

# Exploration Survey Report Bangladesh – Dhaka

*From February 25<sup>th</sup> to March 13<sup>th</sup> 2011*



Stéphane CAMPO  
pour Inter Aide

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# 1 - Context of the exploration - Introduction

During the annual meeting in HO-Versailles in May 2010, the FDP Program Manager based in Mumbai and the Director of Asie-Tana discussed the possibility of starting new programs in Bangladesh. This neighbouring country of India is known as one of the most vulnerable country of the Asian Continent, suffering both from chronicle development issues and regular environmental disasters. So Inter Aide might be willing to start some programs there. As a first step, it was then decided to organize an exploration mission. A proposal was written and sent to the HO for a one month exploration mission. This draft was specially focused on “FDP-like” intervention in the slum of Dhaka (ANNEXE 1 – in French). Due to some time management issues, the duration of this mission was finally reduced to a little over 2 weeks.

The main objectives were to:

- Explore different slums of Dhaka city.
- Conduct interviews with slum inhabitants in order to gather information about their social condition.
- Meet NGOs for gathering general information on Dhaka Slums situation and discuss potential partnership with Inter Aide.
- Conduct a brief social diagnosis of the slums (education, economics....)
- Propose some possibilities of a joint program according to this diagnosis and the partnership opportunities identified on the field.

Most of the visits took place in Dhaka. Of course, in such mission, some improvisation and flexibility was added according to the people met on the field and during the NGO visits.

After a meeting with one NGO, a two-day visit was also made in a rural disaster area in the South of the country.

So this report presents the results of this mission in terms of areas visited and NGOs met. It also gives some potential ideas of intervention: first, some “FDP-like” interventions and then other potential programs that might be interesting to think about. After a little more than two weeks in the country, this report is still more of a brainstorming than a proposal. Much information will have to be cross-checked by other sources and the feed-backs given on the ONGs contain a significant proportion of subjectivity.

## 2 – Timetable of the mission

Date	Activities
Friday the 25 <sup>th</sup> of February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjustment with transport/accommodation</li> <li>Visit to “Mappa” organization to get Dhaka Map</li> </ul>
Saturday the 26 <sup>th</sup> of Feb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of “Farm Gate” area</li> <li>Visit of “Hazaribag” area</li> </ul>
Sunday the 27 <sup>th</sup> of Feb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of “Gaptali city colony” slum</li> </ul>
Monday the 28 <sup>th</sup> of Feb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of “Lalbag” area</li> <li>Meeting with UCEP NGO</li> <li>Visit of “Kamrangir Char” area</li> </ul>
Tuesday the 1 <sup>st</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with BROTEE NGO</li> </ul>
Wednesday the 2 <sup>nd</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with DCI NGO</li> </ul>
Thursday the 3 <sup>rd</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with CHCP NGO</li> </ul>
Friday the 4 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of Shyampur area</li> </ul>
Saturday the 5 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of Tejguan area with CHCP NGO</li> <li>Visit of “Kallyampur” Slum</li> <li>Visit of “Aragao” area</li> </ul>
Sunday the 6 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel to Shatkira district with BROTEE</li> </ul>
Monday the 7 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits of Shyamnagar disaster area with BROTEE</li> <li>Come Back to Dhaka</li> </ul>
Tuesday the 8 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of Mirpur area</li> <li>Visit of Shyal Bare Slum</li> <li>Meeting with NBUS NGO representative</li> </ul>
Wednesday the 9 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with HEED NGO</li> <li>Meeting with SOLINFO NGO</li> </ul>
Thursday the 10 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No visit – Reporting work</li> </ul>
Friday the 11 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews in Kazifuri and Lalmat slum (Mirpur)</li> <li>Meeting with NBUS NGO</li> </ul>
Saturday the 12 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit with NBUS NGO in Kallyampur</li> <li>Meeting with DSK</li> </ul>
Sunday the 13 <sup>th</sup> of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No visit – Reporting work</li> <li>Packing</li> </ul>

### 3 – Few general impression on Dhaka City

#### *The urban structure*

The city itself is divided into 92 wards but as usual it is growing beyond its boundaries. The “old Dhaka” is a labyrinth of streets where one can hardly find his way. It covers a dozen of Wards from the Buriganga river up to Gulistan street. It also the place in Dhaka where one will find the largest Hindu community.

There is one specific type of urban construction that you find all over the city in slum areas (especially in the old city) which are equivalent to the “Pol” in Ahmedabad but in smaller sizes. The “Pol” is formally an area with a single entry closed by a door. One “Pol” can contain a dozen of houses (sometimes more) which form a kind of small quarter in the city. In Dhaka, one finds such structure but with a smaller size. Sometimes the entry might also look like the door of one big building but behind, some 30 families live in a disorganized labyrinth of apartments separated by steal sheets.

Consequently, we will not find much big “open slums” as we use to have in Mumbai (huge areas of small houses). From outside, the area might look quite ok but behind the wall, or sometimes behind the building facades, people are living with the same space and sanitation conditions (sometimes worst) that in the “usual” slums. For this reason, by looking on Google Map, one will hardly identify slum as such (only a few pockets not bigger than “Gabtali colony” or “Kallyanpur”).

The main reason is that big open-air slums have been destroyed in the last 10 years by the municipality — claiming that such big areas increase the illegal and criminal activities. In fact, there is a huge pressure on real estate<sup>1</sup> and local corruption is thriving to get more lands from the municipalities (in many cases, slum are on public land). Without any rehabilitation policy, people have to manage to spread themselves into the city in small pockets. So they put them together to rent and share it. There is historical land-owner (zamindar) policy in the city and if these land-owners don’t have enough capital to build buildings, at least they rent their empty plots to poor people.

There are NGOs (like NBUS and ACHR<sup>2</sup>) which are trying to compromise with municipality and government in order to create a rehabilitation process for slum people but it is still a weak lobbying in front of corrupted politician and real estate business dealers.

As an example, there was a slum situated in Agargaon (next to Kallyampur) covering a huge area with more than 200,000 inhabitants. It was demolished in less than one week in 2005 and people were scattered all over the city. According to many testimonies heard during the visits the destructions are done without even notification from the municipality.



