

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Robben Island Media Kidocracy Konfrence ends Young people speak out on critical issues in own media products

**Robben Island, 11 December 2007...** As 20 children at United Nations headquarters prepared to join Heads of State and government in giving their views on progress towards the goals set out in *A World Fit for Children*, five years after the document was adopted, 54 children from Burundi, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Africa and Sudan gathered on historic Robben Island, South Africa, entered their final day of deliberations highlighting their views on issues affecting African children.

The five-day Media Kidocracy Konference (MKK 2007), organised by Bush Radio in association with UNICEF South Africa, also celebrated 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's right to participation. Young delegates engaged in hearty discussions on gender, global warming, male circumcision, children's rights, child labour, arts, media and culture.

Ending just like it began, with a dash of celebrity flourish and youthful enthusiasm, defining the closing ceremony, the conference wrapped with UNICEF celebrity youth advocate Tshidi, lead singer from the popular South African band Malaika, providing an inspirational message and a rousing rendition of two of the group's hit songs *Destiny* and *Two Bob*.

"I am so impressed with all of you, what I have seen here today and with the stories you have told me," Tshidi told her young fans. "There is always much to learn and to share. I hope you will continue your research into the subjects you explored here this week and inform and share with others the knowledge you have gained."

Among the main outcomes, children highlighted the need for respecting cultural diversity and identity that reinforces positive behaviour among young people. The delegate from South Sudan described the challenges faced by many girls in her country and highlighted the need for girls access to education and the rights of all girls to quality, free education. Many of the young people were touched

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by her honesty and passion for gender equality and the empowerment of girl children through education. This contextualized the importance of MDG 3 for the budding media specialist.

During the closing ceremony one young boy, who was part of the winning print and online media news team, described how he was initially overwhelmed by the task of developing media products based on the discussions, but said: “it all was made so easy and I am now ready to tell my stories to the world.”

Professor Rose September, UNICEF Parliamentary Advocacy Specialist, who delivered the closing remarks, observed, “Children are the most important champions for children’s rights. UNICEF is both inspired and affirmed by the participation of this remarkable group of African children who, through their participation in this initiative, have taken on the task of speaking out and documenting the issues affecting African children in particular”.

“Following the closing ceremony, children showcased the media products they had worked on all week, playing excerpts from their radio programmes, television PSAs, reading from their newsletter and from a blog they created ([www.mkk2007.blogspot.com](http://www.mkk2007.blogspot.com)) that tackled all of the issues they had explored during the week.

Gerrit Maritz UNICEF Adolescent Development Specialist and Nashira Abrahams De Jongh from Bush Radio presented certificates of participation to all the delegates on behalf of UNICEF and Bush Radio.