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HAITI: SCENARIO FORECASTING FOR HUMANITARIAN PLANNING

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline three national-level conflict development scenarios and one repercussion scenario for the second half of 2024, detailing associated changes in needs, humanitarian access and implications for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The report concludes with several recommendations for mitigating challenges faced by humanitarian responders.



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Executive Summary

Since February 29, 2024, the rapidly changing national conflict unleashed by the gang coalition known as Viv Ansanm in Haitian Kreyol has resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, necessitating an updated scenario assessment for the remainder of the year 2024.

- The first and **likely** conflict development scenario sees a progressive enhancement in security due to the deployment of the Multinational Security Support Team (MSS). The role of the MSS is to help the Haitian National Police (PNH) secure main routes and zones of the Metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, currently occupied and controlled by Viv Ansanm. Securing routes and zones will increase accessibility into Port-au-Prince and allow for emergency humanitarian assistance in high-risk areas where it has previously been challenging to maintain support.
- The second and **very likely** conflict development scenario predicts a temporary escalation in conflict between the PNH and Viv Ansanm forces, as the latter upscales its offensive and defensive tactics to combat MSS and PNH operations to dismantle the coalition. This would lead to increased violence in zones of confrontation and temporarily restricted access for humanitarian workers.
- The third and **unlikely** conflict development scenario is that Viv Ansanm members will infiltrate the southern and northern departments of Haiti, blocking access in and out of the capital via main routes. This would bring humanitarian access to a standstill and further impede vital supply routes for both humanitarian aid and the local economy.
- The **almost certain** repercussion scenario predicts that the population of IDPs in Port-au-Prince will continue to expand as violence escalates between Viv Ansanm and MSS and PNH forces. This would exacerbate high economic stressors on local markets for host communities, predominately in the southern and northern departments of the country.

Scale of likelihood	
Very unlikely	The scenario is highly improbable and would only occur in highly unusual circumstances.
Unlikely	The scenario is within the realm of possibility but is not expected.
Moderately likely	The scenario has an equal chance of occurring or not occurring.
Likely	The scenario is expected to occur.
Very likely	The scenario is highly probable and would only not occur in unusual circumstances.
Almost certain	The scenario is nearly inevitable based on current trends and data.

Background and Rationale

The Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) 2024 reports a concerning increase in the number of Haitians requiring humanitarian assistance, reaching 47% of the 11.7 million population. This represents a 5.8% increase from 2023 and a 12.1% rise from 2022. Fueled by gang activity, violence has surged since President Moïse’s assassination in 2021. Haiti now ranks “very high” on the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) risk index due to its vulnerability to hazards and violence and its weak infrastructure.

In early March 2024, heightened insecurity due to gang violence amid a worsening political crisis disrupted the capital of Port-au-Prince and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Haiti, displacing more than 300,000 people from gang-controlled zones¹ and placing an estimated 8.5 million people at risk of acute hunger.² Insecurity has further limited humanitarian access, and the turbulence has revealed the severe impediment that the lack of timely, easily accessible information and analysis poses for response efforts, future planning, and coordination between peer organizations. In this extremely volatile environment and given the limited governmental and institutional capacity to analyze, prepare for, and respond to humanitarian needs, there is an urgent need to maintain a steady flow of accurate information to the humanitarian community. This includes scenario forecasting related to humanitarian responders and their modes of accessing targeted communities, together with the potential impact of insecurity on emergency response capacity.

Objective

In response to this pressing need for timely information on humanitarian access, Mercy Corps’s Haiti Crisis Analysis Team (CAT) has produced an accessibility-focused scenario forecasting report.

1 International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2024. ‘DTM Haiti – Key information on the internal displacement situation in Haiti – Round 7 (June 2024)’. IOM: Haiti.
 2 World Food Programme (WFP). 2024. [Hunger Map Live: Haiti insight and key trends](#).



