

COVER STORY

► Philanthropy

Veolia Environnement Corporate Foundation

After many years of involvement in philanthropy and sponsorship, Veolia Environnement is creating its own corporate foundation. With an annual budget of five million euros, it will focus on three main areas: humanitarian aid, employment and protecting the environment.



The club card of the VE Foundation.

“We want to bring under one umbrella and support a very diverse range of initiatives, by getting as many employees involved as possible,” explains Raymond-Max Aubert, the Foundation’s vice-chairman, who, among other duties, will lead the project selection committee (see text in box). Adds Raymond-Max Aubert, “I can’t emphasize enough the

role of all the company’s employees. Our CEO Henri Proglgio clearly instructed us to make sure that the foundation remained accessible.” As a result, a broad appeal will be made, in France and elsewhere, for sponsors and volunteers to identify and promote initiatives in support of sustainable development in all its forms: environmental protection, the furthering of basic knowledge, job cre-



creates a

Water Force in India.

ation, technology innovations and, more broadly, anything that enhances health and well-being. *“The philanthropic work sponsored by the Foundation must benefit the community as a whole. Initiatives cannot involve profit-making or commercial gain for the group,”* says Michel Avenas, the Foundation’s executive officer.

Three types of initiatives

The first type of initiative is humanitarian aid, which includes emergency situations created by conflicts or natural disasters. This is an extension of a project VE is already involved in, notably through Water Force

(see material in box on p 10). VE professionals volunteer for short-term assignments in

“We want employees to take ownership of the Foundation.”

the field, to assist disaster-stricken regions. One Water Force team recently flew to Iraq and another to Iran with the Red Cross. *“The Foundation can provide financial support for some initiatives, such as sending mobile water treatment units to disaster areas,”* says Raymond-Max Aubert. The second type of initiative involves employment. VE will help create or firm up local service jobs and/or find work ...

► The selection committee

The selection committee awards grants and conducts evaluation missions under authority delegated by the board of directors. Veolia Environnement committee members include Raymond-Max Aubert, its chair, Michel Avenas, Dominique Héron, Philippe Langénieux-Villard, Anne Meaux, Olivier Orsini, Pierre-François Riolacci and Alain Tchernonog. Connex is represented by Dominique Delis and Marcel Rogemont. Dalkia members include Thierry Aveline de Rossignol, Bernard Lecomte and Michel Tesconi. Alain Coillot, Jean-Pierre Combe and Thierry Gosset represent Onyx. And Veolia Water committee members include Philippe Lagrange, Cyril Roger-Lacan and Thierry Vandevelde. **Contact: Veolia Environnement Corporate Foundation - 15, rue des Sablons. 75116 Paris - France.**

► The divisions get organized

In a fashion similar to what Water Force does for Veolia Water, all VE divisions may be called upon to help solve environmental crises thanks to their ability to act quickly, their international network of personnel and their different types of expertise. Onyx's general management, for example, has decided to create a unit of specialists in environmental pollution management. VE's waste management division already intervenes from time to time to resolve environmental crises.

The company is brainstorming ways to combine initiatives under one "banner," so that, in an emergency, equipment and specialists from all fields can be made available to help those in need without seeking a "return on investment" for the company.

for hard-to-place job-seekers. For the third type of initiative, the Foundation will help protect the environment by bolstering projects related to VE's businesses. Initiatives will be long term, not just media attention-grabbers, designed to eliminate pollution in fragile environments and assess the impact of human activity on regions. Environmental sponsorship will also focus on research, educational projects and social initiatives. *"Regarding the research projects funded by the Foundation, the findings must be made public and the investigation topics must be different*



► Water Force: proven effectiveness in the field

Water Force is an experienced field operator. It was in Iraq in April 2003 renovating 70 production facilities and providing drinking water to 200,000 Baghdadis, then in Algeria a month later training municipal technicians in the detection of leaks following the Boumerdes earthquake. It has also been to Morocco, Senegal, Nicaragua, Albania, and the list goes on. Water Force, a department of Veolia Water, was created in July 1998 following an intervention in China when the Yangtze River flooded. It provides skills and expertise on a philanthropic basis, and partners with organizations or NGOs to provide emergency assistance and aid to disaster-stricken populations. Water Force handles the assessment of needs on the ground. *"Rescue operations are planned in the space of a few hours,"* stresses Thierry Vandevelde. *"The*

involvement procedure is formal and involves international zone managers."

Over time, Water Force has managed to carve out a niche for itself and gain credibility in the field. Today, the department works with the primary international government and non-government organizations, including the Red Cross, Secours catholique, Secours populaire, Unicef and Action contre la faim, and with local communities or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *"We even helped the French Red Cross set up an emergency water agency,"* says Thierry Vandevelde. *"It's now recognized as one of the most expert organizations when it comes to water."*

Volunteer teams of employees sign up for one to three weeks of emergency work and are increasingly focusing on fostering development

in Niger, Cambodia, Senegal and Madagascar. *"We offer the technical expertise of our profession, and the NGOs provide their mastery of logistics and the local culture,"* explains Thierry Vandevelde. *"The Foundation should make it possible for us to step up the number of such partnerships while keeping up our expertise."* The department has four permanent employees, an operating budget of one million euros this year and a file of 150 to 170 volunteers. Water Force also draws on the skills and expertise of VE's health department to better understand health and sanitation issues. Water Force holds three-day training sessions three times a year, to hone volunteers' skills in emergency assistance and enable them to meet colleagues with prior experience in the field. All interested, sign up!

