

Day 13 - "Actually, we don't feed them, we eat with them."

Today was our last day in Dhaka as well as our second and last training day for Pothoshishu Sheba Songothon.

It was yet another rewarding and fun day with this group of committed individuals who volunteer their time to work with street children. Although part of the training involved the introduction to and opportunity to practice and develop certain therapeutic play skills, it also focused on highlighting and validating the high quality of work that the volunteers already undertake.

The volunteers give this group of marginalised children the biggest gift they could: relationships based on love, acceptance, understanding and respect.

It seemed an uncanny coincidence that on the day that we were delivering training that highlighted the importance of empathy and positive relationships with children that a certain Jose Mourinho spoke on the very same subject in an article published on the BBC Sport website.

Mourinho revealed it was during his first job with children with Downs Syndrome that he discovered the importance of relationships:

"I wasn't technically ready to help these kids' he said. 'And I had success only because of one thing, the emotional relation that was established with them. I did little miracles only because of the relationship. Affection, touch, empathy - only because of that."

(Well said Jose. Let's hope those relationship making skills of yours help Chelsea get another 3 points against QPR on Sunday.)

It's only a few hours until we fly back to London and although I am looking forward to getting home and seeing my loved ones, it is also with a heavy heart that I say goodbye to Bangladesh and all the amazing people and friends we have made here. There are too many names to mention here, but thank you all for your warmth and hospitality and also for filling my belly up yet again today!

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By Catriona

As I write I am surrounded by my packed bags, waiting for the car to take us to the airport and from there, home.

In some ways I can't believe it is time to leave but in others I feel like I have been in Bangladesh for way longer! We have met so many wonderful people here, and I have been blown away each day by the Bangladeshi hospitality.

Bangladesh has exceeded my expectations in so many ways (in particular the kindness and respect the Photosisu volunteers show the children) and also both filled and broken my heart on a daily basis.

The poverty, desperation and suffering I have witnessed has been breathtaking at times and it has left me feeling both angry and devastated at how people and children can be left to live in such conditions. I have cried more tears than I have thought possible and felt greater sadness than I was expecting.

The hope, happiness and determination of the people and children I have met had left me questioning what it is we truly need as human beings to be happy. What I have witnessed here is that people are happy without so many of the things in the west we believe are importance for our happiness. Do we need so many 'things'? Quite possibly not. Have we in the west perhaps forgotten what we actually truly need to feel happy and contented? Quite possibly yes.

While dhaka is full of sad and upsetting life stories, it is also full of good and kind people who are doing all they can to help those suffering and in need.

We need to champion people like those at Photosisu and Bottomley House (among many other amazing organisations and services we met here) because they are the people who make the most important changes in this world. They change lives by offering what we all need at heart - namely acceptance, empathy and kindness.

I leave Bangladesh with a heart heavy with hope for this beautiful country. It is certainly full of wonderful people who are trying to make it a better place for all of their fellow countrymen and women.

Thank you Dhaka - it's been a blast! I look forward to coming back soon.

By Menna

Fitting that today, our last day in Bangladesh was spent with all of the people that have welcomed

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us so so warmly, all together for the final day of the therapeutic play skills training. They are the people that give their time to volunteer for Potho Shishu, a very talented, intelligent group of people with a great sense of fun and humour! It was great also that representatives of some of the other organisations The Orphan Trust works with could link with PSS for the training such as Dhaka University, Ekmattra, Bottomley House Orphanage and Shishu Polli Plus. They are brilliant with the children and already have a lot of therapeutic play skills such as knowing the importance of play, having outstanding relationships with the children they care for and setting boundaries for the children in the sessions. They provide a physical boundary with a rope and all volunteers are firm, consistent and calm in their manner. Our training has improved their communication, particularly in the use of statements rather than questions and empathic responsiveness, working on using empathy rather than sympathy, joining the child on a journey. One volunteer told the group today....

"Actually, we don't feed them, we eat with them."

The group has enjoyed a game know as Pani Pani which has taken cult status during the 2 days of training. The Ummba Ummba... Pani, Pani game I think may well take Bangladesh and then the world by storm and become the new Gangnam Style!

I've enjoyed living a simple life with a bucket to wash with. I've enjoyed smiles around the clock from every passer by and I've enjoyed beautiful food.

There are only 42 countries in the world out of 219 that are experiencing better economic growth than Bangladesh and that growth has been consistently growing too at a rate of 6% a year. Our job is to provide for those that are left behind and are not feeling that growth or are unable to. To provide therapeutic experiences for those on the streets, therapy for those who have suffered extreme trauma and are living in or visit a safe space each day. We also need to continue to look into supporting in new ways such as those with special needs, disability and mental health issues as well as seeking to support additional organisations through education, health and community action.

Continue to support us on our journey.

Thank you.

Christopher