



ABOUT ERF

2023



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Connecting People and Ideas

WORD

FROM THE
MANAGING
DIRECTOR

Economic Research Forum – Turning 30

In addressing regional challenges, we continue to steadily be guided by our mission and commitment to promoting sustainable development towards a better future for our region for generations to come.

In 2022, not only did the global economy continue to reel from the unprecedented consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war on Ukraine had an equally devastating and lasting effects on all of us for years to come. Furthermore, our region continues to witness political crises, social upheaval and traumatic outcomes, which unfortunately continues to plaque our societies and countries.

At ERF, we recognize that the stakes are higher than ever before and we strongly believe that we have an opportunity to inform policy processes towards a real systemic change.

Subscribing to the premise that good policy is conditional on good research and well-informed processes, ERF systematically addressed the most pertinent issues on timely basis, effectively engaging with stakeholders and extending outreach to maximize on desired impact.

It is with pride, I share this brief record of where ERF stands in to-date as we prepare for celebrating ERF turning 30 in 2023.

Ibrahim Elbadawi
MANAGING DIRECTOR

ECONOMIC RESEARCH FORUM

ABOUT US

A Regional Network

The Economic Research Forum (ERF) is a regional network dedicated to promoting high-quality economic research for sustainable development in the Arab countries, Iran and Turkey. Established in 1993, ERF's core objectives are to build a strong research capacity in the region; to encourage the production of independent, high-quality research; and to disseminate research output to a wide and diverse audience. To achieve these objectives, ERF's portfolio of activities includes managing carefully selected regional research initiatives; providing training and mentoring to junior researchers; and disseminating the research findings through seminars, conferences and a variety of publications. The network is headquartered in Egypt but its affiliates come primarily from different countries in the region.



WE ARE
TURNING **30**

OBJECTIVES



Established in 1993

ERF's core objectives are to build strong research capacity in the ERF region; to lead and support the production of independent, high quality economic research; and to disseminate research output to a wide and diverse audience.



CONNECTING

PEOPLE

AND IDEAS

254

Research Fellows
with an impressive
academic track record

67

Research Associates
promising and young

47

Senior Associates

32

Policy Affiliates

ACTIVITIES



Portfolio of Activities

To achieve these objectives, ERF carries out a portfolio of activities. These include mobilizing funds for well conceived proposals; managing carefully selected regional research initiatives and providing training and mentoring programs to junior researchers. It also includes organizing seminars and conferences based on research outcomes; and publishing research output through multiple channels including working papers, books, policy briefs and through the [ERF Policy Portal – The forum](#)

NETWORK



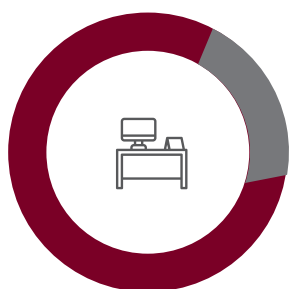
By end 2022, ERF continues
to be home for more than
400 prominent researchers

ERF affiliates are a corner stone towards fulfilling the ERF mandate promoting sustainable development and providing for much needed future economic insights and policy options towards a more resilient, prosperous future of next generations. Network growth underscores ERF's vigor in 2022. ERF is proud to have been growing steadily as the leading network of distinguished economists and policy makers in the region since 1993. The ERF network comprises a distinguished Board of Trustees (BOT), accomplished researchers from the region and highly dedicated head-office staff. A not-for-profit organization, the Forum is supported by multiple donors, both regional and international.

ERF

RESEARCH PROGRAMS

The ERF research portfolio covers a variety of timely topics, including impact of the Ukraine war on countries of the region, social protection in times of crises, women empowerment, debt and stabilization, links between growth and job creation, the political economy and civil movements, digitization and firm performance, impact of climate change, and peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, among others. The selection of the topics was guided by their relative importance to the region and prevalent knowledge gaps. The main research tracks in 2022 included:



● 74

Completed projects

● 90

Total number of projects

ON

THE MACRO SIDE

two main areas of focus were the main items on the research agenda. First, Stabilization and Adjustment in MENA, in light of high fuel and food prices, and the rising global interest rates and debt ratios. Second, The Macroeconomic Impact of Ukraine-Russia crisis on continental Africa. In addition, ERF also addressed the role of development banks in Egypt.

