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Pedro and Mercedes, Dominican Republic Multidimensional Poverty Index Profile



Pedro is the head of family, and lives with his wife Mercedes. They have three children: Mario, their boy, is 15; Elena, their middle child, is 11, and their youngest child is Marta, 9. They all attend school. He also has two older children from a previous partner. They live with their mother. Two of Pedro's children have also died. One child died after childbirth as he needed an operation, and the other child died in first year of life.

He is a small-scale farmer. He owns 10 tareas of land (approximately 1.5 acres) — some is mountainous and the rest more level. He has a greenhouse to protect his plants and he plants hot chilies for export. He sells the crop in Moca (the regional capital 40 kilometers away from his home). His cousin owns a truck and takes Manuel's products to Moca. His father died and left 20 other tareas (just over 3 acres) to his 8 children and Manuel also uses part of that.

For the family's needs, he grows vegetables, beans, plantains and bananas on about 1.5 tareas of land. That is enough for them. Sometimes he does not have enough money for all of the family's needs and then he and his family eat lots of home-grown vegetables. The family uses money to buy the food that they do not grow such as rice, oil, sugar and salt which are crucial to their diet. They also need money to buy medicines, and clothes. They do not eat chili peppers themselves so do not use the cash crop they grow.

He was one of the first in the area to begin using a greenhouse to grow chilies. Though it was expensive to build, it has worked well for the family. This particular greenhouse was designed by his cousin. It was taller and has more space for open air than others — which helped to prevent the wind from destroying its wooden structure. In total, the chili plants last for almost one and a half years. Pedro was about to rip them out and plant new ones. He gets assistance from a non-profit organization with the new seedlings.

At the height of the plant's production, he makes about 1,000 pesos a day from exporting the crop. This works out at about





30,000 a month. But this past year, which was a good one, he averaged about 10,000 month (US \$263 a month). However, since production has been slow now for several months, and now he is selling nothing, he will need to go two to three months with no income as he plants the new crop.

Pedro owns 3 mules, but has not been able to make improvements to the family's house and their living conditions are of poor quality. For example, the family cooks with wood, the smoke from which causes problems for the eyes and lungs. They also have no electricity, a dirt floor and the nearest source of clean water is a river that is 15 minutes away.

His family has always been small farmers. This used to be a coffee producing area, but everyone got out of coffee when prices were low in the 1990s. Now, even though the price of coffee is high, there is no one here to pick coffee. "People now are lazy; they want jobs, not work the land," he says "But now with the new water (aqueduct) that ILAC (a Dominican NGO) helped build, we have water for agriculture. And water is life".

Pedro says: "I want to help my children, to get them educated. I had no education myself. I did not learn how to read. But I make enough to live. I live quietly."

Pedro and Mercedes are not poor according to the local income poverty line, but they are poor according to the MPI. The shaded boxes of the figure below show the deprivations that Pedro faces.

