

CRA

Monthly

THE SURVIVOR'S
ISSUE

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Grateful for the small things, the big things and everything in between.



If I was to describe this issue using three words, I would say; *Strength*, *Newness* and *Gratitude*. Here is why.

Strength: It takes a lot for someone to take you through the most terrifying moment of their life and say how they are battling the challenges that come along in hopes that someone who is going through a similar account will be encouraged.

Newness: The people featured in this issue have a positive vibe about them. Despite the fact that they have been through a tough season, they have a new lease of life, and yearning to do more and be better. Lastly, *Gratitude*; words cannot express just how thankful we are to the men and women who put their lives at risk to save us.

This issue will give you a play by play account of what happened on the 15th of January 2019 at the Dusit complex according to the survivors here at The Commission on Revenue Allocation and just how this experience has changed their lives. We will also give you a timeline of our journey as a Commission to this point.

A special shout out to our men and women in service, for their selfless acts of valour. We will forever be grateful.

Enjoy the read.

Joanne Mbevi

ROUND UP...

2.

“My family had just buried my mother and it looked like I was next in line. This was the only thing that was running through my mind”

Naomi Mathenge explains her state of mind during the Dusit terror attack.



“If I die, who is going to take care of my children and husband? Will I die prematurely? After a series of questions. I resolved in my heart that I am not going to die.”

Dr. Irene Asienge shares the story of how she got through the Dusit attack.

“You guys changed my perception of the police. You are God-sent; I didn't know that in government there are such forces who have specific roles of sorting out crises like these ones. Without you I would not be here. Thank God for you!”

Kennedy Murambi expresses his gratitude to the service men who took part in the Dusit terror attack

DR. IRENE ASIENGA

3.

“I refused to surrender.”

Commissioner, Dr. Irene Asienga's biggest take home has been to cherish her friendships. There are people that she considered acquaintances, but when she was in trouble, they showed up to support not only her but her family in ways she could not imagine. Being a Dusit attack survivor changed that and a lot more.



Finally, a way to connect with the outside world

Later on, it dawned on us that there was a TV in the room. So we urged the lady who was sited next to the remote to switch on the TV so that we can find out what was going on. There it was, the TV called it an attack. I quickly called my husband who at that time did not answer and then I proceeded to call a cousin of mine who is a police man. He advised me that I should lie flat on the ground for a better chance of survival and that I should avoid communicating with the outside world. This was a horrific experience.

My thought

If I die, who is going to take care of my children and husband? Will I die prematurely? After a series of questions. I resolved in my heart that I am not going to die. My mind refused to surrender. I thought about my mother and how she died at my age. I have always looked at her death as a premature death. I told myself that I would live to see my grandchildren. Saying these things somehow gave me strength.

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I resolved in my heart that I am not going to die.

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Photos: Ronald Ngeno

15th of January

15th January is a day that I want to forget and get off my mind.

My story

I remember everything so vividly, I was chairing a meeting in the Ideas centre. As we were going about our normal business, we heard this loud blast. Initially, I thought that something was happening at The Consolata School. Then we heard the screams and what sounded like gunshots. It then dawned on us that this was serious. I rushed to the window to get an idea of what was happening and that's when I saw people running. Thinking about it now, I think I

saw one of the gun men. I remember how this one man was dressed and something was just off. Amongst my colleagues, there was a lot of confusion. Some wanted to run out, others stood still and couldn't move, there was panic all over. Then the C.E.O came and told us to stay in because it was not safe outside. That's how I ended up in the office for 12 hours

I never saw this coming

I have never imagined that a day would come that I would lie flat on the floor. We all found ourselves a spot underneath the table. We pulled the chairs inwards towards the table, in a way that would hide us. It was not the most effective but we used what we had. All this time, we did not know what was going on

4 My family

I have two daughters, one is out of the country, studying in a boarding school. The other stays here with my husband and I. When the one who is abroad woke up and she saw the news on social media. She sent me a text asking if I was okay, I did not want to alarm her so I told her that I am fine. For some reason she did not believe me, she went and asked her father who then told her the truth. He told her that mom is in the office (where the attack is) but she is fine and it shall be well. The shock of knowing I was trapped made her unwell so much so that she was taken to the dispensary to recover. My other daughter got home from school heard of the news and went straight up to my bedroom and stayed in bed. She only got out of bed when she heard my voice in the morning.

The 12 hours that felt like 12 months.

