



An angry crowd in front of the Hospital Diospi Suyana

On Sunday evening the precursors of the disaster waiting to happen were visible: over 100 people had assembled in front of the hospital's main gate hoping to get a doctor's appointment. By Monday morning the crowd had swelled to 500. Roughly 300 of them (patients and their relatives) were allowed in, the remaining 200 exasperated Peruvians were not. The atmosphere was strung to breaking point.

At nine o'clock I slowly move towards this dark wall; a truly threatening backdrop. Our wardens place a bench in front of the gate and then it's my turn. Armed with a megaphone I try to calm the crowd: "Most of you have had bus journeys of over 15 hours to reach Curahuasi. On your way here you passed and ignored several state hospitals. Our missionary hospital has reached its limit."

The ensuing hour is filled with questions and answers. Everyone wants to be treated in the hospital, but we have reached our capacity limit. On the one hand I can truly understand the patients' disappointment, but on the other hand some of them act as though it is their right to be treated by Diospi staff.

"We will never be able to meet all your demands," I call through the megaphone. "Every thankful patient, who returns to his village, encourages ten other neighbours to head to Curahuasi!"

A spokesperson makes his standpoint crystal clear: I am a high-ranking official from Cusco State. "You have got it all wrong," I explain to him, "our hospital wants to help the poor, not the upper middle class!"

An hour later I can climb down from my bench. The long conversation successfully diffused the situation. Many of the crowd realised that our missionary hospital by itself cannot put right all the weak-points of a dysfunctional health care system.

We are concerned about what the future may bring. When the long holidays start (from Christmas to March)

the run of people could assume explosive proportions. Will the hospital then need police protection?/KDJ



Trying to calm the crowd.



Inside: the waiting room is bursting at the seams; outside: the people are crowded together.



If we had ten doctors more, we could help many more Peruvians.