

BP/09/08

IMF Interactions with Member Countries: The Civil Society Dimension

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IEO Background Paper
Independent Evaluation Office
of the International Monetary Fund

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December 7, 2009

Abstract

This paper draws on the author's extensive fieldwork on IMF relations with civil society organizations (CSOs) since 1996, including more recent interviews in sample countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda. While noting evidence of increased engagement in Malawi and Mozambique, on the whole the study finds that the range and depth of IMF-CSO relations remain quite limited. It details the limitations found in the different country contexts, and identifies substantial costs for IMF effectiveness and legitimacy. The analysis explores the circumstances that have generated these shortfalls and, building on this diagnosis, suggests ways forward—both for the IMF and for CSOs. Improved relationships with civil society will be among the important steps to ensure that the IMF does not again slip into decline once the present global financial crisis has passed.

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JEL Classification Numbers: F02, F33, L31, O19

Keywords: civil society, International Monetary Fund, non-governmental organizations, relationships with Fund

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I. QUESTION

1. The present global economic crisis has given a new lease on life to the International Monetary Fund (IMF, also known informally as ‘the Fund’). An institution that had singularly failed to adapt itself to changing world economic and political conditions seemed to be in terminal decline. The crisis has rejuvenated the agency—for the moment. The opportunity for a thorough reinvention of the IMF must be grasped so that the institution becomes fit for purpose in the longer term. An important aspect of that reconstruction concerns the Fund’s relations with civil society.

2. The IMF was established in the statist world of the mid-twentieth century. At this historical juncture governance (i.e., the regulatory processes of society) was executed more or less exclusively through government (i.e., the nation-state). Global governance (in that day generally called “international organization”) was a matter of intergovernmental relations and not more. Thus when at that time an institution such as the IMF related with a country, it normally related only with the government of that territory.

3. Today, 65 years after the Bretton Woods Conference, the nature of governance has considerably altered. Many states have devolved substantial competences to substate authorities in federal and provincial units. At the same time a host of supranational regulatory institutions (regional as well as global in scope) have developed activities and impacts that operate with relative autonomy from states. Indeed, global governance mechanisms set up since the 1990s often combine state and nonstate elements at their core. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is one example. In other cases (such as the Wolfsberg Group in respect of money laundering or the Marine Stewardship Council in respect of fisheries conservation) the global rule-making body is entirely nongovernmental.

4. Not surprisingly, in this situation many people in civil society direct their attention not only to the state, but also to other sites of governance, including global agencies such as the IMF. “Civil society” refers here to an arena where associations of citizens seek, from outside political parties, to shape societal rules and regulatory institutions. Civil society organizations (CSOs, the actors of civil society) include business forums (i.e., chambers of commerce, employer federations, etc.), faith-based organizations (FBOs), labour unions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), research bodies (i.e., university institutes, think tanks, etc.), and more informally assembled social movements. (Note here in particular that “CSOs” encompass much more than “NGOs.”)

5. Increasingly since the 1970s, CSOs have sought to engage all manner of global governance institutions, from the United Nations to, more recently, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. In turn global regulatory bodies have, to one degree and another, developed institutional procedures to engage civil society. The IMF is no exception to this trend, having over the past thirty years come to interact with a considerable number of CSOs. In 2003 the Fund articulated principles and practices in this area with a *Guide for Staff*

Relations with Civil Society Organizations. Welcomed by the Executive Board, signed off by the Managing Director Horst Köhler, and posted on the IMF website, this document spells out the aims, the parameters, and the challenges of the Fund's exchanges with CSOs.

6. The question before the present paper is to assess how far and how well the IMF has developed its engagement of civil society as of 2009. A number of social and political theorists have suggested that wide and deep relations with CSOs can make a large contribution to effective and legitimate global governance. (See the list of further reading at the end of this paper.) Conversely, such analysts also claim, a lack of substantive relations with CSOs can diminish the performance and standing of a global regulatory institution. What does evidence suggest in regard to the IMF?

II. METHODOLOGY

7. Before assessing the evidence it is well to specify the nature of that evidence. The present paper draws principally on the author's own on-site empirical research into IMF relations with CSOs. This work has been undertaken periodically since 1995, with particularly intensive phases during the years 1996–99, 2002–03, and 2007–09, for the most part covering activities through end-2008. Material from the first two phases of work contributes general context and longer-term perspective to the current paper. More specific evidence in the present report is taken mainly from the latest phase of research.

8. All three phases of fieldwork have involved regular visits to IMF headquarters in Washington, DC. In addition, the first two periods of research included in-depth examinations of IMF-CSO relations in Argentina, Russia, Thailand and Uganda, as well as substantive but less thorough explorations of situations in Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, India, Mexico, Romania and the United Kingdom. The most recent phase of research has entailed four visits to IMF headquarters (including the Spring and Annual Meetings in 2007) plus detailed fieldwork in six countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda. In sum, then, the empirical work has over the years covered 18 countries across 5 continents.

9. Recent research has concentrated on SSA for several reasons. First, as of 2007 when the latest phase of work began, SSA was the world region where the IMF had its most intensive involvements. Second, governments in SSA pursue a variety of collaborations with the IMF (formal and informal, funded and unfunded), so providing an opportunity within a single region to examine diverse relationships with the Fund. Third, and of particular relevance to the present study, the 2007 report of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) on *The IMF and Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa* highlighted what was described as “limited and ineffective IMF engagement with country-based members of civil society” (p. 25). The present investigation has carefully examined whether, how and why such a situation has prevailed in IMF-CSO relations in SSA.

10. The six focal countries in SSA were selected with a view to encompassing considerable diversity of contexts: in terms of geographical situation, size of territory and population, type of IMF involvement, strength of state institutions, civil society profile, language, and colonial heritage. Each country was visited for roughly two weeks. In the DRC and Mali evidence collection was limited to the capital, while work in the other four countries included one or two additional sites as well. For each country contact was sought (and usually made) at the IMF with the relevant Executive Director office, current and former mission chiefs, and present and former resident representatives. The African Department front office also generously provided extensive input. In regard to each country, exchanges were also had with 2–3 dozen figures in civil society, always drawn from across the same sectors (i.e., academic, business, labour, NGO and religious). After on-site work a summary report of draft findings and recommendations was prepared for each country and shared with all IMF and CSO respondents for comment and correction. The subsequently revised country reports form an annex to the present paper.

11. Thus evidence for this study has come largely from interviews that the author conducted with practitioners on both sides of IMF-CSO relationships. These conversations were “semi-structured” in the sense that they covered a common set of issues, but without imposing a fixed wording and order of questions. In this way, focus on the problem was maintained at the same time that respondents were encouraged to take discussions in directions which accorded with their experience. In total such interviews were held in the third phase of research with 42 IMF officials working on SSA, 23 other IMF staff based in 6 functional departments, and 183 civil society practitioners. In addition, the first two phases of research involved discussions with over 300 other persons in the IMF and civil society. All interviews were held under conditions of confidentiality; hence none of the more than 500 individuals involved are cited by name in this report. Supplementary evidence was taken from published and unpublished documentation of the IMF and the CSOs concerned.

III. FINDINGS

12. What then has this research discovered regarding the present situation of IMF relations with civil society? As ever, great care must be taken against overgeneralization across the scores of member countries of the Fund. Considerable diversity in practice and context of IMF-CSO connections can prevail between regions, within the same region, or even inside a single country. Approaches to these relationships can also vary substantially across sectors of civil society, as well as among individual officials of the Fund.

