



**For immediate release**

**FIRST LADY OF RWANDA LAUNCHES DFID SPONSORED  
ANTIRETROVIRAL PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS**

**(Kigali, 7th December 2005)** The First Lady of Rwanda, Mrs Jeanette Kagame, today launches a five-year programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to help 2500 women survivors of the Rwandan genocide raped and infected with HIV/AIDS access antiretroviral treatment (ART). The programme is coordinated in partnership by Survivors Fund (SURF) and PACFA.

The programme will enable 2500 HIV+ women survivors and their families to access family based care including ART & comprehensive care services. This is being achieved by enhancing the capacity of 4 local health clinics offering HIV/AIDS and their outreach services, already established. At present only 99 women survivors have access to ART, 23 of them as a result of private funding by SURF. Put into context, less than 5,000 people in the entire country of Rwanda currently have access to antiretroviral treatment.

Founder and Director of SURF, Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, commented: "This programme is a true landmark for survivors of the Rwandan genocide. It will not only have a massive impact on the lives of the 2500 HIV+ women survivors, but on the lives of their many dependents - in particular the thousands of children, and orphans they care for. It will also give vital hope to other women living with HIV and will encourage further testing."

She added: "We are eternally grateful for the incredible support of the British public, which has played an instrumental role in securing this funding from the British Government. But the launch of this programme does not mark the end of our campaign, but merely the first step towards SURF supporting more of the women affected and infected with HIV/AIDS as a result of the genocide. The real challenge now is to engage more governments to add to DFID's funding, to enable us to help more women survivors in Rwanda."

On the grant, a spokesperson from the Department for International Development said: "DFID is proud to be able to support SURF and PACFA with a £4.25 million grant to fund this vital five-year project to provide comprehensive support, care and treatment to 2500 women, and girls, who were raped and infected with HIV/AIDS, in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. SURF and PACFA both have an established track record of delivering HIV/AIDS projects in the field and are already working together to create the space and capacity for a programme of this unprecedented scale." She added: "Eleven years on from the genocide, we hope others will

now contribute to SURF's campaign to help the thousands more women survivors still needing access to treatment."

The Care and Treatment Project for Genocide Survivors infected with HIV/AIDS, is an initiative aimed at alleviating some of the problems faced by women genocide survivors who were raped during genocide, infected with HIV/AIDS and made vulnerable to poverty as a consequence of genocide. The Project aims to improve the living conditions of these women and their dependents and give them hope to live. More specifically the project will:

- Offer Community based care and provide Antiretroviral therapy (ART) to 1500 HIV+ women genocide survivors and up to 1000 of their dependents;
- Enhance the capacity of four local non-government clinics offering ART and other medical care to conform to the national HIV/AIDS care and treatment norms;
- Strengthen community based services including palliative care, food security, social support and initiate income generating activities for concerned families;
- Gradually facilitate women genocide survivors to access existing national services for HIV/AIDS care and support and participate in broader community level programmes.

The project is coordinated in partnership by PACFA and SURF and will be implemented at four centres, which provide care and support for survivors; AVEGA Central, AVEGA Eastern (Rwamagana), Solace Ministries and Rwanda Women Network.

For her campaigning work, Mary Kayitesi Blewitt this week was nominated for the Morgan Stanley Great Briton '05 Award, which recognises contributions that make Britain so great.

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**For more information visit:**

SURF - <http://www.survivors-fund.org.uk>

PACFA - <http://www.pacfa.org.rw/>

DFID - <http://dfid.gov.uk>

## **Some questions answered:**

### **What is the scale of the problem?**

There are an estimated 25,000 women and girls who were raped and deliberately infected by HIV positive men in 1994 who are now living with, and dying from, AIDS. At present many receive no medication, no shelter, and must cope with the trauma of being raped and the stigma of being HIV positive without support. These women are often the sole survivors of their entire families; many with responsibility for supporting orphaned children.

### **How much money is needed to make a difference?**

Survivors Fund has estimated that it would cost only about \$12.5m a year to buy the antiretroviral drugs needed to give the estimated 25,000 women survivors infected with HIV/AIDS their lives back. The total sum is equivalent to half the annual salary of Richard Jay Korgan (Chief Executive of Schering-Plough)! Or 0.01% of the \$80b the US Government spent last year on the war in Iraq.

### **Why is the treatment so important?**

The treatment would enable the women to become economically active again, look after their children and live a relatively normal life. All of this reduces the cost of orphan care, medical care, and frees up hospital beds. And more importantly it gives some hope back to these women, many who have literally nothing left to live or look forward to except death.

### **Why is it the responsibility of the international community, not the Rwandan Government's?**

The international community stood by and failed to prevent, react and stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, a genocide where one million people were killed and tens of thousands of women were raped. The international community is presented with an opportunity to redeem itself.

The women survivors of the genocide were neglected once and now they are dying from HIV/AIDS because they can't afford anti retroviral treatment. Is the international community planning to now abandon them a second time?

### **Why discriminate to support women survivors infected with HIV/AIDS in particular?**

Most of the target group for Survivors Fund Initiative for Free Antiretroviral Treatment for Survivors are widows. They often are the sole survivors of their entire families. On average, each widow supports 7 orphans. And as they continue to die, the number of orphaned children in Rwanda will continue to rise.

In addition, the perpetrators of the genocide - those standing trial at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda who allegedly led the systematic programme of deliberate sexual violence during the genocide - are receiving free antiretroviral treatment. Meanwhile, the victims not only have no medication, but many also have no shelter, and struggle to meet

other basic needs. They also have to cope with trauma of genocide and rape, and the stigma of being HIV positive. Where is the justice in that?

### **What is the Survivors Fund?**

SURF works to improve the lives of the Rwandan Survivors of Genocide. While the genocide destroyed victims by inflicting excruciating physical pain and terrifying mental abuse, the goal of SURF is to rebuild a sense of self and trust in humanity. Its HQ is in London, and has a satellite office in Kigali, Rwanda.

SURF was founded by Mary Kayitesi Blewitt at the behest of survivors. She herself lost 50 family members during the genocide in 1994. Her support for survivors started back in 1995 after returning to the UK from eight months working for the Ministry of Rehabilitation in Rwanda and in 1997 Mary formally established SURF to continue to aid, assist and support survivors in the UK and Rwanda too. SURF is supported amongst others by Comic Relief; The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and The Elton John AIDS Foundation.

Survivors Fund (SURF) is working to ensure that the:

- Voices of survivors are listened to and heard
- Memories of the genocide are kept alive
- Victims of the genocide are never forgotten
- Survivors of the genocide are supported - in Rwanda and the UK

SURF has achieved a great deal in only 7 years since it came into being:

- Nearly 3000 households in all, with an average of 5 children per household, have received grants from SURF for Income Generating Projects.
- SURF currently supports 22 women with treatment.

In 2004 alone:

- SURF helped give vocational training to 175 children in 2004, and supported a further 200 children with school fees.
- SURF helped build 16 mass graves in Rwanda.

SURF is a registered UK charity (no. 1065705/5).

### **What is PACFA?**

PACFA - Protection and Care of Families Against HIV/AIDS - was established as a direct response to the Kigali Declaration of the Summit of First Ladies of Sub-Saharan Africa on HIV/AIDS and Children in situations of armed Conflict of May 2001. Following the Summit, the Office of the First Lady organized consultations with the various partners, which culminated in a workshop to develop a national plan of action of the Kigali Declaration. The workshop identified the key role of the First Lady as being that of advocate, and a mobiliser of communities and resources in the fight against HIV/AIDS among women and youth and the care and protection of vulnerable children and families.