

ELIANA LA FERRARA

Harvard Kennedy School
79 John F. Kennedy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
elaFerrara@hks.harvard.edu

CURRENT POSITION

Harvard University

- Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022-current

PAST EMPLOYMENT

Bocconi University

- Fondazione Romeo ed Enrica Invernizzi Chair in Development Economics, 2011-2022
- Dean of Research, 2014-2016
- Full Professor of Economics: 2006-2011
- Associate Professor of Economics (with tenure): 2002-2006
- Assistant Professor of Economics: 1999-2002

London School of Economics

BP Centennial Professor, 2017-18

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Visiting Professor, Department of Economics, 2012-2013

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Ph.D. in Economics. June 1999

Bocconi University, Dottorato in Economia Politica. July 1997

Bocconi University, Laurea in Discipline Economiche e Sociali. Cum laude and recommendation for publication. March 1993

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Development Economics
Political economics

PUBLICATIONS

Journal articles

- “Apart but Connected: Online Tutoring, Cognitive Outcomes, and Soft Skills” (with M. Carlana), *American Economic Review*, 115(10), 3487-3513, 2025.
- “A Stepping Stone Approach to Norm Transitions” (with S. Gulesci, S. Jindani, D. Smerdon, M. Sulaiman and P. Young), *American Economic Review*, 115(7), 2237-66, 2025.
- “Understanding Child Sex Trafficking Using Victim Level Data” (with M. Bjorkman, M. Kuecken and E. Artadi). Forthcoming, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*.
- “Revealing Stereotypes: Evidence from Immigrants in Schools” (with A. Alesina, M. Carlana and P. Pinotti). *American Economic Review*, 114(7), 1916-48, 2024.

- “Exacerbated Inequalities: The Learning Loss from Covid-19 in Italy” (with M. Carlana and C. Lopez), *AEA Papers & Proceedings*, 113, 2023.
- “Interaction, Stereotypes and Performance. Evidence from South Africa” (with J. Burns and L. Corno), *American Economic Review*, 112(12), 3848-3875, 2022.
- “Implicit Stereotypes in Teachers’ Track Recommendations” (with M. Carlana and P. Pinotti), *AEA Papers & Proceedings*, 112, 409-14, 2022.
- “Goals and Gaps: Educational Careers of Immigrant Children” (with M. Carlana and P. Pinotti), *Econometrica*, 90(1), 1-29, 2022.
- “Violence Against Women: A Cross-cultural Analysis for Africa” (with A. Alesina and B. Brioschi), *Economica*, 88, 70-104, 2021.
- “Learning Spillovers in Conditional Welfare Programs: Evidence from Brazil” (with F. Brollo and K. Kaufmann), *Economic Journal*, 130 (628), 853–879, 2020.
- “The Political Economy of Program Enforcement: Evidence from Brazil” (with F. Brollo and K. Kaufmann), *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 18(2), 750–791, 2020.
- “Aspirations, Social Norms and Development”, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 17(6), 1687–1722, 2019.
- “Entertainment, Education and Attitudes towards Domestic Violence” (with A. Banerjee and V. Orozco), *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 109, 133-37, 2019.
- “Conflict, Climate and Cells: A Disaggregated Analysis” (with M. Harari), *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 100(4), 594-608, 2018.
- “Customary Norms, Inheritance and Human Capital. Evidence from a Reform of the Matrilineal System in Ghana” (with A. Milazzo), *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9(4), 166-85, 2017.
- “Mass Media and Social Change: Can We Use Television to Fight Poverty?”, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 14(4), 791-827, 2016.
- “Market-based Lobbying: Evidence from Advertising Spending in Italy” (with S. DellaVigna, R. Durante and B. Knight), *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 8(1), 224-56, 2016. Winner of 2017 Best Paper Prize for AEJ: Applied Economics.
- “A Test of Racial Bias in Capital Sentencing” (with A. Alesina), *American Economic Review*, 104(11), 3397-3433, 2014 (lead article).
- “Soap Operas and Fertility: Evidence from Brazil” (with A. Chong and S. Duryea), *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 4(4), 1-31, 2012 (lead article).
- “Self-Help Groups and Mutual Assistance: Evidence from Urban Kenya” (with M. Fafchamps), *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 60(4), 707-733, 2012.
- “A Generalized Index of Fractionalization” (with W. Bossert and C. D’Ambrosio), *Economica*, 78(312), 723-750, 2011.
- “Detecting Illegal Arms Trade” (with S. DellaVigna), *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 2(4), 26-57, 2010.
- “The Economic Effects of Violent Conflict: Evidence from Asset Markets Reactions” (with M. Guidolin), *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(6), 671-84, 2010.
- “Television and Divorce: Evidence from Brazilian Novelas”, (with A. Chong), *Journal of the European Economic Association Papers & Proceedings*, 7(2-3), 458-468, 2009.
- “Diamonds Are Forever, Wars Are Not. Is Conflict Bad for Private Firms?”, (with M. Guidolin), *American Economic Review*, 97(5), 1978-93, 2007.
- “Descent Rules and Strategic Transfers. Evidence from Matrilineal Groups in Ghana”, *Journal of Development Economics*, 83(2), 280-301, 2007.
- “L’economia dei conflitti nei paesi in via di sviluppo”, *Rivista Italiana degli Economisti*, 12(3), 39-53, 2007.
- “Ethnic Diversity and Economic Performance” (with A. Alesina), *Journal of Economic Literature*, 43(3), 762-800, 2005.
- “Preferences for Redistribution in the Land of Opportunities” (with A. Alesina), *Journal of Public Economics*, 89 (5-6), 897-931, 2005.
- “Kin Groups and Reciprocity: A Model of Credit Transactions in Ghana”, *American Economic Review*, 93(5), 1730-1751, 2003.
- “Self-Help Groups and Income Generation in the Informal Settlements of Nairobi”, *Journal of African Economies*, 11(1), 61-89, 2002.

