**BBL on Taobao Villages (E-commerce) Development in Rural China: An Emerging Opportunity for Digital Technology and E-platforms for Agriculture and Rural Development.** The BBL was co-hosted by The Poverty & Equity GP and the Agriculture GP’s Rural Livelihoods and Agriculture Employment Solutions Group on February 7, 2019.

A Taobao (淘宝: Hunting for Treasure) Village is an administrative village with e-tailers clustering and total annual online sales of more than RMB 10 million (about USD 1.6 million), as well as at least 10% village households actively engaging in e-commerce or at least 100 active online-shops operated by villagers, primarily with the use of Taobao.com and Tmall.com marketplace managed by the Alibaba Group. E-commerce is showing a promising role in alleviating poverty and improving people’s lives in China. Rural e-tailers usually mobilize local resources and use the e-commerce platform to sell local agricultural products, traditional handicrafts, or manufactured goods produced locally or obtained nearby. Farmers sell agricultural products online directly to urban consumers, obtaining higher farm-gate price.  The rapid growth of e-commerce in China demonstrates that the transition from physical to digital commerce, often perceived as a phenomenon of high-income countries and in urban areas, can happen in a country at a lower level of development and in rural areas as well. In late 2016, the World Bank and the Alibaba Group launched a joint research initiative to examine how China has harnessed digital technologies to aid growth and expand employment opportunities through e-commerce development in rural areas.

In this BBL, Xubei Luo, Senior Economist, Poverty Global Practice, presented the results of the recent study in Taobao villages and its operational implications, followed by discussions on the opportunity of digital technology and e-platforms for agriculture and rural development, as well as for rural poverty alleviation.

