FINANCIAL LIBERALIZATION AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF POVERTY

Philip Arestis* and Asena Caner**

Abstract This contribution attempts to investigate the channels though which financial liberalization (FL) policies might affect poverty. Surprisingly little work has been done so far on this relationship. One channel of interaction between FL and poverty is the growth channel. This literature has been, to a great extent, based on the view that FL mobilizes savings and allocates capital to more productive uses, both of which help increase the amount of physical capital and its productivity. The trickle-down effect of economic growth caused, or accompanied, by FL increases incomes, reduces poverty and improves income distribution. However, one would expect the economic and institutional changes brought about by FL to have a more complex effect on the living conditions of the poor. We suggest that three further channels should be added to the list: the financial crises channel, the access to credit and financial services channel, and the income share of labour channel. As far as we know, no attempt has been made previously in the literature to go beyond the 'growth channel'. Thus, the originality of this contribution is to make the case of these extra three channels, explain them, and comment on their significance.

Keywords: financial liberalization, poverty, channels of influence

JEL codes: O16, I32

CAMBRIDGE CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC POLICY

CCEPP WP07-09

DEPARTMENT OF LAND ECONOMY

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

FEBRUARY 2009

* Cambridge Centre for Economic and Public Policy, Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge, 19 Silver Street, Cambridge CB3 9EP, England
E-mail: **pa267@cam.ac.uk**, Phone: 01223 766 971, Fax: 01223 337 130
** TOBB-Economics and Technology University, Economics Department, Söğütözü Cad. No. 43, Söğütözü, Ankara, Turkey, 06560.
E-mail: **acaner@etu.edu.tr**, Phone: 011 90 312 292 4111, Fax: 011 90 312 287 1946

FINANCIAL LIBERALIZATION AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF POVERTY

1. Introduction[1]

Liberalization of cross-border financial flows and growing integration of capital markets has become commonplace since the 1980s. The period since then has also been one of remarkable economic growth along with a number of financial crises and continuing poverty in many parts of the world. There are still millions of people living in extreme poverty, mostly in Asia and Africa. Is there a potential for the increasing integration of capital markets to solve the most urgent problem of the mankind, namely, providing each world citizen with safe access to food, clothing, shelter, as well as education and health services? What does theory tell us regarding the role of financial liberalization in the elimination of poverty? How do the real-life experiences of countries fit in this picture? The aim of this paper is to provide answers to these questions.

Surprisingly little work has been done so far on the relationship between financial liberalization (FL) policies and poverty. One channel of interaction between FL and poverty is the growth channel. Related literature has been, to a great extent, based on the view that FL mobilizes savings and allocates capital to more productive uses, both of which help increase the amount of physical capital and its productivity. The trickle-down effect of economic growth caused, or accompanied, by FL increases incomes, reduces poverty and improves income distribution. However, one would expect the economic and institutional changes brought about by FL to have a more complex effect on the living conditions of the poor. We suggest that three further channels should be added to the list: the financial crises channel, the access to credit and financial services channel, and the income share of labour channel. As far as we know, no attempt has been made previously in the literature to go beyond the ‘growth channel’. Thus, the originality of this contribution is to make the case of these extra three channels, explain them, and comment on their significance.

Many economists agree that in some countries, financial markets were liberalized prematurely due to a failure to recognize their imperfect characteristics. In many cases this increased volatility and vulnerability and led to financial crises, which affected the poor more severely. This is the crises channel that we investigate. FL can be also thought to affect the availability of credit and financial services for the poor, which is another possible channel of interaction. We argue that in analyzing the effects of FL on poverty, the influence of FL on the availability of credit and financial services should be taken into account. We suggest a further channel to this list, namely the income share of labour channel. This channel works via changes in poverty through the relative bargaining power of labour influenced by the FL process.

To supplement the analysis of theoretical links between FL policies and poverty, this contribution looks closely at the empirical evidence on each theoretical link and provides an overview of the experiences of some developing countries with FL. It is clear that there is still no clear understanding of how the mechanisms involved in FL influence different segments of the population and, in particular, the poor. Furthermore, it appears that a straightforward application

[1] We are grateful for the comments of twoanonymous referees. These were helpful comments and improved the contribution as a result.

of the standard policies without taking any precautions to protect the disadvantaged groups from potential losses worsens the living conditions of these groups. We proceed in section 2 to examine the economic growth channel that is well known in the literature. The rest of the paper puts together three further channels through which FL can affect poverty. Section 3 visits the financial crises channel, and section 4 the access to credit and financial services channel. Section 5 discusses the income share of labour channel. Chapter 6 draws lessons from relevant experiences of various countries. Finally, section 7 summarizes and concludes.[2]

2. The Economic Growth Channel

This channel relies heavily on the FL theory as developed originally by McKinnon (1973) and Shaw (1973). One aspect of the channel that has not been emphasized in the literature is that the existence and strength of the link between FL and poverty depends on the existence and strength of the links between, first, FL and growth and, second, between growth and poverty. We examine both links in what follows and show that there are problems associated with the soundness of both of them.

2.1 The FL and Economic Growth Link

In FL theory removing interest rate ceilings increases saving since saving is an increasing function of the real rate of interest by assumption. As the low-yielding projects are no longer funded, the average return to investment increases, leading to increased output (McKinnon, 1973; Shaw, 1973). Liberalizations of the stock market and the capital account, the other two dimensions of FL, are also thought to have positive effects on economic growth. Stock markets can promote long-run growth through encouraging corporate control and acquisition and dissemination of information, and through mobilizing savings. Capital account liberalization may increase economic growth through higher investment as capital flows in to earn higher returns; by lowering the cost of capital via improved risk allocation; through investment in high-risk/high-return projects via global diversification of risk; through increased efficiency and productivity via transfer of technology and managerial know-how; through increasing incentives for improving the regulatory and supervisory framework for banking, by letting foreign banks introduce a variety of new financial instruments and techniques or by increasing competition; and through the 'discipline effect' by forcing governments to pursue better macroeconomic policies (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for full details and further references). The 'discipline effect', however, cannot be said to have much empirical backing simply because behaviour in international capital markets is characterized by 'mood swings', which have little to do with fundamentals.