- “Inequality and Group Participation: Theory and Evidence from Rural Tanzania”, *Journal of Public Economics*, 85(2), 235-273, 2002.
- “Who Trusts Others?”, (with A. Alesina), *Journal of Public Economics*, 85(2), 207-234, 2002.
- “Political Competition in Weak States” (with R.H. Bates), *Economics and Politics*, 13(2), 159-84, 2001.
- “Participation in Heterogeneous Communities” (with A. Alesina), *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115, 847-904, 2000.
- “Public Capital and Economic Performance: Evidence from Italy” (with F. Bonaglia and M. Marcellino), *Giornale degli Economisti e Annali di Economia*, 60(2), 221-44, 2000.
- “A Political Equilibrium Approach to Trade Liberalization in Developing Countries”, *Journal of International Trade and Economic Development*, 5(3), 287-318, 1996.

Reviews and Chapters in books

- “Changing Culture and Norms in Developing Countries” (with D. Yanagizawa-Drott), in B. Enke, P. Giuliano, N. Nunn, and L. Wantchekon (eds), *The Handbook of Culture and Economic Behavior*, Elsevier, forthcoming. NBER Working Paper 34784, February 2026.
- “The Media as a Tool for Institutional Change in Development”, in J.-M. Baland, F. Bourguignon, J.-P. Platteau and T. Verdier (eds), *The Handbook of Economic Development and Institutions*, Princeton University Press, January 2020.
- “Social and Economic Impacts of the Media” (with S. DellaVigna), in S. Anderson, D. Stromberg and J. Walfogel (eds.), *Handbook of Media Economics*, Elsevier, 2015.
- “Financial markets and conflict in the developing world”, in T. Besley and R. Jayaraman (eds.), *Institutional Microeconomics of Development*, MIT Press, 2010, ch. 3.
- “Family and kinship ties in development: An economist’s perspective”, in J.-P. Platteau (ed.), *Culture, Institutions and Development*, Routledge, 2010, ch. 5.
- “TFP, Costs, and Infrastructure: An Equivocal Relationship” (with M. Marcellino), in M. Artis, A. Banerjee and M. Marcellino (eds.), *The Central and Eastern European Countries and the European Union*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- “Solidarity in Heterogeneous Communities”, in Ph. Van Parijs (ed.), *Cultural Diversity versus Economic Solidarity*, Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2004.
- Book Review of “Income Distribution and High Quality Growth” (edited by V. Tanzi and K. Chu), *The Economic Journal*, 110(461), F234-6, 2000.
- “Exchange Allocation Mechanism Reform” (with G. Castillo and J. Nash), in J. Nash and F. Foroutan (eds), *Trade Policy and Exchange Rate Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ch.4, National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University, 1997.
- “Public Debt”, in R.E. Hall e J.B. Taylor, *Macroeconomics*, Milan: Hoepli, ch.14, 1995

Books

Social norms, economic development and nutrition (with A. Milazzo), Egea publishing, 2015.

