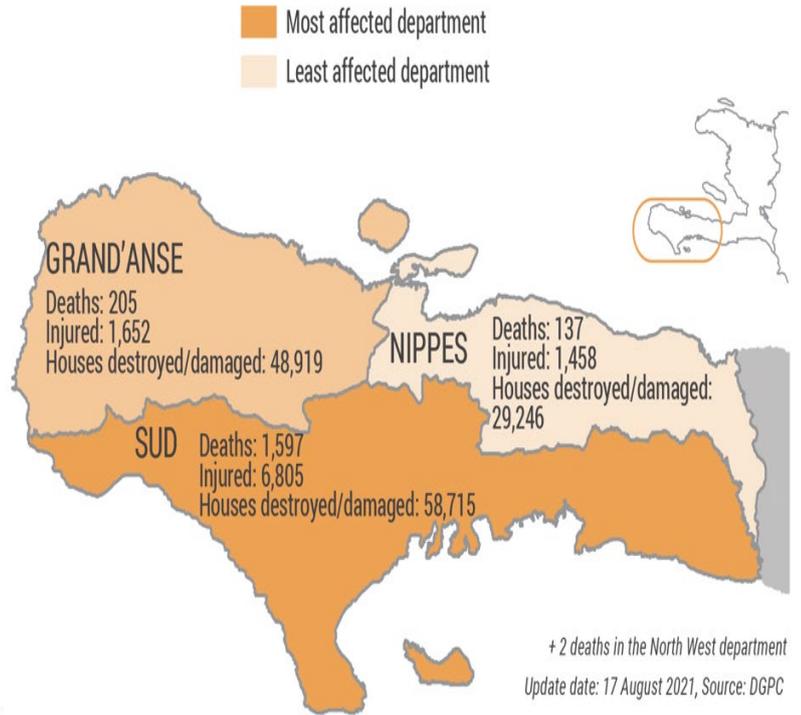


HIGHLIGHTS

- The death toll has surged to nearly 2,000 and more than 9,900 injured, figures that will likely continue to climb as search and rescue operations are still ongoing.
- The Haitian Civil Protection General Directorate (DGPC) says 137,000 families have been affected in the Sud, Grand'Anse and Nippes departments. About 500,000 people – 40 per cent of the total population in the affected departments – are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.
- Nearly 61,000 homes have been destroyed and more than 76,000 have sustained damages in the three most affected departments, leaving thousands homeless and creating an urgent need for emergency shelter solutions.
- An initial rapid assessment found that 24 health facilities have been affected in the Sud, Nippes and Grand'Anse departments, with 20 suffering infrastructural damages and 4 destroyed.
- The passage of Tropical Depression Grace had a moderate impact on Haiti, triggering flooding in Jacmel, Les Cayes and Marigot, which created additional safety risks for damaged homes and those left homeless by the quake.
- Today, 18 August, two more humanitarian convoys are scheduled to deliver assistance to people in need. Convoys have faced roadblocks erected by communities with unmet needs, highlighting the need for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Communication with Communities (CwC).



Source: DGPC

<p>1,941</p> <p>Reported deaths</p> <p>(Source: DGPC)</p>	<p>9,900</p> <p>People injured</p> <p>(Source: DGPC)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Health facilities affected and 4 destroyed</p> <p>(Source: PAHO)</p>	<p>500K</p> <p>People in need of humanitarian assistance in the 3 affected departments (Sud, Grand'Anse and Nippes)</p> <p>(Source: DGPC)</p>	<p>137K</p> <p>Houses damaged or destroyed</p> <p>(Source: DGPC)</p>
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SITUATION OVERVIEW

Four days after a devastating 7.2-magnitude earthquake hit south-western Haiti, the level of destruction and desperation is becoming increasingly evident. As of 18 August, the death toll has surged to nearly 2,000 and more than 9,900 injured, figures that have risen exponentially since the early hours after the quake on 14 August and will likely continue to climb as search and rescue operations are still ongoing to identify and locate the hundreds more who are still missing. More than 80 per cent of deaths so far have been recorded in the Sud department, registering nearly 1,600 deaths, while 205 are dead in Grand'Anse and 137 in Nippes.

While assessments are still in their early stages, the Haitian Civil Protection General Directorate (DGPC) says that 137,000 families have been affected in the three most affected departments (Sud, Grand'Anse and Nippes), with at least 500,000 people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in these departments, representing about 40 per cent of the combined 1.6 million people living across the three departments. Among those affected are 1,475 people living with disabilities, including 720 women and children, who need urgent assistance to meet their differentiated needs, as they are more vulnerable to abuse and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination and exclusion from assistance.



