



# ABOUT ERF

2024



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Connecting People and Ideas

**WORD**

FROM THE  
MANAGING  
DIRECTOR

## Economic Research Forum – ERF@30

Despite the unprecedented regional and institutional challenges, ERF@30 continues to steadily play an instrumental role in addressing the region's most pertinent concerns.

In 2023, not only the region remains plagued by violent conflicts in several countries as it continues to reel from the unprecedented debt crises and the major challenges of maintaining stable debt dynamics and igniting broad-based, sustainable job-creating growth, it has to prepare now for a major far reaching economic and political ramifications of the ongoing tragic war in Gaza. In anticipation of a more serious consideration of the two-state solution to the intergenerational Middle East conflict, it is imperative on a leading development research network like ERF, to take a lead role in undertaking objective, evidence-based policy research on the economics, politics and political economy of this topic.

ERF@30, we continue on our path and commitment to our mission pursuing sustainable development. We are committed to connecting people and ideas nurturing creativity and promoting evidence-based dialogue towards a much-needed systemic change.

ERF@30, we are ready to embark on an ambitious research and communications agenda with particular attention to emerging challenges, strengthening research capacities and expertise, deepening the knowledge of the regional context to provide for independent evidence-based policy options and recommendations.

ERF would continue to build on its transformative capacity to connect ideas and people, create partnerships and to contribute to knowledge and policy debates towards a better future.

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**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 **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

282

**Research Fellows**  
with an impressive  
academic track record

74

**Research Associates**  
promising and young

43

**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



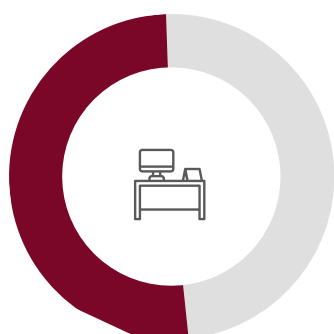
By end 2023, ERF continues to be home for more than 430 prominent researchers

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 2023. 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 2023 included:



● 25

Completed projects

● 49

Total number of projects

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 2023. 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 25 projects were successfully completed in 2023.

## 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 2023 to December 2023, 13 new datasets were made publicly available through OAMDI. By end of 2023, 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)
- 8 Labor Market Panel Surveys (LMPS)
- 7 datasets on Micro and Small Enterprises
- 5 Surveys of Young People
- 4 Harmonized Health Surveys (HHHS)



**180+  
DATASETS**

# OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND POLICY OUTREACH PORTFOLIO

ERF reputation as a well-established and independent institution played a significant role in 2023 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.

ERF continuously strives to engage independent network expertise to address regional issues on timely basis. Systems, modalities, technologies are adopted to best extend outreach to inform policy processes.

Relevance, reach and resilience mark ERF communications and policy outreach activities in 2023. The portfolio of activities are focused on five main tracks: (i) Visibility and Networking and Capacity Building; (ii) Multi-stakeholder Engagement Platform; (iii) The Regional Voice and Engagement; (iv) Publications; (v) Knowledge Platforms and Networks.

In 2023, 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 28. ERF conferences and events are accessible online.

In addition to ERF flagship event, the ERF 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and program related conferences, workshops and consultations, ERF organized special events with: international partners to validate regional reports, with African and European partners to address the impact of the War in Ukraine and to explore opportunities for a deeper EU-Mediterranean integration.

**430+**  
PARTICIPANTS IN THE  
ERF 29TH ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

**2500+**  
EXPERT  
PARTICIPANTS  
TO 32 EVENTS



## ERF ANNUAL CONFERENCES THEMES

### 30<sup>TH</sup> | 2024

Tragedies of Regional Conflicts and Promises of Peacebuilding: Responding to Disruptors and Enablers of MENA Development Pathway

### 29<sup>TH</sup> | 2023

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

### 28<sup>TH</sup> | 2022

Revisiting Macroeconomic Management in Times of Crisis and Beyond

### 27<sup>TH</sup> | 2021

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

### 26<sup>TH</sup> | 2020

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

### 25<sup>TH</sup> | 2019

Knowledge, Research Networks, and Development Policy

### 24<sup>TH</sup> | 2018

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

### 23<sup>TH</sup> | 2017

Regional Economic Cooperation, Peace and Development

### 22<sup>ND</sup> | 2016

Towards a New Development Agenda for the Middle East

### 21<sup>ST</sup> | 2015

Democracy and Economic Development

### 20<sup>TH</sup> | 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 30th Annual Conference: Tragedies of Regional Conflicts and Promises of Peacebuilding: Responding to Disruptors and Enablers of MENA Development Pathway

April 21-23, 2024 | Morocco | Hybrid

ERF conferences provide a multi-stakeholder platform bringing together thought leaders, distinguished researchers and policymakers to discuss and debate pertinent global and regional perspectives to build towards a more peaceful prosperous future for generations to come.

The ERF 30th Annual Conference aims to address the unprecedented regional challenges and to respond to the paramount global disruptors to envision a more resilient future, systems and institutions.

The MENA region has more than its fair share of conflicts, which set the region into a path of human suffering, despair and instability. The Arab-Israeli conflict has become an inter-generational impediment to regional peace, development and cooperation for almost eight decades. It has so far plunged the region into four major regional wars and several uprisings by the Palestinian people, who continue to resist occupation and strive for their legitimate right to self-determination and statehood. The most recent outbreak of the tragic violence in Gaza is a natural consequence of the lack of will and commitment by the regional and international communities to achieve a just and amicable resolution of the Palestinian question, leading to a two-state solution.

Conference plenary sessions aim to examine and assess policy measures to build towards resilient post conflict economic systems, balancing technology and future of work, and exploring prospects towards regional cooperation.

In addition, the conference will include 20 sessions providing a platform for some 60 diverse papers spanning cross-cutting themes selected on basis of rigorous refereeing process in response to an open call for papers. In keeping with ERF

tradition celebrating excellence and unveiling outstanding performance, ERF Best Papers will be acknowledged in the Closing Plenary.

## 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 third conference – GCC Economies in an Era of Energy Transition was held 30 – 31 October 2023, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

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

1700+

WORKING PAPERS



UP TO DATE

12000+

DOWNLOADS OF  
MEDJ ARTICLES

## Our Publications

ERF publication record is outstanding with 80 working papers, 16 refereed journal articles in two volumes of Middle East Development Journal (MEDJ), two books in press and some 80 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 110,000+ users accessing ERF knowledge services.

ERF policy outreach portfolio features, ERF Policy Portal – The Forum, ERF Policy Briefs, ERF Policy Perspectives and ERF Policy Reports. In 2024, ERF produced 82 policy publications including 6 policy reports, 26 policy briefs and 50 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).

# 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

**320,000+**

**PAGE VIEWS**



WEBSITE  
AND THE FORUM

**70,000+**

**NEW USERS**



SUBSCRIPTION LIST

**12,000**

**NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS**



ANNOUNCEMENTS  
AND NOTIFICATIONS

**900,000**

**EMAILS AND  
ANNOUNCEMENT**

The ERF website and knowledge portal provides a knowledgebase featuring profiles of 430 ERF distinguished network of affiliates, a database of all ERF publications, 1700+ 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 12 000+ subscribers sending out some 900,00+ emails in 2023 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 2023 IS PARTICULARLY COMMANDABLE. 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 worldwide.



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