

Rotary Family Health Day 2023: Clubs' Participation Report

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1. Introduction

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of the participation of Rotary Clubs in the Rotary Family Health Day (RFHD) initiative. RFHD is an annual event organised by Rotary International (RFHA) and its affiliated clubs to promote and provide essential health services to underserved communities. This report examines the significance of Rotary Clubs' involvement, highlights their contributions, and explores the impact of RFHD on community health.

2. Background

The Rotary Family Health Day was established to address the critical health needs of vulnerable populations, particularly in low-income communities. It seeks to create awareness about preventive healthcare, offer free medical services and screenings, distribute medications, and promote health education. Rotary Clubs play a vital role in mobilising resources, coordinating volunteers, and facilitating the implementation of RFHD events in their respective regions.

3. Rotary Clubs' Participation

Rotary Clubs actively engage their members, local healthcare professionals, and other community stakeholders in recruiting and training volunteers for RFHD events. They collaborate with medical schools, hospitals, and NGOs to ensure a diverse and skilled volunteer base capable of delivering high-quality healthcare services. The National Department of Health is the major partner in this initiative.

Rotary Clubs leverage their networks and fundraising expertise to secure financial resources, medical supplies, and equipment necessary for the success of RFHD. Through corporate sponsorships, community partnerships, and individual contributions, they generate the required funding to cover event expenses and sustain long-term health programs.

Rotary Clubs undertake meticulous planning and logistical coordination to ensure the smooth execution of RFHD events. They collaborate with local authorities, healthcare providers, and community leaders to identify suitable venues, establish service delivery points, and promote the event within the target population. Rotary Club members assume leadership roles in managing various aspects of the event, including registration, crowd control, and service distribution.

Service Delivery During RFHD events, Rotary Clubs facilitate a range of healthcare services, including medical consultations, immunisations, HIV/AIDS testing, dental care, eye examinations, and health education sessions. They collaborate with healthcare professionals to organise specialised clinics for chronic diseases, maternal and child health, and other prevalent health concerns. By leveraging the expertise and commitment of their members, Rotary Clubs ensure efficient and compassionate service delivery.

4. Impact and Outcomes

Improved Access to Healthcare: The participation of Rotary Clubs in RFHD has significantly increased access to healthcare services for underserved populations. Through these events, individuals who lack regular access to medical facilities receive free screenings, consultations, and medications, helping identify and address health issues early.

Health Education and Prevention: RFHD events not only provide medical treatment but also prioritise health education and prevention. Rotary Clubs organise interactive sessions on nutrition, hygiene, family planning, and disease prevention, empowering community members with knowledge and tools to lead healthier lives.

Rotary Clubs' involvement in RFHD strengthens community engagement and fosters collaborative efforts to improve healthcare outcomes. By partnering with local organisations, governments, and healthcare providers, Rotary Clubs build sustainable networks and amplify the impact of RFHD beyond the event itself.

RFHD initiatives by Rotary Clubs have played a crucial role in advocating for policy changes to address systemic healthcare challenges. By highlighting the healthcare needs of underserved communities, Rotary Clubs contribute to the broader conversation on healthcare reform and the allocation of resources to prioritise marginalised populations.

5. Rotary Family Health Days 8-10 March 2023

After successfully launching the Rotary Family Health Day programme in KwaZulu Natal, the partnership agreed to roll out RFHD programmes in various parts of South Africa. Rotary Districts 9370 and 9400 became the vehicles to drive the initiative. 6 Clubs from D9370 and 14 clubs from D9400 committed to the outreach.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, highlighted in the paragraph below, only 10 of the twenty identified sites were activated for the rollout. The impact of the non-activation of the site denied communities in the respective area access to free medical treatment. One will not be able to quantify the number of people denied access.

The activated sites operated in accordance with their own personal circumstances. A few clubs operated for the duration of three days, others on just one or two. Whilst it is applaudable to have active sites, the limited hours in a day also resulted in members of the community once again being denied access to free medical treatment.