Example of small slum pockets behind a door

1 With around 12 millions of inhabitants (estimation of 4,5 millions living in slums), Dhaka is facing a 6,5 % population growth every year (so 1 million of new migrants)

2 Asian Coalition for Housing Right (<http://www.achr.net/>)

## **Public Services**

There are public services but many critics are made against them: there are inefficient, corrupted and sometimes simply not active any more.

For Health, the people we met say that they public hospitals are not providing proper services. They are crowded, unhygienic and doctors lack time and motivation. But there is also a habit of thinking: "because it is public, it has to be bad". There is a kind of "fashion" to go to private clinic even if there are more expensive. I have met a person who was willing to have a health check-up in a private clinic which would cost around 10,000 Tk. The fact is that he had already had such a check-up 2 years and 5 years before and which showed no particular disease. It is also a "business" in Mumbai where private clinics force patient to make all kinds of test even if they are not needed. So definitely there is a necessity of further investigation in order to know what is the real offer in term of public health services and what is the kind of potential guidance as people are not only looking toward private clinics and practitioners.

Such statement is also true regarding education. There are government schools in good numbers (at least in Dhaka) but private schools are leading the market. There are also quite a lot kindergartens but they are mostly accessible to middle-class people.

There is also a big part of public services (health, education, vocational trainings...) which has been taken over by NGOs. Then, according to the place where people are staying, there are often various options for services and the public services often come as a last choice.

There used to be "Ration Card" and food supply for slum people but since 2005 everything has suddenly stopped without reasons<sup>3</sup> (or no official reasons). So there are very few schemes available and most of them are highly subject to bargaining and middlemen process.

As in other countries, there are also punctual national/local campaigns organized jointly by NGOs and government/Municipality (immunization, nutrition distribution, awareness programs...). As there are punctual, their efficiency is also punctual.

## **Sanitation**

No doubt about it, Dhaka is a highly polluted city. The air is really bad and the most common infection among child slum population is respiratory infections. The rivers are also highly polluted and used as garbage drop out<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, apart from skin infections, no many cases of diseases related were reported during the visits (typhoid, cholera...). There are also very few cases of malaria but dengue seems to be common in the city whatever the area.

All areas visited have at least collective latrines and collective bath/washing areas. On this point, the situation in Dhaka is in much better than in Mumbai. This is mostly due to the high activism of the NGO network.

Concerning water supply, everybody (or almost) manages to get water in the slums (or nearby) but there is two types of connection: legal and illegal. Of course, the illegal water is much more expensive (50 Tk/m<sup>3</sup> instead 6 Tk/m<sup>3</sup>). There have been many NGO program for water supply. For those who can not be connected to the municipal network, there is still the "tube well" option which we see from time to time. It is usually used as an alternative option during water shortage. Until 2007, if slum-dwellers were willing to get a legal connection, they had first to produce a land ownership which they don't have in most of the case. Because of some NGOs' activism (DSK was one of them) they finally succeeded to get a change and this document is not compulsory anymore. But still many slum-pockets don't know it and many middlemen are making huge business on their ignorance.

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3 Nevertheless, during visits we have seen some trucks providing rice to people. It is a kind of "mobile" Ration Shop.

4 There are public garbage collection services but garbage stand for weeks

## ***Transport Situation***

“Gulistan” is “The” heart of communication for local buses going to the different places of Dhaka and suburbs, but also for long-distance buses. There are no proper train facilities inside the city. So one has to manage with buses and all the different kinds of rickshaws (see photos).

It is not a legend: the number of rickshaw is just huge. It increases the sensation of density as this kind of vehicle can go almost everywhere. The official number is 90,000 according to the municipality but other sources gathered on internet easily double, triple this number (400.000 according to Wikipedia!).

I am personally quite used with the traffic of Indian cities but I should admit that we are reaching a higher level of “crowd sensation”. The usual distance between two vehicles on the road is no more than half meter... down to no space at all as I have experienced many times whether in rickshaws, auto-rickshaws or Buses. Of course after a few days, one gets adjusted with this tough way of driving. After two weeks in Dhaka, Mumbai traffic looks like a pleasant and gentle experience!!!

There also is quite an impressive number of collective transportation (buses of all sizes, auto-rickshaws, moto-rickshaws) compare with privates one. The bus transportation is also quite anarchic as there is weak public regulation. All buses taken during the stay belonged to private companies.

The prices are subject to bargain for all transport (including buses). The prices (after bargaining) are similar to Mumbai ones.

### ***Concerning Rickshaws specifically:***

As it is the case with auto-rickshaws in Mumbai, most of the rickshaw-drivers do not own their vehicle (around 8,000 Tk to have one). They usually pay 80 to 100 Tk per day to the owner. So their daily income is around 200 to 300 Tk. Getting a licence is not an easy task. The municipal association (kind of Union) usually gets a certain quantity of licenses from the municipality and choose who can get one.



Rickshaw – The classic one



Moto-Rickshaw – 6 people and more



Mini-Bus (up to 20 people)



All together...Friends For ever

## ***Economics Situation***

Dhaka is a dynamics city and whoever comes from the village should find a way to earn 3,000 to 4,000 Tk a month. Daily wages are around 200 Tk. Some works are more difficult to get (in the textile industry, as rickshaw-drivers...) because of local corporations (not of course if you have family in the network).

Compared with Indian cities, there are relatively less beggars in the street and less people sleeping outside at night. People met on the field and in NGOs explained that at least nobody is starving of hunger in the city. Still Dhaka is expanding economically with improvement in construction, roads, shopping centres... So the city, even overpopulated, still provides good opportunities to make money for many villagers.

The quantity of garment factories is just huge (80 % of all country exportation) and their implementation is going until Guzarit (60 km north of Dhaka) and 90 % of workers are women (or girls!!)