CLIMATE CHANGE

research will focus on energy transition. Work in this area aims to enhance the knowledge on energy transition in the six MENA countries in a way that contributes to the building and promoting of strategic and evidence-based policy initiatives that can lead to sustainability, efficiency and equity, which is reflected in access to better jobs, to more employment opportunities for women and young people, to social and economic inclusiveness, equality and justice, and to achieve climate resilience.

In addition, the research agenda will address how the transition can contribute to inclusive and equitable growth, energy equity and energy security. To that end, we will examine whether Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) can (or cannot) be drivers for the transition in each of the countries, as well as analyzing the challenges faced by MSMEs in the six countries in the MENA region in terms of their ability to transition to renewable reliable sources of energy, and institutional and structural impediments to renewable energy adoption and propose policy options to overcome these challenges and optimize the transition.

SOCIAL

PROTECTION

issues remained prominent on the ERF research agenda. Work on social protection in Jordan and Tunisia continued covering a variety of social protection topics, including: the current landscape of social protection, expansion of social insurance, minimum and living wages, provision of cash assistance and wellbeing, as well as targeting of assistance for the refugee population. Similar work has been initiated for Egypt. The work will continue in 2023 and will further encompass social protection for non-nationals.

Relevance, diversity and significant contribution of evidence-based work across different themes characterize research activities in 2022. The projects had either been solicited or were the result of open competitions. Whether initiated through open calls for papers or solicited, the selection process was guided by clear criteria, peer reviews and the scrutiny of Principal Investigators or project leaders. A total of 74 projects were successfully completed in 2022.

LABOR MARKETS AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

ERF continued to focus on the link between Jobs and Growth, as well as collecting micro data on the Labor Markets. The research also covered the impact of COVID-19 on household, Farmers and firms as well as the issues of inequality.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TRANSFORMATION

focus was on two main topics: Avoiding the failed state trap in Iraq, Algeria and Sudan; and Cronyism and the Future of the Private Sector in Sudan, Algeria, and Ethiopia.



**151
RESEARCHERS**

DIGITIZATION

progress has been made in the context of the interregional collaboration with AERC on understanding Inter-Regional Comparison for the Implications of Digitalization and Disruptive Technologies for Sustainable Growth, Poverty, Inequality, Women and the Youth in North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, partnership with UNDP, examined how digital transformation is affecting economic growth and structural transformation through its impact on key sectors of the economy, and the opportunities that digital transformation can provide in supporting inclusive and sustainable growth, employment generation and poverty reduction.

ON THE DATA FRONT

ERF also continues to expand its efforts to address challenges and provide for evidence-based research and policy making requirements.

Under the Open Access Micro Data Initiative and the Data Portal, several activities have taken place including: Data Collection, Surveys, Data Harmonization and provision of access to users of the data portal. Below is a description of these efforts:

Data cleaning, harmonization and dissemination efforts by ERF's in-house team of statisticians continued steadily. During January 2022 to December 2022, 11 new datasets were made publicly available through OAMDI. By end of 2022, the ERF data portal holds 160 datasets.

ERF DATASETS

- 28 Harmonized Household Income & Expenditure Surveys (HHIES)
- 53 Harmonized Labor Force Surveys (HLFS)
- 13 COVID 19 MENA Monitor Enterprise Survey (CMMENT)
- 4 Harmonized Health Surveys (HHHS)
- 1 Socio-economic Survey
- 8 Labor Market Panel Surveys (LMPS)
- 2 Higher Education Graduates Surveys (HEGS)
- 2 Child Labor Surveys
- 5 Surveys of Young People
- 7 datasets on Micro and Small Enterprises
- 2 datasets on exports and imports
- 5 UNIDO databases on Industrial Statistics
- 3 datasets on enterprises' digitization

OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND POLICY OUTREACH PORTFOLIO

ERF reputation as a well-established and independent institution played a significant role in 2022 pursuing excellence, achieving leadership in commitment to promoting sustainable development regionwide.

