



Pre-Departure Packet  
ThinkImpact - GESI Innovation Institute  
South Africa 2011

## Packing for South Africa

Below is a list of items that you should include when packing. Scholars sometimes find it best to pack in a camping backpack or rolling duffel bag. When thinking about which clothes to bring to South Africa, remember that it is hot during the day and cold at night. The villages are very dusty and washing clothes is a difficult process you will be doing by hand. Be cautious when packing electronics and other gadgets that might be ruined in a dusty environment or draw unwanted attention in a rural village. It is highly recommended that you do not pack ANY valuables in your checked luggage when flying from the US to Johannesburg. Remember to bring only what you can carry!

PACKING LIST	√
Towel	
Hand Sanitizer	
Camera	
Journal	
Sneakers	
Sandals	
Warm Jacket	
Business Casual Outfit	
Swimsuit	
Sunblock	
Sunglasses	
Books	
Toiletries	
Baby Wipes	
Sleeping Bag (light weight/insert)	
Toiletries (soaps, shampoo etc.)	
Headlamp	

## Health and Safety Precautions

ThinkImpact emphasizes the importance of drinking plenty of water, washing hands, sleeping and eating right in order to stay healthy throughout the Institute.

There have been very few incidents of Scholars getting sick in South Africa. Most of the time, someone might not feel like themselves for a day or two, experiencing nausea, slight fever, or diarrhea while adjusting to a new environment. Following typical health precautions and keeping ThinkImpact staff aware of any problems you may be having will ensure that you stay healthy and safe.

In addition to the tips for staying healthy that we have included, please note additional precautions to take while in the rural areas.

### Staying Healthy

1. **Malaria risks:** The decision to take preventative medication for malaria while in South Africa is entirely up to you, and should be made in consultation with your doctor. Malaria is present in this area of South Africa during the rainy season (November-March). However, during the time you will be in South Africa, malaria is not considered a major risk and there is little to no presence of mosquitoes.
2. **Water:** The water used by homestay families is generally safe to drink and you should have no concerns about brushing your teeth or bathing. However, ThinkImpact will provide you with drinking water to ensure that you always have plenty of clean water and are staying hydrated. Tap water in South Africa is safe to drink, and many lodges use well water that is also safe. Despite water that may sometimes taste a little funny, know that the water ThinkImpact provides is always clean and safe, and that it is vital that you stay hydrated at all times.
3. **Animals:** Animals of all kinds are found in the communities in which we work. You should recognize that many animals, especially dogs, are not properly cared for. Do not pet, feed, or play with dogs in the villages.
4. **HIV:** Do not practice high-risk behavior. HIV is a high risk in South Africa.
5. **Diarrhea:** Diarrhea is common while traveling, especially in a foreign environment. If you experience any serious issues, be sure to inform the staff and stay hydrated. Try to maintain a light diet, avoid caffeine, fruit juice and greasy foods should this occur.

# Emergency

## What is an emergency?

### Life threatening conditions

Cardiac emergencies

Trouble breathing

Shock

Severe bleeding

Unconscious or unresponsive

Diabetic emergencies

Poisoning

Seizures

Burns

Head, neck, or spinal injuries

Abuse, harassment, and assault (physical, sexual, and/or emotional)

Missing persons

Violation of rules

## ThinkImpact Crisis Response Guide

1. Stay Calm. Take a second to breath and regain your composure.
2. Assess the Situation. Identify the type of emergency you are faced with (environmental, political, personal etc.) and if you can, contact the appropriate program staff. Contact the staff member who is most likely to be accessible at that given moment.
3. Mind Your Own Business. If the emergency does not personally affect you or pose a threat to your immediate safety, stay out of it. Many African cultures frown upon “outsider” involvement in personal matters of community members.
4. Make Moves. Once you have assessed the situation, it is time to take the appropriate action needed to remove yourself from the scene. Be aware of your surroundings and possible escape routes. When dealing with other people, remember to be sensitive to cultural differences and your place as an “outsider” in the community.
5. Get in Touch. Once you have removed yourself from the situation get back in touch with program staff or others who helped guide you out of the emergency. Update them on your condition and location. It is very likely that you will not have a cell phone or computer handy, don't be afraid to ask for help and find an alternative means of communication.
6. Find a Permanent Safe Spot. The next step is to seek a more permanent and safe environment where you may receive treatment for any injury or guidance.
7. Remain in Constant Contact. Once you are stabilized in a permanent, safe area (such as a hospital or embassy), remain in constant contact with staff members.

