



# AYITI INTEL | ONE-STOP INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

February 12, 2026

*Intelligence for Haiti's Democratic Transition*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNICEF reported on February 12 that child recruitment by armed groups tripled in 2025, with minors now comprising 30 to 50 percent of gang membership and some recruits as young as age nine. This development transforms Haiti's security crisis into a child protection emergency requiring immediate programmatic response and altered rules of engagement for incoming security forces. Simultaneously, China is actively courting Haiti with financial incentives to break its 70-year diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, introducing great-power competition into what was previously treated as a regional stability challenge. Prime Minister Fils-Aime's governance consolidation has entered a steady state with no new decrees in this cycle, while the gourde remains stable and the 2026 humanitarian response plan remains funded at less than four percent of need.



## QUICK SUMMARY FOR STAKEHOLDERS

UNICEF confirms child recruitment tripled in 2025 with 30 to 50 percent of armed group members now minors and some as young as age nine.

China is offering Haiti financial incentives to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan in a direct challenge to US influence.

Prime Minister Fils-Aime issued no new governance decrees in this 24-hour cycle following initial consolidation burst after CPT dissolution.

Gourde remains stable at 131.056 per USD with less than one percent annual depreciation despite political transition.

Humanitarian funding remains below four percent of 2026 appeal with UNICEF requesting 30 million USD for child protection programming.

### DEVELOPMENT 1: UNICEF Child Recruitment Crisis Reaches Emergency Threshold

UNICEF released a comprehensive report on February 12 coinciding with Red Hand Day that documents a 200 percent surge in child recruitment by armed groups during 2025. The agency estimates that minors now constitute between 30 and 50 percent of total gang membership, with verified cases of recruitment at age nine representing the youngest cohort on record. This tripling of recruitment rates builds on a 70 percent increase already recorded in 2024, indicating accelerating exploitation of children within Haiti's armed group structure. UNICEF has verified and provided support to more than 500 children since January 2024 through its Handover Protocol, but the scale of the crisis far exceeds current programmatic capacity.

The recruitment patterns documented by UNICEF reveal systematic exploitation with boys serving as scouts, ammunition transporters, and kidnapping supervisors while girls endure sexual violence and forced domestic labor including cooking and laundry duties. Informal reporting indicates that armed groups are drugging children to create dependency, while the primary drivers remain poverty

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affecting more than 60 percent of Haiti's 12 million population who survive on less than four USD per day, family separation due to displacement, direct threats, and survival-seeking behavior among displaced populations. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell stated that children's rights are non-negotiable and that every child recruited or exploited by armed factions needs release and comprehensive support to heal, resume education, and rebuild futures.

The operational implications for security force deployment are severe. With 30 to 50 percent of armed group members being minors, military and police engagements increasingly risk child casualties requiring strict adherence to international humanitarian law. UNICEF Haiti Representative Meritxell Relano Arana expressed optimism that Prime Minister Fils-Aime and current officials demonstrate dedication to child release and reintegration, suggesting positive political will signals from the new governance structure. However, the reintegration challenge remains acute for older teenagers who have spent five or more years with armed groups and are unlikely to return to school, requiring instead apprenticeships and vocational training pathways. The combination of 1.4 million displaced persons with more than 50 percent being children creates a massive recruitment pool that armed groups continue to exploit.



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Haiti ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in 2014 prohibiting recruitment of persons under age 18 into armed forces or armed groups. The current crisis represents the most severe documented child recruitment emergency in Haitian history with no historical parallel for the scale and speed of the 2025 surge.

### TALKING POINTS

Child recruitment tripled in 2025 with 30 to 50 percent of armed group members now minors including recruits as young as age nine.

UNICEF needs 30 million USD to assist every child in need through release, reintegration, education, and trauma support programming.

Armed groups use boys as scouts and ammunition carriers while subjecting girls to sexual violence and forced domestic labor.

Political will signal from Prime Minister Fils-Aime on child protection represents potential governance credibility opportunity if backed by action.

Reintegration programs must address older teenagers requiring vocational training rather than return to school after years with armed groups.

International humanitarian law considerations must inform GSF operational rules of engagement given high percentage of child combatants.

## RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

International donors should announce immediate funding commitments to UNICEF's 30 million USD child protection appeal within 48 to 72 hours.

