PSI/Angola’s Safe Water Program

From 1975 through 2002 Angola was engaged in a civil war that wreaked havoc on its infrastructure, economy, and health system. Since then, however, Angola has been quickly transforming itself and now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Yet despite this, the country still faces many social and health problems, including the third highest infant mortality rate in the world. Diarrhea is the second leading cause of death among children under five, and PSI/Angola research found in 2007 that only 46% of caregivers of children under five in Luanda reported always treating water for drinking, and that 26% of children under five had a case of diarrhea in the previous two weeks.

Saving Lives with Safe Drinking Water

In order to reduce overall child mortality, PSI/Angola launched Certeza, a point-of-use water treatment product, in April of 2008, with seed funding from Exxon Mobil and continued support from UNICEF, American Express and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Over 250,000 bottles have been sold since product launch, each treating a thousand liters of water. Radio spots have been launched to raise awareness about Certeza’s availability in the private market. Community agents in public markets and health centers promote the importance of using treated water to avoid diarrheal diseases, teach the basic six steps of using Certeza, and discuss good general household hygiene practices. Acceptance of Certeza has been so great that it has been difficult for product production to meet demand.

One Certeza supporter who has incorporated the product into her daily life is Julieth Barroso Neto, who lives in the Cazenga neighborhood of Luanda, an area that is burdened with water and sanitation problems. Julieth first heard about Certeza from her uncle and in the year since then has been using it to treat her household’s drinking water, clean her dishes, and bathe her two-month old daughter. She switched from using bleach to using Certeza because of its ease of use and non-bleach taste in treated water. She noted that when she does not use Certeza, her household of nine people has many problems with diarrhea and skin and urinary infections. After little more than a year in the market, Certeza is helping the government in reaching its goal of reducing overall child mortality.