Photo credit: UNICEF Haiti

As Tropical Depression Grace passed over Haiti's southern peninsula between 16 and 17 August, search and rescue missions were temporarily affected. However, operations have intensified with the arrival of additional search and rescue teams and humanitarian personnel are scrambling to expedite operations. Search and rescue teams have managed to save at least 34 people from the rubble. Grace dumped approximately 10 inches of rain over the same southern-western parts of the country still reeling from the impact of the 7.2-magnitude earthquake. Coastal towns, such as Jacmel, Les Cayes and Marigot, have experienced considerable flooding. Civil protection authorities are urging extreme vigilance on the part of affected people as the combination of heavy rains and possible aftershocks from the earthquake could bring down the cracked walls and roofs of damaged homes.

The southern and western parts of the country, particularly the Sud, Grand'Anse and Nippes departments, have suffered devastating damages and losses, including in housing, buildings, critical infrastructure and roads. However, seaport, airport and telecommunications infrastructure have not suffered major damages. According to the DGPC, almost 61,000 homes have been destroyed and more than 76,000 have sustained damages, leaving thousands homeless. The number of displaced and homeless people will likely continue to grow over the coming days and weeks, creating an urgent need for emergency shelter solutions.

However, many official shelters have suffered various degrees of damage in the most affected areas, forcing displaced people who cannot stay with family and friends to setup makeshift tents constructed of wood and tarpaulin to protect themselves from driving rains, many of which were torn down by Tropical Depression Grace's strong winds. People whose homes are destroyed are taking refuge in assembly points, mainly public squares and empty land. There are 5 such assembly points in the Sud department and 33 in the Nippes.

Government officials are working to carrying out rapid assessments of building safety to identify possible locations that could provide shelter to those displaced and homeless, but heavy rains delayed these assessments on 16 and 17 August. Even before the quake hit, 19,000 people internally displaced by gang violence, some residing in formal sites while others in informal ones, needed durable shelters solutions, with the quake-triggered displacements exacerbating existing shelter challenges for internally displaced people.

With thousands of displaced people sleeping in the streets as rains poured down, the vulnerable population are increasingly exposed to the rising risk of infectious diseases, including cholera, acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases and malaria. Widescale displacement and poor living conditions with restricted access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services is major concern, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the commune of Pestel, Grand'Anse, nearly 1,810 water cisterns have been damaged or destroyed, creating an urgent need for safe water for drinking and sanitation.

In the three hardest hit departments, the health system has been severely affected as health needs continue to grow exponentially in the aftermath of the quake, making humanitarian intervention in health a critical response priority to ensure access to life-saving assistance and the continuation of other critical services, including those in sexual and reproductive health. An initial rapid assessment found that 24 health facilities have been affected in the Sud, Nippes and Grand'Anse departments, with 20 suffering infrastructural damages and 4 destroyed.

Navigating the complex security situation and negotiating humanitarian access remain some of the biggest challenges faced by humanitarian partners. Despite successful negotiations in opening of a 'human corridor' through gang-held areas, humanitarian convoys heading to the hard hit southern peninsula have been blocked by affected communities, whose needs from different ongoing crises or the recent quake in WASH, health and food insecurity have yet to be addressed, demanding that their unmet needs be addressed before the convoy moves on. Today, 18 August, two more humanitarian convoys are scheduled to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need.

Despite its strength and depth, the earthquake is less catastrophic than that of 2010, which left more than 300,000 people dead and 1.5 million others injured. Nevertheless, the impact of the 14 August earthquake has been devastating, particularly as the country was still recovering from the impact of Hurricane Matthew in 2016 which affected many of the same people in the southern peninsula still struggling to repair or rebuild their homes and livelihoods. These crisis-affected people, whose needs will only continue to grow in the weeks and months after this devastating earthquake, lack the resources to recover from yet another crisis. New needs will overlap and exacerbate those already emerging from other crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, internal displacement due to gang violence and growing food insecurity, potentially creating a protracted crisis in a context of chronic political instability and insecurity.

RESPONSE

Coordination

The DGPC continues to coordinate national response efforts, together with line ministries and humanitarian partners, through the National Centre for Emergency Operations (COUN). The Government has fully mobilized rapid response teams in the most affected departments to carry out search and rescue operations, deliver food assistance and medical supplies, and clear roads and bridges damaged by the quake. Based on lesson learned from 2010 quake, national authorities are appealing to all partners to capitalize on national expertise and capacities in-country. In support of the regional response effort, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) has activated its Regional Response Mechanism and, at the request of the Government, will deploy a CARICOM Operational Support Team (COST) to provide coordination and operational support to the COUN.

