

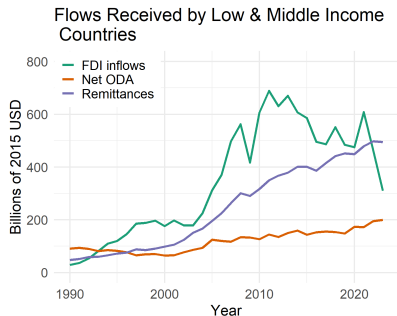
Remittances, Credit Constraints, and Growth: Cross-Country Evidence

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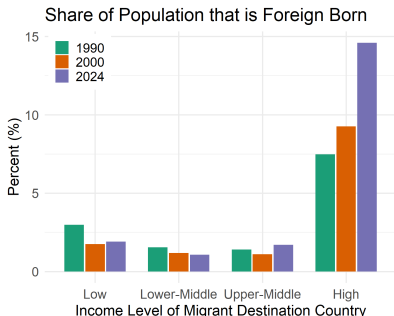
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Motivation



Source: World Bank. Data ends in 2023.



Source: UN DESA International Migrant Stock & Our World in Data.

- ▶ Remittances are now the largest source of external finance for developing countries
- ▶ Unlike FDI or aid, they flow **directly to households**
- ▶ Yet their aggregate effects, including spillovers across countries through trade networks, remain poorly understood

This paper

Research questions

1. How large are the real GDP gains from remittances in low- and middle-income countries, and what is the role of the investment financing channel?
2. How has globalization shaped these gains through changes in the global trade network?

Empirical strategy: Shift-share IV to estimate causal effects on macroeconomic and financial outcomes

Quantitative model: Dynamic, multi-country, multi-sector GE with a collateral-style investment financing constraint ϕ_n to quantify long-run welfare and cross-country spillovers

What we find

Empirically

- ▶ 1% remittance shock \Rightarrow GDP +0.07%, consumption and investment +0.19% \Rightarrow multiplier of **1.5**
- ▶ Effects concentrated in LMICs; zero in high-income countries
- ▶ Imports rise, exports unchanged : no Dutch disease
- ▶ Private credit +0.38%, largest where credit markets are least developed

Quantitatively

- ▶ (Mean) real GDP gain from 2000–2022 remittance boom is **2.6%**
- ▶ (Mean) real GDP gain would fall to **1.6%** if we assume LMICs are not financial constraint
- ▶ Deepening trade integration has offset the real GDP gain by **45%**, to 1.44%

Empirics

Data

Sample: 166 countries (55 high-income, 111 LMICs), 2000–2024

Key variables:

- ▶ **Remittances:** personal remittance inflows(BPM6: personal transfers + compensation of non-resident employees) — World Bank WDI
- ▶ **Macro outcomes:** GDP, consumption, investment, imports, exports — World Bank WDI
- ▶ **Financial outcomes:** private credit, liquid liabilities, bank assets, deposits — IMF Global Financial Development Database

	Low	Low-Mid	Upper-Mid	High
Annual inflow growth	12.6%	8.6%	5.6%	5.7%
Remittances / GDP	3.9%	6.7%	6.0%	1.9%
Remittances / investment	20.8%	43.2%	28.1%	4.7%
Remittances / private credit	46.9%	36.7%	19.5%	2.8%

Empirical strategy

Estimating equation:

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta \ln(y)_{o,t} = & \beta_1 \Delta \ln(\text{Remit})_{o,t} + \beta_2 \Delta \ln(y)_{o,t-1} \\ & + \beta_3 \Delta \ln(\text{Remit})_{o,t-1} + \beta_4 \Delta \ln(\text{Pop})_{o,t} + \delta_t + \epsilon_{o,t}\end{aligned}$$

The identification challenge:

- ▶ Remittances are countercyclical: migrants send more when the origin economy deteriorates, inducing a negative correlation between $\Delta \ln(\text{Remit})_{o,t}$ and $\epsilon_{o,t}$
- ⇒ OLS estimates of β_1 are biased toward zero

Shift-share instrument

$$IV_{o,t} = \sum_{d \neq o} \lambda_{od,1980} \Delta \ln(\text{Remit Outflows})_{d,t}$$

