

Dr. Maria Claudia Lopez

Assistant Professor

Department of Community Sustainability

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources



Dr. Maria Claudia Lopez is an assistant professor in the Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University.

Dr. Lopez is a resource economist specializing in natural resources management, environmental economics, experimental economics and collective action. Her research uses multiple methods—including field economic experiments from behavioral economics, institutional analysis, econometrics, ethnography and participatory research—to understand how rural communities can collaborate successfully in the management of commonly held natural resources. She has done research in Colombia, Spain, Peru, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda and Tanzania. In addition, she is currently working on a project in Rwanda.

Dr. Lopez’s research goals include examining how communities in rural areas cope with external “shocks” to their socio-ecological system, such as large-scale infrastructure development projects, armed conflict or extreme environmental events, among others. Her work will investigate the underlying behaviors and institutions that provide resilience to households and communities to deal with external shocks, how collective action functions under extreme shocks to the system, and under what conditions households and communities fail to effectively deal with extreme events.

Dr. Lopez earned a master’s degree in rural development from the Universidad Javeriana in Colombia, and a Ph.D. in Resource Economics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In addition she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University where she was mentored by Nobel winner Elinor Ostrom.

Global research interests

- Natural resources management
- Experimental economics and behavioral economics
- Collective action
- Rule compliance
- Socio-ecological systems
- Institutional analysis

Geographic focus

- Africa
- Latin America