

2nd of January 2007

After a good night of sleep I woke up the first one in the guest house as I was impatient to see what Dhaka is looking like from our balcony in the day time.

The street around 8am started to be busy with colourful ladies and loud men passing in front of your building to go to work.

One of the Bangladeshi staff, a young lady arrived at our place to dress Maria with the sari they offered her yesterday. That's where you learn to be patient....

As we were ready to jump on our schedule with so many things to do in a so short period of time, we had to handle 90 minutes of girly dress up, make up, bindie etc... But tradition is tradition and Maria knew she had to do it.



When we left the house and started to cross the area, I realized the impact Maria has on the community. I started to hear "Maria, Maria, Maria.." kids calling her name and mothers saying hello etc... On our way to the school one young mother with her tiny baby (really tiny) stopped Maria and I really liked her attitude. The baby looked sick and Maria was

annoyed and told the mother. "I told you 2 weeks ago to go to see our doctor, what are you waiting for". Then she explained that's it is often the case. We have a medical center for the community but they don't go.

While we were approaching the school we heard to voices of the kids getting louder and I found, on the playground, the entire school waiting for us, in line, facing the row of their teacher. Roxanna was holding the banner with Welcome Florence. If you could have seen the smile on their face when we arrived...

They were wearing their blue uniform and sweaters.

All of them looked groomed with nicely brushed and shiny hair. They were between 8 years and 12 years old I guess.



They started the ceremony with a very emotional statement that was reminding me my boy scout commitment. Hand on the heart, they committed to work hard, be a good citizen and be proud of being a Bangladeshi. Then they sang the national hymn before going back to their school followed by us. On the last post of the year, I wrote a post showing 2 pictures. The people of the slums and some young students. In the first row you have this incredible



little boy with a fantastic smile. When the children ended the ceremony, I heard Maria calling someone in one of the line. She said loudly, Flo, look who is here, and she called the same boy from the picture. Oh my god, I don't know how but it was like we already knew each other. He came out of the line with a shy smile and just put his arms around me and hugged me. What an fantastic moment.

As I was the "VIP" today, the staff led me in the school to

show me all the installations. As we arrived the kids were finishing their breakfast as we provide 2 meals per day. All our meals are checked by a nutritionist and you can feel that the kids are in good health. I visited the entire school, the classrooms, the canteen, the medical and dental center, the beauty salon and the sewing workshop.

My first impression? I will go next time for a manicure pedicure or hair wash and blow dry without any doubt!. Not sure about the dentist but it has nothing to do with the equipment but only with the fact that I have a phobia of dentist ;-)

We had to run as many things were waiting for us. On our way out of the school, couple of kids grabbed us for hugs and kisses... how can we refuse! Next stop... the nursery. When we opened the door and found those 3 to 4 years old dressed in those bright colours clothes, they just started to scream of hapiness with their hands up. Oh my god! They just wanted kisses and kisses. We quicly moved to



the next room as there is a big mattress and we had their favorite game. Me in the center and them jumping on me. What an adorable moment.

Then we moved to the younger nursery with the babies.... So cute... but they were more shy and honestly, a little bit frightened by my blond hair and bright eyes... it took a little bit longer for some of them to approach me but finally they adopted me ;-)



Last stop, the pre school, a nice playground outdoor under the shadow of beautiful trees. After the class, the parents were invited to come over for registration. A picture of each child with his parents is taken and kept in a file for our record.

After visiting this school I had my first designated task to achieve. Sort out some donations and especially the Eid boxes donated by schools in

Dubai.

Once it was done, I came back home where Maria was waiting for me and Firoz with a big list of shopping to do. And I can tell you that after doing some shopping here it will change for ever your addiction at least for the word ;-)
We 'just' needed to find suppliers for all the books and stationary for the entire curriculum of 700 children for one year... and guess what? that's was not all... we also had to find suppliers for 3000 uniforms and sweaters. Easy for a frenchie who is coming to Bangladesh for the first time, does not speak the language and has no clue of the currency and if things are expensive or not! But as I say, in life there is no problems, only solutions! and here it's not a system D but a system Z!
Let's go Firoz, we can do it!

We ended in a crazily crowded part of Dhaka (but I will realise later that all Dhaka is crazily crowded ;-). My god! on the same road without rules you have pedestrians, rickshaws, tuk tuk, motorbikes, cars, cows, horses, vans, buses, trucks etc....



We finally founded a book manufacturer who will be able provide us with the full list of our requirements but at a really competitive price. When you work for a charity, the bargain is not a game anymore. You know that each Dhaka saved will provide something more for the Community.
We could not find the uniforms's suppliers and with the traffic, it took us more than one hour to go back home.
We had a last "easy" small shopping to do beafore reaching the guest house (we thought). It was to find mopes to clean the floor. That's when you realise how easy our life is out of Bangladesh. Everything is a challenge even finding daily goods.