EU SEE

SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Haiti

Country Focus Report

2025

Credit: Bailey Torres

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A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

Reporting period covered: November 2024-October 2025

Brief Overview of the Country Context

Haitian civil society operates in a deeply constrained environment shaped by overlapping political, security, humanitarian, economic, and environmental crises that have intensified over the past decade. The crisis has deepened since early 2024, when armed gangs forced then prime minister Ariel Henry to resign and went on to retain control over much of the capital, Port-au-Prince. Politically, Haiti remains trapped in a prolonged and fragile transitional governance process, marked by the erosion of constitutional order, weak legitimacy of governing authorities, and the absence of stable, accountable institutions. This enduring institutional vacuum has limited effective policymaking, delayed elections, and weakened the rule of law, directly affecting civic participation and state–society relations. Elections were last held in October 2016, and the last elected president, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated in July 2021. However, in December, the country's Provisional Electoral Council announced a timetable for the long-delayed national elections, scheduling the first round for August 2026.

The security situation has deteriorated dramatically with the expansion and consolidation of armed gangs, which now exert de facto control over large urban and peri-urban areas, including key economic and transport corridors. Gangs have targeted civilians through killings, kidnappings, rape, and extortion, while also attacking state symbols, hospitals, schools, media houses, and cultural institutions. The near-collapse of the police and security forces—despite international support—has left the state largely unable to guarantee public safety, enforce the law, or ensure freedom of movement, severely constraining civil society's capacity to operate, mobilise, and deliver services. These dynamics have produced an acute humanitarian crisis, with over 8,100 killings documented nationwide between January and October 2025 and more than 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) nationwide. Displacement, widespread poverty, and restricted access to basic services have increased humanitarian needs while simultaneously limiting the reach of local civil society actors, particularly community-based organisations operating in high-risk areas.

Economically, Haiti has experienced six consecutive years of negative or stagnant growth, compounded by the destruction of productive infrastructure, market disruptions caused by insecurity, and declining investor confidence. The collapse of livelihoods has intensified socio-economic grievances and reduced domestic funding and sustainability for civil society

organisations, increasing dependence on external actors. Environmental vulnerability further compounds this context. Haiti remains highly exposed to natural disasters, while the physical degradation of Port-au-Prince—particularly the city centre—has accelerated due to violence, abandonment, and lack of reconstruction, with the legacy of the 2010 earthquake still visible in unresolved displacement and infrastructure deficits.

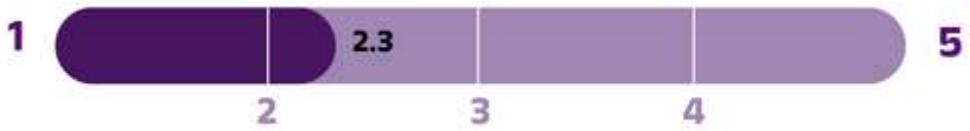
Within this restrictive environment, Haitian civil society has demonstrated heightened awareness of its role as a driver of democratic renewal, social cohesion, and accountability. It has articulated a vision of change centred on restoring constitutional order, promoting inclusive governance, and advancing economic recovery and national reconstruction across all ten departments and the diaspora. However, the ability of civil society to influence policy, mobilise communities, and act as a democratic counterweight remains heavily contingent on an enabling environment increasingly shaped by insecurity, emergency governance, and structural exclusion.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: [1]



Although Haiti's Constitution provides robust guarantees for freedom of association, assembly, and expression, these rights have progressively lost practical meaning for much of civil society amid extreme insecurity, territorial fragmentation, and the effective collapse of state authority. Across 2024–2025, armed gang violence, prolonged states of emergency, and institutional incapacity have converged to produce a civic space that is not only repressed but increasingly unequal. Civil society actors working with or led by women, persons with disabilities, older persons, religious minorities, journalists, and residents of gang-controlled or rural areas face disproportionately high risks, structural exclusion, and barriers to participation compared to more resourced or internationally connected organisations. The cumulative effect is a mutually reinforcing erosion of association, assembly, and expression, where violence and impunity—rather than law—are the primary determinants of who can organise, mobilise, and speak. This context has profoundly weakened civil society's capacity to act as a democratic counterweight, deliver services, and represent diverse lived experiences, leaving many communities isolated, under-represented, and excluded from public life.

1.1 | Freedom of Association

Freedom of association is constitutionally guaranteed under Articles 31 and 31.1 of the 1987 Haitian Constitution, which protect the right to form associations and participate in unions and civic organisations without prior authorisation. In practice, however, civil society organisations

[1] *This is a rebased score derived from the CIVICUS Monitor rating published in December 2025.*

(CSOs), religious groups, and professional associations operate in an environment deeply compromised by widespread insecurity and the collapse of state authority. CSOs led by or serving women, older persons, persons with disabilities, faith-based minorities, and grassroots journalists face heightened barriers compared to better-resourced or internationally connected actors.

In 2025, armed gangs continued to target community-based and faith-linked associations directly. A notable precursor was the December 2024 Wharf Jérémie massacre in Cité Soleil—where at least 207 people, primarily elderly Voodoo practitioners, were killed. The targeting of religious associations rooted in Afro-descendant and marginalised spiritual traditions highlights exclusion based on belief, age, and socio-economic status. These groups lacked both physical protection and political leverage to reconstitute after the attack. By early 2025, CSOs reported being unable to convene meetings or maintain offices in gang-controlled areas. In Mirebalais (April 2025), the takeover of Radio Panic FM by the Viv Ansanm/Canaan gang, later renamed *Taliban FM*, displaced journalists' associations and local CSOs that relied on the station to reach women-headed households, rural listeners, and displaced persons, groups already poorly served by national media. Journalists' unions and watchdog groups, including at least one of their members kidnapped and others missing, were forced to suspend operations or flee the area, weakening professional associations that advocate for press freedoms.

While no formal law bans associations, the repeated declaration of states of emergency in the West, Centre, and Artibonite departments grants expanded security powers to authorities, and de facto legitimises restrictions on gatherings and organisational activity. Combined with gang-enforced curfews and checkpoints, these measures paralyse associational life. This disproportionately restricts small, informal, and community-based associations, which depend on local mobility and face-to-face engagement. Women's groups, disability organisations, and rural associations are least able to relocate or operate remotely, amplifying exclusion.

The erosion of freedom of association severely weakens Haiti's civic fabric. Civil society's ability to organise collectively—essential for humanitarian response, accountability, and dialogue—is curtailed not primarily by legislation but by violence, territorial fragmentation, and state collapse. The erosion of freedom of association entrenches structural inequality within civil society, privileging actors with resources while silencing marginalised voices. Without targeted protection and inclusion measures, Haiti's associational space risks becoming socially exclusive, undermining equitable participation and leaving historically marginalised groups without organised representation. The resulting environment undermines long-term democratic participation and leaves communities isolated, vulnerable, and voiceless.

1.2 | Freedom of Assembly

Freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration is protected under Articles 31 and 31.2 of the Constitution, allowing unarmed public gatherings and notification of police in advance of assemblies held in public places respectively. In reality, this right has been systematically eroded for civil society actors, protesters, and grassroots movements. Women protesters, journalists, persons with disabilities, and residents of gang-controlled neighbourhoods face elevated risks of violence, harassment, and exclusion.