13. These variations having been emphasised, it is nevertheless possible to identify some general patterns in current IMF-CSO relationships. The 12 main findings elaborated below draw particularly on the investigations undertaken in SSA and Washington during 2007–09. That said, the conclusions set out under these dozen headings broadly conform—with due regard for differences in manifestations and degrees—to conditions of IMF-CSO relations that the author of this paper has observed across all countries and continents since the

mid-1990s. Moreover, comparing evidence from 2007–09 with that from the two earlier phases of research, it cannot be said that IMF relations with CSOs, particularly in-country, have on the whole made significant advances in quantity or quality since the turn of the millennium. To the extent that preparation of the 2003 guide was meant to consolidate and expand good practice by the Fund, the exercise has so far fallen well short of its purpose.

14. With regard to SSA more particularly, investigations for the present paper broadly reconfirm the conclusion of the 2007 IEO report regarding “limited and ineffective” IMF engagement of civil society in this region. In contrast to that earlier assessment, however, the present paper elaborates—in detail, with due nuance, and on the basis of hundreds of hours of conversations with 250 persons involved—what is entailed more precisely by “limited” and “ineffective” in these circumstances. This diagnosis in turn suggests lines for future corrective action, as summarised in Section IV.

15. The 12 main findings fall into three sets of points. The first two findings put forward the general case that the IMF has weak links with civil society and bears significant policy costs in consequence. Findings 3-5 highlight limitations on the part of CSOs and governments in their approach to IMF interactions with civil society, as it is important to acknowledge that failings in these relations lie in one way and another with all parties involved. However, as this paper is principally tasked to assess IMF practices, the remaining seven findings examine institutional circumstances of the Fund that have militated against a greater realisation of the benefits that could be had from well-developed relations with civil society.

16. It should be emphasized from the outset that the problems in current IMF-CSO relations are primarily structural. In other words, the difficulties result principally from shortcomings in the ways that CSOs and the IMF operate as organizations, and much less from failings on the part of the individuals who work in those organizations. Indeed, interviews for this research have suggested time and again that many Fund officials and CSO practitioners would wish to improve their mutual relations, but find that institutional and wider societal conditions obstruct their good intentions in this respect.

17. Regarding SSA the account presented below describes situations as they were encountered at the time of field visits to the six countries. It should be noted that, in response to the subsequently drafted country reports, several IMF staff have already taken certain steps to improve certain aspects of their interactions with CSOs. In addition, the African Department front office has been issuing general urgings for mission chiefs and resident representatives to scale up contacts with in-country CSOs. Such positive moves suggest that IMF staff recognise shortcomings in current relations with civil society and are prepared to take corrective measures. However, as will be underlined at the end of this report, deeper and lasting advances in IMF-CSO relations—of a sort that would bring qualitative improvements in policy outcomes and institutional reputation—will require a stronger steer from senior management and a more serious commitment of resources.

A. Finding 1: On the Whole the IMF Still has Few and Mostly Shallow Relations with CSOs

18. Nearly thirty years after its first substantive exchanges with civil society (in the guise of several think tanks, business lobbies and NGOs in Washington, DC) the IMF remains fairly aloof from CSOs. Although the Fund has developed some regular exchanges on concrete policy matters with certain civil society actors, particularly in and around headquarters, relationships in the field generally remain thin, including in countries where the IMF supports stabilisation and policy reform programs. On the whole IMF practice in respect of civil society has only mildly qualified the by now untenable notion that states are the sole constituents of and stakeholders in global regulatory institutions.

19. True, CSOs have become considerably integrated into certain institutional operations of the IMF. For example, some 200–300 civil society delegates now participate in each edition of the Annual and Spring Meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions. In addition, a smaller circle of professional advocates from CSOs regularly provide inputs to policy formulation and evaluation at the IMF. To mention one area of intensive civil society involvement, NGOs with concerns for accountability issues have for more than a decade made detailed contributions to IMF policy development in respect of transparency. Other sustained relationships between the IMF and CSOs marked policymaking around debt relief for low-income countries between 1996 and 2005. The Research Department of the IMF has maintained regular links with a number of professional economists in think tanks and universities. In the field, resident representatives and visiting staff of the IMF have usually developed an in-depth dialogue with the country's banking association (or alternatively its main member banks), and sometimes also with certain other business forums and research bodies.

20. However, substantive contacts between the IMF and CSOs have extended little beyond that. For example, although certain Managing Directors (MDs) and Executive Directors (EDs) have pursued an ongoing dialogue with certain civil society actors, overall IMF exchanges with CSOs at senior level are incidental and inconsequential. The Policy Development and Review Department (PDR) and the Fiscal Affairs Department (FAD) have since the mid-1990s taken civil society inputs on a variety of questions, but most of their work has proceeded in the absence of detailed exchanges with CSOs. The Monetary and Capital Markets Department (MCM) has engaged with several specialised trade bodies and think tanks, but not to a degree that CSOs have helped to put the IMF's finger firmly on the pulse of global financial markets—and with what consequence for the present world economic crisis, one might ponder.

21. In the field, too, IMF relations with CSOs have generally been few and superficial, as can be illustrated with evidence from the half dozen countries in SSA that were recently examined in detail for this report. In none of the countries has the IMF developed anything approximating a mechanism for systematic interchange with CSOs. In no case have IMF

officials working in these countries invoked the 2003 *Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations* more than occasionally and casually. Indeed, for the most part staff have ignored the document altogether, and in some cases they have not even been aware of its existence. Most resident representatives in the six countries have not developed noteworthy relationships with more than a handful of national civil society actors. Many IMF staff missions (for program negotiation and review, Article IV surveillance, and technical assistance) have passed through these countries without meeting any CSOs. Most teams that do make such contact have limited their encounters to one or two meetings at the end of their visit, usually after the main policy conclusions have already been made. Senior ranks of the IMF (Managing Directors, Executive Directors and department front offices) have in most cases had no interchanges with CSOs in these six countries beyond a one-off reception or seminar, if even that. In none of the six countries have government and the IMF consulted with CSOs on macroeconomic aspects of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

22. In this situation a veteran activist in the DRC concludes, “The IMF is not interested in civil society. They find us actors of the second zone.” A policy advocacy officer in Uganda similarly asserts that “the IMF takes a ‘by-the-way’ approach to civil society.” Echoing a common perception among CSOs in SSA, an activist in Mali declares, “The IMF only deals with the state. The would-be beneficiaries of development are not their concern.” A counterpart in Mozambique asks, “Why doesn’t the IMF do like the others and consult civil society?” An informed observer in Nigeria suggests that “the IMF staff guide [on relations with CSOs] is a public relations paper rather than an operational paper.” It should be noted that such criticisms of IMF practice emanate from across all sectors of civil society in the six countries: academe, business, faith groups, labour, NGOs, and other social movements. Moreover, the critiques come from friends as well as from foes of the Fund.

23. Inside the IMF, too, staff generally acknowledge that relations with CSOs are, in the pithy summary of one mission chief, “sparse.” A resident representative reports, “I am sorry to say, but civil society is a low priority in the list of meetings for a [Fund] mission.” Another resident representative declares himself to be “embarrassed at how little interaction there is with civil society.” An IMF staffer with extensive experience of interchanges with CSOs concedes, “The rhetoric of outreach does not match what happens on the ground.” Even those resident representatives who have been more proactive in liaising with CSOs indicate that engagement with non-state actors constitutes “only a small part” of their work. Moreover, several field staff who are personally inclined to do more on relations with civil society report that headquarters cautions them “not to overdo it.”

