

IARIW-WB-CIEM Conference on “Improving Well-being Measurement in Data-challenged Environments in Developing Countries for Better Evidence-based Policies” October 2-3, 2025, Hanoi, Vietnam

Background and Motivation

The International Association for Research in Income and Wealth (IARIW), established in 1947, organizes conferences on topics related to income and wealth throughout the world, generally in partnership with national statistical offices.¹ In addition to its biennial General Conferences, the IARIW also organizes special conferences, with a regional or topic/theme dimension in non-General Conference years.

With 189 member countries, staff from more than 170 countries, and offices in over 130 locations around the world, the World Bank Group is leading international organization that works on reducing poverty and building shared prosperity in developing countries.

The Central Institute of Economic Management (CIEM) is a major think tank in Hanoi that conducts research, develops draft policy documents, and reports on evaluation of policy implementation related to the country's socio-economic development.

The World Bank are proposing to partner with the IARIW and CIEM on an initiative highlighting the importance of data generation and analysis in data-scarce contexts and policy implications for the Asia region. A special IARIW-WB-CIEM conference is proposed for October 2025 in Hanoi, Vietnam. This proposal has been approved by the IARIW Council, after which we will proceed with appointment of a program committee chair(s) and members of the committee, a formal call for papers, selection of papers, the conference, and publication of a supplementary peer-reviewed issue of the Association's journal, the *Review of Income and Wealth* based on selected papers from the conference.

Along with being a topic of key importance to policy makers, the measurement of well-being in data-scarce contexts is a topic of interest to the broader IARIW membership and research community.

Challenges of Welfare Measurement in Data-challenged Environments

¹ For example, national statistical offices that have co-organized or are organizing special conferences with the IARIW include the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2007), Statistics South Africa (2011), the Brazilian statistical office or IBGE (2013), and the Egyptian statistical office or CAPMAS (2015), the Bank of Korea (2017), the Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics (2022) and the Bank of Italy (2023). The IARIW has also co-organized two special conferences with the OECD (2011 and 2015) and with universities (University of New South Wales, 2013, National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, 2019), one with the World Bank (2019) and two with research institutes (Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, 2017, and Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCoE), 2021). Since 2006, IARIW General Conferences have been co-organized with Statistics Finland (2006), Statistics Slovenia (2008), the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2010), the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (2012), Statistics Netherlands (2014), the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (2016), Statistics Denmark (2018), Statistics Norway (2021), STATEC (2022) and the UK Office of National Statistics/ESCoE (2024).

The design and formulation of economic policies relies on credible measurement, but data challenges abound. Many lower-income countries do not have sufficient resources and/ or implementation capacity to collect essential data, such as household consumption surveys as frequently as they desire. Changes to survey design sometimes reduce data comparability over time, even for countries with more established survey capacity. Finally, monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires adequate data, which should have high quality and be comparable across countries and within the same countries over time.

Recent reviews on poverty measurement highlight the challenges with monitoring poverty trends in contexts where household consumption (income) data that underlie such analysis are unavailable, especially for poorer countries (Dang and Lanjouw, 2023). Contexts where disaggregated income data are required—but are not readily available and need to be imputed—to produce “small area estimation” (or poverty maps) are quite common (Molina and Rao, 2015).

Consequently, improved data production and dissemination could not only enable better analysis on other welfare outcomes such as inequality of opportunity (Ferreira, 2022), but could potentially help raise economic growth (Hodelin, 2022). More data and higher-quality data could help monitoring SDGs as well (Barbier and Burgess, 2021). The beneficial impacts of data dissemination and access are well-documented in other disciplines such as political science (e.g., Kelly and Simmons, 2014) and natural sciences (e.g., Nagaraj et al., 2020).

There have been recent calls for better data integration, which fosters the equitable and safe flow of data between government, individuals, civil society, academia, and the private sector (World Bank, 2021). This could ultimately result in stronger country statistical capacity, particularly in poorer countries, which could provide more accurate measurements of processes driving economic growth as well as more resilience against natural disasters, unexpected pandemics, and climate change (Henderson et al., 2012; Jerven, 2013; Devarajan, 2013; Hu and Yao, 2022; Dang *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, data methods, which were employed to more advanced data systems in a richer country context, could well be applied to a poorer country context.

These data challenges promise useful avenues for research, not only by themselves but also particularly how they can offer further insights for better economic growth in the Asia region. For example, challenges affecting most countries in the region such as environmental pollution, population aging, traffic congestion, and structural transformation toward a technology-intensive economy all require better data collection, organization and analysis.

Topics for Call for Papers

The nature of this work includes both macro and micro analysis, with a focus on empirical analysis on developing countries. Theoretical papers with strong empirical analysis are also welcome. We welcome submissions from researchers in all fields, including economics, statistics, political science, data science, computer science, and international development.