GSF leadership must revise operational planning to incorporate child-protection-informed rules of engagement before deployment begins.

Organizations operating in conflict zones should update child protection protocols to reflect 30 to 50 percent child membership data.

UNICEF's PREJEUNES reintegration program requires urgent funding for apprenticeship and vocational training pathways for older teenagers.

Humanitarian agencies should coordinate on drugging prevention and dependency treatment protocols for recruited children.

Media organizations covering security operations should adopt reporting guidelines acknowledging child combatant presence to avoid glorifying violence.



## CONFIDENCE



**High confidence based on official institutional reporting.**

### DEVELOPMENT 2: China Actively Courting Haiti to Break Taiwan Diplomatic Ties

Caribbean Security Group CEO Austin Holmes testified before the US Senate on February 10 that China is offering Haiti financial incentives to break its 70-year diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, transforming Haiti's governance crisis into a flashpoint for great-power competition. Haiti is one of Taiwan's 12 remaining diplomatic allies globally, and Beijing has conducted a seven-year charm offensive specifically targeting Haiti with offers of financial assistance and infrastructure financing in exchange for diplomatic recognition switch. The testimony indicates that 2026 marks the 70th anniversary of Haiti-Taiwan relations, creating symbolic significance for potential diplomatic realignment. Taiwan Plus reached out to Haiti's embassy and Taiwan's foreign ministry for comment but received no response, suggesting sensitivity around the diplomatic maneuvering.

The strategic implications of a potential diplomatic switch are profound for US interests. China gaining a foothold in Haiti would reduce Taiwan's diplomatic allies from 12 to 11 while establishing Chinese presence 90 miles from Cuba and 600 miles from the US mainland. The timing coincides with the Trump Administration's aggressive posture toward Haiti including warship deployment through Operation Southern Spear, sanctions, and strong diplomatic backing of Prime Minister Filis-Aime, suggesting that Washington's engagement is partly driven by awareness of Chinese

competitive positioning. A diplomatic switch would also offer Haiti an alternative patron with potentially fewer governance conditionalities than the US, creating leverage for Haitian leaders in negotiations with Western partners.

Taiwan has played a significant role in Haiti through development assistance programs, but Beijing's financial offers may prove attractive to a government facing severe fiscal constraints with a budget 30 percent dependent on external financing. The absence of any public response from Haiti's government, Taiwan's foreign ministry, or Haiti's embassy following the Senate testimony suggests that diplomatic discussions may be occurring through confidential channels. The geopolitical competition transforms what was previously treated as a regional stability challenge into a domain where great-power interests directly intersect with Haiti's democratic transition, security stabilization, and economic reconstruction pathways.



## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Haiti and Taiwan established diplomatic relations in 1956, making Haiti one of Taiwan's longest-standing diplomatic allies. The relationship has survived multiple Haitian government transitions including the Duvalier dictatorships, the 1991 coup, the 2004 intervention, and the 2010 earthquake, but now faces its most serious challenge from Chinese competitive diplomacy.

## **TALKING POINTS**

China offering Haiti financial incentives to break 70-year Taiwan diplomatic relationship in direct challenge to US regional influence.

Haiti is one of Taiwan's 12 remaining diplomatic allies globally with 2026 marking 70th anniversary of bilateral relations.

Beijing's seven-year charm offensive targets Haiti with infrastructure financing and development assistance offers.

Potential diplomatic switch would give China strategic foothold 90 miles from Cuba and 600 miles from US mainland.

Trump Administration's aggressive posture including warships may be partly driven by awareness of Chinese competitive positioning.

Taiwan has provided significant development assistance but China can offer scale of financing that Taiwan cannot match.

## **RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

US State Department should engage Prime Minister Fils-Aime directly on Taiwan relationship and present competitive offer to Chinese incentives.

Taiwan's foreign ministry should accelerate development assistance announcements to demonstrate tangible value of continued relationship.

International organizations should assess whether Chinese engagement offers alternative financing pathway for humanitarian response and infrastructure.

Private sector stakeholders should monitor potential reconfiguration of trade relationships and aid flows if diplomatic switch occurs.

Regional security analysts should evaluate implications of Chinese presence in Haiti for Caribbean security architecture.

Congressional oversight committees should request classified briefing on extent of Chinese diplomatic engagement and US counter-strategy.



