there anything that you wish that you had brought but that you didn't?

Some people here are nesters and brought their entire lives with them (and have the outrageous customs bill to prove it!) It all depends on if you are a "things" person. We knew we needed to make our home our little haven so we brought it all. Many of the staff bought a couple of suitcases and have kitted out their apartments beautifully with local crafts and furniture.

Is buying a car feasible in Dhaka?

It is doable but very, very expensive. Cars don't depreciate in value so you buy a piece of junk for \$5000 and you sell it for five grand two years later. Weird! The actual car is expensive but maintenance and fixing is cheap (but often unreliable).

You will require a driver, which adds to the cost.

What most teachers do is rent a car with the driver – costs 35000-45,000 taka a month and

maintenance is covered by the car owner. Strongly recommended option! Many teachers share car / driver with other teacher/s.

Is public transport doable in the city?

Buses no, unless you want to die from suffocation. Rickshaws and CNG's are cheap and easy, but risky. Some staff also travel all over the place on their motorbikes or mountain bikes - helmets are a must!

Are telephones and electricity working regularly or are there brownouts all the time?

There are regular power cuts but they tend only to be for very short periods of time so whilst annoying do not disrupt things too much. Make sure you back-up

The mobile phone networks and 3G are stable and seem to work well.

All computers at school have anti-surge boxes for when the power goes out so nothing gets lost though the advice is to back up and save stuff regularly..

Does the average person in the street speak enough English to answer a question where a shop is etc?

This is tricky to answer. No one speaks English until you speak it first so it's touch and go! We always try English first then use body language and our VERY basic Bangla (left/right)...

There are many very educated and wealthy people in our area who speak English but you wouldn't know it on sight. Probably a 50/50 chance that you'd get an English speaker. Locals are easily impressed if you speak a little Bangla so if you're a risk taker, give learning the language a go.

Are the apartments close to the school? If they are far, how do we get to the school and back? Is there a school minibus?

See above - most are within walking/biking distance. For those further out school transport is available if teachers have not availed themselves of the transport allowance.

Do most of the teachers have satellite television in their apartments?

Yes! It's free - school pays. There are various news channels: BBC, CNN, Australia Channel, some sports, National Geographic/Discovery Channel and movies.

Do most of the teachers have broadband internet connections in their apartments? Yes, monthly cost 3000-6000 taka

Is there 24 hour running water supply, so that I could take a shower at any time in the day? Yes, we have fully running hot and cold water at all times.

Is there a reliable post office service?

No. This is one of the hardest parts of living here for some. All our mail goes through DHL to the UK and then we pay postage from there. As a result we can only send and receive documents - no chocolate, hobby supplies, clothes etc. However.... If you are willing to take a risk (and pay insurance) you can try using the local postal service. So far, some of our staff members have received packages from the United States, fully intact and without a customs bill. The candy and other bits and pieces were a little squashed and melted but nothing alarming. It took approximately 8 weeks to arrive. Another staff member was sent a birthday present in September 2006 and it

arrived in April of 2007. Yet other members of staff have never received the parcels at all. Some have had success sending letters directly to our home addresses and it took a couple of weeks.

Are the supermarkets westernised or is it a case of going to the market and negotiating the price of a lime? A funny old mix of both. There are an increasing number of supermarkets here that sell cheap local products and expensive foreign stuff. We send our maid to the market to buy all our fresh produce and also send her to the supermarkets for dairy, bread and meat. All tinned and packaged food we get from the supermarket. In the stores the price is set, the same for anyone; in the wet markets prices vary, westerners tends to pay more

What are the common annoyances?

Be prepared to be confronted by beggars and badly disfigured people, especially at major intersections. They will tap incessantly and determinedly on the van window.

Men peeing 'discreetly' in public Open sewers

Hoiking and spitting

Traffic

Mosquitos

People staring

Things take time

Noise - horns, dogs, rickshaw bells, etc.

Is it expensive in Dhaka compared to western countries?

It depends on how much like a local you want to live. Fruits and vegetables (non imported) are cheap and good quality.

Bread and meat is available from an increasing number of good quality supermarkets and stores at just below western prices and a lot of imported food is available at about 10-20% higher prices than at home. A few of us try to live off perishable food so we can save a bit more money.

As an indication, a couple could spend around Tk12000 / week at the supermarket, a small family around Tk18000 and a large family around Tk20000. Meat, fruit and vegetables and alcohol are bought separately.

Check out www.expatistan.com for a cost comparison.

Can I save money (a reasonable amount) and still travel?

Depends on how much imported food you buy and how much you spend on medicine runs (trips to the duty free booze shop). Some couples try to live on one local payment and save the rest. You may struggle with your NEED to travel every holiday - overseas tickets are pricey!

Can I send money home easily from the city? Are there restrictions on money transfers?

You will receive your salary in local currency, and the school will transfer up to 75% of it to your allocated account back overseas (at no cost to you).The overseas transfer can take up to 3 months to set up, so ensure that your mortgage payments or other financial obligations are covered for this time. Expect to receive the first overseas transfer around November.

It is **not possible** to transfer any other amount out of Bangladesh apart from the 75% of your salary.

Is it easy to travel to other locations?

Easy yes, but a little pricey. Bangladesh is close to everything but the departure taxes are high. Return, Bangkok is about 400-500USD, China about 500-700USD, Australia 1400USD. You can get to India, Burma, Nepal and Bhutan on a bus as well as a plane and now a train to India. Internal travel in Bangladesh is very new but fairly reasonable.

We thought that Bangladesh would be very cheap to travel in as it's a third world country, but as the infrastructure is so limited, it's not as cheap or as easy as India.

Are the staff inclusive and social?

The staff at ISD are great and very inclusive. They have been new before so work hard to make everything very easy. We also had the BEST orientation EVER when we arrived which made us new staff bond like I've never experienced.

That said, social life is what you make it. It is possible to be busy every night or you can become a hermit. YOU CHOOSE. You have to be proactive if you live here, and having a hobby helps. Photography is great, as is tennis and any other club based activity. Plus indoor hobbies are well received so you can escape the heat. Plenty of tennis and golf to keep you busy if that's what you like. Some people like to paint and have found it best to bring paint supplies over with them as the quality isn't very good here.

Are work visas a problem? Or do we enter on tourist visas?

School sorts it all out. The best person to ask is Mr. Babar (babar@isdbd.org) as he is the man in the know about these tricky government things.

What is the level of discipline in the students?

Behaviour management is not a problem. Students generally come from a high socioeconomic background and some, at times, can be a little on the spoilt side. Educating parents can be more the problem, because for teachers it is frustrating when parents choose not to be active in their child's education. On the whole, the kids are AWESOME.

Is the school well resourced?

There are tons of specialist classes, books and a variety of hands on resources. The ICT department is good. There is wireless network connectivity throughout the school however, it would be fair to say that IT resources whilst reasonable could improve.