HURRICANE MELISSA RESPONSE
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - NOVEMBER 2025

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HIGHLIGHTS

Hurricane Melissa, the most powerful storm of 2025, caused severe infrastructure damage, agricultural losses, and fatalities across the Caribbean, affecting over 1,800,000 people. In the Dominican Republic, heavy rains and flooding affected more than 60,000 people.

UNHCR activated its emergency hotlines and strengthened communication with community leaders, particularly in *bateyes*[1] with a significant presence of persons under the Agency's mandate. They indicated that evacuations were challenging due to flooding and concerns about possible detention. The floods disrupted school attendance and access to primary health care. Older persons living alone and persons with disabilities faced heightened protection risks. Priority needs included food, drinking water, shelter, and psychosocial support.

UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR allocated Core Relief Items (CRIs) to the Dominican Republic's Civil Defense before the start of the cyclone season (March 2025), enhancing the country's readiness and response capacity ahead of Hurricane Melissa's impacts. As of 31 October, the Civil Defense assisted 100 families with CRIs and conducted needs assessments to proceed with distribution. Pre-positioned supplies included: 6,500 solar lamps, 702 plastic tarpaulins, 667 collapsible jerry cans, 1,700 sleeping mats, 347 kitchen sets, and 32 rolls of fire-retardant tarpaulins. UNHCR collected information on 2,430 affected families across the country's provinces and regions.

The selection of communities receiving humanitarian assistance was based on assessments of damage, pre-existing vulnerabilities, and the presence of groups with heightened protection needs, including bateyes with individuals awaiting a nationality solution[2]. These communities face persistent barriers to accessing services, primarily due to the lack of civil documentation.

Many of these communities lack structures that could serve as temporary shelters. Other priority groups included adults with limited mobility, communities in red-alert areas, female-headed households facing economic strain, remote communities, and areas with children at risk of malnutrition, psychosocial distress, or educational disruption. Based on these criteria, 866 families were identified as having urgent priority for assistance.

1 The Bateyes are rural settlements historically associated with sugarcane plantations, where workers—often Haitians and their descendants—live and work. Today, many bateyes face challenges such as poverty, limited access to basic services, and social exclusion.

2 Communities in Bahoruco (Batey 5 and Batey Cuchilla), San Pedro de Macorís (municipality of Quisqueya and Barrio La Fe in Consuelo), and Monte Plata (including Batey Borojol, La Construcción, Nuevo, Yabacao, Piraco, La Piña, Payabo, and bateyes in Cruce de Mela).

UNHCR AND WFP RESPONSE TO HARD-TO-REACH AREAS

UNHCR's response was complemented by the World Food Programme (WFP), which provided food kits estimated to last 15 days. UNHCR's partners, the Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI), the Center for Migration Observation and Social Development in the Caribbean (OBMICA), and Empowered Youth for Transformation (JET), assisted with the distribution, which ran from 13 November to 1 December across the identified communities.

The Agency deployed two to three staff members per delivery, working alongside one WFP representative. UNHCR was involved in the response, unloading trucks and assisting older adults and others with limited mobility. WFP staff conducted approximately 10 interviews per day to assess the distribution's effectiveness.

Coordination included meetings held before, during, and after the distribution process to align strategies, monitor progress, and address operational challenges. UNHCR's partners' knowledge of local communities and strong ties with community leaders also ensured accurate targeting and delivery.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

UNHCR's community-based approach complemented the response by incorporating beneficiary feedback. The activity was well received by the communities, who confirmed the value of coordinated interventions and underscored the need to continue strengthening communication with communities.

Regarding CRIs, communities shared positive feedback on solar lamps, as many households remained isolated and without electricity. The lamps were considered highly useful for safety during prolonged outages during the storm. Similarly, plastic tarpaulins were identified as essential, providing immediate protection and shelter in the aftermath of adverse weather.

PROTECTION OBSERVATIONS

During distribution, several households reported challenges, including limited access to basic services, heightened exposure to protection risks due to damaged shelters, and a lack of essential items to ensure dignity and safety.

- **In San Pedro de Macorís,** the explosion of a water storage tank in Barrio La Mina worsened the already difficult conditions in communities previously affected by the storms. The incident caused additional damage to homes and infrastructure, increasing the urgency for assistance.
- In **Batey Borojol, Monte Plata,** a fire broke out the night before the distribution of CRIs, destroying two homes.

- In **Batey Nuevo, Monte Plata,** community members lacked of access to potable water for the past two years.
- In several communities in **Monte Plata**, stagnant water created favorable conditions for mosquito breeding. This particularly affects children, increasing health risks and highlighting the need for preventive measures.
- Across most distribution sites, **a high presence of children was observed.**
- UNHCR noticed **a significant number of persons with disabilities,** including people with visual impairments, and older adults living alone.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Pablo Vizcaíno vizcaino@unhcr.org
Juan González gonzalju@unhcr.org