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### DEVELOPMENT 3: Fils-Aime Governance Enters Steady State After Initial Consolidation Burst

Prime Minister Fils-Aime issued no new governance decrees or cabinet appointments during this 24-hour cycle, indicating that his administration has entered a steady operational state following the initial burst of activity immediately after the February 7 CPT dissolution. The first-week governance actions are now consolidated and include the executive power decree establishing single-head executive structure, removal of Economy Minister Alfred Metellus with Fils-Aime taking the portfolio ad interim, appointment of provisional municipal commissions for Port-au-Prince, Petion-Ville, and Gressier, and presentation of tourism sector priorities by Minister Dessources on February 10. The absence of additional governance moves suggests cautious consolidation rather than dramatic expansion of executive authority.

The single-head executive structure described as executive monocephale has no constitutional precedent in Haiti's 1987 Constitution, which envisions shared executive power between a president and prime minister rather than a prime minister as sole executive authority. This constitutional ambiguity creates potential vulnerability if political opposition coalesces around a unilateral governance narrative, particularly given warnings from the KTA collective against concentration of power. Fils-Aime's direct control of the Economy and Finance portfolio centralizes all fiscal decisions through the Prime Minister's office, providing operational efficiency but also political risk if economic conditions deteriorate or budget execution faces challenges.

The international consensus behind Fils-Aime remains intact with continued support from the United

States, France, Canada, OAS, BINUH, CARICOM, and the Dominican Republic. No new bilateral or multilateral statements were issued in this cycle, suggesting that the diplomatic architecture has stabilized and actors are monitoring Fils-Aime's governance performance before next engagement. The rival College Presidentiel issued no new communique or public statement during this cycle and has not published CPR-002, indicating continued institutional weakness with zero international recognition. UNICEF's positive signal regarding political will on child protection provides Fils-Aime a potential credibility opportunity if he takes visible action on child demobilization and reintegration programming.



## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Haiti's 1987 Constitution established a semi-presidential system with executive power shared between an elected president and appointed prime minister to prevent return to dictatorship. The current single-head executive structure under Fils-Aime represents an unprecedented constitutional adaptation justified by the absence of an elected president during the transition period.

## **TALKING POINTS**

Prime Minister Fils-Aime issued no new governance decrees in this 24-hour cycle after initial consolidation burst following CPT dissolution.

Single-head executive structure has no constitutional precedent and creates potential vulnerability to unilateral governance criticism.

International consensus behind Fils-Aime remains intact with no new statements suggesting diplomatic architecture has stabilized.

Direct control of Economy and Finance portfolio centralizes fiscal decisions but creates political risk if economic conditions deteriorate.

UNICEF's positive political will signal on child protection offers governance credibility opportunity if backed by visible action.

College Presidentiel issued no new communique and has not published CPR-002 indicating continued institutional weakness.

## **RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

Fils-Aime should convene consultative forum or dialogue structure within next seven days to address unilateral governance concerns.

Cabinet reshuffle or broader governance appointments would signal inclusive approach and reduce concentration of power narrative.

Visible action on child demobilization such as policy announcement or UNICEF partnership would capitalize on political will signal.

Economy and Finance portfolio should publish quarterly fiscal execution report to demonstrate transparency under centralized control.

Political actors should assess whether to engage with Fils-Aime governance structure or maintain distance pending electoral calendar clarity.

International partners should request governance roadmap with specific milestones for consultative mechanisms and power-sharing arrangements.



## CONFIDENCE



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#### DEVELOPMENT 4: Humanitarian Funding Collapse Continues with Appeal Below Four Percent

The 2026 humanitarian response plan for Haiti remains funded at less than four percent of total need as of early February 2026, representing a near-total funding collapse that renders the humanitarian system effectively non-functional at current resource levels. UN News published a feature story on February 5 titled Keeping Hope Alive for Younger Generations Despite Funding Collapse noting that without stronger financial support and security improvements millions of Haitians risk sinking into even more desperate conditions. The World Bank released a report on February 12 highlighting that human capital deficits could cost Haiti up to 51 percent of future revenues, with inequalities beginning before school age through nutrition and early childhood development failures that are compounding under current crisis conditions.

