



For immediate release

SURF ANNOUNCES £4.25 MILLION GRANT FROM DFID

(London, 2nd February 2005) The Rwandan Survivors Fund (SURF) is pleased to announce that together with PACFA (Prevention and Care for Families Against AIDS) has been awarded a grant of £4.25 million to help 2500 women survivors of the Rwandan genocide raped and deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS access antiretroviral treatment (ART).

This grant, the first awarded by the Department for International Development (DFID) to SURF, will enable the charity to offer family based care including ART & comprehensive care services to 2500 HIV+ women genocide survivors and their families. This will be achieved by enhancing the capacity of 4 local health clinics offering HIV/AIDS and their outreach services, already established. It will have a massive impact on the lives of not only the women helped, but on the lives of their many dependents – in particular their children, and the orphans they often care for. It will also give hope to other women living with HIV and will encourage further testing and prevention activity. At present only 99 women survivors have access to ART, 23 of them as a result of private funding by SURF.

The grant is the culmination of SURF's *Ten Years On* campaign that was launched in April in the presence of Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for International Development, and the First Lady of Rwanda, Mrs Jeanette Kagame, who set up PACFA. The campaign, that has included an all-day *Reading of the Testimonies* of survivors in Trafalgar Square and the submission of a public petition to Downing Street, has been focused on raising awareness of the plight of women raped and infected with HIV/AIDS during the Rwandan genocide and to lobby governments and pharmaceutical companies worldwide to do more to help this particularly vulnerable group.

Announcing the grant, Director of SURF, Mary Kayitesi-Blewitt, said: "DFID's grant is a massive boost to our campaign to secure access to antiretroviral treatment for the 25,000 women survivors, raped and infected with HIV during the genocide in Rwanda. The money will enable us to give life to 2,500 women and to give hope to thousands more. The real challenge now is to engage more governments to add to DFID's funding, to enable SURF to help even more women survivors in Rwanda."

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: “Ten 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.”

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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 has Survivors Fund being doing to help these women?

In April 2004, the Survivors Fund (SURF) launched its *Ten Years On* campaign, to mark the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. The campaign aims to help the 25,000 women survivors of the Rwandan genocide raped and deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS by raising awareness of their plight and calling for more support to enable them to access antiretroviral treatment (ART).

In April, Survivors Fund launched their campaign at a Parliamentary Reception at Portcullis House, where Minister for International Development, Hilary Benn MP, pledged to do more to help the campaign in the presence of the First Lady of Rwanda, Mrs Jeanette Kagame - who set up PACFA in 2001 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.

Following the launch, the Survivors Fund submitted a petition to 10 Downing Street calling on the Government to do more to pressure pharmaceutical companies to make antiretroviral treatment more affordable, or if possible free, for this most vulnerable group. On 16th July, 100 women joined the Survivors Fund in Trafalgar Square to mark the tenth anniversary of the end of the 100-day genocide in an all-day "Reading of the Testimonies" of these women genocide survivors. Women such as Baroness Shirley Williams, Lady Amelie Jakobovits, Helen Baxendale and Josie D'Arby each read testimonies.

In December, Survivors Fund launched its *One Month to Save the Life of One Woman* campaign where supporters across the world were each asked to donate just £5. Over £6,000 was raised, which when supplemented by SURF, will enable the charity to fund ART for a woman genocide survivors for at least the next ten years. This will make up the number of women genocide survivors supported directly by SURF to 23.

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.

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.

Who is Mary Kayitesi Blewitt?

Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, originally from Rwanda, founded SURF at the behest of survivors after losing 50 family members herself during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Her support for survivors started back in 1995 after returning from eight months working for the Rwandan Ministry of Rehabilitation.

In 1997 Mary formally established SURF to continue to aid, assist and support survivors in the UK and Rwanda. SURF is supported amongst others by Comic Relief; The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

In 2004, she was awarded a Woman of the Year Award for her tireless work for survivors of the Rwandan genocide, which she accepted in their name.

As Fergal Keane, BBC Correspondent, has said of Mary: "She is a quite remarkable human being, one of the most remarkable I have ever met. Her work with the survivors of the Rwandan genocide has involved extraordinary personal sacrifice; every minute of her life is taken up with thinking of their needs. To confront the horror of genocide every day demands deep reserves of emotional commitment due to the terrible experience of her own family in the genocide. Mary draw's her commitment from a very personal source. Her initiative in launching SURF has brought love and hope back to the lives of many survivors; those of us who witnessed genocide in Rwanda know that Mary Blewitt stands among the bravest of the brave, the kindest of the kind."