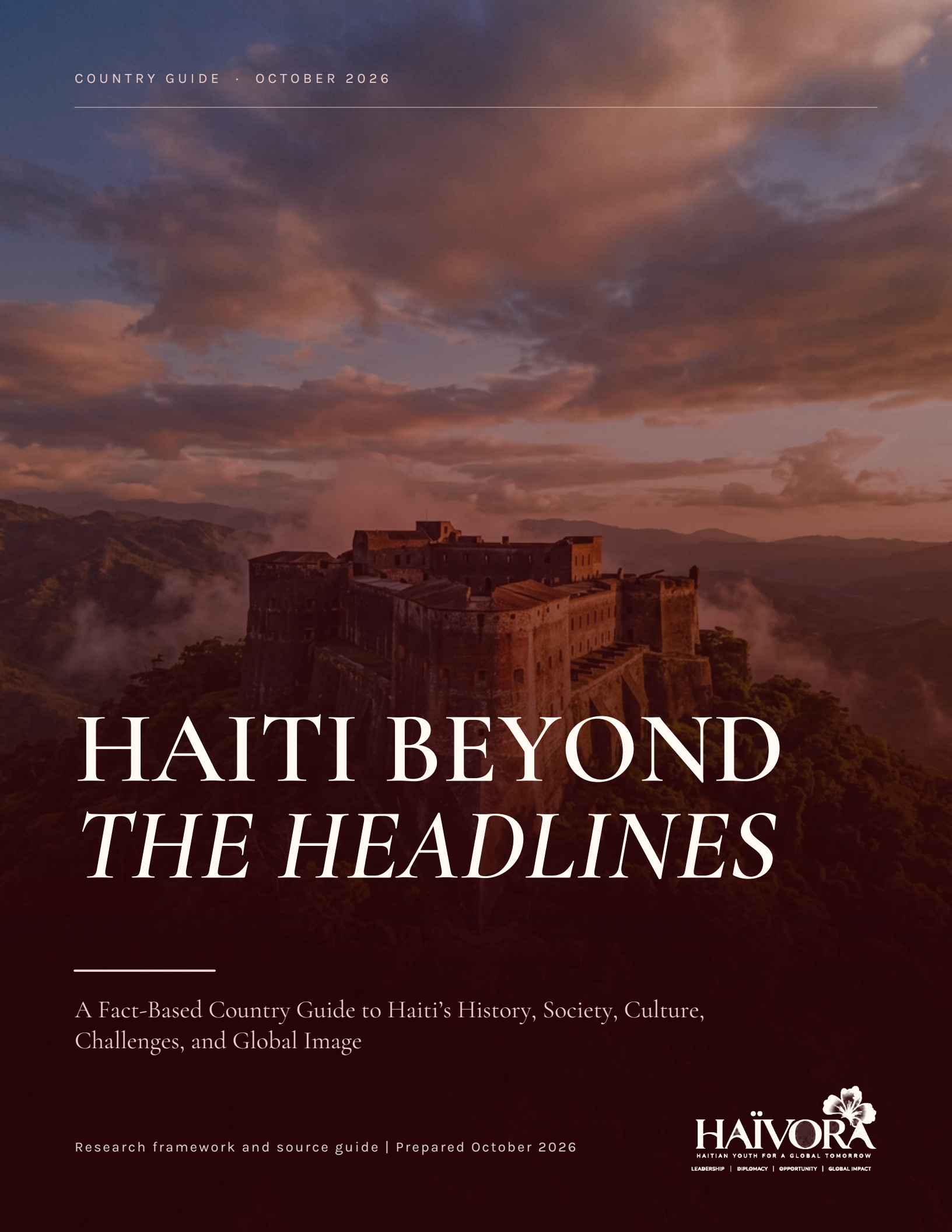

COUNTRY GUIDE · OCTOBER 2026

HAITI BEYOND *THE HEADLINES*

A Fact-Based Country Guide to Haiti's History, Society, Culture, Challenges, and Global Image

Research framework and source guide | Prepared October 2026

HAÏVORA
HAITIAN YOUTH FOR A GLOBAL TOMORROW
LEADERSHIP | DIPLOMACY | OPPORTUNITY | GLOBAL IMPACT



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Empowering Haitian youth for a global tomorrow

HAÏVORA · OCTOBER 2026

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CORE PURPOSE

To challenge misleading portrayals of Haiti with verified information, historical context, credible sources, and respect for the complexity and dignity of Haitian people.