8. Evaluate the Situation. How could you be better prepared in the future?

### Emergency Contact Information

US Contact Information	
ThinkImpact Washington, DC Office	202-657-6616
Saul Garlick cell	303-908-6730
Medical Travel Insurance 24 hour assistance	866 690 5111

South Africa Contact Information	
Medical Travel Insurance 24 hour assistance	International Collect: 202-659-7776
Megan Barry Cell	072 901 4341
Sarah Whitney Cell	079 134 9084
Institute Director (Kate) Cell	TBD
Buffelshoek Trust	011 783 2852
Campbell Scott, Buffelshoek Trust	082 330 9997
Africa Safe-T (Flight for Life)	082 775 1914/086 125 8456
Us Consulate Afterhours Emergency	011 290 3000
Telefriend Johannesburg Hotline	011 922 9999
US Embassy	012 431 4000

## Finances and Logistics

### Food and Water

In Johannesburg, Nelspruit, and Pretoria, scholars are responsible for their own food and water expenses. In the villages, each homestay will receive ample groceries so that Scholars may cook three meals a day for themselves in their homestay kitchen. Regular groceries will include rice, potatoes, carrots, onions, tomatoes, cabbage, canned beans, pasta, cheese slices, sliced bread, chicken (when available), tea, apples, peanut butter, butter, and jelly. Containers of drinking water will be available to refill scholars' water bottles in each village.

In the villages, Scholars are expected to live similarly to local community members. This includes the types of food you will eat. ThinkImpact will ensure that you have enough food and enough variety to ensure that you are eating nutritiously. However, specialty foods are not available in the local area and therefore will not be available for you in the villages. If

you have special dietary needs or medical conditions, please make the ThinkImpact staff aware of this before arriving at training in DC.

## **Phones and Internet**

Internet in the villages will be available at most once a week. Computers and the Internet are not part of daily life for local residents in these communities. If there is a local Internet connection, it is not reliable and often is not functioning for days at a time. Scholars are not permitted to use the Internet at local schools unless advisors have made special arrangements and a schedule for use. The best time to use the Internet is in the cities or during excursions. If you have a special need to use the Internet, please let the ThinkImpact staff know before you arrive at training in DC so we can make arrangements. Due to the remote conditions and unreliability of electricity and internet, we cannot promise internet will always be accessible.

Scholars may opt to purchase their own South African cell phones through Vodacom. The first few days in Johannesburg and Nelspruit will provide an opportunity for you to make those purchases. Cell phones usually cost about \$20-\$30 and prepaid airtime vouchers can be purchased in cities or in small amounts at local shops in the villages. Personal cell phone use is only permitted during free time. Please be respectful of your peers and the community.

## **Shopping**

Shopping time has been allocated for scholars to purchase souvenirs in the cities and on excursions. Be sure to have in mind what you would like to purchase, as this time will be very limited. If there are personal items that you need to purchase, please, do so in Johannesburg and Nelspruit, as local shops in the communities do not usually sell more than a few items.

## **Money**

Scholars have an opportunity to exchange money in both Johannesburg and Nelspruit before arriving in the communities. Both cities are major urban centers fully equipped with South African banks, money exchange centers, ATMs, etc. If you have not notified your bank that you will be out of the country, your ATM card might be rejected. Keeping large amounts of cash while on the trip is highly discouraged. Major stores in the cities accept Visa and MasterCard. During the time in the communities you might spend a few dollars on a Coca-Cola, candy bar, or fruit. Small bills and coins will be most useful.

## Rules & Expectations

- ✓ Let a ThinkImpact staff member know of your whereabouts at all times if you plan to part from the larger group, even when you go with a partner.
- ✓ Always travel in groups of at least 2.
- ✓ Do not go exploring on your own!
- ✓ Do not drive any vehicle.
- ✓ Do not ride on or drive a motorbike.
- ✓ Do not travel in public transportation or with any non-ThinkImpact affiliated driver.
- ✓ Do not use, purchase, or handle illicit drugs (In this case, you will be sent home immediately at your own expense).
- ✓ Do not consume alcohol in the communities. If you are 18, you may drink alcohol in moderation when you are not in the community. As a group, we may go out to bars together in the cities.
- ✓ Internet, phones, and cameras should be used only during permitted times. Use common sense; do not be rude.
- ✓ Do not make promises to community members.
- ✓ Never mention bringing money or providing capital for a business.
- ✓ Keep your fellow scholars and staff informed about your health (physical and mental). It is essential for us to communicate in order to be helpful.
- ✓ Do not take risks. If you are questioning whether or not it is allowed or it is safe, just don't do it.

