

Conflict escalation and increasing internal displacement

CRISIS OVERVIEW

Since 30 March, clashes between armed gangs and Haiti's multinational security mission (MSS) have increased in the cities of Mirebalais and Saint d'Eau in the Centre department. By 22 April, the clashes had killed at least 76 people. **As of 16 May, at least 51,400 people had been newly displaced from Mirebalais district** (OCHA 22/04/2025; Health Cluster/PAHO 24/04/2025). During the attacks – characterised by armed clashes, lootings, and killings – gangs also facilitated the escape of over 500 inmates from prison, including individuals suspected of arms trafficking. The attacks have severely disrupted essential services, resulting in the closure of the main hospital and several schools in the area (OCHA 22/04/2025). **The violence has likely continued to affect more people, but until 18 May, up-to-date information remained limited.**

Between 30 March and 16 May, most of the IDPs from urban Mirebalais moved towards the communes of Boucan Carré (24 %), Hinche (21 %), Lascahobas (17 %), and Savanette (11%), also within the Centre department. On 22 April, around 76% of IDPs were staying with relatives and in nearby areas (OCHA 16/05/2025; OCHA 22/04/2025; Health Cluster/PAHO 24/04/2025).

On 25 April, the MSS carried out an operation in Mirebalais to regain control of the communes of Saut d'Eau and Mirebalais. By 30 April, Mirebalais remained under the control of the armed gangs (UNICEF 03/05/2025; OCHA 22/04/2025; The Haitian Times 11/04/2025; France 24 31/03/2025). As of 18 May, there was no information indicating that the MSS had regained control in Mirebalais.

Prior to the attacks, the Haitian authorities already lacked the capacity to respond to people's needs and provide security, leaving the local police and organisations highly dependent on international aid and funding (ICG 19/03/2025). The situation is aggravated by the suspension of foreign assistance from the US, which contributed around 59% (USD 207 million) of the total USD 294.5 million committed to Haiti's 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (OCHA accessed 30/04/2025). For more information, see ACAPS' report on the impact of the US aid suspension in Haiti.

Centre department, including Mirebalais



Source: ACAPS using OCHA (accessed 09/05/2025)

ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

- There is a high risk of violence spreading towards other communes and areas of Centre department, as armed groups seek to consolidate control over regions near the border with the Dominican Republic. Since April 2025 threats of attacks on the commune of Hinche have circulated on social media ([ACLEd 08/05/2025](#); [Miami Herald 14/04/2025](#)). Threats and insecurity are likely to keep displacing people not only towards Boucan Carré, Hinche, Lascahobas, and Savanette communes in Centre department but also towards other departments.
- Movement and cross-border displacement towards other countries are also likely to increase, particularly through irregular routes. The Dominican Republic has suspended visa renewal and issuance for Haitians since October 2023, preventing from regular Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic ([AI 28/08/2024](#); [AP 15/09/2023](#); [Fragomen 30/04/2024](#)). This has led many Haitians to use irregular and unsafe routes or try to move towards other countries such as Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and the US ([El País 02/12/2024](#); [EFE 21/06/2024](#)). During this journey, they are exposed to protection risks, such as sexual assault, exploitation, extortion, other physical violence, and death.
- There is a rising concern that armed gangs may target critical infrastructure such as the hydroelectric Péligre Dam, which is located 15 kilometres away from Mirebalais and generates electricity for much of the country. According to local news reports, the dam has been shut down since May 13, although no official confirmation or details on the impact have been released. Control over the dam could significantly disrupt the national power supply, heighten protection risks, and hinder the delivery of humanitarian aid ([Rezonodwes 15/05/2025](#); [Alterpress 15/05/2025](#); [ACLEdnews 08/05/2025](#)).
- The country is expected to experience heavy rain between June–October, the typical rainy season. This is likely to worsen health needs through the spread of waterborne diseases ([NOAA 05/03/2010](#); [WFP 04/04/2025](#)). IDPs in temporary or makeshift shelters are likely to be more exposed to diseases and the impact of the rainy season.
- Violence and clashes may keep increasing in coming months in advance of elections that are expected to occur in November 2025, given significant public and gang opposition to the transitional government. On 3 May and 13 May, protesters marched up in Port-au-Prince demanding an end to persistent gang violence in Mirebalais and calling on the country's prime minister and transitional presidential council to resign ([Barrons 16/05/2025](#); [AP 04/05/2025](#)). Civil unrest is likely as protests rise with violent responses and clashes that put IDPs and other civilians at risk.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim

This report aims to analyse the humanitarian impact of the rising internal displacement in Haiti's Centre Department, driven by escalating insecurity there since 30 March 2025. While it provides an overview of the national context, the report particularly focuses on Centre department, where the highest concentration of population movements has been recorded. Displacement across Haiti has been escalating since 2024. For more information, see [ACAPS' full report on increasing displacement in the Grand Sud region \(October 2024\)](#), and [an analysis of the impact of the USAID suspension on the country for additional context](#).

Methodology

This report is based on a secondary data review of publicly available sources and is limited by the lack of up-to-date information on recent developments and key sectoral needs since early May.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

- Insecurity constrains access to several areas of the country, including Centre department. Gangs continue to control the main roads linking the Metropolitan Area of Port-au-Prince (ZMPAP) to the rest of the country. The situation has deteriorated in Centre department, further complicating transport to Nord department and leading to a significant increase in supply costs for all goods, including those that humanitarian organisations need ([LogCluster 08/05/2025](#) and [11/04/2025](#)). During April authorities were limiting humanitarian movement on sections of the road connecting Hinche to Belladère, Lascahobas, and Mirebalais because of insecurity. Roads are the only way to access Mirebalais as the closest airport is in Port-au-Prince. There is limited information on the restoration of access through roads. Until 12 May, armed gangs controlled the road on which the Mirebalais University Hospital is located ([MSF 12/05/2025](#); [UNICEF 03/05/2025](#)).
- Unstable telephone networks and power cuts are usual across the country but also increase when clashes affect network infrastructure, limiting communication and hampering humanitarian response coordination ([OCHA 22/04/2025](#)). The authorities who lead the nutrition and health sectors report that one of the major response constraints in Mirebalais and Saut d'Eau is inadequate access to information and inefficient data-sharing ([UNICEF 03/05/2025](#)).
- The expected rainy and cyclone season in the coming months can further affect access by blocking already disrupted roads. This could limit the aid response and put people at risk of food insecurity and other needs.



- Organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières have reduced their presence and operations in some areas of Haiti, mostly in Port-au-Prince, because of attacks on their hospital and the lack of security guarantees for workers (MSF 08/04/2025).
- Several local radio states have stopped the transmission of news because of direct attacks and insecurity, which impedes people that rely on radio to find updated information. This also limits humanitarian response access to local sources. In late April, armed gangs took over a radio station in Mirebalais. Armed gangs have also been using social media to broadcast their videos and messages as well as to recruit new members (ACLEDE 08/05/2025; LeNational 03/05/2025; Ayibopost 02/05/2025).
- Since 28 April, additional attacks in Artibonite department have also displaced 13,000 more people or close to 3,200 households (OCHA 02/05/2025). In Kenscoff, Ouest department, armed attacks between 18–20 April displaced nearly 1,000 people, with many moving to newly established IDP sites (IOM 24/04/2025). The increasing violence across various parts of the country could exceed the humanitarian aid capacity to respond. This combined with road blockages and insecurity in the Centre department could force responders to prioritise other areas.

CRISIS DRIVERS

The attacks in Mirebalais were launched by the Viv Ansanm coalition on the Mirebalais district in the Centre Department, which have been the main cause of displacement (OCHA 22/04/2025; Haitian Times 11/04/2025; CI 19/02/2025). Viv Ansanm (Living Together) is Haiti's main armed gang coalition, and it is believed that it was formed in 2023, partly to oppose the deployment of the UN MSS. The unification of armed groups has helped them expand their control of territory and strategic infrastructure, increasing their financial and political influence against the transitional government (Insight Crime 25/11/2024).

The localised violence in Mirebalais is part of a broader pattern across Haiti, where gang activity has been the primary driver of mass displacement. Since 2021, armed gangs have intensified their operations to expand territorial control since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse (OCHA 22/04/2025; The Haitian Times 11/04/2025; ICG 19/02/2025).

