



Embassy of the United States of America
Port Louis, Mauritius
PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Ambassador Shari Villarosa first visit to Rodrigues

Port Louis, March 27, 2013: U.S. Ambassador, Shari Villarosa, made her first official visit to Rodrigues on March 26. The U.S. Ambassador, who resides in Mauritius and is also accredited to Seychelles, felt it was important to go to Rodrigues and become more familiar with the place and its people. During this one-day visit, the Ambassador had several meetings and visits scheduled.

Ambassador Villarosa had meetings with the Chief Commissioner Serge Clair; met Arlette Perrine-Bégué, who attended the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in the United States; visited the Wildlife Nature Reserve in Grande Montagne; went to the American Study Center in the Noorthcoombes Public Library; and visited some community projects funded by the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund, namely CARE-CO, in Port Mathurin, and Rodrigues Needs Association, in Rivière Coco.

The U.S. Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund is a grassroots assistance program that responds to requests for financial assistance from small community-based projects which are initiated and administered at the local level. Embassy Port Louis has been providing continuous funding to NGOs in Rodrigues through the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund. The U.S. Embassy looks forward to receiving more Self-Help Fund proposals. More information regarding the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund can be found at mauritius.usembassy.gov/self_help_program.html

Ambassador Villarosa said she was very impressed with the work being done by Care-Co and the Rodrigues Students' Needs Association. CARE-CO is providing good education and the possibility for employment to individuals. She admired the dedication of the nuns at the Rodrigues Needs Association who help to educate a deprived population in a remote area of the country. Of the American Study Center, the U.S. Ambassador looks forward to providing books of interest to young Rodriguan students. An avid hiker, Ambassador Villarosa had an excellent guided tour of the Wildlife Nature Reserve in Grand Montagne and was impressed on how successful the reserve had been in protecting endemic species. She looks forward to visiting Rodrigues again.

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More information on :

CARE-Co Trevor Huddleston

In 2008, the Embassy provided \$1410 to purchase classroom furniture, tables, cupboard, bookshelves, kitchen appliances and a projector to provide special education to disabled children. In 2010, the Embassy funded another project which allowed for the purchase of beekeeping supplies and equipment in order to improve, expand and develop the training scheme for children with disabilities or learning difficulties. The children are those who graduate from the Special Learning Center run by the Association, and who are training in beekeeping under Care-Co Beekeeping & Honey Production Scheme, which operates adjacent to the learning center. Six boys and six girls with disabilities and learning difficulties benefited from the project. The training enabled them to start their own beekeeping ventures at home after they left the center, and they were made associates in Care-Co Beekeeping and Honey Production Center, which provided them with basic equipment, knowledge and support, and the opportunity to market their product through the association.

Rodrigues Needs Association

Rodrigues Needs Association is an NGO, managed by Sister Naikene, which helps deprived youth in Rivière Coco. Common problems students face in that region are poverty, poor living standards, broken families, malnutrition, uneducated parents, low motivation to learn, absenteeism, dyslexia, lack of self-esteem, single parents, alcoholism and drugs. In 2011, the Embassy provided computer tables, writing tables, office chairs, metal cupboards, and bookcases to help children who needed coaching and support in their education. The NGO has set-up a center where children in the neighborhood can come and do their homework or receive help and support. It is believed that by providing a conducive learning environment, children will be more willing to carry on with their education which will ultimately help them get-out of poverty and other social ills.

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