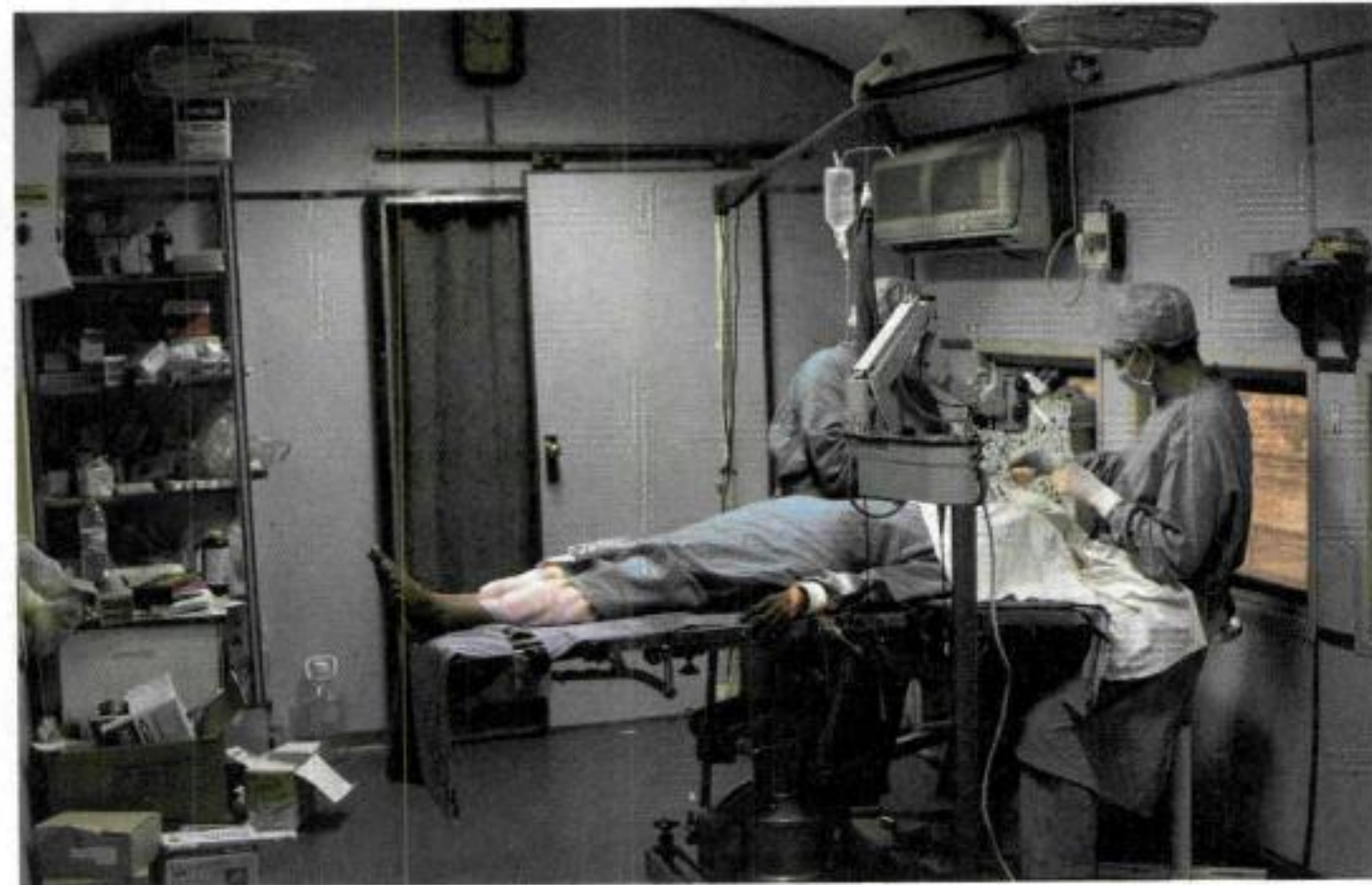




**LIFELINE EXPRESS INDIA**

The Indian healthcare train started its journey in 1991 to treat the rural poor in the country



**REACHING OUT**

Up to June 2009, over 550 000 disabled poor in rural India benefited from services offered on the train

such as diabetes and cancer screening, eye screening and counselling sessions for adults are also free of charge.

