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Veolia Environnement Foundation Newsletter

No. 2 - December 2009

Foundation Info keeps you informed of what's happening at the Veolia Environnement Foundation: the projects being supported, the sponsors' reports, volunteers leaving on emergency relief, development assistance and other assignments around the world. The links in the contents section below will give you more information on the topic: just click and find! Please send us your suggestions, comments, pictures and anything else you'd like to share. (fondation.ve@veolia.com)

TOP OF THE NEWS



© Tara Oceans, F. Latreille

The Veolia Foundation has joined forces with the **Tara Oceans** project, a particularly innovative scientific expedition. In three years, the Tara will sail the five oceans to find out more about the spatial organization of marine ecosystems and their reaction to atmospheric changes. On board, 22 multidisciplinary scientists from 10 countries will each have a turn in covering over 12 basic research fields. This makes Tara a powerful accelerating catalyst for mobilizing teams of scientists and increasing general awareness of the urgency of protecting marine biodiversity. Marie-Marguerite Bourbigot (Veolia Environnement) is the project's sponsor. She is project manager at Veolia's Brittany sea unit and will interface with the mission's scientific teams. Part of Veolia Foundation's funding went to a highly innovative **instrument platform** (further details here).

The Foundation's support

Tara sailed from Lorient on the French west coast on September 5. The television program *Thalassa* broadcast the schooner's departure live from the Eric Tabarly sailing club. Throughout the year and at every port of call, the weekly program *Thalassa* on France 3 and the daily program *Planète Thalassa* will cover the Tara's adventures. For more information, check **the Tara Oceans** program and the itinerary for the 2009-2010 scientific expedition.

LATEST PROJECTS SUPPORTED

The Veolia Environnement Foundation's selection committee met on June 16 and September 29. It selected **27 projects in June** (17 in outreach, five in workforce development and the other five in environmental conservation), and **35 in September** (17 in outreach, 10 in workforce development and eight in environmental conservation).

-WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT-

At its meeting of trustees on June 11, 2009, the Veolia Foundation decided to support expansion of the subsidized employment company La Petite Reine. A pioneer in environmentally friendly urban transportation, this little company specialized in cargo-bike transportation is shifting up a gear and will be creating seven new sites in three years, along with 200 jobs for the unemployed. Philippe Payen, Veolia Transport, is sponsoring this project.

In addition to funding from the Foundation, Veolia Transport employees are donating their expertise and skills to La Petite Reine: advice for the sales teams, technical assistance and training to prepare employees for



more mainstream jobs.

More information is provided on the Foundation's website.

-ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION-



In October 2009, the Unis-Cité non-profit organization launched a new national program to educate young French people from poorer homes about environmentally sound habits. Young community service volunteers help families in disadvantaged neighborhoods develop habits that save water and energy. A pilot project has been launched in the Paris region with assistance from the Foundation, the Campus and Veolia Environnement Ile-de-France.

More information.

-OUTREACH-



The non-profit Collectif Tiers Monde des Cantons de Louviers et Val de Reuil has been involved in outreach projects with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa for several years. In villages surrounding the city of Bohicon, Benin, it is now carrying out a project to supply water and sanitation to improve the residents' living conditions in connection with the decentralized assistance program of the Seine-Eure metropolitan area administration (CASE).

About the project.

The project also involved the Foundation's teams. Since the beginning of a Veoliaforce volunteer's assignment, in April 2009, they have been busy working with their partners on preparing the specifications and request for proposals so that the construction work can begin as quickly as possible.

All the projects supported are presented on the [Foundation's website](#).

SPONSORS REPORT BACK -----



• **Habibou Halidou Doudou** is in charge of environmental conservation at the Niger Water Company and is responsible for many projects being carried out by the company's sustainable development section. He is a specialist in hydraulics and is overseeing the rollout of the Agrisud project in Niger. *"Taking part in a project that encourages local initiative while ensuring drinking water quality and food security ..."*

Continued...



• **Bertrand Auneau** heads a Veolia Environmental Services agency specializing in municipal services for the Gironde region, in France. His sponsorship of a project supported by the Veolia Environnement Foundation has been a wonderful experience. *"A group of young people all working hard and giving of their time with enthusiasm, a love of their neighborhood and extraordinary camaraderie..."*

Continued...

