

UFS SVOSH Chapter partners with Ba Phakamise Health Promotion for a Rural Eye Care Outreach in Ngqeleni, in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

Date of the outreach: 14th June 2025

The University of the Free State (UFS) SVOSH Chapter partnered with Ba Phakamise Health Promotion which is a non-profit organisation that offers services including access to healthcare in rural areas. The Eastern Cape Department of Health was among the partners that were supporting the outreach. The Eastern Cape Department of Health assisted with providing nurses for taking vitals and other consultations the people in the area would need besides eye care services.

A total of 5 UFS SVOSH Chapter students and Mr Carel Masemola, the lecturer who is the advisor of the chapter, together with a private optometrist Mr Thendo Mashudu who is the Public Health Committee member representing the South African Optometric Association (SAOA) attended a rural eye care outreach in a village called Mankosi in the Ngqeleni town in the Eastern Cape province in South Africa. The village itself is situated at the very edge of the province by the sea. The travel from the University to the village was roughly 10 hours and an additional 2 hours on gravel road to reach the very remote area.



The Ba Phakamise funded the transport, accommodation and food for the UFS SVOSH chapter students and the 2 optometrists, Mr Carel Masemola and Mr Thendo Mashudu. The outreach was a success in that patients who did not have access to eye care services for years were tested and for some for the first time got the opportunity to choose a frame. The ratio of the students testing to the patient numbers was overwhelming but regardless of the situation the students showed resilience.

Outreach statistics:

Total number of patients tested	51
Patients requiring spectacles	39
Single vision (SV)	11
Bifocals (BF)	27
Multifocals (MF)	1

Patients referred (To ophthalmology or eye drops)	29
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The department of health did indicate that they would be open to future eye care outreaches in the same village to see the remaining patients that had to be turned back due to the time being too late to continue.

On behalf of the people of the Ngqeleni village and UFS SVOSH Chapter, we say “Enkosi” (meaning “*Thank you*” in Xhosa) to **VOSH International** for giving vision to humanity. The great Nelson Mandela was born in the Province we rendered the services to which reminds me of a quote by him that says “There can be no greater gift than that of giving one’s time and energy to helping others without expecting anything in return.”- Nelson Mandela

Thank you, VOSH International.