When I was in there, I called almost all my siblings, I told them about the situation and all we could do was pray. I received many phone calls, People from previous work places who called just to tell me to pray, I remember praying on phone with them. There are some people that I would classify as acquaintances but they went above and beyond to not only show me but my family a great deal of support.

Moving on

When I first got home, I thought it would be easy to get over it but it wasn't. I was unable to eat and sleep for the first week. I do not know what happened. I got a personal counsellor, who has walked with me up till now where I feel like I am okay. I have to commend the Chairperson, Dr. Jane Kiringai, she really did a lot to ensure that we were supported.

We encouraged one another in the office. At home, my family, neighbours and friends came out to support me. It moved me that people from the village organised themselves and got two vans to come and see me, imagine that. Throughout this process, I have to admit that some things have changed, I love my family a lot but after this experience, I love them a lot more. My family comes first.

10 years from now if I came back here and I think of the lessons that I have learned, I want to remember

That life is short and that I should cherish it. It is important to keep good relationships. I learnt that we should embrace one another, when we were hiding there were no ranks. We were all facing the same danger. So we should all embrace each other. Be a family.

Special thanks to the service men who rescued us

This day changed my perception of the entire police force. The men and women in uniform were just impeccable. How they handled themselves, how they helped us. I am just so grateful. They were willing to die just to save us. Of all the county visits, I have to say that the one to Taita Taveta, where a young member of the armed forces died while saving us was the saddest one. All I could do was Pray that God bless his family. I know the Bible says that there is time for everything but I felt like it was premature. He had just started building his home and he did not get the chance to complete it.

If there is someone who has not moved on from this ordeal and is wondering what to do, my advice:

Go get counselling and talk more about it. Danger is everywhere, people die while they are sitting down in a chair, so you cannot be afraid to live life. Nonetheless, take it one day at a time.

WORRY

less

LIVE

more



MR. GEORGE OOKO.

5.

"I was calm & confident that I would walk out alive"

Not many who were involved in the Dusit D2 Terror attack were calm. Well except for one, Mr. George Ooko, the CRA C.E.O. In his own words, he was focussed on making sure that the people around him were as comfortable as possible. So much so, that one of the colleagues called him from the server room and asked him to go into hiding and stop criss- crossing the office corridor. He takes the communication team through his re-collection of the terror attack.

The Tuesday that was a day just like any other

It was a pleasant day, everything was running smoothly. The communication team had set an Interview with the Nation Media group for the afternoon. During lunch, I went to meet up with two of my friends at the Parklands Sports club then I came back to the office because the T.V interview was set for 2pm. After the crew prepared themselves, I was called in, we did a debrief and then we started. Just as the interviewer asked the first question, the first blast went off.

It was a very loud blast.

I asked those around me, what was going on, of course no one knew. Thinking about it now, my reaction to the blast was caught on camera. It was instinctive that things were not okay. Everyone around the room went silent for a while. A few seconds later, we heard gun shots. I left the boardroom and went to my office because I wanted to ascertain where the blast were coming off from. All this time, it did not cross my mind that we were the ones under attack.

Then the commotion began

There was commotion and this just indicated that something seriously wrong was happening at the Dusit Complex. I sent a WhatsApp mes-

sage to 3 groups saying, blast and gunfire at Dusit complex. I called our Chairlady, Dr.Jane Kiringai and I asked her to contact the police so that they could help. Moments later, the Permanent Secretary for Interior called me, he asked me a few questions about what was happening and from there he established a line of communication with me.

I choose to stay.

There were people who had opted to leave the office but I choose to stay. Maybe because I was the C.E.O, there was a sense of responsibility for my team. There were many people especially the ladies and I wanted to give them some confidence particu-

larly when the gun fire started getting intense. For the first half hour, this is what occupied my mind

Upon reflection.

I have to say that I was calm. I was confident that I would walk out of the chaos. I don't know why I had this feeling. I just did. I was very focussed on what needed to be done and at that time, it was to communicate with the point persons outside who would help with our safe evacuation.

My family

I was in constant communication with my family, I told them I am safe and that they should not come to the complex.



The Family reunion.

When I met my family, everyone was worried and in shock. Later on, is when I began to process what had just happened. I was very fatigued possibly because I was focussed. The whole time I did no sleep a wink. I was watching TV to see what was happening outside, speaking to the Recce squad and ensuring that all of us were safe. This was tiring later that's when I started thinking to myself that "People in the same complex that I was in were shot and killed and that I could have died"

No Regrets

There is nothing that I would have done differently. This is probably because this is not the most traumatic thing that I have ever been through. I put this attack in context. I thought to myself: there was an attack, I could have died and I did not die.

