

AFRIQUE CENTRALE



Rwandan genocide orphanage heeds Holocaust model

An orphanage modeled on those constructed for Holocaust survivors opened Monday in Rwanda by welcoming 120 children orphaned by the African country's 1994 genocide.

Funded largely by Jewish American and international donors, Agahozo Shalom Youth Village will eventually take in 500 orphans, whose families died in a bloody ethnic cleansing campaign which claimed 800,000 lives in 100 days.

The project, which has attracted celebrity support from actress Natalie Portman and the Clinton Global Initiative, is modeled on the Israeli orphanage Yemin Orde, constructed to assist young survivors of the Holocaust following World War II.

Agahozo Shalom is budgeted at 20 million dollars (14.8 million euros), funded largely by private donors, corporate sponsors and partnership with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

"The genocide in Rwanda has hit a strong chord with Jews, who have compassion and understanding of the trauma involved and what is needed for reconciliation and to move forward," said William Recant, Director of Disaster Relief and Development for the JDC.

Similar orphanages emphasizing trauma counseling, educational therapy and volunteerism have since been built in Ethiopia and Kosovo.

The need for such programs remains high in Rwanda, home to an estimated 1.2 million orphans and at-risk children who have lost parents to the genocide, subsequent imprisonment or AIDS.

<http://www.afriquecentrale.info/central.php?o=2&s=759&d=3&i=1975>

Publié le 15 décembre 2008.