

Country Handbook: Bangladesh



Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Bangladesh. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in Bangladesh!



Country Information



Bangladesh is known for the Bengal Delta and its World Heritage Sites. Its culture is rooted in religion, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Bangladeshis value community, family and loyalty.

Main languages:

Bengali

Climate:

Subtropical (seasonal variations in rainfall, humidity and temperature)

Main religions:

Muslim (88.4%), other (11.6%)

Currency:

Bangladeshi Taka



Compassion in Bangladesh

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Bangladesh since 2003. 24 per cent of the population live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children and youth **AGED 3 AND OLDER** attend their local child development centre before school throughout the week and on Saturdays.



For more information on Bangladesh, scan the QR code or visit: compassion.com.au/where-we-work/bangladesh

Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

8:00am - A time for songs, games and introductions.

10:30am - Break time, when children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships.

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11:00am - Social-emotional lessons ranging from conflict resolution to developing healthy self-esteem. Children often come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

12:00pm - Lunch and social time. Children generally receive a meal five days a week. The meals typically consist of rice and lentils with vegetables, fish, eggs, chicken or potatoes.

1:00pm - Health lessons, in which children learn practical health and hygiene lessons.

2:00pm - Letter writing and career planning. Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests and set goals for their future.

Children are also encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as singing, dance, drawing and drama. Children play outdoor games such as football, cricket and volleyball. Parents of Compassion assisted children meet once a month to learn about a variety of topics impacting their families.

Cultural Considerations



Clothing

- **Men:** Shirts or t-shirts with long trousers are appropriate.
- **Women:** It is recommended you wear traditional clothing, including a sari, salwar (loose-fitting trousers) and kameez (tunic). Both nose and ear piercings are accepted.
- Tattoos are not widely accepted, so it's best to cover them where possible.

Public outings

- While credit cards may be accepted in big cities, it is best to have cash with you, especially when travelling to rural areas.
- Please be aware that it is normal for Bangladeshis to stare at people, especially foreigners.
- It is common to get asked many questions by strangers that may be inappropriate in an Australian context, such as your level of education and how much you earn.
- Beggars are at every street corner and along highways in Bangladesh.
- It is common to remove your shoes at places of worship, when visiting people's homes and even in certain shops and businesses. If you see shoes arranged near the door, please remove yours as well.
- Most hotels in Dhaka have Western toilets, but squat toilets are most common in the rest of Bangladesh. If you don't want to use water to clean yourself, it is recommended you carry some toilet paper or tissues when you are out for the day. Please be aware that public toilets may be difficult to find.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number: 999
Compassion Bangladesh office: 011-880-2-9895672
Australian Embassy: +880 2 5881 3101-5

Body language

- Beyond an initial handshake or hug, it is best to avoid further affection with community members.
- Please do not hold hands with or hug someone of the opposite sex in public, including your spouse.
- It is recommended that you avoid winking as this gesture can be easily misinterpreted.
- It is considered impolite to use 'thumbs up' as a gesture.
- The left hand is considered unclean. In Bangladesh, the left hand is for below the waist and the right hand is for above the waist. It is courteous to use either only the right hand or both hands when receiving or giving items.

Language

- English pronunciation of useful Bengali phrases:

Welcome: Shagatom

How are you? Kemon achho?

My name is: Amar nam...

Thank you: Dhonnobad

Greetings

- Shaking hands is the most common greeting, however it is inappropriate to shake hands with someone of the opposite sex.
- Please do not hug children but rather shake hands or offer a verbal greeting.

Eating and drinking

- Guests, elders and leaders are normally served first, and it is polite to wait until everyone has been served to start eating.
- It is common to pray before sharing meals.
- Please refrain from drinking alcohol.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

It is common for mothers in Bangladesh give birth at home without a skilled birth attendant present. Compassion's Mums and Babies program ensures pregnant women have access to prenatal care and the medical assistance they need for a safe delivery. Please pray for God to bless this program so more mums and babies can thrive.

Many children are suffering from malnutrition. According to the World Health Organisation, 22 per cent of children under 5 are experiencing stunted growth. Our local partners are ensuring children are providing with nutritious meals at their child development centre. Please pray that they can continue to provide tailored care to help children recover.

The growth of urban slums in Bangladesh has led to more children living in unsafe conditions. A lack of access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities can mean dangerous long-term effects on children's health and development. Please pray that critical infrastructure will be built, and that God will keep children safe.



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