In the aftermath of the quake, the international community has acted quickly to provide rapid response. A 10-member UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team is now on the ground, together with the Americas Support Team (AST) and Atlas Logistics, to facilitate the coordination of international response activities and information management in support of national response efforts. The UNDAC team will be deployed at the departmental level to strengthen coordination, with three team members deployed in each of the three most affected departments, and one at national level. Coordination of non-governmental organizations will be carried out in close collaboration with DGPC and OCHA.

Additionally, OCHA's Regional Office in Panama convened a third ad hoc meeting of the Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) to exchange sector-based information and coordinate regional efforts as UN agencies and humanitarian partners activate their respective rapid response mechanisms and scaleup response activities. The Assessment and Analysis (A&A) Cell activated by ROLAC continues to provide valuable remote assessment and information management support, liaising closely with the UNDAC team on the ground.

The Health Crisis Cell (UNGUS) has been activated to coordinate and provide support in the health emergency response. Rapid assessments teams have been deployed and several medical teams, essential medicines, and medical equipment

and supplies have been distributed based on reported needs. National medical teams have treated more than 1,700 injured people in the three most affected departments, and more than a dozen seriously injured people have been transferred to health facilities in the Ouest department for treatment. To bolster its emergency health response, the Ministry of Health (MSSP) has sent a request the European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre to activate its Emergency Medical Team network.

International Response

The worsening food security situation, even before the quake, remains a key concern. An estimated 4.4 million Haitians, nearly 40 per cent of the population, face high acute food insecurity, including 1.1 million classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 3.1 million people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), while an estimated 217,000 children suffer from severe and moderate acute malnutrition, a situation likely to be exacerbated for those most affected by the earthquake. The World Food Programme (WFP) has 3,500 tons of food pre-positioned across Haiti and will begin to deliver food assistance to those affected by the earthquake, adding to the support WFP continues to provide to people affected by other ongoing emergencies in the country.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), on the other hand, has begun delivering non-food items, including blankets, tarpaulins and fixing kits, in Miragoine, Les Cayes and Jeremie, while the shelter sector explores more durable shelter solutions based on assessed needs amid widespread displacement. WFP is prioritizing all its logistics support to transport search and rescue teams, health actors and medical supplies to Les Cayes, Jeremie and other affected areas. To facilitate logistics needs, a coastal shipping service was tested on 16 August and three voyages were carried out transporting vehicles loaded with aid and fuel supply.

Governments across Latin America and the Caribbean have quickly mobilized personnel and supplies to support national search and rescue operations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those most in need. On 16 August, the Government of Chile sent a Boeing KC-135 carrying more than 16 tons of humanitarian aid, including essential medicines, 11,000 liters of purified water, food rations and hygiene kits. Likewise, the Government of Mexico sent two Mexican Air Force transport planes with 60 army personnel specialized in search and rescue as well as medical assistance, along with nearly 20 tons of humanitarian aid, including medicines, medical supplies, food and rescue equipment. Additionally, the Government of Colombia sent two Colombian Air Force planes stocked with food, water, hygiene kits, tents and other relief items, in addition to Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams to support response efforts.

In support of the recently deployed Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), USAID has requested support from the Department of Defense US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) to provide air transport to move DART personnel and relief supplies to affected areas, boosting response capacities in a context where limited air assets and difficulties moving personnel and supplies on land creates numerous logistics and security challenges. SOUTHCOM is sending eight helicopters to back response efforts and is providing aerial images to support damage assessments. Similarly, UN Humanitarian Air Service flights continue to support the delivery of supplies and medical staff to affected areas, but WFP needs US\$1.4 million to keep this critical service for the humanitarian community running until the end of 2021.

Humanitarian Financing

The international community has also acted quickly to launch financing appeals and mobilize donor funding for humanitarian assistance in Haiti. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is allocating \$8 million to provide life-saving assistance in health care, clean water, emergency shelter and sanitation, while the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has launched an appeal for approximately \$10.9 million to support the Haitian Red Cross to provide emergency assistance and support the early recovery of 25,000 people affected by the quake. Additionally, the EU is allocating about \$3.5 million for the provision of medical assistance to overwhelmed hospitals and WASH, shelter and protection services for the most affected people. Americares has delivered almost \$3 million worth of much needed medicines and relief supplies, including 9 tons of intravenous fluids earmarked for Les Cayes.