VOLUNTEERS ON ASSIGNMENT -----

• **Burkina Faso (November 2009): Dominique Frick** (retired pipe installer at Sade, Lyons) went off to southern Burkina Faso on a 15-day training assignment. Under a decentralized assistance program between



Narbonne, France and the city and district of Péni, in Burkina Faso, he trained about 20 people to manage mini drinking water networks in rural areas. The Veolia Foundation has been partnering with this project for three years.



- **Niger (November 2009):** **Laetitia Aubeut-Chojnacki** (technical department at Veolia Water Centre Est) conducted a training assignment in Niger for two volunteers employed by the Niger Water Company. The two were taught Veoliaforce's operating methods in preparation for a water-quality analysis campaign in connection with the Agrisud project, which begins in December 2009.

Details of the Agrisud project.



- **Moldavia (October 2009):** Two Veoliaforce volunteers left on their seventh assignment in Moldavia, this time to monitor work on the Ecole Amie des Enfants project, carried out in partnership with UNICEF. From October 5 to 9, **Jean-Pascal Rigolleau**, Dalkia project manager at the Veolia Foundation, and **Jean-Pierre Clavière**, a retired Veolia Water employee (Sade), supervised project start up. They also monitored and coordinated the renovation work on two schools, in Molesti and Sofrincani.



- **Indonesia (October 2009):** After two powerful earthquakes devastated the Indonesian island of Sumatra and damaged the water infrastructure, the Foundation sent a Veoliaforce expert, **Nicolas Le Goff**, to provide support for an emergency relief team from Action contre la Faim. His assignment was to help set up temporary supply points to give almost 30,000 people access to drinking water. He also took part in assessing the materials needed to get a water treatment plant in Padang running again. The plant supplies some 300,000 people.



- **Senegal (October 2009):** **Yannick Dufes** (Veolia Water Ile-de-France technical department) and **Noëlla Robin** (Veolia Water Rennes) went to M'Bour, Senegal, on an expertise assignment. The objective was to supply water and sanitation for an occupational training center. Yannick Dufes managed the water aspects, while Noëlla Robin looked after the sanitation questions.



- **Mali (September-October 2009):** **Frédéric Plumus** (logistics manager with Veoliaforce) and **Jonathan Habert** (project manager at the Veolia Foundation) went to Mali on a 10-day assignment. Their work entailed assessing the sanitation needs in the Niafunké district. Working with the local partner, PADL, the two men sent by the Veolia Foundation studied the feasibility of various technological solutions for independent sanitation systems. Field surveys were carried out in three pilot villages, and on-site soil analyses provided data for determining the most appropriate response.

More on the Cercle de Niafunké program.



- **Philippines (September-October 2009):** **Franck Haaser**, emergency relief director with Veoliaforce, and **Catherine Chatel**, a Veolia Environmental Services volunteer, were in the Republic of the Philippines in October 2009. Their assistance had been requested by UNICEF and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and took the form of an expertise assignment. The objective was to help organize cleaning, clearing and collection of the debris, rubble and other waste resulting from recent cyclones that had devastated the country.



• **Zimbabwe (September-October 2009): Laurent Delecraz and Nicolas Guillaume** (both with Veolia Water Systems) went on a three-week assignment for the French Red Cross. Their work involved supervising installation of the equipment ordered following the assessment assignment that had taken place the preceding June, and training the personnel of the two water treatment plants in the city of Chitungwiza. **Patrice Darré** (Veolia Water Sud Ouest) also worked with the French Red Cross to make preparations for the rehabilitation of two other water treatment plants, in Chipinge and Kadoma.

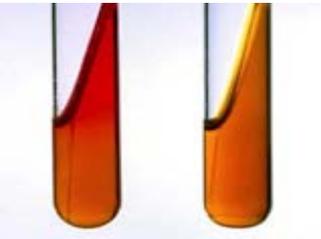
EVENTS



• **Thierry Vandevelde**, Executive Officer of the Veolia Environnement Foundation, signed a memorandum of understanding this summer with the Malian Ministry of Environment and Sanitation. The objective is to enhance Mali's capacity for developing greenhouse gas reduction projects (CDM and carbon offsets) and to promote a development model for Mali in which carbon credits can be used to improve access to water and sanitation. Once the paperwork and procedures are taken care of, the Malian authorities and project promoters will have the tools they need to develop new projects with no outside assistance.

