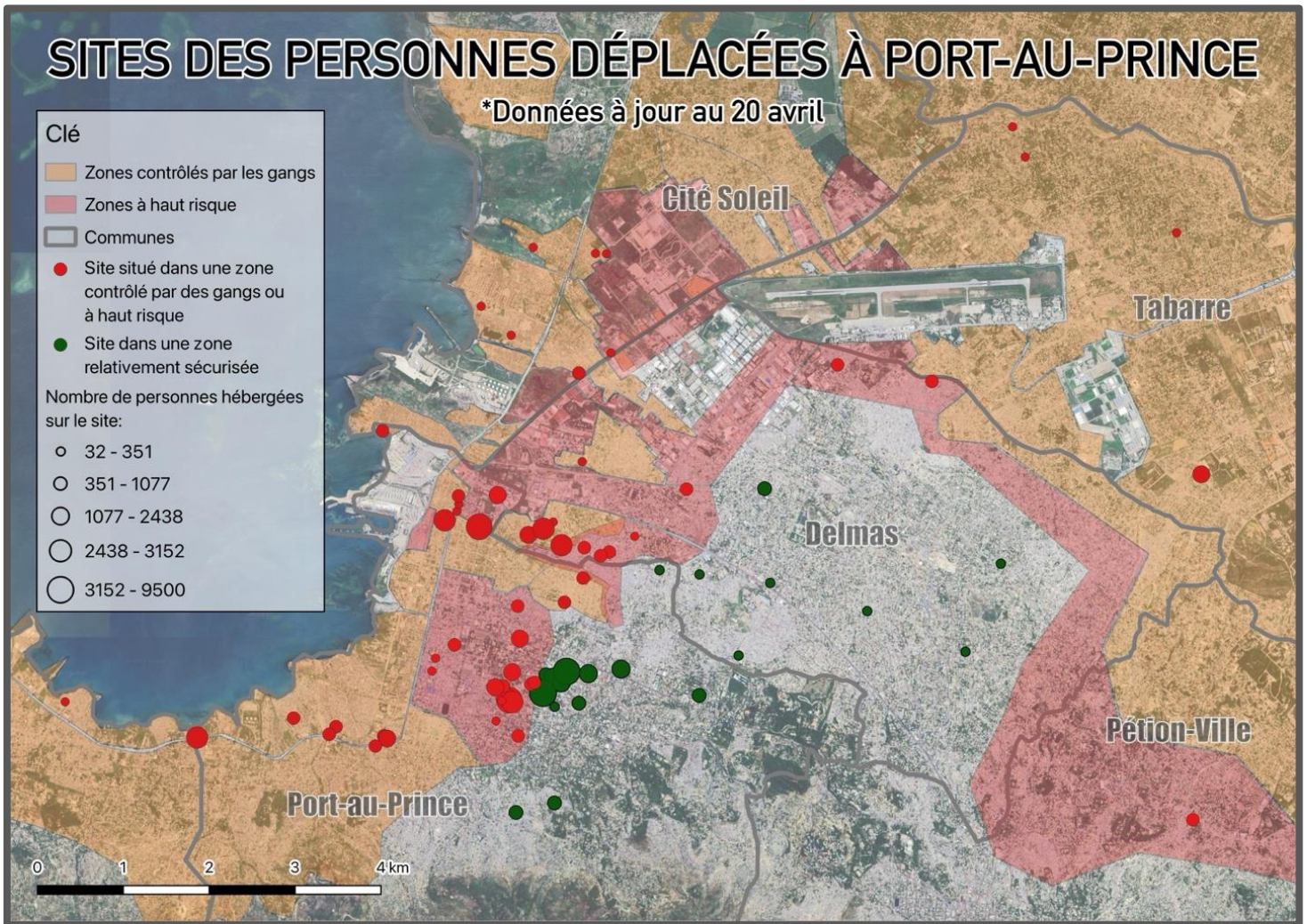


# PROTECTION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN HAITI

MAY 2024



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Geographic Data provided by IOM.

