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**LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES**

**Supporting partnerships with local actors to improve water supply services for the sustainable prevention of Cholera in Kalemie, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

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**PAPER [1]**

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*SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE (SI), as part of its program “Improving access to safe water for sustainable prevention of Cholera in Kalemie, DRC”, supported local actors to establish a partnership in order to ensure efficient management of standpipes. The lack of safe water, which is mainly provided through the piped water scheme, is one of the main causes of the recurrent Cholera outbreaks and standpipes are the main water access points for the most vulnerable communities of the affected areas. The partnership was formally established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) binding Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Water Service Provider (WSP) and the representative of Government in charge of water regulations at local level. The partnership arrangement resulted in an improvement of the management of the standpipes and led to targeted communities having access to piped water; this improved safe water supply services in Kalemie and certainly contributed to the reduction of Cholera cases.*

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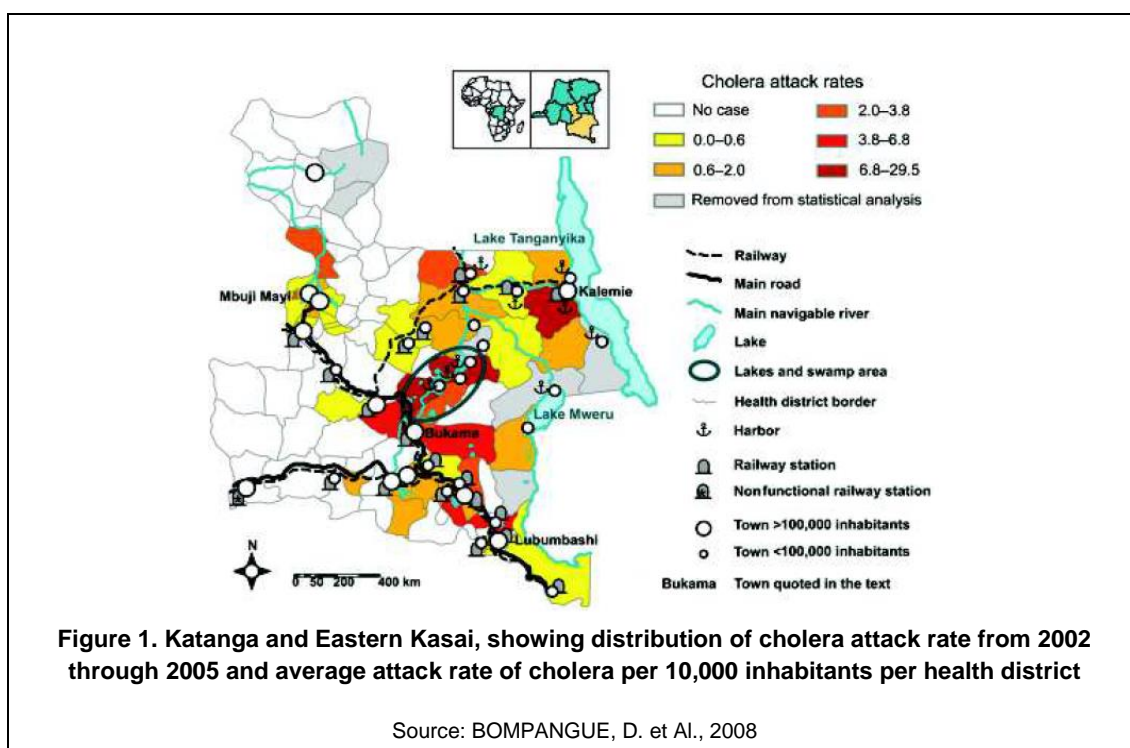
**Background**

Largest city of the Tanganyika province in the south-east of DRC, Kalemie has a population estimated at 253,000 inhabitants (SI-MSF<sup>i</sup> Census, 2014).