### ***Child Labour:***

Child Labour is a huge issue in Bangladesh. Official number (4.5 million) is surely underestimated while looking at the streets of Dhaka. The official age is 18 years old but an informal agreement allows the company to employ 16 years old children. These industries respect more or less this rule but surely not the small business. One can see children (mostly boys) under 16<sup>th</sup> (the starting age might be no more than 7 years old) almost everywhere (in shops, bus, workshop, newspaper selling...). Many initiatives have been carried on to reduce the child labour. Nevertheless during discussing in the slum areas, people easily admit that many children of the slum leave school early for starting a small job. As it was said before, Dhaka is quite dynamics and the opportunities are many...

### ***Cost of life:***

The rent for a 100 square feet in a slum is around 600 to 1,500 Tk a month depending of the area and the facilities.

When water is legally connected, then the monthly fees might not be more than 80 Tk but this price can be multiplied by 4 or 5 in case of illegal connection (middlemen have to be paid).

Compared with Mumbai, salaries are slightly inferior but prices of basics needs (food, transportation...) not that much different. Fruit are even more expensive than in Mumbai. So the economics condition of slum people does not differ much from Mumbai's.

### ***A few prices:***

100 Tk ≈ 60 Rps ≈ 1 €

One day salary for manual work ≈ 150 Tk/200 Tk

Basket of sand at Gabtali Ghat ≈ 1,5 Tk (strong men can carry more than 150 in a day)

Bus ≈ 2 Tk/km

Auto-rickshaw ≈ 10 Tk/km (minimum of 20 Tk)

Rickshaw ≈ 5 to 10 Tk/km (depending on the area).

Rice ≈ 40 to 50 Tk/Kg

Carrots ≈ 12 tk/Kg

Tomato ≈ 18 Tk/Kg

Potatoes ≈ 7 Tk/Kg

Cucumber ≈ 20 Tk/Kg

Small orange ≈ 10 Tk each.

Banana ≈ 10 Tk each

Tea in the street ≈ 5 Tk

### ***Other cultural aspects***

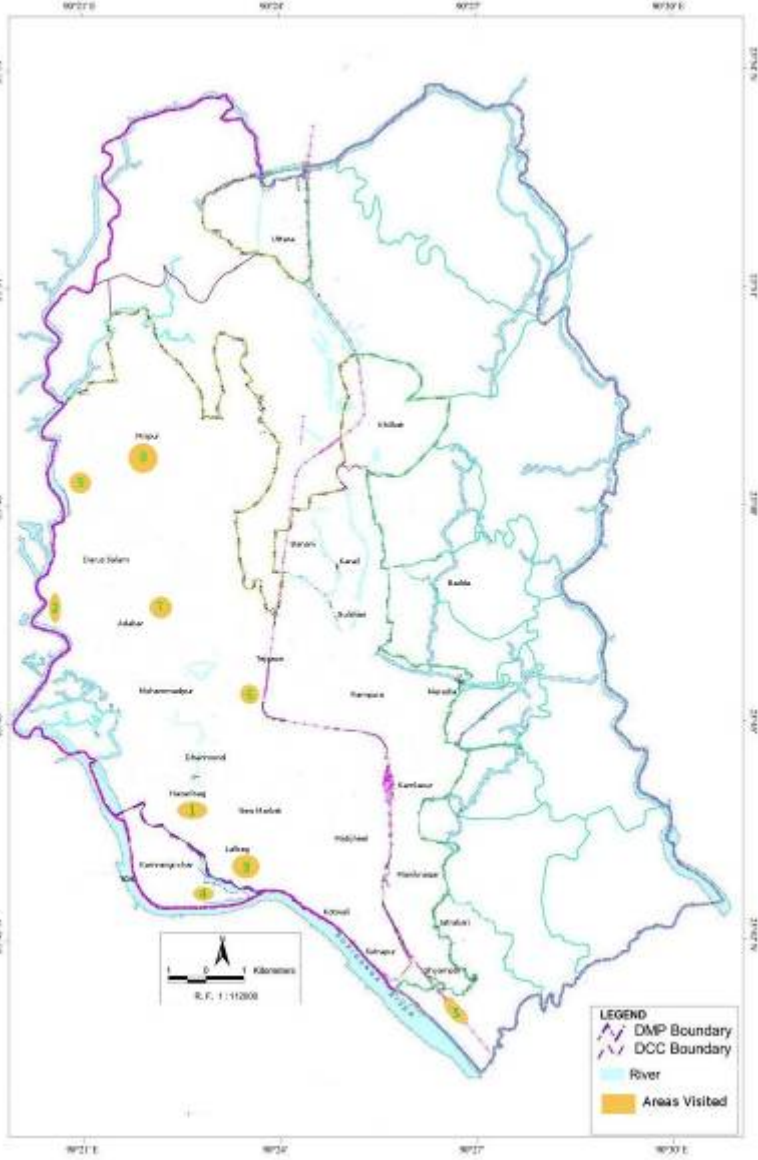
Most of families are now living in nuclear configuration. The women are generally housewives but the garments factories also provide them with opportunities to work. Nevertheless the women are less present in the street, public transportation...

Of course all areas visited are mostly Muslim. There is a quarter in the old town where only Hindus live but in the rest of the city we can hardly see a temple. There are some Christian and a few churches were noticed. There is surely a higher number of Christian NGOs compare with the Christian population. The Mosques are not running many social activities. They Mostly have Coranic school and they are used to providing food on special occasions (festival, Fridays...) for the poor people of the community. 500 Mosques are reported in the all city.

There is a strong phenomenon which has appeared for a few decades concerning wedding arrangements. It used to be the man (or at least the man's family) who was supposed to give some amount to marry a girl but recently it became the opposite (as in India). Girls' families are spending more and more money to get their daughter a good husband. I didn't get the proper reason for this change into these wedding arrangements. This phenomenon is still minor in slum areas (as the means are anyway limited).