24. Regrettably, one must observe that much the same tenor of comments prevailed during research conducted in 1996–99 and 2002–03. Likewise, the general pattern of mostly incidental and shallow IMF-CSO contacts is much the same today as it was ten years ago. Indeed, work carried out in Uganda across all three phases of this research sooner suggests a decline over time in IMF engagement of CSOs in that country. Although the 2003 guide was a welcome initiative, there has in effect been no follow-up: no monitoring of implementation;

no relevant staff training; no further development of consultation mechanisms; no earmarked funding for consultation exercises; no addition of a civil society dimension to the format of briefing papers and back-to-office reports; no standard consideration of civil society engagement in annual staff performance reviews; no review of the guide itself. In sum, a decade into the twenty-first century evidence remains at best scattered that, as an institution, the IMF takes relations with civil society to be an integral and important part of its policy processes.

B. Finding 2: Underperformance in Relations with CSOs Costs the IMF Substantially in Terms of Policy Effectiveness and Institutional Legitimacy

25. The limited range and depth of IMF relations with civil society would merit no further attention were it not that these shortfalls have significant negative consequences for this major agency of global governance. On the one hand, poor attention to civil society deprives the IMF of important inputs for the achievement of policy goals. On the other hand, neglect of civil society undermines political support for the IMF from major constituencies. Again, illustrative evidence presented here is taken primarily from the six focal countries of recent research in SSA; however, to note once more, this data generally confirms what the author has observed at earlier times in multiple other settings across the world.

26. With regard to reduced policy effectiveness, the general absence of systematic relations with relevant CSOs deprives IMF staff of opportunities to *check data* received from official sources and/or to *obtain information* that government lacks or is reluctant to disclose. For example, business forums in all six countries examined recently insist, not unreasonably, that they can have better awareness of market conditions than government officials. Similarly FBOs, NGOs, and trade unions in each of these countries argue, again not insensibly, that they can be more in touch with the everyday circumstances of ordinary people than the IMF's interlocutors in government. Hence, when contacts with CSOs are lacking, staff miss evidence that could prompt constructive adjustments to IMF advice on macroeconomic targets and reform measures. As an NGO program officer in the DRC expressed it, "A good consultation of civil society pays off in effective policy. It is like a bank doing a reference check before extending a loan."

27. Across the six countries several resident representatives and mission teams do indeed report that they have found it helpful to verify and supplement information received from government through certain (usually no more than 2-3) confidantes in civil society. To take one specific example, an IMF official participating in a Financial Sector Assessment Program in one SSA country enthused, after meeting extensively with the banks association, that "this time I saw things from the inside, with exposure to the people who dirty their hands with the real work." Regarding this interchange a leader of the same banks association reported that "more usually the IMF are too distant from us and our realities, but this time they got a lot of things exact for a change." However, such thorough consultations are

irregular, and many IMF officials have altogether neglected the possibilities of information collection from CSOs.

28. The overall lack of meaningful relationships with CSOs also detracts from declared IMF intentions to *cultivate sensitivity to context* and avoid an indiscriminate blueprint approach to policy advice. As one NGO director in the DRC suggests, “We should have a broad socio-economic deliberation in which the IMF brings the macroeconomic frame to civil society, and civil society brings the situation on the ground to the IMF.” Well-connected CSOs can give the Fund a prime channel to grounded knowledge, concrete experiences and local priorities—and can often do so more effectively than a country’s official circles. In Malawi, for instance, ActionAid and the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) put the IMF country team in touch with village life through an accompanied field visit in March 2008. This exposure to a school, a clinic and a community radio station in an outlying rural district was welcomed by all concerned as an eye-opening experience for Fund officials, but it was a one-off initiative. Elsewhere IMF staff have consistently missed opportunities to grasp concrete contexts via CSOs. For example, in the DRC civil society associations could put the IMF in far closer touch with economic life under a post-conflict situation and a fragile state, thereby clarifying distinctive adjustments to policy that those conditions might require. In Nigeria CSOs could serve as conduits to circumstances at state and local levels of this immensely diverse country, as distinct from the partial picture that the IMF obtains at national level. Across all six countries of recent research contact with FBOs could better sensitise the IMF to the centrality of religion in the cultural backdrop to much economic activity in SSA. Fund staff could thereby also become more aware of the particular economic roles and challenges for Muslim populations in Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda.

29. However, these sorts of IMF-CSO interchanges have generally not taken place. As a farmers’ organiser in one country of recent research observes, if in rather harsh terms, “The IMF does not bother much to learn what is happening on the ground.” An NGO leader in Mali perceives similarly, “We don’t see the IMF in real physical contact with people. One gets the impression that they manage an unreality.” Even the convener of a forum of professional economists remarks, “The IMF does not talk about the people behind the numbers. They are strangers far removed from the country.”

30. CSOs can also where warranted *proffer advice* for the Fund to adjust macroeconomic targets and policy reforms so that the measures yield better results. However, in the absence of a regular dialogue with civil society most such suggestions go unheard by the IMF. For example, business associations often have well-honed views regarding adjustments to foreign exchange regimes, tax codes, banking rules, credit supply lines, interest rate policy, and so on. Yet, judging from evidence gathered in the six focal countries of recent research, IMF contacts in-country with organizations of private capital are often underdeveloped outside the financial sector. To be sure, there are exceptions, such as ongoing contacts between the IMF and the Federation of Congolese Enterprises (FEC) in the DRC and the Confederation of Economic Associations (CTA) in Mozambique. More usually, though, IMF links with

chambers of commerce, employer federations, farmers unions, and manufacturer associations are irregular and sometimes nonexistent. True, IMF staff may have grounds to suspect that some propositions from some business forums aim merely to advance short-term special interests. However, much advice from these associations has long-term general economic development in view and rests on expert knowledge of the national commercial environment that the Fund can lack. Observing an apparent inconsistency, one business forum spokesperson in Mali declares, “If the IMF really thinks that the private sector is the motor of development then they need to come and see us more.”

31. Business associations, as well as CSOs from other sectors, have also on various occasions raised well-considered reservations about IMF-supported policies of liberalisation and privatisation in one or the other field. In the focal countries of recent research, for example, a number of CSOs in Malawi, Mali and Mozambique have issued cautions about IMF and World Bank recommendations to privatize parastatal companies in the field of agricultural production and marketing. Drawing precise causal links is difficult, of course, but the IMF’s failure to engage with these alternative perspectives may have exacerbated food security problems in Malawi and Mozambique. Certainly liberalisation of the cotton trade in Mali and the cashew industry in Mozambique—pressed through over the objections of various CSOs—has by general consent had detrimental consequences for national welfare.

32. Yet the point here is not to become distracted with detailed arguments about the merits or otherwise of this or that CSO critique of this or that IMF position. Rather, the more general concern is an observed tendency of many IMF staff to miss opportunities to *sharpen policy analysis* through searching debates with CSOs. On certain issues—such as the renegotiation of mining contracts in the DRC and the fiscal consequences of trade liberalization in Malawi—IMF staff have engaged with a persuasive challenge from CSOs and adjusted their position. On other subjects—such as education spending in Malawi and Mozambique—critical interchanges between the IMF and CSOs have honed the thinking of both parties. However, the more general pattern has been that Fund staff underplay or overlook counterarguments from CSOs, as witnessed for example in relation to the consolidation of banks in Nigeria, loans from China to the DRC, and the aforementioned privatisations.

33. On such occasions, a widely held view among CSOs (as evidenced in SSA cases recently examined) is that, as a civil society economist in one country remarked with some despair, “the IMF kills debate when it should foster debate.” A CSO policy analyst in a second country complained similarly that “writing papers for the IMF is like writing to a black hole: they listen but do not respond and then go back to what they were going to do anyway.” A business leader in a third country likewise perceived that “the IMF more or less have a template. They have already made up their mind.” An NGO director in a fourth country said with resignation, “I tried several times to engage the IMF in policy debate but gave up. Now I just see them at a cocktail reception.”

