

KENYA: NAIROBI BOMBING

9 December, 1998

appeal no. 25/98

Situation Report no. 02/98

Period covered: 12th of October - 13th of November

Efforts continue to assist the victims of the August 7 Nairobi bomb blast. The immediate response of the Kenyan Red Cross Society (KRCS), supported by the Federation, was highly effective. Although various donors have responded well to the appeal on behalf of the bomb blast victims, the total appeal budget remains uncovered. Unless more funds are made available, the original assistance objectives will not be reached. Every effort is being made to cover the most urgent needs with the available resources.

The context

On August 7, 1998, a bomb exploded in Nairobi, Kenya, killing more than 200 people and injuring over 5,500 others. Of the 5,500 victims, 500 were hospitalised and 5,000 more treated in various local hospitals and clinics before being released. More than 30 buildings were severely damaged, and the five storey Ufundi Co-operative Building next to the American Embassy was completely flattened.

Local branch volunteers and staff from the KRCS were at the scene within minutes after the blast, and provided 24 hour service during the 6-day rescue phase. Red Cross Action Teams (RCATs) worked tirelessly to remove debris, and to help extricate survivors and bodies from the rubble. A KRCS first aid post was set up to care for rescue workers and family members waiting for information about relatives. Over 500 volunteers were recruited by the National Society to donate blood at various hospitals.

Red Cross co-ordinated the distribution of over 1,000 hot meals each day at the scene. Tracing services began two days after the explosion. The Regional Delegations of the Federation and the ICRC provided logistical and technical support to the National Society in the form of medical equipment, supplies to hospitals, vehicles, staff, and other emergency items.

On behalf of the KRCS, the Federation launched an international appeal for CHF 845,000 for assistance to over 1,000 victims of the bomb explosion. The immediate Red Cross goals were to provide short and mid-term assistance to families of the deceased, orphans, foster families, as well as psychological counselling to the rescue operation volunteers who were traumatised by their tragic experience. The relief assistance programme had the following objectives:

1. To provide social and psychological assistance to the victims of the bomb blast to ensure that those who need psycho-social counselling are able to receive it; orphans receive school fees; affected families are provided with food parcels; the emergency response capacity of the KRCS is re-enforced.

2. To upgrade and re-enforce the training of KRCS Action Teams, and to further develop the KRCS response capacities with an emphasis on urban relief and rescue.

Latest events

The Government of Kenya's National Disaster Fund has so far received Ksh 270 million. The Government has paid up to Ksh 150,000 to the families next of kin for burial expenses and compensation.

During the first week of November, the persons injured during the bomb blast were invited for medical follow-up to assess their further needs.

According to the level of the injury, compensation was paid to those persons injured during the bomb blast .

The US will provide funds to restore the destroyed office complex adjacent to the bomb blast site, and to support relief programmes carried out by NGOs. Some delay is anticipated in the availability of the funds.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Three months after the bomb blast the KRCS continues to support families of the deceased, and has started to provide individual assistance to victims injured during the blast who are still in need of further treatment.

1. Counselling and psycho-social support •

In mid-October two KRCS social workers began carrying out home visits focusing on families of the deceased. To date, more than 100 families have been contacted, and the problems encountered have been characterised as complex and severe. The social workers reported that it is much easier for widowers than for widows to adapt to the new situation created by the sudden loss of a spouse. While the widowers face emotional stress, in a polygamous society the problems they face are mainly organisational; restructuring their household by remarriage, or replacing the late wife with a second or third wife who may have lived in the countryside. Widows, meanwhile, are harassed by creditors and relatives of their late husband who claim their share of the compensation the Kenyan government has paid to the next of kin. Traditional tribal law often authorises the husband's relatives to demand a return of the property of the deceased or valuables acquired during marriage. On the other hand, the mixture of modern and traditional law often relieves the in-laws of the traditional obligation to care for the widow. The married female friends of younger widows also now tend to keep a distance, since they fear the young women may try to attract their husbands in order to regain the status only a married women in Kenyan society can have. Financial problems are severe. Widows often cannot afford to pay the rent of their present premises, school fees, or other routine costs of living.

With more than 200 families have to be contacted, the social workers are under time pressures. To acquire the home addresses of the victims, the KRCS Community Counselling Centre works closely with the KRCS Tracing Department. To date, 100 home addresses have been identified. At the end of November, school vacation started and families who could not afford the cost of living in Nairobi returned to rural areas to join their relatives, increasing the difficulty of tracing the potential beneficiaries of the Red Cross support programme.

In order to make a first contact with all potential clients before December, the social workers have started to invite clients, whose physical addresses are known, to group counselling meetings at the Community Counselling Centre. In addition, the social workers work closely with other NGOs who provide support to bomb blast victims in order to share information and avoid the duplication of assistance. The Community Counselling Centre provides a meeting point where victims can discuss their problems, and steer them to other organisations who may provide legal or financial support, and distribute food parcels.

