



17 September 2015

UNU -WIDER 30th Anniversary Conference brings together some of the world's most eminent development experts

UNU-WIDER 30th Anniversary Conference - Mapping the Future of Development Economics

17 to 19 September 2015

Marina Congress Center, Katajanokanlaituri 6, Helsinki, Finland

Today's most challenging global issues concern the well-being of the world's poorest people. This has been the core issue for UNU-WIDER, a development economics think tank in Helsinki, Finland, created 30 years ago to do research on how to best achieve sustainable and equitable growth for all.

To celebrate 30 years of research for development, UNU-WIDER is organizing a three-day event of presentations, discussion, and debate. Titled, 'Mapping the Future of Development Economics' the conference focuses looking back and generating lessons for the future of the field.

'In the coming years UNU-WIDER continues to build on a well deserved reputation as a forum for non-partisan debate about key development challenges. At the same time we aim to generate the high quality original research needed to sharpen debates and action for development. The world needs not only analysing and humanising - but also action that makes a difference.' underlines the Director of the Institute, Finn Tarp.

The conference brings together key academic figures such as Nobel laureates in economics Professors Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, as well as a new generation of researchers and practitioners.

The conference culminates on Saturday with the 2015 WIDER Annual Lecture given by Prof Sen. He will discuss how the challenge of development has changed over the last 30 years.

30 years of high-quality development economic research

Amartya Sen was involved in inventing the name of the institute WIDER - World Institute for Development Economics Research - and developing the first research programme. 'Development then, almost universally, was measured by the GDP growth rate. We wanted something wider and WIDER did a lot to promote that broadening of perspective', he says.

The main challenges of development continue to include huge burden of poverty across the world as well as extensive economic and social inequalities, related to class, gender and other barriers. Progress has been made on the old issues of poverty and inequality, but there remains much to be done.

Prof Sen will discuss how development issues are complicated by the rise of two new concerns; climate change and increasing global insecurity.

Unfortunately, in his view, the situation has not changed much in the economics discipline since the inauguration of the institute in 1985: 'I am afraid WIDER is still needed because of the temptation to go back to the comfort of GDP measuring something measurable'.

Bringing together development thinkers and leaders from all around the world

The UNU-WIDER network includes established researchers, and has included Nobel laureates in economics such as Elinor Ostrom, 2009, Paul Krugman, 2008, Edmund S. Phelps, 2006, Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2001, James A. Mirrlees, 1996, John C. Harsanyi, 1994, Douglass C. North, 1993, Robert W. Fogel, 1993, Robert M. Solow, 1987.

Another prize winner connected with UNU-WIDER activities is former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008.

Besides engaging with leading experts, a core activity of the institute is capacity-building which means to provide young social scientists from all over the world varied opportunities.

Dr Smriti Sharma, who did an internship at the Institute in 2014, and received her PhD from The Delhi School of Economics, currently works as a UNU-WIDER Research Fellow looking into issues of social inclusion. She says:

"It has been extremely rewarding for me to collaborate with the impressive global network of UNU-WIDER. Engagement with the Institute has given me an opportunity to discuss my work with researchers from across the spectrum of social sciences and different countries".

The 30th anniversary of UNU-WIDER's establishment will be a good moment to think about the needed priorities of 'research for action' today. Journalists are invited to participate in the conference.

Contact details

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The conference programme can be found at www.wider.unu.edu/30

For press inquiries and conference registration please contact Annett Victorero

Photos can be downloaded here <http://www1.wider.unu.edu/30thanniversary/article/conference-photos>

More information on UNU-WIDER can be found at www.wider.unu.edu