Since 12 September 2022, Haiti has been rocked by at times violent protests that have paralyzed the country, including the activities of humanitarian partners. Roadblocks have sprung up across the streets of major cities, affecting mobility and limiting access to food and water. The fuel supply crisis has worsened and is severely disrupting electricity and telecommunications. After grinding to a halt over the last week, economic activity is slowly picking up again. Looting and attempted ransacking of businesses and attacks on public buildings have been reported in several cities across the country, including the Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Area (PAPMA), Les Cayes, Port-de-Paix, Gonaïves and Jérémie. Humanitarian partners have also reported looting of storage warehouses and attempted break-ins at their facilities. While the situation has forced many humanitarian activities to come to a halt, the needs of the Haitian population are worsening and the living conditions of the most vulnerable are deteriorating, particularly in the IDP sites in the PAPMA.

The current crisis is further exacerbating humanitarian access challenges across the country. Access is a key priority to ensure that humanitarian actors can reach vulnerable populations to provide assistance. Coordination among UN entities and with humanitarian partners not only enables better identification of the impacts on vulnerable populations but also opportunities for immediate response as soon as the security situation permits.

Since the end of July 2022, Haiti has been experiencing social protests that have gradually gained momentum, often paralyzing activity in major provincial cities for a few hours or even days at a time, until reaching an alarming peak across the country on 12 September.

Insecurity, the rising cost of living and the fuel distribution crisis remain at the heart of these protests. In recent years, the humanitarian situation in Haiti has deteriorated amid growing insecurity. Since June 2021, gang control in the Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Area (PAPMA) has expanded significantly. In a context of widespread insecurity, the population finds itself trapped in the midst of intense clashes in violence-stricken neighbourhoods or unable to move freely to the capital as main roads remain under gang control. Access to vulnerable populations continues to be affected, a persistent challenge over the past year that has severely hindered the delivery of humanitarian assistance to communities in southern Haiti devastated by the earthquake on 14 August 2021.

The current situation has prompted a slowdown in the country’s economic activity, spurring a fourth consecutive year of recession. However, it is the current fuel crisis that appears to be driving public discontent. In fact, fuel issues have been one of the main triggers for several protests in Haiti, including the Peyi Lok crisis in 2019.

On 11 September 2022, Prime Minister Ariel Henry issued a series of statements, including an announcement on the elimination of fuel subsidies, which will effectively raise prices at the pump.

The following day, on 12 September, demonstrators set up roadblocks across major cities. While the country witnessed considerable civil unrest in August, the speed and intensity at which these events unfolded took both the public and humanitarian organizations by surprise.

The entire country remains paralyzed by roadblocks and spontaneous demonstrations. Cars near these roadblocks are being shot at and gunfire regularly rings out in the streets of cities. Many businesses remain closed, as looting and attempted ransacking of businesses as well as attacks on private and public buildings have been reported in several cities across the country, including Port-au-Prince, Gonaïves and Jérémie.

Despite the presence of tankers ready to deliver fuel, workers at the Varreux port, the main distribution hub in the capital, remain unable to reach the site to unload shipments. Meanwhile, trucks have not been able to leave the terminal to
distribute fuel to retail gas stations since 12 September. Gang activity remains at the heart of the fuel supply crisis. Beyond the roadblocks that have drastically limited movement for more than a week, access to the port continues to be prevented by gang activity that frequently blocks roads and access to terminals.

Nevertheless, formal and informal economic activities slowly resumed in the metropolitan area on 21 and 22 September.

**IMPACT ON THE HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT**

The ongoing situation is significantly affecting the population’s access to basic services, exacerbating vulnerabilities and severely hindering the activities of humanitarian partners.

While the latter are facing serious restrictions in implementing activities, the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan for Haiti, which aims to provide assistance to 2.5 million people, is less than a third funded. Given the current deterioration in living conditions, partners fear that the situation of the most vulnerable will only worsen. The Haitian Center for Support and Solidarity (CHES), which operates in the Ouest, Nippes and Sud departments, reports that people who were previously self-sufficient have become vulnerable and will require humanitarian assistance.

**Impact on basic services**

*Electricity*

Nearly 86 per cent of the electricity produced in the country is dependent on petroleum products. While the country was already experiencing difficulties in the supply and distribution of fuel, the blockage of the Varreux fuel terminal threatens the country’s capacity to generate electricity, which is currently running on reserves. Electricity rationing is widespread, with supplies not exceeding a few hours per day at most. This situation is having a considerable impact on water supplies and telecommunications throughout the country.

*Telecommunications*

After more than a week now without topping up on fuel, Haiti’s telecommunication services are beginning to falter. Some areas are losing network coverage on a regular basis and the problem seems to be getting worse by the day.

