

THE KAJOLI MODEL

Community Nurtured Early Childhood Learning for the Underprivileged

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Foreword by Shamsul Bari



**UNHCR-RIB Sub-Project on Kajoli
ECDP and Community Mobilization
in Refugee Camps**



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for the Underprivileged**

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Photo 1 : RIB's Chairman, Shamsul Bari taking part in English Language training through Kajoli Method in Northern Bangladesh

Photo 2 : Refugee Children in Nayapara Camp, Teknaf dancing during 'Open house'

Content

1. Foreword	5
2. Impact and Lessons Learnt from the Kajoli ECL Model In Bangladesh	11
3. Working with Refugees : The pilot phase	23

Illustrations

1. Depiction of Kajoli Centers in Rohingya camps by refugee children; Artist: Ferdous, Nayapara Camp	9
2. Depiction of Kajoli Centers in Rohingya camps by refugee children; Artist: Zafor Ahamed. Kutupalong Camp	21

Foreword

I am pleased to have been asked to write the Foreword for this small booklet on the work of RIB relating to children's education in northern Bangladesh and the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

When I returned to Bangladesh in 1999, after having worked for more than 20 years at UNHCR in Geneva and other places in the world, I felt that I still have some years left to continue my work in the humanitarian field, something I learnt from UNHCR over the years. As a result, I became actively involved, together with a number of others in Bangladesh who had similar background and/or interest, in identifying how best we could keep ourselves engaged in useful activities in the country. The result, among other things, was the setting up of a research support agency, known as Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB), focusing primarily on poverty alleviation.

One of the first focuses of our attention was on the education of children belonging to the most impoverished sections of our population. We soon came to realize that one of the reasons why parents of such children were often reluctant to send them to the local primary schools was that they felt it required sending them first to the preparatory kindergarten schools, which was too expensive for them to afford. So immediately we set out to develop an early childhood learning model which would help pre-school-aged children from these communities to be interested in pursuing education and readied for admission in the local primary school system. The model, which evolved through experimentation, first at Kajoli village in Sripur sub-district of Magura district, which is my ancestral village, was subsequently tried out and tested in several other places in the country. The result was the formal arrival of the Kajoli Model, which is so low-cost to implement that it is now being used in over two hundred Kajoli centres throughout the country, run and managed by local communities without any financial support from outside, except for the learning materials which are provided by RIB. The model has recently been adapted for use in the official camps for refugees from Myanmar for 4 year olds.

The primary feature of the Kajoli model is that it helps children learn to read and write through fun and games. It makes learning so attractive that children do not consider it difficult or burdensome. Under the model, children come to Kajoli centres to spend three to four hours a day, mostly in the mornings, for a year before they become six years old to be eligible for entry into the local primary school system. They come to the centres without any books, paper and pencil, almost empty-handed, as if they are going to a playground. Instead of paper and pencil, the model makes use of a pocket-board made of cloth, more recently of bamboo sticks, and pocket cards. It is the pocket cards that introduce them to the written form of words they know from their daily life. These words are inscribed on the cards with pictures that represent them. The students first learn to read the words, and then write them on the blackboards, just by copying them, without learning the names of the letters first. But as they start writing them on the space allotted to them on the blackboards that are placed on three sides of the class room, they also learn the names of the letters used in and the spelling of the words. This latter task is normally considered to be the most difficult aspect of learning by most. The Kajoli children learn them without realizing that they are actually learning to read and spell. So what the Kajoli model does is in fact take away the fear factor in learning which is what kept many children from such vulnerable groups away from education in the past. The model also helps children learn to count, do easy math, recite nursery rhymes and poems, to tell stories and to sing and dance. The emphasis of the model is on developing a child into a complete person with human values. [For a more detailed description of the Kajoli model visit: www.rib-kajolimodel.org .]

An important aspect of the Kajoli model is the participation of parents of the children who are mostly illiterate. When parents discover that their children are eager to go the centres and come back full of enthusiasm about what they learnt there, they themselves become attracted to the process. Very soon they become active partners with their children in the process. In fact, the participation of parents in their children's education has been found to be the most important contributing factor for the success of the Kajoli model in Bangladesh.

An example of the success of Kajoli is that wherever a Kajoli centre exists, the head of the local primary school is eager to get

children who graduate from it to be enrolled in his/her school. This is because primary school teachers have found that the presence of Kajoli children often help other children in their classes become eager to learn and pass on their enthusiasm for learning to them. The recognition by local primary schools of the high quality of Kajoli children has contributed in a big way to the support that the parents of the children and members of the local community provide to the running of the centers.

The success of the Kajoli model has had a number of other positive spin-offs. One is that parents of children who learnt to read and write in Bengali through the Model became eager to have their children also learn English through the same method. This has resulted in the development of a Kajoli Model for English which has recently been introduced in the Kajoli centers. This has created a great deal of enthusiasm and increased local support for the Centers. The other is that as a result of similar requests, the Kajoli Model has been or is being adapted to reintroduce and popularize the Chakma and Santal mother-languages to children from the respective communities. A similar effort is underway to adapt the model to teach Burmese language to refugee children from Myanmar in order to facilitate their eventual return to and reintegration in their country of origin. RIB is pleased to contribute to the preservation and spread of mother languages, an objective which was promoted by Bangladesh and formally adopted by UNESCO.

