

Corporate Responsibility

Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Train

Overview

Transnet-Phelophepa is a healthcare clinic on wheels that travels into areas of rural South Africa, where there is just one doctor for every 5,000 patients, to provide health care. Literally translated, 'Phelophepa' means 'good, clean health' and this encapsulates the essence of what the train aims to achieve. Roche is the main external sponsor of Phelophepa, having provided support since its first journey in 1994.

How does Phelophepa work?

Phelophepa is owned and operated by Transnet Limited – South Africa's biggest state-owned freight transportation and logistics company. The train comprises of 18 coaches providing facilities to conduct general health, dental and eye checks in rural communities, and dispense treatments for diagnosed conditions. In addition to these general health services, individual counselling sessions and group workshops to help people cope with psychological issues such as stress and depression are offered. The train also houses a special coach where education on general health issues including nutrition, hygiene and dental health can be provided to members of the local communities which the train visits. The train travels for 36 weeks of each year, visiting one rural community a week. Rural communities make requests to the Transnet Foundation throughout the year to consider specific stops.

Roche was the first company to become financially involved with the Phelophepa train and has since remained a key sponsor through a public-private partnership with Transnet. Roche now has full responsibility for the continuing operation of the general Health Clinic coach – paying staff salaries, maintaining equipment, providing educational and training material and financing a vehicle that staff can use while the train is at a station to visit surrounding villages and schools. In recent years funding has been increased for more specialist services including diabetes prevention, hypertension and cancer screening, with free pap smears and prostate screening now being provided in a tent set up on the train's platform at some stops.



Key facts and figures

Phelophepa...

- *has 18 coaches, is over 380 metres in length and weighs over 600 tonnes*
- *travels through 70 communities over a two-year cycle*
- *is operated by 19 resident staff and supported by up to 40 South African student volunteers*
- *has helped to train over 20,000 student doctors and nurses since its first journey*
- *has made over 25,000 school visits to date, delivering vital health checks, medicines and education to children*
- *sees an average of over 45,000 patients a year, treating over 600,000 patients since 1994*
- *has benefitted over 5.4 million people through general health screening, HIV/AIDS awareness initiatives, health education and counselling outreach services*

“Roche came on board with gusto, with passion, and with a commitment to say ‘what can we do to help?’ It’s not often that you get such a sponsor. We don’t always want to go to them and ask for money – we very often go to them and ask for advice.... They’ve got contacts in government health departments and they’ve very aware of the environment. The relationship between Roche and Transnet is probably one of the best examples of a sustainable public-private partnership that I can think of.”

Dr Lynette Coetzee, Transnet Foundation’s Senior Manager for Health

Background

In rural communities in resource-limited countries where there is usually a very poor doctor to patient ratio, people have to travel long distances to receive even basic healthcare provision. Phelophepa aims to address this challenge by travelling to remote communities to bring healthcare services directly to the patients. Roche’s long-standing commitment to Phelophepa reflects the company’s approach to finding solutions to health challenges in developing countries – whereby we seek to form public-private partnerships and combine our skills and resources with those of other organisations to deliver sustainable outputs that could not have been achieved alone.



Results

The result of the broad reach of Phelophepa is better awareness of common health issues within these remote and often poorly educated communities, meaning that there is an increased likelihood of people presenting for examination and consequently more chance that patients can receive appropriate treatment. Ultimately the outcomes of Phelophepa are driven by the focus on ‘good, clean health’. Health inspires productivity, productivity generates growth and growth inspires prosperity.



Communities are able to benefit from Phelophepa and the Roche Health Clinic through blood tests, eye tests and general health checks

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