



Haiti - Testimonies from Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

(Reasons for choosing to seek refuge in spontaneous sites rather than with host families; Living conditions in sites; IDPs' suggestions for improving their situation)

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Credit Cover Photo: Beneficiary identification activities in a spontaneous site in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince
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SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to enhance the understanding of the displacement situation in the Metropolitan Area of Port-au-Prince (MAPAP) based on the testimonies of internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in various spontaneous sites. These testimonies were collected through individual interviews conducted from 21st to 25th of July, 2023. The information gathered provides a qualitative overview of the factors influencing decision to live in spontaneous sites, the living conditions in IDP sites, social cohesion and IDP's suggestions regarding type of assistance to be provided to them.



Key Definitions



Internally Displaced Persons: Individuals who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.



Returnees former IDPs: Individuals who were previous IDPs and who returned to their usual place of origin. It should be noted that the notion of the sustainability of these returns is not measured through these evaluations and requires specific studies.



Spontaneous sites: Spontaneous sites are places where displaced people settle without any pre-existing support or assistance.



Host Community: A host community is considered to be the families hosting the displaced individuals within it, as opposed to displaced individuals settled in spontaneous sites.



A site established in a school in the Metropolitan Area of Port-au-Prince © IOM, July 2023.

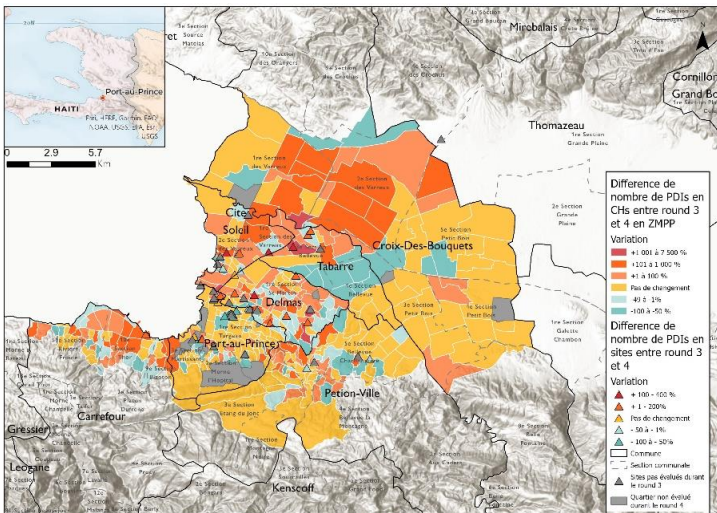
INTRODUCTION

This report constitutes a complementary analysis to the quantitative reports already published by DTM as part of the fourth phase of site and neighborhood assessments in the MAPAP: [Information sheet on the displacement situation in the West Department](#), [Detailed mapping of the displacement situation in the MAPAP](#).

The quantitative results from Round 4 have demonstrated a trend of IDPs leaving host families to settle in sites. While the total number of IDPs in the MAPAP has not significantly increased since the end of 2022 (see Map 1 and Graph 1 below), their places of accommodation have varied significantly (Graph 2). By the end of 2022, only 25 percent of IDPs were settled in sites, whereas by June 2023, this percentage had risen to 45 percent, with nearly half of the IDPs now settled in sites (Graph 2). Given that the number of IDPs has not increased significantly, these results indicate that the same IDPs previously hosted by families are moving to settle in sites where living conditions are extremely precarious, and people are exposed to higher protection risks.

This report aims to deepen the understanding of this trend through testimonies from IDPs obtained through open interviews.

Map 1. Variation of IDPs in neighborhoods and sites between Rounds 3 and 4.