- ▶ **Shares** $\lambda_{od,1980}$: bilateral migrant stocks in 1980
- ▶ **Shifts**: remittance outflow growth from destination d , exogenous to origin-country conditions
- ▶ **Trimming**: drop corridors with $\lambda_{od,1980} > 0.1$ (e.g. Mexico–US); control for sum of retained shares

Relevance: the instrument is significantly correlated with $\Delta \ln(\text{Remit})_{o,t}$
Exclusion restriction: the 1980 emigrant distribution is uncorrelated with subsequent origin-country shocks, conditional on controls and year fixed effects

Fact 1: Remittances Raise GDP, Consumption, and Investment

Table 1: Impact of Remittances on Macroeconomic Outcomes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\Delta \ln(\text{GDP})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Priv. Cons.})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Invest.})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Imports})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Exports})$
$\Delta \ln(\widehat{\text{Remit}})_{o,t}$	0.070*** (0.024)	0.192*** (0.062)	0.194* (0.117)	0.136 (0.091)	0.002 (0.072)

- ▶ 1% remittance shock \Rightarrow GDP +0.070%, consumption +0.192%, investment +0.194%; implied multiplier \approx **1.5** [▶ How?](#)
- ▶ Comparable to open-economy fiscal multiplier estimates in Nakamura and Steinsson [2014]
- ▶ Imports rise, exports unchanged; no Dutch disease; remittances raise spending that leaks abroad through imports

Effects concentrated in LMICs; statistically zero in high-income countries

Table 2: Low and Middle Income Countries Only

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\Delta \ln(\text{GDP})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Priv. Cons.})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Invest.})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Imports})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Exports})$
$\Delta \ln(\widehat{\text{Remit}})_{o,t}$	0.079** (0.033)	0.253** (0.117)	0.191 (0.223)	0.120 (0.141)	-0.089 (0.118)

Table 3: High Income Countries Only

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\Delta \ln(\text{GDP})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Priv. Cons.})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Invest.})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Imports})$	$\Delta \ln(\text{Exports})$
$\Delta \ln(\widehat{\text{Remit}})_{o,t}$	0.014 (0.032)	0.086 (0.091)	0.113 (0.175)	0.187 (0.133)	0.079 (0.100)

- ▶ Remittance-GDP multiplier in low-income, low-middle, upper-middle, and high, respectively, are: 2.03, 1.18, 1.32, and 0.74

Fact 2: Remittances Deepen Financial Markets

Table 4: Impact of Remittances on Financial Outcomes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\Delta \ln$	$\Delta \ln$	$\Delta \ln$	$\Delta \ln$	Δ
	(Priv. Credit)	(Liq. Liab.)	(Bank Assets/GDP)	(Deposits)	(Credit/Dep.)
$\Delta \ln(\widehat{\text{Remit}})_{o,t}$	0.384*** (0.108)	0.470*** (0.134)	0.248** (0.103)	0.257*** (0.087)	0.221** (0.096)

- ▶ Credit rises more than deposits: remittances are intermediated into new lending, amplifying investment beyond the pure income effect

Response is largest where credit markets are least developed

Table 5: Impact of Remittances on Financial Outcomes: Interaction with Private Credit

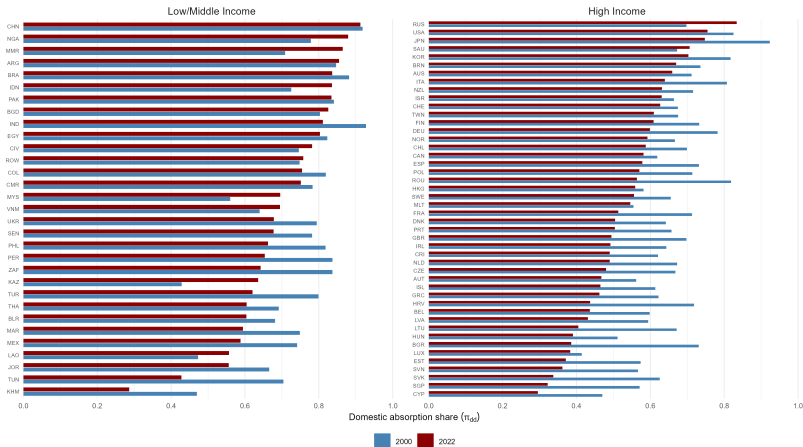
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\Delta \ln$ (Priv. Credit)	$\Delta \ln$ (Liquid Liabilities)	$\Delta \ln$ (Bank Assets/GDP)	$\Delta \ln$ (Deposits)	$\Delta \ln$ (Credit/ Deposits)
$\Delta \ln(\widehat{\text{Remit}})_{o,t}$	0.696*** (0.191)	0.791*** (0.189)	0.490*** (0.166)	0.504*** (0.141)	0.402*** (0.144)
$\Delta \ln(\widehat{\text{Remit}})_{o,t} \times \ln(\text{Credit})_{o,2000}$	-0.089* (0.052)	-0.050 (0.065)	-0.054 (0.051)	-0.080** (0.038)	-0.053 (0.039)

