

## Improving Services for People with Disabilities in South Africa

In South Africa it is estimated that nearly five and a half million people (12% of the population) have a moderate to severe disability. Many of them live in areas that are not well served by existing rehabilitation services. Without access to appropriate rehabilitation, many are unable to reach their optimal levels of independence or participate fully in their communities. In recognition of this, a non-profit organisation in Pietermaritzburg called CREATE (Community Based Rehabilitation Education and Training for Empowerment) runs a two-year training course in Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR).

By the end of the two years of training, each student will have worked with at least 15 children and adults with disabilities and will have set up, or been working with, a group of people with disabilities. This means that, over two years, the current class of 13 students will have affected the lives of at least 300 people with disabilities, many of whom have had no previous rehabilitation.

As a Skillshare International development worker funded by our PPA with DFID, Paul Chappell's main role is to assist with the training course, bringing not only professional knowledge but also his personal experience of having a disability. It became clear to him that after the training there were no opportunities for the facilitators to improve their skills. Recognising this gap, Paul set up a regular continuing education programme for all qualified Community Rehabilitation Facilitators (CRFs). This consists of three one-day workshops each year throughout South Africa, and the production of a CBR newsletter that gives CRFs a chance to share their experiences and learn from each other.



**Paul Chappell**

The training programme covers a range of topics that not only look at the major types of disability, but also community development and the employment of people with disabilities. The course consists of modules, which have a theoretical block in Pietermaritzburg followed by a practical block in the student's home area. Another part of his role has been to establish the Southern African CBR Forum in order to promote the quality of life of people with disabilities in Southern Africa within the scope of CBR. The forum currently consists of CRFs from different provinces in South Africa as well as from Namibia and Botswana.