

Past IEO Findings on Learning from Experience in the IMF

Past IEO evaluations have presented a range of findings and conclusions on the issue of learning from experience at the IMF. These include the following.

- IMF-supported programs reflected many lessons from past crises and helped member countries cope with the global financial and economic crisis. With regard to risk assessment, however, Staff did not appear to look back to assess whether risks did or did not materialize, and to draw relevant lessons (*IMF Response to the Financial and Economic Crisis*, IEO, 2014c).
- A framework of reviewing and monitoring recurring issues would be useful in providing learning opportunities for the IMF (*Recurring Issues from a Decade of Evaluation*, IEO, 2014b).
- Learning from experience took place at many levels, individually and institutionally, formally and informally, routinely, and in response to significant failures. Procedures were in place to learn from past forecast performance but they were not always utilized to their full potential. The IMF regularly commissioned outside studies to assess *World Economic Outlook* forecast accuracy, but it lacked a fully developed process for disseminating and implementing the resulting recommendations. Country desk economists did not always effectively transmit relevant experience to their successors (*IMF Forecasts*, IEO, 2014a).
- Long-standing institutional and cultural issues caused the IMF to fall short in warning member countries about risks to the global economy and the buildup of vulnerabilities in their own economies, despite past lessons about crisis prevention (*IMF Performance in the Run-Up to the Financial and Economic Crisis*, IEO, 2011a).
- Staff believed there were insufficient structured learning activities for sharing with colleagues particular challenges they had faced and innovative solutions (*IMF Interactions with Member Countries*, IEO, 2009).
- The IEO's assessment of whether structural conditionality in IMF-supported programs was effective was complicated by the lack of an agreed framework to assess results and accountability and a consequent lack of information. The IMF should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework linking conditions in each program to reforms and specified goals. This would provide a more robust basis for monitoring the implementation and evaluation of programs, as well as facilitating learning on what works and what does not (*Structural Conditionality in IMF-Supported Programs*, IEO, 2007).