



Bangladesh Street Kids Aid

Volunteer Onboarding Pack





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Overview

Bangladesh Street Kids Aid is a non-governmental organization based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It was founded in 1998 to support the rehabilitation and education of street children in Bangladesh. BSKA provides shelter, education, healthcare, and other support services to vulnerable children, particularly those who have been abandoned, orphaned, or forced to live on the streets due to poverty, violence, or other social problems.

Our programs include a residential shelter for boys, a day care center for girls, a mobile medical clinic, and a street outreach program. The organization also provides vocational training and job placement services to help children and young adults become self-sufficient and lead productive lives. We aim to create a safe and nurturing environment for street children, where they can develop the skills and confidence they need to overcome their challenges and thrive.



In addition to its comprehensive support services for street children, we use skateboarding as a key tool for engagement and empowerment. Skateboarding is at the core of BSKA's approach, providing a fun and engaging way for children to build confidence, learn new skills, and connect with others. Through skateboarding, we aim to create a sense of community and belonging among street children, and to foster positive values such as perseverance, creativity, and teamwork. BSKA uses skateboarding not only as a recreational activity, but also as a means to encourage education and personal development. Overall, skateboarding plays an important role in BSKA's efforts to improve the lives of street children in Bangladesh.

Overall, our mission is to improve the lives of street children in Bangladesh by providing them with the basic necessities of life, as well as education and vocational training, so that they can break the cycle of poverty and build a better future for themselves and their families.



The Team



Susie

Founder and allrounder. She spent over 10 years of experience working with the street children.



Alamin

Skateboarding teacher, outreach worker, and overall program support at residential facility.



Annona

Psychosocial Counselor, educator, and outreach worker at our residential facility in Dhaka.



Kakoli

Administrative assistant, outreach worker, and overall program support at residential facility.



Locations

If you're volunteering in Bangladesh, be prepared for an experience that can be overwhelming at first. The sights, sounds, and smells can be intense, and the chaos of the streets can be a bit much to handle at first. But don't worry, you'll get used to it! The people of Bangladesh are some of the friendliest and most open you'll ever meet. They're always happy to chat and share their stories, and they'll go out of their way to make you feel welcome. So, embrace the chaos and get ready to have an amazing adventure in a country that's full of surprises!



We operate in two locations in Bangladesh: Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. Dhaka is the capital city of Bangladesh, and it's a bustling metropolis that's full of energy and activity. It's a city where the traditional and the modern collide, with ancient temples and bustling markets existing side by side with high-rise buildings and modern malls. Cox's Bazar, on the other hand, is a beach town on the Bay of Bengal. It's a popular tourist destination, known for its long, sandy beaches and clear blue waters. In fact, Cox's Bazar is home

to arguably the longest beach in the world, stretching over 120 km. Despite their differences, both locations share a common need for support for vulnerable children.

During your stay in Bangladesh, we will provide you with furnished accommodation that includes a washing machine, internet, and air conditioning. Since it's a shared accommodation, it's important to maintain cleanliness and organization at all times.



Schedule & Teaching

At Bangladesh Street Kids Aid, skateboarding is at the core of what we do. We offer skateboarding classes for the children we support as a way to teach them new skills, build confidence and provide them with an opportunity to have fun. It's important to note that there is no tight schedule for when the sessions take place, as planning in Bangladesh can often be difficult. However, as a general rule, we go skateboarding three times a week in several street spots or at the skatepark in Gazipur, which we visit at least once a month. Please note that the information may differ in Cox's Bazar, so be sure to check with our team there for more details. These sessions are always a lot of fun and offer an opportunity for our volunteers to connect with the children in a unique and meaningful way. And who knows, maybe you'll learn a thing or two on the skateboard as well!

To create a self-sustaining skateboarding scene, it's crucial to involve the local volunteers as much as possible by asking for their opinions and offering advice when needed. Keep in mind that the local skaters will ultimately run the scene, not the volunteers. Therefore, always be courteous and remember that your role is to support the skate scene in Bangladesh. If you want to become more involved in the local community and have ideas for workshops, film screenings, skate jams, or events, we're all ears! Just let us know, and we'll be happy to discuss it further.



