

*Chris Peat from Axia Interactive Media and Nomathemba Sithole, consultant to the South African Department of Health will be presenting in the E-Learning Africa Tools and Services Village on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> May between 09.00 to 14.00.*

## **E-LEARNING AFRICA PRESS RELEASE**

### **AXIA PROVIDES SUSTAINABLE E-LEARNING AND COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT FOR HIV/AIDS HEALTH WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

- *Contracted by D of H to develop project for 3000 nurses in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the region's worst affected areas*
- *Unique project empowers nurses to create AIDs related educational content to help peers and co-workers in the field*

Axia Interactive Media, specialists in developing e-learning, CPD and e-assessment systems, has been commissioned by the Department of Health in KwaZulu Natal to create a system to deliver bite-sized chunks of interactive health education to nurses in their province.

The KZN Learning Zone system will provide over 3,000 health workers in the Durban area with the latest treatment information on a range of health topics including HIV/Aids and other STIs (sexually transmitted infections). In addition, it will enable nurses and their supervisors to provide evidence of their competence in multimedia formats, and to have this information reviewed and assessed remotely to ensure professional standards are improved. Uniquely, the educational materials being developed as part of this project, which emphasises the giving of pragmatic, hand-on advice are being created by the nurses and sex-workers themselves, and shared online with professional peers and co-workers.

KZN Learning Zone is deemed viable as an educational resource because the Durban area has a more reliable Internet infrastructure than other regions, and PC availability is adequate. The long term vision of the Minister of Health, Mrs Peggy Nkonyeni, which is shared by Axia, is for nurses and other health workers using the KZN Learning Zone to support their professional development to become “ambassadors” for computer based learning in their own homes and communities.

The predominantly rural KwaZulu-Natal region is one of the most disadvantaged regions of South Africa, with over 66% unemployment in parts and 20% of the population receiving no formal schooling. KwaZulu-Natal also has one of the country’s highest levels of HIV/Aids infection. As well as providing an educational resource, Axia hopes the system will create a sense of community for nurses in this region and play a part in reducing the considerable stress and isolation suffered by health workers who work autonomously and with little peer support in remote, rural areas. Indeed, retention of health workers is considered a major problem within the Department of Health, and the creation of a virtual community could help to reduce this.

“We want to make this initial project part of a much larger initiative to help give health workers the educational resources they need on a daily basis to carry out their work as effectively as possible. Projects such as this can make a huge difference to the lives of everyone involved in the struggle against Aids in South Africa, and we are committed to working with their Department of Health to make this a huge success,” says Steve Walker, Managing Director of Axia.

“The new KZN Learning Zone is a key element of the implementation of our Department’s strategic goals, which focus on improving the region’s health system to permit the most cost effective use of limited resources and assure that services are responsive to the needs of the poor,” says Mrs Peggy Nkonyeni, Minister of Health for South Africa. In addition to improving health technology and strengthening Primary Health Care, we are committed to

investing in an infrastructure to improve communication, information technology systems and human resource management. KZN Learning Zone helps us to achieve many of these with a single system.”

Axia are basing the “KZN Learning Zone” on the RCN Learning Zone, which the company developed for the UK Royal College of Nursing 5 years ago. RCN Learning Zone now supports the e-learning requirements and CPD assessments of over 400,000 members. Content for KZN Learning Zone is being developed locally within South Africa.

Axia is providing its services to the Department of Health on a cost only basis; in effect donating its e-learning environment, which is based on a generic platform the company has developed, called Now.Net. Existing users of Now.Net include the Society for Radiographers, Council for Administration, Institute of Archaeologists, LearnDirect, ANLP and the Royal College of Nursing.

### **Notes for Editors:**

#### **About Axia Interactive Media**

Axia Interactive Media (AIM) are specialists in web-based solutions to support lifelong learning and professional development. The company’s products and services are used by professional or trade organisations and awarding bodies, public sector organisations and within the corporate sector.

AIM can provide the right learning environment to enable your people - members, employees, students - become more effective and capable. All our customers share a common vision - to provide flexible training and development using the latest technologies in order to develop their people for tomorrow's challenges. The company has developed a single technology platform, Now.Net, which can be used for the following applications: provision of e-learning (information and guidance services), online CPD administration with e-portfolio facilities and online assessment.

Axia was formed in 1997 and has customers around the world including Italy, Canada and South Africa. The company is committed to enabling both developed

and developing countries to improve the standards of professionals working across all sectors of industry through the provision of cost effective yet highly rigorous skills and capability assessments. For more information on Axia please visit [www.axiainteractive.net](http://www.axiainteractive.net)

### **Biography Details of Conference Speakers**

**Chris Peat, OBE** is Director of Business Strategy at Axia Interactive Media. Chris was awarded the OBE in 2002 in recognition of his services to Adult Learning in Leeds where he was instrumental in establishing the Family Learning Centres that have gained a national reputation for encouraging adults to successfully access learning and achieve. At these Centres he also led the team which created the Job Guarantee model that uniquely received major awards from the private and public sectors for Innovation.

**Nomathemba Sithole** is the Business Development Director of Sisa Consulting. Born in Highflats, KwaZulu-Natal, Nomathemba lived and worked in the United States for 24 years in exile, Nomathemba returned to South Africa in December 2004.

Currently she is consulting in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health providing services related to performance management systems as well as transformation. Nomathemba's has been an administrator, an educator, an investment professional as well as a housing provider for people with disabilities and households of low income.

From 1976, Nomathemba worked in education, staffing and ultimately overseeing the Durban office (and Natal Regional Office) of the SACHED Trust which was engaged in alternatives to Bantu Education. During intense harassment and interrogations in 1981, Mrs. Sithole fled South Africa and settled in the United States of America, getting an opportunity to complete her studies.

At the time of her return to South Africa in December 2004, she was the Executive Vice President of the Corporation for Independent Living and she was the Compliance Officer for Affirmative Action reporting and workforce diversity strategies.

For more information, please visit [www.axiainteractive.net](http://www.axiainteractive.net) or contact

**Lesley Muir, Axia Interactive Media PR on:**

**+44 (0) 7796 148400**

**Lesley@good-pr.co.uk**