

# HAITI

## Complex crisis

Haiti’s humanitarian situation is complex: the origins of people’s needs are rooted in historical vulnerabilities, and are driven by economic and political instability as well as recurrent meteorological hazards’ impact (CFR 12/03/2018). 2019 was characterised by socio-political instability in the form of widespread protests, fuelled by an economic downturn that started in 2018. Short-term aid may not adequately address the chronic nature of Haiti’s humanitarian needs, and certain population groups, notably children, may bear the brunt of increasing vulnerability.

Haiti has been described as a “forgotten crisis” (UN CERF 13/12/2019). Food insecurity, already exacerbated by structural poverty, changing climatic conditions, and limited coping capacity, has notably challenged communities. The chronic food insecurity situation is likely to deteriorate further in 2020, due to the threat of natural hazards and past economic instability and ongoing political instability.

Grand’Anse and West departments, currently categorised in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), are the two departments projected to worsen into Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019).

(At right: Map of Haiti, OCHA 2019)



### NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



### IMPACT



## Key priorities



**4.6 million**  
people require multisectoral  
assistance (HNO 2020)



**Livelihoods**  
increasingly stunted by economic  
downturn and environmental  
hazards

## Humanitarian constraints



Humanitarian access was limited during 2019 protests. Public infrastructure, including roads, has been damaged by successive disasters including 2010’s earthquake (HNO 2020). A lack of state capacity to ensure security is also limiting humanitarian access (HNO 2020).

### Limitations

Available fiscal and statistical data for Haiti is limited, including data on criminality.

## Crisis overview

### Historical information

Haiti's complex crisis is driven by underdevelopment of critical infrastructure, as well as a lack of political and economic stability, and entrenched poverty, factors resulting in extensive vulnerability. Many of these factors are connected to Haiti's history.

Haiti was established as a Spanish colony, part of Hispaniola island that now also comprises the Dominican Republic, in 1492 (BBC Haiti Profile 2019). The island's western part (Haiti) was ceded to France in 1697 (BBC Haiti Profile 2019). Slavery was a common practice on the island for centuries, mainly used in the production of sugar. In 1801 Toussaint Louverture, a former slave, led a rebellion and gained control over the country, abolishing slavery (BBC Haiti Profile 2019). France forced Haiti to pay reparations, totalling USD 22 billion in today's terms, as a condition for recognition (CFR 12/03/2018) and Haiti paid these debts over 120 years, at some points accounting for 80% of its national revenue. Some have suggested this debt repayment disrupted industrialization, policy and institutional development, and economic investment in the country (CFR 12/03/2018). Haiti was then successively occupied by foreign countries, and subject to wealth extraction and exploitation. Corruption and capital flight remain major issues in Haiti.

The country is very exposed to a number of sudden-onset natural hazards, further challenging its economic and institutional development. The earthquake that struck the country on 12 January 2010 killed 220,000 Haitians and displaced 1.5 million (CFR 12/03/2018) (UN SG 01/2020). The shallow earthquake notably affected the densely-populated capital of Port-au-Prince, and, due to poor infrastructure, caused widespread destruction (Columbia University 2010). The UN Peacekeeping mission, active after the earthquake, was later identified as the origin of a cholera outbreak which affected more than 800,000 people over the next decade (PAHO 01/2020). Another notable hazard was 2016's Hurricane Matthew which killed 600 people (Abella et al., 2020) and led to widespread destruction of housing, infrastructure, and livestock, particularly in Grand'Anse and Sud departments (The Guardian 7/10/2016) (CFR 12/03/2018).

### Drivers of the current crisis & outlook

**Growing food insecurity:** IPC projections for March to June 2020 estimate that ongoing socio-economic difficulties will push 4.1 million people, or 40% of Haiti's population, into Severe food insecurity (Phase 3 and above), including 1.2 million at Emergency level (Phase 4) (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019). This is an increase of close to 1,800,000 people compared to estimates for March -June 2019 (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 01/10/2018). Households currently living in food insecure conditions have been pushed to adopt negative coping strategies such as consuming low quality food, selling

goods, or reducing their number of daily meals (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019) (FEWS NET 31/01/2020).

The growing food insecurity is driven by 2019's economic instability and by ongoing political instability, as well as factors including drought and water scarcity, which has resulted in low crop yields in the recent past.

**Poverty and income inequality:** 25% of Haiti's population live below the poverty line (under \$1.90 a day) (UNESCO Haiti Country Page 2020) (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019). Additionally, 40% of Haiti's population has access to less than 6% of the country's income, whilst the richest 2% control 26% of the national wealth (Food Security Portal, last accessed 11/02/2020). Haiti has a historical pattern of inequality, currently ranking number 4 on the GINI Index, which measures the inequality in the distribution of family income in the country (measured through the use of information from 2012, at latest) (CIA Factbook last accessed 11/02/2020) (World Bank Country Profile 2015).

