

## WEBINAR ON

### MEASURING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN THE MENA REGION: LABOUR MARKET, FIRMS AND HOUSEHOLDS

5-6 July 2022

#### The impact of the pandemic on jobs and enterprises in the MENA region

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought permanent changes to world economies. It has presented enormous challenges for governments, businesses, workers, and households. Lockdown policies and government efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on lives and livelihoods, as well as the economic impact, have shaped the evolution of the labor market.

Millions of workers have been exposed to income losses and layoffs, and the impact has been particularly severe for unprotected workers and the most vulnerable groups in the informal economy, which constitutes a considerable share of economic activity and employment in MENA. In addition, women are among the most affected groups, as they are overrepresented in sectors most exposed to contagion (health and education), and bear a disproportionate burden in care work, with the closure of schools and kindergartens.

To study the impact of the pandemic on employment, small businesses and households, the ERF and the ILO have put in place the COVID-19 MENA Monitor - a series of nationally representative panel phone surveys in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Sudan<sup>1</sup>. Five waves<sup>2</sup> of the survey have been conducted across countries in 2020 and 2021, to track the impact of the pandemic on labour markets. A firm survey targeting private small and medium enterprises (SMEs) also collected data on firms' activity and responses to the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

The data collected during the period in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, representing 22,139 household observations and 3,978 firm observations, has allowed ERF and ILO to publish summary briefs, presenting for each country and for each wave, the survey findings on key labour market indicators, business activity, and household incomes and coping strategies.

With all the survey waves completed for the five countries covered, ERF and ILO have teamed up to examine labour markets, firms, and households during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021, through five analytical research papers focusing on: (1) digital transformation of enterprises in the MENA region; (2) job losses, poverty and food security; (3) the gendered impact of the pandemic on employment and care work; (4) the impact on labour markets; and (5) the impact on formal and informal enterprises. Three country case studies were also produced for Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. These contributions are unique for the region in being based on a wealth of direct observations throughout the pandemic and represent important information to allow policy makers devise their recovery strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> This project was made possible by the generous contributions of the International Labor Organization (ILO), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the Government of the United Kingdom, the World Bank and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development (AFESD).

<sup>2</sup> In general, there were five rounds of data collection with varying number of households and/or firms data collection waves in each country.

<sup>3</sup> ERF/ ILO COVID-19 MENA Monitor data are publicly available on [ERF Data Portal](#)

## The long-term challenges to jobs and growth in the MENA region

Pursuing an initiative launched prior to the pandemic, the event will also present the second regional report on Jobs and Growth in the North Africa. The report builds on an extensive effort to collect and harmonise labour market data from and with national statistical offices. In a collaboration between labour economists and macroeconomists, the report further integrates key output growth and macroeconomic indicators, sectoral and structural change dynamics of the region, i.e. the quality of growth, and its nexus with the quantity of jobs created and the quality of these jobs. The second regional report provides an update to the first report with data for the period 2018 to 2021. The analysis is focused on the policy response to the pandemic in North African countries, and the recovery outlook. Complementing official statistics with the additional data collected in the Monitor series, the report sheds light on jobs and income losses during the pandemic and the pace of their recovery, shifts to online and remote work, and access to social assistance programs over the course of the pandemic.

### Webinar Objectives and Setting

The webinar is organized by the Economic Research Forum (ERF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). It aims to disseminate the key findings of the 5 research papers on the impact of COVID-19 in selected MENA countries and to open a dialogue between researchers and stakeholders to inform the policy debate on the implications of the shock and associated coping mechanisms.

At a country level, the webinar will also zoom in on the impact of COVID-19 on 3 countries; Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. Additionally, it will also focus on understanding the relationship between jobs and growth in Morocco during the period 2000-2021 and present the preliminary findings of the second report on jobs and growth in North Africa during the COVID-19 era, to generate feedback and improve the final report.

