



# SOUTH AFRICA

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)  
Population, Health, and Nutrition Briefing Sheet

## Country Profile

Richly endowed with human and natural resources, South Africa is the fourth most populous nation and has the largest and most developed economy in sub-Saharan Africa. Still recovering from a legacy of social and political inequities, South Africa faces the challenges of pervasive poverty and the need to improve services for the disadvantaged.

## USAID Strategy

USAID's program in South Africa began in 1995, the country's first full year of a democratically elected government with a constitution, bill of rights, and policy of transformation to foster equity among all its citizens. The South Africa mission has launched a 10-year program (1996–2005) that supports the development objectives of the Republic of South Africa, USAID, and the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission. USAID's health activities are addressing inequities in access to primary health care (PHC) among South Africans. The strategy includes

- Expanding PHC services to all South Africans under a unified system,
- Improving management of the health care delivery system, and
- Increasing the capacity to deliver prevention and treatment services for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## Major Program Areas

*Primary Health Care System Strengthening.* The "Equity Project," a seven-year initiative of health training and sector reform activities, is USAID's main activity for strengthening PHC. Initial activities are designed to strengthen PHC management and service delivery systems in the Eastern Cape Province; the intention is to formulate successful activities into models for nationwide replication. In addition to technical emphases on improving the quality of reproductive and child health care and nutrition, the initiative includes support to develop effective health information and referral systems.

*HIV/AIDS Prevention Activities.* USAID supports a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the national Department of Health with training of staff and community leaders in HIV/AIDS prevention. Workshops and group presentations focus on HIV/AIDS prevention messages and emphasize educating adolescents and other high-risk groups. A major new initiative is designed to help build capacity to plan and implement HIV/AIDS programs in the national Department of Health and at provincial and district levels.

*Demographic Health Survey (DHS).* Working with the Government of South Africa, USAID will help implement and disseminate the findings of the 1998 South Africa DHS. The DHS will establish baseline data for health sector planning and monitoring.

## Results

- Publication and provincewide introduction of a standardized national PHC package in the Eastern Cape Province; this is the only province where the national policy has been interpreted and realized. With USAID assistance, 43 percent of clinic professional nurses in the Eastern Cape were trained in PHC clinical skills, and by 1997, 46 percent of clinics had at least one staff member who was trained in management skills.
- A National AIDS Strategy that resulted from a USAID-supported National AIDS Convention. A National STI/HIV/AIDS Review will guide the strategy's implementation through regional coalitions among policy and civic leaders.
- A USAID-supported NGO developed a legal charter to prevent discrimination against persons living with AIDS.
- More than 220 nurses were trained in the "syndromic approach" to HIV/AIDS diagnosis, a cost-effective method based on diagnosing by symptom rather than by running clinical tests.



## Bureau for Africa

U.S. Agency for  
International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
20523-3600

Tel: 202-712-0540  
Fax: 202-216-3046

E-mail:  
africawb@rrs.cdiie.org

Website:  
www.info.usaid.gov/regions/afri

## Success Stories

USAID has supported extensive policy dialogue and an exploration of enhanced cost-recovery methods to improve PHC services' financial sustainability in South Africa. A USAID-funded study of the Uitenhage Hospital contract with a private provider group showed that public/private partnerships can result in improved quality for all patients and generate increased resources that can be used in under-funded facilities. USAID plans to provide technical assistance to replicate such partnerships elsewhere.

With USAID technical assistance, Eastern Cape Province developed and established clear guidelines for referrals to reduce the burden on hospitals. As a result, hospital outpatient load diminished significantly. For example, the Umtata General Hospital, the largest hospital in the province's poorest region, closed its outpatient department for general walk-in services, reducing the patient load in the hospital by nearly 40,000 patients per month. Meanwhile, with assistance from the Kellogg Foundation, the Eastern Cape Department of Health created four community-based rural health centers serving the catchment area around the town of Umtata, resulting in significant financial savings and reducing the hospital's burden.

USAID-assisted NGOs have been providing a substantial contribution to community outreach and HIV/AIDS awareness activities in rural and informal settlement areas. Interventions designed and implemented by community members target the general population and individuals at increased risk for HIV infection, such as adolescents. Peer-led prevention education programs have been successful in creating a nonjudgemental environment for the exchange of ideas on issues such as sexuality, STIs, reproductive health, values clarification, and decision-making skills. The USAID-funded AIDSCAP Project played a pivotal role in connecting these NGOs to a variety of information, technology, and resources that not only facilitate their understanding of HIV/AIDS issues, but also help in project implementation.

## Continuing Challenges

South Africa's major health care challenge is to achieve an equitable distribution of basic health care. Unifying two vastly different health systems in South Africa requires that USAID's technical assistance promote appropriate health systems management and development. In addition, USAID's integrated PHC project must integrate HIV/AIDS/STI information and counseling into basic community-level health services.



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20523-3600*

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