The afterthoughts

The thought that had this gone another way, what would that have meant for my family was what crossed my mind.

Healing process

My theory about healing is that time heals. As time goes by, the particular memory recedes as life takes over. I have learnt this through other traumatic episodes that I have had. Time heals. Support from friends and the activities that we did as a CRA team were helpful.

Take home from this experience.

You read about security matters, you watch them on the news but they happen at a distance. This experience made me think hard about matters terrorism, about how cruel and senseless this all is. That innocent people get killed all over the world. It's a phenomenon that is with us that continues to damage and destroy lives.



Word to the CRA staff.

Everyone has their own way of processing. Perhaps coming back here could be a step towards confronting your fears. Personally, I was keen to come back and confront these fears. I came up till the gate a few days after the attack I got to the gate and they could not let me in because they were still trying to collect evidence. My thoughts are that if you do not resume then in a way you have let the terrorists win. Returning back to normalcy, in a way is a small victory over the terrorists.

In conclusion.

I am proud of the way the team supported each other. I pray that we do not experience this ever again. I felt sad for all institutions and people that lost their lives but at the same time I felt lucky for all of us at CRA because physically, we are okay.

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My theory about healing is that time heals, As time goes by, the particular memory recedes as life takes over.

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JECINTER HEZRON.

7.

“People should Know that, it is not normal, it is not ok.”

When you interact with Jecinter Hezron, an aura of strength, bubbiness and resilience immediately strikes a person as a result of the personality she possesses that is rather contagious. While conducting this interview with, she was nothing short of heart felt, as she painted a clear description of the fact, in vulnerability there lies strength not weakness as a result of her opting to do the interview. Though she has still not completely made peace with the occurrence on the 15th of January.

BY JOANNE MBEVI



Photos: Ronald Ngeno

Joanne: What do you recall from the day when the Dusit complex was under attack?

Jecinter: What was the day?
(Pause)

Joanne: The 15th of January, why is it that you don't remember?

Jecinter: Because I have blocked it. I remember but I have blocked it, it is part of my healing process.

(She continues)

It was on a Tuesday. I remember. Ask away, what would you want to know?

Joanne: What was the day was like for you, what do you remember?

Jecinter: It was a Tuesday. I love Tuesdays, they are happy days. The pressure of Monday is over and now I have a chance to correct anything else that remains as I go on through the week. This day was full of meetings. Once I left my morning meeting, I came back in the afternoon and I was called into another meeting for the staff team building. At about 2pm. I kept telling my colleagues in the meeting that we need to end but for some reason the meeting kept dragging. I intended to leave early because I did not have a nanny. I needed to get home so that my child can find

me home. As soon as I stood up to leave, I heard a huge, huge, huge blast. I sat down and told them that a building has fallen. That was the first thing that came to mind.

The colleagues around me at that time rushed to the window to check on what was going on and I told them going to the window was not wise.

We started walking out and at the entrance of the door, the security guard, Henry tells me that there was chaos all over and he does not know what was happening. I go back to my office, I pick my handbag and start heading out. I remember being at the stair case and it was absolute pandemonium. I told those around me, let us all go down the stairs in an orderly fashion.

As we were going down the stairs, I remember seeing a man who had masked himself and I alerted the people around me, "Are those Al-shabaab?" I do not know how but this man looked up and started shooting at us.

(Pauses)

Shooting at us. He doesn't know us but he shot. It was God because the bullets did not hit any of us. I remember shouting, Attack! This is a terror attack, run and hide. I got to 2nd Floor, I ran and hid under a desk. My first instinct was to call my mom. It is unusual for me to call my mother during the day

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because we speak either early in the morning or late in the evening. She answered and we spoke. All I asked for was prayers. Then after, I called my daughter's teacher. I asked the teacher to stay with her until I was able to get to her.

All I could hear was the sound of glass shattering, screams, gunshots and blasts. I then put my phone on charge, I wrote a mass message for all my WhatsApp contacts and asked them to pray and then I waited.

I remember at some point, I heard footsteps approaching. I did not know who that person was. A few steps later I convinced myself that those could not be an attackers because they were very careless. (Imitates by banging the able) They were too loud. Just for me to find out that the person was my colleague. I remember telling him to get down.

Long pause.

I cannot do this interview.

(A moment of silence)

I am not going to do this interview.

Joanne: Okay. Do you want to talk about the aftermath, the healing process?

No, I am not continuing.

(She breaks down in tears)

She amidst tears goes on to explain why she cannot do the interview.

