

Media Programming in the Great Lakes Region: Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo

Search for Common Ground (Search) works to **prevent and end violent conflict before, during, and after a crisis**. Search has a 35-year track record of equipping individuals and societies to find alternatives to violence around the globe. We strive to build sustainable peace for generations to come by working with all sides of a conflict, providing the tools needed to work together and find constructive solutions.

Search is a recognized **pioneer in using media to promote peace and stability in conflict-affected communities**. From our own radio studio founded in 1995 in Burundi (Studio Ijambo) to partnerships with TV networks throughout DRC, Search has spent decades working with community, local, and national media stations, producers, and networks across the Great Lakes Region.

Specifically, our media work aims to:

- 1 Increase the capacity of radio stations to produce more objective, constructive and participatory programming,**
- 2 Create constructive and solutions-oriented radio platforms for dialogue between citizens, political and media actors, and**
- 3 Promote responsible journalism in the media landscape of the Great Lakes Region.**



Reintegrating Child Soldiers Democratic Republic of the Congo



In response to the devastating effect the conflict in DRC has had on youth, Search for Common Ground established the **Sisi Watoto** radio program in 2003.

- Sisi Watoto is a 15-minute radio program in Swahili on the rights and responsibilities of children in post-conflict settings.
- The program was produced by a team of "youth reporters" under age of 18, including ex-child soldiers.
- Covering a broad range of topics, a significant part of the program was focused on the question of child soldiers, their demobilization, and their reinsertion into society.
- Sisi Watoto had a significant effect on breaking down stereotypes, broadening acceptance of and assisting in the reintegration of ex-child soldiers in eastern DRC.

Regional Youth Talk Great Lakes

Between 2008 and 2014, Search produced **Generation Grands Lacs (GGL)**, a 60-minute live phone-in show for youth, that was simulcast on five radio stations in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC, every Saturday afternoon.



The show provided young people an unprecedented opportunity to talk, listen, and learn about the issues and challenges facing their region.

- Through these on-air discussions, listeners discovered the diversity of opinions both within their own country, and in neighboring countries, revealing that monolithic stereotypes of "others" oversimplify the real challenges facing the region, and present an impediment to a brighter future.
- GGL's reach among its target audience was enormous, with more than 90% of university students in Kigali, Butare, Ngozi (Burundi), 86% of students in Bujumbura, and 57% of students in Bukavu (DRC) listening in weekly.



Promoting Women's Voices Great Lakes



Search's **"Voice for All"** project promoted women's voices in the Great Lakes media sector and reached a total of 6 million people in Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of Congo. Implemented in partnership with the Media Women's Associations (MWAs) in each country, the project had sought to increase:

- **Diversity within the media sector in the Great Lakes Region and particularly to reinforce women's involvement in journalism; and**
- **The general public's access to high quality, gender-sensitive media programming, particularly on issues of women's rights**

This project helped to establish a new regional network of women journalists and foster a shift in the way women's voices and issues are reflected in the media. An independent final evaluation found that **83%** of respondents reported that the project increased women's participation in the media in their country, while **74%** said the project increased public access to good quality programming on gender and women's rights.

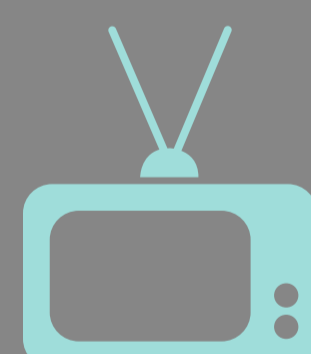


Girl-led Information & Inspiration Rwanda

Seeking to widen the space for female voices in Rwanda, Search produced **Urungano**, and collaborated with **Girl Effect Rwanda** to produce **"Ni Nyampinga"**, Rwanda's first magazine and radio show produced for girls by girls.



- "Urungano" and "Ni Nyampinga" utilized radio's widespread popularity in Rwanda to create a space where girls can have a voice, learn positive social behaviors and attitudes, and hone their leadership skills.
- The weekly radio program "Ni Nyampinga" was designed, produced, and hosted by a team of twelve Rwandan girls. One of the most popular segments of the program featured first-person testimonies on topics often inaccessible to Rwandan girls, such as health and pregnancy.



Promoting Positive Gender Role Models Democratic Republic of the Congo

- In 2011, Search implemented the **"Vrai Djo (Real Man) Project"** in the DRC and utilized its media expertise to create five short films and three audio spots to promote positive male role models in the fight against sexual and gender based violence in the DRC. The programs featured a Congolese superstar with "a positive image" to discourage negative male behaviour and provide an inspiring model of what it means to be considerate and responsible as a man.
- In 2017, Search produced **"Moseka, the Brave"**, a national TV series that challenged social limitations on girls' potential as entrepreneurs and leaders in the DRC. Through virtual chats and video calls on Facebook and Whatsapp, we brought together adolescent girls to discuss the program and sought to inspire them to follow the example of the women in the show. Notably, the final evaluation recorded a 300% increase in the number of young women and girls who had taken action toward economic independence (from 24% to 82%) in Kinshasa.



Regional Dialogue on Peace and Reconciliation Great Lakes

In early 1995, Search launched its flagship **Studio Ijambo**, an initiative to produce radio programs that promote peace, dialogue, and reconciliation. Studio Ijambo utilized an ethnically balanced team of journalists who produced about 25 weekly radio programmes to promote dialogue, peace, and reconciliation across Burundi, Tanzania, and eastern DRC. Programming continues today, with 5-8 radio programs produced per week.

- Programming includes current affairs and news, documentaries, radio soap operas, discussions, and youth shows focusing on issues such as elections, refugees, land tenure, ethnic tensions, HIV/AIDS, the demobilisation process, sexual violence and more.
- Over the years, a multitude of participants have been involved, including students, refugees, government representatives, civil society leaders, and ordinary citizens, representing a broad range of views and voices.

"Dialogue is the Future"

The Studio Ijambo slogan captures the essence of Search's radio work in Burundi.

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