

## **USAID-Funded AED/POUZN Project to Reach Over One Million with Point-of-Use Water Disinfection in India**

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Uttar Pradesh, India – An estimated half-million Indian children under five-years-old will die this year due to diarrhea that is frequently caused by drinking polluted water, and 25 percent of these deaths will occur in Uttar Pradesh (UP), India’s most populous and one of its most impoverished states. The AED-managed USAID Point of Use Water Disinfection and Zinc Treatment (POUZN) project expects to introduce 1.1 million urban and rural poor residents in Uttar Pradesh to household water treatment products and systems through a phase two expansion that commenced recently. The first phase of the project reached 60,000 urban and rural poor in Uttar Pradesh and converted nearly 80 percent of households into users of point-of-use (POU) water disinfection products and systems. Self-help groups (SHGs), which includes between ten and twenty low-income women, create sufficient savings that act as a guarantor for loans from banks and government programs. SHG meetings are held regularly to discuss income-generation, administrative and other issues. In a series of novel partnerships that leveraged existing SHG platforms, the project’s phase one activities increased POU use from a baseline of 4.25% (both urban and rural) to 79.2% (96% of 1525 households for urban areas and 77% of 10,023 families in rural areas). Additionally, the project succeeded in delivering over 9.6 million liters of treated water in only ten months



In the second phase expansion, AED/POUZN will work with self-help groups (SHGs) and grassroots NGOs to reach 600,000 residents in 930 rural poor villages and 520,000 in 480 urban slums with interventions that aim to create new users of household water products and systems. AED/POUZN established a more modest but still significant household conversion target of 30 percent for the scaled-up second phase. Earlier in 2008, POUZN implemented an operations research model to change drinking water behavior among lower income families that belonged to SHGs.

As a part of its strategy, POUZN undertook an innovative multi-point water testing exercise among rural SHG members. Water samples were obtained from the source and from water stored in homes. Publicly testing the water, the exercise dramatically demonstrated the possibility of recontamination – even for water that is pure at its source – and provided community members a visual test of contamination.



POUZN also established public-private partnerships between commercial POU product manufacturers and NGOs that were initiating and managing SHGs. The project provided training to the staff of partner NGOs on water purification, encouraged the NGOs to work closely with manufacturers, and provided multiple choices for POU products, including chlorine (on a cost plus margin basis), water filters (with micro-loans), and information on boiling and solar disinfection. These steps significantly increased the percentage of the population using a POU treatment method, offering POU options at a cost as low as twenty-five cents per month. The commercial partners who extended credit for the purchase of filters have recovered all of their loans to date. POUZN also negotiated and implemented distribution commissions for NGO partners from manufacturers to help sustain the relationship beyond the project life.

POUZN will continue to track the SHG members to determine if long-term behavior change occurred. Meanwhile, a number of international and local organizations have expressed their interest in joining with AED/POUZN in escalating the current model.

The USAID-funded POUZN project was launched in 2005 to mitigate one of the leading causes of illness and death among children in the world – diarrhea -- by promoting the increased use of two proven strategies: *preventing* diarrhea through point-of-use water disinfection and *treating* diarrhea with zinc therapy.