Some analysis suggests that households living in poverty and constrained by income inequality may face more limited opportunities for investment and income diversification, key to building household financial resilience (J. Stiglitz 2012). Haitians' coping capacity and resilience continue to be strained by poverty and inequality, and a large portion of the population is extremely vulnerable to sudden onset crises or even to slight shifts in market prices, as demonstrated by the widespread protests in 2018 (The New Humanitarian 13/01/2020) (J. Stiglitz 2012).

**Economic instability:** The ongoing economic downturn is driven by many interacting factors, including low economic growth, civil unrest, and currency inflation, compounding increasingly dire food access issues: over 2019, the price of basic food items such as rice, beans, and sugar has increased by 34% (The New Humanitarian 13/01/2020). Additionally, foreign direct investment has fallen, and the country's 12-month growth rate was estimated at 0.1%, the lowest since 2010 (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019). The government has imposed drastic cuts to social programmes and capital investments, while expensive energy subsidies remain ongoing (HNO 2020); Haiti was formerly dependent on Venezuelan subsidized fuel (Venezuelan oil-funded development funds specifically, known as Petrocaribe) leading to high levels of public debt (CFR 16/10/2019). The International Monetary Fund's attempts at restructuring the debt included cutting energy subsidies, which would have resulted in oil prices increasing by 50% overnight in 2018 (CFR 16/10/2019).

However, Haitian households live in extremely vulnerable conditions and lack financial flexibility: These reforms were abandoned after widespread protests in the summer of 2018 broke out against prices increases (Al Jazeera 08/07/2018) (CFR 16/10/2019). The provision of Venezuelan oil was stopped in 2014 (Time 24/06/2019) forcing Haiti to buy oil at the international standard rate – resulting in shortages for core infrastructure

(AlterPresse 03/09/2019) as Haitians cannot pay international standard market rates for petrol without international subsidies such as those previously provided by Venezuela.

Additionally, economic activity was hampered by protests, and people's access to services and basic goods became increasingly restricted as shops were closed, roads blocked, and traders unable to import or export goods (NPR 31/12/2019). Already limited medical infrastructure was further restricted by road inaccessibility, leading to medicine, water, and oxygen shortages (HNO 2020).

Since August 2018, Haiti's gourde currency has been subject to a sharp depreciation – it lost 17.4% of its value against the dollar over the course of 2019 (OCHA 16/12/2019), leading to inflation and a reduction in the purchasing power of most Haitians. Recent drought conditions in 2018/2019 had a notable impact on inflation, due to poor harvests resulting in low food stocks (HNO 2020). Further depreciation of the gourde is expected in the upcoming lean season (a time between the fall and the spring harvest, from March to June, that is also associated with food deficits) (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019).

Households currently living in food insecure conditions have been pushed to adopt negative coping strategies resulting in asset erosion, although income diversification activities, like coal collection, may mitigate the effects of high food prices (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019).

**Political instability:** Haiti's history has included a succession of foreign interventions, disrupting efforts to establish national policies (CFR 12/03/2018). US occupation and control over the country's security and finances, lasting from 1915 to 1934, was characterised by human rights violations, forced labour policies and press censorship. The U.S.-supported dictatorship of Francois Duvalier and his son, starting from 1957 and lasting until 1986 with a popular uprising against "Baby Doc", the son, was characterised by human rights violations and corruption (New Yorker 06/10/2014). The most recent President, Jovenel Moise, was elected amid opposition fraud allegations in 2016, leading to an interim government until early 2017 when second elections confirmed his victory. He has recently been at the center of embezzlement allegations. Haiti's prospects for alleviating corruption may be limited: Haiti is ranked 159 out of 176 countries on Transparency International's latest Corruption Perceptions Index, one of the lowest rankings in the world (Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2016).