Preparations

Before coming to Bangladesh as a volunteer, there are a few important preparations to keep in mind. Firstly, you must apply for a visa before your arrival, as visa on arrival is not available for most countries. For European citizens, this means visiting the Bangladeshi embassy in your home country to obtain the appropriate documentation. Additionally, it is recommended that you receive vaccinations for hepatitis A, typhoid, and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis before traveling to Bangladesh. It's also a good idea to bring mosquito repellent and sunscreen, as well as light and modest clothing appropriate for the warm and humid climate.





Arrival at the airport



When arriving at Dhaka airport as a volunteer, be prepared for a hectic and overwhelming atmosphere. There will be a thick mist of mosquito spray in the air, so it might be a good idea to cover your nose and mouth. The airport is often crowded, and the WiFi might not work, but you can buy a cheap SIM card from Bangla Link just after the baggage claim. It's recommended to pay with a credit card to avoid any issues with currency exchange. During migration, you will need to fill out a small paper form and try to skip the queue as much as possible since Bangladeshis don't always understand the concept of queuing. Don't worry, one of our staff members will be waiting for you outside the airport to pick you up.



Living in Bangladesh

This section contains a lot of information, but things will become clearer once you arrive in Dhaka. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact anyone on the BSKA team, regardless of how small it may seem. If you're interested in speaking with past volunteers about their experiences volunteering in Bangladesh with BSKA, you can contact Sophia (sophia.kaefer@web.de) or Marius, who are happy to chat and give you an idea of what to expect. During your time in Bangladesh, it's crucial to respect the local customs and traditions, as it is generally a conservative country. While some bigger towns may be more liberal, it's important to be mindful of the local culture.

Clothes

It's recommended that you avoid wearing revealing clothing around town. When participating in skate sessions, it's important to keep your top on at all times, even if there are no other people around. This is because there may be people living nearby, and others could arrive at any time. If you're male, it's acceptable to wear shorts, but they should not be too short. It's essential to dress respectfully while in public areas to avoid any negative attention.

Tattoos

Tattoos are generally not allowed, or considered "Haram", in Islamic culture. However, in this region, people won't be angered by them. It's important to be mindful that visible tattoos may draw more attention than you want, especially from children.



Food and water

Drinking tap water is not safe in Bangladesh. Although there are water filters in most places, it is still advisable to only drink bottled water and avoid using tap water, even for brushing your teeth. Public consumption of alcohol is prohibited in all areas of the country, but bars and alcohol shops are available in certain locations.



Bangladesh has a unique and flavorful cuisine, and trying new foods is a great way to immerse yourself in the culture. However, street food can be quite cheap but not always the best option if you have a sensitive stomach or are not accustomed to the food. Some common Bangladeshi meals include rice, dal, and fish or meat curry. We often cook at home, and there are also many international food chains like Pizza Hut and Burger King available. If you are a vegetarian, it might be challenging because being vegetarian is not really a thing in Bangladesh, and people will still offer you meat because they don't believe that you would only eat veggies.



Gender roles

In Bangladeshi society, gender roles are quite defined and traditional. Men are generally considered the head of the household and are expected to be the primary breadwinners. Women, on the other hand, are expected to be the caretakers of the home and family. While this traditional division of labor is slowly changing, it is still quite prevalent in many parts of the country. It's not uncommon to see women in public spaces, but there are often societal expectations around dress and behavior. For example, it's considered inappropriate for women to wear revealing clothing or to be out late at night without a male escort. As a volunteer, it's important to be respectful of these cultural norms and to be aware of any potential gender-based discrimination that may arise.

Religion

In Bangladesh, religion plays an important role in daily life, with the majority of the population practicing Islam. You will notice that mosques are prevalent throughout the country, and the calls to prayer can be heard five times a day. As a volunteer, you may be asked about your religious beliefs, and it's best to be respectful of the local customs and avoid engaging in debates about religion. If asked, it's better to simply say that you are religious and leave it at that, as starting a big discussion can be seen as impolite. Overall, it's important to be aware of and respectful towards the local religious customs and practices.