Between January and February 2024, nationwide anti-government protests—some peaceful, others violent—were met with force by security services during police crackdowns. At least four protesters were killed and 15 injured, including at least eight journalists—many of whom lacked protective equipment or institutional backing. Women journalists and freelance

reporters were particularly vulnerable to injury and intimidation, reinforcing gendered barriers to participation in public discourse. These patterns persisted into 2025, with demonstrations increasingly curtailed by insecurity rather than formal bans.

In gang-controlled areas of Port-au-Prince and beyond, de facto curfews, roadblocks, and checkpoints effectively exclude persons with disabilities, older persons, and caregivers—groups with limited mobility—from participating in assemblies, preventing civil society organisations from mobilising supporters or holding public forums. Fear of sexual violence further discourages women and girls from attending demonstrations, even when their socio-economic rights are most affected. Conversely, gangs themselves arbitrarily halt traffic and levy "tolls" on national roads, selectively allowing or banning gatherings.

Successive states of emergency declared in the West, Centre, and Artibonite departments formally restrict movement and public assemblies, permitting authorities to ban protests in the name of security. While legally grounded in emergency powers, these measures have often been enforced unevenly and without adequate safeguards. These measures, combined with gang violence, disproportionately silence poor, displaced, and rural populations, who lack alternative civic platforms. Assemblies organised by community or women's groups are often cancelled first due to safety risks.

The shrinking space for peaceful assembly deprives civil society of a critical democratic tool. When protests are suppressed by police or rendered impossible by gangs, grievances remain unarticulated, fueling distrust and radicalisation. The near-elimination of safe public assembly entrenches unequal civic participation, where only the most resourced or protected actors can mobilise publicly. This reinforces exclusion of marginalised groups from political expression and weakens civil society's role in representing diverse lived experiences in national dialogue. The inability to assemble safely undermines civic engagement, weakens accountability, and deepens Haiti's democratic deficit.

1.3 | Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is guaranteed under Article 28 of the Constitution, which prohibits censorship, and Article 28.1, which protects journalists from prior restraint. Article 40 requires the State to proactively disseminate public information and all laws affecting national life, subject only to limited exceptions related to national security. Despite these safeguards, violence and impunity have profoundly unequal effects on who can speak, report, and be heard.

In practice, freedom of expression is among the most violently repressed rights. Freedom House 2025 rates Haiti as "Not Free" with a 24/100 score. On 24 December 2024, members of the Viv Ansanm gang opened fire on journalists covering the attempted reopening of Haiti's largest hospital in Port-au-Prince, killing two journalists and injuring at least seven. Freelance reporters, younger journalists, and those outside major media houses—groups often including women and rural correspondents—were among the most exposed. The trend escalated in March 2025, when armed gangs set fire to the historic premises of Radio Télévision Caraïbes, one of the country's oldest and most influential media houses. This was symbolically targeting an institution long known for pluralistic debate and broad social outreach. Weeks later, in April 2025, gangs seized Radio Panic FM in Mirebalais, renamed it "Taliban FM," and used it as a propaganda tool, silencing independent voices. This capture of a community radio station serving rural and displaced listeners into a propaganda outlet effectively cut off access to independent information for socially excluded groups.

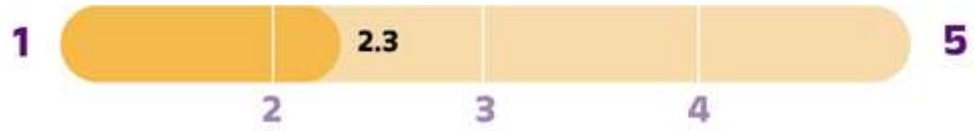
Although censorship is constitutionally banned, the state's inability to protect journalists, investigate attacks, or enforce media laws has created a climate of impunity and self-censorship, particularly among women journalists and local reporters without protection or relocation options. Emergency measures and insecurity further limit access to information, contravening Article 40, which obliges the state to disseminate public information.

The systematic targeting of journalists and media institutions gravely undermines freedom of expression. The silencing of diverse media voices narrows the public narrative and marginalises perspectives of women, rural communities, religious minorities, and displaced persons. For civil society, this results in reduced visibility, diminished advocacy capacity, an unequal information ecosystem where advocacy for inclusive policies is severely constrained, accelerating democratic erosion and social exclusion. Overall, the silencing of independent voices accelerates democratic backsliding and erodes any remaining enabling environment for civic action in Haiti.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



This section finds that, across registration, operational autonomy, and protection from interference, Haiti's legal environment for civil society in 2025 was marked by stagnation and gradual decline. Although constitutional guarantees of freedom of association remain intact on paper, they are weakened in practice by the outdated Decree of 14 September 1989 amending the Act of 13 December 1982 on NGOs, wide administrative discretion, pervasive insecurity, and weak enforcement. The absence of legal modernisation, effective appeal and due-process safeguards, and meaningful protection from violence leaves the enabling environment fragile, unequal, and increasingly unsustainable, with women-led organisations, organisations of persons with disabilities, and grassroots actors disproportionately exposed to legal vulnerability and exclusion.

2.1 | Registration

Haiti's legal framework formally recognises the right to form associations, but in practice places significant structural barriers on the registration of civil society organisations, particularly those led by or serving marginalised groups. Constitutionally, Articles 31, 31-1 and 31-2 of the 1987 Constitution guarantee freedom of association for political, economic, social, cultural, and other peaceful purposes, without prior authorisation. Articles 20, 26 and 30 further protect freedom of conscience and religion, forming a strong normative foundation for pluralistic civic organisation. These provisions align with Haiti's obligations under Article 22 of the ICCPR.

However, registration and legal personality are governed in practice by sub-constitutional instruments, most notably the Decree of 14 September 1989, which applies narrowly to "Non-Governmental Development Aid Organisations." This decree is obsolete, incomplete, and exclusionary. Its definition of NGOs (Article 1) limits recognition to *private, apolitical, non-profit organisations pursuing development objectives*, implicitly excluding

advocacy-focused, rights-based, watchdog, or movement-based organisations from appropriate legal categorisation.

Several articles create systemic barriers:

- Article 6 requires joint recognition by three ministries (Planning/External Cooperation; Interior; Foreign Affairs), creating multiple veto points.
- Article 8(b) requires a *letter of guarantee* from two recognised NGOs or a bilateral/multilateral agency—effectively excluding new, grassroots, women-led, rural, or disability-led organisations without elite networks.
- Article 8(c) requires authorisation from the *local council of the intended area of intervention*, which in 2025 remained non-functional or inaccessible in many insecure or gang-controlled communes.
- Article 8 (guarantee reference) mandates a bank guarantee of HTG 50,000, a prohibitive requirement in a context of widespread poverty and financial exclusion.
- Article 12 obliges foreign NGOs to appoint at least one-third Haitian nationals on their executive boards, a measure that supports localisation but can also be applied rigidly or discriminatorily.