In the following sections two of our colleagues at RIB describe some other aspects of the Kajoli Model, its impacts and lessons learnt from its use in general and how it was found relevant and useful for vulnerable refugee communities from Myanmar in the two official camps located in the Cox's Bazaar area of Bangladesh.

My personal involvement in the development of the Kajoli Model and the fact the model is now being used to educate children in the refugee camps in Bangladesh gives me a great deal of satisfaction. I feel that by doing this I am perhaps paying back some of my debts to refugees all over the world in the service of whom I have spent most of my life and in the process of which I have been able to earn a living for over two decades.

Shamsul Bari
Chairman
Board of Directors of RIB



Kajoli Centers in Rohingya camps drawn by refugee children. Artist: Ferdous, Nayapara Camp

Impact and Lessons Learnt from the Kajoli ECL Model in Bangladesh

Saifuzzaman Rana

Introduction:

“Amar mrittur par ai kendroti amar seler bou porichalona korbe ata amar shapno (After my death this center will be run by my daughter in law, this is my dream)”.

*Roushon Ara, Teacher, Khidirpur Kajoli Model Center, Monohordi, Norsingdi.

Ranking 146th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index of the UN in 2011, Bangladesh remains one of the least developed countries in the world. However, some important developments have taken place in the sectors of economy, agriculture, health, and education. In the education sector, improvements have taken place regarding various indicators. The enrolment rate is significantly high. As a result of government and non governmental interventions people are more aware of the benefits of education. So, parents are finally sending their children to the nearest schools. However, quality remains a big challenge in the education sector in Bangladesh. Research shows that 35 to 40 percent of the children dropped out of school before completing the cycle of primary level. Many reasons for this have been identified, such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, teacher student ratio, traditional teaching/ learning methods, poor teaching materials, low teacher salary, and the lack of knowledge regarding the importance of early childhood learning (ECL).^{*} Early childhood learning is inclusive of learning from very early stages of a child to pre-primary education. If we are able to ensure proper

* We have used here the broader genre of Early Childhood Learning (ECL), rather than Early Childhood Education (ECE), because in the refugee camps we are dealing with 3 and 4 year olds and not only children at pre-primary level i.e. 5 and 5+.

learning environment and pre-primary education for every child, it is believed that the dropout rate will decrease automatically, as early childhood learning and pre-primary education helps both children and parents to understand the process of education and raises their interest to go to school regularly.

Background of the Model:

The story of the Kajoli Model (KM) started ten years ago. An action research was initiated on 1st January 2002 at the Kajoli village in Sreepur Upazila under Magura district of Bangladesh by Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). Dr. Shamsul Bari, Chairman of RIB, conceived the model and initiated its application in Kajoli, which is his ancestral village. Hence the model was named Kajoli. After a year's experience in the village, under the leadership of Mr. Akhtaruzzaman Tuhin (now deceased) of RIB and Professor Bashir Ahmed of Kajoli, the model was further refined, it was decided to try it out in other places of Bangladesh. In the second year, therefore, it was extended to fifteen other places in Bangladesh where the effectiveness of the model, particularly the innovative learning materials was further tested. Finally, after more adjustments, the Kajoli Early Childhood Learning (ECL) Model emerged and spread throughout Bangladesh.

The Kajoli ECL model has two major components. One is the learning part and other is community participation/ownership component. Through the action research approach which was followed in the development of the model, the learning materials consisting of a pocket board, pocket cards, and the innovative use of black boards were perfected. Gradually, playing cards, a book of rhymes, story books, a drawing book on how to draw pictures were introduced. The playing card was devised to help children learn to add and subtract through playing a game. Action research was also used to develop the community outreach and mobilization programme through which local communities were encouraged to participate in running the Kajoli Centres through providing a gathering space for the centres and engaging the mothers in a daily feeding programme for the children.

Present status:

The Kajoli ECL Model's journey started in only one center at Kajoli village in 2003. Now there are two hundred (200) Kajoli centers all over Bangladesh. Most of the centers are in the northern part of the country, especially in the two districts of Nilphamary and Panchagarh in the extreme north. Almost 6000 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 6, are getting the chance to learn how to read and write at the centers. Directly and indirectly more than 6000 families have benefited from them. Each center has a center management committee (CMC). The CMC takes the responsibility to run the center. Almost half of the CMCs have now turned into Kajoli Mothers' Associations (Mothers' Organization) which help in running the centers. A Kajoli Mothers' Association (KMA) is a group of mothers who live near the center. Each KMA has undertaken various developmental activities for the betterment of their children's education, livelihood and society. They have started cooperative deposit schemes, goat rearing, cattle rearing, land cultivation, horticulture etc. In total some 25,000 children have so far graduated from Kajoli centers between 2003 and 2011. Most of them are carrying on their studies at local primary and secondary schools. Presently more than 6000 children are studying in the Kajoli centers all over Bangladesh.

