An assessment of recovery strategies of the 1998 Nairobi bomb disaster victims: A case study of the teachers service commission

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Abstract:

A disaster has been defined as overwhelming events and circumstances that test the adaptation of responses of a community or individuals beyond their capability and lead, at least temporarily, to massive disruption of function for a community or individual. Such was the case with the 1998 Nairobi Bomb disaster that affected several organizations including the Teachers Service Commission. The Nairobi Bomb Blast report (1998) reported 5,486 physical injuries, 600 of whom were TSC employees. 13 of the 2,000 casualties reported were TSC employees. The property destroyed was estimated at Kshs. 63,717,500. The overall objective of the study was to examine the recovery strategies that the TSC adopted to cope with the impact of the bomb disaster. First, the study examined the extent to which the 1998 bomb disaster damaged TSC staff and physical facilities. Secondly, the study investigated the effects of the bomb disaster on the TSC operations and functions. Thirdly, the study looked at TSC's preparedness for future disasters. Using qualitative and quantitative research methods, data was collected from 150 respondents, 59 were interviewed using a structured questionnaire while 99 were interviewed using Focus Group Discussions and In-depth interviews. 58 out of the 59 reported having sustained physical injuries from the bomb disaster. Of these, 52.7% had suffered facial and head injuries, 29.1% had multiple body injuries while 7.3 % had incurred injuries of arms and legs. All respondents reported having suffered psychological injuries. Of the total respondents 48 % reported inability to socialize, 24 % reported that relatives and friends had shunned them. All these were recognized as social injuries. The disaster affected TSC operations in several ways. The organization's premise at Co-operative House building was destroyed forcing TSC to relocate to a new premise at Biashara Street. Additionally, its operations were impaired for 8 months between August 7 1998 and March 1999. With about 600 of the TSC staff injured, the commission continued to pay heavily for loss of man-hours as the staff had to keep attending medical clinics. The study found that TSC had instituted recovery measures for only physical injuries but not for the psychological and social injuries. Also, TSC disaster mitigation strategies had been negatively affected by lack of finances.
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