"The attack was bad. Things will never go back to normal. People should know that it is not business as usual. This one incident has changed alot in our lives.It has changed how we view life,how we relate with each other, how we go from day to day. It has changed everything. It is not normal, It is not okay."

For some of us, we smell death whenever we come into 14 riverside drive. Remember, we saw someone shoot directly at us.

Till now I have nightmares of the attack when I sleep. Whenever I drive in and see the search dogs, I



remember what happened. When I drive and get to the parking lot, I am shaking and have to calm myself down before leaving the vehicle. My nights are bad because sometimes my daughter wakes me up to tell me sorry. This is because I was screaming in my sleep. I am taking medication because of anxiety brought about because of the attack.

After this, The interview could not proceed.

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Till now I have nightmares of the attack when I sleep. Whenever I drive in and see the search dogs, I remember what happened.

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NAOMI MATHENGE

9.

“*I negotiated with God.*”

“My family had just buried my mother and it looked like I was next in line. This was the only thing that was running through my mind. During the ordeal, my mind would take me to my mother’s gravesite and I would imagine my tombstone right next to hers. I wondered who was going to cry the most from my demise”. Naomi Mathenge, current acting director of research and knowledge management department at CRA, she had a sit down with **JOANNE MBEVI** and recounted her story from the Dusit D2 terror attack.



Earlier on ...

I had just walked in from a brief meeting with a colleague (Keziah), I had a pen and phone in hand. Just when I placed them on the table, it happened, I heard the first loud blast.

The people around me

There was a lot of unrest around me. My colleagues walked towards the common area in a bid to find out what was happening. Everyone had questions and just as there were many questions there were equally as many responses. One of the re-

actions from the people around that stuck with me was that this might be a terrorist attack. I remember telling my colleague Keziah that we should go back and collect our car keys, house keys, a phone and a wallet. As I was going through my handbag trying to locate these items which up till now I don’t know how they would have helped. We delayed so much that Keziah and I were the only ones left. Everyone else had run away. A few minutes later, another colleague (Anastasia) came running in.

And then we were 3.

I remember the gunshots, loud as there they were and as we were looking for somewhere to hide, some random man came running in looking for a hiding spot. He asked us where the balcony was and as we were directing him, we wanted to follow him because he looked like he had a solid plan. Unfortunately, the balcony was closed. This man looked at the window that was adjacent to the balcony, he opened it and he jumped out. We just stood there shocked. Despite all that was going on, jumping was not an option for us.

Then the mind starts playing games

I was in a daze, and all I could do was think; we had just buried my mother, I pictured my tombstone right next to hers. I wondered who would cry for me the most. The gunshots got louder and they brought me back to reality.

We found a place to hide.

The shooting intensified. So we pushed some seats forward and hid behind them. We hid in a way that if someone was to walk into the office no one would have known that there was anyone present. Only Anastasia and myself had our phones, so I called my sister and told her that we are under some sort of attack and I didn’t know what will happen. In hand I had the four items I went back

to collect from my bag, my house keys ,car keys ,a pen and a phone. Anastasia's phone went off and the only functioning phone was mine. This was our only mode of communication with the outside world.

Then the terror got real.

Since the window was still open we could clearly hear what was happening outside. It now became obvious that this was a terror attack. So we positioned ourselves in a way that 2 were lying on one shoulder and one was in the middle, not the most comfortable postures but we had to. We all drifted in our own thoughts. The blinds kept moving probably because of the wind and that would terrify us even more. In my mind, I decided to negotiate with my God and I asked him for a sign, "was this going to be the end of me?"

I just felt this calm and peace swoosh over me which assured me then that I was going to be okay. The gunshots would start again and I would go back to that place where I would ask God to re assure me.

Biology does not care for Terror.

The first hour was the worst, we were lying on each other, and so to try and ease the numbness we would just adjust our lying positions. I urgently needed to use the washroom. My colleague (Keziah) would use gestures to tell me to go at it where we were lying but I just couldn't, despite the bathroom being right next door. I just couldn't move.

A few hours later.

CRA had created a WhatsApp group asking people to say where they were. We gave our location to our colleagues. Telling familiar people where we were was a little relaxing. At least someone knew where we were. Mind you, the only working phone was mine and since the

battery was not full, it died. So we opted to stay quiet and wait to be evacuated

The sound of footsteps approaching us

We heard some very slow footsteps approaching our hiding spot, the person opened the door and all I could see was a tall, dark man with small eyes. In my mind, I was like, we have been caught. I remember asking myself, "where will he shoot me, the head, the hand...will I survive?" He opened the door, looked into the room and he left. The fact that he did not see us for me was comforting. Moments later, we had other footsteps and that person walked into the washroom right next to the office, so we decided to peep and see who it was. We saw a well-polished shoe and we thought it was a random person working in the building, it couldn't have been a terrorist. Keep in mind, I was still pressed to use the bathroom.

