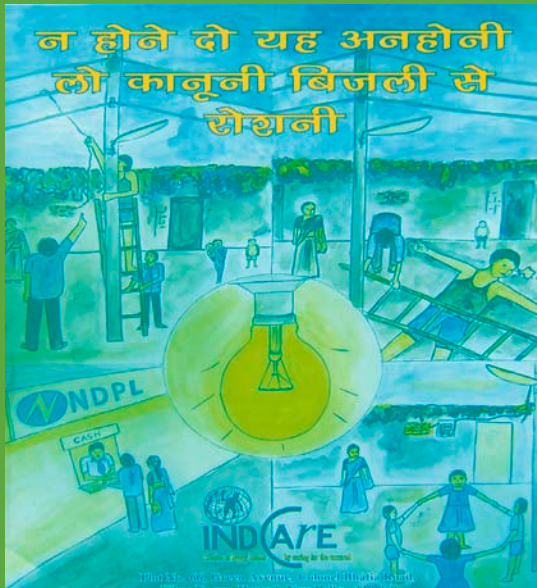




USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Public Understanding and Participation in New Delhi



INDCARE's poster encouraging consumers to sign up for safe and legal electricity connections for consumers in slum communities.

It was a January afternoon and people were busy with their daily activities. Sanju was taking rest with her two children (a year old son and a daughter aged 5), when their illegal access to electricity was disconnected. Sanju went to the toilet leaving her two children inside the room. They had lived there for the past 20 years. Her husband had gone out to his clothing shop from which he earned only Rupees 2,000 per month (about \$45) - the family's only source of income. The children, who were alone in the room, started playing and came down from the cot. The younger one came near to the iron door which was also was close to a live electric wire. The power came back on and the child was burned, particularly his upper body and face. By the time his mother and people from the surrounding houses heard the screams and ran to save him, the child was unconscious. He was immediately taken to the hospital but died soon after arrival. Most people in the slum saw his death as fate and bad luck rather than a result of unsafe and illegal practices to get access to power. Because slum residents remember this terrible accident, INDCARE provided counseling to them about electricity and motivated them to get legal connection with proper wiring to avoid such accidents in the future.

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Assistant Director, INDCARE

When USAID's Energy Team and the Academy for Educational Development (AED) began working with North Delhi Power Limited (NDPL) in late 2003, NDPL indicated that slum areas presented its biggest challenge in terms of reaching out to consumers.

In the spring, INDCARE Trust, a Delhi-based NGO that specializes in working with women, worked with two clusters in northwest Delhi (Jaipur Golden and Bhalla Factory) to urge community residents to opt for legal connections for electricity. INDCARE took a two-pronged approach to the project. While NDPL had originally envisioned an outreach campaign around the issues of the legal and safety issues of electricity usage, INDCARE persuaded them to take a more proactive approach, by offering legal connections as an alternative to theft. At the same time, INDCARE worked with the communities to communicate both the safety risks of illegal connections and the economic benefits of a legal connection.

These efforts involved brokering a new relationship between the utility and the cluster residents. To do this, INDCARE worked carefully to change the perceptions the community and the utility had towards each other. For the residents, the lived experience of marginalization had meant that legal access was an alien concept. The practice of applying and paying for service was one that INDCARE could facilitate. At the same time NDPL was beginning to view the community as potential customers within their service area, INDCARE worked with the utility to respond to the needs of the extremely poor.

By being the bridge between the utility and residents, the project was able to show results on the ground. Within a few months of implementation over four hundred of the 850 households in one community requested legal

connections for electricity. Toward the end of the project, consumers faced a final hurdle before they could have legal connections: they had to come up with an additional \$10 each to pay for the cable that would connect them to the grid. USAID helped them overcome that hurdle by paying the cable costs.



INDCARE Trust, a Delhi-based NGO that specializes in working with women, holds a community meeting.

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