



UNICEF Jamaica Digital Communications Officer, Trevesa DaSilva, surveys the damage done to the agricultural section of the Maud McLeod High school in Westmoreland. Over 1,500 broilers were destroyed.

Reporting Period: 21 November 2025

UNICEF Jamaica Hurricane Melissa

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4

Highlights

- Escalating public health risks, with a declared leptospirosis outbreak, confirmed tetanus cases and rising dengue threat driven by stagnant water and uncollected waste.
- 45 confirmed deaths, 14 missing, and 32 additional deaths under investigation following Hurricane Melissa.
- Disrupting education nationwide, more than 600 schools are affected, with 239 assessed as severely impacted and learning severely interrupted.
- Catastrophic flooding persists in Manchester, St. Elizabeth, Hanover, St. Ann, St. James and Trelawny.
- As of November 21, approximately 1,500 people were sheltering in 104 government facilities island-wide.
- Scaling up lifesaving support, UNICEF directly reached over 6,500 people—including 600 children in state care and 500 children with psychosocial support—with supply distributions through implementing partners reaching over 130,000 people with essential emergency supplies, including hygiene and sanitation.

Estimated Situation in Numbers

Estimated Affected Population:
1,615,000

280,000
Estimated children in need of humanitarian assistance

864,000
Estimated people in need

UNICEF Jamaica activities and presence (by Community)

Hurricane Melissa Response – as of November 21, 2025



Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Significant public health threats have emerged in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, driven by widespread water contamination, accumulated garbage, and inadequate sanitation. Confirmed deaths from leptospirosis and tetanus have been reported, with suspected cases under investigation across St. James, Hanover, St. Elizabeth and St. Ann, prompting active surveillance and ongoing water-quality sampling in affected communities. Stagnant water and uncollected waste have increased vector-borne disease risks, particularly dengue, with current fogging operations unable to meet the scale of need. UNICEF is exploring opportunities to support the government in addressing these challenges.

Garbage accumulation together with delays in waste removal, has forced some residents to burn waste as a coping mechanism. Water safety remains a critical concern, as several parishes rely heavily on untreated springs and rivers, requiring urgent risk communication and accelerated testing. In Trelawny, the situation is compounded by a severe water crisis linked to fuel shortages affecting the operations of the National Water Commission (NWC), leaving most communities without piped water and increasing dependency on unsafe sources.

Restoration of essential infrastructure and utilities remains uneven across the affected regions. Electricity services are still significantly disrupted, with approximately 29 per cent of households remaining without power, despite steady progress from initial outages; in St. James, damage is particularly severe, with up to 95 per cent of the network affected in some areas. Telecommunications systems also remain unstable, disrupting connectivity and leaving several community radio stations offline. Repairs are constrained by limited power and shortage of transmission equipment. There remains limited vehicular access to some communities. Curfews have been imposed in certain locations to support security and facilitate safe restoration activities.

Schools in the northern and western parishes continue to assess damage and clear debris, with many still lacking access to electricity and water. Reports as of 20 November, are that an estimated 189,783 students have been affected, and 679 schools have sustained damage—239 severe, 339 moderate and 101 minor. Island-wide, 791 of 1,010 infant, primary and secondary schools are currently open, with institutions in the eastern parishes largely operating normally, while others elsewhere are open only for key examination grades (4–6 and 10–13).

The World Bank's GRADE (Global Rapid Post-Disaster Damage Estimation) assessment estimates approximately US\$8.7 billion in infrastructural and agricultural damage, with approximately 42 per cent reflected in damage to residential homes and their contents.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

UNICEF is delivering a comprehensive, multisectoral humanitarian response to Hurricane Melissa in close coordination with the Government of Jamaica, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), line ministries and local authorities. Immediate efforts focus on restoring access to safe water, essential health and nutrition services, education continuity and child protection, while strengthening national systems for inclusive and child-sensitive recovery.

Cross-cutting efforts include social and behaviour change communication, visibility for the delivery of emergency supplies and humanitarian needs, and close engagement with national and regional coordination mechanisms—including National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), United Nations Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) and OCHA-led coordination meetings. Mechanisms for real-time community feedback are being developed. UNICEF's leadership, across Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Nutrition and Education, ensures a coordinated, child-focused response that prioritizes the most vulnerable and strengthens national systems for recovery.

