While development economists have largely focused on financial services – specifically savings, insurance, credit, and payments – few have thought about financial service providers as firms with consequent industrial organization (IO) issues. As efforts to increase financial access for the poor spread around the world, understanding how financial service providers grow, expand, operate, compete, and how they are regulated is imperative. This is true not only for financial institutions but also for firms in developing countries as a whole.

Through this workshop, CFSP introduces specialists in IO to new contexts and subjects for their techniques and research questions. Likewise, it introduces development economists to the methods and perspectives from the field of IO, bridging promising applications of these techniques via analogies to research questions in development. We also pool the expertise of diverse sub-areas in these fields.

A primary goal of the workshop, therefore, is to allow these two fields to exchange ideas about the future direction of the emerging field of industrial organization in development. Our focus is to generate a research agenda for industrial organization in low-income and developing countries that enhances both fields. We also emphasize the use of models, comprehensive data, and policy relevance to inform the provision of financial services and the regulation of financial systems.

We encourage those interested in tracking our progress to visit the Consortium on Financial Systems and Poverty website at www.cfsp.org.