# Gang Violence in Northern Port-au-Prince Leaves Schools and Communities Reeling



In northern Port-au-Prince, Haiti, schools and communities are grappling with severe disruptions due to rampant gang violence. As of early 2023, gangs control 80% of the city, contributing to significant social and educational instability. Amidst this crisis, more than 2,500 individuals were reported dead or injured due to gang-related violence in the first three months of the year alone.

The violence has extensive repercussions, including the closure of approximately 900 schools affecting around 200,000 children. Many children display signs of trauma, with incidents of students being unable to concentrate or needing to hide during gunfire. This crisis has also seen a surge in sexual violence, with children making up a third of the 10,000 victims in the past year.

In response, local and international organizations are stepping up to address the psychological impact on young people. Initiatives include parent workshops on engaging traumatized children and promoting mental health discussions to counter existing stigmas. Despite the efforts, the challenges are steep, with many children being drawn into gangs, further exacerbating the cycle of violence and trauma.

The UNICEF representative for Haiti highlighted the displacement of over 360,000 people due to the violence, stressing the alarming conditions faced by children in the region. The overarching goal of these initiatives is to provide some semblance of stability and normalcy in an environment where daily survival is a formidable challenge.