- ▶ Interaction **negative in every column**: pass-through is lower where initial credit markets are deeper
- ▶ 75th \rightarrow 25th pct of initial credit ($\sim 48\% \rightarrow \sim 10\%$ of GDP): private credit 0.35 \rightarrow 0.49 (+40%); deposits 0.19 \rightarrow 0.32 (+65%)

▶ Robustness

Fact 3: Trade Openness Has Risen, Dampening Remittance Pass-Through

Change in Domestic Absorption Share, 2000 vs. 2022



Taking Stock

Three facts from the data

- ▶ Remittances raise GDP and investment in LMICs (multiplier >1); insignificant in high-income countries
- ▶ No Dutch disease: imports rise, exports unchanged
- ▶ Effects largest where financial markets are least developed; trade openness may dampen pass-through

What reduced-form IV cannot tell us

- ▶ How large are aggregate gains from the 2000–2022 boom across countries?
- ▶ How much is amplified by the financing constraint?
- ▶ How does the trade network shape cross-country spillovers?

We build a quantitative GE model to trace aggregate impacts and cross-country spillovers through the global trade network.

Model

Model Setup

- ▶ Dynamic multi-country, multi-sector general equilibrium
 - ▶ 76 countries + ROW; 4 sectors [◀ Diagram](#)
 - ▶ Countries trade final goods and intermediate inputs across sectors. A shock in one country propagates through the global supply chain
- ▶ **Households** earn labor and capital income, and receive net remittances [◀ household problem](#)
 - ▶ Choose consumption and investment each period; accumulate capital over time
 - ▶ Remittance flows are **exogenous**. They are taken directly from data, not determined by migrant stocks or economic conditions
 - ▶ Investment capped at fraction ϕ_n of total income for LMICs [◀ Fact 2](#)
Remittances relax the ceiling and amplify the investment response :
$$P_{n,t}I_{n,t} \leq \phi_n \left[W_{n,t}L_{n,t} + R_{n,t}K_{n,t} + T_{n,t} \right]$$
 [◀ More](#) [◀ Alternative](#)

Model Setup II

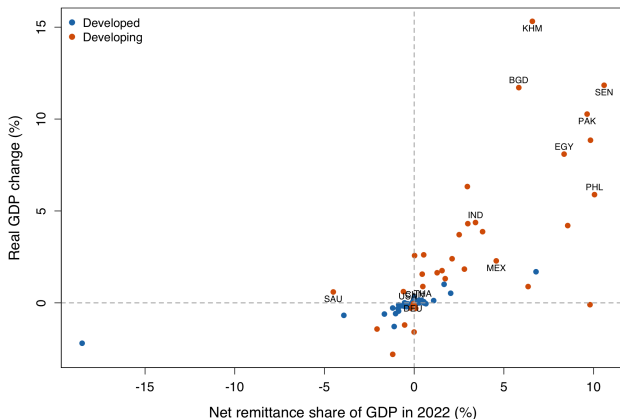
- ▶ **Representative firm** in each sector produce using labor, capital, and intermediate inputs
 - ▶ Inputs sourced from domestic and foreign suppliers; competitive price-taking
 - ▶ Demand shocks propagate upstream through input-output linkages across all countries
- ▶ **Trade** links households and firms across all 77 countries
 - ▶ Bilateral shares follow a gravity structure with iceberg costs and substitution elasticities ε, ρ
 - ▶ The domestic absorption share π_{mm} governs how much remittance-financed demand stays home vs. leaks abroad
- ▶ **Solution and counterfactuals**
 - ▶ Solved from steady-state to steady-state via hat algebra, anchored directly to observed data ◀ Data
 - ▶ Counterfactuals compare shocked vs. no-shock equilibria within the same calibrated economy ◀ Hat Algebra