We took the first step.

When we were certain that there was no one lurking in the office we then very quietly, we opened the door. Anastasia and I crawled into the bathroom next to us and we waited for each other. I could now wait in peace.

Help had finally arrived

Jecinter Hezron (our colleague) called out our names, she was with members of the Recce squad .They had come to evacuate us. We were told to stand up with our hands up in the air and we were walked to the common area awaiting further instructions. I remember seeing some other colleagues at the waiting area, we were warned that we were going to hear gunshots because they were still trying to capture the terrorists and they had not yet completed evacuations on our building. They assured us that we were safe and so we sat. down. At about 3 am, they came down and told us that it was our turn to be taken out of the building. We were told to put one hand at the back of our head and the other hand was to hold the person standing in front of us. The men who were evacuating us surrounded themselves around us and told us that if someone shoots at us, we should lie on the ground. Imagine that heroism, they shielded us. So, we walked safely until we reached the safe zone.



Photos: Ronald Ngeno



Finally, I saw family

I was overcome with emotion, I found my sister, my brother and friend Winnie. What I remember most was my brother hugging me, it was so tight and I remember thinking: this is the best hug that I could have ever received. I just broke down and started crying.

The Triggers

After this, I did not want to hear any doors banging, or any loud sounds. I was in a contemplative mood. Asking myself all types of questions. When I walked into my the house, I went on Facebook and told people that I am safe because there were so many messages coming from concerned people. I switched off my phone and I replayed everything. What was so strong in my mind was, "God you heard my prayer, we will not have another funeral in my family". I choose to stay on a thankful note. I kept asking myself. What is the reason I was not shot or killed? Clearly I still have some stuff to do in this world.

Getting help

When we went through counselling, I remember telling myself I am going because, I will be with people who have gone through the same experience. The counselling sessions by the Kenya Redcross society was a good forum to listen to other peoples experiences. That talking amongst ourselves was good.

The guilt crept in

Months later, I travelled for work to Taita Taveta and among the activities we were scheduled to do was visit the home of one of the agents that lost his life during the Dusit terror attack. There was a part of me that felt guilty because we had gone to say Thank you to someone who died while trying to save us. I felt like, "If I was not there then he would be alive." Then I moved from guilt to heroism. I thought he was a hero because he knew the dangers that were involved and yet he left his post and came to help save us. I thought of our service men from all over. I looked at the parents of this young man and I just said a prayer

for them. I asked God to comfort them because He is the greatest comforter. I appreciate what our service men do and the sacrifices that they make to keep us safe.


My take away from this experience.

My faith has been strengthened. Nothing is guaranteed. The only guarantee is that moment that you're in. We need to take that moment and make the best use of it.

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All I could think of is that my family had just buried my mother and now they were going to bury me.

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A photograph of a paved road with a double yellow line, stretching into the distance through a desert landscape. The road is flanked by large, reddish-brown rock formations. The sky is clear and blue. A small white car is visible in the distance on the road. A pink rectangular border frames the text in the center of the image.

ENCOURAGE
ONE ANOTHER
AND BUILD EACH
OTHER UP.

JOB OTIWA

13.

“I won't go down like this...”

Job Otiwa had just come back to the office from leave but did not know that this was a day that he would never forget. When the attack occurred, he did not believe that he would die, but decided that he would not back down without a fight. As he hid in a room on the first floor of Grosvenor building, he told the colleagues he was hiding with, “We have to fight. We need not go down like this!”

BY RONALD NGENO & PAULA OYOMO.



A series of photos showing Job Otiwa's reactions all through the interview.

Photos by Ronald Ngeno

It was just another day

It was just like any other day. I had just come back from my leave and as usual I working at my desk alone as my other colleagues had already left. There was a loud bang and I stood to leave my desk. When I walked out there was nobody around the office, everyone had left. I started going down the stairs, I didn't run, I walked. As I went, I met other people running down the stairs. As we went down we were shot at, and the bullet hit the wall near us and I saw everyone running back up the stairs. I ran back upstairs and followed the people running back. We got into the first floor offices and hid there.