More information on the Veolia Foundation's assistance for Mali (Niafunké district), carbon certification, etc.

After the memorandum of understanding was signed, an assignment was organized in October to assess the skills needed and the barriers to development of greenhouse gas emission reduction. **Véronique Cikala** (energy markets department at VEETRA-Dalkia) provided technical support for the diagnosis and was instrumental in developing a training program. The program is meant to be comprehensive, dealing with the certification mechanisms (CDM, offsets), and also concrete, since it is designed around a real case: Gold Standard certification of the **drinking water supply project for the Niafunké district**, where the credits will go directly to covering the operating costs and amortizing the equipment.



• **Thierry Vandevelde**, Executive Officer of the Veolia Environnement Foundation, was in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), on November 2 and 3 to sign a partnership agreement with that country's Public Health Department. The agreement calls for a contribution of €50,000 toward country-wide epidemiological monitoring in connection with the cholera project that the Foundation has been supporting since 2007. The Veolia Foundation has committed to help local authorities collect samples, conduct bacteriological analyses and interpret them from an epidemiological perspective.

The epidemiological data obtained after collection and analysis provide essential information for understanding and preventing cholera epidemics. The Foundation decides on actions to improve access to drinking water in so-called "stock" areas determined in the epidemiological monitoring.

PUBLICATIONS



• Since 2008, the Veolia Foundation has been supporting GRET, a non-profit involved in outreach and international assistance, in its work in Mauritania. The construction of a waste processing center has resulted in better collection and treatment of plastic waste. It has also created jobs for women's cooperatives, giving their members a new source of income.

See the project description on the Foundation's website.

The French-German television channel Arte featured this project in a 43-minute report on September 19, *Mauritanie: les « zazous » de Nouakchott*. Produced by Michel Dumont and Emmanuel Royer, the film is available on [the channel's website](#).



• **La Clé pour l'Autisme: Helping autistic adults build a life.** The Veolia Environnement Foundation is helping the non-profit La Clé pour l'Autisme create a new institution to bring autistic adults into the workforce. *Planète Ile-de-France*, Veolia's internal magazine, has published an article on the project.

Top of the news



Veolia Environnement, the leader in environmental solutions, and its Foundation are players in the Tara Oceans expedition. With its presence in 63 countries, serving industrial companies, public authorities and individuals in the fields of water, energy services, waste management and transportation, the company could not be indifferent to this original initiative in circumnavigation.

The Veolia Environnement Foundation focuses on environmental conservation, outreach and workforce development. "We try to balance our projects in the three areas for two reasons: we don't want to spread ourselves too thinly, and we want to contribute significantly to significant projects," says Thierry Vandevælde, the Foundation's Executive Officer. "So nearly a quarter of our annual budget is earmarked for environmental conservation, where we concentrate mainly on projects that will improve our understanding of biodiversity and climate change." The Foundation's Board of Trustees, chaired by Henri Proglio, Veolia's Chairman, was quickly won over when the project was presented at the beginning of November. The Tara Oceans expedition, presented by its two directors, Etienne Bourgois and Eric Karsenti, was compelling.

For Veolia, the proposed scientific program, the roughly 500 researchers involved and the three years it is expected to take to collect the data will eventually enable the company to improve its ways of doing business. Some of the negative environmental impacts of human activities have received considerable media attention. Others, such as ocean acidification or disruption of carbon and oxygen cycles, receive much less because they are more complex. "That alone is good grounds for providing funding for those issues. We are supporting these lines of investigation by financing very sophisticated equipment that can observe, sample and then classify the microfauna and flora in the relatively unknown offshore areas of the seas and oceans. An engineer will organize the databases, thereby processing the data and facilitating real-time access to it for specialists and Web surfers alike. This will be a real first!" says Vandevælde.

