The WIDER Annual Lecture

Introduction

The WIDER Annual Lecture is one of the most important events on the institute’s calendar. The Annual Lecture has been delivered consistently each year for the last 15 years by an eminent scholar, who has made a significant contribution in the field of economics of development and transition. WIDER Annual Lecturers include several Nobel Prize winners, and the Lecture is given each year on a core topic of development economics, often with reference to an ongoing UNU-WIDER research project. An overview of the lectures held in the past is available here.

Lecture topics

The Annual Lecture addresses one key topic in development economics each year. The list of topics so far includes:

1. *New Structural Economics*
   Justin Yifu Lin, May 2011

2. *Reforming the International Monetary and Financial Architecture*
   José Antonio Ocampo, December 2010

3. *The Trade-Development Nexus in Theory and History*
   Ronald Findlay, October 2009

4. *Developing Countries in the World Economy: The Future in the Past?*
   Deepak Nayyar, February 2009

5. *Climate Change: Reflections on the Challenge of Public Good Provision and Development*
   Kemal Derviş, March 2008

6. *Global Patterns of Income and Health*
   Angus Deaton, September 2006

7. *The World is not Flat: Inequality and Injustice in our Global Economy*
   Nancy Birdsall, October 2005

8. *Rethinking Growth Strategies*
Methodology

UNU-WIDER identifies the lecturer, often because of their relevance to ongoing UNU-WIDER research activities, and the lecturer is requested to provide an authoritative review of a particular area of critical importance, including their own work in the field. A large public lecture is organized, with audiences that have ranged between 150 and 450 people. Lectures are videoed and broadcasted globally and are made available from the UNU-WIDER website for downloading: http://website1.wider.unu.edu/?q=annual_lectures_videos.

Key findings

Findings depend of course on the particular lecture, but as a reflection of UNU-WIDER’s efforts to reach out to a truly global audience of policy makers and researchers, the 2011 lecture were organized for the first time in Africa, in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. The lecture was arranged by UNU-WIDER in collaboration with the Mozambican government in the Centro De Conferências Joaquim Chissano, and the lecture was given by Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist of the World Bank, Professor Justin Yifu Lin under the title: ‘From Flying Geese to Leading Dragons: New Opportunities and Strategies for Structural Transformation in Developing Countries’.

Professor Lin predicts new, large MICs could open up unprecedented industrialization opportunities for African and low-income countries.

Speaking to a broad audience of some four hundred researchers, policy makers, ambassadors, and development practitioners, Justin Yifu Lin compared China’s current GDP per capita (measured in PPP terms) to that of Japan in the early 1960s or that of Korea in the early 1980s. Because of its dynamic growth over the past three decades, China will have to move up the industrial ladder, like Japan did in the 1960s and Korea did in the 1980s—a
‘graduation’ that will free up large manufacturing employment opportunities for lower-income economies, and mark China’s conversion from the ‘flying goose’ it once was in the footsteps of other Asian economies into a leading dragon in its own right.

China currently employs 85 million workers in low-skilled manufacturing jobs that will have to be relocated elsewhere because of rising wages and productivity levels, compared to Japan’s 9.7 million in the 1960s and Korean’s 2.3 million in the 1980s. Justin Lin concluded that economic development is a process of continuous industrial and technological upgrading in which any country, regardless of its level of development, can succeed if it develops industries that are consistent with its comparative advantage, determined by its endowment structure. A winning formula for developing countries is to exploit the latecomer advantage by building up industries that are growing dynamically in more advanced countries with endowment structures similar to theirs.

For further details about the lecture see this report on the World Bank's website.

**Research uptake**

The evidence emerging out of the WIDER Annual Lectures is used by a wide audience of academic, policy makers and students of development, including staff at the UN Headquarters. The 14th Annual Lecture was for example presented at the UN Headquarters in December of 2010 by Professor José Antonio Ocampo on ‘Reforming the International Financial System’, with an audience of some 450 participants.