ADDRESSING REGIONAL CHALLENGES

ERF strategy, network, research programs, communication, publications and policy forums are all geared towards addressing regional challenges and opportunities to provide for evidence-based policy options towards a well-informed economic policy process for a better future.

In 2022, the ERF communications agenda addressed diverse topics ranging from revisiting macroeconomic management in times of crisis, to social protection, jobs and growth, social movements and conflict, impact of Covid-19, digital transformation and road to COP 27 as detailed in this section. An impressive set of activities, connecting people and ideas, convening forums, debates and discussions based on evidence-based research attracted more than 5,550 participants. ERF conferences and events are accessible online.

The extent of ERF outreach and uptake this year has been remarkable. In addition to ERF flagship event, the ERF 28th Annual Conference and program related conferences, workshops and consultations, ERF organized special events with: international partners to validate regional reports, with African partners to focus on digital transformation and with national partners to address emerging COP27 related matters attracting a similar number of participants. Some 950+ researchers and policymakers took part in the ERF 28th Annual Conference, Revisiting Macroeconomic Management in Times of Crisis and Beyond, programs related events attracted 2000+ experts to some 32 events, partnerships broadened the scope to wider audience attracting 3000+ participants.

950+
PARTICIPANTS IN THE
ERF 28TH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

3000+
EXPERT
PARTICIPANTS
TO 32 EVENTS

ERF ANNUAL CONFERENCES THEMES

29TH | 2023

The Future of MENA Development Path:
Risks and Opportunities in an Emerging World Order

28TH | 2022

Revisiting Macroeconomic Management in Times of
Crisis and Beyond

27TH | 2021

SDGs and External Shocks in the MENA Region: From
Resilience to Change in the Wake of COVID-19

26TH | 2020

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a
Framework for MENA's Development Policy

25TH | 2019

Knowledge, Research Networks, and Development
Policy

24TH | 2018

The New Normal in the Global Economy:
Challenges and Prospects for MENA

23TH | 2017

Regional Economic Cooperation, Peace and
Development

22ND | 2016

Towards a New Development Agenda
for the Middle East

21ST | 2015

Democracy and Economic Development

20TH | 2014

Economic Development and Social Justice

COMMUNICATE

**ERF IS NOW WELL ESTABLISHED
AS STRONG NETWORK OF
REGIONAL EXPERTS AND
PRACTITIONERS, RESEARCH
CAPABILITIES AND EXPERTISE, A
WELL-ESTABLISHED REPUTATION
AND CONVENING POWER, AND
A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE
REGIONAL CONTEXT.**

OUTSTANDING CONVENING POWER

ERF 29th Annual Conference: The Future of MENA Development Path: Risks and Opportunities in an Emerging World Order

May 4-6, 2023 | Cairo, Egypt | Hybrid

While the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region suffers from several structural characteristics related to the diversification of their economies, the quality of economic and political institutions, and high levels of inequality, poverty, youth unemployment and informality, it is facing several external shocks that add another layer of complexity to its development path. Thus, the 29th ERF Annual Conference will chiefly focus on both the risks and opportunities faced by this region in such a changing and challenging environment. Moreover, it will shed the light on the importance of reorganizing priorities and adopting active economic and social policies at both the short and long-term horizons, especially in terms of digital transformation, green economy, and fintech that are indispensable for a new development model.

Under this overarching theme regarding the risks and opportunities of MENA's development path, the 29th Annual Conference articulates the issues in question in the context of the plenary sessions, the special panels and a select number of the parallel sessions.

GCC Economic Research Initiative (GCCeRI)

ERF launched GCCeRI in partnership with GCC universities in 2019. The initiative aimed at strengthening the GCC regional capacity to create and share knowledge to specifically address GCC requirements and emerging challenges. The initiative was launched in the first GCC conference titled GCC in the Midst of Global Changes: Responding to a New Economic Order organized in partnership with College of Economics and Political Science at the Sultan Qaboos University, in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman 8 – 9 December, 2019.

