



World Water Day

## The choice of access to water to fight against epidemics

In Uvira, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, access to water is being improved and strengthened to fight epidemics, particularly cholera. In this town in the Democratic Republic of Congo, local and international actors are fully committed. The Agence française de développement has just renewed its partnership with the Veolia Foundation, which has been working in the field for ten years.



“If you provide safe water, you protect against cholera, but you also protect against, at least, 25 other diseases that are transmitted by water.”

**RITA COLWELL**  
DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE  
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Sustainable development goal n°6, access to water is a public health imperative. To be able to protect oneself from viruses through good hygiene, to avoid being contaminated by bacteria such as cholera, water is an essential prerequisite. The inhabitants of Uvira, in South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, experience this with each cholera outbreak.

To prevent the population from drawing its water from contaminated sources such as Lake Tanganyika and the city's three rivers, a major program is being conducted by a group of local, national and international partners, led by the Veolia Foundation. The aim is to put an end to the recurring cholera epidemics that affect the region by providing nearly 155,000 people with continuous access to quality water.

The strategy initiated more than ten years ago aims to bring together players from all the sectors concerned. The program brings together the Congolese authorities, the local water utility,



This collective approach is producing its first effects: drinking water production and storage capacities are about to double and a hundred or so standpipes have been built to bring drinking water as close as possible to the inhabitants via a 50 km network.

> [Eliminating cholera – Water production, storage, supply](#)

From the engineering required to design the water networks to raising the awareness of the population and setting up sustainable governance rules, the many partners in this program are fully mobilized. The French Development Agency, which has been involved in the project since its inception, has just renewed its partnership with the Veolia Foundation, which is committed to supporting and accompanying the local operator on a daily basis in order to take delivery of the new infrastructure, launch operations and ensure that the population takes full control of the service.



“ We have been experimenting with the strength of the collective for ten years in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thanks to our combined expertise and pooled resources, the fight against cholera has made a great leap forward in Uvira.

**THIERRY VANDELDELDE**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VEOLIA  
FOUNDATION



This support confirms the relevance of the approach chosen to carry out this development program: a multisectoral prism that even includes a scientific component. Uvira has attracted the attention of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), which has agreed to monitor the impact of improved access to water on health.

For Martin Leménager, who monitored the project on behalf of the Agence française de développement, the water world will be interested in the results of this project."

[More information about fight against epidemics](#)



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