Recently the Kajoli approach was adapted for teaching Chakma language to children in the Khagrachhari District of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The model has also been introduced for children from Myanmar residing in Rohingya Refugee Camps. More recently the Kajoli model has also been adapted to teach English at the Kajoli centres throughout Bangladesh.

Innovative Learning Materials:

The Kajoli ECL model is very effective and attractive for children because of its innovative learning materials. There are no books, paper or pencil used in the approach. Instead, the following learning materials are used:

- **Pocket Board:** It is the main teaching/learning tool in the Kajoli ECE model. It is called Pocket Board because a large

number of pockets are created by stitching a piece of cloth in a way where pocket cards can be inserted. The size of the pocket board is normally about 6 feet long and 4 feet wide. In our experience we found this to be a very useful learning material to help children learn to read through fun and game.

- **Pocket Card:** Three types of cards are used in Kajoli ECL Model. One is picture cards; another is card without picture and the third is smaller sized sound/letter cards. Picture cards are a set of cards where a colorful picture depicts the word inscribed on it. There are 130 such cards with pictures. There are also a similar number of cards without pictures. Children learn the alphabets by matching the non-picture cards to the picture cards. The sound or letter cards are the alphabets with or without the vowel sign which are used to help children form the words they have already learned. Children get used to form a word as if it was a picture which they have learnt through association during playing with the picture cards. There are 13 sets of sound or letter cards in each KM Centre.
- **Black Board:** Each Kajoli Centre uses a number of blackboards, normally four of them which are made from two 8 feet by 4 feet plywood boards split into two and painted black. Each child is provided a space on the blackboard for him/her to write upon, draw or do maths, using a piece of chalk.
- **Counting cards:** Counting cards are used for learning the numerals. In a set , there are 10 (ten) cards containing numbers from zero (0) to nine (9)
- **'Maths game':** This is a set of playing cards used by the children for playing a card game called "the Maths War". There are 56 cards in a box making a set. Two of these are Joker cards, one an equation card, one for rules and the remaining 52 cards are for playing. The objective is to make the children to add and subtract while playing with the cards. This is a very popular game among the children who are happy to play it without realizing that it is used as a learning mechanism.

Learning Methods:

The teacher is central to the methodology. This is a very popular and common concept in the pedagogy of teaching but more often than not it does not work effectively in the early learning stages. Innovative, creative and effective learning methods are the most important elements to help young children to learn. In the Kajoli ECL model we tested and selected those which are more effective and creative. The Look & Say, Trial and Error and Doing-Learning method/process are used in the KM. The interesting point is that we use all methods but do not fully depend on or use one single method. Our approach has been to keep it deliberately eclectic and at the same time to keep a trained eye on the field to see what works where.

The Kajoli ECL Model is therefore formed from a combination of those three well known teaching methods and we called it a picture method, because children are learning the alphabet by picturing it. This is why Kajoli is different from other educational approaches in that the bottom line is to make education joyful.

Concrete Use of the Learning Materials:

Pocket cards and the pocket board are the main learning tools of the KM. First of all a pocket board is hung on the wall of the Kajoli centers at children's height level. Then the teacher puts some selected picture cards (learning materials) in the pockets of the board. While the teacher is putting the cards in the board, the boys and girls are telling the name of the picture. Here, it needs to be explained that all pictures have been selected from the child's immediate environment and are based on the children's knowledge at the age level of around five years. This is why most of the children can recognize the picture. Pictures show for example a ball, a book or a mango. Then teacher asks the students who wants to pick-up a particular card, for example, the card with the picture of a "ball". Almost all students raise their hands immediately. The teacher chooses one of them who raised his/her hand first. In this example, Lalita raised her hand first. The teacher tells Lalita, 'come to the board and pick-up the "ball" card and show it to the rest of the class'.

Finally, Lalita comes to the pocket board, sees the “ball” card, picks it up and shows it to everyone. Everyone claps. What happened in the children’s mind, when the teacher told someone to pick up a card from the pocket board? First of all they hear the sound “ball” and then see the picture of the ball. We call it “**Look and Say**” method. What is the learning area developed through this method? Of course, it is the **cognitive** development of a child through the “Look and Say” method, but we have to look carefully at the full activity. Initially, the students stand up and come to the pocket board, the student recognizes the selected card from a set of cards then he/she picks up the card and shows it to everybody. During showing the card she/he repeatedly says “This is a picture of a ball”. Observing the children’s activity in the center, it is very clear that not only is the cognitive function working here, but also the psycho-motor development of a child. How did this function get stimulated? The child saw the picture card and recognized it cognitively and reflected a few moments, and then moved to the pocket board. This movement is called psycho-motor action or development. Children become more confident to use the cards in the pocket board every day in the center. In the Kajoli ECL model, we do not teach children. We focus on creating the learning environment. Children learn many things through play, fun and game by using Kajoli learning materials.