Counterfactuals

In each counterfactual, we calibrate the world economy to 2000 and:

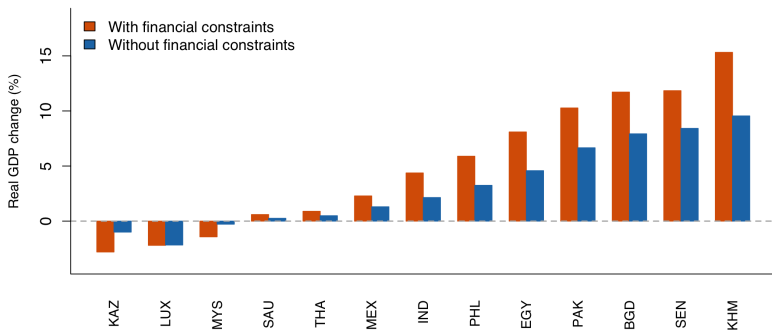
1. **Quantify the remittance boom** by shocking each country's change in net remittances between 2000 and 2022
2. **Isolate the financing channel** by re-running the same exercise but turn the investment-financing constraint on and off
3. **Isolate the role of globalization** by re-running the same exercise but replacing the 2000 trade matrix with its 2022 counterpart

1. Quantifying the Remittance Boom 2000-2022



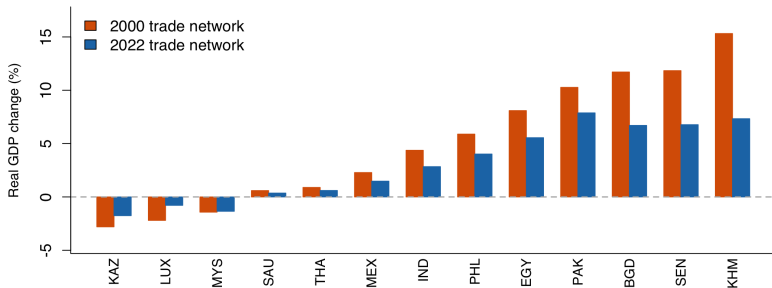
- ▶ Remittance boom expands real GDP in LMICs (mean +2.6%) with negligible effects on high-income countries (mean -0.2%)
- ▶ Thailand real GDP gain: +0.89%

2. Remittances have a Larger Impact on Financially Constrained Countries



- ▶ Ignoring financial constraints understates the remittance boom's impact: mean real GDP gain falls from 2.6% to 1.6%
- ▶ LMICs are precisely where financial constraints are most likely to bind. Omitting them misses **38%** of the total gain
- ▶ Thailand real GDP gain: +0.49%

3. Trade Integration Dampens Impact of Remittances



- ▶ The remittance boom raises mean real GDP by +2.6% under the 2000 trade network. The 2022 network still delivers +1.44%, despite deeper global integration
- ▶ Trade expansion spreads remittance-financed demand across more exporters, attenuating ~45% of the gain
- ▶ Thailand: real GDP gain of +0.6% (2022 trade network) vs 0.89% (2020 trade network)

Conclusion

Two questions: What are the the cross-country impact of remittances? How has globalization shaped cross-country spillovers from remittances?

- ▶ **Remittances are macroeconomically significant in LMICs:** a 1% increase in remittance inflows raises GDP 0.07%, consumption and investment $\sim 0.19\%$ (multiplier ≈ 1.5)
- ▶ **Remittances have a Larger Impact on Financially Constrained Countries:** remittances relax a binding investment constraint and deepen credit markets (private credit +0.38%), with the largest effects where credit is least developed
- ▶ **Real GDP gains are attenuated by globalization:** the 2000–2022 boom raised mean LMIC real GDP by 2.6%; the financing constraint accounts for $\sim 38\%$ of this gain, while deeper trade integration offsets $\sim 45\%$ of it (to 1.44%)

Next Steps

- ▶ **Endogenize remittance flows**
 - ▶ Currently treat remittances as exogenous
 - ▶ Allow flows to depend on migrant stocks and origin/destination outcomes

- ▶ **Dynamic transition path**
 - ▶ Hat-algebra delivers long-run steady-state comparisons
 - ▶ Solve full transition path via dynamic hat algebra to capture adjustment dynamics
 - ▶ Change constraint from a income-based to an asset-based collateral constraint

Thank You!

