

Out-of-school children in Haiti

Obstacles and barriers to learning in the communes of Port-au-Prince and Delmas

Access to education for displaced children in Haiti is severely compromised by insecurity, school costs, and limited availability in public schools, deepening vulnerability and undermining protection, recovery, and long-term prospects.

Summary

Findings show that in Haiti, school exclusion among displaced children in the targeted displacement sites stems from a complex interplay of poverty, insecurity, and fragile educational services. While insecurity often triggers abrupt school interruptions, households' ability to cover education costs remains the decisive factor for sustainable reintegration. The lack of birth certificates and IDs hinder educational progression, particularly when there are official examinations. These findings underscore the **need for integrated interventions** that combine (1) access to safe, inclusive educational opportunities; (2) psychosocial support; (3) assistance with civil documentation—particularly for children living in contexts of prolonged insecurity.

Context

Haiti's prolonged security and humanitarian crisis has severely disrupted access to education for children affected by displacement. To better understand the barriers to schooling and inform the implementation of its Education in Emergencies (EiE) programme, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in partnership with the Citizen Initiative for Human Rights (ICDH), and with financial support from the European Union humanitarian aid, conducted a household survey among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Port-au-Prince and Delmas.

Between September 9 and October 2, 2025, the survey reached 3,180 households, primarily in displacement sites managed by ICDH. Its main operational objective was to identify out-of-school children and support their reintegration into formal education, while documenting structural, economic, and

protection-related barriers. The survey also assessed gaps in civil documentation and gathered insights on children's psychosocial well-being and protection concerns.

Key findings

- **Access to education is reduced with age:** among children aged 6-14, 22% were not enrolled in the 2024-2025 academic year and nearly half experienced a sudden interruption or drop out in their schooling. Meanwhile, more than 50% of the children aged 15-17 were out of school
- **Economic constraints are the leading barrier** to education—both for initial enrolment and continued attendance. For children not enrolled in the 2024–2025 academic year, tuition fees and associated costs (uniforms, books, supplies) were cited by most households. The average cost of tuition in non-public schools, which constitute 9 of each 10 of available schools in the *Zone Metropolitaine de Port au Prince* was \$296 per child per year. In a country where [half](#) of the population does not have enough food, paying school fees is almost impossible.
- **Insecurity, violence, and forced displacement** are major obstacles, particularly in cases of sudden school interruptions during periods of intense violence and mass displacement in 2024 and 2025.
- **The limited availability of public schools**, and limited capacity to enrol across both public and non-public school capacity, adds structural challenges for displaced families living in host communities.

Age-specific vulnerabilities

- Children aged **6–14**: Cost and insecurity are almost equally influential in school suspensions, while cost dominates for those completely excluded from school.
- Adolescents aged **15–17**: Over half were out of school during the last academic year. Safety and protection concerns are nearly as significant as financial constraints, highlighting increased vulnerability with age.

Civil documentation

For enrolment into a Haitian school, a birth certificate of the child and an ID card for one parent or caregiver is required. While most households possess required documents, a notable proportion of children lack birth certificates. While many schools allow enrolment of children without birth certificates, educational progression, particularly with respect to state examinations, is hindered.

Psychological well-being

The survey reveals widespread distress among children in displacement sites:

- A majority exhibit signs of **stress, anxiety, trauma, or sadness**, often accompanied by behavioural changes and sleep disturbances.
- Parents and caregivers report mainly positive responses to their children's distress including verbal reassurance, dialogue, play, physical affection and closeness.
- **Perceived insecurity** is pervasive across most sites, with a number of respondents sharing experiences or threats of physical and sexual violence directed at their children.

Recommendations:

For Haitian authorities, including Ministry of Education

1. **Implement constitutional guarantees for free and compulsory education.** Remove financial barriers and expand opportunities in displacement-affected areas, including host communities.
2. **Enforce regulations on school fees.** Monitor and apply official fee limits to prevent exclusion of displaced families.
3. **Restore school infrastructure for education.** Plan safe, voluntary relocation of displaced populations occupying schools, ensuring alternative shelter.
4. **Expand public education capacity in high demand areas.** Use flexible solutions like double shifts, temporary classrooms, and partnerships with community schools to accommodate displaced students.
5. **Ensure documentation does not block access.** Apply provisional enrolment and grace periods for children lacking civil documents.
6. **Integrate psychosocial well-being in education.** Embed structured support for students and teachers to improve learning and stability.

For humanitarian actors and donors

1. **Ensure sustained, context-appropriate funding.** Go beyond short-term financing to support emergency education and system strengthening.
2. **Reduce economic constraints.** Ease financial pressure on households, by supporting the costs of learning materials, school meals, etc.
3. **Guarantee access and continuity.** Combine rapid reintegration (accelerated learning, catch-up) with long-term school support.
4. **Integrate psychosocial support in EiE.** Train teachers in trauma-sensitive practices and embed socio-emotional learning in curricula.
5. **Promote inclusive education.** Ensure accessible infrastructure, inclusive pedagogy, and referral pathways for specialised services.
6. **Develop protective pathways for adolescents.** Offer flexible, age-appropriate education and vocational options integrated with protection support.

For the humanitarian community

1. **Put education at the centre of child protection.** As, schools provide safety and stability, education must be a core protection measure.
2. **Prioritise child safety across sectors.** Invest in child protection systems, safe referrals, and community-based mechanisms.
3. **Ensure integrated, multisectoral programming.** Coordinate education, protection, shelter, WASH, and livelihoods to sustain school access.
4. **Address household economic vulnerability.** Provide cash assistance, livelihood support, and basic needs coverage to enable schooling.
5. **Plan for prolonged displacement.** Guarantee continuity and stability for displaced children with durable education access.



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