



Rotary club of
HATFIELD
Pretoria
PO Box 12026, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0028



District 9250

Chartered 1997

The Optima Braille Slate

A Cooperative project between the South African National Council for the Blind, The Government of Flanders (Belgium) and the Rotary club of Hatfield (Dist 9250)

Blindness incidence and evolution:

Every 5 seconds, worldwide an adult goes blind; a child loses its sight every one minute.

Today, there are approximately 148 million visually disabled persons worldwide, of whom approx 38 million are totally blind.

More than 90% of the world's visually impaired persons live in developing countries, and less than 10% are literate.

In South Africa, there are approx 360 000 visually disabled, of whom approx 250 000 are blind and less than 10% literate.

There are between 6 000 and 8 000 visually disabled children in South Africa. Approx 60% of these attend schools for the visually disabled.

Background and Motivation:

A Braille slate is a device which allows blind persons to read and write. It is the equivalent of pencil and paper to a sighted person. Currently these devices are all imported and are expensive (\$ 35 - \$ 80), and beyond the reach of most blind persons.

Some two years ago, the SANCB approached the Hatfield Rotary club to assist in finding suitable toolmakers to produce tooling and set up a production unit to produce Braille Slates. The aim was to produce slates for the local and Southern African market which were of high quality and affordable.

Hatfield was approached because of the successful Mobility for Africa project which was acclaimed in the disabled community and also in Government circles.

The Blind:

The project for the blind encompasses three main elements:

The Optima Braille Slate

Three Adult Based Education and Training Facilities in South Africa

Training of nine Braille instructors, who, in turn will train others.

The Braille slate:

A unique design, incorporating all the best features of those currently available, world wide.

Target market

All children, and visually disabled persons, to enhance their literacy and chances of supporting themselves in society.

The Territory

Initially, Southern Africa, expanding rapidly to include all of Africa.

Marketing to take place through the local Associations for the blind, and also through the Rotary clubs in the territories, each of whom are ideal partners.

Rotary involvement:

Rotary can forge links with the local Associations for the Blind, and develop joint projects.

Slates can be ordered through the Rotary club of Hatfield (Dist 9250), at a FOB price of \$ 10. For each such slate delivered, the Optima Project will donate \$2 to Rotary Foundation. Hatfield Rotary club will receive and process your order and ensure the credit through the Fiscal Agent.

If each Rotarian, worldwide, sponsored one slate, 3 % of the world' blind would be able to receive a slate. If that sponsorship was to be through the club, and the Matching Grant system used, this could rise to 12% -- in 6 years the world market could be covered, assuming that at present there are some 30% of the blind using slates.

The project can be replicated by training a trainer at the Optima Centre, and using this person to train in your area. Associations can be formed with local schools or Welfare organisations to establish Adult Based Education and Training Centres. For details of the structure of the programme, contact Samantha Brown at the South African National Council for the Blind 012 346 1171.