In the Kajoli ECL model, we try to introduce other child development areas, for example **physical development**. During center hours every day children are given time to play. Sometimes this happens within the center and some times outside the center. Every body knows that play/game is a very helpful tool to build the body and mind of children.

Leadership is a skill that cannot be developed without proper nursing. Every child should have the equal opportunity to become a good leader. At the Kajoli centers we have some practice that helps to increase the quality of leadership of every child. There is a system in Kajoli ECL Model, where once a month each mother provides the midday meals for all children. The son or daughter of the mother who provides the food

becomes class captain for that day. The class captain plays an important role that day. He/she serves the food to everyone with the help of the mother and is the last of all to take his/her plate. If we analysis this activity, we can see some good practice in Kajoli ECL which is helpful towards developing leadership qualities. Furthermore, by being the last ones to take their plates that day, the Kajoli children are encouraged to serve others before serving themselves. There is no doubt that these qualities learned at an early stage, will never be forgotten.

Social Development: In our Kajoli centers, we always tried to create an effective learning environment that can help children develop good manners and good behavior towards other human beings. Children in the centers get used to social practices, such as the exchange of greetings , saying hello to everybody, and asking each other “How are you?” from the first day on. If someone came to visit the center then everyone would stand up and show respect to the visitor. We do believe that this type of practice can play an important role for the social development of the children.

Emotional Development is a very important characteristic of every human being. Through the Kajoli activities we are also trying to develop the emotional side of a child. Usually, we are creating some space to help children express their feelings. When they play, do group work, sing or dance, they express their feelings. In the KM all activities are performed in the play mode. I think a playground is the best place to express feelings. In this regard it is our main concern to ensure creating this play mode and build spaces where children can have lots of fun and enjoy the game. On the basis of our experience, we can say that we are always encouraging the children to develop their emotional side.

Creativity is another very important characteristic in every human being. People say that it is a quality which is inherited, but interestingly it is possible to increase creativity through practice. In the Kajoli centers children play some game that helps to increase children’s creativity.

Language is the essential tool of communication between human beings. We are trying to develop the language skills of

children through story telling, singing, reciting rhymes and chatting with each other in the KM. Our observation is that the tool of storytelling has a major impact on the development of a child's language skills.

Impact:

Kajoli ECL model is a project which is run by Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) with the help of local community. Positive impact or effects can be found in two areas of the societies, where the Kajoli ECL Model has been introduced. First, the model has positive impacts in the area of Early Childhood Learning. Second, the model results in positive changes at the community level.

- a. **Area of ECL:** Early Childhood Learning is a rather new concept in Bangladesh though it is not new in other countries. There is a lot of scope to do research, to develop learning materials, and to identify teaching-learning methodology in the context of Bangladesh. Today Non Government Organizations (NGOs) are trying to develop ECL guidelines. RIB is one of them. In 2003, RIB has conducted an action research on ECL. The Kajoli ECL Model is the result of that research. Through the research, we have developed a set of learning materials and a teaching-learning methodology and tested them at the field level. Children are enjoying themselves and they learn very quickly. This is not only because of the learning materials themselves, but also the way they are used: Teachers and students are using them as playing materials. Kajoli ECL is therefore a unique learning model that can help children to learn effectively in a joyful way.
- b. **Community Level:** This impact on the community is very important for the success of any kind of initiatives and the sustainability of projects. In this regard, we can say Kajoli ECL model is one of the successful projects in Bangladesh. It has many possibilities to contribute to the society. Through the KM, we are trying to revamp the positive aspects of social trends inherent in our society. Formerly a spirit of

volunteerism was deeply rooted in the society in Bangladesh. There are many areas in which society played a vital role for the betterment of the people such as in education, health, water supply etc. However, since independence in 1971, Government and NGO interventions have taken over all such activities. Through the KM, we are trying to revive social and voluntary practices in communities, where people take care of their own needs. There are many areas where local people can do something or can contribute to the betterment of their own future. RIB creates spaces where responsibilities are shared by community members themselves, such as the midday meals for school children, providing the space for the centers, raising teacher's salary, the center management and to form a local organization for this purpose. Midday meal is a great contribution from the parent side. Once in a month each mother provides food to all children. By providing midday meals, mothers come more close to the KM Center and they feel a sense of ownership. On the basis of KM center establishment and management experiences, we can say that people are interested to work voluntarily and take over many activities and responsibilities in each KM center. If local people would not have been willing to participate and were not interested in the KM, it would be impossible to run more than 200 KM centers all over Bangladesh. As a result of the KM, we can say that the tradition of volunteerism is re-emerging in Bangladesh. This has a great impact on the community level as well as the national level.

Conclusion:

The Kajoli Model is not only a education model for children, but also a social development model of child education, adult education, on parenting, community participation, group work, sharing of feelings and work, community ownership, awareness, volunteerism and sustainability. KM centers have played an important role towards changing the concept of social responsibility among deprived communities all over Bangladesh. As a result of the KM, people are aware that they have a lot of

responsibilities towards developing their own society. Already the community people are taking over various developmental works for future betterment of their communities, such as child education, community owned income generation programs. KM center-based mother's organizations are now even building houses for the KM centers. These are positive signs for the development of a society. Through the Kajoli Model, we are trying to increase the awareness level of the community about their social responsibilities. After eight years of working experience with the KM, we are proud to say that people are more conscious about their children's education and other important contributions they can make as members of the society.



