



**On the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, a young child's life hangs in the balance. As his family attempts to survive in this desolate area, extreme hunger and dehydration threaten the life of 3-year-old Melvin Mila.**



# On the brink

**W**hen we met him, the little boy hadn't eaten in two days. Struggling to keep his eyes open, Melvin's tiny hands clung weakly to his mother. The boy was listless — except when he wailed because of hunger pains.

*"They were hungry and thirsty; their life was ebbing away." (Psalm 107:5)*

"I'm very worried because I don't have anything to give him," said Antoinette, Melvin's mother. "I pray to God for something to come along. Please provide food for the baby."

Because of her own health deficiencies, Antoinette's ability to breastfeed is limited. And without a reliable source of nutrition, Melvin remains undernourished. His current weight barely reaches 12 pounds.

Melvin's father, Juan, is further distressed because he can't earn enough money to take his child to the hospital, let alone feed him every day. It's cruelly ironic that, living in such a barren region, Juan's only skill is farming. Every day, the destitute father attempts to plant beans, yucca and plantains in the unfertile soils of a severely arid area. Juan sheepishly told us his family "eats once a day... sometimes..." emphasizing the word "sometimes."

Dehydration also ravages little Melvin's frail body. Lacking both nutrients and precious fluid, Melvin's skin is paper-thin. Festering scabs cover his body — another sign of malnutrition — and his legs are like rubber toothpicks. Melvin's weakened condition makes him susceptible to frequent fevers and colds, and his family's horrendous living conditions expose him to an array of biting insects.

"When he eats, he's a lot stronger," Antoinette said. Lamenting her son's current condition, she told us, "There's nothing I can do... All I can do is turn him over to God." The poor mother can't remember the last time she saw her little boy smiling. All she can share with her ailing son are her tears.

Throughout the family's shack, magazine clippings of food advertisements hang on the walls. Antoinette posts them there; somehow they offer the suffering mother hope amid a desperate situation.

For destitute mothers like Antoinette, a kind neighbor is often the only source of food for their children. Occasionally, someone will offer her powdered milk or rice for Melvin, but these instances are too infrequent to make a significant difference in the boy's health. Antoinette can only hope and pray that her family will receive aid through the compassion and generosity of others. "If you could help me, I can't pay you back, but God can," pleads Antoinette.

*"Say not to your neighbor, 'Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give,' when you can give at once."  
(Proverbs 3:28)*

Sadly, cases like Melvin's are all-too-common among poor families living in the Caribbean and Latin America. The need for lifesaving food in these areas is widespread and urgent. Please help Food For The Poor give families and innocent children the nourishment they need by sending a gift for food today.