---

[2] This paper relies to some extent on Arestis and Caner (2005) to which we make extensive reference in this contribution. However, it extends the analysis in a number of ways, three being particularly worth mentioning. Firstly, this contribution develops further the argument about the three channels of how FL might affect poverty. These are the economic growth, the financial crises and the access to credit and financial services channels. Secondly, a fourth channel is put forward for the first time, this being the income share of labour channel. Finally, a further aspect is the section on lessons we can derive from the relevant experience on poverty of a number of countries.

It is just as possible that FL policies have a negative impact on growth. Stock market liberalization can lead to greater liquidity and lower uncertainty, which may reduce saving rates; also, highly liquid stock markets may act as 'disincentive to exert corporate control'. Capital account liberalization can slow down growth by eliminating country-specific income risk and the impact of this risk on saving. Furthermore, the critical assumption that savings increase after FL does not always hold (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for details and references). In fact, in countries where a large share of households has incomes close to subsistence level, we should not expect savings to be sensitive to real interest rate. Further critique emphasizes the microeconomic failures that are prevalent in financial markets. The seminal work by Stiglitz and Weiss (1981) revealed that information failures in loan markets may lead to credit rationing by banks. According to this imperfect information view, a free interest rate regime alone may not be sufficient for allocative efficiency of capital.

The empirical evidence on the relationship between FL and growth is mixed and inconclusive. Although a sizable literature finds that financial sector development is positively associated with economic growth, many studies disagree and show that the effect depends on the specific situation (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for details). The experiences of numerous countries reveal that FL is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for achieving a high growth rate. Indeed, there may be 'reverse causation', i.e. faster growing economies may be more likely to choose to liberalize their economies, rather than FL causing economic growth (Arestis and Demetriades, 1997).

One reason for the ambiguity in empirical results is the difficulty of identifying and quantifying FL in a consistent manner across countries. Also, there are differences in the country sample, the sample period, the dataset, and the estimation technique used in these studies. Another explanation, provided by Prasad et al (2003), is that most of the variation in income per capita is explained by differences in total factor productivity and by 'soft' factors such as 'social infrastructure' and not by differences in the capital-labor ratio. Under these circumstances, FL and integration is unlikely to increase growth by itself. Furthermore, as we explore later in this article, a flawed sequencing of domestic FL, when accompanied by capital account liberalization, may increase the chance of banking or currency crises, which are often accompanied by huge output losses.

2.2 Economic Growth and Poverty

In economic growth "the extent of poverty reduction depends on how the distribution of income changes with growth and on initial inequalities in income, assets, and access to opportunities that allow poor people to share in growth" (World Bank, 2001, p. 52). Economic growth can benefit the poor in two ways. Either directly, when growth favours the sectors and regions where the poor exist, and the factors of production that the poor own; or indirectly, through redistributive policies that involve using increased fiscal resources in the expansion of investments in the assets of the poor or transfers and safety nets for the poor.

Empirical evidence on the relationship between economic growth and poverty has one clear message: as countries get richer, on average the incidence of income poverty falls. Furthermore, the poor in developing countries share in the gains from aggregate expansion and in the losses from aggregate contraction (Ravallion, 2001, World Bank, 2001, Beck et al., 2007b). Although in general growth reduces poverty, there is substantial churning under the aggregate outcomes, for example, some people lose during spells of growth even when poverty goes down on average. Therefore, one has to look "beyond averages" (Ravallion, 2001).

Some attempts to measure the effects of FL on poverty econometrically have been based on the assumption that there is only an indirect effect via growth, i.e. the trickle-down effect (see for example Jalilian and Kirkpatrick, 2002). A noteworthy study that attempts to link FL and poverty econometrically in a direct way is the one by Honohan (2004). It concludes that "a ten percentage point (increase)[3] in the ratio of private credit to GDP should (even in the same mean income level) reduce poverty ratios by 2.5 to 3 percentage points" (p. 10). However, the author warns that the analysis is too aggregative to be fully convincing and that the measures of financial development are weak.

Another attempt to measure the direct effect is the study by Beck et al. (2007b; see, also, Demirgüç-Kunt and Levine, 2008). It is shown by these authors that financial development through its impact on the formal financial system[4] affects the poor disproportionately. In Demirgüç-Kunt and Levine (2008), however, it is conceded that these results are not definitive for problems prevail. The authors suggest that the "measure of financial development is not closely tied to theory. The study does not examine policy; rather, it examines a proxy for overall financial development that reflects many factors" (p. 11).[5] In a more recent study, Arestis and Caner (2008) find no statistically significant effect of capital account liberalization on poverty in developing countries, controlling for the possible growth effect. These authors use cross-country and panel data analyses and a de jure measure of capital account openness, (a policy variable unlike the previously mentioned studies). One problem with cross-country regressions, however, is the heterogeneity of coefficients across countries, and the possibility of cross-section estimates not corresponding to country-specific estimates (see, Luintel et al., 2008, for more details).

Clearly, there is more agreement among economists on the existence and strength of the link between economic growth and poverty than that between FL and economic growth. That FL brings economic growth is a strong assumption in many cases. The growth and poverty reduction effects of FL depend on the distributional changes induced by growth and the set of institutions and policies that accompany liberalization.

3. The Financial Crises Channel

---

[3] Authors' addition.

[4] A formal financial system is defined to include banks, securities markets and the full range of other similar-like institutions. Micro-credit programmes and informal systems are not included. Informal financial institutions are non-market institutions such as credit cooperatives, money lenders etc.; unlike the former, the latter institutions "do not rely on formal contractual obligations enforced through a codified legal system" (Ayyagari et al., 2008, p. 2).