A study conducted in 2013 assessed that only 49% of Kalemie inhabitants have access to safe water: among this population, 17% use a protected source, 10% a public tap/standpipe, 9% use a neighbour’s tap and 6% use the tap in their courtyard (the last three provided by the public supply scheme) (EDS<sup>ii</sup>-RDC II 2013-2014). The total figure for safe water access remains much lower than the national targets at the time (71.6% MDG, 2015). As we can see, the piped water scheme is therefore the main source of safe water for Kalemie town. The rest of the population who does not have access to safe water is obliged to fetch water from the Tanganyika Lake and the Lukuga River, and thereby remains highly exposed to faecal contamination. The prevalence of diarrheal diseases (among which cholera) is therefore endemic.

The city has been the entry point of cholera in the eastern part of the country, with the index case notified in 1977. In fact, the area is both a starting zone of cholera during outbreaks and a sanctuary zone during periods of respite, due to its location on the Tanganyika Lake and lakeshore zones. Lake areas are the source of recurrent outbreaks and can sometimes spread to main cities hundreds of kilometres away because of the movements of traders and other travellers (Dr. D. Bompangue, 2008). The lack of water and sanitation facilities and inappropriate hygiene practices as well as the aforementioned environmental conditions make Kalemie a zone of particularly high risk. A violent outbreak occurred in 2015-2016 with 866 cases notified in the city, plus 596 cases in the rural neighbouring zones of Nyamba.

As part of the national multi-sectorial strategic plan for the elimination of the cholera, Kalemie has been classified as a “Zone A” within the typology made up of 3 categories. Precisely, “Zone A” is a source zone of cholera where cases are notified all year long, while “Zone B” is coined as an “epidemic zone” and should be subject to reinforced measures of prevention; “Zone C” is a “node/junction zone”, as they represent crossroads of communication, thus increasing the risks of spreading the epidemics to the national scale.



Fighting cholera in Kalemie is therefore critical to protect the surrounding rural areas and to prevent a country wide diffusion. The cholera cases distribution reports clearly reveal that the areas receiving piped water from the scheme are notifying fewer cases of cholera for 1,000 inhabitants. The sustainability of the public stand pipes of the water scheme that provided water to the vulnerable communities of the city was therefore considered by SI as one of the priority actions.

### The local actors partnership stakeholders

SI is a major humanitarian NGO in DRC, present since 2000. After a first implementation of activities in Kalemie in 2007 which inaugurated the partnership with the REGIDESO (Local Water Provider), SI started a **program for the sustainable fight against Cholera in Kalemie in 2011**, aiming to improve safe water access, to reinforce piped water network management and maintenance, and to consolidate a community-based management of the standpipes.

After two phases of support to piped water network extension and rehabilitation, undertaken along with partners (MSF and Veolia Foundation), SI extended the community-based management of the standpipes to include local actors within a partnership framework with the following specific objectives:

- Encourage the implication of civil society actors in order to defend users' interests
- Improve water supply network management, especially public standpipes and associated services
- Improve the hygiene and sanitation knowledge and practices of populations living in neighborhoods with public standpipes and in areas with a high prevalence of cholera.

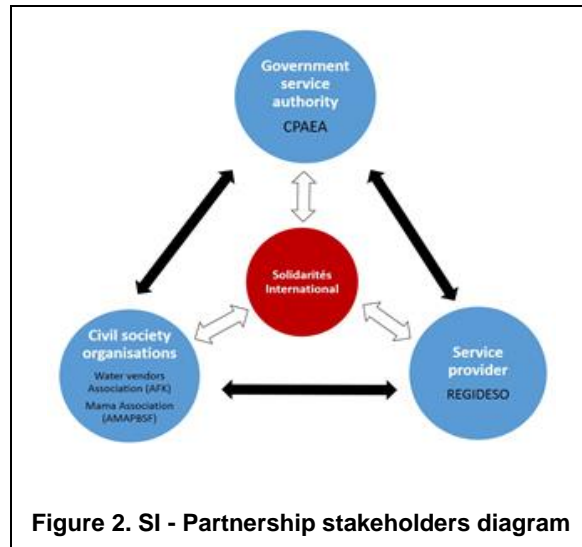
The partnership was effective with the signature of a MoU between the stakeholders: Service Provider, CSO (local associations) and Water Service Authority; all facilitated by SI.