WASH

In coordination with ODPEM and local authorities, UNICEF is distributing six tonnes of WASH supplies, including dignity kits and 10-litre water containers. Water trucking has commenced, with 6,000 gallons delivered to Cornwall Regional Hospital, a Type A facility serving the western parishes. Two 1,000-litre water storage tanks have also been provided. Plans are under way to install hand-washing stations in critical facilities and to rehabilitate community water points through pump replacement, generator support and pipe repairs. Upcoming hygiene promotion campaigns will incorporate menstrual hygiene management.



Residents from Rowe Town in Whitehouse, Westmoreland collect water from the water distribution site established by UNICEF and Water Mission International.

UNICEF is leading WASH coordination jointly with the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW). In-country WASH coordination meetings are held twice weekly, bringing together more than 20 non-governmental organisations to ensure an efficient and harmonised response. Through this coordination mechanism, UNICEF supports the mapping of WASH needs and partner activities to minimize duplication and identify gaps in service delivery. At the regional level, UNICEF co-chairs the Caribbean Development Partners Group-Disaster Management (CDPG - DM) WASH Thematic Working Group, facilitating coordination across the wider Caribbean.

UNICEF has activated its contingency partnership with Water Mission International, enabling the deployment of two freshwater treatment plants in Ferris Cross, Westmoreland. Distribution points have been established at seven locations, along with a distribution tank in Petersfield, also in Westmoreland. To date, approximately 100,000 litres of safe water have been produced and more than 70,000 litres distributed across six communities, with capacity to meet the daily needs of over 4,600 people. An additional water treatment system is being installed in Darliston, Westmoreland to expand access in surrounding communities. A second contingency partnership with Food for the Poor has also been activated to support the construction and rehabilitation of community water points and to deliver hygiene promotion activities. Further support to the MOHW includes water purification resources and vector control equipment.

Health & Nutrition



UNICEF Jamaica Nutrition Officer, Vonetta Nurse, and UNICEF Belize Health Specialist, Olusola Oladeji, conduct nutrition assessments in parishes affected by Hurricane Melissa.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the MOHW, has led and completed an in-depth rapid nutrition assessment in the six most affected parishes between 10 and 12 November 2025. The findings highlight urgent nutrition needs and will guide interventions for children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and other vulnerable groups. To support screening for acute malnutrition among 15,000 children under five, more than 82,000 MUAC tapes and ten scales have been provided to the MOHW for distribution to health facilities in the affected parishes. From 17 to 21 November, and in partnership with the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC), UNICEF is facilitating Nutrition in Emergencies training for 21 key MOHW nutrition staff at central and parish levels. The training focuses on the management of wasting (acute malnutrition) and Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (IYCF-E).

As the sector lead for Nutrition, UNICEF has collaborated with the MOHW to establish and co-chair the Nutrition Sector Working Group. The first meeting, held on 14 November, brought together 28 stakeholders from government, UN agencies, international and regional organisations, NGOs and academia engaged in the Hurricane Melissa response. Weekly coordination meetings will guide the identification of critical needs, map partner interventions and strengthen coherence across nutrition responses to maximise impact for affected populations.

To address immediate psychosocial needs, 35 personnel from the health sector and civil society organizations have been trained in psychological first aid. Emergency response has also been strengthened through the procurement of 50 Starlink satellite devices for the health sector, ensuring reliable internet connectivity in crisis-affected areas; 18 devices have already been distributed to priority facilities.

UNICEF is supporting government and partners in deploying mobile clinics to deliver essential health services to affected families, including maternal and child health care, immunisation, nutrition services and mental health support. The first clinic became operational in Westmoreland on 10 November, followed by four additional sites that now provide access to primary care for hard-hit communities such as Whitehouse and neighbouring areas. A mobile clinic was also activated in Black River on 21 November to restore services where major health facilities sustained significant damage.

To further bolster emergency health response, UNICEF has procured and handed over 3,600 mosquito nets and four Emergency Health Kits containing essential medical devices and equipment to the MOHW.

Education

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MOESYI) to safeguard continuity of learning following Hurricane Melissa. Emergency education supplies are being mobilized for the most affected schools, including 420 School-in-a-Box kits and 420 Early Childhood Development kits. Sixteen (16) tents—three measuring 72 m² and thirteen (13) measuring 48 m²—have already been dispatched to priority areas, with an additional 86 tents of varying sizes expected to arrive to facilitate the rapid and safe return to school. A further consignment of 39 Early Childhood Development kits and 40 School-in-a-Box kits is in country and is being allocated based on identified needs.

