

## **FSB members require assistance with fundraising for Rwanda**

In 1994, the genocide that devastated Rwanda claimed the lives of over 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in a 100-day slaughter. Although it will take decades, the people of Rwanda are determined to rebuild their society.

In April 2012 FSB members Claire Darch and Dr Nicoletta Policek, Directors at Saraswati Project are going on a professional field trip co-ordinated by Steve Robinson from the Aegis Trust. In 2003, following visits by Rwandan genocide survivors and members of the Rwandan Government to Britain's first Holocaust Centre, Aegis was invited to build the first national Rwanda Memorial and Education Centre and to advise on rebuilding the community, specifically using commemoration. The Centre's ground-breaking programmes challenge divisive ideology in schools and the community, document the genocide and provide practical support for orphans and widows. Its programmes help to build community cohesion and encourage work and employment.

To assist in the development of these programmes and provide much needed assistance to widows and orphans, fundraising is required. During the trip, Claire, Nicoletta and Steve will present the monies raised from the UK, which will assist in housing for widows and orphans and many other needs.

Claire and Nicoletta are extremely excited about the visit and the opportunities that it will hopefully open to provide assistance to people in Rwanda. They are aiming to set up a training facility to enable Rwandans to set up businesses and rebuild their lives.

Claire says, "*These issues are very close to our hearts and we feel honoured to be involved in this with the Aegis Trust*".

Claire is setting up links between schools in Sleaford and Rwanda and the pupils are excited about being involved in fundraising.

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The visit to Rwanda includes an intensive itinerary including engaging with leading women in Rwanda – the only country in the world with a majority of women in its Cabinet – and see the explicit role they're playing in the country's rebuilding plan, a meeting with the Head of the Rwanda Development Board, exploring exchange/international student learning and providing practical business development. They will also be meeting with appropriate levels of the Kigali Institute of Education, Kigali Institute of Technology and Management and the National University of Rwanda, visiting schools and orphanages, youth projects and memorial sites. The trip will also involve meeting genocide survivors to hear their experiences first hand.

After the killing stops, the consequences of the genocide continue...Many survivors widowed or orphaned by the genocide have remained disadvantaged. Many younger survivors find themselves head of the households – responsible for sustaining their younger siblings but without the means of paying school fees or buying school materials. Many women widowed during the genocide are unable to make ends meet to pay for basic household expenses, such as water or electricity. Some families are forced to live on the street, their livelihoods destroyed.

Anne-Marie Bucyana, a survivor of the genocide gave a statement in 2004 which powerfully highlights the trauma which thousands of people experienced and are still trying to live with today.



***“Born in 1967, I grew up in a loving home with my parents, two brothers and five sisters. In 1990, I married. My husband, Jean-Marie, and I had our first child in Kicukiro - a boy named Patrick. After his birth, the authorities started persecuting the Tutsis.***

*They arrested my husband, accusing him of being an RPF accomplice. He was jailed*

*for two weeks, and, after his release, fled to Kibuye. I and my son followed after the Interahamwe came looking for him. In 1993, I gave birth to my second child, a boy we named Iradukunda, meaning 'God loves us'. This was where we were in April 1994 when Habyarimana's plane was shot down.*

*When the killings began, they came and took my husband away. Shortly after, I could hear those who took him away singing that they had killed a cockroach, and I knew he was dead. One soldier came up to the house. I was sitting with my baby boy on my lap. He grabbed the child and threw him against the wall. He died from the impact. I ran to pick up my baby's body, but the soldier threatened me and told me to lie down. And there he raped me. I don't really have the words to explain all that he did to me. At some point he heard a commotion, and ran off.*

*When he heard that I was still alive, Zacharya, a colleague of my husband's, came on a motorbike to take me away. I did not know that he had been involved in my husband's murder, and thought that I would be safe with him. I took my son with me. Zacharya had taken many houses from Tutsis, and he took us to one of them in Safi Cyumbati, putting us in a room with Interahamwe. I remained at this house for six days, and was raped every night. At any time one of the Interahamwe wanted me, he took me - even in front of my son, who was with me.*

*At dusk on the sixth day, I was raped by two gangs of Interahamwe. A third gang gave me a hoe and ordered me to dig my grave; they couldn't be bothered to do it themselves. I was naked; they had already taken my sarong. I started pleading with them to shoot me, and not to kill me with a spiked club. They asked me if I knew the price of a bullet. While they were deliberating, another gang of Interahamwe came. Because I was claiming to be a Hutu, their leader ordered the group to take me back to the house, and check my tribe in the morning. As they were taking me back to the house, someone went and told an old lady whom I had helped in the past. Later that night, she stole me away to her house and hid me and my son.*

*We started hearing rumours that the RPF were advancing and killing. Everyone started fleeing. I asked myself, "Why leave?" But I had no reason to stay; so I decided to leave with them. But once we reached the Rusizi River, where we would cross into Zaire, I felt that they all had something in common, and I was on my own. I decided to stay in Rwanda.*

*When I learned I was infected with HIV/AIDS, I was shocked, confused, in denial. I felt worthless; I felt I was finished. That's when I started to feel the trauma. I looked for something with which to commit suicide, but I couldn't find anything. Ever since I found out I was ill I have never received any medication for my illness, not once. I only half survived. I am still carrying death in me; not only th death that AIDS will bring. Others say they escaped from the sword, but the sword is still in my heart. Even in death, I do not believe I will find rest. Only my son gives me the strength to live. It is a miracle that I am still alive after ten years. If I can survive another two years, he will be a little older, and maybe he will have a chance in life; maybe he will not become a street child."*

Read more in Aegis Trusts' book; **We Survived**

This story is just the experience of one woman - thousands of people need assistance.

If you can help with fundraising or would be willing to make a donation towards the £25,000 target, please contact:

Claire Darch on 01529 572020 or 07530 268862,  
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Or

Steve Robinson on 07912 391242  
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Or simply make a donation at:

<http://www.justgiving.com/Support-Rwanda>.

If you would like to join the trip, please contact Steve.

A photographic exhibition will be available on-line after the trip which will show the experiences and work of the field trip members.