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**Forced migration of Haitians in Mexico:
Trajectories and gaps in protection - Update 2025**



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JRS Directors

Karen Vanessa Pérez Martínez (JRS Mexico)
Alejandra Castellanos Bretón (JRS LAC)

Systematization

Leonardo Martínez Garzon (JRS LAC)
Juanita Bedoya Palacio (JRS LAC)
Alberto Quiroz Ávila (JRS Mexico)

Audiovisual interviews

Karen Elisa Villalobos Mendoza (JRS Mexico)

Editorial coordination

Jember Javier Pico Castañeda (JRS LAC)

Graphic design and layout

Laura Angelica Buitrago Quintero



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Introduction

This document seeks to update the **findings** published in 2024 on Haitian nationals in situations of forced migration in the Americas. This has been made possible by the implementation of support processes, especially in Mexican territory. Its presentation is structured in four sections: Haitians in the Americas, barriers to access, protection gaps, and identified needs.

The objective of this update is linked to that of the previous publication: to provide elements—from a comprehensive protection approach—to highlight the situation of Haitians moving across the continent, to call on governments, the humanitarian sector, and host communities to learn about and raise awareness of their realities, in order to promote reception and protection processes and actions in the various places through which they transit and settle.

1 Haitians in the Americas

Contexts of violence, rights violations, and lack of protection have been determining factors in the flows of forced migration from Haiti to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. By 2025, approximately 1.3 million people were reported to be internally displaced in Haiti due to gang control of territory;¹ it is estimated that 90% of the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince is controlled by armed groups.² This has led to situations of extreme violence: between April and June of the same year, there were 1,520 extrajudicial executions, more than 620 victims of sexual violence, and an increase in the forced recruitment of children and adolescents, reaching 300 verified cases in 2024.³

Likewise, basic services have collapsed. More than 1,600 schools have closed, and currently only 41% of health centers in the capital are operational.⁴ Furthermore, 3.8 million people lack access to drinking water.⁵

The prolonged situation of vulnerability faced by the Haitian population has made this group the second largest in terms of transit through the Darien jungle. For

1 International Organization for Migration. (2025, July). *Monthly update on the displacement situation in spontaneous sites in Haiti*. *Displacement Tracking Matrix*.

2 Famine Early Warning Systems Network. (2025, September). *Haiti key message update: Despite actions against gang violence, insecurity continues to disrupt food access and availability*.

3 BINUH. (2025). *Quarterly report on the human rights situation in Haiti April - June 2025*. United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.

4 UNICEF. (2025, October). *The polycrisis for children in Haiti: The ripple effect of violence, malnutrition, lost learning and failing essential services*.

5 Ibid.

By October 2024, more than 195,000 people had crossed this route.⁶ Currently, there is a significant change in migration flows to North America, driven by changes in the US government's immigration policies. As a result, by May 2025, Mexico had seen an increase in asylum applications from Haitians, and an increase in north-south transit had been identified, highlighting the complexity and dynamism of migratory movements in the region.

Between January and August 2025, JRS applied its needs and vulnerability assessment tool in **Mexico**, conducting interviews with people in situations of forced human mobility in public spaces, border areas, shelters, and other reception centers in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico City, Tapachula, and Tuxtla Gutiérrez. A total of 384 interviews were conducted, of which 15% (57 people) corresponded to the Haitian population.

It is important to emphasize that this information does not constitute a statistical trend, but rather qualitative input that allows for a better understanding of the experiences and risks faced by Haitians in transit. Each testimony reflects a journey marked by multiple displacements and vulnerabilities.

The findings show that many Haitians do not travel directly from their country of origin: before arriving in Mexico, they have resided in other South American countries. The main reasons for leaving Haiti include the search for better opportunities (48.39%) and structural poverty associated with unemployment (24.19%). Violence also emerges as a determining factor: 65% of those who have suffered violence cite direct threats as the cause of their displacement.

On the route north and within Mexico, those interviewed report serious violations of their human rights:



Although these data cannot be generalized, they are essential for highlighting the complexity of the journey and the multiple forms of violence faced by Haitians on the move. Each story collected provides evidence to strengthen protection and humanitarian response.

