



For immediate release

SURF CALLS ON FILM PRODUCERS TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS

(London, March 2006) Ahead of the release later this month of *Shooting Dogs*, the Rwandan Survivors Fund (SURF) is calling for greater emotional and psychological support for survivors of the genocide in Rwanda.

The need is more important now than ever, as many survivors are left vulnerable from the mass release of prisoners who have served a lesser sentence after confessing to killing during the genocide in *gacaca* courts. Many of these prisoners, who have admitted responsibility for their crimes but do not carry any burden, are now intimidating, physically attacking, kidnapping and even killing survivors.

Shooting Dogs is a fictional account of a British Priest and his young acolyte set against the backdrop of the true event of the massacre at *L'Ecole Technique Officielle* during the Rwandan genocide of 1994, when 1,000,000 Tutsis and many moderate Hutus were killed in just 100 days. The powerful and emotional film was shot on location in Rwanda, at the school where the massacre happened, and survivors were on the film crew and involved as extras when recreating the crowd scenes.

A number of survivors were deeply affected by the filming. A number were left traumatised as they relived the experience of the genocide. SURF, which works through a number of grassroots survivor's organisation in Rwanda including IBUKA, was chiefly responsible for providing trauma counselling services for those affected.

Mary Kayitesi-Blewitt, Director of SURF, said: "In Rwanda, if you see a machete being wielded it doesn't matter if it's for a film - it seems real. When *Shooting Dogs* finished filming, we had to step up trauma counselling. It took some survivors six months to overcome the anxiety, fear and paranoia. As such, we believe that production companies behind such films have a moral obligation to make a contribution to the organisations that undertake this counselling and are vital to providing the emotional and psychological support for survivors."

Mary Kayitesi-Blewitt, a British Citizen of Rwandan origin, founded SURF at the behest of survivors after losing 50 family members during the genocide in 1994. Mary set up SURF after returning to the UK from eight months working for the Ministry of Rehabilitation in Rwanda where she helped counsel survivors involved in the genocide. SURF continues to aid, assist and support survivors in the UK and Rwanda today.

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For further information on Survivors Fund, or to interview Mary Kayitesi-Blewitt contact:

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Notes to editors:

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. To find out more visit:

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