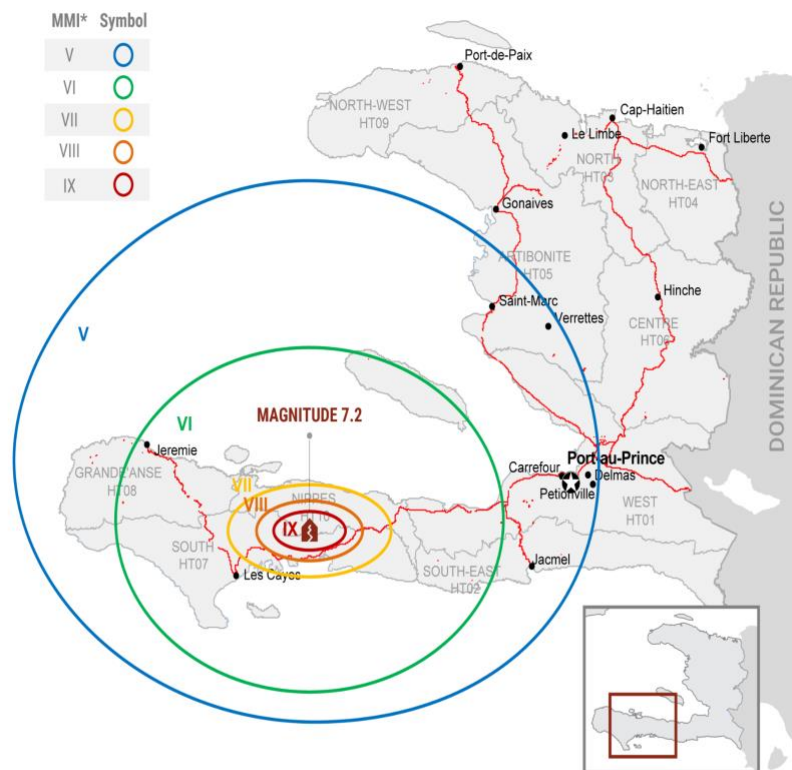


HIGHLIGHTS

- A 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck southwestern Haiti at 8:30am local time at a depth of around 10km. The epicentre was recorded around 12km northeast of Saint-Louis-du-Sud, about 125km west of the capital Port-au-Prince.
- Haiti's Civil Protection reports at least 304 deaths and 1,800 injured so far, figures which are expected to rise. Initial reports indicate more than 700 collapsed buildings, including hospitals and schools, at least 3,778 homes destroyed and significant damages to infrastructure and roads.
- Severe humanitarian access constraints and fragile security situation greatly complicate the humanitarian response in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Prime Minister Ariel Henry declared a one-month national state of emergency. Government has requested specific international assistance for urban search-and-rescue, stating that additional support will not be requested until the extent of damages is known.
- USAID is deploying a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to support damage and needs assessments in coordination with the Government and humanitarian partners.
- Government and UN partners are working closely to conduct post-impact damage and needs assessments and to activate rapid response mechanisms.
- Fast-approaching Tropical Storm Grace is expected to reach Haiti between 16 and 17 August, potentially exposing an already vulnerable population to a double impact in a matter of days.



*Modified Mercalli Intensity (MMI) scale

The administrative boundary Common Operational Datasets used in this map are available from HDX (www.humdata.org). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Creation date: 14 August 2021 | Boundary source: Centre National de l'Information Géo-Spatiale (CNIIGS) | MMI Sources: Based on USGS Feedback: bbatista@un.org | oche-fis-data@un.org | www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int

SITUATION OVERVIEW

At 8:30am (GMT-4) on 14 August, a strong, shallow earthquake rocked southwestern Haiti just 12km northeast of Saint-Louis du Sud, about 125 kilometers west of the capital Port-au-Prince. The 7.2-magnitude quake, which was 10km deep, toppled buildings and homes and damaged infrastructure and roads, cutting off access to some roads in the southwest, such as national road 7 (RN#7) which connects Les Cayes and Jeremie, and forcing many to flee their homes in fear that they may collapse.

While preliminary assessments are still in their very early stages, the Haitian Civil Protection General Directorate (DGPC) reports more than 700 collapsed buildings, including hospitals, schools and churches, and 2,410 destroyed homes in the department of Nippes and 1,368 in Grand'Anse, forcing at least 470 people to seek refuge in shelters, with thousands more thought to be displaced. DGPC also reports at least 304 dead and around 1,800 more injured, figures likely to increase significantly in the coming hours and days as more are still missing. Despite its strength and depth, the quake is likely less catastrophic than that of 2010, the worst disaster in the country's history, which left more than 300,000 people dead and 1.5 million others injured.

The Sud, Grand'Anse and Nippes departments, particularly the cities of Les Cayes, Jeremie and Anse à Veaux, were hardest hit, suffering extensive damage and destruction to buildings and homes, while in Petit-Trou-de-Nippes downed phone lines have left the city out of contact. In Port-au-Prince, the earthquake was strongly felt but no major damages have been reported so far. The US Tsunami Warning System had issued a tsunami warning for the region but discontinued it shortly thereafter. Still, flood waters spilled into the streets of Les Cayes, sparking widespread panic that led some people in coastal areas to flee toward the mountains in fear of a possible tsunami.