Four thousand three hundred fifty-nine (4359) beneficiaries attended the rollout and had direct access to free medical treatment. In the absence of the impact study and undue delays by rotary clubs in the submission of their stats and capturing of data as per the requirements, the breakdown of actual services provided, including gender and age of beneficiaries, is currently not available. Core services provided:

- Malnutrition screening
- Hypertension Defaulter's
- Glucose Level Test
- Blood Pressure testing
- Vitamin A supplement
- Cholesterol
- Measles
- Polio Vaccine
- HIV Tests and referrals
- HIV Counselling
- TB symptomatic Screening
- Family Planning Counselling
- Male and Female condom distribution
- STI Screening
- ADD on services included dental and oral hygiene, eye testing, and provision of reading glasses.

6. Highlights

- Excellent Media Support Sunrise FM 100 000 listeners live broadcast from the site on the day of the event.
- National Radio Thobela has 3.5 million listeners
- Shoshanguve Community Radio and TUT Campus Radio
- Digital Platforms are widely utilised.
- Strong Public Private Partnership
- Excellent DOH Leadership and support
- Support by volunteers, Rotarians, NGOs, business
- RFHA Inc.
- Opening events supported my local councillors, mayors and deputy mayors.
- Add on service providers ready to provide services committing to future events.
- A willingness by partners to provide additional resources, e.g., Water, Venue, Meals, Tables and Chairs, at no cost.

7. Challenges

- A Public Private Partnership of this magnitude has its challenges which partners endeavour to improve and move forward positively.
- The Rotary Club of White River experienced severe challenges in the run-up to the rollout.
- Their event was initially planned for the 17th of March and had to be postponed to 30 March 2023. This was the result of political interference and union strike action. The impact was their inability to mobilise the community for the event effectively. Members of the community also felt threatened and intimidated and did not attend.
- Rotary Club of Port Shepstone planned to roll out for several weeks with their local department of health only to be notified a week before the event that the local department of health would not be participating in the event. High-level intervention with the National Department of Health could not save the day.
- Rotary Club of Newcastle Amajuba withdrew due to financial constraints.
- The Rotary Club of Aliwal North withdrew due to a health worker's strike.
- Other Rotary not participating provided similar reasons and expressed intention to participate in upcoming October RFHD.

Of significance is the report submitted by DGN George Senosha:

'We submitted 7 sites and only 3 were approved a day before the start of RFHD'. Communication challenges with districts and sub districts. The letters circulated by the National Department of health were sent to the contact person provided but insisted that National did not speak to them. This caused a lot of unnecessary forward and backward communication. Last minute approval of sites. Poor time keeping department service providers. Spending a few hours on site and leaving. No resources allocated for agreed services provided citing they only have allocations for their own sites which they cannot use for RFHD. The issue of budget is of great concern as most clubs withdrew at the last minute and vow not to participate in future RFHD. Previous reimbursement of clubs that participated in RFHD not affected sparked resistance, e.g., Waterkloof.

Bez Valley moved the event to 18th March 2023, with no support from the Department of Health.

Green Farm Village site moved to 15-17 March 2023 due to poor communication. Poor turn out 16 club foot conditions were detected, and communities welcomed the idea of a future event.

8. Recommendations

- *Enhanced Resource Mobilization:* Rotary Clubs must enhance partnerships with businesses, NGOs, and governments to secure financial and medical resources. Collaboration with these stakeholders can diversify funding resources and ensure sustainable support for future initiatives. Rotary must continue capacity building and training of members and volunteers. This must include education, event planning, and fundraising. By equipping members with skills and knowledge Rotary Clubs can enhance their effectiveness in organising future RFHD events.
- *Long-Term Sustainability:* Rotary Clubs must consider developing a long-term sustainability plan for RFHD events by improving relationships beyond event days.
- *Communication and Outreach:* Rotary Clubs must prioritise effective communication and outreach strategies to maximise community participation by reaching out to the target population with clear and consistent messaging about the event's purpose, the services provided and the importance of preventative health care.
- *Evaluation and Feedback:* Regular evaluation helps identify areas of success and improvement, thus enabling Rotary Clubs to refine their strategies and enhance the overall quality of RFHD.

Since its inception, RFHD has grown exponentially and has become an integral part of Rotary Clubs' service projects, demonstrating its commitment to addressing healthcare disparities and promoting well-being. The success lies in the collaborative efforts of Rotary Clubs, healthcare professionals, volunteers, community organisations and government working together to create a significant positive health outcome.