The project's sponsor, Marie-Marguerite Bourbigot, a scientist by training and experience and project manager at the Brittany sea unit, and Nelly Olin, former environment minister and current advisor to the Foundation, will interface with Tara's scientific teams. This partnership will give the Veolia Foundation an opportunity to mobilize other international partners, its research teams and clusters of excellence when the Tara is docked. A series of additional projects is already on the agenda in Ecuador (Galapagos Islands) and New Caledonia with Conservation International. So Tara is a powerful accelerating catalyst for mobilizing teams of scientists and increasing general awareness of the urgency of protecting marine biodiversity.



Tara key figures

Expedition length:
Three years (September
2009
to November 2012)

Distance to cover:
150,000 km

Ports of call: 60

Countries: 50

Scientists:
over 100
and 22 scientific
coordinators

Laboratories and institutes:
50 in 15 countries

Experiments
on board: 20 a day



Questions for Eric Karsenti

Co-director of the Tara Oceans expedition

What do you expect of the corporate partnerships for this scientific project?

Corporate partnerships can be very valuable because they tend to be more flexible and responsive. This type of project is completely out of the ordinary and, although it involves basic research and the popularization of science, public institutions do not always have the tools for funding complex expeditions. Also, it's important for companies to be involved in scientific work, information for the public and educational activities in

collaboration with public institutions. That tends to weave a fabric of social relationships that are necessary for cohesion in our complex modern, technological societies.

In the long term, what are you hoping for the most out of this assignment?

I expect three important results:

- 1) That the complex scientific project that we have put together works. It seems to me that there hasn't been such an ambitious interdisciplinary project in oceanography and global ecology in recent times. Through this project, I also want to make the public at large aware of the role of the oceans and ocean life in the climatic equilibriums of our planet.
- 2) That we succeed in introducing to the public the faces of today's scientists and the activities that absorb them.
- 3) That we show young people that enthusiasm and perseverance can not only turn dreams into reality, but also send a message of hope and vitality.



Photos © Tara Oceans, F. Latreille

Etienne Collomb,
journalist with the multi-media agency K-minos
and communications agency Bords de Loire

*For more information about the instrument platform funded by the Veolia
Environnement Foundation.*

The scientific equipment used had to be equal to an expedition of this caliber. The remarkable CTD rosette instrument platform is a technological gem that will definitely be the star of the show. It was in Villefranche-sur-Mer, near Nice, France, that it was adapted for the Tara Oceans project. The team of Gaby Gorsky, CNRS Research Director, is in charge of fine-tuning the platform and putting it to work.

Gaby Gorsky, head of operational oceanography for the Tara expedition and Research Director at the CNRS, France's National Center for Scientific Research, talks enthusiastically about the scientific equipment he is proudest of—the CTD platform.

The CTD (Conductivity-Temperature-Depth profilers) is extremely versatile, with the added advantage of combining a high-resolution camera with a series of sensors to measure salinity, temperature and depth. It also controls the opening of bottles to take samples for later use by the specialists in molecular biology and taxonomists. It therefore provides in situ “snapshots” of the plankton, at a rate of 25 images per second. “The CTD will give us data on the physical, chemical and biological structure of the water column studied, and it can be lowered to a depth of 2,000 meters! The samples and measurements in the vertical profiles as it moves through a water column can be used to study the relations between ‘functional groups,’ (the interactions between the animal and plant species in their physical and chemical environment). This data will be brought together with the satellite images, which reveal the condition of ocean surfaces (currents, temperature, chlorophyll). So it will be possible to connect the vast expanses seen from space and the depths explored by the CTD. The data will be processed on board by an engineer and scientists employing a host of software programs,” says Gaby. He goes on to explain, “The data from the CTD camera will be connected to the physical and chemical indicators to produce a detailed map of the entire plankton ecosystem.” By funding this prototype, the Veolia Foundation is enabling Gaby's team to play an important role in this project. An engineer will operate the remarkable CTD rosette (*see photo above*), setting its parameters, deploying it and processing the data provided by the multidisciplinary wonder. Gaby will be dispensing advice remotely throughout the expedition.