Kajoli Centers in Rohingya camps drawn by refugee children. Artist: Zafar Ahamed. Kutupalong Camp

Working with Refugees : The pilot phase

Mobassherul Alam

After being recruited as Regional Coordinator, I began working in the Rohingya Refugee Camp in early August in 2011. On 6th August 2011, a team of four persons consisting of Senior Program officer Suraiya Begum, Education Coordinator Saifuzzaman Rana, Field Assistant Rashed Sarwar and I, visited the Refugee, Relief and Reparation Commissioner's office in Cox's Bazar to get permission to get into the two camps in order to start our activities. Before that we had an agreement with UNHCR to conduct a 6 month pilot project consisting of running an early childhood learning project and community mobilization through Participatory Action Research with refugees from Myanmar in the two official camps of Nayapara in Teknaf and Kutupalong in Ukhiya. At first, we met many people, discussed in general about the camp situation, and collected their contact information. Although it was raining cats and dogs, we were able to talk with 15 to 20 groups of children and women in different blocks of Kutupalong camp and make them understand about the pocket board and other materials of Kajoli Early childhood learning centers. We also explained the rationale of our visit and RIB's proposed activities in the camp (The Early Childhood Learning and Participatory Action Research). Later we met with three key persons who agreed to help us to promote our ideas in different blocks in the camp.

Our activities started in this way. Here I shall elaborate on the groundbreaking exercise, Kajoli Model, Participatory Action Research (PAR) and interactive theatre. Apart from these, the publication of a Newsletter, and holding of two Children fairs will be discussed as well.

Groundbreaking Activities :

The day after our first visit to Kutupalong camp, we visited the Nayapara camp. We tried to meet with the camp in charge, who

informed us about the Block Management Committees (BMCs) and the Camp Management Committees (CMCs) to which refugees were nominated to help run their daily affairs, and other rules and regulations that RIB must pursue in order to work in the camps. We were lucky enough to find a group of 30 people participating in training on nutrition and hygiene by ACF, another NGO. We requested the trainer not to let them go until we introduced ourselves to them. After the training session, we were able to meet with them and as in Kutupulong we explained our purpose in the camps. At first, they did not care to listen to us but when we demonstrated the pocket board (learning material for children in the early childhood learning) then they were happy to see how the children learn things with pleasure.

When we met with the Camp in Charge (CIC) of Kutupalong and discussed the overall situation of the Camp, we realized that he had already been informed of the reason of our entry in the camp and of our intention to select some teachers for Kajoli centers. He had informed some girls from different blocks in the camp and asked them to come and talk to us. We informally interviewed the girls and asked them to write something down about themselves. The next day a similar visit was made at Nayapara Camp where the CIC of the camp agreed to see us in the afternoon. In the meantime, we were introduced to the CMCs and BMCs in the UNHCR office. It was a useful contact as we could explain our purposes and planned activities to them and they then agreed to spread the word in their respective blocks.

In the groundbreaking exercise, we were able to achieve what we wanted. We directly spoke with 100 people in different groups in the two camps. Generally, most refugees received RIB in a friendly way. However, some of the refugees voiced an allegation about NGO activity in general. They said, *“NGOs say good things at first, but later they harass us a lot. If we criticize them, they complain to Government officials and we get punished. There are many programs which does not benefit us, because they don't try to understand our problems.”*

At first, RIB decided to introduce the Kajoli program and other activities through video screening to all interested people

especially women and children of each camps. Information was also given to all relevant camp and NGO officials as well as the UNHCR. The demonstration at Kutupulong camp was held on 21st August and the demonstration in the Nayapara camp was held on 22nd August. we used the community center and used multimedia projector for demonstration. The presence of people in Kutupulong were more than Nayapara.

The program in each camp started with a small introduction by Meghna Guhathakurta, the Project coordinator followed by the small introduction of the Kajoli Model by Saifuzzaman Rana, Then a 20 minute video documentary on the Kajoli Early Childhood Learning centers in Bangladesh was screened after which Saifuzzaman Rana demonstrated the use of the core features of the kajoli model. There was a question answer session after the demonstration. Some of the children present were asked to participate in the pocket board demonstration, and they found great enjoyment in doing that. This naturally aroused their curiosity as well as encouraged their mothers.

After the demonstration, the refugees became very curious about our Kajoli Model and they asked us if their children could be taught in such a way that had been shown in the video. They also demanded the Burmese version of pocked board. They wrote some slips to Meghna and demanded a Kajoli center in each block which meant seven Kajoli centers in even blocks.

The refugees seemed to be concerned about their quality of life and education and not satisfied with mere survival. This feeling was heightened more in the Kutupulong camp than in Nayapara.