## 4 – Details of the activities of the mission

### 4.1 Map of the slums visited/area report

	1	Hazaribag : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visits of industrial area (tannery)</li><li>• Interview in one slum pocket (~1000 pop.)</li></ul>
	2	Gab tali : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews in Gab tali city colony slum (~4000 pop.)</li></ul>
	3	Lalbag : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visits of Lalbag area</li><li>• Meeting with UCEP local staff</li></ul>
	4	Kamrangir Char : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews in the area</li></ul>
	5	Shyampur : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visit of area</li><li>• Interview in slum pocket near railway (~4000 pop.)</li></ul>
	6	Tejgaon : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visit of the area</li><li>• Visits of CHCP Health Post</li></ul>
	7	Adabar : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visit of Kallyanpur slum (~20 000 pop.)</li><li>• Visit of Agargaon old slum area (now demolished)</li></ul>
	8	Mirpur : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visit Shyal bare slum</li><li>• Visit of shelter for destitute of women (HEED)</li><li>• Meeting of NBUS (in one visited pocket)</li></ul>
	9	Shah Ali : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews in Kazifuri and Lalmat Slum</li><li>• Meeting with NBUS Board</li></ul>
		<b>Notice:</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When we speak about “area” it means an area where there are “private” tiny slum pockets as explain in the “urban structure” chapter.</li> <li>• When we speak about “slum”, it means usual open-air slum pocket as we are used to see in Mumbai or other cities in India.</li> <li>• By “interview” we mean informal discussion with individuals or small groups of people in the slum.</li> </ul>

# Hazaribag

The area of Hazaribag is situated in the South-West of the city. It is an industrial area which is specialised in Tannery. Only one small pocket of slum (around 1,000 families) was identified during the visit. Constructions are mostly made of steal sheets for the walls and the roofs but base structure can be also made in cement for the two-floor houses.

There is a pumping system in the slum and electricity only few hours at night. There are no facilities in the slum itself (health post, school...). People say that most of them work on daily wages salary (cleaning, watchman, nearby industries...) with an average income of 5,000 to 6,000 Tk a month.

Approaching the tannery industrial area, the air become quite unbreathable and the place is surrounded by garbage and polluted water canals. A few people live there in various kinds of habitations (from plastics to concrete/katcha...).



One road in the industrial area



Entry Road of the slum pocket

# Gabtali City Colony

Situated at the extreme West of Dhaka city, it is a recent slum (6 years old) which was given by the municipality. The people were living formally in "Gulshan" but because of the growing speculation on the real estate (it is the rich "western" area of Dhaka), the slum was demolished.

The slum is subject to regular flood during the rainy season. The air is better than in Hazaribag but because of the nearby road used by big trucks, the whole slum is cover with sand and dust. The constructions vary from steal sheet to concrete. Two-store houses have a mix structure of concrete and wood.

The pocket is populated with 4,000 people most of whom are settled in Dhaka for more than 30 years and coming from many different places of Bangladesh. Most of them still have relatives in villages and are used to pay visits there.

The slum is organized into lines which are closed by a door on one side and sanitary (tube well pump and toilets) on the other side. Local people share that water is officially free but the pumps always need repair and each "line community" has to save money (between 1,000 to 2,000 Tk) that the municipal technician would accept to come and repair it. Moreover, the water is not clean and many people (by ignorance) do not boil the water, thus causing many cases of stomach infections and fever especially for children. During the rainy season, there are cases of malaria, typhoid nfection due to stagnant polluted water. One of the men was sharing that during this season, there is regularly 30 to 50 cm of water in his house.

People are mostly working for corporations (cleaning road, construction project) for a salary of 6,000 Tk. Some others are working on the nearby "Ghat" where boats are coming. All the unloading work is done by human (see photo). As an example, one gets 10 Tk for 6 baskets of sand. There is also price for children which show that child labour is quite common here.

There are quite a lot of small schools in the slum for children in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> standards. There are sponsored by an external NGO providing 1 bag, 3 notebooks, books and daily lunch and biscuits. Each school counts around 20 children with quite big age differences. A man from the slum told us that the level of education of the population is quite low, so parents have very little interest/awareness for their children education. Usually, after the 5<sup>th</sup> standard, a large majority of children drop out and almost none of them go to high school. There are no Vocational Training in the slum and youth are learning by their own. As we said before, many of them start to work quite early (tea shop, newspapers selling, bus stand...).

Concerning health, there are no health posts nearby. The nearest hospital is private (3 km from the slum, around 30 Tk by taxi) with a 200 to 400 Tk fee for consultation (medicines have to be paid apart). The municipal hospital is in Dhaka City Centre and in case of emergency; the taxi ride costs 100 Tk. There are local "doctors" but without any graduation.

For PNC (Pre Natal Diagnostic), women will go to hospital only if the pregnancy is not going well but one should guess that according to distance, most of childbirths still taking place home. Basics meals consist in bread, vegetable, sometimes fish or meat. Rarely fruit as they are quite expensive and also rarely milk for children (same reason given).

There are political activities in the slum (during the visit, a demonstration was going on) but we didn't discuss much about these issues.



View of the slum. On the left side, a storage of construction bricks<sup>5</sup>...



Workers on the “Ghat” side unloading all kind of materials but mostly sand (coming by boat from south sea cost area) and bricks.



One street of the slum...

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<sup>5</sup> As there are very few gravels and rocks in the country, the bricks are also use as gravel for cement construction. So one will see a high number of brick factories all over the country. They are coming by boat to Dhaka.

# Kamrangir Char

This area is situated at the South West of Dhaka. It is not considered as a part of the city corporation but its integration is under process. It is accessible by crossing one river. It is a huge old area formally considered as slum (ie. illegal construction) but which has progressively grown into a mix area with many “slum pockets” (as explain before). There is really all kinds of buildings from very unstable steal sheet houses to big buildings of 3-4 floors. The estimated population is around 400,000 (10% to 15% might be slum as such). The slum is more than 40 years old.

They are all facilities in the area: drinkable water (pumping system), electricity, sanitary...There are also many schools going up to the 8<sup>th</sup> standard even if some children drop out. For further education level, they have to go across the river to Dhaka city.

Public hospitals are quite far from the area but there are many private clinics (especially for childbirth) and private practitioners. There is also one NGO which runs a big clinic where free consultations and drugs are given.