	SITES	HOUSEHOLDS	INDIVIDUALS
Gang-controlled areas	37 sites	9.390	38.962
High-risk areas	27 sites	6.687	27.872
Relatively safe areas	21 sites	5.905	23.420

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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### **PROTECTION CLUSTER:**

#### **Requests to the Haitian Government**

- To ensure that internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly those living in makeshift sites, have access to humanitarian assistance in sufficient quantity and quality, respecting human dignity;
- To ensure that IDPs are not evicted from sites without due process, sufficient notice, and consultation, and that they are provided with an adequate alternative for relocation;
- To ensure that the Haitian National Police respect and protect the right to life and use lethal force only as a last resort when absolutely necessary to prevent an imminent threat of death or serious injury;

#### **Requests to Humanitarian Donors**

- To increase funding for national protection actors so that protection principles are effectively integrated into humanitarian interventions in and around IDP sites;
- To strengthen funding for activities aimed at the prevention, mitigation, and response to protection risks, including, but not limited to, humanitarian diplomacy, negotiation for protection, and protection by presence;

#### **Requests to UN agencies, funds and programs and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations**

- To integrate protection principles more significantly into the humanitarian response for IDPs, especially for survivors of sexual violence and for children.
- To prioritize the response to psychological distress and mental health issues in general among their intervention priorities.
- To contact protection actors, according to standard operating procedures, when identifying individuals requiring protection case management.

# CONTEXT

More than 362,000 people are displaced in Haiti, primarily due to gang violence (96% of the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs)). Among these displaced persons, at least 195,764 are in the West Department, with 90,254 (46%) residing in 85 sites across the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince (ZMPP), while the remainder are hosted by families.<sup>1</sup>

The protection situation of IDPs, particularly those sheltered in makeshift sites, is extremely concerning and dire. These sites (schools, churches, public or private buildings) are utterly unsuitable for accommodating families fleeing violence. The hygiene and sanitation conditions are deplorable. For instance, 34% of the sites have no latrines, and 66% have communal latrines that are in poor condition or non-functional. Additionally, IDPs rarely have access to potable water, which is only available occasionally when water trucks can deliver it to the sites. Access to food and healthcare is also very difficult.

Overall, gang-violence induced displacement has only increased the protection risks faced by the Haitian population in their daily lives.

DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION BY SEX AND AGE <sup>2</sup>		
AGE	WOMEN	MEN
<1	2%	2%
1-5	3%	3%
6-11	4%	4%
12-17	8%	7%
18-59	32%	28%
60+	3%	3%

<sup>1</sup> Source IOM DTM dans les sites à Port-au-Prince, 20 avril 2024 (Haïti — Mise à jour sur le déplacement dans les sites de la Zone Métropolitaine de Port-au-Prince (20 Avril 2024) | Displacement Tracking Matrix (iom.int)).

<sup>2</sup> Source : Matrice de suivi des déplacements (DTM), OIM, 23 avril 2024.

## **RIGHTS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE**

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The Haitian Constitution guarantees the protection of the fundamental rights of Haitians. Article 19 specifically stipulates that the State has the imperative obligation to guarantee the right to life, health, and respect for the human person to all citizens without distinction, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, Articles 22 and 36 protect the right to decent housing and private property.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by the Haitian State, reinforce the protection of the rights of displaced persons. In particular, Article 11 of the ICESCR recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing. Similarly, Article 9 (1) of the CRC protects the child's right, including the displaced child, not to be separated from their family.

## **WEAKNESS IN MONITORING AND WARNINGS ON PROTECTION RISKS**

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Among the 85 identified sites in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince (ZMPP), only 15 have partial coverage by a partner working in the field of protection. This lack of presence undermines the ability of humanitarian actors to collect, alert, and respond quickly to protection risks. For instance, no data is currently available on the specific needs of elderly people and those with disabilities in the IDP sites.

More broadly, there is no systematic collection of protection incidents in or around the sites, which compromises the ability to effectively respond to the protection needs of vulnerable populations.

## **PROTECTION RISKS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE**

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Gang violence-induced displacements generate multiple, often cumulative, protection risks. The protection risks identified below by the protection cluster are not exhaustive.

### **RISK 1**    **Violations of the physical integrity of IDPs**

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75% of IDP sites are located in areas controlled by gangs or in high-risk zones where gang activity is prevalent (see map above). Not only does this hinder humanitarian access to these sites, but it also poses a significant risk to the physical integrity of individuals residing there. In recent weeks, the protection cluster has documented several deadly incursions by gangs into the sites, as well as incidents where IDPs have been killed or injured during shootouts between gangs and the police.

