



SURF FOUNDER RECEIVES OBE FROM PRINCE CHARLES AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE CEREMONY

(LONDON – 29th February 2009) SURF Founder and Director, Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, received from Prince Charles the OBE (Order of the British Empire) that she was awarded in the Queen's New Years Honours List at a ceremony at Buckingham Palace. Mary's award is in recognition of her work supporting survivors of the Rwandan genocide, in the UK and Rwanda, through the charity that she established ten years ago, Survivors Fund (SURF).

On the honour, Mary said:

I want to thank everyone dearly for their congratulations. I have been inundated with good wishes since the announcement of the OBE, and I feel truly blessed for such incredible support and goodwill.

In many ways I feel that I do not personally deserve the recognition as the reality is that none of SURF's achievements would have been possible without your support and that of SURF's remarkable staff and trustees. Coupled with the incredible public support that we have received over the past ten years, it has enabled us to achieve all that we have for survivors of the genocide, in Rwanda and UK

On a personal note, it would be amiss of me also not to acknowledge the dedication of my husband, Richard Blewitt, and children, Richard Jnr. and Christine. As well, to remember those who are not here to share in the honour – in particular, my dear brother, John. Though he was finally laid to rest with dignity earlier this year, I still feel his loss so deeply. It is for him in particular that I have worked so hard since 1994, and the fact that there are still so many thousands of bodies of victims still to be located – all someone's friend or family too.

SURF's work is to ensure that all these victims of the genocide are given a decent burial, and that the survivors can finally look forward to a better future. Only to this end, is this honour important.

The challenge ahead is to continue this work.

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

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Notes to editors:

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
- Completed work on a new Resource and Testimony Centre, based just outside Kigali - to provide a place of sanctuary for survivor's still under threat

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

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