Few information about real estate in the slum: 10 m<sup>2</sup> room  $\approx$  20 lakh Tk  $\approx$  2,000 Euros



Across the river, from Lalbag to Kamrangir Char



One street in Kamrangir Char

# Shyampur Area

Shyampur is a slum situated in the South West of Dhaka. It is an old industrial area (mostly steel factories and related). As explain in the “urban structure” chapter, there are no huge open slums but a large quantity of small pockets spread all over the area. The bigger “pocket” is situated all along the old railway track (not in use anymore). In this particular place, the houses are built on stilts because of constant stagnant water coming from the factories on one side and from the pond on the other side. The area is equipped with all facilities (school, water, electricity...). Private Doctors are many in the area and the first private hospital is a 20 mn rickshaw-drrive away. People do not complain from any particular disease (malaria, typhoid...) due to water but more about the dust coming from the roadside.

People work in the nearby factories where they can get salaries from 4,000 to 6,000 Tk a month.



One pocket/street in the slum



Family (the young man was the day-guide)



Houses along the rail track. Bamboo structure were built because of the factories (see behind) spreading polluted water in the slum.

# Kallyanpur Area

Kallyanpur was one of the biggest slums of Dhaka. In 2005, the Municipal Corporation (the land belong to Municipality) destroy the whole slum (around 40,000 inhabitant) in only one day. At this time, Mr Prokrity (from CHCT) used to work in this slum for another NGO (Plan). He witnessed the destruction which was done without no better warning than a letter given the night before. Anyway after demolition, the slum inhabitants came back but in smaller numbers (around 10,000 people now). Maybe the fear of new demolition prevent people from investing more in the construction of their houses (not better than wood/bamboo and steal sheet). The slum is crowed and the sanitary condition is low. There are water tube pump and common toilets in the slum but not enough to service the whole population. So people have to store water in their house. There is a collective drop out garbage just at the entry of the slum but Municipality services don't seem to collect it often enough.

There is no health facilities in the slum itself but in the nearby cross market area (Shyamoli) about 10 mn away by rickshaw. There are several schools run by the NGO Plan and a big girls high school just nearby. There probably are some other informal primary schools but we didn't see them while passing. Mr Prokrity says that the level of school drop out is quite high in the community. It is surely the biggest slum visited during the stay in Dhaka. The nearby areas also have other small pockets. Apart from "Plan", NBUS also has its head office/Resource Centre there.

In terms of priority, the slum really deserves some activities in priority even if the demolition policy of the municipality is unpredictable.



Main road of the slum



One of the Streets

# Shyal Bare Slum

Shyale Bare slum is situated in north Dhaka near Mirpur. It is only one pocket of the slums which are surrounding the lake (around 2,000 families overall).

The condition of the slum are quite difficult as people claim that water has to be brought (and paid) from outside. Electricity is illegal which mean more expensive. There is a land problem on this particular slum. One of the inhabitants is claiming (showing papers) that this land belonged to his grandfather (he himself is quite old) and he desperately tries to make the municipality recognize his rights. Municipality denies it and keeps destroying the slum every 4-5 years.

The slum is partly built on marshy land so all constructions are made of bamboo stilts, a few feet above the swamp. In spite of unhygienic condition, people don't report any particular health problems (only sometime skin infections). Private hospitals are nearby but quite expensive. There is also a health centre run by BRAC<sup>6</sup> NGO.

People sy that no NGO is really working in the slum and that they get no schemes from the municipality (except demolition!!!).

There are schools nearby but mostly private and quite expensive. Many children are school drop-outs. There is a huge garment factory just near the area and many of girls/women are working there (for a monthly salary of 3,000 to 4,000 Tk). Some men also are rickshaw drivers (many rickshaws stand at the entry of the slum).

According to the living condition, this slum certainly is a priority area for intervention.



Such Pocket are settled on the bank of the lake which is around 1 km wide

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<sup>6</sup> BRAC is a huge (the biggest??? according to Wikipedia) worldwide NGO which was funded in Bangladesh in 1972. Ant they are working everywhere in Bangladesh. See <http://www.brac.net/>

# Kazifuri and Lalmat Slums

The two slums pockets are separated from few hundred meters in a residential area on the bank of a lake. All the visits were done with NBUS members who had some meetings going on.

The population of Kazifuri is around 450 families and Lalmat's around 300. Both slums have similar habitation structure (bamboo, steal sheets and few bricks houses). The streets of Lalmat slum are just wider. They are both submitted to regular demolition which might explain why people do not invest much in better construction for their houses. The usual size of a house is not more than 10 m<sup>2</sup> and the hygiene condition are quite bad (clay floor, bad ventilation...).

Both slums got toilets and water units from WSUP NGO which dramatically improved the living condition of the inhabitants (they used to go quite far to get water). There are also quite a good number of schools (government and NGOs school such as BRAC's) going up to the 5<sup>th</sup> standard.

The public hospitals are quite far away so people go to private clinic where the fee is 300 to 400 Tk for a consultation. One man said that many childbirths born at home with of course some unexpected complications.

During a meeting, the people shared that usually children reach the 8<sup>th</sup> standard but many of them drop out after, depending of the parents economics situation.

5 local CBOs (Community Based Organization) from NBUS have started savings. The people usually work in the nearby garments factories (less than a half hour walk).

Compared to others slums visited, these two looks a bit more helped by NGOs and even if they do not look that good from outside, they might not be placed in first rank for intervention.

