September 2026

Pedro Magaña Sáenz

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Professional Appointment

Nclusion | Palo Alto, United States
Research Economist *August 2026*

Education

University of Wisconsin—Madison | Wisconsin, United States
Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics *2026*

University of Michigan—Ann Arbor | Michigan, United States
M.S. in Applied Economics *2019*
M.A. in Public Policy *2019*

Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) | Mexico City, Mexico
B.A. in Economics *2012*

Fields of Interest

Development Economics; Organizational Economics; Firms; Public Policy

Citizenship and U.S. work authorization

Mexican citizen with U.S. permanent residency

Working papers

Signed, Sealed, Delivered: Digital Receipts in the Ugandan Dairy Chain (Job Market Paper)
with David J. Henning

Using a randomized experiment with dairy cooperatives in western Uganda, we provide causal evidence that SMS-based digital receipts for daily milk deliveries improve accountability, product quality, and delivery frequency. In a context of weak monitoring and imperfect transaction information, these messages allow smallholder farmers to better observe the behavior of intermediaries in the supply chain. The intervention effects vary with the intensity of information frictions. Among farmers facing high information frictions (i.e., those relying on intermediaries to transport milk), the intervention increased the detection of discrepancies and encouraged switching away from dishonest intermediaries. Farmers in low-friction settings (those who deliver milk themselves) delivered more frequently; the likely mechanism is a behavioral nudge created by receiving messages both on days with deliveries and days without deliveries. We also find that the intervention increased milk quality for both self-deliverers and farmers using transporters. Overall, our results show that simple digital tools can reduce information asymmetries and strengthen accountability in smallholder supply chains.

Coverage: World Bank Development Impact Blog

Banking Amidst Conflict: How Violence Shapes Financial Inclusion in Mexico
with Xiaofei Wang

We study how exposure to violence shapes the use of formal financial services in Mexico. Using administrative records on violent incidents, we train a long short-term memory (LSTM) neural network to generate out-of-sample, municipality-level forecasts of violence and define violence shocks as unexpected deviations of realized violence from

these predictions. We combine these shocks with nationwide administrative transaction data from the National Banking and Securities Commission (CNBV) covering ATM and correspondent banking activity across all municipalities from 2014 to 2019. We find that unexpected spikes in violence reduce ATM transactions per capita by approximately 1.6 percent in the month of the shock and 1.3 percent the following month, with effects dissipating within two months. In contrast, we find no statistically significant response in correspondent banking activity at any horizon, with point estimates close to zero. This divergence indicates that violence primarily disrupts access to traditional ATM infrastructure rather than inducing broad financial disengagement, and suggests that correspondent banking can serve as a partial buffer against violence-induced disruptions.

Work in progress

Digital Monitoring and Quality-Contingent Contracts: Aligning Incentives in the Ugandan Dairy Sector
with Taesoo Choi
Silent Transfers: Violence and Income Misreporting in Mexico
From Prayer to Progress: Religious Festivals and Development in Mexico

Research Grants

The Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics – University of Chicago, $25,000 USD *2026*
Role: ***PI*** *– with Taesoo Choi*
PEDL CEPR – Exploratory Research Grant, £40,000 GBP *2026*
Role: ***PI*** *– with Taesoo Choi*
The Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics – University of Chicago, $15,000 USD *2025*
Role: ***PI*** *– with David J. Henning*
International Growth Centre (IGC) – Agri-SME Evidence Fund, £20,000 GBP *2024*
Role: ***PI*** *– with David J. Henning*
The Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics – University of Chicago, $15,000 USD *2023*
Role: ***PI*** *– with David J. Henning*
J-PAL/CEGA – Digital Agricultural Innovations and Services (DAISI) Initiative , $71,000 USD *2023*
Role: ***PI*** *– with David J. Henning*
International Growth Centre (IGC) – Small Project Facility, £20,000 GBP *2022*
Role: ***PI*** *– with David J. Henning*
Total external funding raised as PI: $231,000 USD

Honors and Awards

AAE Conference Presentation Award (x3) – University of Wisconsin—Madison, $2,600 USD *2026*
GRF Conference Scholarship Award – University of Wisconsin—Madison, $1,000 USD *2026*
AAEA Travel Grant – Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA) *2025*
Thomsen Distinguished Graduate Dissertator Fellowship (nominated) – University of Wisconsin—Madison *2024*
AAE Dissertator Research Award – University of Wisconsin—Madison, $1,000 USD *2024*
Barbara and Thomas Lyon Scholarship, $4,000 USD, University of Wisconsin—Madison. *2023*
UW-Madison Travel Grant, $1,500 USD, University of Wisconsin—Madison *2022*
Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, University of Wisconsin—Madison *2021 – 2022*
Rackham International Student Fellowship, $10,000 USD, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor. *2019*
Annenberg Internship, $7,500 USD, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor *2017*
Ford School Fellowship, $2,500 USD, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor *2017*