34. Yet in the process of providing inputs CSOs could *raise important alternative issues and perspectives* that IMF staff tend otherwise to overlook. If contacts are absent, then the insights are not developed. Ecological problems provide a prominent example in this regard. During the 1990s Friends of the Earth and the World Wide Fund for Nature raised questions concerning environmental aspects of macroeconomic policy quite insistently with the IMF in Washington, DC and eventually obtained some response. However, environmental NGOs in North America and Europe have tended to pass over the IMF in recent years, and ecological movements can be quite weak elsewhere, including in the six countries of SSA examined in detail here (with the partial exception of CSO advocacy on deforestation in the DRC). The lack of IMF-CSO discussion of ecological matters has arguably encouraged a continued overall neglect of environmental considerations in the Fund's policy advice.

35. Another broad category of policy concerns that a number of CSOs (especially though not exclusively women's associations) could raise for the IMF are gender issues. Yet Fund staff have consistently overlooked these organizations, even in a country such as Uganda where women's groups are particularly strong and in a number of cases undertake detailed economic analysis. As a gender advocacy officer in Mozambique notes, "Since we have no relations with the IMF the message is not heard." A counterpart in Malawi reports that the IMF did not follow up on an invitation to discuss gender mainstreaming in macroeconomics. Given widespread evidence of the feminisation of poverty, as well as the stark marginalisation of women across much of civil society, particularly in SSA, the IMF's well-nigh comprehensive non-engagement of gender-focused groups seems particularly unfortunate.

36. Beyond gender inequalities alone, many CSOs draw attention to general matters of social equity that arguably would well complement the more usual IMF focus on economic efficiency and growth. Many CSOs could put the IMF in closer touch with various disadvantaged circles of society, thereby clarifying for staff problems that usually get less attention in, as one activist in the DRC expressed it, "the prince's court of government." However, in the six focal countries of recent research, the IMF has made no contact at all with CSOs that advocate in respect of small farmers, workers in the informal economy (who constitute the majority of labour in these settings), disabled persons (around 10 percent of each country's population), or cultural minorities. As a business leader in Malawi summarised, without too much exaggeration, "The IMF just visit the elite." Fund policy advice is in consequence more likely to overlook the concerns of these marginalised constituencies and less likely to achieve declared aims of poverty reduction.

37. Indeed, IMF staff often underestimate the degree to which CSOs can be *allies for goal attainment*, including in an area such as poverty reduction. Large numbers of FBOs, NGOs, research institutes, trade unions and other social movements have common cause with the IMF on the eradication of poverty; yet the Fund scarcely meets many of these associations. Such shortfalls in IMF-CSO relations can substantially weaken not only the evidence base for, but also the political force behind, Fund-supported anti-poverty policies.

38. Worse still, the IMF's general aloofness from in-country CSOs with social concerns—observed to one degree or another in all six focal countries of recent research—has encouraged some of these associations to question how far the Fund is actually committed to an anti-poverty agenda. Among a number of remarks in this vein heard during recent interviews, an NGO leader in the DRC asserted that “the IMF do not really want improved public welfare,” while a trade unionist affirmed that “the IMF want economy for economy without social comment.” A labour organiser in Mali echoed that “the name 'IMF' evokes social dramas.” In Uganda a leading NGO activist articulated a sentiment expressed widely across the different countries that “the IMF is most interested in controlling inflation, while we are most interested in hospital beds.” Needless to say, such commentary—whether or not it accords with actual IMF positions, and whether or not it is analytically sound—undermines public estimation of the Fund. Regular IMF-CSO dialogue could clarify these matters and enhance public confidence in the Fund.

39. Another policy area where the IMF has often missed opportunities to build common cause with CSOs is governance, in the sense of enhancing the public accountability of government. Recent research across six countries of SSA uncovered only one case, in Mozambique, of significant interchange between IMF staff and a CSO on matters of “good governance.” More generally, CSOs working against corruption and other state malpractices express concern that the Fund keeps its distance from them. “We need the support of the IMF to fight corruption, but they are absent,” complains one activist in Kinshasa. “Why does the IMF not understand that civil society pushes for better governance that will serve IMF aims?” asks another. “We and the IMF could jointly improve the financial accountability of government,” suggests a civil society expert on these matters in Malawi. “You would expect the IMF to be more supportive of civil society as a watchdog over government and want it to be stronger,” says a development policy analyst in Mozambique.

40. More worryingly, some civil society advocates for “good governance” in the six countries express scepticism regarding the Fund's bona fides in this area. In this vein an activist in Nigeria argues that “for the IMF not to intervene on bad governance is to perpetuate the position.” A counterpart in Mali complains that “the IMF talks of good governance, but they avoid the civil society actors who can tell them the truth of the situation here.” Meanwhile many CSOs working in the DRC condemn the IMF for knowingly saddling the country with odious debts to corrupt regimes. As with poverty issues, then, failure by the IMF to develop collaborations with CSOs on governance matters has cost the Fund some public respect and trust in certain countries.

41. Indeed, surveying the preceding paragraphs it is plain that a poor quantity and deficient quality of IMF relations with civil society can undermine the legitimacy of this key institution of global governance. “Legitimacy” is meant here in the political-sociological sense that authority has the consent of those who are subject to it. Thus the IMF enjoys legitimacy to the extent that the people whose lives it shapes: (a) regard the Fund as having a right to have that influence; and (b) accept an obligation to submit themselves to that

influence. In the absence of legitimacy a site of governance must derive its power from coercion and/or the utter dependence of subjects.

42. That the IMF struggles with generally low legitimacy is evidenced by the current situation where most member countries—their governments and their publics—only accord the Fund major policy influence in crisis scenarios and other circumstances of severe dependence in which other options are not available. As soon as the urgency passes, those states and peoples generally aim to return the IMF to arm's length. Thus the Fund receded as a global institution when monetary and financial crises subsided after 2001. And so the IMF will—in the absence of legitimacy-enhancing institutional reforms—likely go into eclipse again after the present crisis passes.

43. Of course, better relations with civil society are not the only institutional change that is required to bolster IMF legitimacy. Other measures to this end might include reallocations of votes on the board, reconstructions of the board, stronger redress mechanisms, better relations with parliaments, and revised criteria for the selection of management and staff. (Indeed, some CSOs have long advocated a number of such reform measures.) But if improved relations with civil society are not by themselves sufficient to obtain more legitimate global governance through the IMF, they are a requisite for such progress. As a seasoned civil society commentator in Nigeria put it, “The IMF needs a wider basis of interaction with society so that a wider circle will speak up for them when they have difficulties.” For the IMF to continue with all the current shortfalls in relations with CSOs described above—thereby losing key data, perspectives, advice, debate, policy support and overall legitimacy—is not a viable way forward.

C. Finding 3: While Certain CSOs have Developed Strong Capacities for Effective Engagement of the IMF, Most Associations Struggle with Limited Resources

44. In order to chart a more positive way ahead in IMF-CSO relations, as is summarised in the final part of this report, it is important first to specify the principal circumstances that currently obstruct better interchanges. Ten such general conditions are highlighted in the pages that follow: two relating to situations within civil society; a third relating to government attitudes; and the other seven relating to institutional arrangements at the IMF.

45. Although the IMF suffers from a number of institutional shortfalls in its approach to civil society, these problems are exacerbated by widespread capacity deficits among CSOs. Most business associations, faith groups, labour organizations, NGOs, research institutes, and other social movements struggle with limited means to develop high-quality advocacy in respect of macroeconomic policies and the IMF role in shaping them. Particularly in SSA, although also in other regions, CSOs that have a stake in influencing the Fund are frequently young, small and poorly resourced.

