

KENYA: ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF BOMB EXPLOSION

9 October 1998

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period covered: 12 August - 1 October 1998

Volunteers and staff of the Kenyan Red Cross Society, with support of the International Federation, responded immediately to the disastrous aftermath of the 7 August bomb explosion in Nairobi, Kenya. Initial rescue and first aid efforts have now been replaced with relief, medical and counselling activities for families of the deceased, orphans, foster families and rescue operation volunteers. Activities to replenish and increase the emergency response capacities of the National Society are also planned.

The context

A bomb explosion in Nairobi's business district on 7 August, targeting the U.S. Embassy, left 253 people dead and over 5,000 wounded. More than 30 buildings were severely damaged and a five-story building next to the Embassy was flattened.

Local branch staff and volunteers of the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) were at the scene within minutes of the blast and provided 24 hour services during the 7-day rescue phase. Red Cross Action Teams removed debris and helped extricate survivors and bodies from the rubble. A KRCS First Aid post was set up to provide support for rescue workers and for family members awaiting information about relatives. Over 500 volunteers were recruited by the National Society to donate blood at various hospitals. The Red Cross co-ordinated the distribution of approximately 1,000 hot meals a day at the scene. Tracing services began two days after the explosion. The Regional Delegations of both the International Federation and the ICRC provided logistical and technical support to the National Society in the form of medical equipment, hospital supplies, vehicles, staff and other emergency items.

On 25 August, the International Federation launched an Appeal for CHF 845,000 on behalf of the Kenya Red Cross for assistance to over 1,000 victims of the bomb explosion. The Red Cross goals include providing both short-term and mid-term assistance to families of the deceased, orphans, foster families, as well as rescue operation volunteers who were traumatised by their tragic experience.

Latest events

The Kenyan Government has set up 5 sub-committees to deal with the bomb's aftermath. These include: Capacity Building; Relocation and Re-establishment; Health; Social Recovery Repairs; and Re-construction. The KRCS and the Federation participate in three sub-committees, including the Capacity Building sub-committee charged with developing a training module on disaster response for the Red Cross, the Government and NGOs.

The KRCS tracing service is working closely with the Office of the President and the African Research Medical Foundation (AMREF) on data collection. Updated comprehensive information, including details of the deceased, next of kin information and their contacts, has been compiled. Home visits have been conducted to verify data collected. This information will facilitate delivery of food parcels, psychological de-briefings and other follow-up.

The Kenyan government's National Disaster Fund has so far received KES 270 million (approximately CHF 6,890,400). A member of the KRCS's National Executive Board participates in the Committee. The government has provided some KES 50,000 to over 150 families for help with burial expenses.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

- Over 6,000 hot meals were served to volunteers and other rescue workers during the seven-day rescue phase.
- 200 explosion victims have been counselled at a joint counselling centre. Another 100 have visited the KRCS tracing office for information and collection of lost items and additional counselling conducted on a one-to-one basis. 250 lost items were processed and 107 have been claimed, to date.
- The KRCS conducted de-briefings with all Red Cross Action Team members. The Federation Regional Delegation in Nairobi assigned a delegate to support the KRCS in addition to staff on loan from Uganda Red Cross.
- The Tracing Department of the KRCS finalised the list of deceased and obtained the next of kin addresses of 50% of those who died from the blast. Details are now available on the numbers of victims left totally blind (50), partially blind (50), as well as those who suffered severe facial disfiguration (45), severe spinal injuries (25) and those with limb injuries (105).
- The KRCS has held consultation meetings with Kenyan government officials through the office of the President to explore the possibility of formulating a National Disaster Policy. This activity is on-going and the policy is expected to be ready by October 1999.

Additionally, the procurement and packing of food items has begun in preparation for distribution next month to 100 families. The curriculum for a training programme regarding capacity building of the ONS (to begin in mid-October) is being prepared.

Outstanding needs

The Federation/KRCS continue to need support for the following:

Activity	Needs
Vocational Training	CHF 40,000
Income Generation Activities	CHF 50,000

Financial Development	Delegate for 12 months
Psychological Support for Victims	CHF 5,000
Specialised Treatment	CHF 75,000
Training in Disaster Management	CHF 21,000
Upgrading Disaster Management Course	CHF 13,000
Capacity Building (computers, software, etc)	CHF 47,450
Technical Support	CHF 105,275
First Aid Kits and Stretchers	CHF 9,500

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Red Cross has enjoyed positive relations and received the confidence of a number of agencies. There is also co-operation with other NGOs such as Widows and Orphans NGO, 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, and others through weekly meetings organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Having proved its strengths in responding to the emergency situation, the Kenya Red Cross Society is well positioned to continue providing assistance for the medium term which is vitally important in order to give the Government time to organise long-term assistance. It is also critical to support the KRCS in expanding its current disaster preparedness capacities and to further develop response mechanisms for urban relief and rescue.

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