

Sonia's Solidarity Holiday in Senegal

Sonia Colin, a Specialist at Price Determination, Sales & Marketing ArcelorMittal South Africa, recently invested in an alternative way to spend her annual leave.

Elize Zywockiewicz

ArcelorMittal employees the opportunity to volunteer in a Foundation project in a country other than their own.

In September 2010, Sonia travelled to Senegal to participate in the first Solidarity Holidays project along with three other ArcelorMittal volunteers, Maria Ferreira from Luxembourg and Javier Calderón and Asier Marquina from Spain.

The ArcelorMittal Foundation launched the Solidarity Holidays Project as part of the company's commitment to supporting the communities which surround our operations. The aim of the project is to give

Together with local doctors and nurses this project provided local communities in the Saraya region of Senegal free medical services. This mobile camp, which is provided once a year during the critical rain season period, is the only access that these communities have to medical care.

The volunteers' responsibilities included: logistical support, assistance with distribution of medicines and testing for

diagnosis of malaria, collaboration with doctors, and providing care to patients.

Sonia says, "Although I found the work both physically and mentally exhausting, I would not have swapped it for anything else. I believe that anyone who gets the opportunity to participate in one of these projects should do so. It is, on an emotional, spiritual and physical level, very enriching. Apart from experiencing first hand the hardships that these communities endure I also got the opportunity to form friendships with ArcelorMittal colleagues from other countries."

"Our days were quite long but very rewarding. We visited a different village every day distributing medication, administering vaccinations, doing finger prick tests for malaria, weighing babies and taking temperatures. Some areas are very difficult to access and the villagers are very grateful for the service, some insisting on presenting us with maize - and even in one case a parrot and in another a goat - to thank us."

I learnt from this experience that people who may not be rich in money terms can still have abundance when it comes to culture and friendliness.

In the evenings the volunteers took turns providing dinner for the group - each preparing a dish traditional to his or her own culture.

Based on the success of the pilot project in Senegal, the next project is planned for Cerritos del Camargo, Guanajuato in Mexico.

"It is a fantastic opportunity for all our employees to know and participate in the Foundation work discovering other cultures and helping people in need", says Felicidad Cristobal, Managing Director of the ArcelorMittal Foundation.

"Solidarity Holidays offer ArcelorMittal employees the opportunity to make a direct contribution to the community and meet the beneficiaries in countries they would hardly get to see otherwise. In addition, it gives them the opportunity to meet other ArcelorMittal people from all over the world, thus helping build a strong ArcelorMittal culture."

Visit www.mylarcelormittal.com for a slideshow of the Solidarity Holidays pilot project in Senegal as well information on upcoming Solidarity Holidays projects.

