Cholera training

# Introduction

VEI has Water Operator Partnership (WOPs) with several water (and sanitation) utilities in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia. The WOP in Zambia is part of the wider WaterWorX program and includes 5 water utilities and the regulator. VEI its WOPs focus on strengthening the local water utility operations. Improving a water utility its technical, financial and social operations require the long-term partnership offered under a WOP.

VEI is, cautiously, expanding its activities into crisis resilience. Our focus will remain on the collaboration with the utilities and on the prevention of emergencies. Within the WASH sector bacterial outbreaks of *Vibrio Cholerae* (Cholera) are still common and a clear indication of inadequate water supply and hygiene. VEI signed a ‘stand-by’ agreement with RVO under the Dutch Disaster Risk Reduction & Surge Support (DRRS) programme.

Zambia, in 2024, experienced its biggest Cholera outbreak since 1977 (start of recording of Cholera outbreaks) during the 2023/2024 rainy season. Approximately 20.000 people were infected throughout Zambia. The case mortality rate reached almost 4% (approximately 800 people died). In response to these challenges the Zambian health sector has invested heavily in vaccination efforts, resulting in about 2 million people (out of a population of 21 million) being vaccinated against Cholera in 2024. As a result of the vaccinations (combined with the ending of the seasonal rains), the cholera outbreak in the 2024/2025 rainy season was decreased to less than 500 cases (and a case mortality of 2%). The Zambian government (GRZ) has expressed the ambition to eradicate cholera completely by 2025.

Cholera outbreaks are not just a public health issue; it is rooted in inadequate water and sanitation provision. The 11 water utilities in Zambia are part of the first line response to a cholera outbreak. As part of the ongoing collaboration between VEI and the Zambian utilities, organizational gaps were identified. The organizational ability of the utilities to prepare and respond to a crisis (like a cholera) requires improvement.

This memo outlines the proposal for a nation-wide cholera preparedness training with the 11 Zambian water utilities.

# Cholera Prepardness Training

Organizing preparedness training for water utilities in relation to cholera is a critical step in preventing and mitigating outbreaks. It’s essential because;

* Cholera is water borne and water utilities are on the front lines of ensuring safe drinkign water, so their prepardness directly impacts public health
* Training utility staff helps to (1) recognize early warning signs of contamination, to (2) respond quickly toi suspected outbreaks and coordinate with health authorities for timely interventions
* It can cover emergency chlorination protocols, back-up water suplly planning and maintenance of water treatment systems during crises
* And utility must know how to; (1) inform the public about water safety, (2) issue boil water advisories and (3) promote hygiene practices during outbreaks.

The training will contribute to the development and testing of emergency plans, improve coordination with local government, health departments and NGOs and identify the gaps in response capacity.

The proposed cholera preparedness training consists of the following components:

1. Training/workshop (2 days) in Lusaka on a sectoral / national government level. This training/workshop will focus on the national plans and initiatives. This meeting will require a small representation from the water utilities (most effected) and water trusts/
2. Training/workshop (2 days) in Lusaka with all 11 water utilities and focussed on the development of cholera response plans/protocols. These response plans need to be very practical and directly applicable for the utility. Existing reporting initiatives need to be fully incorporated to ensure alignment with national activities. The Water trusts need to be part of this training as well.
3. Simulation training and workshop (1.5 days) in each water utility (all 11). This simulation training will include various stakeholders of the utility. The various local stakeholders will need to be involved in this training at the operational (and strategic) level. To enhance the learning effect 1 staff member from a neighbouring water utility will be invited to participate in this training as observer. Nwasco will be actively involved to ensure oversight and support for the training activities.
4. A final training/workshop (2 days) in Lusaka to bring together the various lessons learned and to upscale it from cholera preparedness training into a wider, sectoral, response to all kinds of emergencies.

The Zambian Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) will play a crucial rule in the 1st and 4th activity on the list. Other stakeholders will need to be identified for the various meetings and training, based on the needs.

**Timeline**

* August 2025: appointment of the external facilitator (from DRRS) and preparing for the various activities,
* September 2025: conduct activity 1 and 2, develop the crisis simulation training and, if possible, do a first roll-out with one of the utilities. VEI has availed a short term expert (STE) for the first 3 weeks of September to work together with the external facilitator on the development of the crisis simulation training.
* October and November 2025: conclude the utility trainings throughout the country. The external facilitator will have to lead these trainings
* End of November / early December 2025: organize the final meeting in Lusaka and the consultant has to conclude a small close-out report.

MWDS (and Nwasco) will be utilized to impose the importance of these activities on the CUs and, to the extent possible, enforce participation and collaboration in the program from the CUs. The external facilitator will take the initiative for all the activities and utilize MWDS (and the other partners) to ensure (and enforce) collaboration from the CUs.

# ToR for external facilitator(s)

An external facilitator will be required for these various activities. A senior expert who is assisted by a junior staff member is envisioned for this assignment. For the external facilitators the following requirements are listed:

**Qualifications and experience:**

* Qualification in public health and epidemiology
* Experience with training and group work
* At least 5 years of experience in public health in Africa
* Regional / local experience in Zambia (and/or its regional peers)

**Skills:**

* Strong organizer, facilitator and collaborator
* Self-starter, taking initiatives

**Practical:**

* Available from mid/late August until the beginning of December
* The total assignment is expected to take about 40 days spread out over this period
* Physical presence in Zambia during this period is required.

**Tasks:**

* Organize, prepare and conduct the 3 trainings in Lusaka (with the various stakeholders).
* Prepare the crisis simulation training (training materials, training logistics and local stakeholder participation).
* Conduct the trainings with the 11 utilities, at their premises and with various local stakeholders.
* Organize own travel arrangements (together with VEI) for the roll-out in the various utilities.
* Provide tailored feedback to each utility based on the training and supervise the development of a cholera response plan/protocol (drafted before the training in the utility and updated/adjusted based on the training experience). The utilities need to draft their own plan/protocol, the facilitator supervises.

Responsibilities of VEI (itself or through/with partners):

* General oversight to the assignment
* Introduce the external facilitator to various network partners
* Fund the costs related to the travel of participants and hosting the various activities/workshops.
* Make adequate transportation, accommodation and safety arrangements for the external facilitator during the travel to the various utilities
* Provide a Netherlands expert to collaborate with in the preparation and testing of the crisis simulation training.

**Timeline**

The total amount of work for the external facilitators is estimated at 8 weeks (spread out of over a 4 month period), starting latest from September – December