Recently, protection partners have gathered information indicating that gangs have used IDPs as "shields" during attacks and infrastructure thefts. For instance, on April 25th and

26th, over 27 people were killed, and 30 others injured by the police within the premises of the seaport, CPS (Caribbean Port Services), while gang members attempted to steal the contents of merchandise containers stored there. Among the victims were individuals living at the Saint Joseph Church site in La Saline, who were caught in the crossfire between gangs and the police.

## **RISK 2** Heightened risk of sexual violence

Incidents of sexual violence remain a major concern in IDP sites, where women and children are particularly vulnerable. According to information gathered by the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sub-cluster, during the first quarter of 2024, at least 216 cases of sexual violence were reported in IDP sites in the ZMPP, including the collective rape of children under 5 years old. Among the primary factors contributing to GBV risks are the lack of space, inadequate lighting, and the absence of separate latrines and bathing areas for men and women.

## **RISK 3** Family separation and non-accompanied children

At least 33% of IDPs living in sites in the ZMPP are children. On these sites, child neglect, abandonment and the presence of unaccompanied children are growing concerns. In May 2024, child protection partners identified at least 109 unaccompanied and separated children in IDP sites, including 54 girls. These children are particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.

## **RISK 4** Evictions

Many IDP sites are located on private properties owned by religious congregations, in schools, or public buildings. This situation places them at high risk of eviction. Since January 2024, the protection cluster has recorded at least 23 site evictions.

## **RISK 5** Mental Health and inflicted distress

The traumas endured by the Haitian population in general, and IDPs in particular, due to criminal violence and extremely precarious living conditions, are rarely addressed by humanitarian actors. The full extent of their impact remains largely unknown. Nearly no site has safe and private spaces to offer psychosocial support. The few partners providing such services prioritize group activities and are unable to offer more in-depth and individualized psychological assistance.

## **RISK 6** Poor access to services

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Haiti, the protection sector under the Humanitarian Response Plan 2024 is only funded at a level of 8%, which compromises the ability of protection actors to provide direct assistance services

at sites in the ZMPP. Nevertheless, the demographics of these sites indicate that the populations residing there are extremely vulnerable, and their protection needs are high.

## **URGENT CALL TO ACTION**

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1. **Rebuilding security in the neighborhoods of origins of IDPs must be a top priority for authorities**, to address the immediate causes of displacement and improve their situation. Despite the challenges faced by service providers in accessing these gang-controlled neighborhoods, state authorities, supported by humanitarian partners, have a duty to protect, respect, and implement the rights of IDPs and ensure they benefit from living conditions and livelihoods at least equal to those of their original neighborhoods.
2. It is also necessary **to mobilize financial resources to enable protection actors to increase their intervention capacities** in and around displacement sites, to be informed, refer, and promptly assist victims of protection incidents.
3. Urgent action is needed for the police, particularly tactical units, to sensitize their personnel and **enhance their training on the use of lethal force**, especially when gangs engage displaced persons to commit thefts and other crimes.
4. Humanitarian assistance activities, such as water and food distribution, and cash assistance, must **integrate key protection principles**, such as equitable and impartial access to assistance and services. For this purpose, a **mobile protection team should be established within the inter-cluster humanitarian coordination group** for protection mainstreaming.
5. To reduce the number of cases of sexual violence, it is recommended that humanitarian actors, where possible, **establish gender-separated latrines and bathing areas on sites, with adequate lighting, sufficient privacy, and the presence of qualified security personnel, trained on the protection of sexual exploitation and abuse**. It is also essential for IDPs, especially women and girls, and people living near sites, to be informed about the risks of sexual violence and available response services. Efforts to prevent and respond to these abuses must be strengthened, with an emphasis on prevention, risk mitigation, response services and access to justice.
6. To prevent potential cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and other cases of sexual violence committed by site managers, protection and camp coordination and camp management partners (CCCM) must work together **to implement PSEA measures, including organizing training for site management committee members**.
7. **Information on family reunification services, particularly for unaccompanied children, must also be available**. When family reunification is not possible, it is crucial to **establish referral pathways to competent child protection agencies**.

8. Psychosocial support must become a priority in humanitarian interventions, particularly for survivors of violence and gender-based violence. **More significant financial resources must be invested in psychosocial support activities and safe spaces on sites.**
9. **Community-based protection mechanisms must be strengthened**, including early-warning systems, information-sharing mechanisms, and consultations with communities.
10. Finally, **IDPs must be consulted in the planning of any relocation project or other sustainable solutions that impact their lives.**