⁶ Coordination Team | GIFMM Urabá Darién, 2025. - Darien Steering Group Meeting

⁷ UNHCR (May 2025). *Americas factsheet*.

⁸ IOM. (April 2025). *Migration trends report: Guatemala monthly dashboard on transit migration trends*.

2 Barriers to access

Recognizing that barriers to access refer to obstacles that prevent or limit people's access to existing services, assistance, or information, according to information from JRS response teams, the following barriers to access were identified:

- **Language:** This continues to be one of the main causes preventing Haitians from accessing services and up-to-date information that would enable them to apply for regularization and international protection processes. At service points offering humanitarian response services, professionals in the territory do not speak or understand Creole, which hinders care and support. Therefore, language barriers reduce access to and the quality of protection and psychosocial care.
- **High transportation and regularization costs:** these costs have caused people to become stranded and exposed to risky situations along the route.
- **Restrictive measures on mobility** (Panamanian government): implementation of physical barriers to mobility in the Darién, fines and penalties for traveling in certain places, among other measures.
- **Discrimination and exclusion** of the Haitian population: gaps in access to health care, sanitation, primary health care, and sexual and reproductive education.
- **Barriers to access economic inclusion services, legal, psychosocial, and health support.**

3 Protection gaps⁹

When we talk about protection gaps, according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [Policy](#) on Protection in Humanitarian Action, these are defined as **structural absences or deficiencies** in mechanisms, services, coordination, or policies that **should guarantee rights and security**. In line with the above, the Haitian population recognizes gaps such as:

- **Reduction of UNHCR support to COMAR in Mexico:** Financial cuts caused by changes in the US government's international cooperation policies have had a major impact on the services available to migrants and those in need of international protection, particularly the Haitian population. In Mexico, "a 30-40% reduction in UNHCR's collaboration with COMAR has led to the loss of more than 50 jobs—mainly protection staff—seriously weakening the asylum system." This has left returnees in Haiti without access to protection services.

⁹ Also identified in the Needs Identification Workshop in Darién, conducted by the Jesuit Migrant Network (RJM LAC), the Jesuit Refugee Service - JRS Colombia, the Jesuit Migrant Service - SJM Costa Rica, Fe y Alegría Panama, and the regional office of the Jesuit Refugee Service for Latin America and the Caribbean - JRS LAC.

¹⁰ UNHCR. (2025, July). *On the edge: Overview in the Americas - The devastating impact of aid cuts on people forced to flee*.

¹¹ Ibid.

- **Minimal psychosocial support** for this population, due to language barriers and cultural aspects related to stigma toward mental health services and psychosocial support.
- **Weak coordination** between different humanitarian actors responding to the migration situation in the region; this is significantly affected by funding cuts and the closure of response services.
- **Lack of a differentiated approach**, particularly in terms of care for children, adolescents, and the LGBTIQ+ population.
- **Exacerbation of vulnerability factors** in specific population profiles: women, girls, adolescents, pregnant/breastfeeding women, people with disabilities, or chronic health conditions face greater risks.
- **Significant exposure to abuse and exploitation** of the Haitian population.
- **Insufficient support**: survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation, disappearance, etc., have not received qualified, structured, and systematic support, which can increase risks.

4 Identified needs

JRS Mexico has identified that the conditions of the migratory journey, combined with the precarious nature of the stay in the country, create a scenario of multidimensional needs ranging from the satisfaction of basic requirements to the implementation of strategies aimed at long-term stability and integration.

4.1 Subsistence and Economic Stability

Needs related to subsistence are the most critical. At the national level, **food and housing coverage** is identified as the most complex challenge (31.5%), followed by **economic security**, which includes access to employment and income (25.1%).

With regard to access to **food**, the situation is alarming: 46.84% of those interviewed eat only twice a day, while 31.56% eat only once a day, evidence of **severe food insecurity**.

Regarding access to **employment**, the absence of regular immigration status is the main obstacle to accessing formal employment, forcing people to enter the informal market, where they face labor exploitation, abuse, and lower wages compared to Mexican workers for the same number of hours worked.

