

Dhaka - Day 3

8th, December, 2007 - Today we started the main task that Maria has given us to be performed during our stay in Dhaka: to visit the houses of about 100 families supported by The Dhaka Project and make an inventory of each family's needs. Then we're going to use the money raised in Portugal and Dubai (donate by Burjuman) so trying to cover some of those needs.

Firstly we elaborated a list with what are the basic requisites for a house: bed, mattress, sheets, electricity, pans, place to cooking, bathrooms, chairs, tables, and so on. A list with about 20 items. We have had two team members with us, Nayon and Omar (*necessary to identify the houses and to support us on translation / nobody speaks English*), and have been in several streets, bystreets, alleys, etc.

We are talking about houses that in the best cases have only one room with 10 sq meters, but built with bricks, with electricity and common kitchens and bathrooms having the least acceptable conditions and in the worst case a the real hut, made of zinc or straw and pieces of fabric, without any living conditons, where they cook on the ground in front of the hut. The average number per house is from 4 to 9 people !!! 9 people sleeping in 10 sq meters, with only one bed (when there is one) where 3 or 4 sleep on the bed and the rest of them on the floor, that sometimes is hardened common ground. Adding to this misery itself, some houses are built in zones near the water (at this moment small stagnat lagoons and open sewers... with all their dangers), becoming easily flooded with water at knees' level in the rain season.

As the day has passed our classification of the houses has suffered changes. At the first visit a first impact, what do we need a list for? They need everything! Second house? New impact, we concluded that the first house wasn't so bad... it even had a bed, well, some boards with 4 feet or on bricks. As we did more visits our concept of the priorities suffered changes, only the houses supported by the Dhaka Project (financed by donations come from Dubai) were painted and had some furniture, but it was evident that the money hadn't been enough to cover all needs. Some supported families have a house but don't have neither a bed nor furniture. Question: how are some children able to study?

We have been really impressed when we saw the poor conditions in which the Project's children live – being these children, spite of all, benefited when compared to many others. They have a good education level, clothes, food... Who look at them in the school, well dressed in their uniforms, with a clean aspect, smart, dynamic



and well educated, finds it hard to imagine them living in such an environment.

Mothers have several times come to me, Sofia, thinking I was Maria, and tried at all cost that also their children could make a transition to the Dhaka Project. Now, the Project is giving support in education, food and vaccination for 700 children, but it's easy to realize that there are many more children waiting for such an opportunity.

Today we have been able to visit 39 houses... tomorrow we'll give continuity to our work.

We have already seen that is really necessary to change families to another houses, due to their actual houses not being worth of any renew. They really need a house! But to give them a house the Project needs more money! We take the chance here to appeal for the generosity of all! It is not needed a lot: the rent for a house with minimal conditions costs about 13 EUR/month – 19 USD/month – 70 AED/month !!!