Working Papers

- “Female Genital Cutting and the Slave Trade” (with L. Corno and A. Voena), IFS Working Paper 25/22; 2025.
- “The Nerds, the Cool and the Central. Peer Education and Teen Pregnancy in Brazil” (with E. Baumgartner, E. Breza, V. Orozco and P. Rosa-Dias), mimeo, Harvard University, 2024.
- “Changing Harmful Norms through Information and Coordination: Experimental Evidence from Somalia,” (with P. Ferreira, S. Gulesci, D. Smerdon and M. Sulaiman), mimeo, Harvard University, 2023.
- “Norm Replacement: A Field Experiment on ending Female Genital Cutting” (with L. Corno), mimeo, Harvard University, 2023.
- “Digging Deeper: Mining Companies and Armed Bands in the DRC” (with D. Zufacchi), mimeo, UCL, 2023.
- “Informing Risky Migration: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Guinea” (with G. Battiston and L. Corno), mimeo, Harvard University, 2023.

- “Valuing Hope: A Model of Aspirations” (with V. Novak), mimeo, Bocconi University, 2021.
- “The Entertaining Way to Behavior Change: Fighting HIV with MTV” (with A. Banerjee and V. Orozco), NBER Working Paper 26096, 2019.
- “News vs. Novelas: Can Entertainment Media Undermine Dictatorships?” (with A. Chong, C. Ferraz, F. Finan and L. Meloni), mimeo, Bocconi University, 2016.

Archived Working Papers

- “Enforcement of Program Conditions and Individual Compliance in Welfare Programs” (with. F. Brollo and K. Kaufmann), mimeo, Bocconi University, 2019.
- “Racial Segregation and Public School Expenditure”, (with A. Mele), mimeo, Bocconi University, 2009.

Ongoing projects

- Binging the Gap: Promoting Cohesion through an Edutainment Web Series on Venezuelan Migrants (with A. Kim)
- Social and economic integration of Syrian refugees in host communities in Jordan (with M. Holmlund and P. Rosa-Dias)
- Property Rights and Women’s Empowerment in Côte d’Ivoire (with A. Donald, M. Goldstein, A. Hartmann, M. O’Sullivan and A. Voena).
- Impact of the Land Tenure Regularization program in Rwanda (with D. Ali, K. Deininger and M. Goldstein).
- Turkish Soap Operas and Women’s Empowerment in Egypt (with S. Gulesci and D. Ubfal).

TEACHING

Harvard University

- DEV 101 – Economic Development: Theory and Evidence, HKS, Fall 2022-2025
- DEV 102 – Economic Development: Using analytical frameworks for smart policy design, HKS, Spring 2025-2026
- API 902 – Doctoral Research Seminar (PhD, co-taught), Fall 2023
- Topics in Political Economics (PhD, co-taught), Fall 2022

Study Center Gerzensee

- Social Norms and Development (graduate): March 2025

Bocconi University

- Development Economics (graduate): Spring 1999-2012, Spring 2014-2022
- International Development (graduate): Spring 2009, 2010, 2011
- Political Economics (graduate): Spring 1999
- Microeconomics (undergraduate): Fall 2013, Fall 2014

London School of Economics

- Media, Political Economy and Development (graduate): Spring 2018

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

- 14.770 Collective Choice and Political Economy (graduate): Fall 2012
- 14.73 Challenges of Global Poverty (undergraduate): Spring 2013

University of Oslo

- Development Economics and Political Economy (graduate): 2012, 2013, 2018

Université de Namur

- Economie de la Population et Politiques Agricoles (undergraduate): 2006

Harvard University

- Social Analysis 10 (undergraduate): 1997-1998

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Harvard Kennedy School

- Faculty Chair, MPA/ID Program, current

Member of Faculty Steering Committee, current
Member of Administrative Board, current
Senior Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, current
Member of PhD Admissions committee, 2022-2025

Bocconi University

Representative of the Faculty in the Board, 2018-2022
Dean of Research, 2014-2016
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Economics and Social Sciences (CLES): 2006-2008
Deputy-Director of the Ph.D. program in Economics, 2003-2006