### Expectations and Tips

- ✓ Arrive meetings or activities 5 minutes early.
- ✓ Be open-minded and flexible.
- ✓ Ask questions.
- ✓ Start early and work late.
- ✓ Be proactive, take initiative and ask how to be helpful.

- ✓ Don't complain.
- ✓ Try to maintain perspective.
- ✓ Hold yourself to a high standard.
- ✓ Remember that nothing is beneath you.
- ✓ Listen and learn from others, including community members, your colleagues and staff.
- ✓ Be respectful of all members in the community, whether they are peers or elders, strangers or host family members, ThinkImpact staff or other scholars.
- ✓ Be aware of the risks associated with engaging in sexual activity. HIV/AIDS is a high risk in South Africa.

## Homestay Guidelines

Homestays are an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of local culture, daily life, and family structures. It is important to keep these guidelines in mind during the first days you arrive and throughout your stay with your new friends and family.

### Respect

Be sure to follow your host family's rules and maintain a respectful attitude in all your interactions with family members. Pay attention to how your actions and demeanor impact other members of the family or house guests and strive to model culturally appropriate behavior at all times.

### Ask

Always ask when you are unsure about something. In order to follow house norms and rules, you have to know what they are. Despite the language barrier, simple questions should provide you with the information you need. Be proactive and cheerful with your questions and needs. Here are a few questions you should consider asking in your first couple of days:

- How do I bathe? How much water can I use?
- Where is the toilet/latrine?
- Where do I wash my hands?
- What time does the family get up in the morning?
- What time do most family members go to bed? When should we be very quiet?
- May I have guests come over?
- When can I use the kitchen?
- Can I help cook?

- Where and how do I wash my clothes?

### **Immerse**

Make an effort to fully immerse yourself in your host family and spend a few extra minutes each day committing yourself to learning something about the local culture. Family members may be shy and introverted which can create some awkward silences and uncomfortable situations. Use patience and make the extra effort everyday.

### **Laugh**

Don't take yourself too seriously; laugh at your mistakes. No one expects you to know how to live like the locals. Nothing breaks down cultural barriers like a mutual giggle-fest.

### **Help**

Offer assistance with household chores as much as possible. This is a great way to learn about the culture. Understanding how the mother of your family cooks, cleans, collects water and washes clothes is all part of the homestay experience. Be sure to keep your room tidy and clean up after yourself or your guests.

### **Appreciate**

Express appreciation for your host family's hospitality as often as possible. Smile and say thank you regularly. It is a privilege for you to have the opportunity to stay in their home, so make sure they know you feel that way. That being said, there is no need to pay them back monetarily; ThinkImpact takes care of homestay payments.

### **Chill**

Traveling abroad and being in a new environment is very exciting and generally a high-energy experience. Take time out to relax in your homestay and never expect your family to entertain you. Chill out and observe the daily rhythms of your homestay family and local community. Centering yourself can be extremely beneficial in terms of succeeding on the Institute.

### **Gift**

Bring a culturally appropriate gift for your host family. This can be a good way to break the ice upon your arrival or may be saved as a thank you present before your departure. Don't show up empty handed! T-shirts, books and art supplies are great options.

## Context and Culture

### History

The Bushbuckridge Local Municipality comprises the northeastern part of the Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. The rural region, which is one of the South Africa's 22 presidential nodes of poverty, covers 198,000 hectares and is home to an estimated 720,000 residents. It borders the famous Kruger National Park and the private Sabi Sand Game Reserve, a hub of luxury tourism in South Africa.

The Bushbuckridge region was classified under apartheid as "black-inhabited" land. Pre-1994, the area was governed under two distinct Bantustans. Black South Africans from around the region were relocated here from other areas as part of the apartheid system – creating distinct homelands, towns, and cities for the different races.

