

ESTHER DUFLO, DOCTOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



Esther Duflo is Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a founder and director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). She is known for her groundbreaking work in understanding the relationships among behavior, policy, and global poverty. In 2010, she was the recipient of the John Bates Clark Medal, awarded to economists under the age of forty who have made a significant contribution to economic thought and knowledge.

Born and raised in France, Professor Duflo received undergraduate degrees in history and economics from L'École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1994 and a master's degree in economics the following year from the Department and Laboratory of Applied and Theoretical Economics (DELTA), also in Paris. She moved to the United States to complete her Ph.D. in economics at MIT, where she was appointed assistant professor of economics in 1999. Quickly distinguished by her work, she was promoted to associate professor and at age twenty-nine became one of the youngest faculty members ever to have been granted tenure.

Professor Duflo is known for her unique approach to research, which involves collecting vast amounts of field data and using it to hypothesize and generate economic models. Her work aims to move beyond the assumption that failed policies are always a result of poor governance or corruption, and instead emphasizes the importance of identifying the reasons that people choose to make certain decisions and the types of incentives that may positively shift their behaviors. Professor Duflo has conducted more than two hundred randomized control trials researching issues such as education, health, access to finance, and household behavior in developing countries.

Her pursuit of the most effective methods of allocating resources to the poor has led to landmark and sometimes unexpected findings. One of Professor Duflo's studies revealed that selling mosquito nets for a nominal fee instead of distributing them free-of-charge would make villagers more likely to use them. Her randomized control trial in India showed that microcredit did not lead to a rise in a family's health, education levels, or economic well-being, and she contested the theory that microfinance loans directed at women help lift families out of poverty by positing that not every poor person is an entrepreneur.

Respected by economists, businessmen, and philanthropists alike, Professor Duflo received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2009 and both the David N. Kershaw Award and a CNRS Médaille de L'Innovation in 2011. She was awarded the inaugural Calvó-Armengol International Prize in Economics for 2010 and in 2008 became the inaugural holder of the international chair "Knowledge Against Poverty" at the Collège de France. In 2005, she was the recipient of a Best Young French Economist Prize. The author of several books, she recently coauthored *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*, which won the Financial Times and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award in 2011. Professor Duflo is currently a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research and serves as the founding editor of *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*.