This partnership arrangement was made possible after the enactment of a new national law on water in 2015 that set a solid framework for the water sector in DRC. This law gives large responsibilities to regional and local authorities, which in turn become indispensable actors to be associated to all actions undertaken. The law also included provisions for CSO, water users associations and Public Private Partnerships for all the aspects of water service delivery and management of the facilities.

## Local actors partnership development and support process

### Water supply activities and stakeholders' roles

The rationale of the development and support of partnerships with local actors is to ensure an affordable tariff for the users of the 21 standpipes constructed or renovated by SI, while establishing a sustainable environment for water supply with the involvement of the WSP (REGIDESO) and of the Regional Committee for Water and Sanitation (CPAEA) in a new regulatory context characterized by a greater role given to local authorities.



The following are the main roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders:

- REGIDESO water provider: governmental agency established by law to develop water resources and to manage water supply systems. The REGIDESO at local level is in charge of the piped water scheme and is thus responsible for the water supply to the public standpipes.

## SAGA

- The “Association des Fontainiers de Kalemie” (AFK) is a direct client of the REGIDESO. Each of the SI standpipes are handled by an **attendant member of AFK** who is in charge of selling the water for the price agreed upon during the concertation phase (at the time, 25 FC<sup>iii</sup> per 20 L container equivalent to \$2 US Cents). The attendant is also responsible for the maintenance of the standpipe. A percentage of the money collected is allocated for his salary and the maintenance.
- The “Association des Mamans pour la Protection et la Sécurité des Bornes Fontaines” (AMAPBSF or the Mamas) is also associated to each standpipe, ensuring that the user has been delivered a proper quantity and quality of water. The Mamas also take the role of hygiene educators: they raise awareness on hygiene practices to prevent water borne diseases and guide the users on how to collect and store the water safely to avoid any re-contamination. They therefore play a key role in cholera prevention.
- The “Comité Provincial d’Action pour l’Eau et l’Assainissement” (**CPAEA**) plays a role of regulator (Water Service Authority) and mediator to harmonize the partnership, notably via the notification of a monthly plenary assembly gathering all stakeholders to discuss potential issues and concerns.

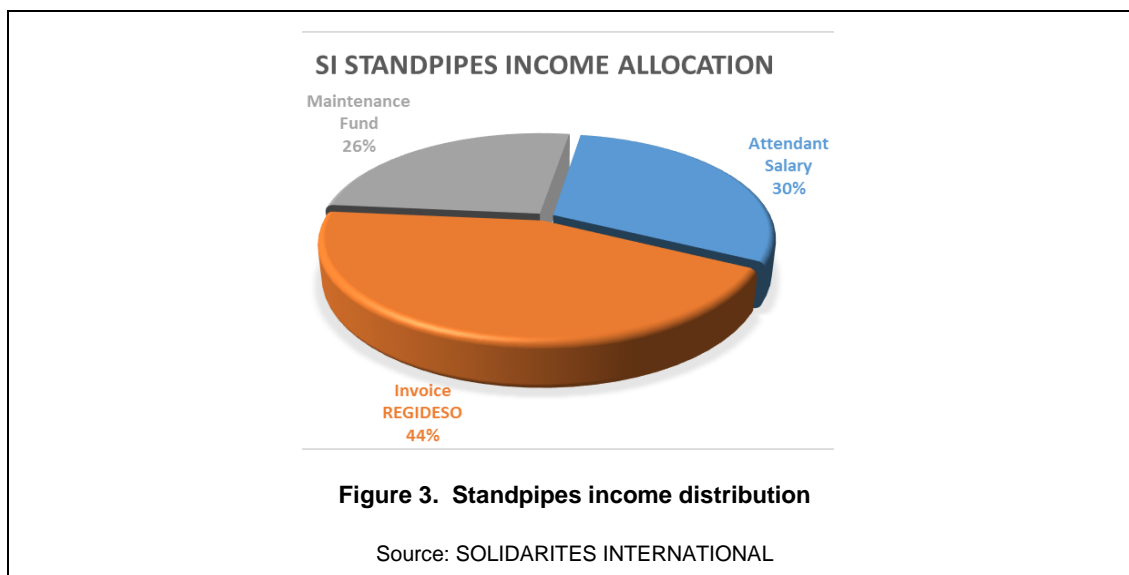
### Monitoring activities

A dedicated SI technical team carries out daily field visits and holds regular meetings with REGIDESO to monitor the evolution of the partnership and the satisfaction of the users. The REGIDESO also supervises the activities via a dedicated technician working full-time along with SI and the contractors for the standpipes construction, renovation or maintenance.

