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**ROTARY'S AFRICA HOPE LAUNCHED FOR AIDS ORPHANED CHILDREN IN RWANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA**

Rotary's Africa Hope is launched today by Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland in partnership with Hope and Homes for Children. This Rotary Centennial project is to help alleviate despair and deprivation for 5,000 children orphaned by AIDS or genocide. The children are in 1,000 of the poorest child-headed and grandparent headed families in Rwanda and South Africa. The AIDS pandemic sweeping through Africa is leaving thousands of children without parents or hope. This project will give them the chance to stay together as a family group in their own homes and continue with their schooling, so that they can fulfil their potential in life and do not have to resort to prostitution or violence just to survive.

Rotary Clubs will raise funds to provide shelter, food and access to medication; stability from practical advice and guidance and education and training to ensure eventual self-reliance.

Hope and Homes for Children has worked closely with Rotary in Eastern Europe for the last six years and celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. Rotarians from Rwanda and South Africa will work with Hope and Homes for Children using the funds raised by Rotary Clubs in Great Britain and Ireland.

The statistics are frightening: in Rwanda in 1994 an estimated one million people were killed in 100 days, by the end of 2001 there were 613,000 orphans of which nearly 300,000 were orphans of the AIDS epidemic. In South Africa by 2005 approximately one million children under the age of 15 will have lost their mothers to AIDS. Every 14 seconds AIDS turns a child into an orphan.

President of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland Gordon McNally has recently returned from a fact finding trip to South Africa, having visited Rwanda last year. He said 'I chose to visit Africa myself specifically to see the scale of the problem and to observe the work being done by Hopes and Homes for Children. I must confess I was unprepared for what I was to see, particularly in Rwanda. There is still much evidence of the genocide that took place in that country ten years ago. Many children have been left with nothing as a consequence of the killing and the subsequent AIDS epidemic. The situation is no less serious in South Africa. There is

no doubt of the urgent need for the work being carried out in Africa and I am excited that we will involve local Rotarians in both countries. Before leaving Africa I made two promises to the children I had met:

1. To tell people about them and
2. To try and help them

Rotary is celebrating a century of service to communities this year and we must give our support through funding and service to these children to fulfil my promise and give them a future.'

Colonel Mark Cook OBE said "By working together, Rotary and Hope and Homes for Children will have an enormous impact on the lives of many thousands of children. We are proud of our partnership with Rotary and we are grateful to them for the time and commitment they put into raising money for our work – every penny makes a difference."

For more information please contact Judith Diment on 01628 672965 or 07860 162313 or [judithdiment@aol.com](mailto:judithdiment@aol.com)

**INTERVIEWS WITH GORDON MCINALLY AND PHOTOGRAPHS  
AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**