[5] Demirgüç-Kunt and Levine (2008) isolate the 'measurement of financial development' as an area that needs a great deal more work. A relevant example is 'private credit', which is used widely in relevant research for it is available in many countries over a good number of years. Although it captures the depth of the financial system, as a variable in the area under discussion, it tells us very little of "how widely access is available" (p. 15).

As many countries experienced high growth rates along with substantial increase in financial fragility during the 1980s and 1990s in the aftermath of pursuing FL policies, the positive view about FL in the tradition of McKinnon (1973) and Shaw (1973) was clouded. Almost all developing countries experienced widespread banking sector problems, recessions and increases in poverty and income inequality (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for references). Interestingly, Ranciere et al. (2005) document that "countries that have experienced *occasional* financial crises have, on average, grown faster than countries with stable financial conditions" (p.1).

How does FL lead to fragility and financial crises? In a simple two-period model of borrowing and investing, capital markets could go wrong when uncertainty about payoffs to new investments increases after financial reform. With moral hazard, capital mobility and deposit insurance, banks lend exuberantly, which sends over-optimistic signals to firms about the outcome of the reforms. Firms over-borrow and over-invest. Savings decline and the current account deficit grows rapidly. If the outcome of the reform turns out to be less favourable than expected, firms have trouble repaying investment loans and this puts the banking system in serious trouble. Another possibility is that FL intensifies financial instability by acting as the key euphoria-inducing factor and threatens growth and employment. Under FL, economies are forced to bear a greater degree of risk than otherwise, so that the euphoria spread by FL produces financial crises (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for details and references).

There is also the possibility that the lack of careful management and sequencing of FL lead to financial fragility and crises. However, sequencing does not appear to be justified in empirical work. Opening the capital account or the stock market does not have a different effect than opening the domestic financial sector. But one exception exists; crashes seem to be larger in emerging markets if the capital account opens up first" (Kaminsky and Schmukler, 2003, p. 31). Similarly, Prasad et al. (2003) observe that there is no "clear road map for the optimal pace and sequencing" in FL and integration. Indeed, "there is the unresolved tension between having good institutions in place before undertaking capital market liberalization and the notion that liberalization can itself help import best practices and provide an impetus to improve domestic institutions" (p. 5).

Empirical work on the impact of FL on macroeconomic volatility and crises provides evidence of an increased likelihood for countries that have gone through FL of eventually being hit by financial crises. Kaminsky and Schmukler (2003) observe that, although equity markets stabilize in the long run (i.e. in five years or longer) if FL persists, the amplitudes of booms and crashes substantially increase immediately following FL. How do financial crises affect poverty? First, crises typically lead to a fall in earnings of both formal and informal-sector workers with varying impacts on workers with different skills and different levels of job security. Secondly, the distribution of income is affected by changes in relative prices of tradables relative to non-tradables, interest rates as well as changes in asset and property prices. Thirdly, contractionary fiscal policy that is traditionally implemented in response to a crisis leads to cuts in social programs. Other reasons why crises may affect the poor differently include the asymmetric effects of increased rate of inflation on the poor, and the 'labor hoarding' hypothesis (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for details).

Most of the empirical evidence on the effects of crises on poverty supports the argument that crises have an aggravating effect on poverty. We may refer to the South East Asian crisis to make the point, and to figures reported in Agénor (2001). Over the period 1997 to 1999, the incidence of poverty (as measured by the national poverty line) increased from 11% to 18% in Indonesia, from 11.4% to 12.9% in Thailand; the urban poverty headcount rose from 8.5% to 18% in South Korea. The income of the poor fell as a result of both lower real wages and higher unemployment: in Thailand real wages fell by 4.5% (and unemployment increased from 2.2% in 1997 to 5.3% in 1998); in South Korea real wages fell by 10.6% (and unemployment increased from 2.6% in 1997 to 8.4% in early 1999); and in Indonesia real wages fell by 44% (and unemployment increased less dramatically than in the other two cases, but 'disguised' unemployment rose).

It is clear that the crisis channel of interaction must be incorporated in any analysis of FL on poverty or inequality. Overall, the current evidence suggests that FL can increase a country's vulnerability to financial crises, which are likely to hurt the poor disproportionately. Moreover, financial crises affect not only the current position of the poor, but also they lead to a reduction in the limited human capital of the poor, thereby affecting their ability to grow out of poverty. The challenge for policy makers, then, is primarily to take measures to avoid crisis situations if FL is to be pursued. The roles of exchange rate policy, capital controls and counter-cyclical fiscal policy in generating or avoiding crises should be taken into consideration (see Lustig, 2000, pp. 6-11). Lustig (op. cit.) summarizes the relevant policies that include improved prudential regulation and supervision of financial intermediaries; new standards of data dissemination; and implementation of corporate bankruptcy reforms. It is equally important to choose pro-poor responses to crises in case they cannot be avoided. The incomes of the poor should be protected in the face of macroeconomic adjustment by using appropriate policy options, such as by maintaining safety nets and by carefully selecting the composition of fiscal adjustment. For it is the case that "(s)ocially responsible macroeconomic policy in crisis avoidance and crisis response can contribute simultaneously to lower chronic poverty and higher growth" (Lustig, 2000, p. 18).

Of great interest and relevance to this section is of course the world financial crisis that began in August 2007 and that is still exercising the policy maker and troubling especially the poor. The impact of the current crisis on poverty is a serious matter and worth commenting on, although the subject-matter of this contribution is not strictly related to a crisis that is still taking place. The difficulty with this financial crisis is that unlike the relatively minor and transient kind of crises discussed in this section, the August 2007 crisis is a major global recession (even a possible depression). This financial crisis is being accompanied by direct policy measures to allocate credit to 'small firms and the (housing) poor' in many OECD and in the emerging economies and less developed countries. This, however, is being done in the context not of FL but financial re-regulation in various ways. What is of particular interest in this context, however, is that this crisis has come about as a result of the financial liberalization, which had been going on since the 1970s, along with financial innovations that emanated from that era, and the easy monetary policy over the period since the equity crisis of March 2000. These three factors have played a significant role in creating and promoting the August 2007 financial crisis (Arestis and Karakitsos, 2009).