“...We need to break down the steps of accessibility to say what risks are there, what can we accept, from standardized data collection procedures, and begin to look at how we share these coordination strategies and data on accessibility amongst other NGOs working in Haiti.” — **Senior UN Staff Member**

Methodology

The research conducted for this scenario forecast took place between June and July 2024, with secondary data collected to support contextual analysis and assess the humanitarian landscape. Further information was gathered through extensive primary data collection via social media monitoring and an examination of secondary data on security entry points and supply routes throughout Haiti. Over a dozen key informant interviews (KIIs) were also carried out with members of the Mercy Corps Haiti (MCH) team as well as peer (I)NGOs and local grassroots organizations. These KIIs provided key insights into access challenges, entry points, and plausible scenario forecasting for the situation in Haiti, which can be used to inform decision-making by the MCH team and partners.



Conflict Development Scenarios

Scenario 1

MSS forces help the PNH improve security in the Port-au-Prince region, improving humanitarian access to gang-controlled zones and the most vulnerable beneficiary communities.

Current situation: A multinational security support team (MSS) led by Kenya has been deployed to Haiti to assist the Haitian National Police (PNH) in stabilizing Port-au-Prince, which continues to be severely impacted by escalating gang violence and political instability. The first 400 Kenyan troops were deployed on June 25, marking the first wave of 2,500 troops committed to the mission. The mission team is led by Kenyan forces and will be aided by troops from the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, and Chad all of whom have pledged support for the MSS and are expected to arrive in full by September 2024.

Forecasting: The conflict between Viv Ansanm and PNH forces began to escalate at the beginning of 2024, with a massive spike in violent incidents between March and April compared to the previous 2023 conflict monitoring cycle, leveling out in May 2024. Based on this trend, conflict trajectories assume there will be a minimal change in the situation over the next three months (July to September 2024) and little increase in violent incidents between PNH and Viv Ansanm. We may therefore deem it likely that MSS forces, working in partnership with the PNH, will weaken the gang coalition's hold over communities in Port-au-Prince. The consensus is that MSS and PNH operations will have a higher impact in gang-controlled zones along Routes Nationales 1 and 2 than within communities like Cité Soleil and Martissant, where gangs have a tighter grip on supply routes and stronger community ties. The operation will likely also have a lower impact in Bas Delmas areas (2-30) compared to Delmas 75, Tabarre, and Carrefour Aéroport, which serve as the main entry points for humanitarian workers to gang-controlled zones. Although the MSS is predicted to be successful overall, its operations are unlikely to significantly improve humanitarian access within the first three months of the forces' initial deployment in July 2024. Indeed, limited improvement in this regard is to be expected until the six- to nine-month mark.

Guiding assumptions: Through international and local governmental support, the MSS was able to secure \$21 million in funding, including a substantial provision of equipment and training on combating gang violence for PNH forces. With the support of the MSS, the PNH's capacity to track, respond to, and prevent gang movements will be greatly reinforced. Furthermore, the MSS's training will help to foster strategic defensive and offensive procedures mitigating risk to the PNH and civilians, ultimately lowering civilian casualties. A vital focus of the training is on the use of perimeter control to isolate conflict incidents and enforce greater security measures in surrounding areas.

What to expect



Targeted raids: Launch of targeted operations against known gang leaders and strongholds, leading to high-profile arrests and disruption of gang networks.



Increased patrols: Intensifying patrols in critical areas, reducing gang mobility and influence.

Aid access and modalities: Heightened security along major supply chain routes will improve access for humanitarian interventions. However, due to the rapidly changing context of the conflict landscape in Haiti, humanitarian actors should prepare for all eventualities by exploring alternative routes for acquiring and distributing humanitarian aid.

Short-term considerations: The deployment of the MSS will strengthen the PNH’s capacity to respond to rising instability caused by the gang coalition, Viv Ansanm. More in-depth training geared toward dismantling the gang’s stronghold in the capital will also enhance the PNH’s ability to implement lasting security measures and improve public perception of the force within communities currently controlled by gangs.

Long-term considerations: It is important to note that maintaining stability will be impossible unless the MSS implements long-term and sustainable security measures that can be maintained by the PNH independently. Failure to do so prior to withdrawal will likely weaken the outcomes of the MSS mission.