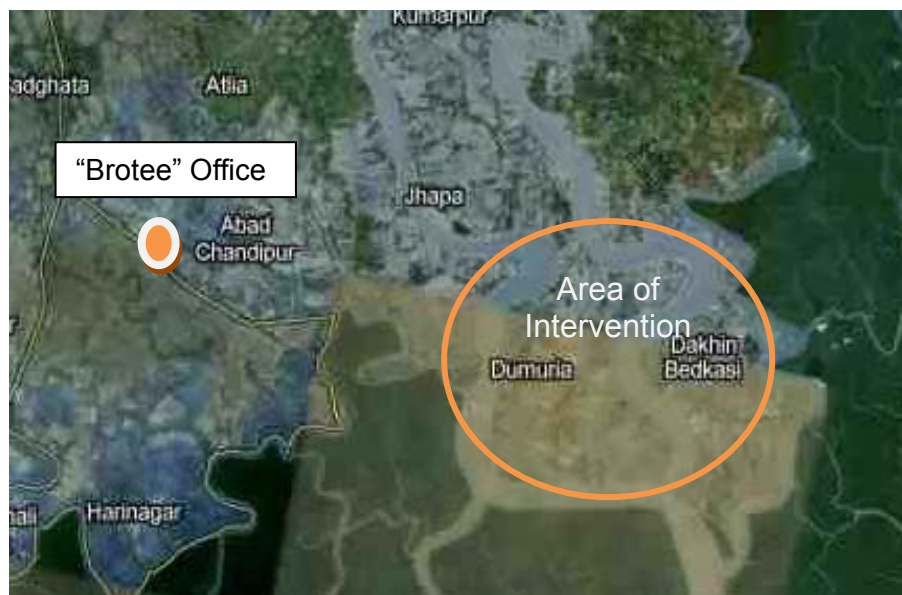
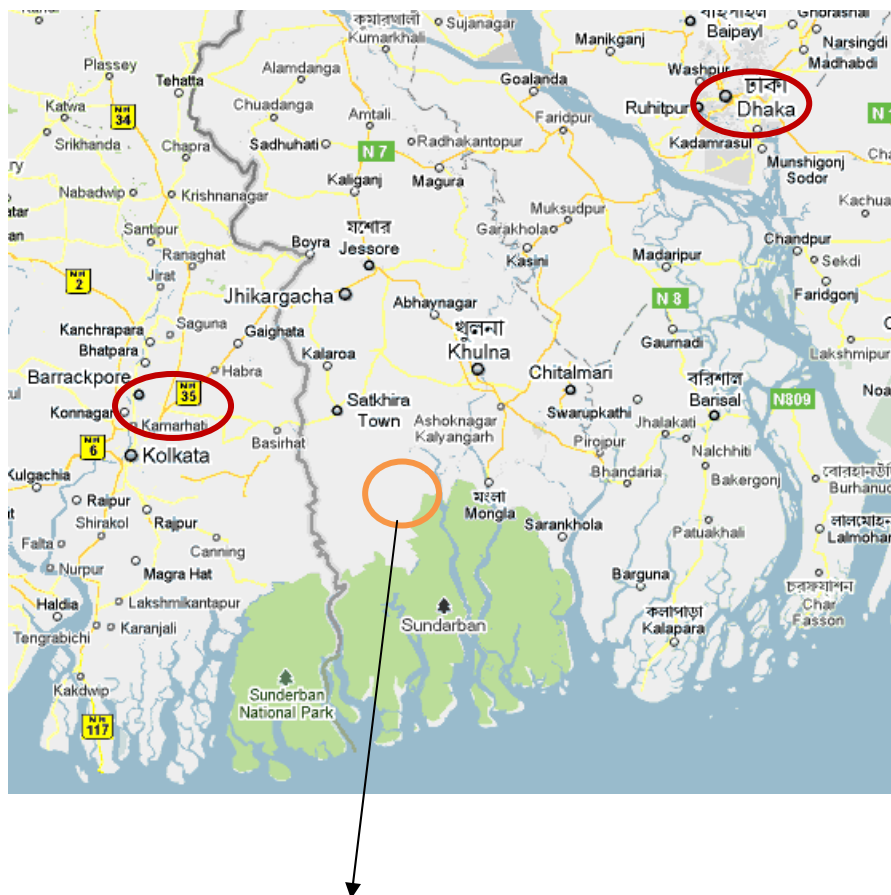


Main road of the slum



Toilets and Water pump units supply by WSUP

# Doumouria Village (Rural)



This visits was organized with Brotee NGO (see related chapter) which was met in Dhaka. The quality of the meeting convinced us to do this unplanned field visit in a rural area.

The area is in Shyamnagar Upazila (sub-district) under Satkhira Distric. Satkhira is situated in South West of Bangladesh (around 7-8 hours from Dhaka by bus) on the boarder with India. After reaching Satkhira, one should take a local bus until Shyamnagar (around 2h30 trip), then a

motorbike until the riverside (around 30 mn) and then a boat to cross the river (around 15 mn).

Geographically speaking, the area is surrounded by rivers (saline water). During the 2008 cyclone, it was one of the areas which were much devastated. All land were flooded by saline water, many houses were destroyed...

At this time, emergency actions were carried out by international agencies (UE, USAID, UNICEF...) providing the population with food, water, tents...). Now some programmes are going on. The main one is called "work for cash" in which people can get 150 Tk a day for infrastructure work (mostly road construction). Some latrine and individual house constructions are also going on. Apart from this "donation programs" which are usually set up after such disasters, there are no other NGOs addressing the long-term social issues of the community. The most important of these issues is access to water. The area is a very difficult area in terms of living environment and one can easily understand why NGOs are not so much motivate to settle there. Everything as to be brought by boat: water, food, construction raw materials (even sand or gravel).... There are no hospitals, no primary schools nearer than 5 km, no electricity... Except the work in this "cash for work" program there is limited income possibilities (very few crops, fishing...). One has to wait 4 to 5 years after the flood before crop culture can grow again.



Village of Doumouria



One pond polluted by Saline water



House Building Program finance by UE



Latrine Program



Women and girls bringing water back from the other side of the river  
(depending of their house location, 5 km of daily walk can be added to this crossing).

### **Activities organized by Brotee :**

Brotee local team is composed of 3 people and all 3 of them seem to have a quite good contact with everybody in the area. They are not coming from the area themselves but are from the nearest town (Shyamnagar). They have initiated some programs in two villages: Doumouria and Noynshora (spelling might be wrong).