Kajoli Model :

After demonstration of the Kajoli Model and other program, we scouted for recruiting teachers. The teachers had to be refugee women. Many young refugees were eager to be teachers. We interviewed them and called them for training. At first stage, we called all of them for training to see who performed well.

Two Kajoli teacher trainers, one the Education coordinator, Saifuzzaman Rana and other one Mrs. Dipali Sen were interpreted by the two Cox's Bazar based RIB staff.

There were two parts of the training. One was the basic method of teaching, the use of pocket board, card, blackboard etc. and the other was the social responsibility and community ownership of the Centre. Dipali took the responsibilities of the first one and Rana took the latter one. They worked in two camps by rotation. Finally, after training we had selected six teachers from both camps. Many women were interested to teach since it was considered to be prestigious to be teachers.

At the time of training they asked about the distribution of biscuits since the general school provided this to the students. But RIB had its own strategy to engage mothers in feeding the children something that was practiced outside, but due to limitation of the camp situation was difficult to organize in this case. We nevertheless continued to motivate the mother's in this way.

It was very important to note, all the animators and teachers were very positive in their respective duty but all were confused about managing a place for Kajoli. In Nayapara a Kajoli Center could be managed somehow, but two more centers were not fixed and teachers who were responsible for the center, was not hopeful and happy with the system of finding Kajoli Center in this way. Later, an example was set by some teachers using their own sheds for the purpose of the centers. Details of the camp based Kajoli Centers are given below :

Kutupalong Kajoli Model Center:

Sl no.	Teacher name	Block	Shed	Room	Total Children	Male	Female
1.	Ismot Ara	G	31	1	32	16	16
2.	Shajeda Begum	D	19	5	39	18	21
3.	Rabeya Boshori	D	8	6	40	19	21

Nayapara Kajoli Model Center:

Sl no.	Teacher name	Block	Shed	Room	Total Children	Male	Female
1.	Rojina Aker	E	942	3	30	18	12
2.	Khaleda Begum	P	1125	2	30	11	19
3.	Ismotara Begum	C	836	2	30	18	12

Kajoli Centers and the PAR group had been fixed and all the teachers were intending to start their class as soon as possible. So, all the materials (Pocket board, Card, Blackboard, Chalk and Duster etc.) were provided. We were able to make them understand the rule and responsibilities about RIB.

Participatory Action Research (Gonogobeshona) :

Two trainers Mr. Alauddin Ali and Mr. Abdur Rouf visited Cox's Bazar to facilitate the animator's training as the PAR process started in the camp. We called all the applicants and the trainer were told to select the best one. We put together a successful workshop. All the applicants participated in the workshop and teachers who were supposed to join also participated. The entire trainees were in high spirit about their workshop and they were made aware of how to think about their problems and solutions. Apart from these, they understood that they would be able to work for their own community. Most of the animators were very eager to work for their community as they could raise awareness of their community, so they were committed to their job. They started to collect the members for PAR group and we gave them time to organize. We monitored the process through regular visits.

Six participatory action research groups including two mothers, association had been formed in the camps, three in each camp. PAR groups almost all consisted of men, but in one camp in Nayapara some women joined in one group. The 12 animators, 2 for each group who facilitated discussion of these groups were 67% male and 33% female. The two women

animators helped to facilitate discussions of the mothers association in each camp. They worked alongside male animators. The age groups of PAR members were from 18 to 59 years.

Camp based PAR groups and meetings are given below :

Kutupalong PAR group:

Name of PAR group	Number and block of members	Animators responsible for	Day and time of meeting	Place of meeting
Sunrise Research Group (SRG)	30 members from A, B, G and F blocks	Mojibullah, Sayedul Amin	1.Monday (10am to 12am) 2.Thursday (11am to 01pm)	Meeting room of Handicap office
Rohingya Refugee Welfare Group (RRWG)	31 members from A,B, C, D, E, F and G blocks	Mohammed Iqbal, Nurul Haque	1.Sunday (11am to 01pm) 2.Wednesday (02pm to 04pm)	Meeting room of Handicap office/ Block centre of H block
Mother Association (MA)	31 members from C, D, F and G blocks	Mv. Abu Saleh, Khaleda Begum	1.Sunday (09am to 11am) 2.Thursday (09am to 11am)	Meeting room of Handicap office

Nayapara PAR group:

Name of PAR group	Number and block of members	Animators responsible for	Day and time of meeting	Place of meeting
Social Development Group (SDG)	30 members from B, H and P blocks	Aman Ullah, Md. Sultan	1.Monday (10.30am to 12.30pm) 2.Thursday (10am to 12am)	A private teaching room in P block
Positive Research Group (PRG)	30 members from H and I blocks	Khaled Hossain, Shamsul Alam	1.Sunday (02pm to 04pm) 2.Wednesday (02pm to 04pm)	Block centre of H block
Mother Association (MA)	30 members from C,E and P blocks	Kamal Uddin, Rumana	1.Saturday (02pm to 04pm) 2.Thursday (02pm to 04pm)	Meeting room of Handicap office

N.B : Name of the groups and schedules of the meetings were fixed by the animators and members of the PAR groups.