Recommendations

(I)NGOs should consider partnering with local grassroots organizations to help secure entry points and strengthen acceptance within target communities, particularly in areas where reclaiming territory may take time or where the PNH may struggle to maintain its regained control. In addition, alternative forms of intervention should be considered and strategizing scenarios drawn up to plan for the eventuality of a complete blockade of humanitarian aid via the main land routes. These should include solutions allowing local grassroots organizations, already accepted within their communities, to take the lead in aid intervention with the financial and logistical support of (I)NGOs.

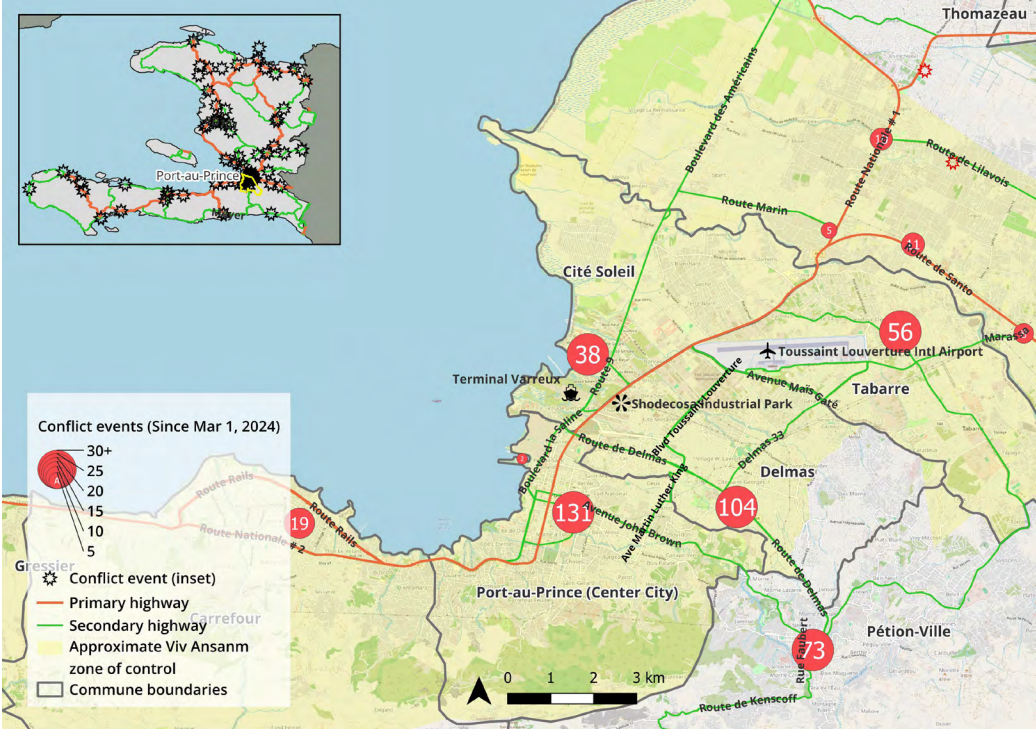


Figure 1. Map of main land routes in and out of Port-au-Prince, showing the number of incidents impacting humanitarian access since March 1, 2024. (Source: ACLED 2024/Mercy Corps)

Scenario 2

A rise in conflict between the PNH, aided by the MSS, and the Viv Ansanm coalition, which will temporarily and sporadically limit access to controlled zones where conflict is occurring but which remain accessible to humanitarian aid workers. An upscale of tactical operations by the PNH is very likely to result in an intensification of violence against communities in these zones, constricting movement and access to humanitarian assistance for their residents.

Current situation: As of May 2024, the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince is experiencing a period of relative calm. This follows the sharp escalation in violence from February to April of this year, directed at both the PNH and the Haitian population, during which the main routes of access to affected populations were either restricted or completely cut off. The present stalemate between the PNH and Viv Ansanm has allowed minimal humanitarian intervention to resume, predominately in IDP host communities, including the Solino, Lalue, and Tabarre areas. Despite this improvement, the security situation remains tense and unpredictable, with new accessibility challenges emerging daily.