The volumetric camera developed in Villefranche under the name Underwater Vision Profiler basically works as follows: a light beam (red, to avoid disturbing the organisms) with a parallelepipedal (not conical) ray illuminates a precisely known volume of water. Images of living organisms ranging in size from 60 microns (particles and microorganisms) to 10 centimeters (larvae or predators, in addition to particulate matter—floculi and aggregates—marine snow) are recorded every 20 cm during descent. The organisms and particles are trapped in an illuminated “window” of 1 to 10 liters, depending on the settings, down to a depth of 2,000 meters. Gaby's only regret is that there isn't enough room in Tara's CTD to slip in an electrical cable to supply it with the power needed to transmit the images live. Instead, there's a few minutes' wait until the CTD has surfaced before the cable can be connected. “But the length of the voyage makes up for this minor inconvenience, and we are expecting fantastic results. We'll be able to observe and store data on all these groups living in their natural environment. Thanks to the CTD's multidisciplinary features, we'll also be able to better assess the effects of water acidification on ecosystems. Lastly, we'll be offering satellites monitoring ocean surfaces a better “view.” In fact, we are going to calibrate satellite images by collaborating with space agencies, such as NASA, and ultimately the current biogeographic maps will be completed or modified. Perhaps,” concludes Gaby, “there are some surprises in store for us and we'll be amazed by all the life in some parts of the world's oceans where we thought there was none.”



The instrument platform includes sensors to measure pressure, temperature, salinity, density, chlorophyll, oxygen and turbidity; a volumetric camera to measure animal plankton and marine snow; and bottles programmed to take water samples.

© Laboratoire d'Océanographie
de Villefranche-sur-Mer



Gaby Gorsky

© Jean-Marie Rames/Studio9

To find out more:
www.taraexpeditions.org

Etienne Collomb,
journalist with the multi-media agency K-minos
and communications agency Bords de Loire.

On assignment



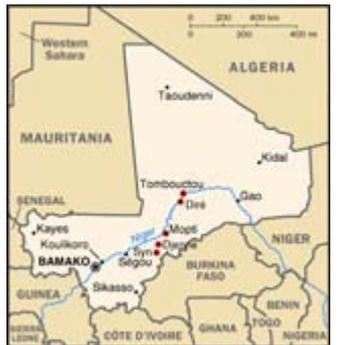
• **Mali** : *For the past two years the Veolia Foundation has been supporting a drinking water supply program in Mali. In the region of Timbuktu eight villages now benefit from a solar-powered pumping system. Now that a ninth village will shortly have the same facilities, the program has become the basis of a wider project devoted to carbon certification, with the aim of strengthening the capacities of Malian government departments. An agreement formalizing this aim was signed in early July by Thierry Vandeveld, executive officer of the Veolia Foundation, and the Malian Minister of the Environment.*

2007-2009

Nine rural villages, spread over five districts in the Niafunké circle, are involved in the program supported by the Veolia Foundation. In this region, located in the north of Mali, the aim is to improve access to drinking water and thus to reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases by installing a water supply system with a solar-powered pump. Why choose solar power? The idea is to make access to drinking water permanent by providing a technical solution that is suitable to the geographical conditions of Niafunké. This is an isolated region, and vulnerable to the yearly floods of the Niger.



The program was therefore developed in collaboration with a Malian NGO (Malian Institute for Local Development) and the technical support of the Project for the Support of Local Development (PADL). Each village has been equipped with a pumping plant powered by solar energy, a water supply system, a reservoir and public standpipes. During the first phase of the project (2006-7) the two first villages took the role of pilot zones before the other seven were chosen. In summer 2009, only one site remained unfinished.



The 8,000 meters of the network are something new in Mali: they are made entirely of high-density polyethylene (HDPE). Less rigid than PVC, HDPE is suitable for winding routes, since it limits the number of joints required and so the risks of leaks in the future. It is also more resistant to heat than PVC. In other words, it's a real innovation.

A permanent supply of water

More than 15,000 Malians benefit from these facilities. The installation of the various elements was discussed publicly during village assemblies. The program supported by the Veolia Foundation goes further than a simple installation of a water system.

In the longer term, the aim is to provide a permanent supply by increasing the users' long-term ability to manage the equipment that they have received. Each village was therefore helped to set up a water management committee. A socioeconomic study was undertaken to devise a program to consolidate their skills in the fields of management, maintenance, and also hygiene. Through the nine management committees more than 175 people were trained—the level of female participation in the training process was more than 60%.



