

THE REA FAMILY

Missionaries to Zambia



June 2024

Drought and Power update.

Summary: Major Crisis.

Prayer requests:

We are expecting two grandchildren this fall!

One born in the USA and one born in Zambia

Zambia's economic trials and severe drought

Sending Church:

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Due to the worst drought in 100 years Zambia is lacking both food and power. The lake levels at the major reservoir have steadily dropped over the last few years due to increased demand for power by a rapidly growing population. This year we received about 1/3 of our normal rain. This resulted in widespread crop losses in about two thirds of the nation. Most subsistence farmers run out of food about 1-2 months before the harvest. Now, having invested everything they have, many are facing a total loss on their crops. As if that were not enough, this lack of rain has also resulted in the water allocation for power generation to be completely used up by June of this year. Rain will not fall until November, and it flows into the reservoir will not begin to increase until March – June of 2025. This has resulted in “load-shedding”. The utility company Zesco has now cut power for 16-20 hours per day. Officially it is 12 hours, but often due to grid instability it is off far longer than that.

How this affects us:

Thankfully last year when we had a similar scare we invested in a basic solar system. Upon seeing the power situation we made the decision to double the capacity of our solar array and battery bank. We are now about 80% off grid. This provides us with power almost 100% of the time. The last time we went through extended load shedding similar to this we were spending \$400-\$600 per month on fuel for a generator. The investment in solar will quickly pay for itself and the stability for our family is something we are really thankful for. Crime has already increased. Upon hearing of home intrusion robberies near us we have undertaken security upgrades at our home and the church. This involves solar security lights, higher block walls, intrusion deterrents on the tops of the walls and security cameras at our home.

How this affects Zambia:

Anyone who needs power to perform their job is out of work. A welder simply cannot work when power is only on for 6 hours at night. One restaurant owner told me it was costing him almost \$700 per day in fuel for a giant generator, and this was when load shedding was only 6 hours per day. Having a shortage of both food and power is brutally hard on the people of Zambia.

The Church:

Our young men are struggling to find ways to make money. Most high school graduates have about a 3rd grade reading and math ability in the place we minister. We knew it was low, but we recently tested some and were shocked at how low it is. We are trying to help with classes on both math and reading. Spiritually things are going very well. We have a growing group of people. They are showing signs of maturity. We have had setbacks, but this is to be expected. Cherri has built up a group of 15-25 ladies who are learning Christian character. And our young men continue to step up into leadership roles in the church. It is a slow process, but that is true anywhere. I prefer slow and steady. I think that is what builds strong men and women who will serve God over the long term.