

ArcelorMittal Foundation Solidarity Holidays

In September, 2010, the ArcelorMittal Foundation launched the Solidarity Holidays programme as part of the company's commitment to supporting the communities which surround our operations. The aim of the project is to give ArcelorMittal employees the opportunity to volunteer in a Foundation project in a country other than their own. This project offers employees the unique and rewarding opportunity to engage with people from different cultures, interact closely with colleagues from other locations and make a direct contribution to the company's social development initiative.

Elize Zywotkiewicz

Since its launch in 2010 four ArcelorMittal South Africa employees have volunteered for various humanitarian projects in Brazil, Senegal, Macedonia and Haiti.

In 2011, Sham Jagathlal, Environmental Manager at ArcelorMittal Coke & Chemicals

used part of his annual leave to travel to Haiti, where he worked with other volunteers and members of the community to build houses for earthquake-affected Haitian families as part of Habitat for Humanity's annual Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project.

Sham chose to tell his story through photographs.

My Haiti Solidarity Holiday (Sham Jagathlal)



Registration for the Habitat for Humanity – Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter project at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel located within the Atlanta airport



Gala night – dinner with former President of the United States Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn



En route to camp, the aftermath of the earthquake of 12 January 2010 is still visible with many people who lost their homes living in tents over a year later.



En route to camp: Evidence of the destruction that the Earthquake wreaked was prevalent. Haiti is a very poor and destitute country, with this poverty visible everywhere making the plight of the Haitians even more pitiful. In some cases the rubble is still lying where the buildings fell because there is no money to remove them.



Here is the camp that we called home for a week. The green stretcher visible in the foreground was the bed that we slept on. It was actually quite comfortable and the organisers had done a fantastic job in providing ablution and shower facilities (cold water) and good food and water for the duration of the stay. – Keep in mind that there were roughly 400 volunteers that had to be looked after. It was a job well done – the comforts of home were never missed.



Our objective was to build 100 of these homes before the end of the week. (This photo is showing the houses almost at completion. When we got there there was only the foundation and the walls (white) constructed up to about a metre and a half. The enthusiasm and dedication that the volunteers displayed in trying to achieve this was a sight to behold – and this with no supervisor standing over your shoulder, and, sweltering heat and humidity to contend with.



The international ArcelorMittal team worked as hard as any other and we were clearly visible in our orange brand colours. We certainly gained the respect and admiration of many.



The full ArcelorMittal team: We had representatives from Africa, Trinidad, the USA (including a Mexican working in the USA), Spain, Germany, Belgium and France and it was especially fascinating and mind-boggling at how we gelled together and got on like family although we only met for the first time at Atlanta. It just goes to show that no matter where about in the world we come from, we are all the same.



Sham Jagathlal who volunteered in Haiti in 2011



Each team was allocated two homes to complete. The houses were already built up from the foundation to about a metre and a half. It was our job to complete the rest of the house using timber. This included constructing the walls, putting in the roof trusses, knocking in the roof, installing the gutters, screwing in the sidings to make the walls look more appealing, hanging in the doors and windows and lastly, erecting a little porch at the house front. It was tough, but in the end rewarding work. Off course, in case you were wondering, not all the homes were completed. The plan was that a team of professional builders employed by Habitat for Humanity were to come in the following week and complete the homes, including partitioning the house into different rooms, installing the toilets, and connecting the water supply.



These are the two home owners assigned to us. On my left is Nerlande Ambrose (33). She is unemployed with 6 children. She lost her father in the earthquake. On my right is Hilaire Annemarie. She is the daughter of the 58 years old owner who lost her husband in the earthquake. The mother is sickly and unemployed. There are 7 children altogether. Both these families are still living in tents.



My team with the owners after completing the homes



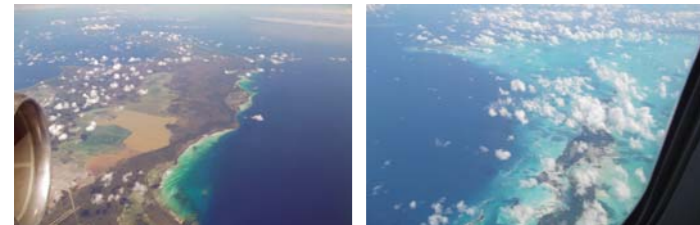
The emotional moments when the homes were handed over. This meant so much to these people whom the world seems to have forgotten. The lumps were in everyone's throat. Being a part of all this was an absolute privilege and the fact that 400 strangers can rally together and complete 100 dwellings within a week for needy people gives one hope for humanity and it makes me proud to know that I am working for a company that cares.



Leaving Atlanta Airport for Haiti on Sunday morning, we flew in a special Habitat for Humanity plane. Delta airlines was the largest sponsor of this project. There were approximately 400 volunteers, 99% from all over USA and Canada. We were flown across in two planes



Sitting first class with President Jimmy Carter and other VIPs. ArcelorMittal was recognised as a significant sponsor – Two employees were given first class seats. I was chosen as one of the lucky two, because I was the one that came from furthest away as I spent 16,5 hours on the plane in a direct flight from Johannesburg to Atlanta



The Bahamas from the air



Landing at Port Au Prince, Capital of Haiti – we had to wait for the VIP's to leave before we disembarked. Needless to say, it was hot and humid and remained so for the entire week until we left