We need to fight, we cannot go down like this

I did not feel like I was leaving (this world) and if I had left, I would have left, just like that. It did not occur to me that I would leave. I was opportunistic that things would work out. As we hid there I told the people around me, "When they come we need to fight! We need to fight! We are not going down!" I made a resolution, that if they come, we need to fight, we cannot die without a fight.

I did not know that trauma would follow

I kept giving myself hope that I was not going down, but I did not know that trauma will follow a few days later. People react in different ways, for me at that time I did not feel like it was something that would happen to us. When people called the following day, that is when it hit me that it was a huge thing and by the way I could have died! That is when it hit me, it could have led to something else. It is now no longer in my mind, but since then I have been wary of spending a lot of time in supermarkets and crowded places. I used to go to T-mall and stay there for a long time,

but now when I go there I shop and leave.

Things can happen, in a twinkle of an eye

I have come to realize that things happen anytime. Different things can happen in a twinkle of a second. My mother and brother could not believe this could happen to me. My mother thought this was more likely to happen to my brother who is in the army. She believed 14 Riverside Drive was one of the safest places. After this, I did not engage in meeting people and picking their calls because I did not want people to feel pity for me.

Thank you

I appreciate the Commission for assisting staff with the counseling and a retreat in Mombasa. They moved in so quickly and the commissioners were with us and this really helped in the healing process.

14.

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As we hid there
I told the people
around me,
When they come
we need to fight!
We are not going
down!

”



RACHEAL KAGWANJA

15.

“I hid just because...”

When Racheal Kagwanja fell down the stair case while attempting to escape the terror attack and felt the glass from the glass window above her fall on her back because the terrorists were shooting, she knew that she would never see her 1 year old son and husband again. She got up and walked into a washroom on the 1st floor of Grosvenor building. She said her last prayer and waited for the terrorists to break in. She recounts her story with **JOANNE MBEVI**

15th January...

On that 15th of January, I woke up and I was not sure that I would make it for work. I woke up very late, there was a lot of confusion in the house. It was just one of those days that was off. Though very late, I made it to work and I remember we had a meeting where I was tasked to do some work.

At 3pm

After my afternoon cup of tea, I heard the first loud blast. I remember my colleague (David) standing beside my desk, we were conversing about something and suddenly we just stopped. We ran to a window and peeped outside so we could see what was happening. Then we heard the second blast, still unaware of what was happening, we saw security guards asking people to vacate the premises. They were coming from the gate and shouting Vacate! Vacate! David ran out and I was left standing there, I stood still couldn't move. As I was in this daze, my colleagues were running out and what was running through my mind was, what do I do? For some reason, running at that moment was not an option for me. Finally, I went to take my handbag and I decided to follow them, then when I was just about to get out of the building, I looked down and saw that I was

wearing heels. Imagine I shouted, "I am in heels, I cannot run like this". In that confused state, I did not imagine that I could run without shoes. On my way back to pick my shoes, someone from upstairs shouted, "Guys do not go out, they have already gotten here."

The gun shots were now louder. So everyone turned back to go back up and hide. All this time, I had no idea what was happening.

Then it got real

As we stood there they started shooting at us. The bullet missed and hit a wall but then it got so dusty and glass began falling on us. I tripped and fell down and that's when I knew, I was going to die.

12 hours in the bathroom stall

So I found a hiding spot. A bathroom stall on 1st floor. I went to the ladies. I was not crying, all I knew was that I was going to die. At this time many thoughts are going through



Photos by Ronald Ngeno

my mind and what was most dominant was that, I will die. I saw my family in my mind my husband and baby and I prayed, I asked God to forgive my sins and allow me to go to heaven. That was my last prayer.

Hiding Just because

I looked around and in the stall was a lady whom I did not know. I told myself that I am just hiding because I am making it a little harder for the terrorists to find me, but I am as good as dead. So this stranger and I are stuck in a bathroom stall and we just stared at each other without saying a word

Then, the police came knocking

We heard them knocking and I pretended to be asleep so that I would not be asked to go out. I wanted someone else to go so that I could ascertain that indeed it was the police. Then one of my colleagues knocked and said it is true it's the police and asked us to go out. This whole ordeal felt unreal.

Then I saw family.

I got very emotional, when I saw my husband, I just shouted and cried out He was out there waiting for me to be rescued. When I laid eyes on my son, I couldn't believe it. Death was staring me in the face and here I was, I was given a second chance to see my son.

The Aftermath.

I couldn't eat, I was out of place in my own house. I could hear the gunshots in my head. The noise in my head was too much. I was afraid of moving from one room to another in my house maybe because I was in a bathroom stall and I could not remember much.