Teaching kits (water trunk opposite) raise young people's awareness of the environment.



from the ones studied by our internal research and development department,” says Raymond-Max Aubert.

Studies will add to the basic knowledge needed to promote sustainable development and will be consistent with the prospective studies conducted by the Veolia Environnement Institute.

Educational initiatives will stress tools for the general public, such as teaching kits. VE's water trunk and waste management kit are designed as aids for primary and middle school teachers. “They are public awareness tools that can be used as a basis for formal instruction,” says Catherine Peyrade, who is in charge of the water teaching case.

In the field of development, the Foundation also plans to promote social innovations, such as the “I’m a

good sport in public transport,” aimed at improving civic behavior and sponsored by Connex in Seine-Saint-Denis. The campaign may inspire other, more extensive, initiatives in towns all over the world.

Naturally, job creation initiatives will also be encouraged, as long as they are sponsored by VE employees and can create permanent employment.

“Outstanding people”

“We want VE employees to take ownership of the Foundation. So we’re going to issue an appeal to employees and let them be the primary initiators,” clarifies Michel Avenas. With 309,000 employees spread out pretty much all over the world, there should be no lack of applicants.

All ideas are welcome. Personal or professional acquaintances and a variety of contacts all could lead to applications. A French network of a hundred regional correspondents has just been created.

Regional correspondents are the Foundation’s ambassadors, both inside VE and to the

Who does what?

The VE Foundation’s by-laws were drafted by its five founders, the company itself and its four divisions. It is managed by a board of directors chaired by Henri Proglio, with Raymond-Max Aubert serving as its deputy chairman. The founding members are represented on the board of directors by Jérôme Contamine, VE’s chief executive, Eric Marie de Ficquelmont, VE’s assistant chief executive and human resources manager, Olivier Barbaroux, Dalkia’s CEO, Antoine Frérot, Veolia Water’s CEO, Denis Gasquet, Onyx’s CEO, and Stéphane Richard, Connex’s CEO. The board of directors also includes a personnel representative, Jean-Luc Davoisne, and five qualified people from outside VE, each selected for his or her area of expertise.

The list includes: Anne-Marie Couderc, assistant chief executive of the Hachette-Filipacchi-Médias group; Hugues Gall, a member of the Institute who manages the National Opera House of Paris; Dr. Gilles Degeois, the founder of the Kinkeliba Association, which does health work in Senegal; Jérôme Jaffré, director of the Centre d’études et de connaissance de l’opinion publique [Public Opinion Research and Polling Center]; and Claude Michelet, a writer. The quintet’s respective personal, artistic and professional experiences enrich the council’s discussions and add complementary skills.

The council meets twice a year. It determines the Foundation’s directions, defines its main lines of action and spells out the criteria for selecting initiatives. It also makes sure that the financial management of the Foundation is sound.



“I’m a good sport in public transport:” an initiative, sponsored by Connex, to teach young people how to behave in public transportation systems.

► The Foundation team

Michel Avenas is responsible for the Foundation's day-to-day operation. Marie-Laure Buisson is in charge of external relations, Dominique Boizeau of internal communication, and Marie-Françoise Malheu of handling relationships with sponsors and organizing special events for the Foundation Club, which includes all employees who want to serve as sponsors or volunteers.

Volunteers are informed regularly about initiatives sponsored by the Foundation and are invited to related events. They can also participate in events organized for them. Each initiative will be sponsored by a VE employee, whose role is to serve as a liaison with the Foundation team, assess the seriousness of project applicants and partners, and advise them as needed. Once a month, a committee of 15 people, appointed by the board of directors and representing all VE divisions, will meet to select projects.

► The other major French foundations

EDF, Carrefour, France Télécom, La Poste, Renault, Dexia Crédit local, Vinci pour la cité, Gaz de France, Crédit agricole, Air France, Ratp pour la citoyenneté, Groupama.



Marie-Laure Buisson, Dominique Boizeau, Marie-Françoise Malheu and Michel Avenas.



Water Force.

outside world. *“They will relay all proposals, foster vocations as sponsors and find available volunteers,”* continues Raymond-Max Aubert. *“Everyone must know that there are outstanding people at VE.”*

The network of regional correspondents will gradually be extended to foreign subsidiaries which also have a tradition of philanthropy, whether, for example, in Berlin or the Czech Republic. The Foundation has an Internet site (www.fondation.groupve.com) to spread the word.

With an annual budget that ranks it among France's major foundations (see sidebar), the Veolia Environnement Foundation is putting all its resources into its projects, keeping its administrative costs to a minimum. A team of four people, led by Michel Avenas, will keep track of, review and promote initiatives as well as manage the entire network of correspondents, sponsors and volunteers.

A strong commitment

Besides doing work to benefit the community as a whole, thereby keeping the VE tradition

of philanthropy and sponsorship alive, the Foundation has some new assets. First, it provides a framework for pulling together all the more or less dispersed initiatives VE is currently involved in: all types of volunteer work, regardless of location or scope. Most of all, however, the Foundation's existence and goals provide a yardstick for Veolia

“The Foundation reflects VE's investment in sustainable development.”

Environnement's investment in sustainable development and humanitarian, social, environmental and scientific responsibility. Veolia Environnement is making a clear commitment. Its Foundation will improve both external and internal communication about sponsorships and help us better share the company's values. It will also increase employees' pride in belonging to the company. ■