The objective of discussion of the PAR group was directed towards identifying problems and seeking a constructive solution leading to some collective activities. In the short time these PAR

groups had existed already, two such activities were carried out. One led to the voluntary cleaning of toilets and road in one block and the other was the collective action to repair the wall of a mosque that had fallen down.

Major issues that was discussed in PAR groups were :

1. Kajoli Issue:
 - a. Sending the children to Kajoli center.
 - b. Feeding issue.
 - c. Teaching method.
 - d. Separate Kajoli center.
 - e. Facilitating the children from congestion, hot weather, sufficient light etc.
2. Social issues:
 - a. Early marriage and dowry.
 - b. Discrimination in medical service.
 - c. Distribution of Qurbani meat among themselves.
 - d. Building the wall of the mosque.
3. Security Issues :
 - a. Drug addiction and anti social activities.
 - b. Facilities in the camp.
 - c. Activities in the camp.
 - d. Robbery from outside need to proper justice.
4. Solidarity issue :
 - a. They discussed frequently about the solidarity among them.

Interactive Theatre :

“I was born in Burma, But the Burmes government says I don't belong there. I grew up in Bangladesh, but the Bangladesh government says I cannot stay here. As a Rohingya, I feel I am caught between a crocodile and a snake”.

With the above quote in mind , Nishan Saber and two of his assistants conducted an Interactive theatre workshop in both camps. It was a fifteen days workshop and the the final presentation was staged on the sixteenth day. Around 42 volunteers joined in the workshop, worked together and presented a good performance.

Interactive theatre is a version of the forum theatre created by Brazilian theatre activist Augusto Boal. It is a technique where groups of actors may adopt a theme concerning their community and develop the scenes in a play scripted by them through interacting with the spectators. The specialty of this form of theatre is that it enhances problem-solving skills in a community unlike other forms of development theatre where the problem is already solved in the script.

When we went to the camps with Interactive theatre the first time, we got few volunteers who were interested to perform at theatre. Later when they understood the process and Nishan Saber acquired the trust of the refugees then they came by the dozens. At first we were not sure whether we would get the participation of women as they tended to be conservative. But once the men were convinced, they started to bring their wives and sisters to the workshop as well. In this way the women felt free to participate as they had the protection of male members of their families. At the same time, we faced some challenges from external stakeholders as well as suspicion that we may be working for the Government! However, the credit goes to Nishan Saber that he managed to dispel such fears and could create a team spirit among the theatre activists. During the final performances, everyone became emotional. The theme in both camps was chosen by the refugees and they decided to enact the horrors they faced which forced them to flee here.

The schedule that was followed by the trainers is given below.

Rohingya Refugee Camp, Kutupalong Ukhiya, Cox's bazar.

Place : Training center of HI Office.

Date	Time	Up to	Activities	Tea & Lunch
22.11.11	9.30 am	4.00pm	Introduction	11.00am & 1.00pm
23.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Previous discussion & Games of Play	–
24.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Games of Play	–
26.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Story collection & Discussion	–

Date	Time	Up to	Activities	Tea & Lunch
27.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Story observation, Group Discussion, Games	-
28.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Story recognition, rehearsal, Role of animator	.
29.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Selecting animator, GroupWise field Observation, Games rehearsal.	
30.11.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Rhythm, Rehearsal, Games	
01.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Rehearsal, Discussion on audience behavior	
03.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Rehearsal, Role of animator	
04.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Rehearsal, Animator & Audience.	
05.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Rehearsal, Presentation Ready	
06.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Rehearsal, Presentation of Theatre.	
07.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Discussion, Correction, Rehearsal.	
08.12.11	9.00am	4.00pm	Presentation, Discussion, End of workshop	

Two newsletters had been published where refugee men and women got the opportunity to write their way of thinking and reveal their vision in the form of poems, stories, drawings, This newsletter showed them a new way of thinking, basically young generations got encouraged with the mode of creativity in the camp.

Two children's fair were held in each camp o the 28th December 2011 to show case and demonstrate the achievement of the children attending Kajoli centers as well as provide a space for other refugees to express their creativity through theatre performances and songs. Dr. Hameeda Hossain, Vice-Chairperson of RIB was also present in this Fair.

Challenges of working in the Refugee camp;

A refugee camp is not always an easy place for someone new. Before starting work one has to consider the situation, rules-regulations of the camp and above all the psychology of refugees. This is really difficult for one if s/he start work without having a thorough knowledge about refugees and refugee camp. In addition to that there are different types of authorities existing in the camp. First, there are the government authorities who is the ruling authority, second, there is UNHCR the donor and implementing authorities such as partner NGOs (national and international) who are working alongside as implementing partners of UNHCR. In this situation, if anyone intends to start working in refugee camp s/he needs to think before of the consequences of any action that maybe taken. S/he has to face many challenges during the working period. I gathered such experiences at the time of working with refugees during the six month pilot phase of our project of delivering early childhood learning to pre-primary level refugee children and conducting participatory action research for self-reliance and self-management among refugee population. This helped me later to comprehend the situation better during the consolidation phase of our project Here I reflect about some of the challenges I faced and how I overcame those challenges.

