

## PRESS RELEASE

**FROM: Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton Constituency**

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### **Fiona Bruce MP speaks at Rotary Club of Burslem on aid visit to Rwanda**

Fiona Bruce MP recently spoke at Port Vale Football Club to the Annual International Night of the Rotary Club of Burslem.

Fiona spoke of her visit to Rwanda in 2010:

*'It was with some trepidation that Jeremy Lefroy (MP for Stafford) and I arrived at the Private Sector Foundation in Kigali, having no prior knowledge of the businesses we'd offered to work with in a rash of enthusiasm as new MPs several weeks earlier. Were they start ups or would the delegates be expecting us to deliver modules of MBAs?! Would there be a cultural divide or language barriers?*

*We needn't have worried! The delegates couldn't have made us feel more welcome and spoke excellent English. They were bright, enthusiastic men and women already trading and employing one or two people in a variety of businesses – shoemaking, chicken farming, clothes retailing, graphic design, accountancy and even a would-be film producer.*

*We broke the ice by telling them of some of our business disasters! On day one we looked at market research and writing a mission statement. They were interested and engaged – but was this typical Rwandan politeness? The acid test would be if they returned on day two. Overnight we wondered? But despite having businesses to run - they all came back!*

*During the remainder of the week, we tackled strategic planning and writing a Business Plan. We also worked on financial, people, and time management. Finally we did workshops on recruitment, interviewing and staff development. Despite cramming rather more in than any self respecting management consultant would dream of doing, and with Jeremy and I learning what worked best as we went along each day, the delegates' overwhelming feedback at the week's end was 'more!'*

*What we learnt from a most enjoyable experience working with enthusiastic, engaged and interested people was how great the need is for this kind of training in Rwanda – however amateur! There is a real opportunity for volunteers in this area; it became clear to us that what we had been concerned would be our weakness – our lack of formal training as management consultants – was far less important than our real life experience running businesses for over 20 years, which enabled us to answer so many of the questions and challenges, which clearly face business people the world over.*

*Building up the capacity to do business well in the SME sector in Rwanda, with the jobs and taxes benefiting local communities which go with them, is much needed. There are thousands of micro businesses, providing a bare subsistence living for their owners and families, but just a handful of big businesses, and a huge gap in between. Only the larger players can afford access to business management training. We worked with about 14 SMEs. At the end of the week, the Director of the Private Sector Foundation asked if Umubano could come back and work with more businesspeople, who were also keen to learn. ‘How many more?’ was our question. ‘About 72,000!’ was her answer. Any volunteers for next year”?*

Fiona also spoke about commitment to Fair Trade as it was Fair Trade Fortnight.

ENDS