These provisions disproportionately impact marginalised groups—including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), women-led associations, rural organisations, and faith-based or survivor-led groups—who face compounded barriers related to cost, accessibility, documentation, and mobility.

While Article 10 of the Decree formally caps the recognition process at three months, CSO testimonies in 2025 consistently reported delays extending well beyond this limit, often without written explanation. The procedures are fragmented, highly formalistic, and inaccessible, requiring notarised statutes, repeated ministry visits, and publication in *Le Moniteur*. Registration costs—formal and informal—remain high relative to local incomes.

Appeal mechanisms are virtually absent. The Decree provides no independent or judicial review process for registration denials or delays. Rejections are often informal, communicated verbally, or not communicated at all. In practice, CSOs lack transparent avenues to challenge administrative decisions, reinforcing dependency on discretion and informal negotiation rather than legal entitlement.

In 2025, no reform of association law was undertaken, despite broad justice reforms such as the June 2025 adoption of a new Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, which involved limited civil society consultation. The continued reliance on the 1989 framework, amid escalating insecurity and institutional collapse, resulted in stagnation rather than improvement in the registration environment. CSO testimonies in 2025 point to a persistent pattern of exclusion, where large, internationally connected organisations maintain registration while community-based actors operate informally, reinforcing inequality within civic space.

While constitutional guarantees are strong in principle, the registration framework hinders inclusive civic organisation in practice, particularly for marginalised groups. The trend in 2025 reflects continued stagnation, with structural barriers outweighing formal protections. Without legal modernisation and simplified, inclusive registration processes, marginalised groups remain least able to formalise their organisations and fully access civic space.

2.2 | Operational Environment

Haitian law does not explicitly require CSOs to obtain prior approval for internal governance, objectives, or activities once legally recognised. The Constitution guarantees freedom of association without subjecting activities to prior restraint. However, the absence of a modern,

comprehensive CSO law, combined with the broad supervisory powers embedded in the Decree of 14 September 1989, creates an environment in which operational autonomy is fragile and contingent.

Articles 13–18 of the Decree of 14 September 1989 empower the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (MPCE) and departmental councils to *review programmes*, *determine areas of intervention*, and *align NGO activities with national development priorities*. While coordination is legitimate in principle, these provisions blur the line between coordination and control, especially when applied to advocacy-oriented or rights-based work.

CSOs reported in 2025 that they were informally required to notify authorities of public meetings, advocacy campaigns, or reports—particularly on governance, corruption, or human rights—even where no legal basis for notification existed.

Administrative burdens under Article 28 of the Decree of 14 September 1989 are extensive. NGOs must submit annual programmes, investment budgets, quarterly foreign-currency certifications, audited accounts, staff lists, and multiple reports through the MPCE and departmental councils. For small, volunteer-based organisations—especially women-led and disability-focused CSOs—these requirements are disproportionate and exclusionary, compounded by digital exclusion and insecurity.

Legally, there is no explicit prohibition on domestic or international funding, and Articles 23–27 of the Decree of 14 September 1989 offer tax and customs exemptions. However, in practice, banking restrictions, foreign-exchange controls, and anti-money-laundering scrutiny have become major operational barriers. In 2025, CSOs reported account freezes and delayed transfers, particularly affecting organisations without international intermediaries—again disproportionately impacting marginalised groups.

Operational space in 2025 was shaped less by formal legal restriction and more by extreme insecurity. Gang control of roads and neighbourhoods forced programme suspensions, relocations, or remote work—options largely inaccessible to grassroots and disability-led CSOs. Civil society testimonies indicated a decline in operational reach, especially in the West, Centre, and Artibonite departments. However, some positive institutional signals emerged, including the April 2025 creation of specialised judicial units on mass crimes and sexual violence, which could strengthen CSO documentation and advocacy, particularly for women- and survivor-led organisations in the medium term. However, their impact remained limited in 2025.

2.3 | Protection from Interference

Haiti's legal framework provides weak protection against arbitrary interference or dissolution of CSOs. The Decree of 14 September 1989 sets out grounds for withdrawal of recognition and dissolution in Articles 29–31, including vague criteria such as "activities incompatible with the status of an NGO" or unjustified interruption of activities for six months. These provisions lack precision and proportionality, and do not guarantee due process safeguards beyond publication in the Official Gazette.

There is no requirement for judicial authorisation prior to dissolution, nor clear rights to appeal such decisions before an independent body, exposing CSOs to potential politically motivated enforcement.

The legal framework is especially deficient in addressing third-party interference. There are no statutory protections for CSOs against attacks, occupation, or intimidation by armed

groups. In 2025, this gap proved devastating: gangs attacked CSO offices, media houses, and community centres with near-total impunity. Women human rights defenders, journalists, and grassroots activists faced heightened risks of sexual violence, abduction, and assassination, driving self-censorship and withdrawal from public life. State inspections under Articles 16–18 of the Decree of 14 September 1989 are weakly regulated and can be applied selectively. CSOs perceive documentation requests and activity restrictions under emergency conditions as tools to discourage mobilisation rather than ensure accountability.

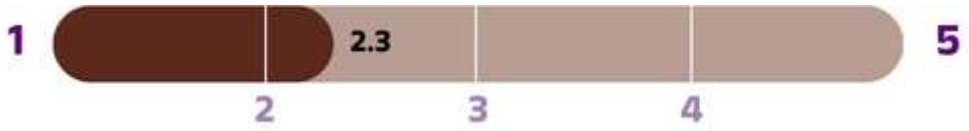
Civil society testimonies in 2025 highlighted the state's inability or unwillingness to investigate attacks on civil society, reinforcing a climate of fear. While the new criminal legislation adopted in June 2025 theoretically strengthens accountability, its effect on protecting CSOs remained minimal within the year.

Overall, protection from interference deteriorated sharply in 2025, driven not by formal authoritarian measures but by legal ambiguity, state incapacity, third-party violence, and impunity. Civil society remains legally exposed, with marginalised organisations bearing the greatest risk.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



This section examines how access, effectiveness, and sustainability of resources shape the enabling environment for civil society in Haiti, revealing a funding landscape that is increasingly constrained, uneven, and exclusionary. It shows that while civil society actors remain central to humanitarian response, protection, and social cohesion amid state collapse and insecurity, their capacity to act is undermined by heavy dependence on external donors, shrinking and volatile funding streams, rigid donor conditions, and weak domestic financing ecosystems. These pressures disproportionately affect women-led organisations, organisations of persons with disabilities, grassroots CSOs, and groups operating in rural, gang-controlled, or displacement-affected areas, deepening inequalities within civic space. Overall, the section highlights how short-term, inflexible, and insecure resourcing not only limits service delivery, but also erodes civil society's autonomy, resilience, and long-term role as an inclusive democratic actor in Haiti.

3.1 | Accessibility of Resources

Access to financial and material resources for civil society actors in Haiti remains extremely limited and uneven, with profound implications for inclusion and equity within civic space. The vast majority of CSOs—particularly those working on human rights, governance, gender-based violence, disability inclusion, and displacement—rely almost entirely on international donors, as domestic public or private funding mechanisms are scarce. Government regulations do not formally prohibit access to funding, but the absence of a stable and legitimate government, combined with weak institutional coordination, significantly constrains resource accessibility.

