

Title of Session: Global Project Based Learning - Bangladesh

Moderator: Linda Ullah

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Room: Global Project Based Learning Group

BJB2 looks around the room

LindaU: The usual suspects...

LindaU: Not sure how dazzling I am tonight.. but I have some interesting threads to discuss.

BJB2: just getting off to a very slow start this year...it's always like this but I always forget

BJB2: are you still traveling?

LindaU Wonders if Jeff and BJ have looked at her Bangladesh photos on FB?

BJB2: nope

LindaU: I'm home...

LindaU: I have one group of them to show tonight.

JeffC: nope

BJB2: your photos are always fabulous

LindaU: Have you all seen Slumdog Millionaire?

BJB2: no

BJB2 . o O (heard of it...does that count?)

LindaU: See it.. It shows the maiming of orphans in Mumbai... by the begging mafia... It happens all over that part of the world and it is inexcusable...

BJB2: so many stories of tragedies and injustices around the world

LindaU: very true... I've seen these maimed beggars on the streets ... they are all over Dhaka-- (capitol of Bangladesh). It is really a HUGE human rights issue.

BJB2: are there ways in which Americans can get involved?

BJB2 feels kind of insignificant

LindaU: the photos I alluded to are of the pollution in Dhaka.. Another huge human rights issue in my mind. Check out the first 10 or 11 photos: <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=55111&l=a4e60&id=720819409>

LindaU: People live and work in this pollution 24/7 including families with children.

LindaU: I spent only two hours on a boat traveling through it, and it affected my lungs.

LindaU: adversely.

BJB2: yuck!

BJB2: what is being manufactured?

LindaU: I've been wondering how to create school projects that can help improve these conditions/issues.

LindaU: Bricks.

BJB2: there is that much building going on?

LindaU: These are coal burning factories.

BJB2 nods

LindaU: Not clean coal technology

LindaU: Yes.

LindaU: and bricks are broken into gravel to build roads..

BJB2: where do they get the coal?

LindaU: there is only one river area in Sylhet where there are rocks in Bangladesh, and they destroyed that river to get the rocks... I'll get you the photos.

LindaU: <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=55104&l=83c24&id=720819409>

BJB2 . o O (I would assume that the coal mining is another issue of pollution and abuse of labor)

LindaU: I might also mention that on the boat we took on the Chandpur trip (brick

factories) they were dumping the trash (Styrofoam and plastic) into the river from our meals (c 150 people times breakfast/lunch and snacks).

LindaU: and soda cans.

LindaU: Not a whole lot of environmental awareness.

BJB2: ack!

LindaU: The rivers and ponds also are full of arsenic from the garment industry waste (dyes).

LindaU: Some or iridescent.

BJB2: so this would have to be an environmental awareness project rather than just focusing on one pollutant

LindaU: My theme tonight was to be to make people aware of all this, and to brainstorm what our students can do to tackle these issues.

LindaU: Exactly....

LindaU: Bangladesh isn't alone.. in all this

BJB2 nods. Do you have any suggestions?

LindaU: Environmental and human rights issues in developing nations.

LindaU: they seem to go together.

LindaU: I keep thinking of Save the Children and how one Canadian 12 year old (now a man) started an organization to deal with all these issues.

BJB2 nods...I remember you telling us about that

LindaU: <http://www.savethechildren.org/>

LindaU: There has to be a way to create projects that first develop the awareness of these injustices...then find ways to help corrupt governments make the changes necessary to improve the lives of their citizens...

BJB2: raising funds doesn't seem to be an answer...change has to go much deeper than that

LindaU: My other thought for tonight deals with an issue I heard about on NPR that disturbed me... It a way it is more local.. but it also deals with global terrorism.

LindaU: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99919934>

LindaU: It's unfortunately very complex.

LindaU: There are unscrupulous, corrupt people in powerful positions that abuse children, families and other people in general.

BJB2: ah, yes, I did see that somewhere.

LindaU: I'm including the pollution and destruction of the fragile environment as part of this abuse.

BJB2: . o O (here's another piece to add to the conundrum...US gang members entering the armed forces, being trained to use weapons and then returning to their communities after they've finished their service)

LindaU: These children in Minneapolis are being essentially brainwashed and, in my mind abducted

LindaU: Yes.

LindaU: and child soldiers.

LindaU: and children being used as prostitutes.

BJB2: the whole thing can be overwhelming...I guess you have to focus on one thing

LindaU: okay.. It's been a heavy night.. or at least that's how I'd planned to start...

LindaU: I do want to share one organization I've recently found: <http://www.ipeace.com/>

BJB2: I think this is something that should be addressed on the group discussion board, Linda

LindaU: How do I do that?

BJB2: draw on the input of all the members of the group and see if they can come up with some ideas

BJB2: post to the discussion board...tell the group what you've shared here

LindaU: I'd like to try to run this as a topic next month and see if we can get some people here for it.