Firstly, it was a new situation, condition and a new environment. It was the first working experience for all of us and we were new to the refugees. We didn't know how to behave with them and who would be the suitable person from whom we could get help. Furthermore dual authorities existed that often clashed with one another and made it difficult for implementation. There were many rules, restrictions which were unknown to us. We

became aware of them when we faced those. It would have been better if we had been provided a module as a new partner on how to act and work in a refugee camp.

Secondly, we needed to establish credibility with other agencies, officials and NGO's. When we started work we needed to discuss with other agencies and seek their help. In a camp situation an NGO is introduced as implementing partner (IP). One had to be constantly conscious about the interest and program of other IP's. In addition to that some official would call you to favor some one as a volunteer and that would put us in a spot.

Thirdly, conceptual clarifications of the program needed to be discussed with others since they had no exposure to our kind of methodology. The concept of Participatory Action Research (PAR), Kajoli Model (Early childhood learning) and Interactive theatre (IT) were unknown to them and we needed to clarify and demonstrate them individually. Clarifications had to be given through exemplars. We needed to show how such methods works and benefits the program at the same time. Sometimes we faced some awkward questions like when we told them that the solution of the interactive theatre lies in the interaction between actor and spectator. Their response was that if you don't know the answer then why are you telling us. Furthermore refugees were used to talk with different executives so they were not used to asking questions and if they did you needed to be careful with the answers.

The dearth of voluntarism is another problem that one faces in the refugee camps. It was not such a problem to manage volunteers before the system of incentives were introduced three or four years ago. But, now it is a challenge for a new partner because if the new partner give less incentives than others then it would possibly not get qualified volunteers. On the other hand if it provides more incentive than other partners then the partner could complain that the new partner is giving more incentives and they are losing their volunteers. Therefore there is a rule in the camp that if any volunteer resigned from an agency then s/he needs to wait two months before joining other agencies. In

addition to that UNHCR organizes incentive working group meeting on the basis of necessity to synchronize the incentive and working hours for refugees.

Shortage of management staffs were also another challenge for us. At the field level, we were only two workers. The others were refugee volunteers. We needed to manage and organize field level programs depending on these group of people. At first, we didn't know anyone and we didn't have much time to ask for volunteers and judge them. So, we needed to select them as we went. We were not that sure of their quality or eligibility. Later, we carried our program with them and it was to our credit that we could make them understand our programs and run them.

Acquiring the trust of refugees was a great challenge. It is mandatory for any agency who wants to work in a refugee camp because refugees have bitter experience of previous organizations. Some of the agencies were not beneficial for refugees but were bent in making profit by exploiting the refugee situation. Since they have had some frightening experience, they did not want to trust any new organization at first sight. We also needed to maintain international standard of our program because there were many international organizations working inside the camp and maintaining a good quality of work was essential for our existence.

Overcoming the challenges

We needed to follow some authentic way to face those challenges. In that case proper supervision was essential and luckily we had a project coordinator who was adept at clarifying both the conceptual and practical aspects of the program. We were given instructions on how to conduct oneself with refugees and how to take care of them. From time to time we gave updates from the field and she provided us necessary directions and guidance from this feedback. Thus we knew how to respond appropriately to the situation at hand. Secondly, all of us at the field level took this project as a mission not a job. We worked from dawn to dusk without taking a break. We needed to

complete many things within a short time. Our target was to complete the mission at any cost.

However we did not forget to take relaxing breaks. We used to arrange a football match on sea beach on the way back to Cox's bazaar office from the refugee camp. This refreshed us immensely and gave us strength to face the next day.

Thirdly, we had to be extremely patient in ironing out misunderstandings. As mentioned before refugees had many misapprehensions regarding organizations as ours and it took us time to figure these out.

We were careful not to raise their expectations. Rather we tried to articulate our limitations to them and it clearly led to better understanding. I made sure that they were not drawn into any kind of fantasy regarding our work. I clarified the workings of the programs of the RIB and explicated how they would be able to benefit from us. I added that it was okay with us if we got five people who understood our purpose rather than five hundred who didn't because then that five hundred people will in no time be decreased to five. Finally they could comprehend our purpose and they believed us.

Listening to the voices of refugees is very important to overcome challenges at work. Our first priority was to listen to them carefully and create the grounds for them to own the projects. This could be done only through giving them some decision making space. When we gave them the opportunity to speak we got a place in their heart and later they came forward of their own accord to help in every program of RIB.

There are many organizations conducting programs inside the camp but many of them concentrated on delivery of services rather than empowering strategies. On the other hand RIB's entry point was to treat them as human beings rather than refugees. This treatment paved the way to their hearts. We didn't provide them much money or logistic support but shared a sense of self-awareness and understanding. Their comments on our work acted as positive feedback in the time of making decision so that those people who came to us became an intrinsic part of the program.