Swedish State Secretary explores WaterAid's inclusive WASH projects in Dhaka

[Dhaka, 11 October 2023] The Swedish State Secretary for International Development Cooperation and International Trade, Ms Diana Janse and Ambassador Ms Alex Berg von Linde visited key WaterAid Bangladesh projects supported by Sweden on 9 October 2023. Geared towards the achievement of universal access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), these initiatives are championing inclusivity, gender transformation, and ensuring sustainability for maximising impact.

Ms Janse visited the Mohakhali Model High School where WaterAid ensured safe water access, gender-segregated and disability-friendly toilets, and mobilised hygiene knowledge sessions and training for students. Most student at this school come from the surrounding slums and therefore the hygiene knowledge was designed to be propagated through the students to their respective families and communities.

Understanding sustainability aspects of WASH interventions was a crucial part of the visit. The interventions of the Mohakhali Model High School were built and then handed over to the school to run on its own two years ago. The students explained the before and after scenario of the sanitation facilities which included reducing absenteeism among girls.

Later, in Ershadnagar slum, the officials explored a groundbreaking inclusive WASH block built for a community of people with special needs, including visual, auditory, and physical impairments. The WASH blocks area maintained by the community, who had been empowered with knowledge, skills, and tools to under the flagship WASH for Urban Poor (WASH4UP) project supported by government of Sweden. This facility has significantly reduced disease prevalence and economic burdens. Moreover, activities under the WASH4UP project have fostered personal dignity, safety, and social inclusivity, presenting a model for building an equitable society.

Through strategic partnerships and investments, the Government of Sweden and WaterAid are shaping a brighter future – enabling the most vulnerable and outlier communities to have access to clean water and improved sanitation. The impact of these interventions goes beyond provision of better WASH services as it enables healthier lives, resilient communities, stronger governance structures and systems, and a more sustainable future.

Ms Hasin Jahan, Country Director, WaterAid Bangladesh, said, "While Sweden and WaterAid is positioned to scale effective WASH services, we have to be mindful of the goal we have in achieving SDG6. To do that, everyone, everywhere needs to have access to safely-managed water, sanitation, and hygiene services. It is an enormous mission, and we believe that our partnership with Sweden will help us realise gender transformative approaches, help improve biodiversity and environment-sanitation in crosscutting sectors, and enable us to accelerate solutions in emerging issues such as anti-microbial resistance."

As a leader in sustainable water, wastewater management, recycling, and waste management, Sweden's expertise aligns seamlessly with the future goals of WaterAid Bangladesh and be a considerable driver in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6). Looking ahead,
WaterAid aims to foster collaborations that encourage relevant private sectors to engage in trade activities with Sweden over the next decade. The second phase of the WASH4UP project supported by the Government of Sweden aimed to enhance environmental health and resilience. This three-year project targets to reach 9.7 million people ensuring significant positive impact in WASH accessibility to citizens specially the low-income communities of different urban regions spanning Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Paikgacha, Sakhipur, and Saidpur.

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