4. The Access to Credit and Financial Services Channel

The FL process and financial development that usually accompanies it can have profound effects on the availability of credit and financial services for the poor[6]. The proponents of FL argue that it leads to financial deepening and better access to credit for previously marginalized borrowers and savers. For a given level of deposits, the reduction of reserve requirements increases the supply of credit. A rise in the interest rate increases savings and bank deposits thereby allowing banks to supply more loans. Moreover, the removal of barriers to entry increases competition and motivates banks to extend their services to traditionally excluded sections of the population.

Nonetheless, it is not clear that financial sector reforms will increase the supply of loans to small firms and the poor. From the banks' point of view, it is more expensive to lend to the poor due to higher processing, administrative and monitoring costs and higher risk of default. Since banks emphasize profitability rather than other lending criteria such as the viability of the project or social outreach, banks may naturally prefer doing business with established companies rather than the poor even after financial sector reforms. Various studies report that, in developing countries, it was the established borrowers and not the small firms or the poor who had access to more credit or better terms of borrowing after FL. Furthermore, rising interest rates affected the credit demand and credit repayment of the poor negatively (see Arestis and Caner, 2005, for references).

The impact of FL on the poor could also work through its effect on the interaction between formal and informal financial markets. In developing countries, the informal financial sector has usually a more important role. It has been shown that roughly 40 to 80 percent of economic agents in developing countries lack access to the formal banking sector (Beck et al., 2007a; World Bank, 2007). If FL expands the formal sector at the detriment of the informal sector, it can hurt the poor substantially given that the poor operate mainly in the informal sector. Lensink (1996) finds that this actually happened in a number of sub-Saharan African countries. What the proponents of these FL programs fail to recognize is that the formal banking sector in these countries is relatively unimportant for the financing of investment projects.

In contrast, a flourishing informal financial sector exists. The informal lender, due to having better knowledge of the borrower, has better opportunities to discriminate among borrowers with high and low risks and to charge appropriate interest rates. Liberalization programs that ignore these aspects can reduce the overall efficiency of capital allocation process by shifting funds from the better informed informal to the poorly informed formal sector (Lensink, 1996). Ayyagari et al. (2008) examine firm financing patterns in China and find that a relatively small percentage of firms in the sample rely on formal bank finance; the informal financial sector plays a significant role. Firms that rely on the formal sector, though, grow faster, have higher productivity and profit reinvestment rates. However, when informal financing is defined to include internal financing, the informal finance sector has higher productivity growth and profit

---

[6] Beck et al. (2006) examine the possibility of the existence of barriers to banking services. Using surveys of 193 banks in 58 countries they conclude that cross-bank and cross-country variation in barriers to banking exist. Furthermore, Beck et al. (2007a) employ aggregate cross-country banking data, five large banks in 80 countries, and reach similar conclusions.

reinvestment rate, but not higher growth than the small formal sector. But, then, four large state-controlled companies dominate the Chinese financial system; state-owned banks enjoy a large share of bank lending. Ayyagari et al. (2008) produce evidence suggesting "that the firms which receive government help in obtaining bank financing do not grow as fast as firms which report no government help" (p. 37).

The role of microfinance institutions in terms of this channel cannot be emphasized enough[7]. These institutions have the advantage of proximity to the market they serve and, therefore, enjoy better knowledge of the community. They provide services to those who are not served by the formal sector and therefore complement the formal financial system. Lanzi (2008) discusses microfinance from the point of view of it being "a characteristically social enterprise" (p. 203). The conclusion reached is that microfinance institutions "are no more than financial service providers specialized in offering services ..... Thus, microcredit is far from being the capitalism-compatible tool of liberation (in the Marxist sense) of the poor and this piece of news cannot shock economists since, following Marxism, no capitalism-compatible ways towards the freedom of the poor actually exist" (p. 209). A slightly alternative view is propounded by Cull et al. (2008) who analyze data from 346 of the world's more important microfinance institutions dealing with 18 million borrowers and show that microfinance institutions can in fact provide reliable banking services in a commercially viable way to poor customers. They argue that although profit-maximizing investors would have limited interest in the institutions that attract the poorest customers, the microfinance sector has grown substantially with its emphasis on social objectives.

Microfinance institutions have been able to expand services, improve quality, and successfully innovate to tackle problems of asymmetric information, **yet** challenges to high costs remain. Such success has not yet proved to increase economic growth or to reduce poverty on a large scale. Consequently, microfinance institutions should pursue a more profit-seeking objective (Prahalad, 2004). Cull et al. (2008) respond to this suggestion by arguing that the empirical assertions used to support this argument are questionable. The challenge in their view is to take advantage of the new opportunities of the market place as offered by microfinance, and to recognize at the same time that potential trade-offs always exist. World Bank (2007) suggests that microfinance is not overwhelmingly beneficial and displays a great deal of skepticism in this study as to whether microfinance can produce a significant reduction to poverty. We might add to this the fact that rates of interest charged by micro-finance institutions can be astronomically high for the informal sector. This consideration may very well defeat the aim of the microfinance exercise in certain cases of really weak informal sectors.