In 2025, shifts in international funding significantly weakened the enabling environment for civil society in Haiti, with disproportionate effects on marginalised groups. The abrupt U.S. funding freeze and cancellation of most USAID programmes sharply reduced humanitarian and service-delivery support delivered largely through CSOs, triggering service closures, staff losses, and programme suspensions that UN agencies described as catastrophic, particularly

in food security, health, protection, and GBV response. While the European Union (EU) maintained emergency and flexible support for local partners to operate amid gang-related access constraints—prioritising health, education, food security, and community resilience — overall EU allocations were projected to decline compared with 2021–2024, limiting medium-term stability. These dynamics intensified inequalities: women-led organisations, OPDs, grassroots CSOs, and groups serving displaced populations—already facing security, mobility, and digital access barriers—were least able to absorb funding shocks, risking further exclusion from service delivery, advocacy, and decision-making.

Organisations led by women, persons with disabilities, or operating in rural and gang-controlled areas often lack timely access to information about funding opportunities, which are typically communicated through digital channels dominated by international networks. Power shortages, poor internet connectivity, and insecurity—particularly acute outside Port-au-Prince—have limited the ability of many organisations to access calls for proposals or participate in donor briefings in 2025. Where opportunities do exist, application processes are frequently complex, English- or French-only, and highly technical, disadvantaging grassroots organisations with limited administrative capacity.

Tax and fiscal policies do little to incentivise local philanthropy. There are no robust tax deductions or exemptions to encourage private donations to CSOs, and organisations report facing routine tax and customs burdens on imported equipment or humanitarian supplies. This disproportionately affects disability-led organisations that require assistive devices or specialised materials.

Banking remains a major structural barrier. In 2025, CSOs continued to report account freezes, delayed transfers, heightened scrutiny, and requests for excessive documentation, often linked to international anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism financing controls. Smaller and newer organisations—particularly those addressing sensitive issues such as sexual violence or accountability—are most affected, as they lack established banking relationships or international intermediaries.

Human rights reports and CSO testimonies throughout 2025 point to a declining trend in accessibility, driven not by formal legal restrictions but by insecurity, infrastructural collapse, and financial system constraints. Overall, the funding environment privileges large, internationally networked organisations, while systematically excluding community-based actors closest to marginalised populations, shrinking the inclusive potential of Haiti's civic space.

3.2 | Effectiveness of Resources

Even where funding is accessible, its effectiveness in enabling civil society action in Haiti is significantly constrained by donor conditions, operational insecurity, and limited flexibility. Donor funding in 2025 remained heavily earmarked toward priority sectors such as humanitarian assistance, health, education, security stabilisation, and gender-based violence. While these areas are critical, CSOs consistently report that funding is often donor-driven, leaving limited space for locally defined priorities such as civic education, governance reform, social cohesion, or disability-inclusive development.

This narrowing of funding priorities affects organisations working on intersectional issues, including women's political participation, disability rights, LGBTIQ+ inclusion, and religious or cultural minority rights, which are frequently perceived as sensitive or secondary. Funding conditions often impose rigid logframes, short implementation timelines, and reporting requirements that do not reflect rapidly changing security realities or the psychosocial needs of communities affected by violence and displacement.

Flexibility remains uneven. In 2025, some international donors and NGOs demonstrated increased willingness to adapt modalities, including remote implementation, budget reallocations, and security-related cost adjustments. However, CSOs report that such flexibility is not systematic and often depends on individual donor relationships. Organisations working in gang-controlled areas or with survivors of sexual violence expressed concern that funding conditions sometimes expose staff and beneficiaries to heightened risk, without adequate safeguards or security support.

CSO testimonies highlighted that donors are not always sufficiently responsive to contextual risk analysis, particularly for women staff, community mobilisers, and volunteers, who face increased threats of sexual violence, abduction, or intimidation. Smaller CSOs rarely have the leverage to renegotiate conditions, leading to partial implementation or suspension of activities.

Overall, civil society assessments in 2025 indicated a decline or stagnation in resource effectiveness. While funding volumes may persist, their constrained design and limited adaptability reduce civil society's autonomy, resilience, and ability to respond holistically to complex crises. This weakens civil society's role not only as a service provider, but as an agent of rights-based and inclusive transformation.

3.3 | Sustainability of Resources

The sustainability of civil society resources in Haiti remains fragile, shaped by over-dependence on external funding, short funding cycles, and the absence of domestic financing ecosystems. Most CSOs rely on a single funding source or project-based grants, creating vulnerability to sudden donor withdrawals, which occurred in 2025 as some donors scaled back or suspended operations due to insecurity or concerns over fiduciary risk.

Funding gaps between project cycles are common and have direct consequences for organisational survival. CSOs report difficulties retaining qualified staff, maintaining offices, and sustaining community trust when programmes are repeatedly paused. These dynamics disproportionately affect women-led organisations, which often carry additional unpaid care burdens, and organisations working with persons with disabilities, where continuity of services is essential. Short-term contracts and delayed disbursements also undermine staff well-being and increase burnout, particularly among frontline workers responding to violence and displacement.

The broader resource environment severely limits strategic planning and long-term visioning. Rather than investing in institutional strengthening, advocacy, or movement-building, CSOs are compelled to prioritise immediate project compliance. This erodes their capacity to act as durable civic actors and democratic counterweights. Gender inclusion and diversity-focused organisations, which require long-term engagement to shift social norms and structural inequality, are especially disadvantaged.

Self-reliance remains limited. Local fundraising is constrained by widespread poverty, the absence of tax incentives, and insecurity that disrupts public events and campaigns. Income-generating activities are largely unviable in a collapsed economy, and volunteerism—while culturally strong—cannot substitute for sustainable financing. Even intermediary actors such as the Volontariat pour le Développement d'Haïti (VDH) remain dependent on external support.

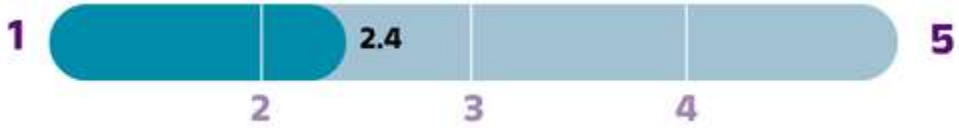
In 2025, some CSOs demonstrated adaptive strategies, including digital networking, shared services, and regional or diaspora partnerships. While these initiatives show resilience, they remain insufficient to reverse the overall trend. Evidence from CSOs and human rights

observers points to a continued decline in resource sustainability, reinforcing inequality within civil society and threatening the long-term viability of inclusive civic action in Haiti.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



This section examines the extent to which transparency, participation, and accountability shape the relationship between the Haitian state and civil society, finding persistent structural weaknesses across all three dimensions. While constitutional principles and ad hoc dialogue spaces exist, the absence of enforceable legal frameworks, proactive information disclosure, and institutionalised participation mechanisms continues to limit meaningful civic engagement. In practice, opacity in public decision-making, uneven and exclusionary consultation processes, and weak accountability loops constrain civil society's ability to inform the public, influence policy, and hold authorities to account—disproportionately affecting women, persons with disabilities, displaced communities, and grassroots organisations. Together, these dynamics undermine trust, weaken democratic governance, and leave civic oversight dependent on discretion rather than guaranteed rights.