4.2 Physical and Mental Health

Health ranks as the third priority need (14.8%). The physical strain of the migration journey and prolonged uncertainty have a significant impact on overall health.



Mental health: 80% of people report emotional distress, mainly associated with migratory grief and a perception of insecurity. In shelters, there is a demand for specialized psychosocial support to mitigate trauma and overcrowding.



Physical Health: Access to public health care is poor. In cities such as Tapachula, there is a critical need for medications for chronic diseases and equipment for diagnostic tests, forcing people to resort to private services, which increases their economic vulnerability.

4. Legal Assistance and Documentation

Immigration regularization is a key need for 12.2% of those interviewed. Procedures before the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) are perceived as excessively long, with waiting times that can exceed three months for an initial interview. This situation creates a legal limbo that restricts access to work, safe mobility, and other basic services.

4.2 Information and Education

There is a widespread demand for clear and reliable information on migration processes and available services to counter rumors and scams spread on digital social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube.

In terms of education, families face significant difficulties in enrolling their children in school due to mandatory fees, the cost of school supplies, and fear of abuse, bullying, and xenophobia, which limits their ability to exercise their right to education.

Conclusion

The forced migration of Haitians constitutes a humanitarian crisis exacerbated by violence, gaps in protection, and structural barriers. This assessment, based on data identified in Mexico, highlights the urgent need for a coordinated response focused on human rights.

JRS's support has contributed to their transformation. Through comprehensive services such as specialized legal advice, psychosocial support, humanitarian assistance, and intercultural spaces for integration, it has helped to strengthen protection, personal agency, and access to rights for Haitians. Every action—from immigration regularization to mental health support—builds paths to stability and dignity.

It is therefore important that governments, humanitarian actors, and communities prioritize comprehensive protection, respond to existing gaps, and work collectively to develop responses that guarantee reception, protection, and possible futures for all people on the move.

Spelantzia

Hope and projection overcoming barriers



Spelantzia lived in Haiti with her family. She was a student and passionate about her country's dance and music. However, she was forced to leave due to the socio-political context and the constant violence to which she was exposed.

Hoping to find a better future for herself and her family, Spelantzia began her journey in the Dominican Republic until she reached the Suchiate River in Tapachula, Chiapas, where she faced a variety of barriers, from language, finding a place to live, new people with whom to share a space, searching for work, as well as attempted kidnappings and persecution.


Spelantzia managed to get in touch with one of the lawyers from the Jesuit Refugee Service Mexico, and from there, she began her comprehensive support process. She managed to obtain her permanent residence visa and currently volunteers at the JRS in Tapachula, translating for people who only speak French or Creole, with the aim of helping them continue their own processes and find new opportunities like hers.



See interview with Spelantzia

Nelson

Teaching Spanish and building community

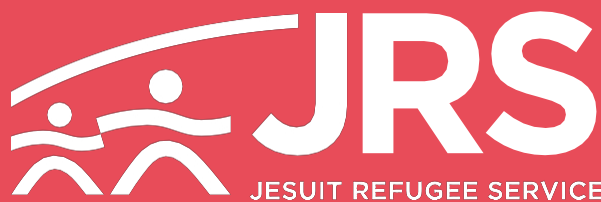


Nelson's mother and father were born in Haiti. Although he was born in the Dominican Republic, he spent his life in his parents' country. Nelson was a student and truck driver; in his free time, he loved to play softball.

He decided to leave his country because of the socio-political context he was experiencing. It was through a cousin who had already left Haiti some time ago that he began to find out how to leave. He left the Dominican Republic and, after crossing six countries, managed to reach Tapachula, Chiapas.

Nelson speaks Spanish and Creole, which allowed him to reach a place where he can maintain hope. People who migrate from Haiti to Mexico face a series of obstacles, one of the most difficult being language. For this reason, Nelson teaches Spanish classes at the "Espacio Intercultural" in Tapachula. Although he remains in Tapachula because he has not been able to obtain his documentation, teaching Spanish to Haitians has motivated him to continue trying to find a better future for himself, his family, and his community.

 [Watch Nelson's interview](#)



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