46. In terms of organizational longevity, even major CSO interlocutors of the IMF in the global north such as the Institute of International Finance, the Peterson Institute for

International Economics, and Oxfam International have existed less than thirty years. In the six focal countries of recent research a few business forums, religious associations, and trade unions date from the late colonial period; however, the majority of CSOs that concern themselves with macroeconomic matters have operated for less than two decades. Hence the CSOs are generally little older than IMF efforts to reach nonstate actors, and few CSOs can draw upon a long experience of sustained interchange with the Fund.

47. Moreover, resources for many CSOs are limited and precarious, as situations in the six focal countries of recent research in SSA indicate especially pointedly. CSO staff contingents are generally small, in most cases comprising less than 20 persons. Finances are usually uncertain, and in five of the six cases (Nigeria being an exception) funds for CSOs come mainly from outside the region. A minority of CSOs in SSA are well endowed. They include a few business groups (such as the Private Sector Foundation in Uganda), NGOs (such as the Foundation for Community Development [FDC] in Mozambique), and elite universities (such as the Lagos Business School in Nigeria). However, most CSOs in the six countries contend with crowded offices, second-rate equipment, and an often unreliable utilities infrastructure.

48. Civil society resources are still more constrained when it comes more particularly to addressing macroeconomic policy and the IMF. Judging from the six countries considered in detail here, relatively few CSOs in the global south have developed specific competence for economic policy advocacy. Associations with greater capacity in this area include certain transnational NGOs (e.g., ActionAid), national NGOs (e.g., the Mozambique Debt Group [GMD]), faith-based organizations (e.g., the Research Center for Social Action [CEPAS] in Kinshasa), professional groups (e.g., the Economic Association of Malawi), think tanks (e.g., the Bamako Forum in Mali), business associations (e.g., the Private Sector Foundation Uganda), national trade union offices (e.g., the Nigeria Labour Congress), and university units (e.g., the Economic Policy Research Center in Kampala). Yet even these sites tend to have less than ten (and in some cases only one or two) people who are dedicated to work on macroeconomic issues.

49. CSO capacity, in SSA and elsewhere, tends to be thinner still in relation to the IMF more specifically. Some of the large (and usually transnationally operating) CSOs have staff with highly specialised knowledge regarding the IMF. Examples include the Center for Global Development, the Center of Concern, and Global Unions, all of whom maintain offices in Washington, DC that work on the Bretton Woods institutions. However, case studies undertaken recently in SSA indicate that in-country CSOs that address macroeconomic concerns rarely have particular expertise regarding the IMF. In each of the six countries only a handful of CSO officers could specify the mandate, policy instruments and institutional structure of the IMF. Indeed, many civil society figures in these countries—including some who hold considerable seniority—still confuse the IMF with the World Bank.

50. Sometimes CSOs have raised the impact to be had from their limited capacities by creating an institutional hub for civil society action on macroeconomic policy (including IMF involvements) within a given country or region. For example, in the global north such a convening role has been filled by the Bretton Woods Project in Britain, the Halifax Initiative Coalition in Canada, and the New Rules for Global Finance Coalition in the USA. In SSA some similar coordination has occurred on a regional scale through the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), based in Harare. Nationally some countries have relevant hubs such as MEJN in Malawi and the Group of 20 (*Grupo 20*) in Mozambique. However, an effective center of this kind is lacking in the other countries examined, although bodies such as the National Council of Development NGOs (CNONGD) in the DRC and the Uganda National NGO Forum could conceivably develop such a role. Indeed, the IMF and other economic policy institutions could encourage them to do so.

51. CSO capacity for engaging the IMF is also limited to the extent that few civil society associations in any of the countries examined since the mid-1990s have developed systematic training of their staff and members on economic literacy, including the purposes and activities of the IMF. There are noteworthy exceptions to this rule, such as training programs for citizen monitoring of government budgets, as pursued for example in Mozambique and Uganda, and to a lesser extent in Malawi. In addition, the Uganda National NGO Forum convened a one-off week-long workshop in 2007 on macroeconomic questions. However, these courses have not normally addressed the role of the IMF in any detail. One exceptional case in this regard occurred between 2000 and 2003, when the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria ran a workshop to prepare its members for their involvement in the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings. However, this yearly event ceased after 2003, and nothing comparable has transpired in other countries examined in this research. Thus, much as the Fund has not trained its staff on how to engage with civil society, CSOs too have not trained their personnel on how to engage the IMF.

52. Nor has the IMF taken much initiative to make up for these shortfalls in capacity amongst many CSOs. As one seasoned observer in Nigeria put it, “The IMF has not been enthusiastic to make itself understood outside a narrow circle of professionals.” For example, in the six countries of SSA examined in detail for this study, Fund staff have not (except in Malawi) convened special events for CSOs to explain the IMF role. In Malawi several resident representatives have held regular meetings with a core group of CSOs to discuss key macroeconomic issues of the day. Likewise, in these countries IMF officials have on only a handful of occasions contributed to CSO research into economic policy questions (e.g., with data and feedback on draft papers). In another oversight of civic education, mission chiefs and resident representatives have only very rarely (and in some cases never) spoken to university students in these six countries. Whereas the IMF Institute has developed capacity for tens of thousands of officials across the world, it has provided no training for CSOs in order that these nonstate actors might better contribute to and watch over government on macroeconomic matters. In this situation, a civil society activist in Mali observes that “the IMF reinforces the capacities of the state but not the other actors.” As a result the state-civil

society balance is arguably skewed in ways that could adversely impact policy effectiveness and democratic accountability.

53. Indeed, the IMF (along with other global and regional governance institutions) arguably has a public duty to help build up and sustain a substantial, dynamic and accountable civil society, on national as well as supranational scales. In accordance with the so-called “post” or “augmented” Washington Consensus it has been generally agreed since the late 1990s that global regulatory bodies such as the IMF have a responsibility to promote effective and legitimate states, particularly in parts of the world where national and local governments are weak. Yet a viable public regulatory apparatus will not adequately deliver core values of economic welfare, ecological integrity, social justice, moral decency, cultural vibrancy, democracy and peace unless it is accompanied by a vigorous civil society. Thus to the extent that the IMF fails to develop relations with CSOs, it is failing in a crucial political obligation to bolster civil society.

D. Finding 4: Many CSOs Have Underplayed Macroeconomic Issues and the IMF Role

54. If the IMF has on the whole failed to develop substantial relations with CSOs, this omission has also been encouraged to the extent that, as evidenced from recent research in SSA, much of civil society has neglected macroeconomic policies and IMF involvement in shaping them. This widespread CSO oversight is curious, given the crucial importance of fiscal conditions, monetary affairs, external accounts and the like in shaping the direction and speed of economic and social development. Yet outside narrow circles of specialists, CSOs have tended to put strikingly little sustained focus on macroeconomic matters. Civil society attention on development questions has gone overwhelmingly to sectoral issues and projects, leaving the macroeconomic frame to one side. When governments and the IMF have (as they normally do) deliberately kept macroeconomic issues outside the scope of public consultations on PRSPs, CSOs have not (at least in the six countries examined in detail here) raised notable objections.

55. To be sure, there are exceptions to this general neglect in civil society. For example, certain CSOs in the focal countries of recent research have convened public debates on macroeconomic concerns. Examples include the Economic Association of Malawi, the Mozambican Association of Economists (AMECON), and the Nigeria Economic Summit Group. In addition, the Peoples’ Forum (*Forum des Peuples*) in Mali, held annually since 2002, and the DRC Social Forum (*Forum Social RDCongo*), convened in 2007 and 2009, have offered venues for debates of economic paradigms. That said, none of these civil society meetings have turned a spotlight specifically on the IMF.

