

Participatory Rural Video Centre

by Muhit Milon

FOR the first time in Bangladesh a participatory rural video centre was opened at Kamarpar, Sajahanpur, Bogra on 21 April. The Director General of RDA Mohammad Nazrul Islam, NDC opened the centre. Followed by the opening speeches, participatory video training for the rural video team was inaugurated.

The 20-day-long training will develop capacities of the rural video team on video documentation about local farming innovations. The centre is a part of the 'Fostering Women Voices through Videos in Bangladesh' project undertaken by the Department of Agricultural Extension Education, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) and Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogra. The project is a spin off development initiative of a Ph.D. research of the Centre for Development Research, Vienna, Austria and is supported by the Karl Kahane Foundation, Switzerland. Ataharul Chowdhury, Principal Investigator of the project and Assistant professor of BAU says, 'By the name we should not confuse the centre as a place to produce or show films. The centre will be managed by a rural team who will spot and develop local innovations through participatory research and learning process. Videos will serve as documentation of their findings and as tools to scale out the innovations from the pilot sites. Agricultural extension methods and initiatives such as Farmers Field Schools and IPM clubs have been tried out to build capacity of the rural actors in many developing countries like Bangladesh.

Despite many successes in promoting local innovations and to build capacities of the farmers there are challenges to scale out the innovations beyond the pilot scale. Especially personal network of women in



Farmer-to-farmer video: A new extension approach to develop and share local innovations regarding pest management in Bogra

Bangladesh is not well elaborated and they remain isolated from the mainstream development initiatives. Locally made videos have proved a powerful tool to build capacity of the rural women and to scale out the local innovations beyond the pilot scale in several Asian and African countries. The findings show that illiteracy of the participants has no influence on the video mediated group learning sessions organized in these countries. On the other hand, illiteracy rate is still a great challenge to develop digital Bangladesh. Dr. Md. Abdul Momen Miah, professor of BAU and co-investigator of the project said, 'Video will add a third eye and will enhance innovative capacities of rural men and women'. The Director General of RDA said, 'The project has a key component to contribute to the development of 'Digital Bangladesh', an important policy enacted by the present Government of Bangladesh'. It is expected that the initiatives undertaken in Bangladesh will contribute to bridge the digital divide through video based information and communication

technologies (ICTs). The pilot initiatives will develop two teams in two villages of Bogra and Mymensingh districts. Mr Abdul Matin, Director, CIWM, RDA and Mr. AKM Zakaria, Joint director, RDA were present among other distinguished guests. Mr. Khalid Aurongzeb, and Rafia Aktar Assistant Director, RDA managed the whole event.

Managing pests is crucial for quality crop and seed production in Bangladesh, but has often led to excessive and indiscriminate use of pesticides, threatening environmental and human health and increasing production costs. For years, farmer field schools (FFS) have promoted integrated pest management (IPM), often including local alternatives to managing pests. Although impacts on target communities have been significant, challenges to extend the impact beyond those directly involved in FFS have become more pressing. At present increasing trend of indiscriminate pesticide use gives us a clear signal to look for alternatives. ▣