Moving on

The support of my husband was very helpful; he understood my fear and he took me to go see a counsellor where I talked about it and cried. A few sessions later, I started improving. I was able to move from one room to another, he kept encouraging me. It was and is still tough.

Coming back to site.

At that moment I felt that it was premature to come back to work. I was not ready, my family was also not convinced that coming back was the best option but I did it. The option of staying home and looking after my son was swirling through my mind but then it came to me, anything can happen anytime. With that in mind, I came back.

The reaction I had when I visited the family that had lost a loved on because he was trying to save us.

I was so sad, I looked at that family and I could see the sadness. I kept thinking that he died because of me.

My advice

Time heals, months later I am not the same person. Only God can take you through this healing journey. Ask God to guide you when you are in tough situations, I believe that if all of us tried to run out then we probably would not have made it, some had to remain behind.



A full moon is visible in a dark, starry night sky. The foreground is filled with the intricate, dark silhouettes of bare tree branches, creating a complex web of lines. The overall scene is serene and evocative, with a cool color palette of blues and purples.

CULTIVATE THE HABIT
OF BEING GRATEFUL

RONALD NGENO

18.

“If I die, I go to heaven”

Ronald Ngeno a Communications Officer at CRA was confident that if he had died during the Dusit terror attack then for he sure would go to heaven.

BY JOANNE MBEVI.

Just a typical day.

It was just a normal day, I was in the boardroom with some members of the Press, the CEO Mr. George Ooko and a few of my colleagues at the 3rd floor broad room conducting an interview for the then recently launched 3rd revenue sharing formula. A few minutes into the interview, I had a loud bang. Terror was the last thing to come to mind

How I knew that I was in danger

Though I was in denial for some time because the last thing that I expected was a terror attack. The CEO's reaction led me to think that this could have been something serious.

So it began

I believe the shock made me a little slow because my colleagues ran out and I was left alone. Moments later I snapped back, I went to my work station, picked my wallet and purposed to leave because the gun shots and the screams were getting louder. I looked out of the window and I saw people running in one direction so I assumed that the danger was in the opposite direction. I walked out to the lobby of my floor, went down the stairs and saw the journalists who were with earlier on. They were taking a video. The terrorists spotted us

and that's when started shooting at us. Luckily, they missed but there was a lot of dust and glass from the windows was falling on us. I started running downstairs where I opted to go to the washrooms to hide. The bathroom was already full of people. There was one man standing out in the open and after assessing the situation. I did not feel safe. Just in case anything were to happen, I would be at the fore front. So I climbed up to the ceiling.

That was not a good decision on my part because it could not hold my weight and it came crashing down. I got a few cuts but I went back up to hide again.

The Ceiling felt like my only hope

The ceiling was dark and stuffy but this seems like my only hope. All this time, I could still hear the gun shots. So I took out my phone, and tweeted the US embassy and The Kenya Police to alert them of what was going on and then lastly, I tweeted my family to tell them I love them. This to me was



Photos by Paula Oyomo

my last communication to my family.

Then it got to me

Later on, the stuffiness in the ceiling got to me and because the gun shots had stopped. I decided to come down and join the other guy who I had left there in the open bathroom. I went back down knowing in my heart that if the terrorists came then they would most likely kill me.

The “last conversation” with my wife

I decided to call my wife and speak to her one last time. I don't remember much of the conversation other than that I love her and care for her. I was feeling anxious.

The terror continued

While on the bathroom floor, the gun shots started again so we just sat there in silence not knowing what was going on out there. Sitting on the floor was not the best because some people relieved themselves on the same floor we were sitting and lying on

A ray of hope

Earlier on we had spoken to the police via whatsapp and they had told us that when they come to rescue us they will knock in a specific manner. At around 2:40am. We had the knock. They told us to come out with our hands up. We were frisked and then we walked out in a line with our hands in the surrender position. We were escorted out of the Dusit complex.

Then I met my family

I felt safe once I had gotten to the house. My wife, Kids and I embraced. We were all crying tears of Joy. Finally I was with Family. I thanked God that I was alive.

The first night.

I did not sleep that day. People were hounding me to do interviews, I picked just a few. Loud noises would scare me to the point of taking me back to the terror attack.

The healing process

Telling my story over and over again sort of helped me sort my feelings and the counselling that CRA organised with the Red Cross helped. The trip to Mombasa really helped me get away. I write my feelings a lot and this has helped me.



“

I decided to call my wife and speak to her one last time. I don't remember much of the conversation other than that I love her and care for her.

