

Haiti

The economy and prospects for job growth

June 2026

Seven years of contraction: shrinking output, collapsing formal jobs

Real GDP has fallen every year since 2019, and the largest formal-employment sector has more than halved

Real GDP, index (FY2018 = 100)

Formal apparel / garment jobs (thousands)

Economy ~16% smaller than 2018. Contraction every year FY2019-FY2025 (-4.2% in 2024, -2.7% in 2025); IMF projects further decline in 2026.

From ~60,000 (2021) to ~24,000 (Nov 2025). About -60%. Haiti's largest formal-sector employer, hit by insecurity and shrinking access to the capital.

The backdrop: gangs control ~85% of Port-au-Prince, unemployment is 15.1% with over 80% of work informal, and 5.7M people face acute food insecurity. Jobs are both the goal and the route out.

As security improves: from stabilization to durable growth

If the Gang Suppression Force pushes gangs out of Port-au-Prince and its environs, what must follow

7 years

of unbroken GDP contraction (since FY2019)

~85%

of Port-au-Prince under gang control

5.7M

facing acute food insecurity (IPC 3+)

15.1%

unemployment; >80% informal

Improved security is necessary but not sufficient. Stabilize first, but the goal is durable growth: short-term jobs are the bridge to rebuilding the capital base, raising productivity and protecting competitiveness.

1 Consolidate security

Hold recovered zones with a sustained police and justice presence, and a credible disarmament and diversion path for ex-gang youth. Clear roads and reopen the port. Without a durable hold, gains reverse and no firm will hire or invest.

2 Income & services now

Cash-for-work at scale, plus restoration of water, power, waste, schools and clinics; reopen banks and markets. Income in households within weeks restores demand, dignity and a personal stake in stability.

3 Reopen commerce

Restart the Port-au-Prince port, customs and trucking; secure the Artibonite and Cap-Haitien corridors and the fuel supply; restore the payments system so goods, firms and workers can move again.

4 Rebuild capital & productivity

The destination, not an afterthought: firms lost ~40% of assets and investment fell ~25%. Restore private investment, raise productivity, and renew trade preferences (HOPE/HELP) to keep Haiti competitive and growing.

Short term: absorb youth fast, and rebuild the food supply

Immediate, labor-intensive work that diverts youth from gangs and restores food, buying time for the longer-term rebuild

Public works / cash-for-work

Fastest, largest low-skill absorption. Needs cleared zones, a sub-market wage, fast disbursement.

Construction & repair

Housing, schools, clinics, markets. Needs a public reconstruction pipeline and secured sites.

Agriculture & agro-processing

Biggest rural employer and the fastest route to more food. Needs inputs, irrigation, road access to markets.

Garment / light assembly

Semi-skilled youth, mostly women. Needs secured parks (SONAPI), reliable power, HOPE/HELP renewal.

Acute food insecurity, IPC 3+ (millions)

From 1.3M (2017) to 5.7M (2025), about half the population, as gangs blocked roads and seized farmland and cereal output kept falling.

Food quick wins: input and irrigation support, restore market access, protect the planting seasons, and pair with cash transfers to bridge the lean season.

From jobs to growth: capital, productivity, competitiveness

Short-term work buys time; lasting growth needs investment, higher productivity, and protected market access

ASSETS TO BUILD ON

Young workforce: over half under 25; >1M micro and small firms.

Competitive wages: among the lowest-cost apparel producers in the Americas.

Location & diaspora: proximity to major markets; remittances around 19% of GDP.

Agriculture: high-value crops (cacao, vetiver, mango, coffee) and rice import-substitution.

WHAT MUST BE REBUILT

Capital base: surviving firms lost around 40% of assets; investment down around 25% since 2021 (lost output since 2018 approximately 39% of GDP).

Productivity: GDP per capita down >12% since 2010; farming gets <1% of credit yet employs half the workforce.

Competitiveness: renew trade preferences (HOPE/HELP, lapsed 2025), fix energy and logistics, and build skills.

GROWTH-READY WHEN SECURITY HOLDS

Apparel, agriculture and agro-processing, construction, logistics, and the northern corridor (Caracol, CODEVI). Targeted investment pays even before nationwide security, yields have already tripled in the north.

Reforms and partners: what unlocks jobs, and what it will take from abroad

Priority reforms before a legitimate government, and the external support to initiate and sustain recovery

REFORMS & CAPACITY (EVEN BEFORE ELECTIONS)

Fiscal: rebuild domestic revenue (customs/DGI) and transparent budgeting; phase fuel subsidies into targeted transfers.

Rule of law: functioning justice, property and contract enforcement, anti-corruption, central-bank independence.

Capacity that matters most: customs and port administration, public investment management (MEF), the central bank (BRH), and basic service delivery.

US, PARTNERS & LATIN AMERICA

US and partners: sustained security financing (GSF), budget and balance-of-payments support, HOPE/HELP renewal, guarantees and de-risking for private investment, humanitarian and diaspora channels.

Mobilizing Latin America (Examples): scale co-financing; potential for CARICOM regional labour mobility and trade; technical and agricultural cooperation with Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Chile; deepen the Dominican Republic trade and border relationship.

Through-line: security enables income; income and services build stability; investment, productivity and reform turn stability into durable growth and jobs.