

Eastern Cape Capacity Building Workshops

As part of our ongoing effort to strengthen the administrative capacity of South African community-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs), South Africa Partners has been working with partners in the Province of the Eastern Cape to identify specific needs and provide technical assistance and training. The need to increase capacity among these NGOs is an important component in the province's overall goal of improving access to quality health care. The Eastern Cape Department of Health has begun to develop a system of contracting that will eventually provide qualified NGOs with funds to deliver critical health services that are now being provided only through provincial hospitals and clinics. With a population of more than 6 million people, the Eastern Cape needs effective NGOs that can provide services at the grassroots level, but without critical administrative capacity, many NGOs in the province will not be in a position to compete for these contracts.

In June, SA Partners conducted a workshop in one of the Eastern Cape's six health districts to gather more concrete information about the needs of health NGOs in the Queenstown area. Collaborating with the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition, the Health Systems Trust, Oxfam Eastern Cape, and the Eastern Cape Department of Health, SA Partners brought together facilitators and NGO representatives to begin a process of designing follow-up workshops that will address more specific needs, and structure effective technical assistance and mentoring opportunities.

Twenty four organizations were represented at the workshop and, while participants agreed that to operate an effective organization many skills must be strengthened, financial management was identified as the most important need. In 2003, SA Partners will begin to offer financial management trainings to NGOs working in two of the province's six health districts. Recognizing that the workshops are only a first step, we will be including follow-up activities that include mentoring and ongoing technical assistance to ensure that the skills learned at the workshop will be incorporated within the organizations.

SA Partners is most grateful to the Izumi Foundation for its past support of these activities.