”

CRA SURVIVOR ISSUE

POSITIVE *mind*

POSITIVE *vibes*

POSITIVE *life*

MANNASEH MWAURA.

21.

“I am a better man.”

My biggest lesson from the Dusit terror attack is that I should never take things for granted. I can confidently say that I am a better man than I was. Mwaura, an office assistant shares his experience and thoughts on what keeps him going. **BY JOANNE MBEVI.**



Photos showing Mwaura's emotions throughout the interview.

Photos by Ronald Ngeno

My day to day.

I work at CRA as an office assistant. I am 42 years old and I have two kids and a wife. I was going about my normal duties serving tea. Then I had the first blast. The first thought was, that was a tyre burst. It did not occur to me at that moment that it was something serious.

Tyre burst turned terror attack.

I looked outside the window and that is when I saw people running past our office suite. Moments later, the gunshots started. Then there was another blast this time louder than the previous. There was so much commotion around me. Despite all this, a terrorist attack was the last thing on my mind. When I looked out of the window and saw the people who were running being shot at. It came to me that this was serious. I was in the midst of a terror attack

What I remember

I ended up in the bathroom with a few of my other colleagues, the general feeling was fear. I honestly cannot say play by play what was happening in the bathroom because I do not remember much. I just remember the gunshots got louder and louder and that much later, a rescue team came to evacuate us. I had not communicated with my family because I did not have a phone on me so I can only imagine what was going through their minds.

The first few nights

I couldn't sleep at all. I was in a bad place emotionally. Being involved in such an ordeal just doesn't go away. Loud bangs, would scare me. I guess you could say that this was a trigger for me.

My comfort

Oddly enough what gives me comfort is that when I came back to work, I was not afraid because I told myself they cannot come back a second time.

A change of scenery

The Commission on Revenue Allocation made efforts to bring us closer, I got a sense of family when we went for the team building. The change of scenery was good and the counselling sessions courtesy of the Commission really helped me cope with the experience.

My biggest lesson

Do not take things for granted. I am a different man, a better man than I was.

“

I still cannot remember everything play by play. Looking back all I know is that I am grateful to the people who helped rescue us. If it were not for them, I probably would not have seen my family again.

”



IN
EVERYTHING
GIVE
Thanks.

1st Thessalonians 5:18

WE JUST WANT TO SAY

24.

Thank You!

It is not easy to lay down your life for someone else. This is what members of Kenya's elite security service do on a daily basis. During the Dusit attack, the security team put their lives on the line to save people trapped in the complex by the terrorist group Al Shabaab. We appreciate your work and sacrifice and say a big THANK YOU for saving our lives on January 15th, 2019.

By Ronald Ngeno

Elsie Kimei

May God continue giving you courage for the selfless acts that you do. Thank you

Lawrence Katana

May God bless you abundantly for the priceless task that you did in saving our lives.

Kennedy Murambi

You guys changed my perception of the police. You are God-sent; I didn't know that in government there are such forces who have specific roles of sorting out crisis like those ones. Without you I would not be here. Thank God for you!"

Collins Wanyoike

Thank you to all the men and women who came to the rescue at 14 riverside. You are appreciated. God Bless you for your sacrifices, putting your life on hold, to rescue and protect us. Respect to our security force & Thank you again.

Geoffrey Ntooki

I am very grateful. Thank you for saving our lives.

Henry Kavaya

I just want to thank the men of service who took their time and came and helped with the rescue mission. It is because if you that I now spend time with my family. Thank you.

THE JOURNEY.

25.

1. Coming back to the office - Day 1

CRA staff having tea at the Dusit hotel.



2. CRA shows its appreciation to the Recce squad

3. CRA visited Recce company to say thank you for their sacrifice and service during the Dusit attack.



Commissioner Dr. Irene Asienga shakes hands with CEO Recce Company Mr. Gordhan Kamau during a thanksgiving service to honour GSU servicemen and women.



THE JOURNEY.

26.

The Commission made a courtesy visit to the family of one of a Recce Squad members who lost his life in the line of duty.



The CRA Chairperson Dr. Jane Kiringai gives her condolence to the family of the young Recce squad member who lost his life in the Dusit terror attack.



Jecinter Hezron gives her condolences to the family.

Memorial trees were planted



The Vice chairperson, Mr Humphrey Wattanga .



Commissioner, Mr. Kishanto Ole Suji



Commissioner, Professor Edward Oyugi.



The Commission C.E.O Mr. George Ooko.

THE CRA

survivors

ISSUE