To monitor and facilitate the project, several employees from the Veolia group were called upon. Three Veoliaforce volunteers brought their on-the-ground expertise. Yvon Caron, a Veolia Water retiree, undertook three assignments in the space of less than a year. In August 2008, he spent two weeks studying the dimensioning of the equipment. Two months later, he spent another 10 days on the technical analysis of the documents submitted during the tendering process. He then spent just under three weeks on site in February 2009 to supervise the works, taking over from Benoît Barbarou. This senior network maintenance technician from Veolia Water Toulouse had gone out for two weeks in January 2009. His assignment was to supervise the site and approve the layout and the dimensioning of the network.



Renaud Splingart (technical manager at Veolia Energy-Dalkia)

provisionally completed this series of assignments in May of 2009. He was able to check the electromechanical equipment (submersible pumps and photovoltaic panels) and train the person in charge of their maintenance and repair. All three worked with Jonathan Habert, assignment director at the Veolia Foundation: since 2007 he had spent more than seven months on site. After evaluating the requirements (August 2007) and taking part in the dimensioning of the equipment (September 2008), he moved to Mali for six months in the first half of 2009. His work mainly involved getting the equipment operational and training the management committees.

This program may be classic in its aim— to provide a water supply system—but it makes use of a rarely used technology: solar-powered pumping. The choice of this technology enabled an ambitious sequel: a project for carbon certification training has been added on to the installation of the supply equipment.



*Champ solaire
Adduction d'eau potable
par pompage solaire
(Guediou Gourma,
Cercle de Niafunké)*

Carbon certification for the project

Among its many initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the Kyoto Protocol introduced the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The mechanism's principle is simple: reductions in GHGs are beneficial to the planet wherever they are generated. From that arose the idea of creating certificates that give a financial value to the reductions and can be traded.

These certificates can be obtained by financing GHG reduction projects, or in any event by investing in clean technologies in developing countries. If a developed country helps an underprivileged country to put in place a sustainable development system, it can deduct this aid from its own emissions. It is a win-win situation: the developing country gains the expertise it needs to secure itself a "clean" future, and the developed countries (or their businesses) fulfill their specific commitments of emission mitigation and reduction. Currently the main beneficiaries of the CDM are India, China and Brazil. These three countries make up more than 90% of CDM projects and credits generated thereby.

Mali, like most of its neighbors, is disadvantaged in this area: sub-Saharan Africa represents less than 1% of the credits generated globally, and is faced with a twofold problem: not only are investments in this field low, but in addition there is a lack of promoters; the authorities have no projects to support in the complex area of certification. This is where the Veolia Foundation has intervened. In collaboration with the competent authorities and the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Mali, it has offered to make these mechanisms better understood. This skills improvement program consists of passing on the methods and systems used to potential promoters of projects in Mali as well as to the competent authorities responsible for organizing them.

So the Niafunké project is acting as a sort of experiment. The credits will not be used to finance the investment (which is being covered by the backers, in particular the Veolia Foundation) but to support the functioning and amortization of the water supply system. Concretely, **it will reduce the sale price of water and so help spread access to drinking water in areas of extreme poverty.**

The Veolia Foundation has decided upon the voluntary offset certification known as the "Gold Standard," which maximizes the socioeconomic impact of the program and involves a reduced and less costly procedure. The Niafunké circle is acting as a pilot region: once confirmed, the certification model can be extended to other water supply systems with solar-powered pumps.

To help the public authorities understand this approach and ensure the transfer of skills, the certification procedure is carried out in collaboration with all the interested parties. The aim, once the competent authorities are conversant with the documents, is to be able to reproduce the procedure at a lower cost. The Veolia Foundation will support the setting up of this model both technically and financially until Verified Gold Standard (VGS) credits are obtained by the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Mali.

The protocol concluded between the two entities therefore covers support with carbon certification projects. To be precise, the agreement includes a diagnosis of the obstacles to the development of carbon projects in Mali, the drawing up of the documentation required to obtain VGS, and lastly the development of a program to improve the skills of the authorities so that they will be able to develop other CDM/voluntary offset projects. It's a significant commitment for the Veolia Foundation in a far-reaching project.

