

A RAINY DAY

On the third day of my five day stay with a poor family in rural Bangladesh, the heavens open. It rains hard and continuously for more than 24 hours and life for 'my' family comes to a standstill. Rain in Dhaka is a nuisance: the drains overflow, traffic grinds to a halt and unpleasant smells permeate the air. Rain in the village is something else and I had never realized before living this for myself just how big an impact it has.

'My' family live in a one roomed bamboo and CI sheet house. The rain pounds on the tin roof relentlessly. The bamboo walls soak up the rain and sweat dampness. The father (Ali), a rickshaw driver, is unable to work all day. One days income lost means that he buys 5kg less rice this week. His wife (Salma) works in the garment industry some five miles away. There was no way she could miss a day at the factory so she leaves home at 6am and paddles through the rain, works her ten hour shift in the dry clothes she had carried with her and then returns home in her wet ones. She shivers all evening and starts sneezing and snuffling next morning. Their three children, two girls and a boy are aged between 2 and 7 years. The eldest attends a government school one and a half miles from home. She usually walks to school in bare feet with her friend but there was no way she could go this day. So she stays with her two siblings and their father cooped up in the house all day. They have no warm clothes. The outside stove was soaked and unusable and so there is no cooked food to be had. The four of them eat handfuls of moori (dried puffed rice) periodically throughout the day. At night, we can't go out to use the toilet – I don't know what they did but I had to resort to a bottle. It is very cold... a cold I have never, in 22 years of Bangladesh experience, ever felt before.

We play games, sing songs, read books together but the novelty of having the bideshi (foreigner) play Incy Wincy Spider over and over soon wears off. We simply have to sit out the rain. Cooped up together in 200 square feet, it is unsurprising that we all succumb to Salma's cold.

I am due to leave soon... back to Dhaka and the inconvenience of waterlogged streets and the comfort of my Echinacea tablets. 'My' family, meanwhile, will take several days to recover from the rainy day.

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**Seasonality
Revisited**

Perspectives on Seasonal Poverty

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