

ArcelorMittal South Africa Solidarity Holidays 2014

Volunteer says building a house for family of 16 is a labour of love

Rio Matlhaku

Sonto Zwane says she and her team of volunteers spent the first day of her Solidarity Holidays, house building project, learning the finer details of how to assemble a Protea House. The house that Sonto and her fellow volunteers from ArcelorMittal Newcastle Works are building will, from this Friday, become a home to Gogo Sarafina Mazibuko and her family of sixteen.

Sonto describes the mood as vibey, convivial and joyous. "It is a labour of love", she adds. Sonto is part of the Newcastle Works CSI Committee. "So this is up my alley, so to speak", she chuckles. She says even the challenges the volunteers encountered were swiftly resolved. Gogo Zwane's shack does not have electricity so the contractors had to ask a neighbour to help out; a sign of how important this project is, not only for beneficiaries but the whole community.

The Solidarity Holidays are an initiative of the ArcelorMittal Group Foundation aimed at encouraging employees to volunteer countries other than their own and foster a spirit of a global cultural exchange between employees of the largest steel manufacturer.

This week, 39 volunteers from Newcastle Works and 11 International Volunteers from the ArcelorMittal Group's operations around the world converged in Blaauwbosch, outside Newcastle to build houses for ten families currently staying in shacks. Gogo Mazibuko and her family of sixteen live in a two room shack where they all wash, eat and sleep.

"I am proud to be making a difference in the lives of Gogo Zwane and her family. I cried when the team got to the shack on Monday to start their work. I just could not believe that people could live in such squalor. It has been a humbling experience and now I will have no reason at all to complain about whatever problems I have, my life has been a blessing compared to what other people have to go through", says Sonto.

"I would like to encourage more of my colleagues to get involved in volunteering. It is such a joy and fulfilment to get an opportunity to make such a difference. ArcelorMittal South Africa has given us a chance to touch other less fortunate people in a positive way."



Sonto Zwane from Newcastle Works