### Progress of the partnership

A bank account has been created to be collectively managed by the three parties (CPAEA, AFK and REGIDESO).

The AFK is a reliable client of the REGIDESO: the association (AFK) is now in charge of collecting the revenues of the standpipes from the members (attendants) and in turn to pay the attendants salaries and to pay the water bills to the REGIDESO. The CPAEA supervises the AFK in this process. The remaining amount (after extraction of the attendants’ salary and the REGIDESO bills) goes to a maintenance fund.



The results of this new partnership proved to be effective with the increase of the maintenance fund after just few months. Between September and December 2015, the maintenance fund received 930.5\$. This was the first time that the maintenance fund was credited. Moreover, standpipes are increasingly repaired immediately.

In addition, SI proceeded to the installation of 12 water meters in order to guarantee a fairer and more transparent billing of water to the users.

Furthermore, SI supported the Mamas to start an activity of soap fabrication that they can sell near the standpipes and hence better accompany the users in the improvement of their hygiene practices and also as an incentive to their participation to the partnership activities.

In parallel, SI is supporting REGIDESO for the assessment, planning and rehabilitation works of the piped water scheme.

### Local actors partnership support development steps

- Step 1: Identifying the groups and setting up simplified concertation procedures;
- Step 2: Securing legal acknowledgement of the associations and strengthening the associations;
- Step 3: Signature of a memorandum of understanding with all stakeholders;
- Step 4: Implementation and follow-up of the management of the standpipes.

## Challenges, lessons learned and way forward

### Challenges and mitigation measures

SI succeeded in being reactive and flexible to monitor the progress of the local actors' partnership for improved management of standpipes. A first protocol launched in December 2014 was reviewed after the identification of non-operational standpipes and inappropriate allocation of standpipes revenues to guarantee maintenance works. This review guided the development of a new protocol effective from September 2015 with a better distribution of responsibilities and improved accountability towards the users and hence improved water supply services.

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Mitigation measures</b>
Stakeholders' lack of interest and confidence in the local-based partnership management	Awareness sessions to clarify MoU objectives, rights and responsibilities of each party
Difficulties of REGIDESO to undertake both collection of the standpipes revenues, the payment of attendants and the remittance to maintenance fund on a monthly basis	Modification of the initial protocol via a signed meeting minutes by all parties. New system placing the AFK as direct client of the REGIDESO and thereby giving it greater responsibilities under the control of CPAEA
Staff turnover within the CPAEA (problematic for the management of the bank account as a signature from the CPAEA vice-president is required for all transactions)	Authorization for the signature transferred to a new permanent focal point.

### Lessons learnt

- The opening of a common bank account was crucial;
- A platform enabling the discussions between all stakeholders is important to ensure local-based solutions to sustainable water supply service delivery;
- The importance of enhancing the legitimacy of CSO to ensure local-based ownership for water supply sustainability.

### Steps forward

- Apply the local-based partnership management model to all standpipes in Kalemie;
- Continue the process of legal registration of all the CSOs;
- Encourage CSOs to elect members based on defined criteria that add value and legitimacy to their role in the partnership and ensure the efficiency and involvement of each stakeholder;
- Organise training sessions for CSOs and REGIDESO staff on basic financial and logistics management.

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Note/s**

- i MSF : Médecins Sans Frontières  
ii EDS : Enquêtes Démographiques et de Santé  
iii FC : Franc Congolais (Local Currency Congolese Franc : \$1 US = 1,300 FC (Feb. 2017))
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