Current conditions in Bushbuckridge can be partly attributed to the lasting legacy of apartheid. There are relatively low levels of quality infrastructure in the region—including roads, sanitation, and access to water. The majority of residents are Shangaan, with a large minority of Northern Sotho people and a small minority of Siswati. 29% of the population lives in small rural villages, 61% in dense rural villages, and 9% reside in one of the five small urban centers. It is estimated that only 18% of the population is employed, and 84% of households earn less than R1300 per month (\$185).

Two major concerns in the Bushbuckridge region are the quality of health and education. Education is a major challenge throughout South Africa and even more so in the Bushbuckridge region. As a result of apartheid and a lack of government services for black South Africans before 1990, 40% of adults in the area have no formal education and only 12% have attended secondary school. While all children today are required to attend school and there are hundreds of schools within the Bushbuckridge Municipality, the quality of education still suffers. Matriculation rates for grade 12 students in South Africa hover around 60%, but they are significantly less in the Bushbuckridge region.

As is the case throughout South Africa, the communities in which we work face high rates of HIV/AIDS and little to no access to quality education or treatment. According to surveys and censuses, greater than 1 in 4 people in the area have been tested HIV-positive. It is projected that in certain age groups across the region, the HIV prevalence is as high as 80%. Treatment is not consistently available at the local hospitals, and for reliable access to medication, one would have to travel to a private clinic or major urban center. The challenges of HIV/AIDS in Bushbuckridge are coupled with other widespread diseases such as tuberculosis and other health issues like malnutrition. Healthcare in the region is underfunded with poor service delivery, exasperating health problems and contributing to death.

Many residents cannot access quality care or are unlikely to visit clinics when needed as a mixed result of distrust in the quality of care and belief in traditional medicine.

## Cultural Norms

Greetings	South Africans typically greet each other by shaking hands and using common greetings from their local language. Phrases like “Avuxeni” and “Minjani?” are frequently used in the area and you should practice these as often as possible. It is considered impolite to pass someone on the street without greeting each other in this way. There are also common handshakes practiced in South Africa. Let local community members initiate these and learn from them.
Clothing	The majority of South Africans wear typical “Western-style” clothing. You may also see women wearing traditional fabrics called “nguva” as skirts or wraps, and many women choose to cover their heads with what is called a “duku”. Clothing is usually more conservative than in the United States, and it is uncommon to see short skirts or shorts worn in the villages.
Alcohol Usage	Drinking alcohol is common, and alcoholism is a problem in many communities. The high rate of unemployment leaves many men spending the day sitting around drinking. It is unusual to find women drinking alcohol in the villages. Drinking usually takes place at local “shebeens”, or bars, or during celebrations or soccer matches. Traditional beer is also made at home in some families.
Eating	Mealie pap (or vuswa) is South Africa’s most popular traditional food, and is eaten with chicken, beef or fish, in addition to sauces made with tomatoes or onions. Mealie pap is a maize-based porridge, common in appearance to mashed potatoes. Other common traditional foods include morogo (greens), tihove (beans, peanuts, and samp), and xigugu (peanut butter). Most people prefer to use their hands to eat, but forks and spoons are used for dishes like rice, beetroot, and butternut. Culturally, it is common for women to serve their husbands and children and eat their meals separately afterwards.
Dancing	Music and dance play an important role in local culture. There are types of dances rooted in both traditional and modern culture. Traditional tribal dances often have gender specific roles and are learned by children at a young age. Modern music and dance is also popular and varies from hip-hop to kwaito to house. It is not uncommon for a group of people to gather around and watch others dance, especially at a church, local shebeen (bar), or community event.
Public Displays of Affection	Public displays of affection in the rural areas and urban areas vary. Men and women rarely show public affection in these villages. However, it is not uncommon to see a man and a woman or two men hold hands as a sign of friendship while speaking or walking.