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND AFFILIATIONS

Program Director for Development Economics, Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), 2020-current

Foreign Honorary Member, American Economic Association, 2021-current

International Honorary Member, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2019-current

Affiliate, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 2016-current

Affiliate, Center for International Development, Harvard University, 2022-current

Faculty Associate, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard, 2023-current

Senior Scholar, Harvard Academy for International Area Studies, Harvard, 2023-current

Fellow, International Economic Association, 2018-current

Fellow, Innocenzo Gasparini Institute for Economic Research (IGIER), current

Full member, European Development Research Network (EUDN), current

President, Econometric Society, 2024

Scientific Director, Laboratory for Effective Anti-Poverty Policies (LEAP), 2016-2025

President, Bureau for Research in Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD), 2016-2019

President, European Economic Association, 2018

Research Program Director, State Program, International Growth Centre, 2008-2021

Expert, World Bank-IMF High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery and Growth, 2021-2023

Executive Committee Member, Econometric Society, 2022-2025

Executive Committee Member, European Development Research Network (EUDN), 2017-20

Executive Committee Member, European Economic Association, 2016-19

Editorial Board/Associate Editor: Journal of Population Economics

Refereed articles for: American Economic Review, American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, American Political Science Review, B.E. Journals, Econometrica, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Economic Journal, Economics Letters, European Economic Review, Games and Economic Behavior, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Law Economics and Organization, Journal of Political Economy, Journal of Public Economics, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Review of Economics and Statistics, Review of Economic Studies, Science.

Econometric Society, 2019-2020

Member of the Scientific Program Committee for the 2020 World Congress

Paris School of Economics, 2020-current

Scientific Council Member

Toulouse School of Economics, 2018- current

Scientific Council Member

NHH FAIR, 2018- current

Scientific Advisory Board Member

Infosys, 2020, 2022, 2024

Member of the Selection Committee for Infosys Prize in Social Sciences
International Economic Association, 2011-2016
 Executive Committee Member
European Development Research Network (EUDN), 2014-2018
 Executive Committee Member
Econometric Society, 2014
 Member of the Program Committee for the Winter Meetings of the Econometric Society
European Research Council, 2009-2010
 Member of the SH1 Evaluation Panel for the ERC Starting Grants
Econometric Society, 2005
 Member of the Program Committee for the 9th World Congress of the Econometric Society
Global Development Network, 2004
 Member of the Selection Committee for the Global Development Awards 2004

HONORS AND AWARDS

Faculty of Arts Distinguished Lecture in Economics, University of Waterloo, October 2025
 “De Sanctis” Prize for Economic Sciences, 2024
 Kuznets Lecture, Yale University, March 2023
 Manchott Lecture, University of Bonn, 2022
 AEA Foreign Honorary Member, 2021
 Birgit Grodal Award, EEA, 2020
 Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Oslo, 2020
 Bocconi Research Excellence Award, 2020
 AAAS International Honorary Member, 2019
 Jacob Marschak lecture, Econometric Society, November 2019
 Walras-Bowley lecture, Econometric Society, June 2019
 Economic Journal Lecture, Royal Economic Society, April 2019
 Atkinson Lecture, LSE, November 2017
 FBBVA Lecture, Madrid, May 2015
 JEEA-FBBVA Lecture at the ASSA Meetings 2015, Boston
 Prize “Indennità di eccellenza nella ricerca”, Bocconi University, 2001, 2004, 2012
 Prize “Incentives to research”, Bocconi University, 2000
 Harvard-MIT Research Training Group in Positive Political Economy Scholarship, 1996
 Harvard University Scholarship, 1995 and 1997
 D. Menichella Scholarship, Bank of Italy, 1994
 I. Gasparini Award, Bocconi University, 1990

GRANTS

IPA PRI Grant for “Binging the Gap: Promoting Cohesion through an Edutainment Web Series on Venezuelan Migrants”, Principal Investigator, 2025-26
 IGC Grant for “Social and Economic Integration of Refugees in Jordanian Communities”, Principal Investigator, 2025-2026
 Mittal Institute grant for “Unveiling Gendered Climate Vulnerability in India”, Principal Investigator, 2024-2025
 GEM Incubation Fund for “Female Labor and Hysterectomies in India”, Principal Investigator , 2024-2025
 Weatherhead Grant for “Social and Economic Integration of Refugees in Jordanian Communities”, Principal Investigator, 2024-2025
 JPAL DLI Grant for “Social and Economic Integration of Refugees in Jordanian Communities”, Principal Investigator, 2023-2026
 Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics Grant for “Seeding Innovation Through Reality TV”, Principal Investigator, 2023-2026
 USAID-DIV Grant for “Testing and Information and Coordination Tool to Reduce Female Genital Cutting”, Principal Investigator, 2020-2022