GAPS & CHALLENGES

Security & Humanitarian Access

The volatile security situation and humanitarian access constraints continue to be among the biggest challenges faced by national authorities and humanitarian partners in the early days of the response. While the humanitarian community welcomes the efforts of all stakeholders in negotiating and securing access to the worst-affected areas, this access will need to be sustained long-term, particularly considering the lack of air and sea assets available to reach affected people.

The heavy rains brought by Tropical Depression Grace across south-western Haiti on 16 and 17 August triggered localized flooding and mudslides, which temporarily suspended response operations and will continue to complicate them in the coming days. The Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications has cleared the debris from a quake-induced landslide that was blocking national road 7 (RN#7), a key road in terms of humanitarian access as it connects Les Cayes and Jeremie, but cautions that some parts of the road are susceptible to collapse.



Photo credit: UNICEF Haiti

AAP & CwC

As response operations are rolled out, the first convoys moving along the newly established, safe and secure humanitarian corridor have confronted some access constraints, as affected communities along the route to the southern peninsula have blocked them, demanding that their needs arising from other ongoing emergencies or the quake be addressed, which brings to the fore the need for effective Communication with Communities (CwC) in such a complex response environment.

Humanitarian actors, including the sector lead agencies, the Humanitarian Country Team and UNDAC, must prioritize Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and meaningfully integrate CwC into needs assessments and response plans, coordinate with the existing in-country humanitarian architecture and relevant authorities to mitigate risks associated with communication gaps and the spreading of rumors, identify information needs and preferred communication channels of affected people, and establish two-way communication channels for community feedback and complaints.

The immediate focus should be on the dissemination of urgent, life-saving information through radio and social media, building upon existing and trusted networks for high audience engagement. In collaboration with designated authorities, humanitarian partners are urgently called upon to reactivate the CwC Working Group to develop a common strategy and priority actions, including early, clear and inclusive messaging through community preferred channels, to mitigate the proliferation of rumors and potential risks that may arise, especially during and after relief distributions.

Health (including COVID-19), Protection, Shelter & WASH

The weakened capacity of the health system in context of exponentially growing health needs is also one of the biggest response challenges. Per MSSP, persistent gaps in the emergency health response stem from a lack of medical personnel, including general practitioners and specialists, medicines and medical supplies, and logistics support to delivery supplies, deploy personnel to affected areas and transfer patients.

WASH is another major gap not only in health facilities receiving injured patients, which require upgraded water storage capacities and the reconstruction or rehabilitation of WASH facilities, but also for families whose homes have collapsed who need access to safe drinking water and hygiene supplies. Interventions in the WASH sector will be critical to mitigating the spread of disease and COVID-19.

Additionally, with significant damage and destruction suffered in the housing sector, and the appearance of unsafe makeshift accommodations in affected areas, durable shelter solutions will be a priority response action as thousands will likely be displaced and homeless beyond the immediate aftermath of quake, given the ongoing shelter challenges in the country. In such a precarious security context, protection mechanisms and services must be prioritized for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, girls and boys, the elderly, people living with disabilities and the LGBTIQ+ community, including protection against sexual exploitation and abuse as well as gender-based violence.

While the surge in COVID-19 cases witnessed in June and July 2021 has tailored off, the post-earthquake context increases the COVID-19 risk significantly, as displaced people staying with friends and family, in emergency shelters or makeshift accommodations in the streets, will lack access to adequate WASH services and personal protection supplies, while physical distancing will be hard to maintain with people living in close quarters. Additionally, with humanitarian, military and other actors arriving en masse to respond to the fallout of the earthquake, the prevention of COVID-19 contagion could pose access challenges and additional risk factors that must be considered in the planning and implementation of humanitarian partners' activities in line with the principle of 'do no harm'.

The health system in the most affected areas is already overwhelmed and does not have the capacity to effectively respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. However, with the less than 1 per cent of the population having received their first jab of the COVID-19 vaccine, including healthcare workers, the risk of a surge in COVID-19 cases is a concern, especially if the more contagious and deadly delta variant is introduced on the island.

The impact of the earthquake will greatly exacerbate existing humanitarian needs resulting from multiple crises that both national authorities and humanitarian partners lack the human and financial resources to respond to all at once. Haiti has already been hit by two storms this year, Elsa and Grace. With the peak of what is expected to be yet another active Atlantic hurricane season just around the corner, the humanitarian response to the earthquake must be rapidly scaled up to address pressing needs and to mitigate the vulnerabilities and risks affected people will be exposed to when faced with a potential major storm impact. In order to do so, however, additional financing for humanitarian action is urgently needed to prevent the current crisis from further deteriorating, creating an even more dire human situation in the country that could potentially act as a push factor that may intensify Haitian migratory flows in the Americas.

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