BJB2: good idea. And posting to the discussion board might get a dialogue going

BJB2 . o O (it's not going to be a quick solution)

LindaU: I returned from Bangladesh really upset (as you can tell).. then I watched Slumdog Millionaire.

LindaU: I'm not even sure there really is a solution.. but I hope there is.

LindaU: I'm not usually this pessimistic.

BJB2 hugs Linda

LindaU: I've just seen/experienced too much injustice in the past few weeks.

BJB2: you can't be the only person in the world who has seen this!

LindaU: It's hard to turn a blind eye when you know children are being abused.

LindaU: Seeing it and doing something to stop it are two different things.

BJB2: maybe we need to do something in some other education sites like classroom 2.0

BJB2: and post to education blogs

LindaU: I think, at some level, we all know it exists, but we choose to forget about it.

LindaU: Good idea

BJB2: we choose to bury it because we feel helpless

LindaU: and embarrassed by it.. because we aren't stopping it.

BJB2: yes, true.

BJB2: write an article that I can put in the TI newsletter

LindaU: When you visit that part of the world it is "in your face" and yet people there ignore it.

BJB2: either they don't know any better or they also feel helpless to change anything

LindaU: I'll have to think about getting my words organized and doing some serious postings.

BJB2 . o O (or they're in survival mode and can't get involved)

BJB2: good...I'll look forward to seeing your posts

LindaU: I think it's more of a defense mechanism. They really choose to sit in their air conditioned cars with the windows rolled up and let their drivers shoo away the beggars. They may roll down a window part way as the car starts to drive away and slip the equivalent of a few pennies out the window to a beggar.

BJB2 sighs

LindaU: I really encourage you to go see Slumdog Millionaire. It really exposes some of the abuses...

BJB2: I'll do that

BJB2: what does your husband think of this?

LindaU: He reminds me that it is hard to fight the corruption. I think he feels the same way I do, but knows the dangers of going against the "system."

BJB2 nods. He lives it every day, doesn't he?

LindaU: Yes. Thailand has the child prostitution. In many ways it is otherwise better than Bangladesh.. but there is that "sick" side.

BJB2 nods.

LindaU: I agree... I'm not sure how we can really make lasting positive change.

BJB2: we can try to get the ball rolling. Awareness is important

LindaU: It definitely has affected my thinking... I've blamed the pollution for the bronchitis... My lungs started burning during the 2 hours I was going through it... It made me wonder how people live in that kind of pollution.

LindaU: IT made me wonder about all the health hazards they live with.

BJB2 nods...and the medical care that is given

LindaU: Maybe awareness is the best I can do right now.

BJB2: it's a start

BJB2: but you have to take care of yourself first!

LindaU: Back to the issues I've been thinking about... I've noticed that Bangladeshis are

offended when I talk about these issues. They want me to see the good things about the country.

BJB2: same as any other country!

BJB2 . o O (Americans are the same way)

LindaU: It's like being the "ugly American" to point out these problems.

BJB2: so the approach needs to be more "save the children" or generalized/universal?

BJB2 . o O (an international bill of rights...right to clean air, etc)

LindaU: V.S. Naipul (Indian author from Trinidad) went to India for the first time and wrote "An Area of Darkness." He pointed out the injustices in his book, and outraged the Indian community in the world and in India.

LindaU: These exist.. but some countries choose to ignore them.

BJB2: so we need to make the rights more 'in your face' ;-)

BJB2: but I don't think pointing fingers at specific nationalities is going to work

BJB2 . o O (as you've just mentioned)

LindaU: Part of the issue is governments who "look the other way"

BJB2: can we change that?

BJB2 . o O (or are we tilting at windmills?)

LindaU: and people with money who pretend the ugliness doesn't exist. They live in their protected bubbles.

LindaU: People of power who consider themselves above the law.

LindaU: governments who make it dangerous to oppose the status quo.

BJB2: much of that is out of our control...and I think if we take that approach we'll drown in our own tears

LindaU: We may only be able to help a few.

BJB2 nods.

LindaU: but.. Do you know the story of the boy and the starfish?

BJB2: yes

BJB2 . o O (it matters to the starfish)

LindaU: Yes.. <http://dreamemporium.com/starfish.html>

BJB2: maybe that would be a good title for a movement for change ;-)

BJB2 . o O (unless it's already been done)

LindaU wonders about copyright issues.

LindaU: Well it's getting late... I love chatting with you, but time is flying by

BJB2 hugs. I've appreciated our discussion...lots of things to think about

LindaU: Hope I haven't depressed you too much..

BJB2: get back to me if you have any ideas ...and post to the discussion board

LindaU: I'll shake this off... but begin to do something positive about it--to the extent I can.

BJB2: that's all any of us can do...to the extent we can...one starfish at a time

BJB2 hugs goodnight

LindaU: Good night.. :-)