Transnet Foundation head **Cynthia Mgijima** says that Transnet has undertaken such a large CSR project because the need to extend the reach of healthcare is just too great for government to tackle alone.

“We align our CSR projects with the areas that put the most pressure on government. We want to see a return on our investment and witness the positive outcomes from the money that we put into South Africa and, through a campaign that deals with primary health, we are able to achieve this,” she says.

She also mentions that, through its CSR projects, there are many areas where Transnet is making a difference in people’s lives.

### A Partnership

Coetzee explains that a project such as Phelophepa is not a solo programme run only by Transnet.

In reaching so many people and offering the services that it does, the train needs partnerships with experienced companies and individuals in the medical profession.

Without such partnerships and the valuable skills on board the train, from the permanent staff to the students that volunteer from training institutions all over South Africa, the train would not function.

“This is a huge partnership where everyone contributes. We all learn from each other and share our ideas on how we can achieve the best solutions to aid the less fortunate in rural communities,” she says.

The train’s major external partner is international pharmaceuticals company Roche.

This company has been involved in the project since its inception in 1994 and has extended its financial support to Phelophepa I to the end of 2013.

The pharmaceuticals giant sponsors the

train’s pharmacy and health clinic, which was renamed the Roche Health Clinic in 2001, and provides services that include basic health education, screening and examinations, cancer screening and education, minor ailment treatment and diabetic screening and education.

Roche South Africa CEO **Steve Hoerter** says that the company’s long-standing partnership with Transnet has helped to bring primary healthcare to millions of South Africans.

“Phelophepa is an important part of Roche’s CSR investment in South Africa, and we are very proud of the positive impact this initiative has had on the lives of so many South Africans. When our partners at Transnet approached us about introducing a second

train, we were happy to increase our level of support, being aware of the significant impact Phelophepa II will have on delivering primary healthcare to South Africans living in rural areas,” says Hoerter.

Roche was one of the first companies to provide external funding for Phelophepa.

The train not only provides practical experience for final-year nursing, dental, psychology and pharmacology students, but also attracts catering students, from the Walter Sisulu School of Technology’s hotel management department, needing an opportunity to practise their skills.

“The majority of training institutions in South Africa send their final-year students to the train and, through these institutions, we also receive international students to work on Phelophepa,” says Coetzee.

One of the suppliers of students to the train is the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), which sends volunteer final-year students from its dentistry department, nursing school, department of pharmacy and pharmacology and department of psychology to work on board the train for a two-week period.

Wits School of Oral Health Sciences public oral health specialist **Dr Ahmed Bhayat** says that the aim of sending dental students to the train is to expose them to rural communities and to allow them to render primary oral health services away from the confines of the dental school in real-world circumstances.

In the process, students carry out basic dental procedures under the supervision of a qualified dentist.

He explains that each university is allocated a certain number of two-week blocks, depending on the number of students enrolled at the university.

“Wits usually has three two-week blocks on Phelophepa during June and July, and

### Medical trains around the world

**India:** Lifeline Express in India started in 1991 and is run by Mumbai-based charity Impact India Foundation to provide healthcare and medical assistance to prevent disabilities among the rural poor. It offers rural communities surgical interventions for the restoration of hearing, sight and movement, as well as immunisation, nutritional assessments and healthcare awareness.

**China:** The Lifeline Express China eye train, a replica of the Indian Lifeline Express, departed on its first journey in 1997 and, since then, three more trains were launched in 1999, 2002 and 2009. The train aims to restore sight to people with cataracts, in poverty-stricken areas of China. Together, these four-compartment trains account for the treatment of almost 14 000 cataract patients a year, and over 100 000 people received free operations from 1997 to 2009.

**Argentina:** The Alma Train aims to provide children with social and medical assistance in poor areas of the South American country. The train has been operational since 1980.