56. Several (mainly transnational) NGOs have from time to time pursued research and advocacy on macroeconomic questions that implicate the IMF. In this vein ActionAid and Oxfam have since 2005 done work on fiscal space for education programs in SSA, including

in the DRC, Malawi, Mali and Mozambique. The Uganda Debt Network (UDN) has since the mid-1990s published a detailed *Policy Review Newsletter* that has occasionally given specific attention to the IMF. AFRODAD has undertaken assessments of the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). Around 2005–06 the European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) investigated how far the Bretton Woods institutions had adopted principles of country ownership and civil society participation, *inter alia* in Mali and Mozambique. In 2007 ActionAid examined operation of the IMF's Policy Support Instrument (PSI) in SSA, as did (in a more ad hoc fashion) a circle of nationally based CSOs in Nigeria in 2008. Also in 2008 a Christian Aid evaluation of the energy sector in Nigeria made several passing references to the IMF.

57. Yet the catalogue of the past decade of CSO investigations of the IMF in the six focal countries of recent research pretty much ends there. Moreover, these studies have generally had limited circulation, discussion and follow-up advocacy—and thus little policy impact. ActionAid has engaged the IMF in a couple of debates on its reports regarding fiscal space and the PSI. However, the other work described above has passed without creating noteworthy stir at the Fund or in wider policy circles.

58. One should note as well the general lack of searching attention to the IMF by in-country CSOs. National business forums, labour unions, faith groups and NGOs in the six countries examined here have produced no focused studies of IMF activities. Even academic researchers in these countries have since 2000 provided few significant investigations of IMF advice in SSA. “Nobody is interested,” summarises one NGO leader in the DRC. “Monitoring of the IMF has been rudimentary,” laments a faith-based activist in Malawi. “Basically no one in Mozambique watches the IMF,” concedes a researcher at a local think tank in Maputo. “We don’t have resources to figure out what the IMF is doing and how,” says a business association leader in Nigeria.

59. Indeed, it is striking how relatively few CSOs in the six focal countries of recent research have taken initiative to seek contact with the IMF. This pattern of general passivity holds across all sectors: academic institutes and business associations as well as FBOs, NGOs and trade unions. Only a scattering of CSOs have proactively requested an appointment with the resident representative or visiting staff from Washington. Hardly any CSOs in these countries have sent copies of their documentation to the office of the resident representative or to IMF headquarters. Many (though certainly not all) CSOs have neglected to invite Fund staff to join civil society events that touch on macroeconomic concerns.

60. As an alternative to engaging the IMF directly themselves, CSOs might also promote greater and improved oversight of the institution through legislative channels. Such a strategy could enhance public accountability in respect of IMF involvement in macroeconomic policy, especially since many parliamentarians lack much competence on this subject. CSOs in the six countries examined have indeed taken several initiatives in this vein. For example, in Malawi, the country office of ActionAid and MEJN for a time sponsored a Malawi

Parliamentary Committee on the IFIs (MAPCOI). In Mali, the country office of Christian Aid together with the Debt and Development Coalition in Mali (CAD-Mali) successfully urged the parliament to create a Commission on Debt in 2006. The Mozambican Debt Group has provided some limited training of parliamentarians, while the Mozambican Association of Economists has supplied ad hoc informal advice to some legislators in Maputo. Yet all of these actions have had limited scope and duration, and no such CSO development of parliamentary capacity on macroeconomic matters and the IMF has occurred in the DRC, Nigeria or Uganda. In 2006, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Center (CISLAC) in Abuja made a specific appeal to strengthen capacity for scrutiny of the international context by the State Houses of Assembly, but without response. Likewise, the Uganda Debt Network had no uptake to its proposed training of parliamentarians on budget and debt issues.

61. CSOs in these six countries of SSA have also made little headway in enhancing scrutiny of the IMF through the mass media. MEJN and the Economic Association of Malawi have provided some occasional economic literacy training for journalists. A regional CSO, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (which includes chapters in Malawi and Mozambique), has held a one-off training for journalists on economic issues. In Nigeria the Lagos Business School has done some training of journalists on economic and financial reporting as and when it can find a sponsor to fund the activity. UDN has included a few reporters in its budget training courses in Uganda. However, fuller and sustained programs of civil society support for quality economic journalism in the six countries has been absent, thus leaving mostly unrealised this potential CSO contribution to more effective and publicly accountable IMF operations.

62. All in all, then, CSOs in the six countries of SSA have shown less initiative in engaging the IMF than might be expected given the crucial role of the Fund in shaping macroeconomic policy and general development strategy. Reasons for this relative shortfall in civil society attention to the IMF lie partly in the resource constraints discussed above and the poor visibility of the Fund discussed below. In addition, the oversight results in good part from widespread CSO perceptions, some of them cited earlier, that the IMF only relates with government and is not ready or interested to meet citizen groups. Indeed, among the more than 180 civil society practitioners interviewed for this study, only a handful were even vaguely aware of the 2003 *Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations*. Not a single hard copy of the guide appears to have reached CSOs in any of the six focal countries of recent research.

63. All the same, a number of CSOs concede that they themselves could take more action to engage the IMF. Thus one leading convener of civil society in Mozambique affirms that “we should do more ourselves to open up the IMF.” A veteran activist in Kampala likewise considers that “the IMF is not alone to blame for lack of interaction with civil society—it is a two-way thing.” A number of CSOs (including some business associations and development NGOs) admit to assigning the IMF a low priority in their work. Some civil society actors have failed to respond on those relatively rare occasions when IMF staff have asked to see

them. One resident representative in SSA recently put considerable effort into arranging a consultation with CSOs, only to find that just 10 out of more than 40 RSVPs actually attended the meeting.

E. Finding 5: Although Governments Generally do not Object to or Hinder IMF-CSO Relations, National Authorities Give Little Active Encouragement to These Links

64. The direct participants in IMF-CSO relations are of course Fund officials and civil society actors; however, national government is an important third party whose attitudes can greatly influence the possibilities of positive interactions between the other two. The IMF is subordinate to the state inasmuch as its involvement in a country is subject to the acquiescence of the national government of that territory. CSOs are subordinate to the state inasmuch as their operations are subject to the law of the land. Even in crisis situations where a government is heavily dependent on the IMF and/or where the rule of national law is precarious, the state nearly always remains a key part of the political equation. Hence the stance of national authorities vis-à-vis IMF-CSO relations can normally have far-reaching effects on the amount and quality of interaction.

65. Certainly IMF officials have sometimes invoked the principle of deference to the member state as a reason for their restraint in pursuing links with CSOs. Particularly in the first two phases of this research, some Fund staff have expressed concerns that IMF relations with civil society should not provoke the national authorities and not be perceived to undermine the primacy of the member state in governing the country. In this vein the 2003 guide also carefully counselled staff on how to negotiate possible tensions with government that IMF-CSO interchanges might generate. The general advice was to tread cautiously in relations with civil society and to retreat as and when the host state might object.

66. However, evidence from research done in 2007–09 suggests that Fund officials are today generally less worried than in 1996–09 and 2002–03 that exchanges with CSOs in a country would disrupt the IMF’s relations with government. This subject figured regularly in discussions with Fund staff during the earlier two phases of work, but hardly at all in recent conversations. In the 6 SSA country studies, only one among over 40 IMF officials interviewed reported refraining from a particular interaction with civil society (a lecture to university students) out of concerns not to offend the government.