Forecasting: Given the historical volatility in Port-au-Prince and recent conflict patterns, the situation is likely to remain unstable. The current forecast indicates a high probability of intermittent flare-ups of violence, with tension and unpredictability in the security situation continuing to significantly impact humanitarian operations. Although a level of access has been restored, the risk of violence and route closures remains high, rendering aid delivery inconsistent and putting both aid workers and beneficiaries at risk.

Guiding assumptions: The central strategy of the Viv Ansanm gang coalition has historically involved switching between offense and defense tactics in responding to PNH operations. This cat-and-mouse game has given rise to sporadic and unpredictable incidents of conflict that are difficult to anticipate. Preparation for rapid response in target communities is therefore key to addressing humanitarian needs as and when an incident occurs.

Aid access and modalities: Heightened conflict will significantly disrupt humanitarian operations in the gang-controlled zones of Martissant, Cité Soleil (i.e Brooklyn, Village de Dieu), and the Croix-des-Bouquet regions (Cannan and Croix-des-Paix). Aid workers in these zones may face restricted access, which will hinder the delivery of essential services and supplies. An escalation of violence will also have a significant impact on local communities, rendering them more vulnerable and restricting their movement and ability to access aid.

Short-term considerations: As channels and networks for accessing and providing humanitarian aid are constricted, the need for humanitarian assistance will increase. This forecast presumes a need for INGOs to implement partnerships with local NGOs working in IDP camps and gang-controlled zones where access is more challenging.

Long-term considerations: This forecast assumes that the violence will slowly decrease as the PNH regains control of Viv Ansanm territory and opens up



Vehicles destroyed during gang violence in Port-au-Prince, March 2024. © Reuters

previously inaccessible routes. Nonetheless, given the instability of the socio-political environment, it is recommended that humanitarian organizations consider and be ready to deploy alternative pathways for providing aid. Long-term planning should also include support for local community leaders and associations with experience in aid provision in the event that INGOs are unable to access gang-controlled locations.

Recommendations



(I)NGOs should establish robust monitoring mechanisms to track the evolving conflict and its impact on controlled zones, and increase knowledge sharing between local and international partners to stay informed about changes in the security landscape. There is also a need to develop and update contingency plans for restricted access to controlled zones and identify alternative routes and methods for delivering aid to affected communities. Finally, (I)NGOs are recommended to liaise with the PNH to secure timely information about potential access restrictions, while advocating for the protection of humanitarian corridors and safe passage for aid workers and beneficiaries.

Scenario 3

Although unlikely, there is a possibility that the Viv Ansanm gang coalition will infiltrate the southern and northern departments of Haiti through Routes Nationales 1 and 2, effectively blocking all access to and from the capital. This blockade would severely disrupt humanitarian aid delivery and further exacerbate already the fragile supply routes on which humanitarian operations and the local economy rely.

Current situation: Since late 2023, the Viv Ansanm gang coalition has made numerous attempts to enter the southern departments of Haiti through the town of Gressier, located about 12 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince. In 2024, they made a further bid to access the country's northwest, this time through the town of Ganthier. The accompanying violent attacks on small towns surrounding the Routes Nationales 1 and 2 have raised concerns about potential scenarios if the gangs are successful in infiltrating departments outside of the capital. Given the centralization of the Haitian economy and infrastructure in Port-au-Prince, violence beyond its bounds poses multifaceted logistical challenges for importing and exporting goods and resources. The various gangs operating in the capital currently control routes of the supply chain to and from the country's north (accessing supplies from the Dominican Republic) and south, and are in constant conflict with port authorities (Custom Port Services) in the main fuel terminal of Port-au-Prince, Verreux. As a result, supply routes into and out of the city are no longer secure or reliable, and this has a detrimental impact on northern and southern provinces, specifically on commerce conducted by the majority of the Haitian population. This impact has been felt in local market systems throughout Haiti, while also impeding the ability of humanitarian aid responders to access and distribute their supplies.