*The webinars, reports and papers are supported by the project "Advancing the Decent Work Agenda in North Africa (ADWA)", implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The project aims to promote job-rich growth, International Labour Standards (ILS) and their application at the enterprise level. It works at the policymaking level in order to support evidence-based decisions on key dimensions of the Decent Work Agenda.*

*\*The webinar will be held in English; Arabic and French simultaneous interpretations will be provided during the event*

## AGENDA

### DAY 1: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LABOUR MARKET AND FIRMS IN THE MENA REGION

5 July 2022 – 3 PM (Cairo time) (3 h)

#### 03:00 - 03:10 Welcome Remarks

- Dr. Ibrahim Elbadawi, *Managing Director, ERF*
- Mr. Eric Oechslin, *Director of the ILO Decent Work Team for North Africa and Country Director for Egypt and Eritrea*

#### 03:10 - 04:45 Session 1: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Labour Market and Care Work in the MENA Region (1h 35 min)

**Moderator:** Dr. Ibrahim Elbadawi, *Managing Director, ERF*

#### 03:10 – 3:35 - **Are labour markets in the Middle East and North Africa recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**Speakers:** Ragui Assaad, *University of Minnesota and ERF*  
Caroline Krafft, *Saint Catherine University*  
Mohamed Ali Marouani, *University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, IRD and ERF (15 min)*

**Lead Commentator:** Gladys Lopez de Acevedo, *The World Bank (10 min)*

#### 3:35 – 4:00 - **Job loss during COVID-19: Estimating the poverty and food security effects in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco**

**Speakers:** Adel Ben Youssef, *University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis and ERF*  
Burim Prenaj, *University of Prishtina (15 min)*

**Lead Commentator:** May Gadalla, *Cairo University and ERF (10 min)*

#### 4:00 – 4:25 - **The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women's Care Work and Employment in the Middle East and North Africa**

**Speakers:** Caroline Krafft, *Saint Catherine University (15 min)*

**Lead Commentator:** Nehad Aboul Komsan, *Chairwoman of the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) (10 min)*

#### 4:25 – 4:45 **Q&A (20 min)**

**Break (10 min)**

**04:55-06:00 Session 2: The Impact of COVID-19 on Firms in the MENA Region (1 h 5 min)**

**Moderator:** Mustapha Nabli, *International Consultant and ERF Senior Associate*

4:55 – 5:20 - ***Impact of the stringency and volatility of Covid containment measures on firms' performances in the MENA region***

**Speakers:** Lisa Chauvet, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.  
Mohamed Ali Marouani, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, IRD and ERF  
Nesma Ali, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf and ERF  
(15 Min)

**Lead Commentator:** Bassem Kamar, *Chief Economist of the Central Bank of the UAE (10 min)*

5:20 – 5:45 - ***Does COVID-19 pandemic spur digital business transformation in MENA region? Evidence from firm level data***

**Speakers:** Ebaidalla Mahjoub Ebaidalla, *University of Khartoum and ERF*  
Mohammed Elhaj Mustafa, *University of Khartoum and ERF*  
(15 min)

**Lead Commentator:** Izak Atiyas, *Sabancı University and ERF (10 min)*

5:45 – 6:00 **Q&A (15 min)**

## AGENDA

### DAY 2: MEASURING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN SELECTED COUNTRIES IN NORTH AFRICA

6 July 2022 – 3 PM (Cairo time) (2 h)

#### 03:00 - 04:05 Session 1: Country Case Studies (1h)

**Moderator:** Mahmoud Haddad, *University of Tennessee at Martin and ERF*

##### 03:00 – 03:10 - **Case of Tunisia (10 min)**

**Speakers:** Mohamed Ali Marouani, *University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, IRD and ERF*

##### 03:10 – 03:20 - **Case of Egypt (10 min)**

**Speakers:** Ragui Assaad, *University of Minnesota and ERF*

##### 03:20 – 03:50 - **Case of Morocco (30 min)**

**Speakers:** Saad Belghazi, *Independent Consultant (20 min)*

Caroline Krafft, *Saint Catherine University (10 min)*

##### 03:50 – 04:05 **Q&A (15 min)**

#### Break (10 min)

#### 04:15 - 04:50 Session 2: Preliminary Findings: The Second Report on Jobs and Growth in North Africa in the COVID-19 Era (35 min)

**Moderator:** Valentine Offenloch, *Chief Technical Advisor, ADWA' Project*

**Speakers:** Caroline Krafft, *Saint Catherine University*  
Ragui Assaad, *University of Minnesota and ERF*  
Mohamed Ali Marouani, *University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, IRD and ERF (15 min)*

##### **Q&A (20 min)**

#### 04:50 - 05:00 Closing Remarks (10 min)