

Phelophepa – Train of Hope



What is Phelophepa?

Made up of two words from different South African languages which, when translated literally, mean “good, clean health”, Phelophepa is the name of a mobile clinic on rails. Roche has been supporting the “Train of Hope”, as local people call it, since 1994. Roche was the first company to become financially involved with the train, and it has remained its main external sponsor to this day.

How does it work?

Today the Phelophepa Healthcare Train has 16 coaches, weighs 600 tonnes and is fully equipped to provide general, dental, eye and psychiatric care as well as cancer, diabetes and hypertension screening. Phelophepa travels through 70 communities over a two-year cycle and sees an average of over 40,000 patients each year. The staff consist of 14 employees and around 40 student interns preparing for careers in a variety of health-related fields who each do 14 days of volunteer service. So far, the Health Train has reached more than ten million people in remote regions of South Africa – among them many women and children who previously had no access to basic health care.

How does Roche support Phelophepa?

Roche was one of the first companies to provide funding for the Phelophepa Healthcare Train after it was founded by the state railway company Transnet, and the Group is the project’s main sponsor outside South Africa today. In recognition of Roche’s ongoing commitment to Phelophepa, the coach housing the train’s health clinic was renamed the ‘Roche Health Clinic’ in 2001. Since 2003 Roche substantially increased its support for Phelophepa. The additional funding has facilitated the creation of new cancer screening and diabetes services and has significantly improved the train's healthcare programmes for school children.

Facts & Figures

Roche support milestones	People treated	People reached*
Sponsoring since 1994 2001 Roche Health Clinic	> 40,000 a year	> 18,000,000 to date * including health education sessions in towns and villages where the train stops
2003 Substantial increase in support		

What impact does it have?

Phelophepa is a method of helping people to help themselves which has brought about a significant and lasting improvement in the health of people living in the regions visited by the train. Over 40,000 people are treated on the train every year – and far more people have been reached by the extensive health education sessions that the Phelophepa staff organise along their route. To date the Health Train has reached over ten million people in remote parts of South Africa.

Why South Africa?

In rural South Africa there is one doctor for every 4,000 patients. Medical care is either unavailable or unaffordable for many people. Phelophepa started as a local initiative of the Roche affiliate in South Africa.

Who are our partners?

Transnet, South Africa's state-owned transportation company. Lynette Coetzee , Manager of the Phelophepa Project, comments: "Since 1994 Phelophepa's clinics and community outreach programmes have made it a Train of Miracles for more than ten million people in rural South Africa. Roche is the only external sponsor that has been on board from the start. We are proud to have Roche as a supporter. In addition to funding, it provides us with strong moral support and with expertise that helps us to play a leading role in healthcare delivery in rural communities."