#### **1 – Clean Pond Campaign**

In order to address the main issues of the population, Brotee started a pond cleaning program with PSF (Pond Sand Filter) units in two villages. In the region, there are no other alternatives because tube pumps (even deep pumps) give saline water. The population gave support during the cleaning process (remove the saline water and clean/protect the empty pond) and a reasonable symbolic amount of money (around 5,000 Tk). One PSF unit costs around 1 lakh Tk (1,000 Euros) and the whole process (cleaning, transport and units) around 2,000 Euros. A committee was created and is in charge of maintenance and of collecting money from the users (around 3 to 5 Tk a month). For this program they have been helped by the national government who provided engineer staff for the construction part and by a funding agency called NABI (North American Bangladeshi Islamic Community).

Each Pond can provide water to around 200 families and water test show that water is perfectly drinkable.





Pond with PSF units

## 2 – Others Activities

As Brotee does in all their rural programs, they also initiated the creation of what they call Gono Gobeshona (= research group) which is basically a community empowering approach but targeting youth so that they can bring change into their community. Until now there are 2 of these groups and both of them have started small informal schools which are running by volunteers among the adolescents (member of the “Gono Gobeshona”). They have also started a savings program among themselves.

Brotee also initiated women savings groups (20 Tk a week) by giving trainings and tools. They also have a small programs for Child adoption (I forgot the funding agency name) for the most vulnerable families (mostly nutrition and health support). 100 children are under this program.



Informal school managed by “Gono Gobeshona” members



Another informal school started by “Gono Gobeshona”.under a tent provided by the local government<sup>7</sup>.



“Gono Gobeshona” meeting group (in the same tent which is also use for informal school). Regular meeting where resolution are decided (today was about the “Dahej” issue = money given for girls wedding).

<sup>7</sup> This kind of tents were surely given to local government during the disaster

## 4.2 List of NGO met / meeting report

### 4.2.1 Brief presentation of NGOs met

Name	Rural/Urban	Targeted population	Activities
<b>UCEP</b> (Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs)	Both	Child Labour (start at 11 years old)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal/technician Education</li> <li>Vocational Training</li> <li>Job Placement</li> </ul>
<b>BROTEE</b> Samaj Kallyan Sangstha	Rural	Minority/Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy for human right (access to water, fair election, defence of minority)</li> <li>Youth Group Empowerment ("Gono Gobeshona")</li> <li>Water supply</li> </ul>
<b>DCI</b> (Development Center International)	Both	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School/Vocation Training</li> <li>Micro-Finance</li> </ul>
<b>CHCP</b> (Community Health Care Project)	Both	Women/Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women empowerment</li> <li>Reproductive Health/ STI Prevention/Nutrition</li> <li>Micro-credit</li> <li>Education</li> </ul>
<b>HEED</b> (Health Education Economics Development)	Both	Children/ Destitute women/all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health (TB, Leprosy/Malaria/sanitation...)</li> <li>Education (school/language centre....)</li> <li>Economics (Micro-credit/Handicraft fair trade,....)</li> <li>Disaster management</li> </ul>
<b>SOLINFO</b> <sup>8</sup> (Solidarité Informatiques)	Both	Children/adolescent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer teaching</li> </ul>
<b>NBUS</b> (Nagar Boshivashi Unaon Shangastha)	Urban	Slum people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slum people empowerment</li> <li>Slum Family support and counselling</li> </ul>
<b>DSK</b> (Dushtha Shasthya Kendra)	Both	Slum community/Farmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water supply and advocacy/agriculture</li> <li>Community organization and promotion</li> <li>Micro-credit</li> </ul>
<b>MAPPA</b> <sup>9</sup>	Urban/Rural	Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create personalized map for both urban &amp; rural areas</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Friendly meeting only for getting NGO contacts. SOLINFO is actually making computer Vocation Training centre all over the country.

<sup>9</sup> Situated near Farmgate. Good to remember such organization when some detailed map will be needed during implementation.

## 4.2.2 NGOs' websites

UCEP (Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs) - <http://www.ucepbd.org/>

BROTEE - Samaj Kallyan Sangstha  
<http://www.brotee.org/>

DCI (Development Centre International)

CHCP (Community Health Care Project) <http://chcpbd.org>

HEED (Health Education and Economic Development) <http://www.heed-bangladesh.com>

DSK (Dushtha Shasthya Kendra)  
<http://www.dskbangladesh.org/>

NBUS (Nogor Bostibashi Unnyan Songstha)



4 board members of NBUS during a meeting in Lalmat slum. On the left side Dholy was met by chance during a visit in a tiny small pocket. At her right side, the general secretary Mr. Abdus Salam.



Mapping of Kallyampur slum made when preparing the sanitation renovation plan



Resource Centre and Central Office

## 4 – Proposal of intervention/partnership

### 4.1 FDP potentiality activities

#### ***Needs of Family counselling in the slums of Dhaka City***

There are hundreds of NGOs working in Dhaka offering a wide range of services (clinics, schools, vocational training, shelters...). Multiple campaigns (immunization, TB...) are regularly taking place in the slum. Many infrastructure programmes have also been carried out (especially for toilets/sanitation facilities that we have seen in all slum visited). There are also many NGOs specialized in organizing demonstration for advocacy on certain themes.

On the other hand, there are comparatively fewer NGOs working inside the slum. We have also visited several NGOs' offices which are situated in areas that probably were slums some 15 years ago, but which have turned into mixed areas of slums pockets and middle-class houses (HEED, CHCP). In the most deprived slums (as Shyal bare, Gaptali, some part of Shyampur...) there are almost no organization working there on daily basis (PLAN, BRAC for school essentially).

From time to time, some NGOs make home visits concerning a particular problem (follow up of a disease, follow up of vocational training...) but no thorough counselling with an holistic approach. Some organizations might also make home visits for sensitization or in case of urgent matters (like NBUS). Nevertheless, this thorough counselling is needed for solving certain issues which requires a deep change in the family mindset.