2. Distribution of food parcels •

The KRCS, after discussions with the International Federation's Regional Logistics Centre and with the support of the KRCS Relief Officer, has decided to distribute food parcels to the families of the deceased as well as to visually impaired women, through 4 central distribution points in Nairobi and by home visits carried out by KRCS branches in rural areas.

The Italian Embassy, Norwegian Embassy, and ECHO have organised the supply and distribution of food parcels consisting of maize, beans and oil, covering a period of 6 months.

3. Projects with other implementing partners •

Programme for visually impaired women

More than 100 persons still suffer from severe eye injuries or have lost their sight completely as a consequence of the bomb blast. The International Federation has initiated a programme to assist visually impaired women in co-operation with their implementing partners (the KRCS, the Kenyan Society for the Blind, the Adventist Development Relief Agency and the Baptist Mission of Kenya).

These women are eligible to receive institutional rehabilitation at the Technical Training Institute for the Blind in Machakos. After a period of mobilisation and orientation training to strengthen their basic living skills (e.g. in personal hygiene, child care, and running a household), they can participate in programmes for Braille literacy and vocational training. In order to enhance entrepreneurship, the training institute offers classes such as carpentry and joinery, tailoring and knitting, tannery, and leather work. After the institutional training period, the women will be provided with the means for income generation, and specialists will support them in the establishment of businesses.

The programme budget covers the costs of training of 17 women, but additional funds are still needed for income generating activities. Some 25 visually impaired women will receive food parcels for a period of 6 months.

The Kenya Society for the Blind has offered to organise a training course for KRCS volunteers and social workers to improve their ability to assist the blind.

4. School fees for orphans •

Since the social workers have collected data from more than 100 families, the task of selecting the 40 most needy children who will receive school-fee support is very challenging. The programme is sponsored by the Italian Embassy.

5. Traumatological and orthopaedic treatment •

In the first week of November the Government of Kenya offered bomb blast victims who had received medical treatment a second medical check-up to assess the need for further treatment. As a consequence, in order not to duplicate assistance the social workers have delayed the selection of patients for potential traumatological and orthopaedic treatment.

The Nazareth hospital has been contacted and the medical personnel are ready to carry out surgery in January and February 1999. During the next two months, the social workers must determine which patients have needs that remain uncovered by the official Government departments or any other organisation.

6. Capacity Building of the KRCS - Disaster Preparedness •

The American Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross confirmed their support for disaster preparedness training of KRCS Action Teams, and agreed to supply disaster response material. The first training course is being organised for 50 persons, 25 KRCS staff/volunteers and 25 from external disaster preparedness units.

The mission of the Social Welfare Delegate started on October 12. The Terms of Reference include technical support and advice to KRCS on social and psychological programme activities.

On November 5, the Social Welfare Delegate and the Regional Disaster Preparedness Delegate discussed budget lines in detail with the KRCS Director of Programmes and the Finance Department. They agreed on priority activities and purchases, and the work plan will be revised accordingly.

Outstanding needs

Technical equipment is still required at the Counselling Centre, and should be installed as soon as possible. A Finance Development Delegate needs to be recruited as soon as possible to assist the KRCS to administer the funds already contributed. At this time the RDN Finance Delegate, in co-operation with the Social Welfare Delegate, is filling the gap. One additional vehicle for the social workers is crucial if they are to reach victims effectively.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Red Cross has enjoyed very good relations with, and the confidence of, a number of agencies. It has been invited to meetings related to the bomb blast activities, and received positive a response from the Italian and the Canadian Embassies. The Red Cross co-operates with a number of other organisations, such as Widows and Orphans, Amani Counselling Centre, African Medical Research Foundation, Catholic Relief Services, National Christian Council of Kenya, Kenya Society for the Blind, Lutheran World Federation, Operation Recovery, Beyond the Disaster Counselling, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, UNDP, World Vision and the Kenya Mission of the Baptist Church. In the first weeks following the bomb blast, co-operation was based on weekly meetings organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Those organisations which remain involved now meet every second week at the NGO Council Committee of Kenya.

The Federation has close contact with national and international media on the aftermath of the bomb blast. On November 2, the Federation released a media statement to address the plight of harassed widows, and to underline the importance of continuing Red Cross back-up for the next of kin of the blast victims.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Although further governmental funds may be made available to support people affected by the bomb blast, more assistance is required now. The Red Cross has proved its strength in responding to the emergency situation and in continuing to support victims for the medium term. Unfortunately, the Federation's appeal has not been fully covered, and foreseen activities will have to be curtailed if the response does not improve. More funding is particularly needed for counselling, vocational training and income generating activities.

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