To summarize the argument of this section, it is rather unclear whether the consequences of FL for access to the financial market by small customers and the poor are adverse or beneficial. Future research should focus on developing models to examine a number of factors affecting the

[7] There are other market-based strategies for poverty alleviation besides microfinance that have proliferated in recent years. These are individual development accounts (based on the hypothesis that the poor will save if provided with the same incentives and mechanisms as the non-poor) and bottom-of-the-pyramid strategies developing products and services especially designed for the poor by private firms). Although such strategies will probably be beneficial only in some cases and to only some people, they are certainly new alternatives to poverty alleviation that should be kept in mind when designing financial sector reforms.

poor in different ways and on clarifying based on these models the conditions under which FL increases the poor's access to credit and financial services. On the one hand, increased competition and improved distributional efficiency will lead financial institutions to seek markets normally rationed out. In this case, small borrowers with good business prospects but insufficient collateral will benefit. On the other hand, financial sector reforms may leave the basic structure of the banking system unchanged, thereby protecting or reinforcing the oligopolistic position of banks. In this case, previously marginalized customers will not have greater access and some may even be excluded. In many countries, financial sector reforms so far have not embraced the broad agenda of developing the institutional structure and new instruments to satisfy the financial needs of small enterprises and the poor. FL is not sufficient to improve access to credit and financial services by the poor, given the empirical evidence from developing countries. Even if credit and financial services are extended to small customers and the poor, it is doubtful that improved access by itself will eradicate poverty. Furthermore, there is the potentially serious problem of being charged exorbitant interest rates as suggested above.

5. The Income Share of Labour Channel

Financial liberalization might affect poverty by changing the share of labour in national income. We know that with increasing global competition and capital mobility, rents in production are considerably squeezed. However, the share of capital in these reduced rents is increased, since capital can search for higher returns abroad more easily in a liberalized regime than before, thus enhancing its position in a strategic bargain with labour.

That financial capital is more mobile while labour (especially unskilled) is far less mobile across national boundaries than they used to be is one feature of today's international labour and capital markets. According to Rodrik (1997), increasing capital mobility could be giving more bargaining power to capital over labour. As world-wide trade and investment opportunities for employers are increasing, they are able to move across borders more freely. This leads to an increase in the demand elasticities for immobile factors such as land and unskilled labour. Wages race to the bottom to attract capital. Another implication is that during a crisis, capital can threaten to flee unless it receives the world interest rate plus a risk premium, whereas labour cannot flee and has to bear the burden.

So far, there are only a few studies on the link between FL and labour's income share. One example by Jayadev (2007) estimates the effect of financial liberalization on the labor share of output using an index of capital account restrictions based on data from 140 countries over the period 1972-1996, controlling for macroeconomic trends and changes in endowments. Panel data estimates reveal that capital account openness exerts a robust and significant negative effect on the labor share of income. The effect is robust across many subsets of developing and developed countries, except for the low-income country sample. Furthermore, the losses of labour are not temporary, but they persist through the medium term (five years).

Harrison (2002) models the bargaining process between firms and workers on the division of excess profits between capital and labour in an imperfectly competitive theoretical framework where firms make excess profit. In her model, bargaining strength is a function of the fixed costs of relocating and the alternative return available elsewhere. To the extent that the fixed costs of relocating are larger for labour than for capital, the bargaining process could lead capital's share of national income to rise relative to labour. Applying the model to data for more than 100 countries over 40 years, she finds that rising trade openness and exchange rate crises reduce the output share of labour, while capital controls and government spending increases it.

It has been suggested that the effect of financial globalization on the inequality between the income shares of capital and labour does not operate monotonically and smoothly through time, rather it operates via short-term severe disputes during crises. By changes in the distribution of income between labour and capital, labour partially bails out capital in resolving crises, and therefore it is not hurt unintentionally. As empirical support for this thesis, Diwan (2001) reveals an inclination for labour share to fall sharply during a financial crisis, recovering only partially in subsequent years. The author also finds that the decline during a crisis can be partly explained by the degree of leverage in the country, the nature of its financial structure, and the openness of its current and capital accounts.

One further possible consideration as far as the relationship between FL and poverty via changing income share of labour is concerned, an important 'intermediate' consideration is educational/skill upgrading. On the one hand, FL could help labour enhance its skills; this is actually one of the main ways, beyond the bargaining power of labour, that income share of the poor could be increased. On the other hand, FL can change production and management practices in such a way to diminish the role of labour vis-a-vis capital. Definitely, more research is needed on examining these points as they are missing in the literature.

We may summarize the rather small amount of evidence produced so far on this channel. It provides support to the thesis that financial liberalization can actually reduce the share of labour in income. Since labour income is the major income source for the poor, this channel of interaction shows that detrimental effects on this group of people that emanate from FL are evident. However, as mentioned before, a great more research is needed on this channel.

6. Lessons from Various Country Examples

Developing countries have very different experiences regarding financial liberalization, growth and poverty. Countries such as China and India experienced large reductions in poverty and high growth rates with relatively closed capital accounts. On the other hand, fast-growing East Asian countries with open capital accounts were hit by the Asian crisis. In 1998 the number of people living in poverty in the four Asian countries that were hit the hardest by the crisis, increased by more than 60 per cent. In that year approximately 20 million people in those countries fell into poverty. The estimates for the increase in poverty are as follows: 17 million in Indonesia, 2.3 million in Thailand, 665,000 in the Philippines, and 500,000 in Malaysia. The estimates use the \$1 a day poverty line for Indonesia and the Philippines and \$2 a day for Malaysia and Thailand (World Bank, 2007 and Charlton and Stiglitz, 2004).

In the rest of this section we discuss briefly the experiences of some developing countries with financial liberalization and poverty. Since the 1980s, absolute poverty declined globally, but not in every region. A large share of the world's poor still live in China (211.6 million people in 2001, based on the \$1 a day measure) and India (358.6 million people in 2001, based on the \$1 a day measure), despite large reductions in poverty that have been achieved by these countries in recent years (Chen and Ravallion, 2004). The highest poverty rates and the greatest depth of poverty in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Headcount poverty rates are rising in Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania (World Bank, 2006). These observations lead us to focus our discussion on these cases.

