

KENYA:

Assistance to victims of bomb explosion

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The response to the August 7, 1998 bomb blast in Nairobi continues, with efforts now focusing more fully on providing mid to longer-term assistance to the victims. USAID has provided funds to assist bomb blast survivors for three years.

The context

The bomb which exploded in Nairobi, Kenya on 7 August 1998 killed more than 200 people and injured over 5,500 others. Of these victims, 500 were hospitalised and 5,000 more were treated in various local hospitals and clinics before being released. The initial emergency phase consisted of blood supply activities and the provision of food and tracing assistance. Mid-term activities focused on providing social and psychological assistance to the victims, particularly for orphans to receive school fees, and the distribution of food parcels to affected families. The Red Cross has been granted funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide assistance for the education of school children and the dependants of the deceased and injured. The donation will also allow for mental health assistance for those who were traumatised by the experience.

Latest developments and Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) continues to provide assistance to families and individuals who have been affected by the bomb blast. The KRCS has started further capacity building-type training for its personnel and volunteers to improve their skills in responding to disasters. In addition, the following planned activities have been initiated:

Educational Support Programme: In January 1999, 49 school children were able to continue their school education with the support of the KRCS. The funding -- CHF 30,000 -- will assist these children for one year. More funds were needed to support other affected children, however, and the KRCS/ Federation signed a USD 2.5 million contract with USAID (see below).

Distribution of Food Parcels: The supplementary food programme for the families of the deceased will continue to assist the next of kin until it closes in August.

Programme for Visually Impaired Women: The KRCS is continuing the assistance programme for visually impaired women. After the initial phase of institutional training was completed, the KRCS offered a three-day seminar in January for the women and their partners. Twenty-four participants attended. By the end both partners felt that they would be able to cope better with the impairment and have a better understanding of each other's situation. The Oasis Counselling Centre facilitated the seminar with the assistance of the Kenya Society for the Blind. Two blind women have continued with the second phase of their institutional rehabilitation training in Machakos and have improved their mobility and orientation skills.

Since January 1999, four KRCS volunteers have assisted in the support programme for visually impaired women. They work under the instruction and supervision of an orientation and mobility specialist from the United States. All the volunteers carry out home visits in order to practise home based rehabilitation exercises with the visually impaired women and their families. The volunteers work for 3-5 days in the programme, act as sighted guides, train the beneficiaries in orientation and mobility skills and distribute food to families. They also assist in screening and keep client records.

Vocational training and assistance for income generating activities started at the end of April for 20 visually impaired women. The United Disabled People of Kenya (UDPK) facilitated the first training course. A UDPK training officer will assist the women in the implementation process of their business.

Orthopaedic Treatment: The KRCS has helped six patients to have orthopaedic treatment in Nazareth hospital. Three of them underwent complicated surgery. The rehabilitation process looks promising. Some CHF 15,000 was made available to cover the medical expenses, which were not met by official or other organisations.

Vocational Training: A sum of CHF 100,000 is available to assist with the financial rehabilitation of the families of the deceased. Selected family members will participate in vocational training programmes and receive financial support to start micro-enterprises such as tailoring, catering or hairdressing.

Capacity Building of the KRCS - Disaster Preparedness: To strengthen the KRCS disaster response capacity, two training courses have been held for the training of trainers of Disaster Response Teams of the Red Cross, NGOs and governmental bodies. The KRCS, with financial support from the appeal, offered a Disaster Management course for members of Red Cross Action Teams and external disaster preparedness units. A second was to be held in June. After the completion of the programme 200 members of various Kenyan support units will have received training.

USAID grant

The KRCS/Federation recently signed two agreements with USAID which will make a total of USD 3.5 million available for rehabilitation programmes to be carried out by the Kenya Red Cross over the next three years.

One grant provides USD 2.5 million to assist at least 800 children in their school education for a period of three years. The project will be monitored by a co-ordinator and three assistants who will maintain regular contact with the children, their families and schools, and will follow their social and mental progress. In addition, they will provide counselling where needed and refer children and adults to the mental health assistance programme if required.

Another USD 1 million will provide a "Crisis Mental Health Assistance" programme for 20,000 people traumatised by the bomb blast for a period of two years and focus on outreach activities, counselling, training, information and documentation. Through outreach activities the Red Cross, and implementing partners, will contact affected 600 families and assess their needs for mental assistance. Children and adults will receive special counselling and treatment. The KRCS will train volunteers and community leaders to sensitise them to mental health disturbances. A total of 444 teachers and guidance counsellors will receive further education through specially designed training programmes on how to use art therapy and theatre performances in assisting children with trauma. The programme will target 148 schools.

In order to reach potential beneficiaries outside the current database the Red Cross will launch a public relations campaign about the programme and what it will provide. The KRCS will work in close co-operation with the National Institute for Mental Health in the US and will look for assistance from National Societies who have expertise in mental health support programmes.

Outstanding Needs

Funds are still needed to support a programme to improve the social and economic situation of widows and widowers by providing vocational training and micro-enterprise development; CHF 100,000 is required to assist the 70 families in most need.

External Relations- Government/UN/NGO's/Media

Although ten months have gone by since the bombing, various national and international media sources are still seeking interviews with social workers and survivors in order to document the impact of the explosion and the recovery of the affected families.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details

Conclusion

Most of the one-year programmes of assistance to the survivors and bereaved families of the bomb blast will come to a close, on schedule, in a few weeks' time. The initiatives undertaken will have helped victims with some of the most urgent problems facing them in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. The substantial USAID donation, inspired by the Federation appeal programmes, will ensure that benefits can be provided for another three years.

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