

## From Maracaibo, Venezuela

Friday, May 31, 2019:

The humanitarian crisis here in Venezuela has reached a new record level, especially here in Zulia state. There has been no water for 23 days in a row. There have been power outages of up to 22 hours a day. For example, this past Sunday there were only 2 hours of power, and it was out all Sunday night until Monday morning. But thankfully, I could teach because of the generator which was bought with several generous donations. It helps that food doesn't go bad in the fridge and we can keep phones charged.

The gasoline situation is also a major situation. It is almost impossible to get gas as it is getting scarce and gas stations are only open when there is electricity. The gas line in this photo I took on Monday, May 20 was 7 blocks long. People waited for 8 hours to get gas.

People also lined up containers on the highway waiting for water trucks to pass and give them water.



That was on Monday. So yesterday (Thursday, May 30) I found gas for \$5 for 20 liters (5.28 gal) to put in the car and the generator. That's a fair price seeing as how the 1st guy wanted \$10. For people who can't afford the black market price and wait in line, the gas is so cheap it's almost free. But what happened after I took those photos on Monday is that the gas station ran out of gas and people have been standing in line for 3 days waiting for the gas truck. One truck used to service one station, but now one truck provides gas to 3 or 4 stations, so they have to ration it and they only let people get 30 liters (7.92 gal) ... unless you give \$5 to the station attendant (it's not self-service) & then he'll give you more. But \$5 is a lot of money for us. And it's going to get more expensive because according to a National Guardsman I talked to, there's not a lot of gas left in the country and they're not going to send any more gas out to the state of Zulia and people are really freaking out. We've had all these power outages and so people are buying gas operated generators in a country that's full of oil and now we have no gas. It's so crazy, because we're the state with the most oil.



At banks, people line up for hours to get only 10,000 BsS (2 dollars ) because of the lack of cash.

For some perspective, that might buy a dozen eggs and a loaf of bread.



I have been wanting to start the *escuelita* (the little afternoon school) back up again, but it is a struggle to get it going. Although we have some resources, the current situation poses a major hindrance. People are so busy trying to get a little food or water that it is difficult to gather the kids to come. Also due to the current situation, our financial situation is below what's required to buy supplies and snacks for the kids. But we are still doing everything we can to start it as soon as possible. School kids lost this school year and they really need help.



This is Daniel. He goes to my church. Sunday he was showing me the mosquito bites that are covering his arms. This is very dangerous because mosquito-borne diseases once preventable or treatable, like malaria (previously eradicated in Venezuela in 1961), dengue fever, Zika, etc. are on the rise now due to the lack of medicines.

On the bright side, Mely received a degree as Specialist in Research Methodology and continues to work at the Hospital General del Sur. The lack of medicines and supplies is very hard to deal with and she loses many patients unnecessarily.



Jose and I have finished our undergraduate studies to be Psychologists. Jose is an honor roll student and got the highest mark with a special publication mention in his final thesis. We both have been working seeing patients at the Psychiatric Hospital since last year with no pay.

Axel has started his 3rd semester in computer engineering. This week the university required a month's tuition in advance and the increase in tuition made it difficult for us to pay, but God provided.

All our donors, whether they give a lot or a little bit, are being the instruments that God is using to provide things like Axel's tuition, the generator, and boxes of supplies. You are blessing those in need and God is watching. Although we still have needs, God has used unknown angels to bless us and others and we appreciate it more that words can express.

God bless you all,

Rubén