

Focus | The impacts of escalating violence in Haiti

In 2024, Haiti faced the most severe food crisis in the region, a crisis rooted in a confluence of political instability, economic fragility,

In 2025, 15 years after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake and nine years on from the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew, the country remains deeply distressed. Its challenges were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, followed by, in 2021, the assassination of the head of state and 7.2 magnitude earthquake. Efforts at reconstruction have fallen short, leaving extreme socioeconomic inequality and chronic political and gang violence unaddressed (ICG, 2024).

An alarming food crisis in 2024

Haiti's acute food insecurity during the latter half of 2024 reflects the confluence of multiple crises. Nearly 48 percent of the country's population, or 5.4 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity, with around 2 million in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and nearly 5 600 in displacement sites in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). While insecurity and violence are key drivers of the crisis, particularly in the MAPAP and in regions like Artibonite, structural weaknesses in the agricultural sector and climate shocks are key drivers in rural areas, where 75 percent of those facing high levels of acute food insecurity live. Farmers and producers struggle with low productivity and high input costs, while recurrent droughts, floods and hurricanes further disrupt food production (FAO DIEM, 2024, Round 6; IPC, September 2024). Drought and erratic rainfall in 2024 reduced yields, especially for staple crops such as maize, beans and rice (FAO, October 2024).

Amid escalating insecurity, armed gangs continued to control key supply routes, severely limiting the flow of goods, particularly to isolated regions. These restrictions limited access to livelihoods and

humanitarian assistance (IPC, September 2024).

The political crisis has weakened governance structures, impeding effective policy responses and coordination of relief efforts. Inflation remained persistently high, with the Haitian currency losing significant value against the U.S. dollar. Since Haiti is reliant on imports for more than 70 percent of cereal consumption requirements, currency depreciation drives up prices of staple food products (FAO, October 2024).

A projected deterioration in 2025

Escalating violence, further weather extremes, political unrest and the depletion of household food stocks are likely to drive further deterioration during March–June 2025. About 51 percent of the analysed population or 5.7 million people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity. Of them, around 2.1 million will be in IPC Phase 4, and about 8 400 living in camps in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). Additionally, humanitarian food assistance is not expected to meet the needs of the population (IPC, April 2025).

A critical nutrition crisis

The rapid deterioration of acute food security, armed violence and displacement have had a devastating impact on nutrition, particularly among children under 5 years of age and pregnant and breastfeeding women. A cholera epidemic has further strained the nutrition situation. Access to health and nutrition care are constrained by the closure of health institutions, insecurity and shortages of supplies, particularly in Ouest and for displaced populations (IPC, March 2024).

The national GAM prevalence stood at 11.7 percent in 2024, rising to 24.6 percent among displaced populations (SMART, 2024; IPC, September 2024). Out of 69 areas analysed, 13 were classified in

Serious or worse (IPC AMN Phase 3 or above). The urban Croix-des-Bouquets municipality in Port-au-Prince was classified in Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4). Out of the 0.3 million children aged 6–59 months suffering from acute malnutrition in December 2023–November 2024, nearly half were severely acutely malnourished (IPC, March 2024).

Women and girls bear the brunt of the crisis

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the food crisis in Haiti. Data from the National Food and Nutrition Security Survey reveals significant gender differences in food consumption scores, with women-headed households consistently exhibiting poorer scores than those headed by men. This is largely due to their reliance on informal and unstable income sources and their heightened exposure to security risks. Women of reproductive age often prioritize their children's needs over their own, exacerbating their nutritional vulnerabilities (IPC, September 2024).

For women in displacement sites, the situation is often alarming, as they are separated from their livelihoods and social support networks and have limited access to sanitation, maternal and child health services. Around 42.6 percent of women-headed households resorted to borrowing. Women were more likely to resort to begging to ensure household survival than men. Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue in displacement settings, further compounding the vulnerabilities of women and girls (IPC, March 2024).

Sharply rising internal displacement

In 2024, escalating gang violence and insecurity forced an additional 730 000 people to flee their homes, bringing the total number of IDPs to 1 million, representing 9 percent of the country's

population. Most (83 percent) are hosted by families, while 17 percent reside in 142 established sites (IOM, January 2025).

The living conditions in overcrowded camps and informal settlements are dire. There is a lack of basic services, such as clean water, sanitation and healthcare, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks and further exacerbating malnutrition. Over 70 percent of households faced high levels of acute food insecurity, with women disproportionately affected (IPC, September 2024). Needs assessments indicate that IDPs urgently require assistance to cover all their survival needs.

In 2024, nearly 200 000 Haitians were deported from the Dominican Republic (IOM, February 2025). These deportees, expected to increase in number in 2025, experienced limited access to essential services and income (ACAPS, November 2024; IPC, April 2025).

Priorities for action

Haiti's food and nutrition crises require urgent, coordinated and sustained interventions from national authorities, international donors and humanitarian organizations. Addressing the crisis effectively will require immediate food assistance, complemented by emergency food production to empower people with the capacity to produce their own food. Long-term investments are crucial to strengthening livelihoods and resilience, while strong agricultural interventions are needed to boost local food production, reduce import dependence and lower market prices. Equally crucial is the need to contribute to the stabilization of the political and security situation in the country. Only through a comprehensive and inclusive approach can Haiti hope to mitigate the devastating impacts of its ongoing food security and nutrition crisis.