Research Experience

Research Assistant, University of Wisconsin | Madison, Wisconsin
Professors: Dr. Dustin Frye, Dr. Corbett Grainger, and Dr. Bradford Barham *2021 – Present*
Research Assistant, University of Michigan | Ann Arbor, Michigan
Professors: Dr. Eduardo Montero and Dr. Zach Y. Brown *Spring 2020*
Research Assistant, Center on Finance, Law and Policy, University of Michigan | Ann Arbor, Michigan
Professors: Michael Barr, J.D.; Dr. Antoinette Schoar, and Dr. Eldar Shafir *Fall 2019*

Research Assistant, Northwestern University | Chicago, Illinois
Professors: Dr. Erika Deserranno and Dr. Gianmarco Leon-Ciliotta — *Summer 2019*
Research Associate, University of Michigan | Ann Arbor, Michigan
Economic Growth Institute — *2018 – 2019*
Research Assistant, University of Michigan | Ann Arbor, Michigan
Professors: Dr. Dean Yang; Dr. Xavier Giné, and Dr. Jessica Goldberg — *2017 – 2018*
Country Office Intern, Innovations for Poverty Action | Lilongwe, Malawi
Professors: Dr. Dean Yang; Dr. Xavier Giné, and Dr. Jessica Goldberg — *Summer 2017*
Research Coordinator, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) | Mexico City, Mexico
Professors: Dr. Enrique Seira and Dr. Joyce Sadka — *2011 – 2012*

Professional Experience

Economic Analysis Coordinator, Ministry of Finance | Mexico City, Mexico — *2014 – 2016*
Market Analyst, Laureate International Universities | Mexico City, Mexico — *2013 – 2014*
Financial Analyst, Laureate International Universities | Mexico City, Mexico — *2012 – 2013*
Parliamentary Advisor, Senate of Mexico | Mexico City, Mexico — *2010 – 2011*

Teaching Experience

Guest Lecturer, University of Wisconsin | Madison, Wisconsin
AAE 477/ECON 477: Agricultural and Economic Development in Africa — *Spring 2026*

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin | Madison, Wisconsin
AAE 474/ECON 474: Economic Problems of Developing Areas — *Fall 2025*
AAE 350: World Hunger and Malnutrition — *Spring 2022*
MATH 221: Calculus and Analytic Geometry II — *Fall 2020*

Teaching Assistant, University of Michigan | Ann Arbor, Michigan
PUBPOL 639: Quantitative Methods for Program Evaluation — *Spring 2019*
POLSCI 369: International Economic Relations — *Fall 2018*
PUBPOL 639: Quantitative Methods for Program Evaluation — *Spring 2018*
POLSCI 490: Game Theory and Formal Models — *Fall 2017*

Pre-Doctoral Publications

Magaña Sáenz, P.F. (2015). Behavioral Economics and Nudges Applied to Pawnshops. **Gaceta de Economía**, 34, 96-126. (Original in Spanish)

Talks (inc. scheduled)

2026 NEUDC 2026, 2026 Development Economics Rookiefest, MWIEDC 2026, PacDev 2026, MEA 2026, CSAE 2026, Nclusion Seminar, PSDRN Seminar Series 2025-2026, PEDL IOM Workshop
2025 AFE 2025 (University of Chicago), World Bank–KDI School Development Impact Conference, Bates White Seminar, AAEA/WAEA Joint Annual Meeting, Juli Plant Grainger Public Workshop, 2025 WEFIDEV-RFS-CEPR Conference (LSE)
2024 Development Workshop, Development Lab, Student Research Colloquium (University of Wisconsin)
2023 Development Workshop, Development Lab, Student Research Colloquium (University of Wisconsin)
2022 Development Lab, Student Research Colloquium (University of Wisconsin)
2021 Development Lab (University of Wisconsin)

Affiliations

Graduate Research Fellow, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin — *2025 – 2026*

Other Information

Languages: Spanish (Native), English (Fluent)
Skills: Stata (Advanced), LaTeX(Advanced), Microsoft Office (Advanced), R (Intermediate), Python (Intermediate)

References

Laura Schechter
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