ERF recognizes that the GCC Governments are currently laying the groundwork for an economic recovery, heeding the lessons of past experiences and seeking to build a more efficient and resilient economy of the future. They are looking ahead to ensure that the short-term impact of the pandemic does not translate into a long-term economic crisis. The second conference The GCC Economies in the Wake of COVID19: Charting the Road to Recovery and Resilience brought together 250 participants online 9 – 10 March 2021, to further discuss related issues of pertinence.

The Road to COP 27: Distinguished Lecture Series

COP27 Presidency, Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin UN Climate Change High-Level Champion for COP27 and the World Bank Group in partnership with the Center for Economic and Financial Research & Studies (CEFRS), the Economic Research Forum (ERF), the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES) and the Institute of National Planning (INP) coordinated the Climate and Development Distinguished Lecture Series in Q3-Q4 2022. The series aims at advancing the global conversation about how to better link the global climate change and development agendas. Two high level events were organized in Cairo, Egypt featuring renowned Dr. Stephane Hallegatte and Dr. Montek Ahluwalia on 10 and 30 October 2022, respectively.

ERF publications are fully accessible online. The ERF website and knowledge portal provides a gateway to ERF network, publications, events, data portal and policy portal.



UP TO DATE

1620+

WORKING PAPERS

Our Publications

ERF publication record is equally impressive with 100 working papers, 16 refereed journal articles in two volumes of Middle East Development Journal (MEDJ), two books in press and some 100 policy publications: articles, briefs and reports.

ERF publications fully accessible online. The ERF website and knowledge portal provides a gateway to ERF network, publications, events, data portal and policy portal – The Forum, facilitating access to some 200 000+ users accessing ERF knowledge services.



UP TO DATE

11600+

**DOWNLOADS OF
MEDJ ARTICLES**

ERF policy outreach portfolio features, ERF Policy Portal – The Forum, ERF Policy Briefs, ERF Policy Perspectives and ERF Policy Reports. In 2022, ERF produced 97 policy publications including 10 policy reports, 39 policy briefs and 48 policy articles.

ERF POLICY PORTAL – THE FORUM

The Forum offer an opportunity for economists to write articles longer than newspaper op-eds (up to 1,500 words) containing a degree of technical nuance, but which do not go into the same level of detail as a journal article. It provides an outlet for researchers to air policy insights and arguments based either on an existing body of original research, or to comment on unfolding economic, social and political events.

The Forum has published columns in 34 broad areas of economic policy concerns. Topics that have received particularly extensive coverage include political economy (90 columns); labour markets and human resources (79); growth and development (76); business and productivity (62); inequality and poverty (56); conflict and instability (47); international trade (42); education (41); fiscal policy (37); oil and natural resources (36); gender (32); healthcare (32); institutions (28); structural transformation (28); migration and remittances (27); financial markets (21); and public spending (19).

SPECIAL IN 2022 AT A GLANCE

SPECIAL REPORT



Embarking on a Path of Renewal: MENA Commission on Stabilization and Growth

In the chaotic global post-COVID-19 economy, with the ongoing war in Ukraine, the challenge of adjusting to the global stagflation that is engulfing the world is particularly hard for the oil importing countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The regional report aimed to answer questions related to how risky is the current development path in MENA, and especially in highly indebted Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia? How to avoid financial crises and neutralize the threat of falling into a vicious cycle of economic, social, and political decline? How to initiate and begin to sustain a higher, more inclusive, and more sustainable growth path? What are the main challenges relating to: Stabilization measures and debt workouts; innovative economic, social, and climate-related reforms; and political reform and government accountability? And finally, how can the regional and global communities best help?

A regional commission of experts, working under the auspices of the Economic Research Forum (ERF), and the Finance for Development Lab (FDL), was asked to evaluate the macro-economic risks ahead, and to make recommendations on the best course correction to avoid them.

After an elaborate process of analysis, consultation, and deliberation, the Commission came up with four sets of recommendations, which are developed in this report:

First, the recent macroeconomic shock waves are making an already weak economic situation catastrophic. Public debts are rising fast towards unsustainable levels. The challenge ahead is stark: inaction would lead to a financial crisis; but austerity alone could stabilize debt only in the very short term and at the cost of high social tensions. Economic growth is already falling, poverty rising, and the middle-class further weakened, all threatening a rise of social unrest. Failing to develop a convincing response raises the threat of a vicious cycle of economic, social, and political declines, including a retreat into populism, and destructive social polarization.

