



**For immediate release**

## **SURF EMBARKS ON SECOND OFFICIAL VISIT TO RWANDA**

**(London, October 2006)** The Rwandan Survivors Fund (SURF) today embarks on its second official visit to Rwanda. Led by SURF Founder and Director, Mary Kayitesi-Blewitt, the visit will give a group of 13 donors, partners and trustees of SURF, as well as journalists, the opportunity to visit for themselves the projects that SURF supports and to meet survivors to hear first hand their testimonies.

The weeklong visit is the second time that SURF has organised a trip in an official capacity to Rwanda. Participants will get the opportunity to meet survivors of the genocide, in particular widows and orphans, and will visit health clinics and co-operative ventures that SURF supports, as well as villages and mass graves built by SURF money.

One of the highlights of the visit will be a visit to SURF's Humura Resource and Testimony Centre. Humura (meaning 'calm' in Kinyarwanda) is currently under development, and will serve to document the atrocities of the Rwandan genocide to act as both proof of genocide (many still hold the view that it never took place) 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 to ensure that they are available for posterity, increasingly important as survivors age and die. 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.

A second highlight will be seeing the rollout of SURF's Programme of Antiretroviral Treatment for Women Survivors of the Genocide Raped and Infected with HIV/AIDS. Through a grant of £4.25 million from the UK Department for International Development, and working alongside one of SURF's partner organisations PACFA, the first of 2,500 women survivors began the programme of treatment earlier this year that will enable them to live a normal life again. Participants will meet a number of the future beneficiaries, as well as a number of SURF's other grassroots partner organisations, including AVEGA and IBUKA, who are working with survivors in the field.

Commenting on the trip, Director of SURF, Mary Kayitesi-Blewitt, said: "The visit will give some of our key stakeholders a unique opportunity to see first hand the work that we undertake. In my view, there is nothing comparable to first-hand experience. Literally "seeing is believing" when it comes to understanding the genocide, and its aftermath." She added: "The visit is being facilitated by survivors and the agenda has been developed by survivors

too, thus helping to empower those involved and to show a side to survivors that is often overlooked. It will also give survivors the opportunity to speak directly to people who are in a position to make a difference and to give our key stakeholders and the media the opportunity to learn more about the plight of survivors and the issues they currently face.”

Participants include representatives from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, London Oratory School, TELCO, Reuters and Good Housekeeping Magazine.

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**For more information visit:**

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

**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 for women survivors with HIV/AIDS, providing counselling for survivors, vocational training and home building for orphans. 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, SURF has:

- Provided grants for 5000 households for Income Generating Projects.
- Built over 70 homes for child-headed households, giving shelter to 5 survivors.
- Provided vocational training to 360 children, and supported 370 children with school fees.
- Built 22 mass graves, giving thousands of victims of the genocide a decent burial

SURF is supported amongst others by the Department for International Development; Comic Relief; The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund; The Elton John AIDS Foundation; The Funding Network and The Pears Family Charitable Foundation.

In 2007 we hope to build 5000 new homes for survivors, a further 23 mass graves and to complete work on the Resource and Testimony Centre.

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