



For immediate release

SURF applauds visit of David Cameron and Conservative Party members to Rwanda

(24th July 2007) Survivors Fund (SURF), the only dedicated international charity representing and supporting survivors of the Rwandan genocide, applauds the visit of the David Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, to Rwanda.

SURF has played an instrumental role helping to organise the visit, to ensure that Mr Cameron and his colleagues from the Conservative Party are given the opportunity whilst on the visit to learn more about the plight of survivors of the genocide, and the work of the British-based charity to provide vital support to improve the lives of the hundreds of thousands affected by the killings in 1994.

Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, Founder and Director of SURF, who lost over fifty members of the family in the genocide said:

“I would like to applaud the visit of David Cameron, and the delegation of Conservative Party members, to Rwanda. The fact that party members have taken time out to see first hand the realities on the ground in Africa is admirable.

Literally “seeing is believing” when it comes to understanding the genocide, and its aftermath, and the visit is important, not only for Conservative Party members but also for survivors of the genocide too. The visit is giving survivors the opportunity to speak directly to those in a position to make a difference to their lives, to help address their challenges that include the issues arising from the release of perpetrators of the genocide given amnesty through gacaca (village courts) to the trauma of giving evidence at such trials.

These problems, unique to survivors in Rwanda, are exacerbated by the ongoing issues of lack of shelter, education and access to healthcare which Survivors Fund (SURF) is helping to address. The support demonstrated by the Conservative Party visit will not solve all these problems, but will go some way towards at least helping raise awareness of their existence.”

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Notes to editors:

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What is the Survivors Fund?

Survivors Fund, or SURF, is a charity dedicated to aiding and assisting the survivors of the Rwandan genocide. Since 1997, SURF has been supporting medical care and providing counselling for survivors, vocational training and home building. The work ensures 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

Over the past year alone, SURF has:

- Supported 2500 women raped and infected with HIV/AIDS with antiretroviral treatment
- Provided grants for 5000 households for Income Generating Projects
- Built 70 homes for child-headed households, giving shelter to nearly 400 young survivors
- Provided vocational training to 360 children, and supported 370 children with school fees
- Built 22 mass graves, giving over 100,000 victims of the genocide a decent burial

In 2007, SURF hopes to build 500 new homes for survivors, a further 23 mass graves and to complete work on the Humura (meaning 'calm' in Kinyarwanda) Resource & Testimony Centre to document the atrocities of the Rwandan genocide to act as both proof of genocide (many deny it) and as a resource for all those who want to learn the lessons from the genocide. Furthermore, it will permanently preserve memories of the genocide through the recording of testimonies in a holistic manner – as there will be a counselling centre on site. As well, it will provide a place of sanctuary and shelter to vulnerable survivors at risk from reprisal attacks for giving evidence at gacaca (community-based) trials.

For more information, please see: www.survivors-fund.org.uk

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