

MEDIA RELEASE

8th Media Kidocracy Konfrence opens today on Robben Island Celebrity Advocates Danny K and Malaika to join celebration

5 December 2007... In a youthful celebration of freedom and democracy, young people from South Africa and the African continent will converge on Robben Island from 5-10 December to take part in the eighth annual Bush Radio *Media Kidocracy Konfrence* (MKK 2007) co-sponsored by UNICEF South Africa .

According to Conference co-ordinator Nashira Abrahams-De Jongh, Bush Radio, Africa's oldest community radio station, the project was started MKK eight years ago because children are often seen as passive absorbers of the media. "MKK shows that they are the ones who can influence the media by actively producing their own material," she explained.

The main theme of this year's youth conference is the celebration of children's rights. Organisers say this is a fortuitous choice given that the conference coincides with the observance of the 18th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the annual celebration of the International Children's Day of Broadcasting on 10 December, which champions children's right to participation and their right to having their say in issues that affect them.

"The conference will enable children and youth to identify the social issues pertinent to themselves and their peers and to dialogue about the power of the media, and how to use it to advance their interests," says Ms. Abrahams-De Jongh.

For UNICEF, a partner with MKK in the planning and shaping the content of the conference, the young people's gathering is a celebration of democracy and human rights. UNICEF Representative, Macharia Kamau said: "The children of South Africa can now celebrate democracy and participation in a place where democracy was denied to many of the country's greatest leaders, including Nelson Mandela. How wonderful it is that today, children can freely play their part, celebrate their rights and contribute to the transformation of South Africa by developing their own media products around the social issues that affect them, their families and communities."

Hot Topics, Expert Speakers and Celebrity Advocates

Planning for the conference which took place over 9 months has resulted in the selection of a range of topics that children and young people consider of major importance to them. These include: virginity testing and circumcision, child trafficking, cultural identity, global warming, human rights and sexuality.

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Popular Hip Hop Choreographers, Go Live (Craig and Amanda Bullock), will assist the children in the course of the week to demonstrate child rights through Hip Hop Choreography. Several well known speakers and UNICEF celebrity advocates such as singers Malaika and Danny K have also signed on to support the conference. Experts in the field of gender, global warming and child labour such as Mmabataho Ramagoshi (SABC), Peter Johnston (UCT) and Patric Solomon (Molo Songololo) will critically engage with young people around these issues.

Conference co-ordinator, Nashira Abrahams-De Jongh, says the partnership with UNICEF highlight of this year's event "This partnership has enabled the participation of young people from other parts of Africa as well as access to various experts in the field of media and child rights and we are grateful for that". [Children from local refugee organizations are also supported to attend by UNICEF.](#)

Conference Programme

MKK 2007 this year will not only celebrate the 18th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through discussions and debates, but also through practical workshops where the young participants will create broadcasts for radio and television and publish material in print and on-line.

"We want young people to share how they experience social issues in their lives. How they deal with it, and how they can change it," says Abrahams-De Jongh

The conference culminates with a live broadcast from the island, on the International Children's Day of Broadcasting (10 December 2007), on Bush Radio 89.5fm.

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