This report does not deny Haiti's political, economic, security, or humanitarian challenges. It argues that accurate reporting must also include context, history, culture, geography, creativity, community life, and the limits of the available evidence.

OVERVIEW

Executive summary

Haiti is frequently discussed internationally through a narrow set of themes: poverty, political instability, natural disasters, violence, and humanitarian emergencies. These are real subjects that deserve serious reporting. They are not, by themselves, a complete description of the country or its people.

A responsible public-information project should correct specific false claims, avoid unsupported counterclaims, and cite evidence next to factual statements. The country's difficulties must not be hidden; neither should isolated stories be used to define all Haitians.

Haiti's history includes the Haitian Revolution and independence in 1804, the struggle to build a sovereign state under difficult international and domestic conditions, periods of dictatorship and democratic transition, foreign intervention, natural disasters, and contemporary humanitarian and security crises. Haiti is also a country with distinct languages, regional communities, artistic traditions, literature, music, religious and spiritual practices, historic sites, entrepreneurs, farmers, educators, professionals, and a global diaspora.

How to use this report

- Use the historical overview as a starting point, not a substitute for specialist historical research.
- For current figures, open the source and record the publication date, data period, geography, and definition.
- Treat personal stories as personal stories unless representative research establishes wider prevalence.
- When evidence is mixed or incomplete, say so clearly.

01 Haiti at a glance

Haiti, officially the Republic of Haiti (République d'Haïti / Repiblik d Ayiti), occupies the western part of the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean and shares the island with the Dominican Republic. Its capital is Port-au-Prince. Haitian Creole (Kreyòl ayisyen) and French are its official languages. The country is divided into ten departments.

For population, economic indicators, health, education, electricity access, poverty, and other statistics, use dated data from the World Bank, the Haitian government, the United Nations, and other specialist agencies. Do not mix figures from different years as if they describe the same moment.

KEY FACTS

Capital

Port-au-Prince

Official languages

Haitian Creole & French

Administrative divisions

Ten departments

- Library of Congress: Haiti Country Guide — Country facts and curated research sources.
- World Bank: Haiti country page — Current development overview and data links.

02 A concise history of Haiti

Before colonization and the colonial period

Before European colonization, the island was inhabited by Indigenous Taíno communities. Spain colonized the island beginning in the late fifteenth century. France later established control over the western portion, which became Saint-Domingue, a colony whose plantation economy relied heavily on the enslavement and brutal exploitation of Africans.

1804

On January 1, 1804, Haiti declared independence from France.

The Haitian Revolution and independence, 1791–1804

In 1791, an uprising against slavery and colonial rule developed into a revolutionary struggle involving enslaved people, formerly enslaved people, free people of color, and competing European powers. Leaders included Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, among others. On January 1, 1804, Haiti declared independence from France. The revolution made Haiti a landmark in the history of slavery, emancipation, and anticolonial struggle.

This history should be explained carefully: the revolution was not a simple or uniform event, and historians study its different leaders, phases, social groups, and international consequences.

1825

Nineteenth century: independence and difficult state-building

After independence, Haitian leaders faced the task of building a state while confronting diplomatic isolation, internal political conflict, and economic constraints. France recognized Haitian independence in 1825 under a financial arrangement requiring Haiti to pay compensation to former French colonists; the long-term impact of this debt and the terms imposed on Haiti are major topics in historical research. Haiti's political institutions and leadership changed repeatedly during the nineteenth century.

