

The five districts of Maracaibo with the highest levels of food insecurity

The districts within the municipality of Maracaibo that have the highest levels of food insecurity are Bolívar, Cacique Mara, Idelfonso Vásquez, Manuel Dagnino and Venancio Pulgar.¹ In all five of these districts, 100% of households reported that, in the last three months, they had: (i) worried about running out of food; (ii) ran out of food; (iii) adults cut a meal from their diet in a day; (iv) adults did not have a healthy diet. In these five districts, over 90% of households indicated that, in the last three months, (v) both children and adults felt hunger but did not eat; (vi) children in their household had an unhealthy diet (with the exception of Bolívar, 88%); and (vii) children had an unvaried diet.

This data was the result of the *Survey on Food Security in the city of Maracaibo*, conducted by the Commission for Human Rights of the State of Zulia (Codhez) during early September 2018. The survey, based on the Latin American and Caribbean Food Security Scale (ELCSA) questionnaire, was conducted in all of the 18 districts of Maracaibo in 800 households, resulting in a range of 30 to 80 households interviewed per district. This report describes the characteristics of the food insecurity experienced by households in these districts. The report also describes each districts access to economic assistance, along with other relevant information, with the purpose of highlighting the needs of the most vulnerable communities of the city, where the Venezuelan State has disregarded its obligation to guarantee Venezuelans' right to food. The report also includes sections on the districts Santa Lucía and San Isidro, also having alarming levels of food insecurity, due to its geographic and demographic particularities.

A historic center in distress: Bolívar

Food insecurity

District Bolívar has the highest rates of households where children tend to eat once a day (21%) or sometimes not at all (13%). Bolívar also has the highest rate of households where, at least once in the last three months, due to a lack of money or other resources, children did not eat at all during an entire day (21%). The reality for adults is similar: adults in 33% of households tend to eat once a day or sometimes not at all – the highest rate reported in the city.

The data indicates that such precarity is not a universal experience for all children in the district: 46% of households surveyed indicated that the children in their home eat three times a day regularly. In spite of this regularity, most households still experience important levels of food insecurity. 67% indicated that at least once in the last three months, due to a lack of money or other resources, children stopped having at least one meal during the day (breakfast, lunch, or dinner). Additionally, 83% reported that, at least once in the last three months, the children in their household felt hunger but were not able to eat due to a lack of money or other resources. That is, while 46% of family members below the age of 18 tend to eat three times a day, the

¹ Districts are referred to in Venezuela as *parroquias*. The districts are listed alphabetically, not by the level of gravity of their current situation.

majority have, at least once, were not able to satiate their hunger and has cut a meal from their day.

It is important to note that not a single household in this district reported that the adults in their home tend to eat three times a day, suggesting that the adult family members are sacrificing meals to feed their children.

District characteristics

Considering that the Bolívar district is home to the centers of political power of the city of Maracaibo and the state of Zulia, that it is the center for most public transportation lines, and that it is surrounded by some of the most important popular markets, it is necessary to conduct more detailed research to uncover the underlying causes for the particular vulnerabilities of this community in spite of their proximity to the aforementioned resources.

During 2018, Maracaibo has been marked by a prolonged and profound crisis in the provision of basic public services, also affecting inhabitants access to the right to food. In Bolívar, 100% of households reported that failures in electrical and water services greatly affected their ability to eat. 67% reported that failures in the provision of gas to their household, essential for cooking, greatly affected their ability to eat – another 33% responded their ability to eat was affected to a small extent. In Bolívar, 50% blame the national government for the poor nourishment of their community, followed by 14% who blame the communal councils and another 14% who blame the owners of *abastos*, small-scale community-based stores that sell food products.

Economic assistance

Bolívar has the second highest rate of households with family members who have migrated abroad (66.7%), of which 95% receive remittances – 50% receive these regularly and 45% ‘once in a while’. That is, 63.37% of the households in the district receive economic assistance from family members abroad. 100% of households have purchased government-subsidized boxes of food (CLAP box), but the frequency with which they have access to CLAP boxes is amongst the lowest in the city. Not a single household reported having received the box on a monthly basis, while 62% reported having access to the CLAP boxes three or less times a year.