There is the famous debate on whether 'gradualism' or 'shock therapy' in liberalization is more desirable. The Chinese experience is contrasted with the experiences of the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries in the 1990s, and is thought to demonstrate the merit of gradualism or experimentation to top-down reform. In the formerly socialist countries, starting with the reforms in the late 1980s, the period of collapse of Communism and the transition to capitalism was a period of broadening set of opportunities and increasing availability of better quality consumption goods. But it was also a period of large declines in income, increasing unemployment, rising poverty and suicide rates and great uncertainty.

Unlike the one-shot reform strategy followed by the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, Chinese reforms, launched in the late 1970s, have been gradual, with varying speed since the beginning. The first wave of liberalization included agricultural liberalization where use rights to commune land were allocated among rural households. By 1984 all provinces had adopted these reforms. Encouraged by this success, Chinese leaders began to permit rural enterprises, and to implement market-oriented reforms in the urban areas as the second wave of liberalization (Lipton and Zhang, 2007). The fast growth of rural enterprises and the urban non-state sector raised employment and the share of wages in income by following China's comparative advantage and making labour intensive technology choices.

As the third wave of liberalization, China began to reform its foreign trade management system. Private sector firms were given more self-management power and the permission to keep some foreign exchange. Mandatory planning was gradually lifted while special economic zones were built in coastal provinces. By the beginning of 1990s, China had integrated into the world economy by allowing foreign capital inflows, and especially foreign direct investment (FDI), which makes up more than 70% of capital inflows. While in the 1979-1984 period the total gross FDI inflow was only \$3.06 billion, in 2002 alone it was \$52.7 billion (Lipton and Zhang, 2007).

Performance of the Chinese economy has been remarkable. Between 1978 and 2003 GDP per capita grew 8% annually, increasing GDP per capita sevenfold during the period. There have been major structural changes and urbanization during the period as the share of agriculture in GDP fell from 28 to 14 percent while its share in employment fell from 70 to 49 percent. Based on the \$1 per day poverty line (1993 purchasing power), the poverty rate declined from 62 percent in 1980 to 16.6 percent in 2001 and to 8 percent in 2003 (Lipton and Zhang, 2007). Along with the decline in poverty, education and health indicators have improved.

Despite the remarkable progress, poverty in China is far from eliminated. There are still 75 million rural people below the dollar-a-day poverty line (Lipton and Zhang, 2007). Important for our analysis, the substantial part of the decline in poverty had already happened by the mid-1980s, before the big strides in foreign trade or investment liberalization (Bardhan, 2006). As the poverty rate falls to a certain level, it becomes more difficult to help the remaining poor to escape poverty. The problem with China is that poverty reduction has been uneven across provinces. The poorest are mostly in remote, resource deficient regions. These people have high population growth rates and low literacy rates with little hope for successful migration. The existence of regional disparities in China is similar to the continuation of deprivation in East-Central India, despite overall advances in poverty reduction. In both countries, "regions with worse health and education outcomes not only have fewer specialists and facilities, but also attract lower-quality personnel, supervision, popular participation, and public responsiveness and perhaps governance" (Lipton and Zhang, 2007, p.20).

FDI in China has helped reduce poverty by being export-oriented, and by following the country's comparative advantage in labour-intensive technologies. However at present, most FDI comes from developed countries and concentrates in coastal provinces and manufacturing sectors. The occupations and provinces of the poor receive much smaller shares of FDI than their shares in the population (UNCTAD, 2003).

On the gradualism debate, Sachs and Woo (1994) state that it was not gradualism but China's economic structure that facilitated success. China began reform as a peasant agricultural society, whereas the former Soviet Union countries (FSU) as urban and over-industrialized. China faced the classic problem of transferring workers from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity industry, an easier problem to solve. On the other hand, in FSU, the problem was structural adjustment: cutting employment in inefficient and subsidized industry to allow new jobs in efficient industry and services. However, the speed of reforms is not a trivial issue. One needs to keep in mind that it took about 40 years for European countries to attain the level of liberalization now being sought in developing economies.

India is also known as a country that was slow to adopt financial liberalization (Jha, 2002). The "Delhi consensus" avoided capital account liberalization until recently. Liberalization efforts in this country were at a creeping stage in the 1980. The country experienced a balance of payments crisis in 1990-91, resulting in it being subjected to an IMF-style adjustment programme. Starting in 1991, economic reforms accelerated (Chandrasekhar and Pal, 2006). The flows through foreign institutional investors were relatively stable during the 1992-2002 period, but have recorded an extraordinary surge since 2003. The stock market index, Bombay Sensex, has risen during the same period, and is more volatile than before. A high average growth rate during the later period put India among the fastest growing developing countries in the 1990s (Ahluwalia, 2002). The share of services in national income increased fast.

Parallel to these developments was a sharp rise in rural, urban and regional inequality and only a marginal decline in Indian poverty in the post-reform period. The rise in inequality was due to an increase in the income share of capital relative to labour, a drop in the rate of labour absorption and the rapid growth of the services sector (Jha, 2002). It has been argued that the rise in inequality has diminished the poverty-reducing effects of higher growth.

One challenge offered by financial liberalization in developing countries like India is the rise in returns to financial activity. As long as the returns to agriculture and manufacturing are limited, there is a limit to what would be paid to finance such investment. Thus, despite the fact that social returns to such investment are higher than that for stocks and real estate, and despite the contribution that such investment can make to growth and poverty alleviation, credit may not be available at the required rate (Chandrasekhar and Pal, 2006).

Sub-Saharan African countries, where headcount poverty rates (according to the frugal $1 a day threshold) vary around 45%, faced stagnating growth in the early 1980s. During the 1980s per capita GDP declined by 1.3 % per year, which was 5 percentage points lower than the average for all low-income countries (Collier and Gunning, 1999). It became necessary to reform and re-structure these economies. The financial sector received a major part of this attention along with infrastructure.

These countries implemented financial liberalization programmes in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s with the aim of mobilizing resources and relieving savings and foreign exchange constraints on growth and poverty reduction. Evidence collected so far shows that financial liberalization improved financial deepening (as measured by liquidity ratio or private sector credit ratio) to some extent, however the link to growth via financial deepening is not as certainly confirmed. Neither savings nor investment has demonstrated clear upward trends. Furthermore, growth has been quite modest and not sufficient to sustain an increase in per capita income (Serieux, 2008).