1915

U.S. occupation, dictatorship, and political transitions

U.S. forces occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934. In the twentieth century, Haiti experienced authoritarian rule, including the Duvalier dictatorships, which ended in 1986. The period that followed included political upheaval, elections, coups, international involvement, and efforts to build democratic institutions. These events should be described with dates and reliable historical sources rather than compressed into a claim that instability is an inherent feature of Haitian society.

- U.S. Department of State historical background on Haiti. Useful historical timeline; an archived source, so do not use it for current conditions.

2010

The 2010 earthquake and other disasters

On January 12, 2010, a major earthquake struck near Port-au-Prince, causing catastrophic loss of life, displacement, and infrastructure damage. Haiti has also experienced hurricanes, floods, droughts, and other hazards. Disasters interact with factors such as building quality, infrastructure, poverty, land use, and preparedness; they should not be treated as evidence of a national character or as the only story about the country.

- U.S. Department of State: Haiti From Rescue and Relief to Reconstruction Historical earthquake response information; archived.

Today

Recent and ongoing challenges

Haiti faces serious contemporary problems involving armed violence, displacement, political uncertainty, limited access to services, economic hardship, and food insecurity. The scale and location of these conditions change over time. Any public report should use current updates from the UN, IPC, World Bank, and credible reporting, clearly label the period covered, and avoid presenting a dated emergency snapshot as timeless or universal.

- World Bank: Haiti — Current country overview.
- IPC: Haiti country analysis — Dated acute food insecurity analyses.



Haitian painting and visual arts: one part of a diverse, living cultural life.

03 Culture, language, and identity

Haitian identity cannot be reduced to poverty or crisis. Haitian Creole is spoken widely and is central to everyday life, oral expression, literature, music, education, and national identity. French also has an official role. Haitian cultural life includes painting, sculpture, metalwork, storytelling, poetry, novels, music, dance, Carnival, cuisine, religious traditions, community celebrations, and contemporary creative industries.

Haiti's culture is diverse; practices vary by region, family, generation, faith, and individual. Avoid describing any single religion, custom, food, or lifestyle as something every Haitian follows.

- UNESCO World Heritage Centre: UNESCO for Haiti — Overview of cultural heritage and creative life.
- UNESCO: Haiti country page — Country and cultural heritage information.

04 Historic places and heritage

The National History Park Citadelle, Sans-Souci, Ramiers is a UNESCO World Heritage Site connected to Haiti's post-independence history. The Citadelle Laferrière and Sans-Souci Palace are important historical landmarks. Heritage should be discussed with accurate dates, historical context, conservation information, and respect for local communities.

Haiti also has varied landscapes, coastlines, mountains, agricultural areas, towns, and urban communities. Tourism claims should be supported with current, location-specific safety and travel information; a beautiful image alone does not establish that a place is currently safe or accessible.

- UNESCO World Heritage Centre: National History Park—Citadelle, Sans-Souci, Ramiers — Official site description and heritage listing.

05 Food, agriculture, and food insecurity



Haitian cuisine includes dishes and ingredients whose use varies across regions and households, including rice and beans, maize, root vegetables, plantains, soups, stews, fish, poultry, and many locally adapted recipes. A responsible account should recognize culinary traditions while also acknowledging that prices, access to markets, agricultural conditions, transport, insecurity, and household income affect food access.

CASE STUDY

Mud cookies

Associated Press reporting from 2008 described some people in particularly vulnerable communities in Port-au-Prince making cookies from dried earth, salt, and vegetable shortening during severe economic hardship and high food prices. This is historical, location-specific reporting. It is not a nationwide survey, and it does not establish that Haitians generally eat mud cookies or that the practice represents daily life across Haiti.

ACCURATE WORDING

"Some reports have documented people facing extreme hardship making and eating mud cookies. This should be understood as a specific account of severe deprivation, not a general description of Haitian people or Haitian food culture."

◆ Associated Press report archived by the Los Angeles Times: "Poor Haitians on a mud diet" — Historical report; not current prevalence data.

Food insecurity: acknowledge the facts precisely

Hunger and acute food insecurity are serious issues and should be measured using specialist analysis. When quoting a statistic, include the number of people or percentage, the population analysed, the location, and the time period. Do not infer from food insecurity data that people eat a particular substance, and do not infer from one food story that it describes all people experiencing hunger.

◆ IPC: Haiti analyses — Use the newest available report and quote its exact time period.

06 Economy, work, and development

Haiti's economy includes agriculture, commerce, services, manufacturing, creative work, small businesses, and activity supported by the diaspora. Economic conditions are affected by infrastructure, access to finance and markets, security, governance, climate-related shocks, international trade, and other factors. The existence of serious poverty does not mean that every Haitian household has the same circumstances or that the country has no economic activity.

For a public report, use indicators from the World Bank and official statistical sources, and explain what each indicator measures. For example, a national poverty rate is not the same as a claim that every person is poor; GDP change is not the same as household income; and remittances are not the same as government revenue.

- World Bank Data: Haiti — Indicators and their dates.
- World Bank: Haiti—Providing Opportunities for All Haitians — Development context and opportunities; check the publication date before quoting numbers.

07 Education, innovation, and community life

Haitian people work and study in schools, universities, professional organizations, public institutions, businesses, farms, arts, technology, and civil society. Teachers, students, healthcare workers, researchers, entrepreneurs, artists, journalists, and community organizers contribute to public life in Haiti and abroad. Specific success stories should be individually sourced and not exaggerated into unsupported claims about the entire population.

When documenting initiatives, record the organization's official name, location, dates, what it actually did, and a source such as an official page, published report, or credible news article. Do not use an individual's achievement as proof that a whole country has or lacks a particular quality.

08 Diaspora and Haiti's international connections

Haitian communities live throughout the Caribbean, North America, Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere. Diaspora communities maintain family, cultural, professional, educational, entrepreneurial, and civic connections with Haiti. Claims about migration, remittances, citizenship, or diaspora demographics should be sourced to current government or international data and should distinguish between estimates and official counts.

Avoid framing Haitians abroad only through migration or crisis. Diaspora experiences are diverse and include students, workers, professionals, artists, business owners, public servants, and families.

09 How misinformation about Haiti spreads

Misinformation can spread when a real image is paired with an inaccurate caption, an old event is presented as current, a story from one place is generalized to the whole country, a statistic is repeated without its date, or a shocking example is shared without the context needed to interpret it. A post can mislead even if the image itself is authentic.

UNESCO's Port-au-Prince office launched a #STOPinfodemic campaign in 2020 with partners including UNDP and UNICEF to address disinformation, including misinformation surrounding COVID-19 and online news. This demonstrates that information quality is a recognized issue in Haiti; it does not mean every negative story is false.

◆ UNESCO: #STOPinfodemic campaign in Haiti Context on media literacy and disinformation.

10 A verification checklist for viral posts

1 **Original source**
Who published the claim first? Is there a named journalist, organization, or primary source?

2 **Date**
When was the content recorded or published? Is a past event being presented as current?

3 **Location**
Can the place be identified? Is a single neighborhood being treated as the whole country?

4 **Scale**
Is the claim based on representative data, a small sample, or one person's experience?

5 **Image verification**
Can the original image or video be found? Does it match the caption, place, and date?

6 **Independent confirmation**
Do credible sources independently corroborate the claim?

7 **Exact wording**
Does the evidence support "some people," "many," or "most"? Do not upgrade a limited claim into a universal one.

8 **Human dignity**
Does the post inform, or does it use people's suffering to shock, mock, or stereotype?

9 **Corrections**
If the claim is wrong or outdated, is there a correction or newer data?

11 Model response to misleading content

> *I'm from Haiti, and I support sharing accurate information about my country including its real challenges. But a story about a specific person, place, or period should not be presented as if it describes all Haitians. Please provide the original source, date, location, and context. Haiti's history and present-day reality are much more complex than a viral post can show."*

12 Editorial rules for this project

01 Put a date and version number on every edition.

02 Cite every major factual claim close to where it appears.

03 Prefer primary sources and reputable institutions; use journalism for documented reporting and human stories.

04 Label historical information, current statistics, estimates, and personal testimony separately.

05 Do not invent figures, quotes, sources, or personal stories.

06 Do not say a claim is false merely because it is uncomfortable; verify it first.

07 Do not say a claim is true merely because it appears in a reputable-looking graphic.

08 Use respectful images with clear dates, locations, captions, and permissions where required.

09 Correct errors openly and keep a record of changes.

10 Have Haitian historians, journalists, researchers, and people from different regions and backgrounds review the report before publication.



13 Recommended research library

Library of Congress: Haiti Country Guide
A gateway to historical collections and reference material.

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian: Haitian Revolution
Revolution and international history.

UNESCO: Haiti
Country profile and heritage resources.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre: Haiti
Cultural heritage context.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre: National History Park
Official listing for a key historic site.

World Bank: Haiti country page
Development updates and data.

World Bank Data: Haiti
Country indicators and years.

IPC: Haiti country analysis
Food insecurity reports with analysis periods.

UNESCO: #STOPinfodemic in Haiti
Media literacy and disinformation context.

Associated Press report on mud cookies (archived)
Historical reporting; use with its date and limits.

14 Everyday life in Haiti: beyond the headlines

Daily life in Haiti is not one single experience. A household in a rural commune, a family in Port-au-Prince, a small-business owner in Cap-Haïtien, and a student living with relatives in the diaspora may face very different realities. Income, access to roads and electricity, security, disability, gender, age, and the availability of public services all shape daily life. A responsible report should avoid describing every Haitian as living the same way.

Family, neighborhood, faith communities, music, sport, food, and mutual assistance are important parts of social life, but their importance varies by person and community. These strengths should not be romanticized as substitutes for public services. Communities should not have to replace the state in providing safe streets, reliable schools, clean water, health care, electricity, and justice.

For many families, ordinary life involves work, school, transportation, shopping at markets, preparing meals, caring for relatives, religious or community activities, and maintaining social networks. Informal work and small enterprises are important to livelihoods, but informal employment can also mean unstable earnings, limited legal protections, and little access to insurance or credit. The current security and economic crises can interrupt these routines: people may change routes, close a shop early, postpone medical care, or spend more on transport and food when roads or supply chains are disrupted.



14.1

What current indicators tell us and what they do not

11.9M
Population, about 11.9 million (2025)

65.1
Life expectancy at birth, about 65.1 years (2024)

53.9%
Electricity access (2024)

Source: World Bank Haiti data page. National indicators, not descriptions of every community.

The World Bank's Haiti data page reports a population of about 11.9 million in 2025, life expectancy at birth of about 65.1 years in 2024, and electricity access of 53.9 percent in 2024. These are national indicators, not descriptions of every community. Electricity access does not necessarily mean power is available all day, affordable, or reliable. Likewise, a national average can hide major differences between urban and rural areas and between households with different incomes.

−1.5%
Estimated real GDP decline in 2026 (eighth consecutive year)

−2.7%
Real GDP decline in 2025

50.8%
Below US$3.00 a day (2021 PPP), estimate

The World Bank's country overview, accessed in October 2026, reports that real GDP contracted for an eighth consecutive year in 2026, with an estimated 1.5 percent decline for that year, following a 2.7 percent decline in 2025. It also estimates that 50.8 percent of Haitians live below US$3.00 a day in 2021 purchasing-power-parity terms. Because these are estimates and projections, the report should label them as such and check for revisions when newer data are published.

5.83M
52% of the analysed population in IPC Phase 3+ (March–June 2026); about 1.9 million in Emergency (Phase 4)

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reported that more than 5.83 million people 52 percent of the analysed population were experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) for March–June 2026. About 1.9 million were classified in Emergency (Phase 4). This is a time-bound food-security classification, not a claim that every person in Haiti is hungry or that every region is affected equally.

These figures show serious and measurable hardship. They do not tell the whole story of how people adapt, work, learn, create, and support one another. The purpose of including both evidence of hardship and evidence of agency is not to balance one with the other artificially; it is to describe the country accurately.

15 Development potential: what Haiti already has to build on



Agriculture and local food systems

Haiti has agricultural knowledge, farmers, local markets, and diverse growing environments. Yet farmers can be constrained by insecure access to land, limited irrigation, erosion, extreme weather, costly inputs, weak storage, poor rural roads, and difficulty reaching buyers. Practical priorities include repairing irrigation and feeder roads, expanding soil and watershed restoration, improving access to climate information and agricultural extension, supporting farmer cooperatives, strengthening storage and cold chains, and connecting producers with schools, hospitals, hotels, and local processors. Programmes should be designed with farmers and measured by changes in income, yields, food losses, and affordability—not only by the number of trainings delivered.

Energy and infrastructure

The World Bank reports electricity access at 53.9 percent in 2024, while access and reliability vary substantially. Solar mini-grids, rooftop systems, battery storage, efficient public lighting, and resilient power for clinics, schools, water systems, and small businesses can help where they are technically and financially appropriate. Projects must budget for maintenance, replacement parts, trained technicians, transparent tariffs, and community oversight. Installing equipment without a long-term repair plan is not sustainable development.

Education, skills, and youth employment

Young people need more than motivational messages. They need safe schools, trained teachers, learning materials, pathways from school to paid work, apprenticeships, internet access, technical and vocational training, and opportunities to start or grow enterprises. Useful partnerships can connect schools and universities with local employers, agricultural businesses, renewable-energy technicians, software and design services, health services, and cultural industries. Youth should participate in decisions and budgets, not only attend consultations or appear in promotional photographs.

Culture, tourism, and creative industries

Haiti's history, architecture, crafts, literature, visual arts, music, cuisine, and living cultural traditions are assets with educational and economic value. Cultural development should protect heritage and support the people who create it. Priorities can include conservation training, fair payment for artists and craftspeople, locally led cultural tourism when security permits, stronger archives and museums, digital promotion, and transparent arrangements so communities benefit from visitor spending. Heritage must not be reduced to a product or separated from the communities that sustain it.

Digital work and entrepreneurship

Digital services, online education, design, translation, software, remote support, and small online businesses may create opportunities, especially for young people and diaspora-linked networks. These opportunities depend on affordable internet and electricity, reliable payment systems, digital skills, language access, cybersecurity, and trust. Digital entrepreneurship should complement not replace investment in agriculture, manufacturing, public services, and other forms of productive work.

16

What could help Haiti move forward? A practical framework

1

Restore security and protect civilians.

Security policy should protect residents, investigate abuses, reduce illegal weapons flows, and ensure that schools, hospitals, markets, ports, and roads can function. Security is necessary for development, but it is not a substitute for accountable government, justice, or economic opportunity.

2

Rebuild public trust through accountable institutions.

Publish public contracts, procurement decisions, budgets, and project results in accessible formats. Strengthen independent oversight, audits, courts, and anti-corruption safeguards. Give local governments resources and clear responsibilities, and create safe ways for citizens—especially women and young people—to report problems and influence decisions.

3

Make local economic activity possible.

Improve transport corridors, electricity, water, telecommunications, market facilities, and access to finance. Support small and medium-sized businesses, cooperatives, and producers with transparent rules and fair competition. Measure whether jobs are created, wages are paid, local suppliers are used, and businesses can remain open.

4

Invest in people and essential services.

Prioritize primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation, education, child protection, and support for displaced families. Services should be accessible to people with disabilities and to communities outside the capital. Emergency assistance must continue where needed while longer-term systems are rebuilt.

5

Strengthen food production and climate resilience.

Support farmers with irrigation, soil protection, storage, insurance where viable, climate-smart practices, and dependable access to markets. Restore watersheds and improve drainage and waste management to reduce flood risks. Disaster planning should be based on local hazards and include evacuation routes, shelters, early warnings, and continuity plans for schools and clinics.

6

Make energy access reliable and affordable.

Expand solutions suited to each community, including renewable energy where appropriate. Pair construction with maintenance funding, technician training, consumer protection, and transparent management. Monitor actual service hours and affordability, not only the number of connections installed.

7

Put young people in decision-making roles.

Create paid internships, apprenticeships, research opportunities, civic education, and youth advisory mechanisms with clear influence on policy. Avoid treating youth as a single group: rural and urban youth, young women, young people with disabilities, and displaced youth may face different barriers.

8

Work with the diaspora as a partner.

Remittances support many households, but they should not be treated as a replacement for functioning public institutions or a complete national development strategy. Build channels for diaspora professionals, researchers, investors, artists, and students to contribute knowledge and investment under transparent, locally led arrangements.

9

Make international support transparent and locally led.

Aid and development programmes should publish budgets, partners, intended results, evaluation findings, and complaints procedures. Haitian institutions, municipalities, universities, civil society, and affected communities should help set priorities and assess whether projects work. Outside partners should strengthen local capacity rather than create parallel systems indefinitely.

10

Measure progress publicly.

Choose a small set of indicators school attendance and learning, clinic access, hours of electricity, water reliability, farm income, job quality, road access, public procurement transparency, displacement, and public safety. Publish results regularly and explain setbacks. Progress should be judged by whether people’s lives become safer and more dignified, not by announcements alone.

17 How to discuss Haiti responsibly

A serious account can name violence, hunger, political dysfunction, corruption, displacement, and economic contraction without implying that these conditions define Haitian identity. It should distinguish armed groups and political actors from the wider population, distinguish allegations from findings, and avoid treating a dramatic incident as proof of a national characteristic. It should also avoid unsupported claims that Haiti's problems are caused by one factor alone.

When presenting a statistic, include the source, publication date, period covered, population or geographic area measured, and whether the number is observed, estimated, or projected. When discussing an individual's experience, do not imply that it represents everyone. When information is unavailable or disputed, state that plainly. Haitian researchers, journalists, community organizations, and people directly affected should be included as knowledge-holders, not only as subjects of outside reporting.

18 Updated data and source notes (accessed October 2026)

World Bank, Haiti country overview: https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/haiti

economic contraction, poverty estimate, development strategy, and current country context. The page reports an estimated 1.5 percent GDP contraction in 2026 and 50.8 percent below US$3.00/day in 2021 PPP terms; both figures should be cited with the date and methodology shown by the World Bank.

World Bank, Haiti data: https://data.worldbank.org/country/haiti

population (2025), life expectancy (2024), electricity access (2024), GDP, inflation, and other indicators. Indicators refer to different years; do not present them as if they were all measured in 2026.

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Haiti: Acute Food Security Situation Projection Update for March–June 2026, released 16 April 2026: https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/fi/c/1162842/?iso3=HTI

5.83 million people, or 52 percent of the analysed population, classified in IPC Phase 3 or above for the stated period.

World Bank Group, "World Bank Announces New Strategy for Haiti," 4 March 2025: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/03/04/world-bank-announces-new-strategy-for-haiti

2025–2029 country partnership framework and announced grant financing of approximately US$320 million.

These sources provide a starting point, not a substitute for checking the newest release before publication. Statistics can be revised, and security or humanitarian conditions can change quickly. A final public version should be reviewed by Haitian subject-matter experts and, where possible, include sources from Haitian institutions and researchers.



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CONCLUSION

A fair account of Haiti must hold two truths together: the country faces serious challenges that deserve clear reporting, and the country and its people cannot be reduced to those challenges. The most effective answer to misinformation is not exaggeration in the opposite direction. It is verifiable evidence, historical context, precise language, and the willingness to correct errors.

Accuracy is not denial.
Context is not an excuse.
One story is not an entire country.

Research note: This is a source-based foundation, not an exhaustive academic history. Verify all current statistics directly at the linked source before publication, and seek review from Haitian subject-matter experts.