

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bata is declared a disaster zone and urgent measures are activated to protect those affected.
- The death toll from the Bata explosions climbs to 108. At least 615 people were injured.
- The UN Resident Coordinator and WHO Representative arrive in Bata to assess the extent of damage on the ground.
- According to UNITAR, 243 structures appear to be heavily damaged or destroyed. 300,000 people live within a 10km distance from the epicentre of the blast.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Government issued a decree declaring Bata a disaster zone and activating urgent measures to protect those affected by the explosions, which caused significant material damage in the city. The Government requested the Committee on Prevention and Civil Protection to carry out a general assessment of the situation and to present proposals for solutions to mitigate and repair all damages caused by the explosion, both to individuals and to public infrastructure. The search and rescue operation continues in the aftermath of the explosions at the Nkuantoma military barracks. On 10 March, the rescue team found a five-year-old girl alive under the rubble.

According to UNITAR, 243 structures appear to be heavily damaged or destroyed inside the military barracks and around the camp. Furthermore, about 300,000 people live within a 10km distance from the epicentre of the blast.

On 10 March, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the WHO Representative arrived in Bata to assess the damage on the ground caused by the powerful explosions that occurred on 7 March, leaving 108 dead and more than 600 wounded, including many children. Accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other Government officials, the delegation carried out a mission to the explosion site and to the three main hospitals where victims are receiving treatment on 10 and 11 March. They also visited NGO SOS Children's Village and the Spanish College, where some affected families have found shelter.

At the Bata Regional Hospital, a reduction in the number of children coming for routine vaccination has been observed. Meanwhile, most of the victims from the blasts receiving treatment in intensive care are children.

While the extent of the damage and the number of affected households remain unknown, some urgent needs have been identified, including financial support, temporary shelter, food assistance and psychological support for victims. There is also an urgent need to strengthen COVID-19 prevention and testing services.

RESPONSE

The Government has released an initial fund of ten billion CFA Francs, to help meet the costs of repairing the damage caused by the explosion. While concern over risks posed by unexploded ordnances including explosives, rockets and other munitions remain, private construction companies are helping clear the military camp. A team from the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) will also deploy to Bata to assess the situation on the ground.



Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in March 2021.

On Wednesday, 10 March, Spain sent an emergency medical team to Bata and more than 2,600 kg of surgical material, medicines and medical supplies. A second flight arrived in Bata on 11 March with a team of 14 specialists, including orthopedic and trauma surgeons, emergency doctors and operating room nurses. The two flights were co-funded by ECHO, and the operation was organized by the Humanitarian Action Office of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The United Nations provided support with formalities upon entering the country.

The U.S. Government is delivering aid to organizations on the ground through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to help respond to identified needs. In addition, U.S. disaster response experts are on the ground and an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team is on the way.

The Government of France is deploying a mobile medical unit on 12 March, with a capacity to help treat 250 seriously injured people; as well as emergency medical and pediatric equipment to care for a thousand injured and sick people. Equipment to help prevent COVID-19 will also be dispatched, as well as tents and kitchen kits for those affected. The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is also coordinating the dispatch of ten demining specialists from the civil security forces through the Operational Center for Inter-ministerial Crisis Management (COGIC) of the Ministry of Interior.

South Korea has also pledged US\$ 200,000 in humanitarian assistance to respond to needs in the country. The Foreign Ministry said in a press release that the government hopes its emergency assistance will help the citizens of Equatorial Guinea, who have suffered hardship due to the large-scale explosions that took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, UN humanitarian aid mechanisms have been activated and technical teams from WHO and UNICEF arrived in Bata on 10 March, providing social protection and health support, identifying children who have lost their parents and people in a vulnerable situation.

UNICEF is coordinating with NGO partners based in Bata to finalize collaboration areas and is continuing to liaise with Ministries to assess response needs and capacities in terms of shelter, food distributions, psychosocial support, and COVID-19 prevention among the affected population; as well as identify resource mobilization opportunities and logistical support needed to handle in-kind assistance. More specifically, UNICEF has coordinated with NGO ASAMA and hospital directors in Bata to check the health status of children and to locate the families of the admitted children who were separated and unaccompanied.

UNICEF is also working with WHO to support the Ministry of Health in the management, inventory and control of the stock of health supplies and products donated by partners for the health emergency. WHO also delivered medicines and medical equipment at the border with Cameroon on 11 March.

UNICEF and USAID carried out a joint visit to the shelters where affected families are staying to identify priority needs.

UNFPA is preparing to implement the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in crisis situations. This will include series of crucial, lifesaving services and activities to respond to the SRH and gender-based violence (GBV) related needs among the affected population, particularly for women and girls. The ongoing rapid assessment will help tailor planned interventions. Emergency funds are being raised by UNFPA at the regional and global level.

The UNDAC team will arrive in Bata on 12 March, including mapping, information management, environmental and disaster assessment specialists.

The Resident Coordinator continues to keep Member States informed of the UN coordinated response.



Medicines and medical equipment being received by WHO and FAO colleagues at the border between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea

For further information, please contact:

Mercy Manyala, Humanitarian Affairs Officer,
manyalam@un.org (+221) 77 5699486

Maria Fernandes Teixeira, Development Coordination Officer, Strategic Planning and RCO Team
 Leader, maria.fernandesteixeira@un.org
 (+240) 222 447616