Protests over the course of 2019 paralysed the country. They were triggered in July 2018 when structural reforms were pushed by the IMF in reaction to Haiti's debt for Venezuelan oil. The reforms were reversed when protests broke out. Despite this, protests continued after a legislative commission supported corruption findings for officials like Moise, including embezzlement of Venezuelan oil-funded development funds (known as *PetroCaribe*), and accused state agencies of interference in the investigation, charges

Moise has denied (NPR 31/12/2019) (The Economist 18/02/2020). The then-national parliament passed a motion of no confidence for the removal of the government headed by Prime Minister Céant, leading to dissolution of the national legislature (HNO 2020). This resulted in the absence of a government-approved national budget for the second year in a row, a dearth of public sector financing, and a lack of government support for humanitarian and development projects (The New York Times 16/10/2019) (The Economist 18/02/2020) (HNO 2020). Since March 2019 there has been no functioning legislature in Haiti although there may be a prospective date for elections (UN SC 13/02/2020) (The Economist 18/02/2020). Jovenel Moise is currently ruling by decree as the mandates for the executive and several other house parliamentarians expires in January, although the Minister of the Interior has been nominated although not ratified (UN SC 13/02/2020). Negotiations between Moise and opposition groups are reportedly ongoing, although he has reportedly offered to form a coalition, naming four prime ministers since his election to power (The Economist 18/02/2020) (Haiti Libre 09/02/2020).

The protests constrained access to basic services and led to a loss of lives, restricting economic activity across the country and hampering humanitarian responses. For responders, preparatory work for the June–October cyclone season was restricted, as the Direction for Civil Protection (Direction de la Protection Civile, or DPC, in French), humanitarian agency for the state-led response, had few resources and provided limited support. This may have placed many more people at risk of being inadequately prepared in case of a cyclone. Financing gaps notably resulted in no reconstruction for buildings damaged by the October 2018 earthquake (HNO 2020).

## Underlying variables of the crisis

**Environmental hazards:** Haiti is subject to many different and often compounding meteorological hazards having a range of economic and social effects. Much of Haiti's population lives along the coast, bearing the brunt of sudden and protracted hazards, such as rising sea-levels (HNO 2020). Haiti is also subject to periodic droughts, most recently between 2018 and 2019 (HNO 2020), and the whole country remains vulnerable (HNO 2020).

Haiti is located on a geological fault line and is subject to earthquakes, which often have high death tolls and cause widespread destruction (Columbia University 2010). It is also situated along a seasonal hurricane path, from August to November (HNO 2020) (World Bank 2017) (NHC NOAA Last accessed 13/02/2020).

Widespread deforestation and other environmental degradation have left much of the country prone to flooding, soil erosion, mudslides, and the drying up of rivers (HNO 2020).

Climate change and an increase in global average temperatures mean Haiti is likely to be affected by an increasing number of hurricanes and other meteorological hazards (Abella et al., 2020). Overall, casualty rates in Haiti after natural hazards are high indicating the high vulnerability of Haiti's population (World Bank 2017).

**Underdeveloped infrastructure:** Haiti lacks city planning and building codes, resulting in the proliferation of informal housing and infrastructure (World Bank 2017) (CFR 12/03/2018) (Abella et al., 2020). Large populations are settled in flood zones, placing them at risk of flooding and flooding-related health and WASH hazards (World Bank 2017).

There is a severe lack of healthcare services and infrastructure across the country: only 31% of Haitians have access to healthcare services (HNO 2020). If unaddressed, the underdevelopment of basic services and reliable physical and state infrastructure will continue to exacerbate needs, especially after sudden-onset crises.

**Human rights violations:** Human rights violations, often involving state security forces (The Economist 18/02/2020) put pressure on local people and hamper their daily lives. Accusations include arbitrary detention, torture, targeted violence against the press and civil society, impunity, and forced labour (HNO 2020). Although figures vary, up to 200 people, including police officers, may have died during the protests and security forces are known to have fired live ammunition (The Economist 18/02/2020).

It is unclear whether Haiti's human rights situation will change without further focus on political accountability and without further support to civil society.

**Gang violence:** Violence is pervasive in Haiti, and in 2019 Haiti saw high rates of common criminality, kidnappings, hijackings, and robberies (UN SC 13/02/2020). Violent attacks by gang members was also common, however there is a lack of reliable information on its extent and severity (OSAC 2019) although recent figures on hospital admissions in the Port-au-Prince area for persons with violence-related wounds, such as gun-shot wounds, have been high (MSF 06/03/2020). Gangs control drug and arms trades and extort local communities. Some human rights groups have suggested that gangs may be affiliated with different political actors, gaining leverage from and providing illicit services to those in power (Freedom House 2019) (Thomas Reuters Foundation 10/12/2019). Although gangs were active across the country in the past, price hikes, a lack of investment in social infrastructure, and a proliferation of small arms in the context of increased protests may have driven a spike in activity (HNO 2020). Some reports suggest that the reduced presence of security forces following the departure of the UN Stabilization Mission (known by its French acronym MINUSTAH) in 2017 could be linked to an increase in violent incidents (Thomas Reuters Foundation 10/12/2019).