*Water*

The availability of drinking water in the coming days and weeks is a pressing concern. On 17 September, the National Directorate for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (DINEPA) called for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to allow its staff to safely reach their workplaces and ensure the proper functioning of water supply systems. Given the volatility of the current situation and the critical shortage of fuel, DINEPA is concerned that it will not be able to operate its pumping stations and provide potable water for the country, especially in PAPMA and other major cities. OCHA has contacted DINEPA and is currently working to identify ways in which the UN can provide support to help ensure that the distribution of potable water continues.

*Education*

The difficulties in financing children’s schooling, combined with virtual impossibility of ensuring their safety, had already forced the Government to postpone the start of the school year – initially scheduled to start on 5 September – to 3 October 2022. In addition, just 15 days before the start of the new school year, many schools have been looted.

Terre des Hommes, which operates in the Nord, Ouest, Grand'Anse, Sud and Sud-Est departments, indicates that the families of minors in foster care are finding it increasingly more difficult to acquire essential goods and school supplies ahead of the new school year.

*Health*

While access to health services is hampered by limitations on movement, medical facilities could also be affected by fluctuations in water and electricity supplies.

Epidemiological surveillance continues throughout the country, given the high risk of epidemics, including measles and polio. PAHO/WHO continues to review alerts, although it faces challenges due to security issues and fuel shortages. The response to an outbreak of anthrax in livestock, which also spread to several people, is ongoing in the Grand’Anse department. Three rounds of catch-up vaccinations and vitamin A supplementation among children in PAPMA are scheduled to begin by the end of September, but could be affected by the current situation.

Doctors of the World (MdM) Argentina’s contacts in the field report a growing emergency in the commune of Cité Soleil and Bas Delmas linked to a pre-existing epidemic of scabies (Sarcoptosis), which, due to sedentariness and the harsh weather conditions associated with Tropical Storm Fiona, is spreading rapidly among households seeking help.

UN entities are supporting the maternity ward at the University Hospital of Peace with equipment and supplies for enhanced management of obstetric complications. The UNAIDS Office and the Joint Team on HIV are supporting the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP) with a rapid analysis on the continuity of antiretroviral treatment. In the Ouest, Sud and Grand’Anse departments, 72,507 people living with HIV are currently on treatment, 63 per cent of whom are women. In the West department alone, treatment for 51,303 people could be interrupted due to the current situation, with serious consequences for mother-to-child transmission, increased HIV infections, drug resistance, morbidity and mortality.
Cash

For several months, the Haitian population, especially outside the capital, has faced difficulties withdrawing cash from banks. In fact, with the expansion of gang activity, the secure transportation of cash has become extremely difficult and expensive. During the first week of social unrest, banks chose to remain closed and several were the targets of looting. While freedom of movement has been severely hampered, a lack of cash is also affecting the population as they try to replenish and resume economic activities.

Impact on internally displaced people (IDPs)

Lack of access to basic services and humanitarian assistance

While difficulties in accessing basic services compound the vulnerabilities of the entire population, IOM says that the already precarious living conditions of populations displaced by the August 2021 earthquake in the country’s southern departments and those displaced by gang-related violence, mainly in PAPMA, have significantly deteriorated, especially for 6,830 households living in makeshift sites (according to the DTM data for August 2022).

Due to blockades and debris scattered across roads, partners and their suppliers (i.e., water tankers) are having difficulty reaching target beneficiaries for water, sanitation, food and health care. Populations living in sites that have become inaccessible due to the deteriorating security situation are now even more isolated and vulnerable.

The 835 households still living in displacement sites established after the August 2021 earthquake in the southern part of the country, who were supposed to get cash assistance to facilitate their relocation, now find themselves unable to receive cash transfers. These vulnerable families, already affected by the rising cost of living and supply shortages, are now even more vulnerable as they have been left with virtually no means to pay for goods or services.

Solidarité International reports that 36 makeshift displacement sites in PAPMA, which were already suffering from a lack of assistance, have received almost no assistance since 12 September, particularly at the Plaza Hugo Chavez (300 households) and Monfort Institute (2,000 households) sites.

Water and sanitation

The lack of potable water is a major concern due to limitations in supply and access to the sites. Although Solidarité International was able to make water service deliveries on 19 and 20 September, potable water at the Hugo Chavez site has been completely cut off for six days. In addition, the irregularity in the supply of water services can also trigger other health-related problems, with skin diseases already being reported at the Hugo Chavez site. The regular emptying of latrines also remains a challenge in a context of severely limited access. In order to ensure waste management at the site, partners are considering solutions that will help keep the site clean, such as launching cash-for-work activities to help prevent the situation from becoming catastrophic.