4.1 | Transparency

Haiti's legal framework offers partial recognition of the right to access information, but significant gaps limit transparency in practice. While the Constitution establishes principles relevant to openness—most notably Article 40, which obliges the State to disseminate laws, decrees, and information of national interest—Haiti lacks a comprehensive access-to-information law setting out clear procedures, timelines, and enforceable rights. As a result, transparency depends largely on administrative discretion rather than legal entitlement.

Public-sector transparency in Haiti remains structurally weak, constraining the enabling environment for civil society and investigative journalism. There is no legal obligation for authorities to proactively publish draft laws, policies, budgets, procurement contracts, or audit findings, beyond the constitutional duty to publicise adopted legal texts under Article 40 of the

1987 Constitution. In practice, international monitors and press-freedom organisations report that information is released late, selectively, or not at all, particularly outside Port-au-Prince, with journalists frequently unable to obtain basic public records due to the absence of a freedom-of-information law. Media reporting further indicates that government communication has become increasingly one-way: officials issue statements and appear in tightly managed briefings without press conferences or questions, a practice criticised by Haitian journalists as limiting scrutiny and public accountability. This opacity has had tangible civic impacts, including controversy over the non-publication of state budget details and security decisions, such as the hiring of foreign security contractors, which journalists say were taken without meaningful public disclosure or debate. Information deficits exacerbate exclusion: organisations working with women survivors of violence, persons with disabilities, and IDPs reported difficulty accessing data critical to rights-based advocacy and service delivery.

Online publication is inconsistent, and many ministries lack functional, regularly updated websites. These shortcomings disproportionately affect women, persons with disabilities, rural populations, and displaced communities, who face digital divides, accessibility barriers, and limited access to informal information networks.

There are no standardised or widely known procedures for filing access-to-information requests, and no statutory deadlines for responses. CSOs in 2025 reported that requests for information—especially on security policy, humanitarian response, and public spending—were frequently ignored or answered informally without documentation. There are no effective safeguards against unjustified refusals, nor independent oversight bodies empowered to enforce transparency or sanction non-compliance. Appeals mechanisms are unclear, slow, or inaccessible, placing the burden on civil society to persist in an opaque system.

Overall, the transparency environment remains weak and uneven. The absence of enforceable access-to-information guarantees undermines informed participation, limits accountability, and restricts civil society's ability to engage meaningfully in governance processes. Together, these practices undermine civil society's ability to inform the public, monitor power, and engage in evidence-based advocacy, reinforcing a climate in which civic oversight depends on discretion rather than enforceable rights.

4.2 | Participation

Civil society participation in public decision-making in Haiti is fragmented, ad hoc, and weakly institutionalised, despite growing recognition of its importance. There is no dedicated legal framework establishing clear standards, procedures, or guarantees for CSO participation in policymaking. As a result, consultations occur largely at the discretion of political authorities and are often shaped by donor pressure rather than domestic accountability norms.

In recent years, some formal participation spaces have emerged. Notably, civil society platforms were involved in negotiations leading to the 3 April Agreement on political transition, and the Presidential Transition Council (PTC) includes two civil society observers, who are also represented in government. However, CSOs widely report that these forms of participation have been symbolic rather than influential, with limited ability to shape final decisions. Marginalised organisations—representing women, youth, persons with disabilities, rural communities, and displaced persons—are reportedly consulted irregularly or not at all.

Where consultations occur, they are often convened late in policy processes, with limited documentation and insufficient time to prepare input. Participation formats vary (in-person meetings, workshops, occasional online engagements), but accessibility is uneven. Insecurity,

digital exclusion, and mobility constraints disproportionately prevent gender and inclusion-focused organisations from participating on equal footing. These barriers reinforce an imbalance in whose voices are heard.

In 2025, some functional cooperation emerged, particularly in the humanitarian sphere. Local Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations collaborated with institutions such as the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities (MICT), through the Directorate of Civil Protection (DGPC), and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MAST) on responses to displacement, health access, and gender-based violence. While valuable, these interactions were operational and reactive, focused on service delivery rather than policy co-creation or strategic planning.

CSO testimonies point to a mixed but fragile trend: increased rhetorical openness to participation, but limited structural progress. Without clear rules, inclusive outreach, and accountability for follow-up, participation remains uneven and exclusionary, undermining the potential of civil society to contribute meaningfully to democratic governance and social cohesion.

4.3 | Accountability

Accountability mechanisms linking government action to civil society input in Haiti remain underdeveloped and largely informal. While CSOs frequently provide recommendations, monitoring reports, and advocacy inputs, the government rarely offers systematic or publicly documented feedback on how these contributions are used. When civil society input is not incorporated, explanations are typically absent or conveyed informally, limiting learning and trust.

There are no institutionalised spaces that allow civil society actors to follow up on policy commitments or track implementation in a sustained manner. Accountability therefore depends heavily on civil society's watchdog role—through reporting, public denunciation, and international advocacy—rather than on formal state-led mechanisms. This dynamic is shaped by a long history of authoritarianism, corruption, and impunity, in which civil society often developed in opposition to power, rather than as a recognised governance partner.

Some limited monitoring initiatives emerged following the 3 April Agreement, including a mechanism involving CSO partners of the Project for the Strengthening of Civil Society Organisations (PROSS) and the government, which held several meetings between 2025 and 2026. While these meetings indicate a willingness to engage, their outcomes remain weakly documented and lack enforceability. Gender equality and inclusion-focused organisations report minimal visibility of how their concerns—particularly on gender equality, disability inclusion, and youth participation—translate into policy change.

Civil society actors can monitor and report on government commitments through national and international human rights mechanisms, but domestic avenues for redress are weak, slow, or inaccessible. Marginalised groups face additional barriers due to legal complexity, security risks, and lack of resources. Human rights defenders and journalists continue to face intimidation and violence, further constraining accountability.

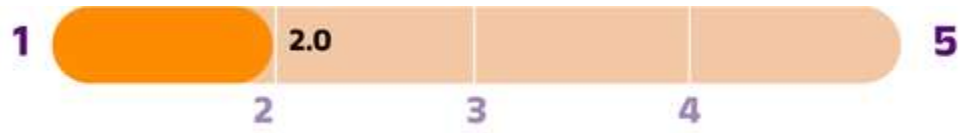
Overall, civil society testimonies in 2025 point to stagnation in accountability. While dialogue spaces exist, they lack transparency, feedback loops, and enforcement power. In the absence of structured, inclusive accountability frameworks, civil society's role as a democratic

counterweight remains essential but precarious, heavily dependent on political context and civic resilience rather than guaranteed rights.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



This section highlights a deteriorating environment for constructive dialogue and inclusive participation for civil society actors in Haiti in 2025. It highlights how deep mistrust between authorities and civil society, rising violence, and attacks on media have narrowed the space for open debate, fostering polarisation, fear, and widespread self-censorship. While civil society remains socially valued for its humanitarian and community roles, public confidence in its ability—and that of citizens more broadly—to influence political decision-making has stagnated or declined amid prolonged instability and insecurity. Formal constitutional guarantees of equality are undermined by weak implementation and entrenched social and economic barriers, disproportionately excluding women, persons with disabilities, displaced populations, and other marginalised groups from civic life. Overall, the findings point to a shrinking, fragmented, and unequal civic space, in which resilience and local trust persist but are increasingly overshadowed by violence, exclusion, and the absence of meaningful avenues for participation and dialogue.