The program in numbers

€140,000 (€70,000 in 2008 and €70,000 in 2009) granted by the Veolia Foundation

6 submersible pumps, 6 reservoirs with a capacity of 20-30 m³, 33 public standpipes

15,000 beneficiaries, more than 175 people trained to use the equipment

[Find the other Veoliaforce volunteer assignments here.](#)

On assignment



• **Philippines** : **Franck Haaser**, emergency relief director with **Veoliaforce**, and **Catherine Chatel**, a **Veolia Environmental Services** volunteer, were in the Republic of the Philippines in October 2009. Their assistance had been requested by **UNICEF** and the **Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System** and took the form of an expertise assignment. The objective was to help organize cleaning, clearing and collection of the debris, rubble and other waste resulting from recent cyclones that had devastated the country.

September-October 2009

Between September 26 and October 4, 2009, Typhoon Ketsana—the most violent that the archipelago has experienced in 40 years—and Typhoon Parma reached the north of the Philippines. Five communities in eastern Manila were badly affected, as well as the provinces of Rizal and Laguna. Almost 2 million people found themselves in a state of emergency.



It was in the context of this natural disaster that, on October 9, UNICEF in Geneva passed on to the Veolia Foundation, its “stand-by partner” since April 2008, a request from its Philippines office for help with a difficult issue in the management of solid waste.

On October 16, Franck Haaser, the head of emergencies at the Veolia Environnement Foundation, and Catherine Chatel, a specialist from Veolia Environmental Services, left on assignment to provide technical assistance in the field.

“A great deal of mud had been swept into the city and the wastewater collection system was submerged. There was a large amount of waste of all kinds to remove. UNICEF had given us the job of evaluating the waste collection situation in the areas affected by the typhoons. The priority was on the capital, Manila, so that we could advise the seven NGOs working in the field on issues of water, wastewater and hygiene. Since each community—or LGU (Local Government Unit)—had its own waste management system, we had to ensure that all the resources were available to the municipality and deployed throughout the five communities according to need. It was essential to make a rapid assessment of the situation as a whole, including the two provinces, to ensure that information was fully shared with those involved in the water sector—including UNICEF—in close collaboration with the local authorities and Manila Water, which is responsible for the capital’s water and wastewater services. It was also important to ensure that there were no “gaps”—that is, that no areas were passed over.”

Three field visits would be necessary to grasp the situation and advise the NGOs on standardized intervention techniques. Generally speaking Manila was not in too bad a condition, most of the waste having been removed by the LGUs to temporary dumps. *“However, two of them presented a problem: one of the communities wanted to keep these dumps permanently on sites that were technically unsuitable, for example because of the proximity of a watercourse. We therefore made a very strong recommendation that they should be emptied as quickly as possible.”*

To respond to the call for international solidarity in the area of emergencies and development aid, the Veolia Environnement Foundation relies on the Veoliaforce network of volunteers from the company’s four divisions (water and wastewater, energy, waste management, and transportation), who are ready to step in anywhere in the world. In the space of 10 years, the Veoliaforce volunteers have traveled to the field about 50 times for assignments lasting between two weeks and three months. The Philippines assignment was the fourth emergency mission since the beginning of 2009.



In the provinces of Rizal and Laguna the problems were very specific. They related more to the collection and treatment of plastic bags containing household waste and excretions. In Rizal the river had burst its banks. In addition to mud and natural debris, it was carrying the waste of the inhabitants. The distribution of tools would make it possible for the people who refused to be evacuated to place their excretions at intermediate collection points, from where they would then be transported by trucks to an official dump. There, too, the situation was on the whole satisfactory.

"However, since cases of cholera and leptospirosis—a disease transmitted through rat urine—had been noted by medical NGOs, especially in the province of Laguna, we recommended that all those involved should be kept informed, as the management of problems relating to water and waste is also dictated by medical considerations connected with epidemics."

MSF had managed to organize a collection, by waste boat, of the plastic bags containing excretions, but were looking for a treatment solution that would not involve the wastewater services. Catherine Chatel came up with a quick and safe solution for this major problem of the assignment: she recommended digging a pit of specific dimensions in a carefully defined area where the bags could be emptied mechanically before being covered with quicklime and the pit filled in.

The team, originally intended to be on assignment for three weeks, would complete the job in just two.