Second, the immediate debt challenge forces countries to adopt painful decisions. While some reduction in government expenditure is unavoidable, much of the political capital invested in adjusting to high indebtedness should go towards improving growth prospects. Public expenditure should be reoriented to safety nets and pro-growth spending. Debt restructuring can only go so far, and countries should not expect too much from it. IMF support will be necessary.

Launched in October 2022 on the margin of the World Bank-IMF annual meetings in a hybrid event in Washington DC.



DURING THE LAUNCH EVENT

400+

PARTICIPANTS



DURING THE LAUNCH EVENT

700+

**DOWNLOADS OF
THE REPORT**

It needs to be more generous, but it also need to be made conditional on launching credible national revival strategies, as opposed to the austerity-only based approaches of the past.

Third, a pro-growth macroeconomic framework is necessary to ignite growth. But it is not sufficient. In order to achieve a shift in expectation, structural reforms are needed. The reform agenda not only includes the “old” challenges of improving growth prospects and modernizing the state, it should also address the new challenges of relocalization and climate change. On all these fronts, the medium-term reform agenda needs to be initiated in credible ways to create a major expectation shock that can affect the short term - to encourage the private sector into initiate a supply response, and to encourage citizens to start buildin social trust.

The fourth recommendation is to recognize that economic reforms are eminently political exercises that need to mobilize the political elites to work. The latter need to believe that the

risks ahead are catastrophic, but that a better future is possible, and to convey these messages to the citizens with brutal honesty. Politically, they need to organize an open dialogue with the private sector and civil society to find new mutually beneficial arrangements - political, social, and economic - that can unlock the countries’ true potential. A gradual process if it starts in earnest is possible - improved trust in institutions and confidence about the future will support collective action and generate a virtuous process of progress on all fronts. In addition, there are enormous new opportunities to expand regional and global cooperation that can and should be mobilized in support of reformist national programs.

The report was launched in October 2022 on the margin of the World Bank-IMF annual meetings in a hybrid event in Washington DC along with a host of outreach activities. An Arabic abridged version was also made available and widely circulated.

ERF

WEBSITE AND KNOWLEDGE PORTAL

Our knowledge portal provided for an efficient and effective networking platform for event organization, visibility and outreach



WEBSITE
AND THE FORUM

300,000+

PAGE VIEWS



WEBSITE
AND THE FORUM

130,000+

NEW USERS



SUBSCRIPTION LIST

10,000

NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIBERS



ANNOUNCEMENTS
AND NOTIFICATIONS

1.15 million

EMAILS AND
ANNOUNCEMENT

The ERF website and knowledge portal provides a knowledgebase featuring profiles of 400 ERF distinguished network of affiliates, a database of all ERF publications, 1620+ working papers, an impressive archive of ERF annual conferences, policy conferences and events. It provides a gateway also to the ERF Data Portal and the ERF Policy Portal – The Forum.

It further provided for an efficient and effective networking platform for event organization, visibility and outreach. Online users are exceedingly adopting a targeted approach and so is

ERF to ensure targeted outreach to relevant stakeholders. To maximize outreach, ERF manages a newsletter subscription list of 10 000+ subscribers sending out some 1.15 million+ emails in 2022 announcing relevant publications and events.

Nurturing partnerships, identifying pertinent thematic areas of interest, careful design of events and forums seeking varied perspectives, adopting an integrated approach linking and timing the production of publications and policy articles with events contributed significantly in expanding ERF outreach and engagement.

ERF PARTNERS

WORK CARRIED OUT IN 2022 IS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSIVE. ERF MANAGEMENT WOULD LIKE TO PARTICULARLY ACKNOWLEDGE:



Relevance and resilience best describe the ERF strategic partnership approach. ERF nurtures partnerships with likeminded institutions to address emerging challenges of emerging interests and to extend outreach and engagement with different stakeholders regionwide.



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