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Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

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Manuel and Lola, Dominican Republic Multidimensional Poverty Index Profile



Manuel Rodriguez has lived in a small town in the north of the Dominican Republic for his whole life. He is 30 years old and is married to Lola. They have one daughter, Lucy who is 10 years old. They have lived for five years in their current house which is owned by Manuel's cousin.

A farmer, he takes pride that he can “make it” on his own. He does not own land but plants 4 tareas (just over half an acre, also owned by his cousin). He plants plantains, corn, string beans, beans, yucca, cebollin, and vegetables. He sells to a truck that drives past their house, but income from this is precarious. Because the road is bad, there are times

the truck does not make it as far as their home. The family eats about half of what he produces and sells the rest, unless the buyers fail to come; in which case he eats it all or gives it to his neighbours

Earlier in the year it rained almost constantly, and he could not work on his own land or the land of others. The family survived on what they could harvest from their land. With no money coming in, they had to cut back on what they could buy. Rice is the staple of the family's diet so if there's no money, there's no rice. Though they didn't suffer hunger, they suffered deprivation compared with what they're used to.

Besides working his own land, he works a minimum of 3 days a week as a day laborer for others; where he earns 300 pesos a day. He is very proud and says that he no major problems. “I maintain myself and my family well.” When asked about problems in the community, he mentioned that the biggest one had been lack of water, but that they now had irrigation water for their crops due to an irrigation system installed by a local NGO and the community.





Lola meanwhile felt the community had major problems. She felt that the bad condition of the road running through the town and the lack of electricity were major issues for the family. She also said that for her and the other local women there was no way out and no employment opportunities. “It is sad, but all I can do is take care of my husband,” she said.

She would like to have a small business or learn a trade, to help the family. Right now she is part of a small women’s group. The eight women meet weekly and have started a small rotating fund. They put in a small amount

every week and they take turns using it for things that they need. She uses it to get money to buy coffee in town that she then sells in small packages to the neighbours (mostly to the other women in her group). For every 12 packs of coffee she sells, she makes 24 pesos (70 US cents). Not much but at least she feels that she is contributing to the family income.

“Life is not good... We need money—not that I need money, but we need money for doctors. If you go to the doctor and you do not have money, they will not help you,” she says.

The couple has one daughter, but lost two children, both boys, during birth. One was particularly tragic because the family felt it could have been avoided. Santa went to the doctor the day before her child died and the doctor referred her to the hospital to give birth. When they got to the hospital, however, they were told to come back the next day because the family didn’t have health insurance. Yet the next day was too late, and their child died during birth.



Though health insurance is national, their family is not covered. They all said that who was and was not covered was political; during political campaigns people some are signed up, others not. Lola and Manuel have sent in the forms twice; yet they have never been accepted and have now given up on the scheme.

For the future, Lola’s main aspiration, besides getting training herself, is to help her daughter get educated. Her main hope is that with the help of God her daughter will be able to have education and get a job or profession. Their daughter said that she really wanted to be a teacher.

Manuel and Lola are poor according to the MPI. The shaded boxes of the figure below show the deprivations that they face.

