

Youth in Haiti remain optimistic amid worsening instability

The crisis in Haiti has left children among the most vulnerable to the extreme violence, malnutrition, poverty, and collapsing social systems there, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The agency surveyed over 3500 young people in early June, [the majority of whom believe their rights are rarely or never respected](#).

“When I ask children if their rights in Haiti are being respected, the answer is often a resounding: “no”,” said [Samarre Tercier Marcellin](#), Youth Advocate for UNICEF Haiti.

“Children are abused, die of diseases and malnutrition that could be cured or prevented, and lack access to quality learning. This needs to change,” he added.

Despite this stark reality, a shocking majority of [youth respondents to the UNICEF survey](#) still believe the future of children is brighter than it is in the present.

Haiti continues to suffer a series of political, socio-economic and security crises. Rival gangs are battling for control of territory across the capital Port-au-Prince forcing thousands of people to flee their homes. This has further exacerbated poverty and severe hunger across the nation.

Worsening crisis and impact on youth

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) [added Haiti to the list of countries](#) of “greatest concern due to the escalation of violence by armed groups,” in their most recent outlook report for the months of June to October 2024. FAO and WFP have also identified Haiti as a “famine or risk of famine hotspot,” [with over five million people](#) now experiencing acute food insecurity, the highest numbers seen since the 2010 earthquake.

The number of displaced people in Haiti has also greatly increased in recent months, from [362,000 in March to 580,000 currently](#), according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

[More than 100,000](#) left Port-au-Prince alone due to the deteriorating security situation.

This situation has had grave consequences on the children of Haiti. Of the [2,500 people killed or injured](#) from January to March, many of them were children, said UNICEF.

"Each day, children are being injured or killed," [UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell](#) told the UN Security Council [in April](#). "Some are being recruited, or they are joining armed groups out of sheer desperation."

Around 600,000 of the 1.6 million people facing emergency levels of acute food insecurity are children and many schools have shut down due to attacks, leaving thousands of children stripped of their right to education.

Optimistic youth disposition

Despite the devastating conditions, many youth remain hopeful. [According to the UNICEF survey](#), 24 per cent are very hopeful and 41 per cent are at least a little. Fourteen per cent said they are not very hopeful, and just 10 per cent reported no hope at all.

When asked about what would allow the country to change the most, 40 per cent cited better access to education, 24 per cent the economic development and poverty reduction, 19 per cent security around the country and seven per cent improved health services.

Increased humanitarian action

Humanitarian efforts have been intensified as a result of the worsening conditions. [WFP has delivered](#) 43,600 hot meals to nearly 13,500 displaced people in

Port-au-Prince since 1 June. It has also allocated \$1 million as part of its social protection and resilience activities to approximately 65,000 people across the country.

There have also been joint efforts on behalf of the Haitian authorities and national and international organizations to prepare Haitian civilians for the hurricane season that began on 1 June.

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