Another recurrent cause of displacement is Haiti's exposure to climate hazards, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods, which cause severe destruction in towns, as well as food insecurity when droughts, floods, and civil unrest result in a lack of sufficient food and clean water (OCHA 22/04/2025; Archynewsy 06/05/2025). Currently, the North-East department is facing severe floods, which are likely to cause displacement (OCHA 10/05/2025). In 2024, floods in the South department affected 3,558 families and around 117,000 IDPs present in the department (OCHA 15/11/2025). Haiti is highly vulnerable to environmental hazards, with severe impacts observed on an annual basis.

CRISIS IMPACT

Displacement

By 29 April, armed clashes in Mirebalais alone had displaced over 51,000 people, including approximately 27,000 children (UNICEF 03/05/2025). Clashes and violence make information-gathering difficult, meaning data on the needs of IDPs – particularly those in rural areas – remains limited. The coming rainy season is expected to affect them further.

The recent escalation of conflict has worsened an already critical displacement crisis in Haiti. Since January 2025, gang-related violence has newly displaced more than 130,000 individuals. Most of the displaced population resides with host families or across over 228 active displacement sites countrywide, 97 of which have been newly created in Centre department (Health Cluster/PAHO 24/04/2025; CCCM Cluster 28/04/2025). By mid-April, there were over 1 million displaced persons in Haiti, many of whom had been displaced since the surge of violence in 2021 (IOM 14/01/2025 and 15/05/2025).

Shelter

By 29 April, more than 12,500 IDPs (24%) of the people displaced in Mirebalais were stranded across 95 spontaneous sites across Centre department, exposing them to overcrowded conditions with higher risks of contracting communicable diseases (UNICEF 03/05/2025). There is no specific definition of spontaneous sites, but they often can be tents or public buildings, including schools, that are temporarily available for IDPs but not necessarily equipped with everything they need, such as sufficient sanitation facilities.

Most IDPs across Haiti tend to stay with relatives, rather than in temporary sites. That said, according to the Shelter Cluster, **the number of sites nearly doubled from 119 in March to 228 in April**, mostly because of displacements caused by armed attacks in Centre department (97 of the 121 newly created sites are in this department). Despite the increasing number of sites, the number of IDPs staying in them in the department increased by only 10%, which could indicate that many have decided to stay with host families or are on the move (IOM 28/04/2025; CCCM Cluster 28/04/2025). There is no information on the current state of spontaneous sites, but they are likely to be made with tarpaulins and timber, making them vulnerable to the impact of the coming rainy season.

According to OCHA, some host families in Hinche and Boucan Carré are providing shelter and sharing their limited resources, including food, with up to 30 people, including children. This situation also increases humanitarian needs host communities (UNICEF 03/05/2025). By 2024, 39% of households Centre department lived in makeshift shelters (REACH 12/10/2024).

Protection

There is a high risk of increased child recruitment, further violence, and other protection risks among people displaced from Mirebalais and Saut d'Eau, but little information is available. Some children assessed in Hinche and Boucan Carré communes in Centre department have reported witnessing the recruitment of other children by armed groups, fuelling concerns for their own safety (UNICEF 03/05/2025). There are no recent reports of gender-based violence, but women and children's groups have repeatedly mentioned coming across different situations of gender-based violence, including rape, in the context of camps. Displaced women and girls are sometimes sexually exploited in exchange for assistance or access to toilets (IOM 28/04/2025; AI 12/02/2025).

Health

Waterborne diseases

From 29 December 2024 to 15 April 2025, 1,487 suspected cholera cases were reported countrywide (Health Cluster/PAHO 24/04/2025). From March, there were increasing alerts of suspected cholera cases in Ouest and Centre departments (UNICEF 09/05/2025). The actual number of cases is likely much higher given overcrowded shelters and a lack of access to health facilities. The risk of diseases is heightened in the Centre department because, as of 2024, 37% of households used unprotected spring water as their source of water, and 7% used surface water (REACH 12/10/2024).