Analyses of the major factors that explain African stagnation reveal that a lack of openness in product markets, a lack of social capital, high systemic risk and poor public services are important determinants of poor growth performance (Collier and Gunning, 1999). On the other hand, the lack of formal finance is found to have a minor effect on growth, yet a more important effect at the household level. Put succinctly, "Africa stagnated because governments were captured by a narrow elite that undermined markets and used public services to deliver employment patronage. These policies reduced the returns on assets and increased the already high risks agents faced. To cope, private agents moved both financial and human capital abroad and diverted their social capital into risk-reduction and risk-bearing mechanisms." (op. cit. p.100). It is incredible that despite being highly indebted, many Sub-Saharan African countries are actually net creditors vis-à-vis the rest of the world. The external assets of these countries belong to a small number of wealthy individuals while debt is borne by the entire population via the governments (Boyce and Ndikumana, 2001). In fact, global savings are severely misallocated. In recent years the United States has been using a large share of the world's savings originating from relatively poor or middle-income countries (Epstein and Grabel, 2007). Under these conditions, one should not expect much benefit from liberalization per se.

It is clear from all these discussions that FL is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for growth and poverty reduction. FL policies brought developing countries varying degrees of success. The outcome in each country is a function of the social, economic, political and institutional environment in the country. Therefore, financial sector reforms should at best be guided according to the specific circumstances of each country.

7. Summary and Conclusions

We contribute to the debate on FL and poverty by criticizing the current approach in the literature and by identifying three further channels of interaction between FL and poverty: the crises channel, the access to credit and financial services channel, and the income share of labour channel in addition to the growth channel that is usually mentioned, or implied, in the literature. Our work reveals that FL has a complex relationship with poverty. The trickle-down effect of economic growth accompanied by FL is what is usually assumed to benefit the poor, yet theory and evidence tells us that this is not always the case. When FL is applied without first maintaining macroeconomic stability and establishing the supporting institutions and policies, even when it brings economic expansion, it often comes at the cost of devastating crises and increasing economic inequality. The poor appear to pay a higher price than the rich in the aftermath of these crises.

The reduction of extreme poverty by half by year 2015 as stated in Millenium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000) is a big challenge for policymakers worldwide. It is important to provide the poor with sufficient access to consumption smoothing mechanisms to alleviate poverty. Equally important as providing access to credit and financial services is providing the poor with education, safety nets and basic health services. Unless they are equipped with the proper skills to take advantage of the financial services and to manage the debt, the poor may not benefit at all from the new set of prospects.

Although financial repression may not be desirable in that it has its own problems, it is clear by now that its alternative has not been free of problems; on the contrary and as we have shown it has been marred with all sort of problems, especially so when it comes to the poverty question. If FL is to be introduced, it must be designed with poverty reduction as its thrust in order to benefit the poor. Otherwise, the market by its nature will benefit those who already have access to economic resources or to information and those who are strategically positioned to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the market, as already experienced by many developing countries.

A final comment relates to the question of why we have concentrated merely upon the relationship between FL and poverty and have not accounted for inequality as well. We believe that proper treatment of inequality would require a great deal more, which would go beyond the purpose of this contribution. It is of course the case that poverty has attracted the attention of the World Bank and other organizations and institutions dealing with development and growth. While it is true that this work avoids any serious discussion of inequality, it is still obvious that in these studies the purpose is to concentrate on the issue of poverty. The question of inequality and growth has been studied separately from poverty as for example in Barro (2000), where one finds that the Kuznets curve is ‘re-invented’ as an analytical device for representing the relationship between inequality and growth over the 'poverty to richness' cycle. Even in that study, the discussion of poverty is not directly focused. In other words a separate in-depth study is required to account properly for the relevant dimensions of the impact of FL upon inequality.

References

Agénor, Pierre-Richard (2001), “Business Cycles, Economic Crises, and the Poor: Testing for Asymmetric Effects”, *mimeo*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Arestis, Philip and Asena Caner (2005), "Financial Liberalization and Poverty: Channels of Influence," chapter 3 in Philip Arestis and Malcolm Sawyer (eds.), *Financial Liberalization: Beyond Orthodox Concerns*, International Papers in Political Economy Series, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Arestis, Philip and Asena Caner (2008), "Capital Account Liberalization and Poverty: How Close is the Link?" TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Working Paper No. 08-11.

Arestis, Philip and Panicos Demetriades (1997), "Financial Development and Economic Growth: Assessing the Evidence," *Economic Journal*, 107(442), 783-99.

Arestis, Philip and Elias Karakitsos (2009), "Subprime Mortgage Market and Current Financial Crisis", *mimeo*, Cambridge Centre for Economic and Public Policy, Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge.

Ayyagari, Meghana, Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and Vojislav Maksimovic (2008), "Formal versus Informal Finance: Evidence from China", *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4465*, Washington DC: The World Bank.

Bardhan, Pranab (2006), "Globalization and Rural Poverty," *World Development*, 34 (8), 1393-1404.

Barro, R. (2000), "Inequality and Growth in a Panel of Countries", *Journal of Economic Growth*, 5(1), 5-32.

Beck, Thorsten, Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and Maria Soledad Martinez Peria (2006), "Banking Services for Everyone? Barriers to Bank Access and Use around the World", *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4079*, Washington DC: The World Bank.

Beck, Thorsten, Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and Maria Soledad Martinez Peria (2007a), "Reaching Out: Access to and Use of Banking Services across Countries", *Journal of Financial Economics*, 85(2), 234-266.

Beck, Thorsten, Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and Ross Levine (2007b), "Finance, Inequality and the Poor", *Journal of Economic Growth*, 12(1), 27-49.