Forecasting: Although it remains unlikely that the gang coalition's forces will be able to enter previously unoccupied regions of the north and south, the possibility cannot be ruled out and should be factored into humanitarian plans. In the event that Viv Ansanm does expand its control into the north and south, its primary targets would likely be the smaller, national airports of Jacmel and Les Cayes, together with the two city's ports, and the city of Jérémie, located in the Grande Anse. All of these locations have previously been connected with narcotics and weapons trafficking by gangs, who use the sites of economic interest minimally and in secrecy to avoid detection. If the gangs were



Food delivery in Port-au-Prince, 2010. © Mercy Corps

to further secure their control of Routes Nationales 1 and 2, while also taking control of one or more ports in the south, there could be a blockade of such a magnitude as to severely impact humanitarian operations, restricting the flow of essential supplies and services to and from the capital. Such a blockade would also significantly disrupt the local economy, leading to shortages of goods, increased prices, and heightened economic instability.

Guiding assumptions: Since 2023, and prior to the formation of the Viv Ansanm gang coalition, gangs in Haiti have been progressively moving

beyond Port-au-Prince and attacking points in the country's southwest, seeking to strengthen their hold on national supply chain routes and expand their areas of control. As of July 2024, several gangs from the neighboring town of Mariana have sought to restrict movement to and from the south via Route Nationale 2 by staging attacks on boats entering the harbor in Mariana and on the local community. The onset of large-scale and coordinated attacks by Viv Ansanm in late February 2024 has made it significantly more difficult for humanitarian organizations to receive supplies and implement interventions. Access into or around gang-controlled zones has since become the foremost challenge for humanitarian actors in Haiti. The accompanying disruptions in the supply chain have revealed the fragility of existing supply routes and the need for a more harmonized humanitarian approach to a rapidly changing conflict setting. Given the unpredictability of the conflict dynamics in Haiti, alternative strategies are crucial to prepare and plan for all eventualities and meet the growing humanitarian needs.

Aid access and modalities: As was demonstrated at the start of the crisis in March 2024, restricted access or complete inaccessibility to these crucial supply chain routes would disrupt humanitarian interventions of all kinds. Immediate action is therefore required to address the anticipated blockade. Humanitarian organizations and local authorities should prepare contingency plans and seek alternative routes to mitigate the impact of a reduction in access.

Short-term considerations: With their response times greatly limited at present by the critical humanitarian access situation, (I)NGOs will need to work with local grassroots organizations and/or associations to implement their projects. They should also consider initiatives to stimulate local economies and assist local organizations to buy and distribute aid within their communities independently. This will reduce security risks for both (I)NGO personnel and receiving communities.

Recommendations



Pre-position essential supplies and resources in strategic locations outside the blockade area to ensure continued access to aid. Increase stockpiles of critical supplies within the capital to mitigate the immediate impact of the blockade. Explore initiatives for strengthening the resilience of local communities and authorities and building their capacity to manage the blockade. Provide local organizations with training and resources to enhance their ability to operate under restricted conditions.

Repercussion Scenario

Scenario 4

The IDP population will increase as more individuals in gang-controlled zones flee conflict. Many IDPs will not return to their previous homes even if the PNH reclaims control of the zone.

Current situation: An estimated 160,000 individuals displaced from gang-controlled zones of the capital now reside in other areas of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. Beyond its bounds, an additional 578,074 IDPs have moved further afield and are now dispersed throughout the northern and southern departments of Haiti. The expanding conflict has left many IDPs stripped of assistance, mainly in high-risk areas surrounding controlled zones. During Mercy Corps’s key informant interviews with IDPs and representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), interviewees noted the challenge of finding secure locations where humanitarian assistance could be delivered. Indeed, residents of IDP camps in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area said they had so far received minimal assistance due to the camps’ proximity to gang-controlled zones, which places aid workers delivering support to communities at significant risk.

