

The bedays are boat dwellers and normally



have no abode on land. They are popularly known as River Gypsies. All their activities are performed from or on boats. From time immemorial they have plied the rivers of Bangladesh and neighboring India to buy and sell their wares on boats. A description of their lives and activities is contained in the brief summary of a research project supported by RIB.

As a follow-up of the research project, it was decided that RIB would support the introduction of a mobile school on boat for the education of beday children. Since the community is for most of the time on move from one place to another on their boats, the idea of a boat school was only natural. But unfortunately such an idea was never put into practice before, as a result of which the bedays have remained one of the least literate communities in the country.

To begin with, it was decided to use the Kajoli pre-school model to attract children to learning. One mobile school was thus set up which went with the groups wherever they moved around. This was so successful that the researcher, Mr. A.K.M. Maksud, who is also the head of Grambangla Unnayan Committee (a local NGO), was subsequently able to obtain donor support to open 22 such boat schools for the beday community. These are still in operation. One boat school is thus attached to one cluster of beday boats. Apart from pre-school classes, other classes have gradually been introduced. The need for more such schools will be met if more funds are available.