

Higher quality of healthcare on the horizon

Philips South Africa and the Rhiza Foundation's sixth consecutive Cape Town to Cairo roadshow saw the launch of their 'mobile clinic', a project focusing on delivering basic primary healthcare to thousands of people living in townships that have little or no access to healthcare facilities.



As a collaboration between Philips South Africa, Rhiza Foundation and corporate social investment partner Nozala Trust and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), the mobile clinic is currently being deployed to service the populous townships of Diepsloot, Cosmo City and Orange Farm, in Northern Johannesburg. The main goal of the clinic is to improve the quality of life and provide access to health services, particularly access to maternal-child healthcare and dental care.

The mobile clinic vehicle, custom-built on a mid-sized truck frame, operates as a 'mini-health clinic on wheels' and provides an extremely versatile platform to deliver primary health care services, education and counselling. Measuring 10 meters by 2.5 meters, the mobile clinic is divided into two parts: a maternal and childcare section and a dental care section.

Maternal screening allows for early detection of complications

According to the Philips Fabric of Africa trends report, women in Africa are at significant risk of premature death, with particular high mortality rates recorded in pregnancy. Women in semi-urban and rural areas across South Africa (and all of Africa) often die due to preventable complications during childbirth, as they have no access to ultrasound screenings to detect critical conditions. Many of these deaths can be diagnosed with basic imaging technology.

maternal health; and the mobile clinic project, conceptualised by the Rhiza Foundation, offered a good synergy to address the issue of maternal and infant mortality.

Coming on board as the clinical technology partner in this project, Philips has equipped the mobile clinic with its innovative VISIQ ultrasound. The size of a tablet, the VISIQ is the first ultra-mobile ultrasound system from Philips. Approximately ten times smaller than a traditional ultrasound machine and with reduced energy consumption, it is ideally tailored for the mobile clinic and will be used for screening, triage and foetal well-being scans, all of which helps to address the critical issue of maternal and infant care prevalent across South Africa.

"In many African countries, including South Africa, there is a chronic shortage of suitable equipment or necessary skills to facilitate safe delivery and appropriate newborn care, as well as dental care. By bringing healthcare directly to those most in need, shortens the waiting period and improves access which ultimately saves lives," states Jose Fernandes, GM of Philips Healthcare for Southern Africa.

"Innovation as a means to improve people's lives is at the heart of who we are and we increasingly seek engagement and co-creation opportunities with organizations such as the Rhiza Foundation that can result in making a difference in the lives of South Africa citizens."

Women staff empower other women

The mobile clinic will be staffed by an all women team of a registered nurse, a dental therapist, a dental assistant and a driver/ assistant, as one of the goals of the project is to empower and uplift women. This is the first pilot launch and the ambition is to scale it up to include more mobile clinics (five over the next five years in different communities) based on the outcomes of the initial pilot.

Alef Meulenberg, Chairman and Founder of Rhiza Foundation states, "Rhiza stands for community development at large, through education, skills and enterprise development as well as primary healthcare that makes a sustainable difference in township communities in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Our goal is to make people self-sustaining, through our holistic approach regarding community and socio- economic development. We are extremely proud that the mobile clinic in collaboration with Philips and our other partners is being launched; we are confident that it will provide and improve primary healthcare in township communities that currently lack regular access to these services."

The launch formed part of Philips' annual pan-African Cape Town to Cairo roadshow that kicked off on 11 May in Cape Town. Johannesburg is the second stop on a journey covering 12 000 km across 11 cities and 8 countries over a period of 4.5 months. The roadshow has gained significant momentum over the past five years, allowing Philips to get to the heart of some of the key issues facing Africa, including Mother and Child Care, the rise of non-communicable diseases, energy efficient LED and solar lighting solutions, as well as shining a spotlight on the need for clinical education and training.

The next stop on the roadshow will be Nairobi, Kenya from 26-29 May 2015. For more information, go to www.philips.com/C2CAfrica.

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