Cholera, malaria, and other waterborne diseases are likely to proliferate during the rainy season from June–November. IDPs in makeshift shelters, with overcrowded conditions and little access to hygiene and sanitation, are more likely to contract vector-borne diseases. Attacks on health facilities also limit timely medical care, increasing the likelihood of complications. The Hôpital Universitaire de Mirebalais had been closed since the attacks on 31 March and until early April, forcing IDPs and residents to seek care at alternative facilities, including Hôpital Sainte Thérèse de Hinche and Hôpital Albert Schweitzer in Artibonite, which have reported being overstretched given the increased demand (EFE 25/04/2025).

Healthcare access

Many people in Haiti avoid going to hospitals because of violence and clashes in the streets, particularly in the ZMPAP, but also in places where violence is escalating, such as Centre department). People suffering from serious illnesses – strokes, acute infections, chronic complications – are at risk of being diagnosed late or not at all because of lack of access to healthcare, progression to severe forms of disease, interrupted treatment, and increased

drug resistance for some diseases. They often die at home without ever receiving the medical assistance that could have saved their lives (Rezo Nódwes 27/04/2025).

There is limited access to prenatal and postnatal care countrywide. Some people are forced to walk two hours or more to access essential healthcare services, which poses a great maternal mortality risk (MSF 30/04/2025). Boucan Carré commune in Centre department has also received a large influx of IDPs, and the number of births recorded at the Boucan Carré hospital (St. Michel) more than doubled in April compared to March, rising from 13 to 32 – a significant increase given that in Haiti, approximately 63% of women tend to deliver outside of a healthcare facility and only resort to hospitals if they do not have access to a 'matron' or experience complications. The hospital has reported limited capacities in terms of qualified staffing and equipment (UNICEF 03/05/2025; MSF 07/04/2024; Raymondville et al. 23/08/2020). Haiti is experiencing a severe shortage of medical staff as many qualified workers decide to migrate because of the insecurity and lack of work opportunities in the country. This increases in areas with an escalation of conflict, such as Centre department (MSF 07/04/2025).

Education

Since 30 March, all schools in Mirebalais have been closed. Education has been and is expected to remain disrupted, as numerous schools are currently being used to shelter IDPs (OCHA 22/04/2025). Until 29 April, UNICEF had identified at least 42 schools used as shelters in Centre department (UNICEF 03/05/2025). Since 2021, widespread violence across parts of Haiti and an climate and environmental hazards have severely affected access to education (UNICEF 28/02/2025 and 30/04/2025). The prolonged absence from schooling heightens children's exposure to recruitment by armed groups, exploitation, abuse, and other protection risks.

Food security

As of April 2025, around 50 % of the population of Centre department (305,400 people) were facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and 131,470 Urgence (IPC Phase 4) (IPC 14/04/2025). The overall violence in Haiti has caused the closure of markets, destroyed crops and cattle, and made many people dependent on humanitarian aid, which is also scarce because of insecurity (WFP 05/05/2025). In April 2025, nearly half (around 5.7 million) of the population countrywide faced high levels of acute food insecurity, classified as Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse conditions. Among them, over 8,400 people living in displacement camps near Port-au-Prince were experiencing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) hunger. An additional 2.1 million people, representing 19% of the analysed population countrywide, were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) conditions, facing critical food insecurity, while 3.6 million people (32%) were in IPC 3 (IPC 14/04/2025).

According to a WFP study, which took a sample of 116 households per department and 120 households per commune in the ZMPP, more than eight out of ten households have experienced moderate or severe hunger on the Household Hunger Scale; 67% of households eat only one meal a day or even go whole days without eating. This figure rises to 73% among IDPs. IDPs lack the means and resources to cope with the impact of insecurity. It has been found that 89% of IDPs countrywide have insufficient food consumption (poor and borderline), which is 20% more than the consumption of nondisplaced people (WFP 31/03/2025).

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Returns

Between 2024 and 15 April 2025, 540,800 people on the move were deported from the Dominican Republic to Haiti; of the deported people, 72.4% were men, 19.7% women, 4.7% boys, and 3.5% girls (Health Cluster/PAHO 24/04/2025). Only in April, around 20,000 Haitians were returned from the Dominican Republic – many taken to Belladère in Centre department, which, also considering the escalation of conflict, lacks the capacity to receive a large influx of deportees and refugees. Since 22 April, IOM has been reporting an average of 15 pregnant women and 15 lactating mothers daily at the Belladère and Ouanaminthe border crossings (UN 30/04/2025). Deportees are more vulnerable to the consequences of violence and displacement, as they lack the means to recover, and many have no support networks when they return to Haiti.

