I traveled with a group of ten people including representatives from five other companies Costco, Campbell Soup Company, Verizon, United Airlines, and Motorola Solutions as well as staff from the American Red Cross and our very own CCO in Haiti, Gladys Coupet.

We visited the Red Cross compound where there are Red Cross and Red Crescent delegations from around the world, working collaboratively. We met the President of the Haitian Red Cross, Madame Michaeelle Amédée-Gédéon. When she saw Gladys was part of our delegation, a big smile appeared on her face and she said that Gladys is one of the most important people in Haiti!

There has been much progress made and the work that the Red Cross has done and is doing is impressive. The Red Cross staff we met are knowledgeable, highly trained and care deeply about their work. Because of the generosity of so many Americans, the Red Cross has not only been able to provide disaster relief. They are also deeply involved with reconstruction and helping Haiti to develop some of the basic infrastructure that many Haitians have never had – permanent and semi-permanent shelter and sanitation facilities, which prevent the outbreak of cholera and other diseases. Of the 1.4 million people who were in tents, more than one million have been relocated. But there is much more to do.

We were able to see for ourselves the work the Red Cross supports: an impressive hospital and a tent camp where more than 200 residents had been moved to more permanent homes. These houses are very small and have no electricity or running water. But residents make them into real homes. More than one had opened a small store by adding a small room with a window and ledge from which they sell goods. In a large tent, about 50 children from the ages of about 7 to 15 greeted us with a song they learned from the Red Cross about how to better prepare for disasters.

Our work in the Citi Foundation has been greatly informed by the Red Cross. We now view disaster relief as more than just support at the time of the disaster. It also means helping people better prepare before and helping with reconstruction after. We are now doing this in several markets around the world.

Gladys, who was herself injured in the earthquake, showed me the temporary Citi facilities (Citi’s prior building collapsed) and I met several of her staff. We discussed Citi Haiti’s plans to continue to help by supporting mobile money transfer capability for a local microfinance institution.

Last week, Gail McGovern, the President of the American Red Cross, met with Vikram Pandit and me to thank Citi for our support. Vikram asked about the Red Cross’s future plans, discussed how Citi might be able to assist with their information technology and data management plans, and reaffirmed our commitment to help however we can.

To learn more about Citi’s community approach to disaster, visit the Citi Foundation Website.