ERF EMINENT LECTURER SERIES

GLOBAL POVERTY AND ANTI-POVERTY POLICIES

PROF. MARTIN RAVALLION,
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 10, 2017
ERF PREMISES, CAIRO, EGYPT
11:00 AM – 16:30 PM

ERF held a special event with Prof. Martin Ravallion to address *Global Poverty* and *Anti-Poverty Policies* followed by discussion moderated by Dr. Ibrahim El Badawi (Economic Research Forum) and Dr. Sherine El Shawarbi (Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University) on December 10, 2017.

Prof. Ravallion holds the inaugural Edmond D. Villani Chair of Economics at Georgetown University. Prior to joining Georgetown he was the Director of the World Bank's research department. Martin has advised numerous governments and international agencies on poverty and policies for fighting it, and he has written extensively on this and other subjects in economics, including five books and over 200 papers in scholarly journals and edited volumes. His latest book, The Economics of Poverty: History, Measurement and Policy, was published by Oxford University Press in 2016. He is past President of the Society for the Study of Economic Inequality, a Senior Fellow of the Bureau for Research in Economic Analysis of Development, a Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research, USA, and a non-resident Fellow of the Center for Global Development. Amongst various prizes and awards, in 2012 he was awarded the John Kenneth Galbraith Prize from the American Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, and in 2016 he received a Frontiers of Knowledge Award from Spain's BBVA Foundation. Martin is an Australian citizen who studied at the University of Sydney and the London School of Economics, where he obtained a PhD in economics.

This seminar is organized in the context of the ERF research agenda on *inequality and inclusive growth*.

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AGENDA

11:00-11:30   Networking and Registration

11:30-12:30   Session I: Global Poverty Revisited
Moderated by: Dr. Ibrahim Elbadawi, *Economic Research Forum*

New measures of global poverty are developed that take seriously the idea of relative-income comparisons within countries but also acknowledge that latent norms defining poverty vary systematically across countries. The ideal, welfare-consistent, measures are shown to be bounded below by a fixed absolute line and above by weakly-relative lines derived from a model of relative-income comparisons calibrated to data on national poverty lines. Both bounds indicate falling global poverty incidence, but more slowly for the upper bound. Either way, the developing world as a whole has a higher poverty incidence but is making more progress against poverty than the developed world.

The percentage of the population of the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) living below the upper bound has fallen from 39% in 1990 to 28% in 2013. However, survey coverage is still weak for MENA. (This presentation will be based on Ravallion's research with Shaohua Chen.)

12:30-13:30   Q&A / Open discussion

13:30-14:30   Lunch

14:30-15:15   SESSION II: Informational Constraints on Antipoverty Policies
Moderated by: Dr. Sherine El-Shawarby, Cairo University

It has often been said that the world's aggregate poverty gap is modest so it should not cost much to eliminate poverty using targeted transfers. However, identifying who is poor and by how much is particularly challenging for policy makers. With imperfect information about levels of living, the amount of money needed to eliminate poverty can quickly balloon. The presentation will cover two new papers that try to assess whether the data typically available and routinely used by policymakers in Africa are adequate to reliably identify who is poor. The results suggest that the standard data sources and targeting methods are not very effective in reaching poor households or poor individuals. Policy interventions will require either much more individualized information or broader coverage through less finely targeted, more universal, transfers. (This presentation will be based on Ravallion's research with Caitlin Brown and Dominique van de Walle.

15:15-16:30   Q&A / Open discussion