JPAL PPE Grant for “TOP: Tutoring Online Project during the Coronavirus Emergency in Italy”, Principal Investigator, 2020-2021
 European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant for “Aspirations, Social Norms and Development (ASNODEV)”, Principal Investigator, 2016-2021
 Economic Development and Institutions (EDI) grant on “Oppressive Gender Norms”, Principal Investigator, 2017-2020
 European Commission FP7 Initial Training Network grant for “Policy Design and Evaluation Research. (PODER)”, Network Coordinator, 2013-2017
 European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant for “Conflict, Identity and Markets (CIDAM)”, Principal Investigator, 2008-2013
 European Commission FP7 Initial Training Network grant for “Actors, Markets, and Institutions in Developing Countries: A micro-empirical approach. (AMID)”, Network Coordinator, 2008-2012
 PRIN Grant for “The effects of poverty and information on human trafficking in developing countries”, 2008-2010.
 COFIN Project “Institutions, social norms and income distribution in developing countries,” Italian Ministry of Education, 2004
 European Commission FP6 grant for Specific Targeted Research or Innovation Project “Polarization and Conflict”, 2003

PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES in the last three years

Econometric Society World Congress, August 2025
 NCDE Conference (keynote), Oslo, June 2025
 Canadian Economic Association Conference (keynote), Montreal, May 2025
 Conference in Honor of Guido Tabellini, Milan, May 2025
 Family, Fertility and Human Development Inaugural Conference, Budapest, December 2024
 LACEA-LAMES (keynote), Bogota, November 2024
 EEA-ESEM (keynote), Rotterdam, August 2024
 AMES (keynote), Hangzhou, June 2024
 Econometric Society NASM (keynote), Nashville, June 2024
 SEEDEC (keynote), Bergen, June 2024
 Econometric Society Africa Meeting (keynote), Abidjan, June 2024
 Global Empowerment Meeting, Cambridge MA, May 2024
 Nobel Symposium in Economic Sciences, Stellenbosch, March 2024
 BREAD-NBER Development Economics Conference, Boston, December 2023
 BFI Social Economics Conference, Chicago, November 2023
 Migration and Development Conference, Boston University, October 2023
 CESifo Education Conference (Jacobs Foundation Lecture), Munich, September 2023
 CESifo Labor Conference (keynote), Munich, July 2023
 SABE Conference (keynote), Nice, June 2023
 PECO Conference, Washington DC, May 2023
 IOG-BFI Conference, Chicago, March 2023
 ASREC Conference (keynote), March 2023

INVITED SEMINARS in the last three years

Northwestern University, March 2026
 Princeton University, February 2026
 Yale University, February 2026
 Duke University, February 2026
 University of Pittsburgh, October 2025
 University of Waterloo, October 2025
 UCLA, March 2025
 Brown University, February 2025
 Universidad Autonoma de Madrid (online), December 2024
 MIT Economics Department Seminar, October 2024
 MIT Sloan, April 2024
 Tufts University, September 2023
 University of Maryland, September 2023

Toulouse School of Economics, May 2023
Wharton, April 2023
Boston University, March 2023
Brown University, March 2023
Rice University, February 2023
Northeastern University, February 2023

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION (*selected recent ones*)

NBER Political Economy Meeting, October 2025
CEPR-UPF Conference in Development Economics, September 2025
CEPR-PSE Conference in Development Economics, June 2024
CEPR-TCD Conference in Development Economics, October 2023
CEPR-JADE Conference in Development Economics, April 2023
CEPR-IFS-UCL Conference in Development Economics, October 2022
LEAP Development Conference, June 2022
Econometric Society World Congress 2020, August 2020 (Scientific Program Co-Chair)

LANGUAGES

Fluent in Italian and English. Fair knowledge of French.

PERSONAL

Italian citizen. Married with two children.
Piano diploma from Conservatorio “Dall’Abaco”, Verona, 1991.