Chairman of RIB Visits Kajoli Centers in the North

Two separate refreshers' training programmes and re-unions of the teachers' of Kajoli Pre-Schools of north-western Bangladesh were held on 21-22 December, 2009. Teachers from 44 Kajoli Centers participated in the refreshers' training course held at the RIB Outreach Station of Saidpur, Nilphamari on 21 December, 2009. Dr. Shamsul Bari, Chairman RIB, personally conducted the training programme. Mr. Saifuzzaman Rana, Education Coordinator of RIB assisted the Chairman in conducting the session. A.K.M. Maksud, Executive Director of Gram Bangla and Matiur Rahman and the Assistant Program Officer of Saidpur Outreach Station, RIB were also present and participated in different activities of the programme. A few guardians, Agranees ("Champions"), representatives of Mothers' Organisations, some journalists and 12 children from a local Kajoli Center also participated in the programme. Extreme cold and foggy weather caused some delay in starting the programme, which started at 11:00 AM and continued till 4:00 PM. At the beginning of the training session, Dr. Shamsul Bari highlighted the proper and correct use of different educational materials by the teachers and children. He demonstrated how the teachers should help the children in using the pocket cards and pocket board during the learning process. He also discussed how to use other educational materials such as blackboard, recite poems, tell stories, sing and dance and play games with the children in order to interest them in learning and for their overall development. In the second session of the day, Dr. Bari discussed issues such as developing community ownership of the Kajoli Centers and participation of the local community members in the running and welfare of the Kajoli Centers. He specially emphasized upon the need for and continuation of midday meals served to the children by the mothers and in strengthening "mothers' organizations". These activities have proved very important and contribute to the sustainability of the Centers. At the end of the day's programme, he and others shared experience of the Kajoli Pre-School Model, its uniqueness, ownership of local communities, performance of the children and the issue of social-sustainability with the local journalists. It was mentioned that the idea Kajoli Pre-School Model originated in and spread to different parts of the country as an initiative of local communities with the help of research conducted by RIB and local the communities jointly all over the country. RIB's contribution in this respect was/is limited to teachers' training and providing educational materials.

On 22 December in the morning the team members visited Kajoli Centres located at Bakupara, Telipara, Borapar and Jagannathpara villages of Boda Upazilla under Panchagar district. The team members observed how much the children enjoyed coming to the centers and learning to read and write with immense pleasure. The team learnt from the experiences of the local villagers in running the Kajoli centers and how the centers can be made socially and locally self-sustainable. Dr. Bari exhorted the local people to be involved with and to support these centers. The visiting team later sat with the teachers of 18 local Kajoli Centers (including 2 from Birol Upazila of Dinajpur). Mr. Forhad Hossain, Social Welfare Officer of Boda Upazila also joined in the discussion. Dr Bari discussed with the teachers the best uses of the educational materials in improving the learning process of the children. The Upazila Social Welfare Officer declared that he will make government support available in the form of allowances for old people, disabled persons and freedom fighters belonging to the families of the teachers of Kajoli Centers. The visit of the Chairman and other members of the team as well training and re-unions of the teachers is expected to boost the morale of the teachers and local community in running the Kajoli Centers.