Boyce, James K. and Leonce Ndikumana (2001), "Is Africa a Net Creditor? New Estimates of Capital Flight from Severely Indebted Sub-Saharan African Countries," *Journal of Development Studies*, 38 (2), 27-56.

Chandrasekhar C.P. and Parthapratim Pal (2006), "Financial Liberalization in India: An Assessment of its Nature and Outcomes", *mimeo*, http://www.networkideas.org/featart/may2006/Financial_Liberalization.pdf

Charlton, Andrew and Joseph E. Stiglitz (2004) "Capital Market Liberalization and Poverty Initiative for Policy Dialogue", *Working Paper*, Preliminary Draft, June.

Chen, Shaohua and Martin Ravallion (2004), “How Have the World’s Poorest Fared Since the Early 1980s?”, *World Bank Research Observer*, 19(2), 141-170.

Collier, Paul and Jan Willem Gunning (1999), “Explaining African Economic Performance,” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 37, 64-111, March.

Cull, Robert J., Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and Jonathan Morduch (2008), “Microfinance Meets the Market”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4630*, Washington DC: The World Bank.

Demirgüç-Kunt, Asli and Ross Levine (1996), “Stock Markets, Corporate Finance and Economic Growth: An Overview”, *World Bank Economic Review*, 10 (2), 223-239.

Demirgüç-Kunt, Asli and Ross Levine (2008), “Finance and Economic Opportunity”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4468*, Washington DC: The World Bank.

Deveraux, Michael, B. and Geoffrey W. Smith (1994), “International Risk Sharing and Economic Growth”, *International Economic Review*, 35, 535-551.

Diwan, Ishac (2001), “Debt as Sweat: Labor, Financial Crises, and the Globalization of Capital” *mimeo*, The World Bank, July.

Epstein, Gerald and Ilene Grabel (2007), “Financial Policy,” International Poverty Centre Training Module No.3, July.

Harrison, Ann (2002), "Has Globalization Eroded Labor’s Share? Some Cross-Country Evidence", *mimeo*, Berkeley: University of California.

Honohan, P. (2004), “Financial Development, Growth and Poverty: How Close are the Links”, chapter 1 in G.A.E. Goodhart(ed.), *Financial Development and Economic Growth: Explaining the Links*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Jalilian, Hossein and Colin Kirkpatrick (2002), “Financial Development and Poverty Reduction in Developing Countries,” *International Journal of Finance and Economics*, 7(1), 97-108.

Jayadev, Arjun, (2007), “Capital Account Openness and the Labour Share of Income,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 31 (3), 423-443.

Jha, Raghbendra (2002), “Reducing Poverty and Inequality in India: Has Liberalization Helped?”, *mimeo*.

Kaminsky, Graciela Laura and Sergio L. Schmukler (2003), “Short-Run Pain, Long-Run Gain: The Effects of FL”, *IMF Working Paper WP/03/34*, Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

Lanzi, D. (2008), “Microfinance at a Cossroads”, *Economic Notes*, 37(2), 203-210.

Lensink, Robert (1996), "The Allocative Efficiency of the Formal versus the Informal Financial Sector," *Applied Economics Letters*, 3 (3), 163-65.

Lipton, Michael and Qi Zhang (2007), "Reducing Inequality And Poverty During Liberalisation In China: Rural And Agricultural Experiences And Policy Options," Poverty Research Unit at Sussex, University of Sussex, Working Paper No. 37.

Luintel, K.B., Khan, M., Arestis, P. and Theodoridis, K. (2008), "Financial Structure and Economic Growth", *Journal of Development Economics*, 86 (1), 181-200.

Lustig, Nora (2000), "Crises and the Poor: Socially Responsible Macroeconomics", *Poverty and Inequality Advisory Unit Working Paper No. 108,* Inter-American Development Bank (Sustainable Development Department): Brazil.

McKinnon, Ronald I. (1973), *Money and Capital in Economic Development*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Prahalad, C.K. (2004), *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits*, Philadelphia: Wharton School Press.

Prasad, Eswar, Kenneth Rogoff, Shang-Jin Wei and M. Ayhan Kose (2003), "Effects of Financial Globalization on Developing Countries: Some Empirical Evidence," *IMF Board Document*, Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

Ranciere, Romain, Aaron Tornell and Frank Westermann (2005), "Systemic Crises and Growth," *NBER Working Paper No. 11076*, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Ravallion, Martin (2001), "Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Looking Beyond Averages," *World Development*, 29, 1803-16.

Rodrik, Dani (1997), *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics.

Sachs, Jeffrey and Wing Thye Woo (1994), "Structural Factors in the Economic Reforms of China, Eastern Europe, and the Former Soviet Union", *Economic Policy*, Vol.9, No.18, , pp.102-145, April.

Serieux, John (2008) "Financial Liberalization and Domestic Resource Mobilization in Africa: An Assessment," *International Poverty Centre Working Paper No. 45*, April.

Shaw, Edward S. (1973), *Financial Deepening in Economic Development*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Slaughter, Matthew, (2001) "International Trade and Labor-Demand Elasticities", Journal of International Economics, 54(1), 27-56, June.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. and Andrew Weiss (1981), "Credit Rationing in Markets with Imperfect Information," *American Economic Review*, 71(3), 393-410.

Taylor, Lance (1983), *Structuralist Macroeconomics: Applicable Models for the Third World*, New York: Basic Books.

UNCTAD. 2003. *Trade and Development Report 2002: Developing Countries in the World Trade*. http://www.unctad.org/Templates/WebFlyer.asp?intItemID=2510&lang=1.

United Nations (2000), United Nations Millenium Declaration. http://www.un.org/millenium/

World Bank (2001), *World Development Report 2000/2001*, New York: Oxford University Press.

World Bank (2006), World Development Report, 2006, Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press.

World Bank (2007), *Finance for All? Policies and Pitfalls in Expanding Access*, World Bank Policy Research Report, August, Washington DC: World Bank.