Additionally, the earthquake generated a series of aftershocks, between magnitude 4.2 and 5.2 all at depths around 10km, creating significant concerns as buildings and infrastructure already compromised by the initial quake are now more vulnerable to even weak aftershocks. In addition, minor floods and landslides have been reported in affected areas. The earthquake struck as Tropical Storm Grace is expected to reach Haiti between 16 and 17 August, exposing an already vulnerable population to tropical storm-force winds and heavy rain that could trigger life-threatening flash floods and landslides.

The quake could not have come at worst time for Haiti, which is still reeling from the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse on 7 July and escalating gang violence which has resulted in the internal displacement of around 19,000 people in the country's southern peninsula, greatly worsening an already precarious humanitarian situation, with some 4.4 million in need of humanitarian assistance prior to the quake.

While a recent surge in COVID-19 cases has tapered off, the possible displacement of thousands of people has created ripe conditions for a spike in COVID-19 infections, potentially overwhelming an already weak and overstretched health system that will also have to provide assistance to those injured by the earthquake. Early reports indicate that local hospitals near the epicenter are already overwhelmed with wounded people, especially in Les Cayes and Jeremie, with the Red Cross and hospitals in unaffected areas providing surge assistance, while Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) prepares to receive patients at Tabarre Hospital in Port-au-Prince.

Significant humanitarian access constraints, a fragile security situation and a fast-approaching tropical storm add an extra layer of complexity to humanitarian response efforts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The southern peninsula, a hotspot for gang-related violence, has been virtually unreachable for the past two months due to road blockages and security concerns, while humanitarian personnel have been the targets of repeated attacks, including a targeted attack on an MSF Belgium emergency health centre in late June. All of these factors combined will create significant logistics challenges in reaching the most affected areas. For more on the latest political and security developments in Haiti, see [OCHA Haiti's SitRep No. 5](#).

Prime Minister Ariel Henry has declared a one-month nationwide state of emergency, stating that international assistance will not be requested until the extent of damages is known. Several governments in the region have already offered to support national response efforts. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) has been fully activated and search-and-rescue operations are ongoing with support from international partners. Preliminary assessments are being carried out under the leadership of national authorities, but it will likely take days, if not weeks, to fully assess the scale of damages and humanitarian needs.

RESPONSE

The National Centre for Emergency Operations (COUN) has been activated and coordination meetings are being held with all key stakeholders, including an emergency meeting with the Director of Civil Protection and humanitarian partners convened by Prime Minister Ariel Henry. OCHA Regional Office (ROLAC) convened a meeting of the Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) to facilitate coordination and information sharing among humanitarian partners at the regional level.

Diplomatic missions and international surge support mechanisms, including Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and UN Disaster Coordination and Assessment (UNDAC) teams, remain on standby to provide assessment, coordination and search-and-rescue assistance. At the request of the Government, on 14 August, a USAR team from the US arrived in Haiti to be deployed in Les Cayes. Additionally, USAID announced the deployment of a DART to support damage and needs assessments in coordination with the Government and humanitarian partners.

With support from the World Food Programme (WFP), a UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) reconnaissance mission has been carried out with representatives of the Government and humanitarian partners in the affected areas. Initial findings indicate less significant damages than initially expected. However, a more complete assessment will be required to determine the full extent of the earthquake's impact. As part of the immediate humanitarian response, two UNHAS flights are preparing for the delivery of supplies and medical staff.

Mobilization of national and international partners for the coordination of the emergency response is in progress, including government deployment of volunteers for rapid response teams to conduct search-and-rescue activities and clear collapsed buildings and homes. Government authorities are monitoring the situation and continue public information operations through traditional media and social media.

The most urgent humanitarian needs are expected to be linked to the provision of medical assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene. The emergency health response is already underway, including the installation of tents at the OFATMA Hospital in Les Cayes. UNICEF will send 3 health emergency kits to the 2 hospitals in Les Cayes and 1 in Jeremie, covering around 30,000 people.

GAPS & CHALLENGES

Access to the southern region, where some of the most affected areas are located, will be a challenge owing to existing restrictions due to the presence of gangs. Violence and insecurity have been on the rise in recent months, hindering the capacity of humanitarian actors to operate normally and reach affected populations.

Road blockages along national road number 2 (RN#2) continue to present logistics challenges for humanitarian partners. In the aftermath of the earthquake, damage to infrastructure and roads could further limit access by land to affected areas. The national road 7 (RN#7), connecting Les Cayes and Jeremie, has been cut off at Glace River due to a landslide caused by the earthquake. Authorities are currently working to remove debris and restore traffic.

Hospitals are reportedly overwhelmed, posing challenges for the treatment of injured people. The hospital in Les Cayes is overcrowded, while the hospital in Jeremie has suffered partial damages. As the humanitarian situation worsens, UN agencies and humanitarian partners find themselves already stretched from responding to multiple crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, internal displacement due to gang-related violence and growing food insecurity, leaving them strapped for resources to effectively respond to the earthquake and a potential tropical storm impact expected in the coming days.

The earthquake has exposed an already vulnerable population to yet another crisis they lack the capacity to recover from, generating new humanitarian needs on top of those born out of simultaneously unfolding emergencies. Humanitarian partners already lack sufficient resources to respond to the ongoing IDP crisis triggered by escalating gang violence in Port-au-Prince. As Tropical Storm Grace races toward La Hispaniola, affected populations brace for the brunt of potential triple emergency whose required response could potentially stretch humanitarian organizations to the brink. As such, additional human and financial resources are urgently needed to cope with an increasingly more dire and complex humanitarian situation on the ground.

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