Poverty in the middle of the city: Cacique Mara

Food insecurity

In the Cacique Mara district, not a single household in the survey reported that the children in their homes tend to eat three times a day, the most alarming rate in the city of Maracaibo. 76% reported that children tend to eat two times a day, 18% once a day, and 6% sometimes not at all.

However, most of the children that eat twice a day have not had the experience of eating once a day or less. 12% reported that, due to a lack of money or other resources, the children in their household ate one time in a day at least once in the last three months and 15% responded they hadn’t eaten at all at least once in the last three months. That is, 73% have not had the experience of eating two or more times in a day in the last three months.



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In contrast, the households of this district report the second highest rate of adults that tend to eat once a day (23%) and sometimes not at all (5%). The households also have high rates of adults eating one time in a day (70%) or nothing at all (15%) at least once in the last three months. When comparing the situation of children to that of adults in the district, when there are insufficient funds or resources in the family, adults sacrifice meals to feed their children at least twice a day.

District characteristics

Cacique Mara is a district surrounded by main roadways: *circumvalación 1 and 2* along with *Avenida La Limpia*. The district has the second highest percentage of people who consider themselves black (25%).

100% of households reported that failures in electrical and water services greatly affected their ability to eat. 33% reported that failures in the provision of gas to their household, essential for cooking, greatly affected their ability to eat – another 55% responded their ability to eat was affected to a small extent. In Cacique Mara, 44% blame the national government for the poor nourishment of their community, followed by 31% who blame the owners of *abastos* and 13% blame the communal councils.

Economic assistance

Cacique Mara is the district which receives economic assistance from family members abroad with the lowest frequency. 55% of households report having a direct family member who has migrated, 100% of whom send remittances. However, only 18% receive remittances regularly while 82% receive them only once in a while. On the other hand, while every household has bought a CLAP box, none reported having access to these on a monthly basis. In fact, the majority receive it three times or less a year (75%). The rest receive it every two months (13%) or have only received it once (13%). These rates represent the second lowest frequency of CLAP box acquisition in the city. Additionally, 92.5% have received direct economic assistance from the government (in the form of pensions, direct money transfers, and *carnet de la patria* money transfers). Food insecurity in the district of Cacique Mara is thus marked by uncertainty in the reception of remittances and denial of consistent service in governmental economic assistance.

Hunger in the peripheries: Idelfonso Vásquez

Food insecurity

Idelfonso Vásquez is characterized by having the second lowest rate of households where children regularly eat three times a day (2%), but the highest rate of households where children tend to eat twice a day (85%). Nonetheless, a majority of children have experienced eating once (45%) or not at all (11%) at least once in a day in the past three months due to a lack of money or other resources. 9% reported that the children tend to eat once a day and 4% sometimes not at all. In 70% of households, adults tend to eat twice a day. However, at least once in the last three months, due to a lack of money or other resources, 94% of adults ate one meal or nothing at all during an entire day – the highest rate in the city.



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District characteristics

Idelfonso Vásquez is located in the northeast of the city, on the border with the municipality of Mara, which marks the transition from the city of Maracaibo to the indigenous territory of the wayuu and añú peoples, La Guajira. The district has the highest percentage of people who identify as wayuu (20%) on par with district San Isidro. It is one of the peripheral districts of the city, characterized by both extremely dense urban areas but also ample plots of semi-rural land at its outskirts. Idelfonso Vásquez is the district with the highest average quantity of family members per household at 8.8 people.

100% of households reported that failures in electrical and water services greatly affected their ability to eat. 66% reported that failures in the provision of gas to their household, essential for cooking, greatly affected their ability to eat – another 14% responded their ability to eat was affected to a small extent. In Idelfonso Vásquez, 34% blame the national government for the poor nourishment of their community, followed by 18% who blame the communal councils and 13% who blame the owners of *abastos*.

Economic assistance

Idelfonso Vásquez is the district least affected by the migratory phenomenon: 64% of households report not having a family member abroad. The district also has the lowest rate of remittances received from family members abroad (11%) and the second lowest rate of regular remittance reception amongst those who do receive assistance (22%) given that most households receive remittances inconsistently (67%). Even though every household reported having acquired a CLAP box, not a single household received them on a monthly basis. The majority have received it every two months (62%), followed by three or less times a year (32%) and only once (6%). 82% reported receiving economic assistance from the government.

