DOCTORS OF AFRICA / MEDECINS D'AFRIQUE
MDA Kenya Country Office

MDA KENYA EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM

MDA KENYA
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EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE WESTGATE MALL SEPTEMBER 21ST-24TH TERRORIST ATTACK IN WESTLANDS NAIROBI; PUBLIC BLOOD DONATION INITIATIVE CARRIED OUT AT UHURU PARK NAIROBI

SEPTEMBER 2013

DOCTORS OF AFRICA / MEDECINS D'AFRIQUE is an international, pan African health Non Governmental Organization born in Congo Brazzaville in 1993. We mostly focus on promotion of primary health, with special attention on maternal and child health. We have been much operating mostly in French speaking countries such as Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Gabon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Guinea, France and also Japan. Kenya is the first English speaking country where we plan to bring our contribution to health related issues which include clean water, sanitation, hygiene promotion, good environment as well as emergency response. This is aimed at improving the social development efforts of the African continent and in particular, the Kenyan population.

BACKGROUND

The Nairobi Westgate Mall tragedy was as a result of an organized terrorist attack carried out by militants who claimed they were revenging for Kenya's role of their country's invasion. It was carried out on Saturday 21st beginning at 11am and lasted for almost five days; the gang being inside the mall holding hostages while the Kenya security carried an assault to capture the terrorists and free the hostages.

Such an ordeal is not the first in Kenya, neither in the African continent nor in the world. Many countries have suffered similar if not worse cases.

For Kenya, the last attack of such a magnitude happened on August 7 1998, when terrorists targeting the American embassy in Nairobi resulted in the deaths of over 200people. This attack was carried out simultaneously with another one in neighbouring Tanzania where also scores of people were killed in the capital Dar es Salaam. Elsewhere in the world especially at the turn of the century, many nations have gone through such experiences including USA, England, India among others. It therefore exposes the real fact that terrorism is an emerging human-caused disaster that needs as much attention for emergency response as any other natural disaster.

The Ruins of the Westgate Mall after the Attack

THE RESPONSE NEED

MDA Volunteers assisting in preparing Blood Donation Bags

Due to magnitude of the attack, there was an immediate humanitarian crisis that arose. This included;

- Rescue and transfer missions for survivors from scene to the hospital
- Transfer of the mortal victims from the scene to the preservation point
- Food and water provisions to both the victims and rescue coordinating persons

- Blood donation for the wounded victims
- Psycho social counseling for the affected

MDA INTERVENTION

As a humanitarian non governmental organization, MDA has one of the areas of operation as emergency response. As a result, it was agreed that we should give a helping hand to the unfolding tragedy that had left many people mortally injured, maimed and psycho socially affected. We therefore deliberated on which best way we could support and afterwards settled on assisting in the blood donation efforts. We registered for the same on Tuesday 24th and spent the whole day offering help in the HB center, blood testing and collecting points.

Doctor Kaara in Action at the bleeding tent

THE TARGET

The blood donation appeal was made by the government and other agencies in order to assist the wounded in hospitals as well as increase the stocks in the blood bank. Thousands of people both from Kenya and foreign nations flocked to the donation centers all across the country and ultimately, over 4000 units of blood was collected. To note, according to the Kenya Blood Transfusion Center, the country has an annual blood requirement of about 400,000 units; however, in 2012, only 158,000 units were collected. Blood collection therefore ought to be a continuous exercise.

MDA's Bertille at the HB check point

CONCLUSION

At the end of the event, it was fulfilling to know that we had offered our helping hand on a humanitarian crisis that befell our country.
This was also an eye opener to MDA on such future initiatives should they unfortunately happen again. It was also clearly observed that the organization needs some basic first aid kits as well as some medical equipment such as HB screening tools, since these were the materials of support which we were being requested to provide.

THE MDA TEAM AT THE END OF THE INITIATIVE

WAY FORWARD

Emergencies, whether natural or manmade are a daily occurrence all over the world. In Kenya for instance, we have annually recurrent disasters in some regions. These include drought, famine, floods, epidemics among others. Manmade calamities include ethnic clashes, cattle rustling and as for this case, terrorism. As such, there is need for MDA Kenya to strengthen the area of emergency response and put in place ideas, systems, materials and mechanisms for effective and efficient response.

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