

# MY RWANDA CHALLENGE



*Above:* David Russell (SURF Director) with Odette Kayirere (AVEGA Coordinator), 2010 Guardian International Achievement Award Winner



*Right:* Julienne, a survivor of the genocide and SURF beneficiary

Dear Sir / Madam,

The reason I write to you is that I am **seeking sponsorship** for two marathons I am running in two weeks in April, first in London then in Rwanda, to mark the anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

You are receiving this letter as **your house is along my training route from West Hampstead up to Hampstead Heath**, and as I am unlikely to attempt such an ambitious challenge again, I am looking to maximise the sponsorship by any means necessary!

To let you know a little more about myself, I am the Director of Survivors Fund (SURF), the principal international organisation **representing and supporting survivors of the Rwandan genocide**. I am the sole full-time employee in the UK, and last year helped to raise nearly £1 million for an array of projects in Rwanda including a new health clinic for 5,000 women survivors, a university scholarship programme for 100 young survivors, and a new programme to provide educational support to 500 children born to women survivors raped during the genocide.

However, **the needs of survivors seventeen years on from the genocide are far greater** than we can address. That is why I have bought myself a pair of running shoes, and I am attempting this challenge. I am not a natural runner, so **the past six months of training has been tough - but the going is easy compared to the challenges for survivors**.

I appreciate that this is an unorthodox approach, and that with so many scams around you may have some doubts, so I would urge you to visit our website at [www.survivors-fund.org.uk](http://www.survivors-fund.org.uk) or google *SURF Rwanda* to learn first-hand about our work. Naturally, **I would be happy to run round to meet you** at any time to tell you more about SURF, our work with survivors, or my forthcoming marathon challenge!

If you are able to sponsor me, then all the funding, **100% of every penny donated, will go to support widows of the genocide** in membership of our principal partner organisation in Rwanda, AVEGA. You may be aware of their work from a series of films broadcast by Comic Relief with our patron, Paul Bradley. If you want to learn more about the widows, then we have these short films available to view on our youtube channel at [www.youtube.com/survivorsfund](http://www.youtube.com/survivorsfund).

I have appended overleaf a donation form, though my fundraising page with VirginMoneyGiving is the **easiest way to donate, which can be accessed at [www.tinyurl.com/SURFmarathon](http://www.tinyurl.com/SURFmarathon)**. I have already raised over £2,000 but I am dearly hoping that I can reach a target of £10,000 - with your help!

My involvement with SURF extends back to my introduction to the organisation in 2004 by the Holocaust Educational Trust when at the time I was working at The PR Office, an agency that I co-founded. **I was immediately captivated by the cause**, and helped to launch a campaign which secured £4.25 million from the British Government to support 2,500 HIV+ women survivors on antiretroviral treatment. I was fortunate then to receive a fellowship from New York University in social entrepreneurship, from which I returned in 2009 to begin in post as director of SURF.

That is my potted story, but to learn more about the story of the survivors then please do not hesitate to contact me at [dr@survivors-fund.org.uk](mailto:dr@survivors-fund.org.uk) or on 07590 329 267. Thank you!

David Russell  
Director, Survivors Fund (SURF)

## A message from SURF Patron, Lindsey Hilsum:



Channel 4's Lindsey Hilsum

"In 1994, when the genocide started in Rwanda, I happened to be there. As a journalist, I felt powerless. Rwandan friends rang to say that men with machetes were surrounding their houses. They tried to hide, but some I never heard from again. In just 100 days, the then government led the killing of up to 1 million minority Tutsis and those members of the Hutu majority who refused to participate in murder. I saw things that I can scarcely bear to remember or to tell you.

How much worse then for the 400,000 survivors, who seventeen years on, are still haunted by the memories of what happened during that cruel and desperate time. But there is a charity, founded by a Rwandan living in the UK, Mary Kayitesi Blewitt OBE, which helps survivors of the genocide.

Survivors Fund (SURF) provides practical and moral support. Tens of thousands of women were gang raped and infected with HIV. SURF provides 2,500 of them with anti-retroviral drugs and trauma counselling. Working with local partners, it would like to be able to help more genocide widows.

For £50 a month, SURF can sponsor a young survivor through university, to help them build a better future. With just £10 a month, SURF can help a widow set up a business, to provide for orphans and children in her care. Any sum can help SURF gather testimonies and build memorials, to ensure the victims will never be forgotten.

After seventeen years, Rwanda is a different, much safer place. But the survivors of genocide remain amongst the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.



SURF Founder, Mary Kayitesi



When the killing started, the world stood by and did nothing. I feel that if we don't help the survivors now, we're abandoning them again. The genocide in Rwanda was not just another story for me. It was the most terrible thing I ever saw. But I believe we can do something to help those who survived, but whose pain and hardship endures. Please support SURF."

**Lindsey Hilsum, SURF Patron, Channel 4 News International Editor**

### Sponsor me and Survivors Fund (SURF)

Monthly Banker's Order (UK Bank Accounts only)

Name of your bank \_\_\_\_\_

Address of your bank \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Sort code   -   -

Please pay to the account of Survivors Fund (No. 13716264), Bank Sort Code 83-91-36, Adam & Company Bank, 22 King Street, London, SW1Y 6QY, the sum of: (please tick)

£65  £20  £10  £5  Other £ \_\_\_\_\_

100 Club

Every month, starting on (date) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Or I would like to make a one-off donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque to **Survivors Fund**

I have completed the Gift Aid Declaration below.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Your Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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UK taxpayers: Please tick this box to enable us to raise an extra 28p on every pound you donate, at no cost to you!

I want all donations I make to the SURF from 6 April 2003 until further notice to be Gift Aided

Please return your completed form to our office: **12 Rickett Street, London SW6 1RU**

Or donate online at [www.tinyurl.com/SURFmarathon](http://www.tinyurl.com/SURFmarathon)

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