Topics on which proposals are welcome include the following sub-themes (which can overlap)

Data access and innovative data use

- Role of data access, dissemination and transparency in improving development outcomes;
- Innovative data use in monitoring and responding to natural disasters, pandemics, and climate change;
- Solutions to data challenges with monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

Missing data and data imputation

- Addressing survey measurement errors and survey non-response for better data quality;
- Tackling missing data issues at the top or the bottom of the income distribution;
- Development of new small area estimation techniques or useful application of these techniques to inform policy;
- New data imputation methodologies;

Data generation and new data sources

- Review of existing databases, their strengths and weakness, on producing trends across countries and within the same countries over time;
- Generation of new datasets for better measurement of welfare;
- Innovative use of new alternative data sources to address gaps in traditional sources, such as big data or non-traditional data (e.g., nightlight, cell phone data) or data “beyond GDP”;
- Judicious use of other data sources to replace or combine with administrative data;

Well-being estimation in data-challenged contexts

- Estimation of poverty and inequality (including trends, dynamics, and inequality of opportunity) outcomes in data-challenged environments;
- Estimation of welfare outcomes for population groups that are traditionally not well captured in household surveys such as refugees or forcefully displaced populations;
- Welfare analysis in conflict environments;

Country statistical capacity

- Role of country statistical capacity/ performance in contributing to economic growth, poverty reduction and/ or better welfare outcomes;
- Potential for better collaboration between the public sector and the private sectors in creating more and high-quality data;
- Improvements of standards to enhance inter-operability between data systems toward a more integrated system with better data use and production;
- Political economy of data production and dissemination

Better use of data to address challenges in the Asian region

- How solutions to these data challenges could help alleviate issues in Asian countries. These include but are not limited to climate change, environmental pollution, population aging, forcibly displaced persons, and traffic congestion. Other challenges include improving economic resilience and economic structural transformation.

Conference Organization

Program Committee

Hai-Anh Dang (World Bank and IARIW member) will serve as chair of the program committee. He has been working on data imputation techniques to provide estimates on poverty trends and dynamics where actual (panel) data are not available. He also works on the World Bank's new Statistical Performance Index that evaluates country statistical capacity, which was first launched in the World Bank's recent flagship report, *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives*.

The program committee consist of the list below

- i) Sabine Alkire (University of Oxford)
- ii) Himanshu (Jawaharlal Nehru University)
- iii) Stephen Jenkins (London School of Economics)
- iv) Dean Jolliffe (World Bank)
- v) Lars Osberg (Dalhousie University)
- vi) Catherine Van Rompaey (World Bank)

Keynote speakers include Francisco Ferreira (London School of Economics) (confirmed), and XXX (to confirm), among others.

The key activities of the program committee will be evaluation of proposals for acceptance into the conference program and solicitation of proposals for the conference.

Conference Program

Papers will be presented over a two- day period. There will be a reception the evening of the first day of the conference and a farewell dinner the evening of the second day. There is the possibility of an excursion on the third day to Ha Long Bay, a world heritage site about two hours' drive from Hanoi.

The conference program will include paper sessions, keynote addresses, policy panels, and a farewell dinner. It is expected that there will be 20-24 papers presented in plenary sessions. If there are a large number of high-quality submissions, parallel sessions or a poster session may be organized.

There will also be pre-conference training activities related to well-being measurement and other related topics aimed at local and regional capacity building.

Conference Size

The number of delegates attending IARIW special conferences in the past has been around 100. A similar number is expected for this conference.

Conference Venue and Timing

This is the first time that the IARIW organizes a conference in the Southeast Asian region. Conference venue (*to be confirmed*)

Organizational Responsibilities

The IARIW will work with the World Bank and the local organizer CIEM to organize the conference.

The IARIW and the World Bank will cover the travel and accommodation expenses of the keynote speakers. The IARIW will make some funds available for researchers whose papers are selected for the conference and who do not have travel funds on a need basis. The IARIW will cover the farewell dinner, and the World Bank will cover the costs of lunches and coffee break. The two organizations will share the costs for the conference venue.

The CIEM will take care of local logistics, including liaison with government officials, inviting local researchers to attend the conference, and assisting conference participants with obtaining visas and other in-country support.

RIW Special Issue

Selected papers from IARIW special conferences are normally published in special issues of the *Review of Income and Wealth*, edited by a sub-set (two or three persons) of the members of the program committee. To be considered for the special issue, paper givers must submit a revised version of their paper by a specified date after the conference, generally within three months of the conference.

Papers that have undergone the peer-review process but are not selected for publication with the special issue of the *Review of Income and Wealth* may also be recommended for fast-track peer review with other journals, including *Journal of Economics and Development*, subject to the authors' and editors' agreement.

Procedures for Proposal Submission

Persons interested in presenting a paper at the conference are asked to submit a proposal of less than 1,000 words through the web tool posted on the IARIW website.

Timelines for the Conference

August 13, 2024

Announcement of Call for Papers

January 31, 2025	Deadline for Receipt of Paper Proposals
March 15, 2025	Decisions on Proposals and Release of Preliminary Conference Program
March 31, 2025	Deadline for Applications for Financial Assistance
April 15, 2025	Decisions on Financial Assistance
August 31, 2025	Deadline for Submission of papers (one month before conference)
October 2-3, 2025	Conference
December 31, 2025	Deadline for Submission for RIW Special Issue
First half of 2027	Release of special issue

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