

# **Role of Information & Enabling Access to Clean Water: Field Experimental Evidence from India**

## **Abstract**

In rural region of Assam, India, where groundwater is heavily contaminated with a hazardous naturally occurring compound, we worked with the state government agencies to analyse the reasons behind the lack of demand for water quality. We study the constraints households with young children and pregnant mothers face in accessing clean water. The study randomly assigned a set of villages to an information treatment to raise awareness about water contaminants and provided information about alternative safe water sources. A second treatment combined awareness with measures to facilitate access to clean water via the flagship programme of Government of India; the Jal Jeevan Mission. Our results indicate that the information campaign alone was sufficient to increase awareness of contaminants, knowledge of public water programs and adoption of preventive health measures. However, to translate this increased awareness into actual change in demand for clean water, the combined treatment was salient. Further, the combined treatment reduced information asymmetries, allowing women to weigh the costs and benefits of drinking contaminated water. This led to an increase in breastfeeding (planned) duration among (pregnant) mothers.

JEL: Codes: C93; I10; I12; I18

Keywords: randomized controlled trial; water contamination; arsenic information; transaction costs; tap water