Bangladesh Trip

DAY 4---BRAC
IFC
Yunus Center

April 22nd, 2014
Leaving the hotel at 8:40 am, we were heading to the BRAC. We have long known that BRAC is the leading NGO in the world, who focuses on the development of the rural/poverty area. We were excited to hear about their insights on our project in a broad scope.
Sitting in a nice conference room, we met Nazra Mahjabeen Sabet (Programme Head BRAC Enterprises). We learned about The cooperations and disagreement between BRAC and IDCOL on SHS. Nazra specifically pointed out the challenges BRAC were facing in implementing the SHS and the flaws in the existing business model. Their sharp insights are very helpful in the wave of optimism in the system.
After meeting with BRAC, we were back in the hotel waiting to rest a little bit, but interestingly, there is always surprises in our journey that we got a call from IFC, which motivates us to rush out to the road again, heading to the IFC building. IFC is in the same district with BRAC. A very neat and tidy office space was very accommodating.
Dr. Afifa Raihana, the specialist from Sustainable Energy Finance of IFC gave us a presentation on how to build the link between banking and environment, and how should banks take their roles in environmental issues and mitigate the associated risk.

Then we had a discussion on the feasibility of our two versions of financing options, the current availability of carbon credit in local context, and the cashflow-based models the IFC and IDCOL follow.
After a quick lunch break, we made it on time to Yunus Center. We were all very excited to meet Dr. Yunus. It is a precious experience for us to meet the most celebrated personel in Bangladesh. With the fame of Nobel Prize and the devotion in helping the rural areas, Dr. Yunus’ insights will be a shining add-on to our project.

Walid’s friend, who is an employee in Yunus Center, came by our hotel yesterday and gave us a brief idea about each branch in Grameen Group and suggestions about today’s meeting with Yunus Center.
We introduced our team and project purpose to Dr. Yunus. And during the 1-hour meeting, he discussed about the development of Solar Home System, the feasibility of Solar Nano-grid System and micro-financing. He is familiar with the situation in Bangladesh and has great experience in personal micro-financing. He covered most of our questions and gave us suggestions about our project.
Electricity reliability is a problem in Bangladesh. Even Grameen group was affected by load shedding from time to time, and we were there to experience one. This experience further intrigued us to study renewable energy development.

After today’s meeting, a lot of things were clarified. Yet, some bigger questions emerged, how to harness the financing power from both public and private sector is the biggest one.