

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Water and sanitation project launched to benefit 30 million people across Bangladesh**

**Dhaka, March 21, 2007:** The Sanitation, Hygiene Education and Water Supply in Bangladesh (SHEWA-B) project was formally launched Wednesday to ensure access to improved water supply and sanitation for 30 million people in 34 of the poorest districts across Bangladesh by 2011.

Advisor to the Ministry of the Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives Mr. Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal inaugurated the project as the chief guest at the city's Sheraton Hotel.

“This hygiene-focused project will boost the current initiative with the demand driven community-led approach. It will reduce mortality, morbidity and malnutrition due to water and excreta related diseases and will also improve access to safe water in un-served and underserved areas including arsenic affected areas,” said Mr. Iqbal.

Stressing the need for ensuring 100 per cent sanitation coverage by 2010, the advisor further said Bangladesh's sanitation status is on a road to success as the country had achieved 81% coverage by the end of 2006, which marked an increase of about 48% over the last three years and was the highest in the South Asian region.

Mostly financed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the project will be jointly implemented by the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and UNICEF. For the five-year duration of the project, DFID will contribute US\$ 62.8 million, UNICEF's own contribution will be \$9.3 million and GOB will invest \$16.9 million.

The British Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn, on an earlier occasion, reemphasised the need for providing basic services to the people by saying that: “What people want and need is enough food to eat and water to drink. A roof over their heads, a job, a school for their children, and medicine and care when they are sick.”

Tom Crowards, DFID Senior Programme Manager said, “In Bangladesh for those who are in extreme poverty, getting clean water and good sanitation is almost impossible. DFID will continue to provide substantial support; around 40% of DFID aid will go towards to basic services for the poor, including water and sanitation. We are very pleased to be partners in this important project”.

“At the heart of this project, is promoting good hygiene practices. We know that changing people's behaviour is difficult, but history also shows us, that it is possible with perseverance and creativity. What I find exciting about this project are the new

approaches that will be used over the next 5 years to engage with people around the country – to interact with school children, urban and rural populations, mothers, fathers....in fact millions of ordinary Bangladeshis,” said UNICEF Representative Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault.

Tom Crowards, DFID Senior Programme Manager said, “In Bangladesh there are 36 million people without access to safe and adequate drinking water. For those who are in extreme poverty, getting clean water and good sanitation is almost impossible. DFID will continue to provide substantial support, around 40% of DFID aid to basic services for the poor, including water and sanitation. We are very pleased to be partners in this important project”.

SHEWA-B is an expansion following the successful implementation of the Rural Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Supply project (RHSWSP) with DFID support in 37 upazilas or sub-districts.

It is designed in two phases. The first phase, from 2007-2009, will cover some 60 upazilas in 16 plainland districts as well as 300 paras or villages in the three districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The second phase will add 44 more upazilas in 12 more districts and another 300 paras in the CHT. The programme will also cover slum areas in the main pourashavas in the programme districts.

Meanwhile, the school component of SHEWA-B will provide both separate and appropriate toilets for boys and girls, and will incorporate hygiene education to help address the challenges Bangladesh faces in school retention rates, particularly for girls.

The launching was also addressed, among others, by the Secretary of Local Government Division Mr. Safar Raj Hossain, Secretary of Primary and Mass Education Mr. Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Senior Programme Manager of DFID Mr. Tom Croward and DPHE Chief Engineer Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman.

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