

Abstracts of Background Papers

BP/15/01, “Review of Ex Post Assessments of Countries with Longer-Term Program Engagement and of Ex Post Evaluations of Exceptional Access Arrangements,” by David Goldsbrough

This paper assesses the quality and effectiveness of two types of country-specific self-evaluations: ex post assessments of longer-term program engagement and ex post evaluations of exceptional access arrangements. It finds that these reports were better at assessing details of the program design and implementation than at questioning fundamental assumptions underlying the overall strategy and considering possible alternative approaches. The paper analyzes how well these evaluations discussed the rationale for the program, the adjustment/financing mix, macroeconomic and structural challenges, the appropriateness of macroeconomic and structural conditionality, and forward-looking strategies. It discusses the clarity and quality of lessons; Staff views and practices regarding the conduct and use of these evaluations; and the system for follow-up of lessons and recommendations. It also provides background on related policies and guidelines for conducting these reviews.

BP/15/02, “Self-Evaluation in IMF Policy and Thematic Reviews,” by Louellen Stedman

This paper examines the extent to which IMF reviews of institutional policies and operations incorporate self-evaluation. Covering the period 2006–13, it discusses findings for a broad sample and examines seven reviews in more detail. The paper finds that self-evaluation was

an explicit part of the objectives or tasks for more than half of policy reviews and about one-fifth of thematic reviews in the sample. Even if they did not set out to do so, a large majority of periodic policy reviews and about half of the other thematic reviews in the sample incorporated elements of self-evaluation. The paper recommends that the IMF give more importance to self-evaluation in its key thematic reviews, emphasizing the distillation of lessons learned. The IMF could consider setting out indicative examples or best practices for self-evaluative reviews. Given the recent decision to move many policy reviews to an as-needed basis, the IMF should also take steps to ensure that self-evaluation takes place on a regular basis, to facilitate learning and to enhance the IMF’s effectiveness.

BP/15/03, “Self-Evaluation in the Areas of Technical Assistance and Training,” by Marcelo Selowsky and Ling Hui Tan

This paper examines how well the IMF self-evaluates technical assistance (TA) and training with respect to relevance, effectiveness and impact. It finds that the relevance of TA is assessed through contacts with country authorities, TA donors, stakeholders, and regular consultations between TA and area departments. Likewise, the paper finds that training is assessed through surveys of participants and sometimes their agencies. The paper finds that the impact of TA, however, is the most difficult and least well covered aspect of TA evaluation; and that assessing outcomes and impact is even more challenging for training than it is for TA. The paper offers recommendations to help fine-tune the evaluation systems.