Please email any questions/comments to athiwat@umich.edu and
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Related literature

Macroeconomic effects of remittances

Acosta et al. [2009], Lartey et al. [2012], Frankel [2009], Bettin et al. [2017], Combes and Ebeke [2011], Chami et al. [2005], Giuliano and Ruiz-Arranz [2009], Aggarwal et al. [2011], Bahadir et al. [2018], Durdu and Sayan [2010]

⇒ We provide **cross-country causal estimates** and embed the credit channel in a multi-country GE model

Causal evidence on remittances and household welfare

Yang [2008], Yang and Choi [2007], Cox Edwards and Ureta [2003], Woodruff and Zenteno [2007], Khanna et al. [2025], Caballero et al. [2023], Bonadio et al. [2024]

⇒ We scale from household transfers to aggregate welfare, capturing trade-network spillovers that single-country studies cannot identify

Quantitative models of trade, capital flows, and remittances

Huo et al. [2025], Caliendo et al. [2019], Dekle et al. [2007], Di Giovanni et al. [2015], Albert and Monras [2022], Pan and Sun [2024]

⇒ We introduce **cross-country income transfers** and a **binding investment financing constraint** ϕ_n , and show how trade-network evolution attenuates the welfare pass-through of remittance shocks

Computing the remittance multiplier

$\hat{\beta}_1 = 0.070$ is an **elasticity**:

$$\hat{\beta}_1 = \frac{\% \Delta \text{GDP}}{\% \Delta \text{Remit}} = \frac{\Delta \text{GDP} / \text{GDP}}{\Delta \text{Remit} / \text{Remit}}$$

Rearranging gives the dollar-for-dollar multiplier:

$$\text{Multiplier} = \frac{\Delta \text{GDP}}{\Delta \text{Remit}} = \hat{\beta}_1 \times \frac{\text{GDP}}{\text{Remit}} = 0.070 \times \frac{1}{0.047} \approx \mathbf{1.5}$$

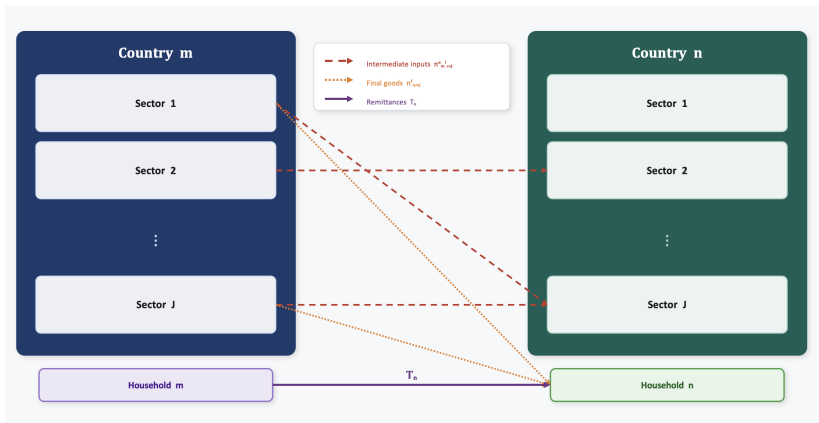
- ▶ 0.047 is the sample average remittance-to-GDP ratio (from Table 1)
- ▶ Interpretation: one additional dollar of remittances raises GDP by \$1.50
- ▶ Comparable to open-economy fiscal multiplier estimates in Nakamura and Steinsson [2014]

Robustness Check

Results are robust across the following exercises

- ▶ **Alternative share base years:** 1960 and 2000 migrant-share weights; GDP and credit elasticities remain positive and significant
- ▶ **Alternative trimming thresholds:** tighter 0.05 cutoff and no trimming; estimates barely move, confirming results are not driven by dominant corridors
- ▶ **Shift-share controls:** add instruments using destination export and FDI outflow growth as shifts; financial-sector elasticities unchanged
- ▶ **Sample restrictions:** drop small countries (below 25th population percentile) and highly remittance-dependent economies (above 90th remittance-to-GDP percentile)
- ▶ **Winsorization:** tighter 1%–99% threshold and no winsorization; macro results hold cleanly; financial results noisier without winsorization but private credit and deposits remain positive