## Humanitarian impact

**Food & livelihoods:** Food needs are high across the country. 2019's protests disrupted livelihoods and compounded already-restricted access to food caused by high prices, inflation, and low crop yields, pushing vulnerable households into increasingly difficult economic circumstances (The New York Times 16/10/2019) (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019). Haiti is additionally highly dependent on food imports, another factor of vulnerability in case trade is disrupted leading prices rises (CSS 09/02/2017).

Although Haiti also produces food, this production is fragile. Agricultural production in 2019 dropped by 12.3% compared with 2018 due to climatic shocks including drought (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019). Alongside the direct effect this has on food stocks, this has led to significant losses for households dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods – of the country's employed people, 63% of Haitian men and 34% Haitian women work in agriculture, indicating the significance that abrupt environmental changes can have for people of working age (World Bank last accessed 11/02/2020). Additionally, subsistence farmers and their families, who depend on their yields for food and gain little to no profit from their own farming, have been heavily impacted. Yields in Nord and Nord-Est are believed to have been limited by ongoing disruptive weather (FEWS NET 31/01/2020).

Urban households have also seen the erosion of their livelihoods (including employment and assets) over recent years due to meteorological and political-economic shocks.

Vulnerable households across the country require food assistance to cope with food scarcity, price increases, and livelihood erosion (see map on page 6) (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019). Markets however are functioning across the country, permitting a stable source of access to food except in Croix-des-Bossales in the Port-au-Prince area (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019).

**Health:** Health infrastructure is limited and underfunded, with few qualified personnel; it does not cover the needs of the whole country (HNO 2020). During protests, vital medicine, oxygen, and fuel supplies were held up at roadblocks, and many hospitals cut their services or closed (The New York Times 16/10/2019).

Malaria, diphtheria, and measles are common pathogens. Caseloads are aggravated by severe shortages in healthcare infrastructure, medication shortages, a low vaccination rate, and nation-wide WASH limitations (HNO 2020). A cholera epidemic which had affected over 800,000 people since 2010 was controlled in 2019, and no confirmed cases have since been reported, although the risk of outbreak remains (PAHO 01/2020).

Haiti's Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates are the highest in the northern hemisphere; in 2018, half of Haiti's population was considered to be undernourished (WFP 2019), and

this may increase in the IPC's projected March-June 2020 period for areas in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) (IPC Haiti Acute Food Insecurity Analysis 31/10/2019) (Orrico et al. 2019). Malnutrition plays an aggravating effect on overall health, exposing malnourished people to other illnesses, which can worsen malnutrition (HNO 2020).

**WASH:** Around 26% of Haiti's population does not have access to an improved source of water (40% in rural areas) (HNO 2020). Access to clean water sources has dropped significantly since 1990 (The Economist 18/02/2020), and WASH infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, is often not maintained (HNO 2020). The origin of the cholera outbreak that spread from 2010 onwards has been identified as UN Peacekeeper camp waste that was discharged directly into the Meille river, a primary source of water for many communities (National Geographic 18/08/2016) – indicative of the structural lack of resources available and the vulnerability of inhabitants.

Only 14% of households in Haiti have access to water in-house, indicating that most Haitians must travel to some degree to meet their household WASH needs. This may pose protection risks especially to women and girls (HNO 2020).

**Shelter and NFIs:** Infrastructure and housing development is very poor in Haiti, notably around urban centres where slums are common. Across the country many Haitians live in "self-produced" housing, built with little technical expertise, posing a danger to households (Abella et al., 2020).

Investment in housing and shelter is also lacking. Houses damaged since Hurricane Matthew (2016) are reportedly still damaged. Populations living in informal shelters are especially vulnerable to the effects of sudden-onset natural hazards.

**Protection:** Civilian protection violations, including gender-based violence, are often related to criminal violence. Some reports suggest there has been an increase in violent incidents since the departure of the UN stabilization mission in 2017 and peacekeeping mission at the end of 2019 (Thomas Reuters Foundation 10/12/2019) as local police forces are reportedly undertrained, underfunded, and susceptible to corruption (The Economist 18/02/2020). Incidents were also reported during the 2019 protests, including gang violence.

Another protection issue in Haiti is the high number of children forced into labour, with an estimated 225,000 to 500,000 children exploited (PADF 13/01/2013) (The Conversation 08/05/2019), mostly girls; many work in hazardous conditions and are often subject to ill-treatment and neglect. Research suggests that many of these children come from destitute families who are promised that their children will attend school and earn a living, indicating that poverty may be a driver of protection violations and exploitation (The Conversation 08/05/2019); There has also been a reported increase in kidnappings since January 2020, echoing "kidnapping sprees" of previous years and reportedly targeting a

range of Haitian civilians, although some cases have been contested (Miami Herald 13/02/2020).