These problems are multiple but a few matters can already be pointed out:

- Child Labour: there is a real need of sensitization on school drop out. Many children hardly complete their 5<sup>th</sup> standard. As there is a habit of employing children in all kind of businesses, it is clearly an attractive option for families which are in need of cash. A deep work needs to be done in order to make the families understand the long-term advantages of education. Moreover, there are many existing vocational training options (as UCEP, DSK) to which families can be referred.
- Savings and budgeting: Bangladesh is the country of easy loan. So people are use to get loans from different organizations and there is surely a need of helping families facing multiple debts for getting out of it. This issue was not discussed directly with families but we know that the problem is well known in Bangladesh and it surely creates tremendous difficulties in the family budget (stress, family tensions...).
- Child nutrition/child care: There is a low level of awareness on child nutrition (importance of breastfeeding, importance of balance meals, fruit...) and the problem is not only coming from insufficient income. Seeing the average salary and relative dynamic of the city economy, the families are reasonably not suffering of hunger here. In some slums, the hygiene conditions of children are also quite bad and some sensitization would be welcomed. This especially when the quality of water is doubtful and pre-treatment such as boiling would be required.
- Women's health: Pre and post pregnancy counselling, family planning, nutrition and hygiene are surely some topics that also need higher and long term sensitization. Because of religious statements, communities are less sensitized on birth control. So the public services are not much active on this issue (Bangladesh has the highest population density of the world!!)

Of course a deeper study of the slums situation would enhance our knowledge of the slum-dwellers' needs. Especially concerning certain topics that are quite sensitive and not easy to analyze (women violence, drug addiction...).

## ***Particularity of intervention***

The main specificity of Dhaka city is the high instability of the bigger slum areas (submitted to regular demolition) and the consequent spread of slum population in a myriad of tiny pockets all over the city. It will definitely bring some difficulties during the implementation. The biggest slum of the city hardly counts more than 10,000 to 15,000 habitants.

For a start, we can of course target the bigger slums but on a mid-term basis, we will face a difficulty in managing the activities. We will have to select areas with a population of 500,000 and make a full census of the slum pockets (which might not represent more than 10%) and then start to work in these dozens slum-pockets.

There are others social aspects that one should take into account and are linked with this configuration. The small slums (of 50 to 200 houses for most of them) are looking more like small independent villages. It might surely affect the social life inside (everybody knows everybody) and it looks difficult to work in such slum without creating a kind of relationship with local leader (formal and informal). Such organization like NBUS is present in hundreds of slum-pockets in the city and they already do individual sensitization work as well as community advocacy.

Maybe we should think about another kind of intervention which includes a dynamic cooperation with such local committees.

A last point that should be notified is the relatively low level of English of most of the NGO field staff. If usually the boards have quite good level, when it comes to field, we have much more difficulties to communicate. Compared to India, we are one level below and it might bring additional difficulties.

## ***Potential partners***

Even if we have surely met some well committed NGOs (BROTEE, HEED, NBUS), we didn't find some real potential partners who already have a high interest for including an individual approach into their activities. HEED would be reliable because of the apparent motivation of the actual director and what seems to be a strong financial transparency policy. DSK might also be good but we didn't have time to meet the Board so it is more difficult to evaluate. NBUS is also quite an interesting organization but the main issue is that they don't have a FCRA. So even if we succeed in creating a good technical approach on field level, we might be stuck when it comes into finance management. Of course, we can use a NGO as a "cashier" while waiting for the NBUS registration. In all cases FDP is a very particular program for whom partnership process is long and uncertain.

## **4.2 Other Potential action depending of needs/potential partners**

According to the observations and the discussions, Bangladesh appears to be a country where rural programmes might also be highly needed. This is particularly true in the South of the country which is regularly suffering from environmental disasters. The central government is almost absent in this region and the local elected leaders have no real budget.

Having visited one of these areas, I should admit that the conditions of living are extreme (it is really surviving) and the urgent action taken by international agencies are rarely continued by a long term development approach. On the other hand, Brotee is the only NGO we met which might fit with Inter Aide's philosophy when it comes to rural programs (non charitable approach, community based, long-term effects targeted...). For this reason, I already see different options of intervention:

1. Water supply programme: safe and clean water is surely "THE" main problem of rural areas. The frequent cyclones in some areas and the arsenic pollution in others (when it is not the same !!!) make this issue as the first priority for villagers. As Inter Aide implements Water Programmes in Haiti, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, it would be interesting to study the possibility to start programs in Bangladesh by targeting the most vulnerable areas (areas with the highest arsenic contamination, tribal and minority villages, deprived areas after cyclone disaster...). We can use the pilot programs of Brotee:

river Water supply, cleaning pond... (HEED is also willing to help us for further study in their disaster areas). We can even start by a simple technical consultancy mission on these programs. This would be a good “small” collaboration with them in order to evaluate the partnership.

2. Income generation programmes: some of Brotee’s youth groups are willing to start micro-businesses (mostly agricultural programmes) in their villages. They already have savings between them but not enough. Brotee is ready to become an invest partner by sharing the investments and profit (so sharing also the risks). So acting as partner with these youth groups and not as “loan” provider. On the other side, the youth would need proper training related to business management (budget, account follow up, marketing...). In this sense it might be a good challenge for Inter Aide Income Generation Program (IGP) to develop such rural development activities. Again, it can easily be done on an experimental basis with one youth group in a village followed by Brotee.

## CONCLUSION

In such mission, the main question remains: “Should Inter Aide start to work in Bangladesh”. The answer to this question is without doubt: “Yes”. The fact that there is already a huge quantity of NGOs should not make one feel that everything is already there. It is true that Bangladesh is a country of NGOs (like Madagascar, Haïti, Burkina Faso...) but at the field level (in the slums as well as in the village areas...) their presence is less obvious and certainly doesn't compensate the government weaknesses.

Even if we didn't manage to find proper partners for the implementation of a “FDP-like” program, at least we now have a better vision of the slum situation as well as a basic network of a few NGOs which can be helpful in case of a future mission. The NBUS networks surely is the best option we have until now and maybe we should work out a different approach which can use this wide spread slum-based organization.

Historically Inter Aide in Asia has only worked in urban slums. So the perspective of starting rural programmes might look unusual at first. Nevertheless, regarding the needs, this option should be also studied in the future.

But in any case, surely more studies and visits should be organized. Maybe by others members of Inter Aide could do it, in order to be able to share the different point of views.