

## Enable, South Africa

### *Nothing about us without us*

Disability and poverty in southern Africa are inextricably linked: "Poor people face a greater risk of impairment or disability.... The birth of a disabled child or the occurrence of disability in a family often places heavy demands on family morale, thrusting it deeper into poverty.... This means not only that there is a higher proportion of disabled people amongst the very poor, but also there is an increase in families at the poverty level as a result of disability" (South African government Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997). People living with disabilities in South Africa experience many barriers to education and employment including discriminatory attitudes based on fear and lack of awareness.

July 1st 2003 saw the launch of a new project in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa providing adult basic education, training and development opportunities for people with physical disabilities and their carers. According to the 1996 census, KwaZulu-Natal has the highest total number of people with physical disabilities in the country - around 130,000 or 23% of the national total. 39% of this group have no schooling at all, and 69% have not reached secondary school.

The three-year EC funded project will pay for tuition, teacher training, and learner assessment, as well as classroom equipment, venue adaptations, and curriculum and materials development. Over three years the project should reach 145 learners between the ages of 16 and 60. Appropriate education and training could lead to income generation opportunities as well as greater participation in their families and communities. The surrounding community will also benefit, for example the Jabulani Craft Centre is seen as a resource that may be used by others in the community including the local farm workers. This integration of disabled and able-bodied learners helps to break down discriminatory attitudes, promotes equality and awareness of the abilities of disabled people.

The project is the first South African project funded through Skillshare International, and will be led by Skillshare's South African partner Natal Adult Basic Education Support Agency (NASA), which works with six other organisations for disabled people and parents in KwaZulu-Natal: Amaoti Disabled People's Association, Siyazama Sewing Froup, Jabulani Craft Centre, the Zimele Centre, Nduduzwnie Centre and KwaMakaye Disabled People's Organisation. The ENABLE project is run on a participatory basis reflecting the international slogan of the disability movement: "Nothing about us without us." The structure of the programme is set up in a way that disabled people are involved at all levels of decision-making and implementation. Skillshare International's country office in South Africa will assist NASA in terms of managing the EC funds, and in monitoring the progress of the project. Skillshare International is also launching an appeal to help to support this project. The EC funding covers 75% of the total cost, and to be able to release that money over the three years we must match it with our own commitments.



*" We need to speak and write in English to promote our crafts to the tourists."*

**- Jabulani learners**

*" Numeracy skills would help to develop our income-generating sewing project."*

**- Siyazama learners**

*" We want to be confident in counting money and to read where the bus is going."*

**- ADPA learners**

Left: English lanquaaae learners at ENABLE.