5.1 | Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue

Public discourse on civil society in Haiti remains highly polarised and marked by deep mistrust between state authorities and civic actors. Government officials and political leaders frequently adopt an ambivalent or defensive stance toward CSOs, especially those engaged in human rights monitoring, anti-corruption work, gender equality, and accountability, framing them as politicised, destabilising, or influenced by foreign agendas rather than as legitimate democratic actors. This framing contributes to a discursive environment in which criticism of state failure is delegitimised, weakening conditions for constructive dialogue.

Media coverage plays a dual role: while independent outlets and digital platforms continue to amplify civil society voices—particularly in documenting gang violence and institutional

collapse—violent attacks on journalists and media houses in 2024–2025, including the arson attack on Radio Télévision Caraïbes and the killing of journalists during the December 2024 General Hospital attack, have sharply narrowed the space for pluralistic debate and fostered widespread self-censorship. Women journalists and community reporters face particularly elevated risks, reinforcing gendered exclusion from public discourse. Social media has become an equally contested arena: it enables CSOs to bypass weakened institutions, but also exposes activists—especially women human rights defenders and members of marginalised communities—to harassment, disinformation, and threats that translate into offline danger in a context of near-total impunity.

In 2025, escalating gang violence further reshaped public discourse, eclipsing policy debate with narratives of survival and insecurity; evidence-based civic dialogue deteriorated, replaced by crisis-driven messaging and political blame-shifting, despite rhetorical acknowledgements of civil society's role in stabilisation efforts. This 2025 trend points to a decline in the quality and safety of public discourse, in which civil society's contributions are acknowledged in principle but undermined in practice by hostility, violence, and shrinking media freedom.

5.2 | Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement

Public perceptions of civil society in Haiti remain complex and deeply contextual. On one hand, many citizens continue to associate CSOs—particularly community-based and faith-linked organisations—with humanitarian assistance, social support, and survival during crises. On the other, prolonged political instability, donor dependency, and elite capture have fuelled scepticism about the influence and independence of some nationally visible CSOs. Women, youth, and rural residents often express stronger trust in local organisations than in nationally or internationally linked NGOs, reflecting proximity and lived responsiveness. However, belief in the ability of civil society—or citizens themselves—to influence political decisions remains low, mirroring broader disillusionment with governance and electoral processes.

Civic engagement is further constrained by limited and uneven civic education. Formal civic education in schools is inconsistent, disrupted by insecurity, school closures, and displacement. Community-based civic education initiatives exist but are under-resourced, often donor-driven, and fragmented. Gender and inclusion-focused civic education—addressing women's rights, disability inclusion, and youth participation—is particularly scarce, reinforcing exclusion.

Key incidents in 2025, including the expansion of internal displacement and attacks on community leaders, further dampened civic engagement. Citizens in gang-controlled areas prioritised survival over participation, while women and persons with disabilities faced heightened mobility and security barriers. Freedom House and BTI assessments both note deep public disengagement from formal political life, despite ongoing grassroots resilience.

Overall, evidence from 2025 points to stagnation or decline in civic confidence, with civil society perceived as socially necessary but politically constrained. Without improved security, inclusive civic education, and visible impact on decision-making, public belief in civic engagement as a pathway to change is likely to remain weak.

5.3 | Civic Equality and Inclusion

Legal guarantees of civic equality in Haiti are grounded in the 1987 Constitution, which affirms equality before the law and prohibits discrimination (Articles 17, 18, and 19). However, these formal protections are weakly implemented, and no comprehensive anti-discrimination

framework ensures equal civic participation for women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, or other marginalised groups. Structural inequality therefore persists across legal, social, and economic systems.

Social and economic barriers are profound. Women's exclusion from political leadership—most notably their absence from voting roles within the Transitional Presidential Council—has been explicitly criticised by UN human rights experts as undermining peace and security. Persons with disabilities face persistent physical, informational, and attitudinal barriers to participation, despite advocacy gains by OPDs and targeted projects.

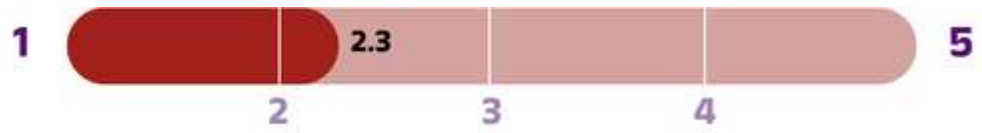
Societal tolerance is strained by violence and displacement. In 2025, sexual violence by gangs, discrimination against displaced persons, and vigilantism intensified exclusionary dynamics, particularly affecting women, girls, and persons with psychosocial disabilities. Civil society organisations representing these groups reported exclusion from high-level consultations and limited protection from threats. Human rights and democracy indices consistently categorise Haiti as "Not Free", highlighting severe deficits in equal participation and protection. While some OPDs and women-led organisations achieved localised advances through donor-supported initiatives, these gains remain fragile and uneven.

Overall, the trend in 2025 reflects a continued decline in civic equality and inclusion. Without legal reform, targeted protection, and inclusive institutional design, the enabling environment for civil society risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than serving as a platform for inclusive democratic participation.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



This section reveals the fragile and highly contested nature of digital civic space in Haiti, where digital platforms have become simultaneously indispensable for civil society action and deeply constrained by insecurity, legal gaps, and structural inequality. Despite Haiti's very low level of digital government development—ranking near the bottom globally—online spaces such as social media, messaging apps, and digital news platforms have emerged as critical tools for information sharing, advocacy, and accountability in a context of mass displacement, territorial gang control, and shrinking physical civic space. However, the exercise of digital rights and freedoms is undermined by recurring connectivity disruptions linked to violence and infrastructure collapse, weak and uneven legal protections, rising digital security risks, opaque platform governance, and sharply unequal access shaped by poverty, gender, disability, geography, and insecurity. Together, the realities documented in 2025 point not to overt state-driven digital repression, but to a pattern of structural erosion of digital civic space—where insecurity, technological fragility, and the absence of effective safeguards increasingly limit who can participate, speak safely, and organise online in Haiti.

6.1 | Digital Rights and Freedoms

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' E-Government Survey 2024, Haiti ranks 186th out of 193 countries on the E-Government Development Index (EGDI), placing it last in the Caribbean in terms of digital government maturity and online public service provision. However, digital space has become an essential—yet fragile—arena for civil society action in Haiti. In the absence of a digitised public administration and with severely constrained physical civic space—with over 1.4 million people internally displaced by gang violence—platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) play a crucial role in information-sharing, watchdog reporting, and citizen mobilisation.