All exercises replicated for both macroeconomic (Fact 1) and financial sector (Fact 2) outcomes. [◀ Back](#)



◀ Back

Household problem

- ▶ Preferences (GHH)

$$\mathbb{E}_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \ln \left(C_{n,t} - \chi_n \frac{L_{n,t}^{1+1/\psi}}{1+1/\psi} \right)$$

- ▶ Labor supply depends only on the real wage (no wealth effect)

$$\chi_n L_{n,t}^{1/\psi} = \frac{W_{n,t}}{P_{n,t}}$$

- ▶ Budget constraint

$$P_{n,t}(C_{n,t} + I_{n,t}) = W_{n,t}L_{n,t} + R_{n,t}K_{n,t} + T_{n,t}$$

where $T_{n,t} \equiv T_{n,t}^{\text{in}} - T_{n,t}^{\text{out}}$ is net remittance income

- ▶ Law of motion of capital $K_{n,t+1} = (1 - \delta_n)K_{n,t} + I_{n,t}$

Welfare Measure

Lifetime utility with GHH preferences:

$$\max_{\{C_{n,t}, I_{n,t}, L_{n,t}\}} \mathbb{E}_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \log \left(C_{n,t} - \chi_n \frac{L_{n,t}^{1+1/\psi}}{1+1/\psi} \right)$$

Welfare is the log change in the GHH consumption composite

$\tilde{C}_{n,t} \equiv C_{n,t} - \chi_n \frac{L_{n,t}^{1+1/\psi}}{1+1/\psi}$ between steady states

$$\Delta \mathcal{W}_n = \ln \frac{\tilde{C}'_n}{\tilde{C}_n}$$

► **Computation:** Using the labor FOC $\chi_n L_{n,t}^{1/\psi} = W_{n,t}/P_{n,t}$:

$$P_{n,t} \tilde{C}_{n,t} = P_{n,t} C_{n,t} - \frac{1}{1+1/\psi} W_{n,t} L_{n,t}$$

so $\Delta \mathcal{W}_n = \ln \frac{(P_n \tilde{C}_n)'}{P_n \tilde{C}_n} - \ln \hat{P}_n$, which we can recover from hat-algebra approach

Computing Real GDP Change

Real sectoral value added is gross output minus intermediate inputs at base prices:

$$V'_{nj} = P_{nj}Y'_{nj} - P_{nj}^X X'_{nj}$$

Its log change decomposes as:

$$\ln V_{nj} = \frac{1}{\eta_j} \ln Z_{nj} + (1 - \alpha_j) \ln H_{nj}$$

where η_j is the value-added share, Z_{nj} is TFP, and H_{nj} is the labor-capital bundle.

Real GDP is the value-added-share-weighted sum across sectors:

$$\ln V_n = \sum_j \frac{V_{nj}}{V_n} \ln V_{nj}$$

- ▶ Real GDP change is a weighted average of sectoral value added changes
- ▶ Each sector's value added responds to the remittance shock through factor demand H_{nj} , delivered directly by the hat-algebra solution

Investment Financing Constraint

- ▶ Households face a collateral-like cap on investment:

$$P_{n,t}I_{n,t} \leq \phi_n \left[W_{n,t}L_{n,t} + R_{n,t}K_{n,t} + T_{n,t} \right]$$

- ▶ $\phi_n = 1$: constraint slack; $\phi_n < 1$: binds
- ▶ Remittances $T_{n,t}$ enter the RHS \Rightarrow positive shock relaxes the ceiling

Calibration

- ▶ Developed: $\phi_n = 1$; Developing: constraint binds \Rightarrow recover from 2000 data:

