



## **SOUTH AFRICAN TV SPECIAL *TAKALANI SESAME'S TALK TO ME* HONORED WITH PRESTIGIOUS JAPAN PRIZE**

### **Independent Research Finds Parents Exposed to TV Special Twice as Likely to Talk to Their Kids About HIV and AIDS**

(New York, NY, and Cape Town, South Africa, November 2, 2005)—*Takalani Sesame Presents: Talk to Me*, the TV special based on the multi-media initiative aimed at conveying messages about talking to children about HIV and AIDS, was selected as the best program earlier this week in the Education Category, garnering itself the Governor of Tokyo Prize in the Japan Prize Contest. The Japan Prize honors media that contribute to the advancement of educational television around the world.

“We are proud to be a part of a project that encourages effective communication, cooperation, pride in one’s culture, and respect for others,” said Gary E. Knell, Sesame Workshop’s President and CEO. “On behalf of all the partners, we thank the Japan Prize for this prestigious recognition.”

*Takalani Sesame* has continued making a measurable impact with children and their families since the beloved children’s television series introduced a special HIV and AIDS education focus in 2002. Studies completed by independent South African researchers have shown positive results:

- Data from a Health and Development Africa study showed that parents and caregivers who watched segments from the *Talk to Me* television special were more than twice as likely to talk with children in their households about HIV compared to caregivers who did not view the program <sup>1</sup>;
- Young children (ages 3 to 6) who were exposed to *Takalani Sesame* showed substantial gains in four areas (basic knowledge, blood safety, discrimination, and coping with illness) of HIV and AIDS education that Khulisa Management Services tested:<sup>2</sup>; and

- Results of the Khulisa Management research also suggest that *Takalani Sesame* can play a role in enhancing communication between educators and children: Educators who were exposed to episodes from the series were more likely to speak about HIV and AIDS in their classrooms than were those not exposed.<sup>2</sup>

“*Talk to Me* materials were tested using a classic experimental design—that of a controlled trial,” said Dr. Gill Schierhout, Director, Health and Development Africa. “The ability to find an effect was possible because the presentation of the intervention was fully under the control of the research process. The randomly assigned comparison group allowed us to identify effects of the intervention on child-caregiver communication in a more rigorous way than is possible in observational studies.”

“The independent studies of *Takalani Sesame* highlight the extensive impact of the series as an endeavor that effectively reaches, teaches, and engages South Africa’s youngest citizens,” said Dr. Helene Aiello, Director of Education, Khulisa Management Services. “Prior to *Talk to Me*, teachers and parents generally did not discuss HIV and AIDS with children. The initiative gave them an opportunity to open up the discussion in a non-threatening way, and the resources made available allowed for interactive and creative learning.”

The project’s outreach initiatives have also resulted in the development of innovative materials designed to reach children and their caregivers in their home languages. These materials included video and audio cassettes, and print resources such as storybooks, posters, newspaper inserts, and educators’ manuals. They were widely distributed to educators, parents, and caregivers, and were estimated to benefit more than 2 million children in four regions of the country.<sup>3</sup> These resources reinforced and expanded upon the educational messages in the *Takalani Sesame* radio and television programs, and played an important role in the success of the project.

*Takalani Sesame* incorporates an innovative curriculum created by South African educators, child development experts, scriptwriters, and filmmakers to encourage young children to develop literacy, numeracy, and life skills. Targeted to children 3-7, *Takalani Sesame*’s lessons are illustrated through humor, music, fantasy and daily life situations.

The *Takalani Sesame* project is a partnership of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Kwasukasukela, and Sesame Workshop. *Takalani Sesame* is brought

to the children of South Africa through funding that has been provided in part by the United States Agency for International Development in support of the South African Department of Education and by Sanlam, the exclusive corporate sponsor of the project. The research commissioned for this project was managed by a joint committee of the project's partners.

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<sup>1</sup> Health and Development Africa (2005). Impact Assessment of a New Programming Component on HIV and AIDS for *Takalani Sesame*. Report prepared for the *Takalani Sesame* Project with aKa Associated and Social Surveys Africa. Rosebank, South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Khulisa Management Services (2005). Impact Assessment of *Takalani Sesame* Season II Programme. Report prepared for the *Takalani Sesame* Project at SABC Education Television. Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> *Takalani Sesame* Project. (2004). Reach of the Outreach Component of *Takalani Sesame*: Report Prepared for Sesame Workshop. Johannesburg, South Africa.