Haiti has not experienced state-ordered nationwide internet shutdowns, but civil society organisations and independent media have faced recurrent, de facto connectivity blackouts in 2025 caused by insecurity and infrastructure collapse rather than formal policy. According to Cloudflare's Internet Disruption Reports, gangs have repeatedly damaged fibre-optic infrastructure, including major cuts in Arcahaie, disrupting national connectivity and international traffic flows, while Digicel traffic dropped by about 80% following a major fibre break on 26 August 2025. These outages are compounded by the fact that armed groups control around 80–90% of Port-au-Prince and key transport corridors, preventing technicians from accessing damaged sites and delaying repairs. Power failures linked to fuel shortages and grid damage further exacerbate disruptions, as generators servicing telecom sites cannot be supplied during gang blockades. For CSOs and journalists, these prolonged outages have severely constrained field reporting, emergency coordination, digital advocacy, and secure communications, effectively silencing civic activity at critical moments despite the absence of an official shutdown policy.

Haitian law provides partial and uneven protection of digital freedoms for civil society actors, including journalists, largely by extending pre-digital legal guarantees into the online space rather than through a dedicated digital rights regime. At the constitutional level, the constitution guarantees freedom of expression and information (arts. 28–28-3) and the inviolability of private communications (art. 37), protections that apply in principle to online speech and digital communications used by journalists and civil society organisations. Privacy and data-related freedoms are more explicitly addressed in the 2018 Decree on the Protection of Personal Data, which establishes consent, purpose limitation, and data-security obligations, and grants data subjects rights of access and rectification—legal tools that can enable investigative journalism and civil society data use, but whose weak enforcement also limits their practical effect. At the same time, the New Penal Code (2025) both enables and constrains digital freedoms: it criminalises cyber-attacks, unlawful surveillance, and data misuse (arts. 437–442, 587–593), strengthening protections for journalists and civic actors against digital harassment, but it also extends criminal liability for defamation-like and public-order offences to online expression, potentially chilling critical speech in the absence of strong judicial safeguards. In practice, online political content has not been systematically censored by the government, but self-censorship is widespread due to fear of retaliation from armed gangs rather than state authorities.

Private digital platforms play a decisive role in content visibility. However, their content moderation practices remain opaque, particularly regarding Haitian Creole-language reporting, community journalism, and documentation of violence. CSO testimonies in 2025 highlighted the removal, down-ranking, or delayed visibility of posts documenting gang abuses or sexual violence, disproportionately affecting women human rights defenders and grassroots journalists.

Lived cases underscore the risks linked to online activity. Journalists and civic activists reporting digitally on gang violence have faced threats, harassment, and offline attacks, most notably following online coverage of the December 2024 General Hospital attack and the March–April 2025 media arson campaigns. Women journalists and community reporters who rely heavily on social media due to lack of institutional backing face heightened gender-specific risks.

Overall, reports from 2025 point to stagnation to decline in digital freedoms: while formal censorship remains limited, insecurity, platform opacity, and the absence of legal protection increasingly constrain civil society's ability to exercise digital rights safely.

6.2 | Digital Security and Privacy

Digital security and privacy remain one of the weakest aspects of the enabling environment for civil society in Haiti, despite recent limited legal advances. While Haiti adopted a 2018 decree on the protection of personal data, this instrument is narrow in scope, weakly enforced, and not supported by an independent data protection or cybersecurity authority, leaving no effective mechanism for oversight, investigation, or redress in cases of digital rights violations. As documented by legal and academic analyses, responsibilities for data protection, cybersecurity, and digital privacy are fragmented across state bodies with limited capacity, and there is no operational regulator dedicated to personal data governance or digital security coordination. As a result, journalists and civil society organisations operate in a context of structural vulnerability to cyber threats, unlawful surveillance, and privacy breaches, with minimal institutional protection and few practical remedies.

In 2025, reported incidents of cyber-related disruptions and digital fraud increased in Haiti, primarily affecting telecom operators, banks, and core service providers, with indirect but significant spill-over effects on CSOs that rely on shared digital infrastructure. Cloudflare's Internet Disruption Reports document repeated fibre-optic cuts and suspected sabotage, including incidents that reduced Digicel Haiti's traffic by up to 80%, disrupting access nationwide and affecting online payment systems, communications platforms, and cloud-based tools routinely used by civil society. Public institutions have also acknowledged recurring technical failures linked to intrusions or physical sabotage of digital infrastructure, notably when gangs briefly seized a key Téléco telecommunications hub in August 2025, interrupting internet and air-traffic communications before police regained control. While there is no verified evidence of systematic state-sponsored spyware deployment or mass digital surveillance, CSO and media testimonies consistently report heightened fears of monitoring, including compromised devices, account takeovers, and social-media infiltration during advocacy and human-rights campaigns—concerns amplified by Haiti's weak cybersecurity governance and the absence of an effective oversight authority.

Disinformation, intimidation, and online harassment constitute acute and escalating risks for civic actors in Haiti, particularly for women human rights defenders, journalists, and activists working on sexual violence, corruption, or gang accountability. The CIVICUS Monitor documents coordinated smear campaigns, threats, and online harassment targeting journalists and civil society figures, often linked to gang-controlled narratives and political manipulation during periods of heightened advocacy or protest. Similarly, the rapid spread of online disinformation, hate speech, and gender-based harassment has amplified risks for media workers, noting that such attacks frequently precede or accompany physical intimidation and violence, including attacks on newsrooms and killings of journalists. According to surveys cited by UNESCO, 76% of Haitian journalists have faced threats related to their profession, 62% report verbal and online harassment, 30% have been victims of physical threats, and 54% say these threats have directly affected their journalistic work. These abuses frequently target those reporting on sexual violence, corruption, or gang accountability, and often unfold through coordinated smear campaigns, doxxing, and threats on social media—reinforcing a climate of fear that constrains civic expression and discourages public engagement.

Organisations of persons with disabilities often rely on digital tools to overcome physical barriers, yet lack access to secure devices, encryption tools, or digital safety training. Women-led organisations reported heightened concern about data breaches involving

survivor information, particularly in GBV case management, in a context with no legal guarantees of confidentiality or redress.

The absence of cybersecurity capacity, digital literacy, and emergency response mechanisms leaves CSOs reliant on external support or informal coping strategies. Overall, human rights observers and CSO testimonies in 2025 indicate a deteriorating digital security environment, driven less by overt repression and more by legal voids, insecurity, and technological fragility.

6.3 | Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility in Haiti remains low, highly unequal, and extremely crisis-sensitive, shaping who can realistically participate in digital civic space. In 2025, access to the internet continued to be constrained by high user costs, unreliable electricity, weak network quality, and territorial insecurity, particularly in gang-affected areas. According to DataReportal's Digital 2025: Haiti, internet penetration stood at 39.3% of the population (around 4.65 million users), while social media use reached only 22.4%, underscoring the narrow reach of online civic engagement. While World Bank data reports a higher estimate of 48% of individuals using the internet in 2024, it also highlights stark structural barriers, including electricity access for only about 51% of the population, with far lower and less reliable coverage in rural areas. Connectivity rates are markedly lower in rural communities, informal settlements, and displacement sites, where dependence on mobile data, fuel-powered generators, or solar kits makes access intermittent and fragile. As a result, digital civic participation in Haiti remains deeply stratified by geography, income, gender, and security conditions, leaving large segments of the population structurally excluded from online public debate and digital civil society spaces.