Marriage and Dating	Polygamy is widely practiced, but is not as common among the younger generation. However, it is normal to hear of men having more than one “girlfriend” at a time. Being unfaithful is not necessarily considered cheating. This is one factor contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. For youth in these villages, dating is secretive and young people usually sneak out of their homes after dark in order to spend time with members of the opposite sex. Rates of pregnancy among teens and young women are extremely high.
Family	The role of the family is central to local culture. Families have an innate trust and sense of loyalty to each other, which does not often extend outside of the family. Gender roles differ in families. Men usually represent the family outside of the home, but women are primary decision makers within it. While men and women both work, women are generally responsible for cooking, cleaning, and looking after children. Children are expected to help out around the house before and after school, collecting water, cleaning, cooking, or looking after their younger siblings. The elderly are highly respected in this culture, and it is not uncommon for grandparents to be raising their grandchildren if the parents are away at work or have died.
Death	There are a variety of practices and traditions associated with death in these communities. As a result of poor healthcare and HIV/AIDS, it is not uncommon to see three or four funerals take place each week in a small village. Ceremonies usually last an entire week, with church and prayer sessions held for a few days, and a night vigil and morning burial taking place over the weekend. The entire community often attends funerals, and visiting Scholars are sometimes asked to attend.

**Local Language: Xitsonga**

South Africa is a multilingual country with 11 official languages including: Afrikaans (13.3%), English (98.2%), Ndebele (1.6%), Xhosa(17.6%), Zulu (23.8%), Sepedi (9.4%), Tswana (8.2%), Sesotho (7.9%), Xitsonga (4.4%), Swati (2.7%), Venda (2.3%). The Shangaan people came to South Africa long after most other African people had arrived, settling in the Limpopo River valley. Their language, Xitsonga, is used in eastern Limpopo and Mpumalanga, areas near the border of Mozambique, as well as in southern Mozambique and southeastern Zimbabwe. Xitsonga is the language used in written documents and as a medium of instruction in learning. However, the spoken language is known as Shangaan. Shangaan is spoken in a variety of dialects all over this area. Secondary schools throughout South Africa require a level of understanding of English, an enormous challenge for South Africans who were raised speaking only their home language.

## Xitsonga Greetings

English	Xitsonga	Pronunciation
Good Morning	Avuxeni	(ah-vu-she-ni)
Good Afternoon	Inhlikanhi	(in-thlee-ka-ni)
Good Evening	Riperile	(re-pe-re-lay)
How are you?	Minjhani?	(min-ja-ni)
I'm good.	Hi kona/Hi pfukile	(ee-ko-na)/(ee-fu-ki-lay)
And you?	Minjhani wena?	(min-j-ani way-na)
Go well. (goodbye)	Famba kahle.	(fam-ba kath-lay)
Stay well. (goodbye)	Sala kahle.	(sa-la kath-lay)
See you tomorrow.	Ni ta ku vona mundzuku.	(nee ta koo vo-na moon-d- zoo-koo)

## Key Words

English	Xitsonga	Pronunciation
Chicken	Huku	(who-ku)
Cook	Sweka	(swe-ka)
Cow	Homu	(oh-moo)
Do	Endla	(end-la)
Friend	Munghana	(moon-gah-na)
Go	Famba	(fam-ba)
Goat	Mbuti	(im-bu-ti)
Hunger	Ndlala	(in-dla-la)
Love	Rhandza	(rah-n-za)
Lion	Ngala	(n-gal-a)
Me (I)	Mina	(mee-na)
No	E-e	(eh-eh)
Orange	Lamula	(la-moo-la)
Play	Tlanga	(tl-anga)
Porridge	Vuswa	(vu-swa)
People	Vanu	(va-nu)
Sit	Tsama	(sa-ma)
Very	Ngopfu	(in-go-p-fu)
Water	Mati	(ma-ti)
Yes	Ina	(ee-na)
You	Wena	(way-na)

## Conversational phrases

English	Xitsonga	Pronunciation
What is your name?	I mani vito ra wena?	(ee ma-ni vi-too ra way-na)
My name is...	Hi mina...	(hee mee-na...)
Thank you.	Nkomu	(in-ko-moo)
I am asking for...	Ni kombela	(nee kom-be-la)
Where are you going?	U ya kwihhi?	(oo-ya kwi-hee)
I'm going to...	Ni ya e...	(nee ya eh...)
What are you doing?	U endla yini?	(oo end-la yee-ni)
Can I go with you?	Ni nga famba na wena?	(Nin-ga fam-ba na way-na)
Let's go.	A hi fambeni	(a-hee fam-be-ni)
It is hot.	Kahisa	(ka-hee-sa)
It is cold.	Katitimela	(ka-tee-tee-me-la)
I am hungry.	Ni twa endlala	(ni t-wa end-la-la)
I am thirsty.	Ni twa tora.	(ni t-wa tor-a)