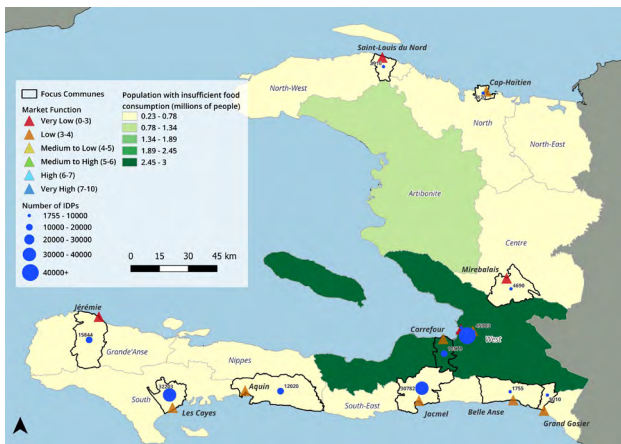


Figure 2. Current market functionality, number of IDPs, and population with insufficient food consumption across Haiti. (Source: WFP 2024/Mercy Corps)

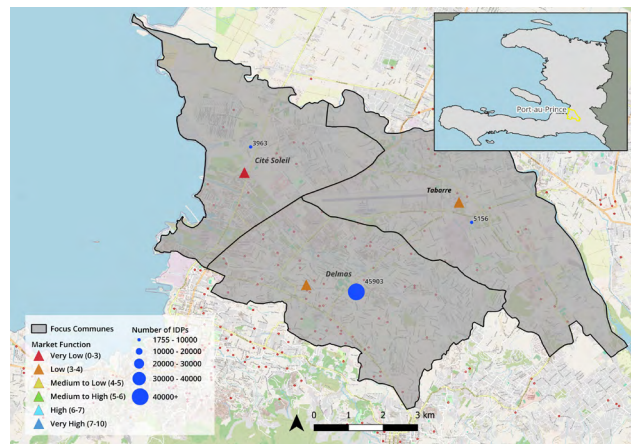


Figure 3. Current market functionality and number of IDPs in Port-au-Prince. (Source: IOM 2024/Mercy Corps)

Forecasting: With the conflict between Viv Ansanm and the PNH likely to increase following the MSS’s deployment in July 2024, the next three months will be critical for IDPs in Haiti. Should the conflict expand into areas surrounding the IDP camps, already displaced individuals may be forced to relocate once again. To be effective, relocation strategies and humanitarian interventions will need to be flexible and capable of responding to a rapidly evolving context, which places IDPs in a perpetual state of flux. As the number of IDPs increases, host communities will find their already strained resources periodically depleted as IDPs move in and out of the area. As a result, local markets in host communities will continue to experience emergency stressors in an already fragile market economy. Since May 2024, the inflation rate in Haiti has risen to 28%, while limited imports and exports have led to a decline in overall GDP since February 2024. The pressure an influx of IDPs would place on the already insufficient market system will further weaken the financial resilience of host communities and pose a wider challenge for the humanitarian response. As IDPs continue to flee gang-controlled zones for the Haitian provinces, humanitarian

workers' capacity to track and relocate beneficiaries in need of assistance, as well as provide long-term solutions for IDPs who do not return, is certain to be greatly restricted.

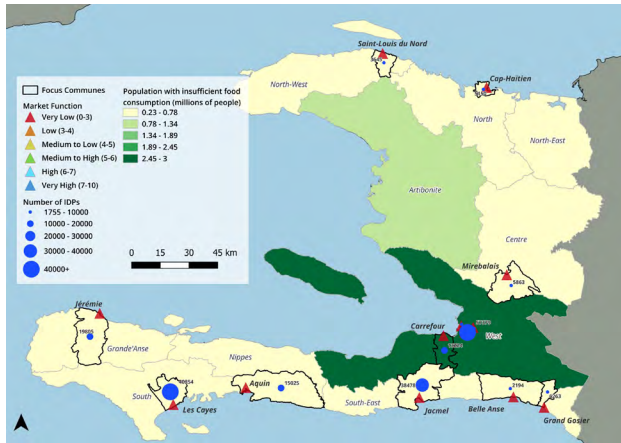


Figure 4. Scenario predicting a 25% increase in the number of IDPs and a 25% reduction in market functionality across Haiti. (Source: WFP 2024/Mercy Corps)

