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MIT's Esther Duflo Wins John Bates Clark Medal

The **American Economic Association** presented MIT's [Esther Duflo](#) the [John Bates Clark medal](#), awarded to the nation's most promising economist under the age of 40.

"Esther Duflo has distinguished herself through definitive contributions to the field of Development Economics," the AEA said in [its announcement](#). "Through her research, mentoring of young scholars, and role in helping to direct the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT, she has played a major role in setting a new agenda for the field of Development Economics, one that focuses on microeconomic issues and relies heavily on large-scale field experiments."

Ms. Duflo, 37, is the head of the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology's** Jameel Poverty Action Lab with **Abhijit Banerjee**. She's been at the forefront of using randomized experiments to analyze development programs. In doing so, she and her colleagues are uncovering ways to make sure that money spent to help poor people in developing countries is used effectively.

One experiment she ran with economists **Pascaline Dupas** and **Michael Kremer** randomly selected 70 schools in Western Kenya to receive an extra teacher, roughly halving the pupil-teacher ratio. The result: [Reduced teacher effort and insignificant increases in test scores](#). In an experiment she conducted in India, randomly selected teachers were given cameras with date and time stamps and told to take a picture of themselves and their students each morning and afternoon. The result: [Teacher absences fell sharply and student test scores improved](#).



American Economic Association
The John Bates Clark medal

Another experiment focused on giving beans to the poor as an incentive. The study found giving poor mothers 60 cents worth of dried beans as an incentive to immunize their children works astoundingly well. By answering these kinds of problems, Ms. Duflo, her colleagues, and the many economists around the world she has helped inspire, are uncovering ways to make sure that money spent on helping poor people in developing countries is used effectively.

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