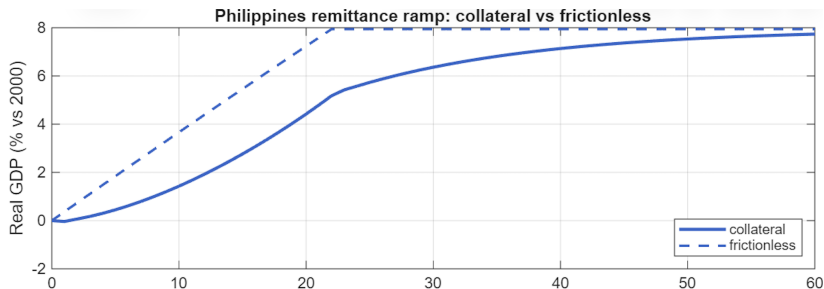
$$\phi_n = \frac{P_n I_n}{W_n L_n + R_n K_n + T_n}$$

- ▶ Frictionless benchmark: investment-to-income ratio in high-income countries $s^* \approx 0.224$; developing economies avg. $\approx 0.15 < s^*$, confirming the constraint binds

Alternative approach: Asset-based collateral constraint

Setup. Country borrows $D_{n,t} \leq \theta_n P_{n,t}^F K_{n,t+1}$ at world rate r^* ; impatience $\beta(1+r^*) < 1$ makes it bind every period (θ_n sets the wedge $(1-\theta_n)(\rho-r^*)$, not whether it binds). Remittances T_n enter only the budget, so they self-finance capital by raising net worth over time.

Experiment. Difference a counterfactual (remittance boom) path against a baseline path, solved forward from observed data. Welfare effect from financing-constraint is PDV gap between θ_n -from-data and $\theta_n=1$ — the genuine self-financing dynamic absent in steady state.



Quantification and Calibration

Coverage: 77 countries (76 + ROW), 4 sectors, year 2000

OECD ICIO

- ▶ Final use trade shares π_{mij}^f
- ▶ Intermediate use trade shares $\pi_{mi,nj}^x$
- ▶ Sectoral expenditure shares v_{nj}
- ▶ Value-added shares η_j
- ▶ Capital shares α_j

World Bank WDI

- ▶ Labor income $W_n L_n$
- ▶ Capital income $R_n K_n$
- ▶ Nominal investment $P_n I_n$
- ▶ Net remittances T_n

Calibrated parameters

- ▶ ϕ_n : investment financing constraint, recovered from observed investment data
- ▶ $\psi = 0.72$: Frisch elasticity of labor supply
- ▶ $\varepsilon = 0.89, \rho = 1.43$: trade elasticities from Huo et al. [2025]

Equilibrium

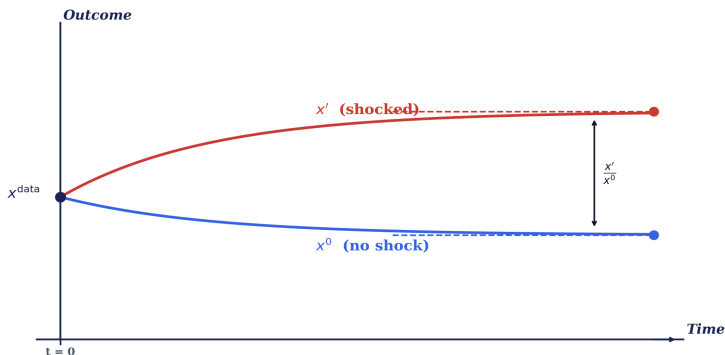
Given $\{T_{n,t}\}$ and $\{Z_{nj,t}\}$, an equilibrium consists of prices $\{P_{nj,t}, W_{n,t}, R_{n,t}\}$, factor allocations $\{K_{nj,t}, L_{nj,t}\}$, goods allocations $\{Y_{nj,t}, \mathcal{F}_{mnj,t}, X_{mi,nj,t}\}$, and household choices $\{C_{n,t}, I_{n,t}, L_{n,t}\}$ such that:

- ▶ **Household optimization:** households maximize utility subject to the budget constraint, capital accumulation, and the investment financing constraint $P_n I_n \leq \phi_n (W_n L_n + R_n K_n + T_n)$
- ▶ **Firm optimization:** competitive firms minimize costs taking prices as given
- ▶ **Goods market clearing:**

