

7th, December, 2007 - Today we've gone out in a bus with 15 children, towards Dhaka downtown. Our goal was to visit the central museum but as it was Friday the museum was closed; Fridays are holidays here, like our Sundays... so we decided to have a piknic near the Parliament House, on the green grass of a park.

There, we have been questioned by a teenager girl, who wanted to know who those children were and what we were doing there... we explained that they were kids from The Dhaka Project, and where we had come from and introduced Rian to her, a volunteer colleague come from Dubai. Her parents joined her and showed amazed with the project, leaving their contact with us.

During this light meal the sharing spirit has been continuous. Some people have



come to us begging, asking us to give them some wafers or fruit and our kids soon wanted to offer their part... they are always offering the little they have.

After this snack we have gone to the diversions park that is situated near a very beautiful flower market where cars are decorated and where they make wonderful artworks with flowers. Unfortunately it wasn't open yet... so we took the children along the banks of Buriganga River... in a traffic mess, we had to stop several times, because the children aren't used to traveling by car and frequently got sick.



And we met an yet more distant landscape, very different from ours... the quarters we had got to know until now had nothing to do with this reality... the slums where Maria rescued 40 families from! Some kids have friends and family yet in these slums.



The people here just have nothing, every little is harnessed for everything, since narrow strips of fabric to be worn... the kitchen is a simple hole in the ground, there is only one room where everybody sleep... our arrival caused open arms to us with all the tenderness from those people whose things they have to offer are smiles and kindness. And they inquired us about Maria, once she hasn't accompnied us in these days, but they were so happy for seeing these children from their slums now living in the Dhaka Project premises with their parents!

Back to our buses we managed to have our lunch in a traditional restaurant... we have been inquired once more... our side table neighbours asked us who we were, if we could sing or dance.

And they addressed praise to Zidane who Vitor seemed to resemble (*he has shaved his hair off!*) They were workers from a garments factory, that works mainly for Zara and Bershka, and gives employment to around 1200 people and the look of these 5 young men his level of life seems to be above of the average in this region of the world. In



Bangladesh people live from everything possible to be fixed or re-used, there are small shops to sell everything. All little jobs are good for survival, being the hope of life around 50 years according to what they say, being healthy and living is a gift from Heaven. All the rest is not needed, and due to that, being probably, their essence of happiness.

After a rich spicy lunch, rice and beans soup, (*the Bangla kitchen is fantastic for its taste and aroms diversity, so in spite of the lack of food, eating is always a party*) we turned back to our buses searching for

places where we could take the children to have a short travel by boat. We got in a number of little traditional boats covered by straw, to make a tour in the river where the activity is more than much, fishers, boats loading oil from oil pipes supported on bamboo canes, the brick factories along the banks, the small restaurants, the filmography teams, the small wood and bamboo factories, the rice landscapes, the river that permits thousands of people living, all that the river can give them is collected, treated and sold. Entire cities of zinc walls and roofs live over weak pillars easy to be swept by any typhoon or a heavier monsoon.

We have no words to describe the happiness of touring aboard these small boats, everybody song, everybody wanted to be in photos, one of the girls dove her hand in the water and collected some shells, one more gift from the river that feeds and washes all this people.

We came back home tired, late in the evening, with joy, singing and handclapping following the rythm of the local music come from the bus radio's loudspeakers... we don't know who has got more happiness in this day. If us, adults, who suddenly have travelled years back to our youthful spirit, sharing the simple things of



life, or the kids who had the oportunity to know a boat, to visit the city downtown and have adults side by side teaching them new games and introducing them a world they know little about (*Ex: the simple act of collecting the empty containers, the paper bags and put it all in the rubbish bin after our piknic*).

At the end of this day, we learned one more thing; being Baloo (to be well/ok) is a joy.

Inch Ala
Sofia and Vitor