67. Indeed, in practice national governments (including in the six countries examined recently) have hardly ever objected to IMF contacts with CSOs, let alone obstructed them. Questions about state sovereignty may define certain more theoretical debates about civil society involvement in global governance, but the issue rarely intrudes upon on-the-ground interactions between the Fund and CSOs. In fact, the word “sovereignty” was not uttered even once by any of the 250 IMF and civil society practitioners interviewed in the third phase of this research. To this extent participants in contemporary public policy appear to expect and accept that CSOs will engage global governance institutions such as the IMF.

68. In the six focal countries of recent research in SSA, governments have mostly adopted a relaxed attitude towards IMF-CSO contacts. Normally exchanges between Fund staff and CSOs in these countries have occurred without any need to inform the national authorities, let alone seek their explicit approval. Moreover, these discussions have usually transpired bilaterally, without the presence of government representatives. Occasionally an official from the ministry of finance or the central bank has accompanied a mission team in a consultation of CSOs, but any such attendance has been innocuous. In confidential interviews no civil society actors have complained of any intimidation by government in respect of their exchanges with the IMF. On the contrary, a number of civil society actors in the DRC, Malawi and Mali have urged that IMF-CSO meetings should as a matter of principle be trilateral to include government.

69. The only case of broad government unease about IMF-CSO relations encountered in this research has arisen in Nigeria. Here a history of polemics and public unrest surrounding the IMF has prompted national authorities and Fund staff to agree that currently pursued policy reforms will stand a better chance of implementation if the IMF keeps a low profile in the country. Yet even in this case government wariness has concerned the general public visibility of the Fund and not IMF links with civil society in particular. Indeed, IMF management and staff have quietly pursued a modest range of interactions with CSOs in Nigeria without attracting any complaints from government.

70. One might have anticipated that national authorities could become uneasy if CSOs used contacts with the IMF as a way to increase their influence on government policy, but this research has uncovered only one instance of such tensions across the six focal countries. On this occasion the government in question worried that CSOs who were loyal to opposition parties might try to use links with the IMF to undermine the ruling party. In response the resident representative “kept exchanges with civil society organizations to a technical discussion of economic issues and took a backseat to government.”

71. Indeed, judging in particular from the six recent case studies in SSA, relatively few CSOs have attempted specifically targeted lobbying of government via the IMF. Usually such indirect advocacy has involved business associations, and respondents from commercial circles in the DRC, Malawi and Nigeria report having booked some success with this tactic. However, Fund staff have not encouraged such lobbying, which has remained on a small scale. A think tank in one recently examined country reports, “We thought we could use consultations with the IMF as an avenue through which to lobby government, but we failed miserably in this.” The general absence of such political manoeuvring has presumably reinforced the overall acquiescence of governments towards IMF-CSO contacts.

72. Thus the limited extent and depth of IMF engagement of civil society that has prevailed to date cannot on the whole be blamed on government obstructionism. That said, national authorities have arguably helped to constrain the development of IMF-CSO relations by omission: namely, through a lack of active encouragement of these links. Government

neglect to consult CSOs on the macroeconomic aspects of PRSPs was noted above under Finding 1. The limited initiatives vis-à-vis civil society of many Executive Directors (i.e., the representatives of governments at the IMF) is elaborated below under Finding 12. No evidence was encountered in any phase of this research of instances where government ministers have urged the IMF to increase its links with CSOs in their country. Moreover, in none of the countries covered by this research have national finance ministries and central banks developed explicit policies and procedures for regular engagement of civil society associations on macroeconomic issues.

73. True, in particular situations some governments have encouraged CSO pressure on the IMF. For example, national authorities in many low-income countries have openly welcomed civil society campaigns for the reduction of debts to multilateral institutions such as the Fund. Mozambique and Uganda are among the countries where national authorities and CSOs cooperated quite closely on debt issues. An NGO officer in Maputo notes that, “on debt CSOs could say some things [to the IMF] that the government was not able to say.” Also in Mozambique the Ministry of Education has collaborated with CSOs in research and advocacy to press the IMF regarding larger budget allocations for school teacher salaries. However, these instances of positive government support for civil society interest in the IMF have been exceptions sooner than the rule. More usually governments have adopted a passive stance that has in effect encouraged IMF-CSO relations to languish.

74. National authorities have also in a broad sense constrained the development of IMF-CSO relations in situations where governments have hampered the development of an autonomous civil society. For example, all six focal countries of recent research in SSA have in the past had severely authoritarian governments that repressed most organised citizen activity. To this day certain CSOs in these countries remain substantially captured by the state, ruling political parties, or particular government figures. In addition, official registration and reporting requirements for CSOs continue to have considerable restrictive effects on civil society operations in some countries such as Uganda. In the DRC an NGO leader complains that “the government does not want a strong civil society that says what the real people want.” One interviewed civil society activist in Mali reports being detained by police for six hours during a visit by the IMF Managing Director in 2001 “to keep me out of the way.” Clearly the Fund cannot obtain optimal inputs from CSOs in circumstances where governments arbitrarily encroach upon and impede civil society work.

F. Finding 6: While the IMF has Significantly Improved Its Transparency Over the Past 15 Years, It Continues to be Invisible to Many Relevant Civil Society Actors

75. The rest of this paper now turns to conditions of the IMF itself that have weakened IMF-CSO relations. One such circumstance is the often poor public visibility of the Fund. To be sure, the IMF has become much more open to public scrutiny since the mid-1990s. However, to judge by recent evidence from the six countries in SSA, large-scale disclosure of documents, an elaborate website, a major publications program, and proactive engagement of

the mass media have not translated into wide and deep awareness of the IMF among relevant civil society actors. For example, many persons interviewed for this research—most of them prominent and experienced figures in the respective national civil societies—did not know that the IMF maintains a bureau in the country, let alone the name of the resident representative. “Is the IMF still in Nigeria?” was a question frequently raised by civil society interviewees in that country. Few CSOs in any of the six countries were aware of the timing or substance of staff visits to their country, apart from, as one NGO manager put it, “a small press release that may go unnoticed.” In Uganda a respondent remarked that “unless you hang around the Sheraton you would not know that the IMF mission is in town.” Meanwhile, civil society awareness of IMF technical assistance work was almost entirely absent in all of the countries examined.

76. An exception to this general rule of poor IMF visibility comes in Malawi. Here 7–8 years of fairly regular IMF contact with CSOs, together with a sequence of publicly visible resident representatives, has left no civil society actors complaining that the institution is hidden and secretive. In Malawi alone among the six recently scrutinized countries, CSOs regularly compare the IMF favorably with the World Bank on public outreach. In the other countries covered (albeit less markedly in Nigeria) contrasts with World Bank practice on public communications tend to leave the IMF in a negative light. True, Malawi offers the advantage of relatively modest size and hence more manageable proportions for a handful of IMF staff. Yet in Mali, where the population is smaller than Malawi and the main CSOs are concentrated and easily accessible in the capital, Bamako, the IMF is much less known in civil society.

77. In most cases the poor visibility of the IMF amongst CSOs in these six countries has resulted from a low priority given by Fund staff to proactive outreach, rather than from a deliberate effort to stay in the public shadows. One partial exception to this rule, in Nigeria, was noted earlier. Elsewhere, though, the problem is more that staff are so immersed in statistical calculations and interchanges with government officials that they neglect strategic and systematic outreach to civil society (and other nonstate actors). In interviews for this research several well-meaning resident representatives echoed the complaint of one that “it is very hard to get out of the office to do outreach, as there are constant requests from Washington to check this or that detail.”