The composite humanitarian dashboard presents catastrophic baseline conditions including 6 million people in need, 1.4 million displaced with more than 50 percent being children, 8,000 killed in 2025, 5.7 million food insecure representing 51 percent of the population, and 2.1 million facing emergency hunger at IPC Phase 4. UNICEF's 30 million USD child protection appeal represents only one slice of total humanitarian need, while WFP faces a 44 million USD funding gap through April 2026 for food assistance programming. The IRC's February 11 press release emphasized the circular trap facing forcibly returned Haitians, with 270,214 returns in 2025 including nearly 20 percent who were already internally displaced before leaving Haiti and now arrive with nowhere to go and minimal reintegration funding.

The combination of security crisis, political transition, and funding collapse creates reinforcing negative dynamics. Security failure drives humanitarian collapse by displacing populations and disrupting service delivery, humanitarian collapse creates recruitment pools for armed groups through poverty and family separation, and funding inadequacy prevents organizations from scaling

protection and assistance programs that could interrupt these cycles. The World Bank assessment that human capital deficits will cost up to 51 percent of future revenues indicates that Haiti's crisis is not merely a security problem but a generational development catastrophe that will compound over decades without massive intervention. Organizations planning multi-year programming face strategic decisions about whether to continue operating at current funding levels or suspend operations until adequate resources become available.



## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Haiti's humanitarian funding has declined progressively since the 2010 earthquake which generated unprecedented international response. The current below four percent funding rate for the 2026 appeal represents the lowest humanitarian financing level in modern Haitian history, even lower than pre-earthquake baseline conditions when chronic underfunding was already a systemic challenge.

## **TALKING POINTS**

2026 humanitarian response plan funded at less than four percent of total need representing near-total funding collapse.

World Bank warns human capital deficits could cost Haiti up to 51 percent of future revenues from nutrition and education failures.

UNICEF needs 30 million USD for child protection while WFP faces 44 million USD gap through April 2026 for food assistance.

270,214 Haitians forcibly returned in 2025 with nearly 20 percent already internally displaced before leaving and minimal reintegration funding.

Composite dashboard shows 6 million in need, 1.4 million displaced, 5.7 million food insecure, and 8,000 killed in 2025.

Funding collapse creates reinforcing negative dynamics where security failure drives humanitarian crisis which fuels armed group recruitment.

## **RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

Major donors should announce comprehensive funding commitments in Q1 2026 to prevent complete humanitarian system collapse.

UNICEF and WFP should receive priority funding given child protection emergency and food security crisis requiring immediate response.

Organizations planning multi-year programming should assess operational sustainability at current funding levels or suspend operations.

Reintegration programming for forcibly returned Haitians requires dedicated funding stream separate from general humanitarian appeal.

World Bank should work with Government of Haiti on human capital investment strategy addressing nutrition and early childhood development.

International financial institutions should explore emergency budget support to Government of Haiti for basic service delivery maintenance.



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## WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

### NEXT 24 TO 48 HOURS

UNICEF child recruitment report international response with potential major donor funding announcements from US, EU, or Canada addressing 30 million USD appeal and broader child protection programming needs.

Fils-Aime governance signals including potential consultative forum announcement, cabinet appointments, or visible action on child demobilization to address unilateral governance concerns and capitalize on UNICEF political will assessment.

Delmas demolition aftermath with monitoring for business community reaction, protests, or political criticism following February 11 operations against illegal structures on public sidewalks.

### THIS WEEK

China-Taiwan diplomatic maneuvering with potential government of Haiti response to Holmes Senate testimony or Taiwan foreign ministry public statement defending bilateral relationship and development assistance record.

GSF advance team activity as Special Representative Christofides expected to formalize Haiti presence this month ahead of April deployment window with operational planning incorporating child protection considerations.

Humanitarian funding pledges at international donor conferences or bilateral commitments given 2026 appeal below four percent funding and multiple agency emergency appeals including UNICEF and WFP.

## STRATEGIC HORIZON

Security operations under intensify directive with potential PNH or GSF advance operations in Artibonite where Gran Grif maintains significant territorial control and recruiting infrastructure.

ULCC asset declaration compliance with approximately 25 days remaining on 30-day deadline for former CPT members to submit financial disclosure documents.

Electoral calendar viability assessment as May 19 campaign start date approaches with security preconditions unmet and CEP silent on party registration or compliance procedures.

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