Oral presentation.

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THE CHALLENGE TO THE WATER MARKET IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The DR Congo is considered the African country with the largest water resources on the continent, and yet, paradoxically, it is one of the countries with the lowest access to drinking water. It is therefore necessary to establish new policies and efficient management frameworks for both the resource itself and the public water service in order to enhance the value of water, not only as an economic resource but also as a social good, since one of water's essential roles remains the preservation of life. The overall objective of our work is to analyze the challenges facing the water market in the DR Congo in order to propose recommendations aimed at improving access to drinking water and strengthening the regulation of the sector.

To identify best practices, the analysis adopted a comparative approach, allowing us to study the case of the SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) project in Uganda, which implemented similar reforms in the water sector. Our research highlighted three key elements: the reasons for infrastructure inefficiency, unequal access, and weak regulation. Water management policies in the DR Congo can improve or promote sustainable and equitable access to drinking water for the entire population through: strengthening governance, building institutional capacity, investing in infrastructure, education and awareness-raising, collaboration with the private sector, international development partnerships, and community-based innovations.

Uganda's experience in the water sector offers valuable lessons. Uganda has focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals by translating them into national targets and regional and local objectives. Emphasis has also been placed on the effectiveness and efficiency of using both domestic resources and those of donors to ensure cost-effectiveness. The coordinated monitoring of sector activities contributes to strategic decision-making, policy formulation, and coherent development planning. This, in turn, helps inform informed decisions regarding investments and service development.

In our research, to gather information relevant to this work, we used documentary research, surveys and interviews, as well as comparative analysis. This allowed us to study case studies of other countries that have implemented similar reforms in the water sector in order to identify best practices and lessons learned.

The results of our research showed that the following are significant challenges: inefficient infrastructure (deteriorating infrastructure makes water management questionable, as it directly affects access to and the quality of drinking water) ; unequal access (disparities in access to water between different regions and populations lead to social unrest) ; and weak regulation (the regulation of public services is insufficient and not strictly enforced).

Current water management policies in the DR Congo face major challenges, including a lack of planning and coordination (policies often appear fragmented, with little coordination between different levels of government and stakeholders), insufficient investment (the sector requires significant investment to modernize infrastructure and improve water distribution), and current strategies that tend to be more reactive to crises (such as cholera outbreaks) than proactive in prevention and sustainability.

Keywords : Challenge ; Market ; Water ; Water market.