**Education:** Two out of ten children in Haiti do not attend primary school (WFP 2019); other estimates place 320,000 school-age children in Haiti as not attending school (HNO 2020). Additionally, 100,000 children are estimated to be attending non-rehabilitated schools, placing them at risk in the case a sudden-onset hazard affects their school (HNO 2020). Many schools in Haiti were closed due to protests and only 60% of schools have reopened since the protests ended at the end of 2019 (The New Humanitarian 13/01/2020).

## Vulnerable groups affected

People living in public institutions, such as orphanages, hospitals, and penitentiary centres, may be especially affected by Haiti's political and economic instability, and may bear the brunt of further cuts to public spending – notably in access to WASH infrastructure and food provisions (HNO 2020). Other vulnerable groups include subsistence farmers as well as the urban poor, who may face increased humanitarian needs resulting from their precarious livelihoods' situations. Women and children may be especially vulnerable to the effects of the complex crisis.

The Haitian diaspora in the Dominican Republic is also under particular pressure after the passing of recent laws stripping the children of undocumented persons of their legal status (PBS 06/04/2019). Human rights groups have stated that the laws are racist and specifically target persons of Haitian descent (PBS 06/04/2019). Many have been forced to return to Haiti and live along its border; an estimated 9,000 people per month since 2015 have voluntarily or been forcibly returned from the Dominican Republic, according to rare estimates of their numbers (HNO 2020). They often do not receive support or follow-up related to their reintegration and access to basic services although their numbers are unclear (HNO 2020). Returnees without livelihoods or resources, and those living in informal camps along the border may be especially vulnerable to hazards and economic conditions.

## Humanitarian and operational constraints

Many operational constraints for NGOs exist in Haiti. Humanitarian personnel have been threatened by criminal violence as well as protest groups. NGO compounds were also deliberately attacked in 2019 (MSF 07/07/2019). After the departure of the UN stabilization mission, the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has ensured transport for the humanitarian community, but lack of financing means their support may not last into 2020. This has the potential to further restrain humanitarian access and operations (HNO 2020).

A lack of road infrastructure and poor maintenance of existing ones, particularly in rural areas, has limited access for humanitarian workers and people in need (HNO 02/2019). Roadblocks and barricades have limited access in the recent past, notably during times of protest (HNO 02/2019); protests have inhibited civilians' access to basic services, as well as schools and businesses (Al Jazeera 06/2019).

## Local and national response capacity

Petrol/fuel shortages are a major challenge faced by civilians, public services, and humanitarian actors, which hampers both response and coping capacity (HNO 02/2019). National Response bodies, including the DPC's Centre for Emergency Departmental Operations (or *Centres d'Opération d'Urgence Départementaux* in French) are limited by funding inadequacies and communication gaps (HNO 2020). Many of these bodies do not have sufficient electricity or fuel, access to clean water, or pre-positioned contingency stocks (HNO 2020). The State's WASH institution, DINEPA, requires further support to train personnel in response planning (HNO 2020). The government has promised a national food-distribution programme, although it is unclear when this would start (The Economist 18/02/2020).

Volunteer-led municipal civil protection committees (or *Comités Communaux de Protection Civile*, or CCPCs, in French) have been active in recent years ensuring quick reaction times and response planning after sudden-onset disasters (Abella et al., 2020). They have been associated with a reduction in the loss of lives after sudden-onset hazards. Other early warning tools have been established in the country in the years following the 2010 earthquake, including forecasting workstations (WMO 2017). A national website publishing daily meteorological updates exists and is open to the public although it is not available in Creole, the language spoken by the majority of Haiti's population (Bulletin Météo Haiti en Ligne, last accessed 13/02/2020). In effect, Haiti's early warning systems continue to face challenges (Abella et al., 2020)

## International response capacity

UN bodies operate in country. A large number of INGOs working in development and in humanitarian and livelihoods response are present across the country, notably in the Port-au-Prince area (OCHA Physical Presence document 07/10/2019). Nonetheless aid flows have been, historically, inconsistent and reactive primarily to political events and there have been criticisms against NGOs for their lack of accountability, particularly after the 2010 Earthquake (The Guardian 15/04/2015). Furthermore, short-term humanitarian aid may not cover the needs of what has become a chronically complex crisis (The Intercept 22/10/2019) (World Bank Country Profile 2015).

# Projected Food Insecurity (IPC Phases) in Haiti's Departments

Source: Projected IPC phases for March – June 2020, IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis