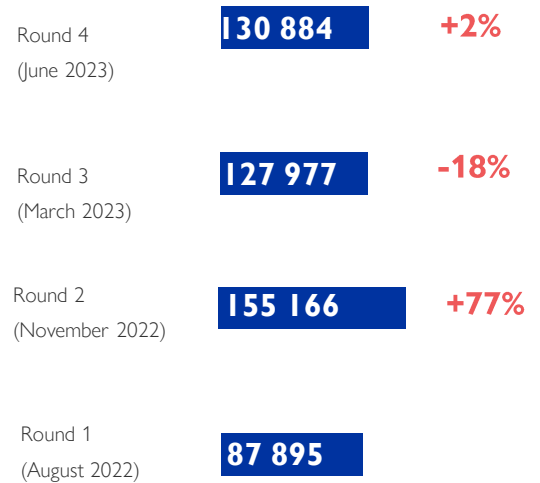


METHODOLOGY

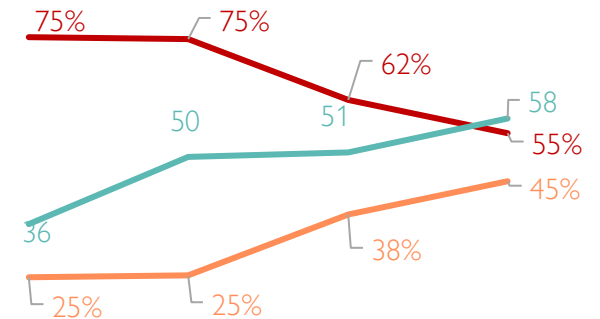
Open interviews were conducted in sites that experienced significant increases in the number of IDPs residing there. Thus, 8 sites were targeted, and 34 displaced household heads who were settled in those sites were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in person by DTM teams.

It should be noted that this report provides an in-depth insight into the experiences of the interviewed IDPs and does not claim to represent the entire population of IDPs in the MAPAP. However, the insights gained from these testimonies can provide valuable information to guide policies and programs aimed at improving the living conditions of IDPs and addressing the displacement situation in a holistic manner.

Graph 1. Evolution of the number of IDPs from Round 1 to Round 4



Graph 2. Variation between Round 1 and Round 4.



Round 1 (August 2022) Round 2 (Nov 2022) Round 3 (March 2023) Round 4 (June 2023)

— IDPs in HCs — IDPs in Sites — # Sites

REASONS WHY IDPs CHOOSE TO MOVE TO SPONTANEOUS SITES INSTEAD OF HOST FAMILIES DURING THEIR INITIAL DISPLACEMENT

This section focuses on the testimonies of IDPs who chose to seek refuge in spontaneous sites when they fled their homes, rather than going to host families. These are the IDPs who went directly to settle in sites during their initial displacement.

Insufficient resources within family members.

Some individuals directly opted for a site, considering that their relatives did not have the necessary resources to accommodate them. For most of them, settling in a site was seen as a temporary situation while they sought means to move to other provinces (departments outside of the MAPAP) in the country.

"The members of my family do not have the necessary resources to accommodate me. As a member of this church, I prefer to stay here until I find assistance to move to the provinces. I never want to return to my area of origin." (A household head settled in a church in the MAPAP)

"As a faithful member of this church, I prefer to stay here. Most of my friends and family live in a small single room, which does not allow for accommodating anyone else." (A household head settled in a church in the MAPAP)

"For us, it's a matter of lack of economic means. Our families wouldn't be able to support us financially." (A household head in a site in the MAPAP)

Sense of solidarity in the site.

Some IDPs prefer life in spontaneous sites due to a sense of solidarity, particularly because the IDPs settled in a site often come from the same locality of origin.

"I am a member of this church, so the best option for me was to come here. When you live with someone, they don't respect you. By coming here, despite our differences, we are forced to stay together until something happens for us." (A household head settled in a church in the MAPAP)

"I don't like staying at someone else's place. As a member of this church, when the conflicts started in our residential area, our pastor decided to welcome us here. During the day, many of us engage in individual tasks, but at night, we all come together to spend the night together." (A household head in a church in the MAPAP)

Geographical proximity to the area of origin.

Some IDPs chose to go to a specific spontaneous site because it was the closest place to their area of origin. These individuals felt that they did not have relatives elsewhere to seek refuge with.

"We chose this site because all our relatives live in this area. We didn't want to move away from our zone." (A household head in a site in the MAPAP)

REASONS WHY IDPs LEAVE HOST FAMILIES TO SETTLE IN SPONTANEOUS SITES

This section presents the testimonies of IDPs who initially sought refuge with host families during their first displacement but later decided to leave them and settle in spontaneous sites.

Economic problems and lack of resources.

Some IDPs left the families where they were accommodated due to a lack of resources on the part of those families to continue hosting them for an extended period.

"Our families didn't have much space or the means to accommodate us for a long time or support us financially. Therefore, we were forced to leave our host family and come to this church." (A displaced household head in a church in the MAPAP)

"I have 5 children, and I sought refuge at my sister's place. It was already very difficult for my sister as she didn't have much space, and she had 3 children whom she could barely feed. I didn't have any money at all. Our children started to argue over food and sometimes over trivial matters. My sister couldn't take it anymore, and neither could I. So, I had to come and live here in this site." (A displaced household head in a site in the MAPAP)

Social cohesion issues.

The testimonies of IDPs highlight several factors related, to some extent, to social cohesion, which prompted them to leave host families and settle in sites. These factors compelled the IDPs to seek more harmonious and supportive environments, despite the challenging conditions in the sites.

"We know that we lead a very difficult life in this site, but at least there will be no one to hurl insults, abuse, and humiliations at us anymore." (A household head settled in a site in the MAPAP)

"I left the host family due to the mistreatment I received from them. Here, this is my church, and I prefer to stay here until I find help. Despite the many problems we face, such as the lack of a place to wash or cook, we are compelled to stay here until God intervenes." (A household head settled in a site in the MAPAP)

"I had to leave the host family because there was no harmony between us. As the Creole proverb says, 'granmoun pa ret kay granmoun' (adults don't stay at other adults' homes). I have a friend who is part of this church and suggested I come here until things improve." (A household head settled in a church in the MAPAP)

"Some of us were staying with host families, but we left them to seek refuge in this school because of conflicts among the children. We lacked the economic means to rent houses. We lost everything." (A household head settled in a school in the MAPAP)

LIVING CONDITIONS IN SITES

This section presents the various testimonies of IDPs regarding their living conditions in the sites where they are settled.

Unsanitary conditions and health difficulties.

IDPs describe precarious living conditions in the sites, marked by sanitation and health problems: absence of latrines, hygiene issues, lack of waste disposal systems, etc. This situation exposes IDPs to increased health risks. Some IDPs have experienced tragic situations, with testimonies of deaths, especially pneumonia among children. Access to medical care remains very limited in spontaneous sites.

"It's a very difficult experience. The sanitation is poor, there are germs, no latrines. We sleep outside, we have fallen ill, and we have seen children die from diseases, especially pneumonia." (A household head displaced in a site in the MAPAP)

Stigmatization and verbal violence.

IDPs face forms of stigmatization from certain members of host communities where their settlement sites are located.

"We endure insults, mistreatment, and verbal assaults." (A household head displaced in a site in the MAPAP)

"We experienced a real hell. Other people accused us of carrying diseases and insulted us, calling us germs and trash. They used the name of our original commune to humiliate us." (A household head who was displaced in a site and later returned to their area of residence)

Uncertainty.

"For me, the experience is similar to going to bed exhausted at 10 PM and waking up at 4 AM to hit the streets without knowing where to go."



Assistance team from the DGPC and IOM in a site in the MAPAP. © IOM, July 2023.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO LIVING CONDITIONS BY IDPs.

This section presents the various proposals put forward by IDPs to improve their deteriorated living conditions after displacement.

Security stability.

"For me, it is necessary to ensure security stability." (A household head displaced in a site in the MAPAP)

"If we had the opportunity to permanently leave this locality, we would do it immediately. With the gangs, we will never be at peace." (A household head displaced in a site in the MAPAP)

Access to livelihood means.

"There should be opportunities created for everyone to earn money and meet their own needs." (A household head displaced in a site in the MAPAP)

"Honestly, I don't have much hope for a change in this area anymore. But maybe if everyone had a job or other means to earn money, things could improve." (A household head displaced in a site)

Conclusion

The various testimonies have shed light on the complex challenges faced by IDPs: unsanitary living conditions, health issues, stigmatization, fear, and insecurity are all realities that impact their physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Furthermore, these testimonies have indicated the reasons why an increasing number of IDPs choose to live in sites rather than with host families, despite the precarious living conditions in these sites.

Several recommendations arise from these testimonies:

- It is crucial to implement measures aimed at improving the quality of services in spontaneous sites, with a focus on improving hygiene and sanitation conditions and ensuring access to healthcare services.
- Assistance to host communities to strengthen their capacity to accommodate IDPs is crucial. Host communities are often the first to provide assistance to displaced individuals, but their resources are very limited. Humanitarian interventions should increasingly include host communities, and community-based interventions that reach both IDPs and the host communities should be strengthened.
- There is an urgent need to enhance social cohesion between IDPs and host communities, as the deteriorating security situation increasingly creates a climate of suspicion and stigmatization towards displaced persons. Maintaining social cohesion is of paramount importance in this context.
- Access to livelihood means emerged as a significant expectation of IDPs. A participatory and inclusive approach involving IDPs in the design of assistance programs should be continued and strengthened. This approach allows for a better understanding of their needs and aspirations and helps define activities that address them.

You can consult all the DTM information products in Haiti via the link below and contact the DTM by email :

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