



## The District Health System

The South African Government has adopted the district health system, which is generally accepted as the most effective way of organising and delivering district health services. The district health system covers all levels of preventive and primary health care (PHC), as well as district hospital services. The government's policy on the district health system (*National Department of Health, 1995*) includes the following list of principles that underpin its development:

- Equity
- Access to services
- Quality
- Integration of services
- Comprehensive services
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Local accountability
- Community participation
- Developmental and inter-sectoral approach
- Sustainability

Although much has been achieved, challenges remain. A key problem lies with inherited inefficiencies and inequities in resource allocation, which make it difficult to improve access and quality in some areas. Solving these problems requires careful identification of challenges and priorities, as well as good planning and implementation. It also requires standard planning methods and processes, and sufficient numbers of managers with the skills to apply them.