Funding is currently being sought to support infrastructural repairs for up to 100 severely affected schools, benefiting an estimated 100,000 students, as well as their teachers and parents. UNICEF Jamaica will also expand its Be Prepared disaster risk reduction activity booklet by developing a companion psychosocial first aid version tailored specifically for early childhood learners. This forms part of a wider package of mental health and psychosocial support interventions targeting more than 100,000 students and their families.



The Providence Infant School in Flankers, St. James, sustained significant structural damage, including the complete destruction of several toilet facilities.

To strengthen the education workforce, 600 teachers from the most affected schools are being identified to receive training in the Return to Happiness (RTH) methodology, supporting their own recovery and equipping them to better assist approximately 18,000 students. In parallel, MOESYI's Guidance Counselling Unit has initiated training for an additional 450 counsellors and volunteers to provide more specialized psychosocial support to at least 5,500 of the most affected students and their families.

Child Protection

During the reporting period, a total of 1,152 children (561 girls) and 141 caregivers (96 women) received community-based mental health and psychosocial support through child-friendly safe spaces and community outreach.

Children First Agency (CFA), UNICEF's implementing partner, delivered individual and group psychosocial interventions to 495 children (236 girls) and 99 caregivers (66 women) across St. James (23), St. Elizabeth (235), Clarendon (99) and St. Thomas (237). Although Clarendon and St. Thomas were not among the most severely affected parishes, specific communities continue to face significant disruption, with homes destroyed or still flooded. Four boys requiring medical attention were referred to specialized services.



UNICEF partner, Children First Agency, engages with children during a psychosocial support intervention at a child friendly space established in St. Elizabeth.

UNICEF, in partnership with the Jamaica Red Cross (JRC), has initiated mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities in the Petersfield High School shelters in Westmoreland, engaging 41 children (21 girls) and 42 caregivers (30 women). The team conducted group sessions for both children and caregivers, focusing on emotional expression and stress management, and carried out assessments to inform expansion of services in additional communities.

Support was also provided to the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) to deliver emergency supplies and psychosocial services to 616 children (304 girls) residing in state care facilities in Trelawny (57), Westmoreland (21), St James (64), Hanover (91), St Elizabeth (32) and Manchester (32), as well as to 319 children in foster care across the six affected parishes.

To reinforce ongoing psychosocial support activities, 35 Early Childhood Development kits, six recreation kits and 800 hygiene and dignity kits have been distributed to implementing partners.

Tailored Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) training materials have been shared with partners, and coaching of PSEA focal points is ongoing to ensure systematic integration of PSEA content into staff and volunteer training. UNICEF continues to work closely with the inter-agency PSEA Network (chair and co-chairs) to deliver sensitisation sessions for humanitarian personnel through in-person and online briefings, and to disseminate key communication materials across sectoral channels.

Humanitarian Cash Assistance

UNICEF continues to be among the few actors providing targeted, child-focused support in Jamaica's Hurricane Melissa response, working closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) and UN partners to keep children's needs at the centre of recovery efforts. Leveraging technical expertise and experience, UNICEF is influencing the expansion of social protection measures to reach vulnerable households with children, including those with disabilities.

Damage assessments are progressing rapidly using mobile tools developed with UNICEF's technical contributions. To date, 17,000 assessments have been completed by the MLSS—representing 36 per cent of the estimated 47,000 affected households.

UNICEF is strengthening coordination through active participation in the Cash Working Group (CWG), which convened over 12 organizations with cash commitments targeting 3,000–7,000 affected individuals. There is strong interest in harmonizing targeting through the MLSS using socio-economic parameters outlined in the Benefit Level Calculator being developed by UNICEF. A dedicated UNICEF-led workstream is advancing this process, alongside efforts to identify safe and inclusive payment mechanisms and strengthen communication and feedback systems to keep affected populations informed and engaged.

UNICEF is also initiating horizontal expansion of social protection through an innovative digital voucher mechanism, leveraging the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) mobile app. This system will enable rapid, secure assistance for approximately 1,500 children with disabilities and their families, reducing logistical barriers, prioritizing inclusion, stabilizing local markets, and providing real-time tracking of voucher redemption, issued by the government. With an estimated 450,000–500,000 persons living with disabilities in Jamaica, this innovation has significant potential for nationwide scale-up, transforming how social protection systems serve vulnerable populations.

Cross-cutting

Community feedback is being gathered through partner reports and assessments as well as digital surveys to inform programme adjustments and strengthen accountability to affected populations.