Shelter and food security

At the largest IDP site in PAPMA, the Monfort Institute, the consequences for the population could be disastrous. In fact, on 18 August, a multi-sectoral assessment of the Monfort Institute site conducted by the Task Force for the Coordination and Management of IDP Sites in PAPMP revealed that the site was already overcrowded, with displaced people living in makeshift shelters often made of non-permeable and fire-prone materials, or in the school, which remains an open and unsegregated space. The food situation was worrisome due to insufficient and undiversified food, which led the displaced population to resort to negative coping strategies, including reducing the number of meals they consumed, prioritizing children’s food needs, borrowing food and begging. In addition to the lack of functional sanitation facilities and drinking water, there is a general lack of hygiene products, including feminine hygiene products.

Protection and GBV

In this context, women and girls are particularly vulnerable. In the Hugo Chavez and Monfort sites, partners have highlighted the lack of lighting and risk mitigation measures against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Prior to 12 September, the Hugo Chavez site had 95 pregnant women, 13 of whom have since given birth, including five on-site (i.e., without access to health care before being transferred to a hospital) and eight in hospitals.

In addition, repatriated migrants are unable to reach their intended destination and have virtually no means to meet their basic needs for shelter, food or clothing. IOM, who is working to meet these needs, says that such needs were not present before the unfolding crisis.

Impact on operations

Most humanitarian partners have been forced to cease all field activities. Many have reorganized their assistance delivery modalities to provide at least minimal assistance to the populations targeted by the humanitarian response. Some have taken the opportunity to move forward with administrative follow-up on projects. In many cases, they have activated Business Continuity Plans.

However, many have reported difficulties accessing banking services and several areas of the country, including the capital, face serious communication problems. Mobile phone and internet service providers are unable to maintain network connectivity, which affects partners’ remote working capacities. The situation is also increasing operational costs, further straining the budget allocated to humanitarian activities.
Looting of humanitarian stocks

Although the protests and social demands are not directed at humanitarian partners, they have not escaped the violence. Partners regularly face security threats amidst civil unrest across the country, with several incidents having been reported, including looting. For instance, in Port-de-Paix, the Departmental Emergency Operations Center (COUD) was looted. In Gonaïves, among other places, the COUD and the warehouses of several humanitarian organizations, including Caritas and WFP, were attacked and their pre-positioned stocks stolen. Protesters took some 1,400 tons of WFP food for school feeding programmes and Haiti's most vulnerable families and children, and set fire to offices adjacent to the warehouse. However, staff were not directly targeted. Also in Gonaïves, some 2,000 IOM's non-food kits (NFIs) were stolen from the WFP warehouse. Protesters also looted the warehouse of the NGO Caritas and attacked the UNOPS Office. In Jérémie, violent attempts to loot warehouses were reported by GOAL, confirmed by ACTED, CRS and CARE. The UNDP Office there was also looted. WFP also reported looting in Les Cayes on 21 September. In Port-au-Prince, individuals threw stones and attempted to break into the UNOPS Office, while a UNDP vehicle was vandalized in Pétion-Ville, a neighborhood in the capital.

On 7 September, armed individuals had already looted the Grand’Anse COUD, emptying it of all of its pre-positioned contingency stocks and equipment.

Logistics challenges

Humanitarian organizations, which are also suffering due to shortages, have very limited fuel supplies. Indeed, those who had contingency stocks resorted to using them, especially during August, without being able to replenish them afterward. Humanitarian partners can normally count on the support of WFP, which has fuel reserves available to support humanitarian response efforts. However, the amount of fuel provided by WFP to partners in August exceeded the total amount for the past seven months, with reserves dwindling to just 50 per cent of storage capacity by the end of August. Given the difficulties in replenishing fuel stocks, WFP has been forced to implement a system that prioritizes supplies for operational activities and emergency response.

With respect to logistics and transportation, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is operational despite recurring funding challenges. However, the sea transport service provided by WFP to allow for the pre-deployment of staff and the pre-positioning of stocks has been suspended due to the volatile security situation in port areas. In addition, national roads 1 and 2 connecting the capital to the north and south of the country remain blocked.

Disaster Preparedness and Response

On 20 September, Haitian authorities lifted the yellow alert for the country following the passage of Hurricane Fiona. However, information on the possible impacts of heavy rainfall and high winds in the north and north-east of the country is not yet available. UN agencies and humanitarian partners have consolidated the latest available information on emergency stocks and remain on standby, ready to support rapid post-disaster assessments and response.

In addition, Haiti remains on alert due to the potential formation of another tropical depression in the region over the coming days.

As the Atlantic hurricane season reaches its peak, humanitarian partners are stressing the need to restock supplies, especially those that have been looted, in order to be prepared to respond in the event of a potential disaster.

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