The Dominican Republic has established several measures against migrants and refugees from Haiti, one of which is the building of a wall on the border between both countries. At the same time, since April 2025, the Government has deployed 9,500 soldiers to the border to impede irregular migration and said it will deploy 750 immigration agents throughout the Dominican Republic to identify people with irregular status and deport them back to Haiti (DW 07/04/2025). Dominican consulates in Haiti have not issued visas for almost two years, having been closed since 2023.

Inflation

In Centre department, food prices have generally been increasing, driven by factors such as the security crisis, limited access to essential roads, and increased food insecurity. The combination of the limited availability of goods, a weakened economy, and widespread crop destruction has contributed to rising food prices. Market assessments have been primarily done in the capital city, mostly in Delmas (part of the ZMPP). Essential commodities have

experienced notable increases, with the prices for staples such as rice and sugar rising between 8–20% and for wheat flour increasing by approximately 13%. That said, the rise is likely to be similar in the rest of the country (WFP 31/03/2025). People, particularly IDPs, lack the means to afford the higher food prices, which makes them more vulnerable to food insecurity and limits their accessibility to medicine and essential items.

Rainy season

Haiti's rainy season goes from April–June and from August–October. Although forecasts indicate an average rainy season in 2025, with a mild risk of heavy rainfall in Sud department, there are risks of waterborne diseases and people having less coping capacities because of violence and food insecurity (IRI accessed 06/05/2024; WFP 17/04/2025). The rainy season will also severely affect IDPs living in makeshift and spontaneous shelters because they are likely to be more exposed to floods and diseases. The impact could also force them to be displaced again.

Between December 2024 and February 2025, the country experienced heavy rainfall that exceeded 200% of normal levels, causing floods and damage. Despite this, crop conditions have remained favourable (WFP 17/04/2025). Until 10 May, some parts of the country, such as Nord-Est department, were experiencing heavy rainfall and floods, and over 3,000 families have been affected, which could overstretch humanitarian aid capacity and also cause displacement (OCHA 09/05/2025).

Political crisis and upcoming elections

Haiti is expected to hold elections on 15 November 2025, but there is uncertainty and tension around a change in government. Haiti has not had any elected representatives since January 2023 and has not held elections since 2016. The most recently elected president, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated in July 2021. Since then, interim leaders have been appointed, but the absence of a stable, elected government has contributed to a deteriorating security situation, with armed gangs gaining control over large portions of the national territory (Le Monde 31/01/2025; Reuters 29/01/2025; BBC 19/09/2024). The current administration faces corruption accusations which have caused social tension and discontent (Reuters 02/10/2024). The electoral period may aggravate violence among armed gangs competing for territorial control, likely resulting in heightened internal displacement. This instability could hinder voter participation because of fear of retaliation from armed gangs and forced displacement. In the longer term, this could lead to more years of increasing humanitarian needs and displacement.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

- OCHA and UNICEF have been developing a multisectoral assessment and have deployed in Hinche and Boucan Carré – where a large concentration of IDPs have been registered – to support coordination, conduct needs assessments, and initiate the response (UNICEF 03/05/2025).
- Until February 2025, there were 27 humanitarian responders in Centre department. In May, it was unclear if they remained active (OCHA 09/05/2025). Insecurity and clashes pose a great risk to the continuation of projects and operations in the department.
- The US funding suspension has reduced the capacity of the humanitarian response. In 2024, the US provided around 65% (USD 190.6 million) of the total USD 295.5 million committed to Haiti's 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (OCHA accessed 06/05/2025). UNICEF reports a funding gap of 92% (\$249 million) (UNICEF 09/05/2025).
- By 16 April, the Regional Humanitarian Pooled Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean (RHPF LAC) had allocated \$4 million in funds to respond to the needs of IDPs in Port-au-Prince and Grand'Anse, although there are no reports of allocation to Centre department from the RHPF LAC (OCHA 16/04/2025).