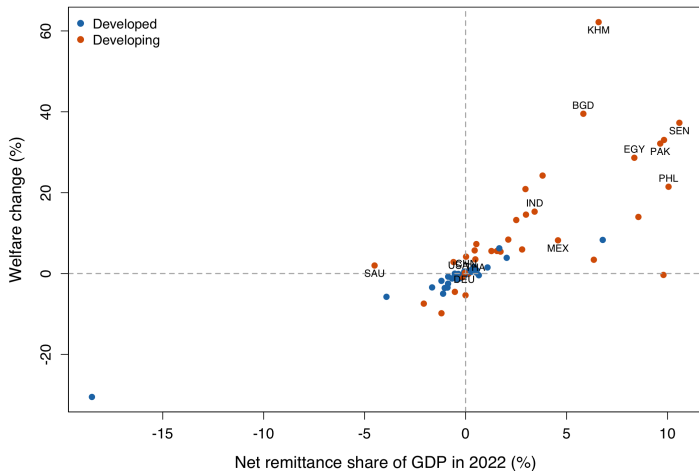
$$P_{nj} Y_{nj} = \sum_m P_m F_m \pi_{nmj}^f + \sum_m \sum_i (1 - \eta_{mi}) P_{mi} Y_{mi} \pi_{nj,mi}^x$$

- ▶ **Labor market clearing:** $W_n L_n = \sum_j \alpha_{nj} \eta_{nj} P_{nj} Y_{nj}$
- ▶ **Capital market clearing:** $R_n K_n = \sum_j (1 - \alpha_{nj}) \eta_{nj} P_{nj} Y_{nj}$

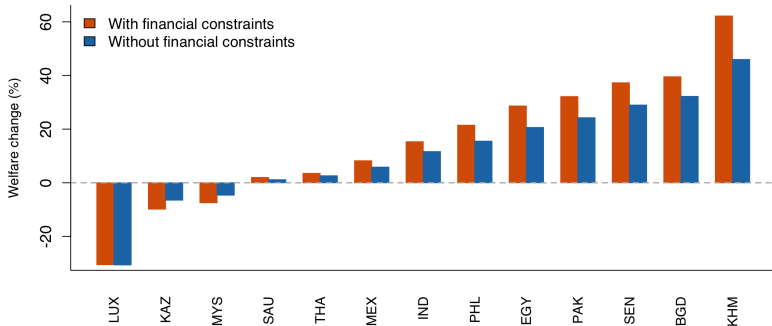
Dynamic Hat-Algebra



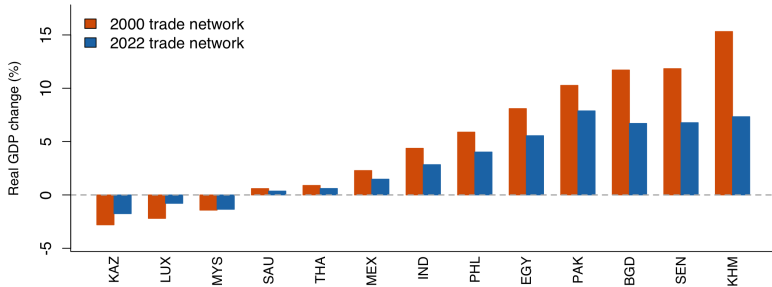
- ▶ $\hat{x} \equiv x'/x^{\text{data}}$: solve equilibrium in changes relative to observed data — no price-level data required
- ▶ Two solves anchored to the same x^{data} : no-shock (\hat{x}^0) and shocked (\hat{x}')
- ▶ Outcome of interest: $x'/x^0 = \hat{x}'/\hat{x}^0$: differences out model misspecification common to both solves



- ▶ Remittance boom raises welfare for LMICs (median +5.64%) but generates marginal losses for high-income countries (median -0.1%)
- ▶ Thailand welfare gain: +3.5%



- ▶ Ignoring financial constraints understates the remittance boom's impact: median welfare gain falls from 5.6% to 4.1%
- ▶ LMICs are precisely where financial constraints are most likely to bind — omitting them misses ~27% of the total welfare gain
- ▶ Thailand welfare gain: +2.6%



- ▶ The 2022 trade network reduces median welfare gains for LMICs from +5.6% (2000 network) to +4.5% (2022 network)
- ▶ Deeper trade integration spreads remittance-financed demand across more exporters, weakening the domestic multiplier and offsetting 17% of the potential welfare gain
- ▶ Thailand: welfare gain falls from +3.5% (2000 network) to +3.0% (2022 network)

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