In this response and recovery period, Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) messages are critical in raising awareness and encouraging best practices relating to key issues including food safety, nutrition, breastfeeding, preventing water borne diseases, mental health and wellness and child protection. These messages will be aired on radio stations which will reach the affected communities as electricity and connectivity are restored. The messages will also be carried in town centres and remote communities via town criers. UNICEF proposes to deploy a U-Report poll to solicit information from adolescents about the impact of the hurricane on their lives. This will help to inform the recovery plan. The poll will be implemented when telecommunication services have been restored.

In the three weeks since Hurricane Melissa, communication and advocacy have remained essential to ensuring that the voices and needs of affected children and families are clearly heard. Within the first 24 hours, UNICEF captured photographs of the devastation and produced a video appeal from the field to support urgent fundraising and advocacy efforts. Ongoing visits to impacted schools and engagements with educators have continued to provide critical insights into the disruption of education services and the evolving needs of children.

The power of storytelling has also played a central role in mobilizing support. UNICEF's feature on 13-year-old Jordan, a child with Type 1 Diabetes who urgently needed a safe way to store his life-saving medication, generated an overwhelming response from the public on UNICEF Jamaica's social media pages. Philanthropists, moved by his story, reached out to UNICEF and provided the essential items he needed. Jordan's experience demonstrates how effective communication can activate community solidarity and ensure that vulnerable children receive timely help when they need it most. Additionally showing UNICEF supporting and strengthening the health system through mobile clinics, highlight the fact that we are the partner of choice for child-focused response and recovery.

Visibility around the arrival of emergency supplies was also critical. Through the dissemination of timely news releases, a special UNICEF driven feature on World Children's Day and coordination of more than ten high-impact interviews with international and local media, UNICEF's leadership was prominently highlighted.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

Coordination platforms have been established with UNICEF by line ministries and agencies including Ministry of Health and Wellness; Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information; Ministry Labour and Social Security, ODPEM and other public institutions and local partners in Jamaica. UNICEF is also actively participating in regional, sub-regional, national and local meetings with the Caribbean Development Partners Group – Disaster Management (CDPG-DM) through the Thematic Working Groups, United Nations Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) and National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) meetings. UNICEF continues to work closely with implementing partners and key government agencies to ensure an

effective and efficient response. UNICEF is also participating in coordination meetings being held by UNOCHA in Montego Bay to facilitate coordination in areas of the country where multiple humanitarian actors are concentrating their efforts, these meeting will allow UNICEF to ensure its response reaches the most vulnerable communities. Also, UNICEF recently participated in an Emergency Operation Centre meeting for the St. James Parish with parish level government, district representatives and humanitarian NGOs, including the Red Cross.

As the co-chair for the UNETT, UNICEF is facilitating the harmonization of the UN response alongside government authorities and humanitarian partners. UNICEF is taking the lead in WASH, Nutrition and Education in coordination with other UN agencies.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

International media coverage, supported by UNICEF's PFP amplified the impact of the response in Jamaica. Features in *Forbes* and *The European Sting* highlighted the scale of the crisis and UNICEF's child-focused interventions, using human interest stories to mobilize global support and drive donor engagement.

- [After the storm: Young Jordan's diabetes struggle](#) - Jamaica Observer
- [New Health and Wash Strategy Rolled Out With UNICEF Support](#) - Jamaica Information Service
- [After the storm: How Jordan is surviving diabetes post Hurricane Melissa](#) - UNICEF Jamaica
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/unicefusa/2025/11/04/supporting-children-in-jamaica-in-the-wake-of-hurricane-melissa/>
- <https://europeansting.com/2025/11/05/half-of-jamaicas-population-reeling-from-hurricane-melissa>

Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF is reaching out and coordinating with donors and private sector partners to secure timely and flexible funding for immediate response and early recovery priorities where the government and the most affected communities require support.

UNICEF Jamaica has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with key partners, Global Empowerment Mission (GEM), Food for the Poor, and American Friends of Jamaica, under the Building a Better Jamaica Fund 2.0, an initiative administered by the National Commercial Bank Foundation. The MOU will facilitate the scale up emergency relief efforts for children and families impacted by Hurricane Melissa.



Olga Isaza, UNICEF Jamaica Representative (left), joins partners in signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate the scale up of emergency relief efforts for children and families affected by Hurricane Melissa. UNICEF will spearhead efforts in the areas of restoring access to safe water, proper sanitation and hygiene and nutrition. The MOU was facilitated by the Building a Better Jamaica Fund 2.0 and administered by the N.C.B. Foundation.

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