The forgotten district of the south: Manuel Dagnino

Food insecurity

In Manuel Dagnino, the majority of children tend to eat twice a day but, at some point in the last three months, due to a lack of money or resources, only eat once or not at all in a day. While a relatively lower percentage of households reported that the children sometimes do not eat at all (4%), 18% of homes reported that in the last three months, due to a lack of money or other resources, children had not eaten in an entire day at least once – the second highest rate in the city. 12% reported that children tend to eat once a day, but 71% reported eating only once in a day in the last three months – due to a lack of money or other resources – at least once, the highest rate in the city. 73% of households reported that the children tend to eat twice a day, and in 12% three times a day. Nonetheless, even for the households where children eat three times a day there are alarming levels of food insecurity as 100% reported that, at least once in the last three months, the children of their home felt hunger but were not able to eat due to a lack of money or other resources.

District characteristics

Manuel Dagnino is surrounded by two main highways – *circumvalación 1 and 2* – and *Avenida Sabaneta*, where the single metro line of the city runs above ground, creating a barrier

between this district and rest of the city. 50% of the district considers itself *moreno*, the second highest rate in Maracaibo, 30% white, 17.5% black (third highest rate), and 2.5% afro-descendant.

100% of households reported that failures in electrical and water services greatly affected their ability to eat. In Manuel Dagnino, 32% blame the national government for the poor nourishment of their community, followed by 23% who blame the communal councils (second highest rate of blame for communal councils), 23% who blame the owners of *abastos* and 16% who blame the governor of Zulia.

Economic Assistance

In Manuel Dagnino, 57.5% of households have at least one family member abroad, the fourth highest rate of migration amongst Maracaibo's districts. 95.7% of households with family members abroad receive remittances. This district has the second highest rate of regular reception of remittances (65.3%). 90% receive economic assistance from the government (third highest rate) and 100% have acquired the CLAP boxes at some point. Nonetheless, none of the households surveyed had received the CLAP boxes on a monthly basis: 15% receive it every two months, 48% three or less times a year, 38% only once.

Another peripheral district in distress: Venancio Pulgar

Food insecurity

Venancio Pulgar has the second highest rate of households where children do not eat all day regularly (9%) and the third highest rate of eating once a day regularly (16%). 65% tend to eat twice a day and just 9% eat three times a day - the third lowest rate in the city. 100% responded that in the last three months, their household's children had, due to a lack of money or other resources: stopped having a healthy diet in the last three months, not had a varied diet, stopped having a meal in a day at least once (breakfast, lunch or dinner), ate less than they should have, were served less food, and felt hungry but were not able to eat.

Food insecurity is similar for the adults of Venancio Pulgar. In 8% of households, adults did not eat at all in an entire day regularly, 18% eat once a day. The majority of adults eat twice a day (60%) and 14% report eating three times a day regularly.

District characteristics

Venancio Pulgar neighbors district Idelfonso Vásquez in the northeastern periphery of Maracaibo. It is home to areas of both high density and lower density. According to the results of our survey, it has the second highest average of members per household, 8.62 people and the third highest percentage of people who identify as black (24%).

100% of households reported that failures in electrical services greatly affected their ability to eat, 98% in reference to failures in water services. 86% reported that failures in the provision of gas to their household, essential for cooking, greatly affected their ability to eat (third highest rate in Maracaibo) – another 12% responded their ability to eat was affected to a small extent.

In Venancio Pulgar, 41% blame the national government for the poor nourishment of their community, followed by 13% who blame the communal councils, 11% who blame the governor of Zulia, and 11% who blame privately-owned businesses.

Economic assistance

This district has the second highest rate of no family members having left Venezuela (62%), trailing only its neighbor, Idelfonso Vásquez. Of the households with family members abroad, 42% receive remittances regularly, 47% do so ‘once in a while’, and 11% believe they will in the future. Every household reports to have acquired a CLAP box at least once, but only 12% receive it every month. The majority purchase it three times or less a year (44%) or every two months (42%). 100% of households reportedly receive economic assistance from the government.

