

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **"Hello Kigali! Hello Kinshasa!"**

The GREAT LAKES GENERATION is talking, live on air, every week



**KINSHASA, December 6, 2007**

***While the bullets are flying in eastern DR Congo and the region's diplomats are struggling to agree on peace accords, youth from the Great Lakes region are talking to each other about conflict, about peace and the building of a new generation. This weekend, the program will be presented live from Kinshasa, and beamed out to the rest of the region via webstreaming and FM.***

Via an innovative use of internet, telephone and FM technology, a 60-minute live phone-in talk show for youth is simulcast every Saturday afternoon in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Called "The Great Lakes Generation", or GGL, the program allows youth throughout the Great Lakes to talk, listen and learn about the issues and challenges facing their region.

Each week, the program is presented by two journalists of different nationalities, from two of the five partner radio stations. "Call us in the language of your choice!" invite the presenters, who together are able to dialogue with callers in six major languages of the region: French, English, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Swahili and Lingala.

This is the first time that youth in the Great Lakes can dialogue via their local radio stations, without passing through Europe via international radio stations such as BBC and Radio France International. The GGL producers rotate the studio of live talk show between the three countries. It is broadcast on FM and via webstreaming and the other four radio stations pick up the streaming and broadcast the program live on FM.

Listeners across the region thus tune into the same program at the same time on: Kigali's Contact FM and Butare's Radio Salus, RTG@ in Kinshasa and 13 cities, Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu and throughout Burundi on Radio Isanganiro. GGL is broadcast every Saturday at 14h00 in eastern DRC, Rwanda and Burundi, and 13h00 in western DRC, and via internet on [www.contactfm.co.rw](http://www.contactfm.co.rw) or [www.isanganiro.org](http://www.isanganiro.org).

This Saturday, 8 December, the program will be broadcast and webstreamed for the first time out of RTG@'s Kinshasa studio, co-hosted by Rwandan and Congolese journalists, and simulcast in Burundi and Rwanda. Against the backdrop of war and displacement in eastern Congo, this is an important step in the process of building regional youth understanding and collaboration.

GGL was launched in 2006 and is executive produced by the international conflict transformation NGO Search for Common Ground, who has worked in the Great Lakes region for the last 12 years. It is funded by the United States Agency for International Development in Rwanda and DRC. A listenership survey conducted in Bujumbura, Kigali and Bukavu in August 2007 showed that 63% of students from the three countries were listening to the radio program.

*“Linking the youth from across Rwanda, DRC and Burundi via radio was a dream. Now it’s happening every week, and it’s initiatives like this which contribute to a new generation of youth that will be proud to be from the Great Lakes,”* explained Search for Common Ground DRC Director Lena Slachmuis. *“GGL gives youth the chance to learn about each other, learn about conflict and manipulation and find a way to build a positive and collaborative future for this region. By listening to each others’ experiences, live on air, stereotypes crumble and people begin to talk sincerely. It’s inspiring!!”*

The program addresses different themes each week, including manipulation, identity, rumour management, youth participation in political life, recruitment of youth into armed groups, displaced and refugee youth, gender, minorities, exclusion and issues around nationalities. The program format includes a studio guest, pre-recorded interviews, vox pops, spots, jingles, reportages and of course, callers phoning in.

Listeners participate by calling in, sending SMS (text messages by cellphones), or writing in by email ([radiogg1@yahoo.fr](mailto:radiogg1@yahoo.fr)). In collaboration with a Great Lakes network of University Students, public listening sessions rotate around high schools and universities in the three countries each week, encouraging the youth to listen, phone in, and debate the subject after the program ends.

*“The problem in this region, is that we the youth don’t know each other. We inherit the stereotypes and prejudices imposed by politicians, or by our parents,”* comments Alyce Akineza, one of the Rwandan journalists in the GGL production team. *“Generation Grands Lacs helps us to discover each other, and we realize that we have a lot in common, in fact.”*

Commenting on the subjects addressed in GGL, a Bukavu listener said: *“We appreciate the subjects on the GGL show. These things are there, in our hearts. GGL brings these issues out into the open, and helps us to talk about it. This is the beginning of frank dialogue and addressing conflict.”*

His comments were echoed by a Rwandan studio guest Claude Nsanzabandi, who commented, *“When youth have the opportunity to discuss their past and their future, they provide themselves an even better opportunity to heal their own trauma.”* By SMS, a Burundian listener wrote in: *“Bravo GGL. It’s about time that the youth of the region ignore these stereotypes and build a better future for this region!”*

Former Burundian President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, a studio guest on a recent program, commented: *“GGL gives me hope. The presidents of the region should listen. If the youth have good relations in the region, the leaders can only follow!”*

*“No passport needed!”* shouts out another jingle on the program. *“Cross the borders with GGL every Saturday!”*

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