



SAASTA

South African Agency for Science
and Technology Advancement

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Media Alert

To all Media

15 October 2021

For immediate release:

FameLab South Africa 2021 Final Promises Inspiring Stories of South African Science

Ten young scientists from around South Africa will be inspiring us with their research stories as they deliver short, entertaining, informative and insightful talks at the FameLab South Africa 2021 Final when broadcast online on 20 October at 18h30.

FameLab South Africa extends an invitation to watch the event online on YouTube (<https://bit.ly/SAASTAYoutube>). The virtual event promises inspiring and captivating stories about South African science and research. The 10 finalists from across the country, selected at the national semi-finals that took place on 28 September 2021, will be sharing their passion for their work and highlighting the impact they are making in society as young scientists. The winner will be announced during the event and will go on to represent South Africa on an international stage hosted by Cheltenham Festivals, UK, in November.

The finalists are working in diverse fields of science, and topics of the talks will include research into cancer treatments, botany and indigenous knowledge, water ecology, biodiversity, palaeobiology, HIV vaccine and drug development, food science, climate science and information security. The topics take us from studying the past to showing how we are striving to understand our present, predict possible futures and provide solutions to current problems for a better future.

FameLab, an initiative of Cheltenham Festivals in the UK, has been running in South Africa since 2013 through a partnership between the British Council, Jive Media Africa and the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA). FameLab aims to develop science communication and public speaking skills and confidence in young scientists.

The 10 finalists have been on a journey of development in science communication over the course of the year, from their initial participation in science communication training workshops; participating in and being selected at one of the 14 heats across the country; attending a science communication masterclass with international trainer, Matthew Tosh; and participating in the semi-finals to be selected to represent their institution and research field in the finals. The end of this 2021 FameLab cycle does not end their journey in science communication and engagement, but marks the beginning of their future as scientists actively and proactively engaging with society.

In addressing the participants at the semi-finals, which took place on 28 September, Michael Ellis, manager of the Science Communication Division at SAASTA said that SAASTA aims to develop

the field of science communication, which includes developing science communication skills and confidence in scientists through programmes such as FameLab. He commended all participants for embracing the opportunity offered by FameLab and taking steps to enable better communication of science with the public. Effective communication will support the advancement of science for society and improve the impact of science.

FameLab Finals Broadcast Details:

Date: 20 October 2021

Time: 18h30

Online on NRF-SAASTA YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/SAASTAYoutube>



The ten finalists, representing various research institutions, are:

- Zakithi Mkhize – Sub-Saharan African Network for TB and HIV Research Excellence/University of KwaZulu-Natal
- Kaylan Reddy - Stellenbosch University
- Lungile Buthelezi - University of KwaZulu-Natal
- Letago Kgomoewana - North-West University
- Tasvi Daya - University of the Witwatersrand
- Oluwatoyin Onipe - University of Venda

- Caitlin Rabe – Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences and University of Cape Town
- Shivani Ramburrun - University of the Witwatersrand
- Nelisiwe Dlamini - The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
- Hima Rama – South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity and University of the Witwatersrand

For more information about the event contact: Lithakazi Masilela at L.Masilela@saasta.nrf.ac.za or Joanne Riley at JE.Riley@saasta.nrf.ac.za

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Notes:

To find out more about FameLab in South Africa, go to:
<https://www.saasta.ac.za/competitions/famelab/>

For more information about FameLab, contact:

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About the British Council

Founded in 1934, the British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. We are a global organisation with more than 190 offices in 110 countries and territories. We touch the lives of around 500 million people every year – almost a tenth of the world's population

About Jive Media Africa

Jive Media Africa supports top researchers with innovative, cutting edge communications. Winners of the National Science and Technology Forum Award for Science Communication, they brought the FameLab competition to South Africa in 2013.

About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa. SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow. It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.saasta.ac.za

About the National Research Foundation (NRF):

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South

Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.nrf.ac.za