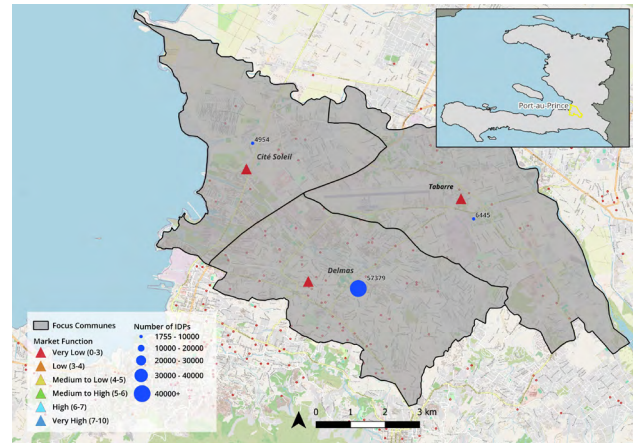


Figure 5. Scenario predicting a 25% increase in number of IDPs and a 25% reduction in market functionality in Port-au-Prince. (Source: IOM 2024/Mercy Corps)

Guiding assumptions: At the beginning of the crisis in early March 2024, most IDPs fleeing Port-au-Prince and the surrounding gang-controlled regions were accepted by host families. Only approximately two in ten remained in sites where residents had formerly fled during a spike in the conflict in 2022. By 2023, the number of IDPs remaining in these sites rose to six in ten, an increase primarily due to the limited resources of host communities and resulting decline in social cohesion.

Aid access and modalities: Heightened insecurity in host localities following the arrival of IDPs reflects a lack of trust in outsiders coming from gang-controlled zones and the challenge of cultivating a harmonious environment between IDPs and host communities. This can exacerbate security risks in conflict zones or unstable areas, placing humanitarian workers in danger. Increased violence and conflict can also restrict access to certain areas, complicating aid delivery. Finally, the continual movement of IDPs can make it difficult for humanitarian organizations to locate and provide consistent aid to target beneficiaries.

Short-term considerations: The sudden population increase in host communities will put pressure on local resources, services, and infrastructure, potentially straining relations between IDPs and host community members.

CPT Impact: This scenario forecasting analysis takes into account the probable involvement of the Transitional Presidential Council (CPT) and newly elected government officials in scenario planning efforts coordinated with the MSS and PNH. While recognizing the Haitian government's efforts to strengthen national security measures and effectively reinforce governmental authority in gang-controlled zones, the report also acknowledges constraints on the government's ability to respond rapidly, both due to insufficient capacity and lack of readily available resources. A scenario forecast focused on CPT policies cannot, therefore, yet be determined. Based on the collaborative efforts of the CPT since July 2024, however, it is likely to allocate the PNH resources for securing borders and ports and strengthening regulations on imported goods. These measures will help to limit weapons trafficking, which fuels gang violence. Additionally, the PNH will enhance security efforts to reclaim controlled territories and secure routes and neighborhoods. These actions are expected to reduce violence and improve humanitarian access in gang-controlled zones.

Overcrowding may lead to a deterioration in living standards, bringing with it associated health risks, poor sanitation, and competition for basic necessities. The local market economy may also be disrupted by increased demand and competition for resources. As IDPs move into the southern regions of Haiti, including areas like Sud, Grand'Anse, and Nippes, they may encounter communities already burdened by previous displacement and natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Increased circulation of IDPs can exacerbate security issues including crime and violence, further complicating relocation efforts.

Long-term considerations: The surge in IDPs will place humanitarian resources and services under significant pressure. IDPs' inability or unwillingness to return to their homes will aggravate long-term displacement challenges, requiring sustained humanitarian support and potentially feeding into protracted displacement cycles.

Recommendations



Implement programs to support the local economy and boost economic resilience, such as cash-for-work initiatives, microfinance opportunities, and small business support. Facilitate market access for IDPs and host community members, ensuring fair competition and the availability of goods. (I)NGOs are also recommended to form partnerships with local grassroots organizations whose members include both local leaders and representatives of the IDP population in their areas. This will help to promote harmonized integration and relocation initiatives and foster acceptance of IDPs within host communities.

This document is intended for humanitarian purposes only. Mercy Corps Crisis Analysis provides impartial analysis that does not necessarily reflect the opinion of Mercy Corps as an organisation.

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