Every district is different: The cases of Santa Lucía and San Isidro

Santa Lucía, urban

Santa Lucía is a historic area of the city, one that responded affirmatively to most of the questions posed in the ELCSA scale: 88% responded that their children had an unhealthy diet and 77% stated that children had been served less food and that they had felt hunger but were not able to eat. Nonetheless, the children of Santa Lucía have not cut as many meals as those in other, more vulnerable districts. 35% of households reported that, in the last three months, due to a lack of money or other resources, children had only eaten one meal in a day at least once. However, no households reported that the children had ever had to go without food for an entire day. 46% reported that the children tend to eat three times a day while the remaining 54% tend to eat twice a day. In contrast, only 10% of adults in Santa Lucía eat three times a day while 90% tend to eat twice a day – the highest percentage of adults eating twice a day in the municipality. We deduce that adults are sacrificing a meal a day to guarantee better nourishment for the children of their households. Santa Lucía is also the district with the highest percentage of people who identify as black (30%) and have the lowest frequency of access to CLAP boxes – 67% have only received it once.

San Isidro, rural

San Isidro is a difficult district to access, with the highest percentage of rural land in the municipality, and has a number of noteworthy characteristics. Like Idelfonso Vásquez, it has the highest percentage of people who identify as wayuu (20%) and, like district Cecilio Acosta, has the highest rate of monthly access to CLAP boxes (67%). Even though 39% of households in San Isidro reported that the children eat three times a day and 61% eat twice a day, it remains the district with the fourth highest rate of children who, due to a lack of money or other resources, had to eat only once in a day at least once in the last three months (57%). Additionally, 27% of households in San Isidro receive remittances regularly from family members abroad, the fifth highest rate.

Inequality in the distribution of CLAP boxes

The five districts with the highest levels of food insecurity are the same districts which receive CLAP boxes with the lowest frequency. In Bolívar, Cacique Mara, Idelfonso Vásquez, and Manuel Dagnino, not a single household reported receiving the box at a monthly basis. In Venancio Pulgar, the rate reached 12%. This indicates that the CLAP program is not prioritizing the most vulnerable communities in the city.

The frequency of CLAP box reception is also marked by significant racial inequality. Just 3% of blacks and 5% of afro-descendants in Maracaibo reported having access to the CLAP boxes on a monthly basis in comparison to 36% of whites, 28% of *morenos*, and 28% of wayuus.

Recommendations for the Venezuelan State

- *Geographic inequalities:* The west of Maracaibo has higher levels of food insecurity in comparison to the east. It is urgent for the Venezuelan State to design and implement strategic policies for peripheral districts of the city so that these also have access to the infrastructure and quality services to guarantee the right to an adequate standard of living.
- *CLAP:* We urge the Venezuelan State to eliminate any form of inequality which exists in regards to the frequency of CLAP box distribution, particularly attending to the most vulnerable districts: Bolívar, Cacique Mara, Idelfonso Vásquez, Manuel Dagnino, and Venancio Pulgar. It is evident that the assistance is not reaching the most needed communities – specially affecting the black and afro-descendant populations of Maracaibo – in a context in which the majority of communities blame communal councils (the distributors of the CLAP boxes in each community) for the poor nourishment of their community. In conclusion, the Venezuelan State must revise structures for distribution of humanitarian assistance in the form of food so that inhabitants of all districts may be properly attended, without discrimination based on political views, social characteristics, racial identity or any other reason.
- *Public services:* Without a doubt, the crises in the provision of public services has intensified the food insecurity experienced by the inhabitants of Maracaibo. Every district has been affected by the constant failures in electrical, water, and gas services. Any effort to provide direct assistance to the population will not solve the alarming levels of food insecurity until every person in Maracaibo has access to quality public services. We demand that the *Corporación Eléctrica Nacional* (Corpoelec, national electricity company), *Hidrológica del Lago de Maracaibo* (Hidrolago, local water company), and *Servicio Autónomo para el Suministro de Gas e Infraestructura* (Sagas, local gas company), coordinate measures with local, regional, and national authorities in order to re-establish the respect for human rights and re-establish and improve the public services of Maracaibo.

Maracaibo
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