

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**1st December 2006, World AIDS Day**

# **AXIA SEEKS TO PROVIDE 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
- Axia wants to emulate UK's success with Computers on Wheels scheme to ensure supply of PCs and Internet access to field based HIV workers

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.

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. However in order to achieve this, a means to provide access to PCs and sustainable e-learning to all community regions must be devised. Axia believes this can be achieved by emulating the UK's successful Computers on Wheels scheme whereby banks of PCs are shared among disadvantaged regions, transported to different locations according to a rota system, and centrally stored at a secure base.

The predominantly rural KwaZulu-Natal region is one of the most disadvantaged regions of South Africa, with over 66% unemployment in parts

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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. Axia has already written to the Secretary of State, Hilary Benn to request his support, and is in the process of contacting a number of other organisations to gain their participation in a scheme similar to Computers on Wheels. 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.

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## **About Axia Interactive Media**

Axia Interactive Media specialise in providing e-learning and online CPD assessment systems to enable both public and private sector organisations to achieve best practice. 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. Now.Net is the online assessment system supporting the administration and assessment of Care NVQs in the UK.

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)

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