For civil society actors, digital access is uneven. Larger organisations with international backing can maintain connectivity through mobile data, satellite solutions, or relocation, while grassroots CSOs, OPDs, and women-led groups often face prolonged disconnection due to power outages or blocked access routes. Lived experiences reported by CSOs in 2025 included missed funding deadlines, inability to submit online grant proposals, and exclusion from virtual consultations and coordination meetings when prolonged disconnections coincided with gang blockades or attacks, reinforcing existing inequalities in participation within Haiti's digital civic space.

Digital literacy remains a significant barrier. Large segments of the population—and many CSO staff—lack basic ICT, data literacy, and information verification skills, contributing to misinformation and limiting effective advocacy. The impacts are clear: women, older persons, and persons with disabilities face compounded barriers due to lower access to devices, training, and inclusive digital design.

The emergence of artificial intelligence and automated content moderation further complicates accessibility. Haitian civil society actors and the general population are largely unprepared to engage with AI-driven tools, whether for advocacy, service delivery, or protection against misinformation. Language barriers (particularly limited Haitian Creole support in AI tools) risk reinforcing exclusion.

In 2025, some civil society organisations demonstrated resilience by developing remote working networks, shared digital infrastructure, and peer-to-peer training, partially mitigating access gaps. However, these remain isolated initiatives. Overall, reports and testimonies point

to stagnation rather than structural improvement in digital accessibility, leaving digital civic space uneven and reinforcing existing inequalities within civil society.

C) Recommendations

Despite the depth of Haiti's current crisis, the transitional governance period represents a decisive moment for action—one that calls for targeted, practical reforms to rebuild an enabling environment for civil society. The recommendations that follow are grounded in the findings of this report and are intended to translate this critical window into concrete policy, legal, and operational changes. They emphasise the need for clear political will, structured and meaningful inclusion of civil society in decision-making, and sustained investment in local civic actors—particularly those representing women, persons with disabilities, displaced populations, and other marginalised groups. Without deliberate and coordinated action, existing exclusions will persist; with it, civil society can become a central partner in democratic renewal, social cohesion, and inclusive development in Haiti.

1. Recommendations to the Government of Haiti

1.1 Establish an Enabling Legal and Institutional Framework

- Modernise the legal framework for civil society by replacing the obsolete Decree of 14 September 1989 with a comprehensive law on associations, NGOs, and foundations, aligned with the Constitution and ICCPR standards. The law should explicitly protect freedom of association, prevent arbitrary dissolution, and simplify registration procedures—particularly for grassroots, women-led, disability-led, and rural CSOs.
- Adopt a legal framework on access to information, operationalising Article 40 of the Constitution, with clear procedures, deadlines, appeal mechanisms, and sanctions for non-compliance, and ensure accessibility formats (Creole, disability-accessible).
- Introduce basic data protection and digital rights safeguards, including limits on surveillance, protection of personal data, and safeguards for journalists and human rights defenders operating online.

1.2 Institutionalise Inclusive Dialogue and Participation

- Formalise structured and inclusive consultation mechanisms with civil society at national and departmental levels, ensuring early involvement in policy formulation—not merely validation. Include quotas or criteria to ensure participation of women, persons with disabilities, youth, displaced persons, and rural organisations.
- Strengthen transparency and feedback loops by publicly documenting consultations, clarifying how CSO inputs are used or why they are not adopted.
- Institutionalise civil society engagement beyond humanitarian coordination by embedding CSO roles in governance reform, justice reform, security oversight, and transitional processes, reducing ad hoc and donor-driven engagement.

1.3 Improve Protection and Accountability

- Ensure effective investigation and prosecution of attacks against journalists, civil society actors, and human rights defenders, building on the new judicial divisions on mass crimes and sexual violence.
- Lift disproportionate restrictions imposed under repeated states of emergency and ensure that emergency measures are time-bound, proportionate, and subject to oversight, with safeguards for civic freedoms.
- Protect local administrations and ensure safe access for civil society to operate, especially in IDP sites and high-risk areas.

2. Recommendations to Civil Society Actors

2.1 Strengthen Collective Voice and Strategic Engagement

- Build stronger coalitions and platforms across thematic, geographic, and identity-based lines to strengthen collective influence, reduce fragmentation, and counter politicisation.
- Develop shared advocacy agendas focused on restoring constitutional order, protecting civic space, and improving transparency, rather than fragmented project-based advocacy.
- Engage strategically with transitional authorities by negotiating formal engagement frameworks, while maintaining independence and watchdog roles.

2.2 Build Organisational Capacity and Resilience

- Invest in institutional strengthening, including governance, financial management, safeguarding, and staff welfare—especially for women staff, frontline workers, and volunteers exposed to violence.
- Improve digital literacy, digital security, and risk management, including secure communication practices, data protection for survivors, and counter-disinformation skills.
- Promote inclusive internal practices, ensuring meaningful leadership roles for women, persons with disabilities, youth, and displaced persons within CSOs themselves.

2.3 Diversify Approaches and Sustain Community Trust

- Strengthen community-based civic education and mobilisation, even in informal or low-connectivity settings, to rebuild public trust and civic engagement.
- Where possible, explore diaspora partnerships, shared services, and mutual-aid models to reduce dependence on single donors and mitigate funding disruptions.
- Systematically document violations, barriers, and success stories to support evidence-based advocacy nationally and internationally.

3. Recommendations to the International and Donor Community

3.1 Protect and Expand Civic Space

- Treat protection of civil society as a core stabilisation and governance objective, not a secondary issue. Integrate civic space benchmarks into political, security, and humanitarian engagement with Haitian authorities.
- Support protection mechanisms for human rights defenders, journalists, women leaders, and grassroots activists, including emergency support, relocation options, and psychosocial care.

3.2 Improve Funding Accessibility, Flexibility, and Equity

- Increase direct, flexible, and multi-year funding to local CSOs, especially women-led organisations, OPDs, rural groups, and organisations working with IDPs and survivors of violence.
- Simplify application and reporting requirements, expand Creole-language processes, and allow adaptive budgeting in response to security shocks.
- Work with financial institutions to reduce banking barriers, prevent arbitrary account freezes, and support secure financial access for local CSOs.

3.3 Support Systems Change and Inclusion

- Invest in legal reform, access to information systems, and digital inclusion, including safe connectivity, digital accessibility for persons with disabilities, and local ICT capacity.
- Support independent research, perception surveys, and civic education to rebuild trust between citizens, civil society, and institutions.
- Coordinate donor actions to avoid fragmentation, short funding cycles, and parallel structures that undermine civil society sustainability and autonomy.

D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the CIVICUS Monitor. However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. **The panel for this report was convened in October 2025.** The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as V-Dem, the Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index, the RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy, and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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