Being a female volunteer

Female volunteers don't have to dress like locals but covering up may make them feel more comfortable. It is advised to avoid clothes that reveal a lot of skin even in hot weather. Walking around town in the evenings, there aren't many women around, so it is recommended to go out with someone else, especially if new to the area. It is not customary for unmarried men and women to have physical contact, including shaking hands. Men may not shake hands with women, but this is not meant to be offensive. It is possible to receive a lot of attention from men and teenagers, which can be tiring but not harmful.



Female volunteers have the opportunity to bond with local women, which male volunteers cannot do. They can experience a different side of life and participate in various activities, including cooking, while spending time with Bangladeshi women. Sharing meals and accepting invitations can lead to feeling like part of the family.



Safety and Wellbeing

As a foreign visitor to Bangladesh, it's important to prioritize your safety and wellbeing. Bangladesh is generally a safe country, but visitors should take some precautions. Petty crime, like pickpocketing, is common in crowded areas, so keep an eye on your belongings, especially in public transportation. In addition, Bangladesh has high pollution, particularly in Dhaka, so it's important to protect yourself from air pollution and drink only bottled water. When traveling longer distances, it's recommended to use ride-sharing apps like Uber or the local equivalent, which are generally reliable and safe. It's also important to respect local customs and dress modestly, especially for women.

- If you notice someone receiving unwanted attention, offer to help and check if everything is okay.
- Men and women in Bangladesh have limited contact due to cultural differences. Some men may misinterpret foreign women's friendliness as interest, which can lead to uncomfortable situations.
- If you prefer not to go alone, ask someone to accompany you.
- Look out for each other when you are in a group.
- If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, don't hesitate to let us know. Trust your feelings and don't worry about overestimating the situation.



Cost of Living and Currency

The cost of living in Bangladesh is generally quite low compared to many Western countries. A can of Coke costs around 25-30 Bangladeshi taka (BDT), which is equivalent to about \$0.30 USD. A typical street food dish can cost anywhere from 50-150 BDT (\$0.60-\$1.80 USD), depending on what and where you eat. If you plan on shopping for souvenirs or clothing, bargaining is common in markets and it's not uncommon to see prices drop by as much as half of the original asking price. Keep in mind that larger cities like Dhaka and Chittagong tend to be more expensive than rural areas. The currency in Bangladesh is the Bangladeshi taka, with exchange rates fluctuating but typically around 84-85 BDT to \$1 USD. ATMs are widely available in major cities and credit cards are accepted in larger establishments, but it's always a good idea to carry cash as well, especially when shopping at smaller markets or street vendors.





Language

While it's possible to communicate with only English in Bangladesh, learning a few Bangla phrases can greatly improve your interactions with the locals, parents, and kids. People will appreciate the effort and it can make communication easier and more engaging. English is spoken more frequently by children in Cox's Bazar than in rural areas. If you have time prior to your trip, it's recommended to learn some common phrases and numbers to help with communication during your stay.

Hi, Hello - Salam-alaikum

Thank You - Dhonno-baad

Goodbye - Khoda Hafez

How are you? - Kemon achhen?

I am fine - Bhaalo achhe

I am feeling good - Amaar bhalo lagchhe

I am feeling bad - Amaar kharap lagchhe

What is your name? - Tomar naam kee?

My name is ... - Amar naam ...

What time is it? - Coy-ta baa-jay?

I don't know Bengali - Aa-mee Bangla ja-nee-na

I don't understand - Buj-tey paarchhi na

How much is it? - Eta koto daam?

Yes - Hae/Jee

No - Na/Jee na

Sorry - Maaf ko-roon/Khoma ko-roon



Please - Please

Ok - Theek achhey

What? - Kee?

Where - Koth-aye?

How? - Kemon korey?

When? - Kobey?

Who? - Kay?

Why? - Kano?

One - Ek

Two - Dui

Three - Teen

Four - Chaar

Five - Pach

Six - Choy

Seven - Shaat

Eight - Aath

Nine - Noy

Ten - Dosh





Enjoy
Your trip.

BSKA^o
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