

# Centuries-old Histories: Explaining Poverty in the Developing World



Nathan Nunn  
Professor, Economics

## CURRENT RESEARCH

Historical roots behind current economies help create tomorrow's public policy

According to recent statistics released by the United Nations, seventy-five percent of the world's poorest countries are located in Africa, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa's second largest country, also being ranked the poorest in the world with an average per capita Gross Domestic Product of \$394.25 in 2013. What has caused such countries to experience such poverty while others experience significant wealth and prosperity? Dr. Nathan Nunn, Professor of Economics at Harvard University, is interested in finding the answer. By examining the historical and evolutionary roots behind the current economic, cultural, and social differences between societies across the world, he and his team conduct research that seeks to better understand the origins of current underdevelopment. In particular, Dr. Nunn's research focuses on particular channels and mechanisms, such as the evolution of cultural practices, social norms, and political institutions. His research has helped to shape policies that are improving living standards of people around the world. Additionally, it has provided insight into the cultural and institutional details of societies, and their origins, which in turn, enables policy-makers to design policies that take into account the specifics of a country's environment.

Interdisciplinary in nature, Dr. Nunn's research draws from and contributes to a wide range of fields, including social psychology, economics, history, political science, and anthropology. He and his team collect data by conducting fieldwork, many times in remote areas of the world, in order to collect data that otherwise would not be available. While abroad, he and his team live simply and also try to contribute to the health...

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## AFFILIATION



Harvard University

## EDUCATION

- Ph.D., in Economics, 2005, University of Toronto

## AWARDS

- Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow, 2009

## RESEARCH AREAS

Humanities, Economics, Political Science, Sociology

## FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will support the continued research of Dr. Nathan Nunn, of Harvard University, as he examines the roots of current underdevelopment. Donations will fund the necessary \$200-300K/year for each large project conducted by Dr. Nunn's team and the \$50-60K/year required for smaller projects. Help uncover how and why a country's history has shaped its current economic environment and how policy can be better designed to account for a country's unique historical, cultural, and institutional setting.

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