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## SNAPSHOT

# New Water Treatment Plan Improves Community Health

**Thanks to USAID-ACCESO's natural resource management training, town sees vast improvement in water quality and child health.**



*Photo by Fintrac Inc.*

Water committee members in Santa Catarina learned proper water chlorination and treatment techniques, which have led to better living conditions for 14,000 people.

**“We have really seen impressive changes.”**

— *Sonia Sanchez, community leader*

### Telling Our Story

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In Santa Catarina, Intibucá, residents had long complained of unsuitable drinking water, citing an unappealing color and odor. The town's two community water committees had been unable to treat the water effectively with granulated chlorine.

USAID-ACCESO natural resource management specialists began working with the water committees in October 2011 after an analysis conducted by the Ministry of Health found dangerously high levels of fecal coliform and mesophilic bacteria in their drinking water, rendering it unsuitable for human consumption. The local health center was also reporting high numbers of children diagnosed with diarrhea on a monthly basis.

Project specialists introduced Santa Catarina's water committee members to chlorination tablets through a visit to a neighboring town that was already using the tablets. This basic technology is easier to use than granulated chlorine, which requires carefully calculated measurements and constant supervision and monitoring. The tablets are also 50 to 60 percent less expensive than other water treatment technologies.

This simple change adopted in Santa Catarina in February 2012 led to quick and impressive results. A water analysis conducted in July 2012 showed little to no trace of harmful bacteria. USAID-ACCESO technicians taught members of the water committees how to conduct daily analyses with a quick chlorine testing device to monitor the bacteria levels.

Clean, potable water is the basis for building better living conditions for Santa Catarina's 14,000 inhabitants. It has had a direct impact on the health of the community's children. Diamantina Sanchez, a community health volunteer, reports that the community health center has received significantly fewer cases of diarrhea since July, thanks to uncontaminated water.

The project is also providing training and technical assistance in health and nutrition to the residents of Santa Catarina, using clean water as the foundation for improved nutrition practices.

USAID-ACCESO is committed to a comprehensive approach that integrates improved agricultural production with natural resource management activities geared toward maintaining healthy soils and conserving water. These practices increase yields, reduce input costs, and increase net incomes. To date, the project has trained more than 3,500 individuals in natural resource management best practices.