78. Many staff assume that the IMF’s impressively full and detailed website would deliver significant visibility towards CSOs, but judging from the focal countries of recent research this hope is largely unrealised. To be sure, the Fund website attracts important interest from certain figures in civil society, and these elements are usually highly appreciative of the available information. Indeed, several users in the six main examined countries remarked that the IMF site includes important data and analysis that cannot be easily obtained from the national government. However, this small circle of regular browsers tend to be well-resourced professionals who already know the IMF in some detail, have high levels of economic literacy, speak English, and enjoy good internet connectivity. Such

privileges are not available to the majority of CSOs in SSA who have a stake in IMF activities, with the result that these associations rarely access the website. Moreover, as several respondents emphasised, with predominantly oral traditions in SSA many civil society actors in the region do not feel culturally comfortable with the internet as a medium for communicating information, constructing knowledge, and building trust.

79. Not all countries are equally served on the IMF website either. In particular CSOs in non-English speaking countries suffer from a small scale of translated documents. For example, as of early 2009, when the research for this project ended, material in French covering seven years of IMF activities in the DRC comprised no more than a welcome page, a set of staff photographs, a summary description of IMF operations in the country (not updated since 2004), five press releases, and a single Public Information Notice from 2005. No IMF policy documents or staff reports for the DRC have been translated. Even in countries like Mozambique where a selection of official IMF papers have been translated, they usually do not appear until months after the initial release in English, by which time the material is no longer economically and politically live.

80. Some IMF resident representatives (including in four of the six countries highlighted in recent research) have in recent years created their own web pages within the overall Fund site. However, the user does not easily locate these pages. Even one incoming resident representative experienced difficulty tracking down the site for his new post. Moreover, once found the resident representative pages tend to give relatively few details regarding IMF activities in the country. For example, the sections normally contain little or nothing concerning dates and purposes of forthcoming management and staff visits, ongoing technical assistance projects, or meetings held with CSOs and other stakeholders. The resident representative pages are also poorly integrated with other information on the IMF website regarding the country in question. Nor have staff tracked use patterns, and the resident representative pages—in these four countries at any rate—have generated very little correspondence.

81. In a further contribution to poor institutional visibility, IMF staff have generally undertaken little proactive distribution of publications to in-country CSOs. In none of the six countries recently examined does the IMF have tailored publicity material in the vein of brochures on, for example, *The World Bank Group in Mozambique* or *The World Bank in Uganda: Country Brief*. Among the six countries only in Mozambique has the resident representative office operated (albeit in a limited and not very systematic fashion) an electronic mailing list to notify CSOs of relevant newly released IMF reports. For a time around 2004–05 the resident representative in the DRC had the office driver deliver hard copies of the IMF's *Civil Society Newsletter* to 27 CSO addresses in Kinshasa, but the practice was then discontinued. Meanwhile, relatively few CSOs in the six countries have figured in Washington-based electronic mailing lists of the IMF or hold subscriptions to *Finance & Development*.

82. Also, in the six countries of SSA closely examined for this report, IMF resident representatives have generally not pursued extensive and systematic programs of face-to-face engagement with CSOs in their host country. As already mentioned, Malawi constitutes a partial exception to this rule. Elsewhere resident representatives have at best made periodic ad hoc appearances at conferences and seminars where CSOs may also be present. Even on those (relatively infrequent) occasions when CSOs have specifically invited the IMF resident representative to attend one of their events, the official in question has often missed an opportunity to meet, say, the Nigerian Economic Society, or the Center for Basic Research in Uganda, or the Confederation of Independent and Free Unions of Mozambique (CONSILMO), or CAD-Mali.

83. Nor has the External Relations Department (EXR) of the IMF made the institution more visible to CSOs in SSA to the degree that one might have anticipated. Not until 2007 did EXR appoint an official with a specific brief to upgrade relations with CSOs in the global south. And, between 2000 and early 2009 when the research for this paper was concluded, EXR coordinated only one outreach activity for civil society in the six countries examined closely here, namely, a half-day event in Malawi on January 28, 2008. To this extent EXR has not been much of a presence outside the IMF premises. In contrast to their counterparts in the global north, few CSOs in SSA (except the associations in Kinshasa noted above) received EXR's *Civil Society Newsletter* while it was issued in 2002–07. Moreover, few in the six focal countries of recent research have been aware of the “IMF and Civil Society” web page that replaced the newsletter.

G. Finding 7: IMF Officials Generally have Low Awareness and Understanding of Civil Society and Tend as a Result to be Overly Cautious Towards CSOs

84. A further difficulty in developing fuller IMF-CSO interchanges is that those civil society actors who do manage to become well briefed on the IMF generally encounter officials at the Fund who know relatively little about nongovernmental circles. In other words, IMF staff tend to be as poorly prepared to engage CSOs as vice versa. Recent evidence from SSA certainly bears out this conclusion, which moreover suggests that little improvement has occurred relative to the situation that was observed in earlier phases of this research 6 and 12 years ago.

85. The IMF has never had significant in-house expertise regarding civil society. The staff includes hundreds of highly accomplished professional economists, but very few Fund officials have undertaken substantial studies in political science or sociology that would include close attention to civil society. Departments of the IMF lack designated specialists in *political* economy who might advise *inter alia* on relevant questions concerning civil society. Even those EXR personnel who have since the early 1990s carried a specific brief for civil society liaison have in most cases had neither a research degree in the subject nor major practical experience in the sector. More usually these officials have been economists transferred from other departments of the IMF or journalists recruited from outside the

organization. Whereas other agencies such as UNDP and the World Bank have tasked in-house experts to develop institutional policy on relations with CSOs, the IMF had to rely on outside help (the present author) to draft its 2003 guide.

86. Nor has the IMF provided its staff with any professional training on interactions with CSOs. A short course on media relations, specifically tailored for IMF personnel, has run very successfully for some time. However, the Fund holds not even a basic seminar to elucidate, say, the practical implications of the *Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations*.

87. With no relevant academic study and no professional training on the subject, most IMF personnel unsurprisingly have little more than vague notions of civil society and its role in policy processes and wider social relations. Even on matters of rudimentary definition, IMF staff have in interviews for all phases of this research countless times oriented too narrowly by reducing CSOs to NGOs or too widely by presuming that civil society includes parliaments and the press. Judging from both recent and earlier country case studies, IMF mission chiefs and resident representatives rely heavily on intuition and what they take to be "common sense" when they engage with CSOs. It does seem paradoxical that, while demanding the highest standards of professionalism in economic analysis, the IMF has condoned a lax approach to the political economy of civil society.

88. In individual country contexts, too, IMF staff tend to be short on specific information concerning relevant civil society associations and practitioners. In the six countries of SSA examined in detail recently, resident representatives have usually become closely acquainted with only two or three individuals in the national civil society. On arrival in the country most of these field staff have not, as one might expect, made a round of courtesy calls to become acquainted with the main players in the various sectors of civil society. Even after several years in post, most resident representatives in these six countries had not systematically mapped the civil society around them. For example, these pivotal in-country officials of the IMF are generally not able to specify the main trade union rivalries, the composition of national NGO confederations, the principal women's associations, the constituencies of different business forums, the main economic and social commissions of FBOs, and so on. Meanwhile the Washington-based staff assigned to these six countries in many cases could not recall even names, let alone specific mandates and views, of the CSOs that they have met (usually only briefly) on their field visits.

89. Such staff unfamiliarity with civil society is exacerbated to the extent that IMF country teams tend to lack extensive, systematic and periodically updated databases on relevant CSOs. In the six case studies of recent research, such listings were available if unclearly catalogued in one country, substantially out of date in a second, rudimentary in a third, and absent altogether in the other three. EXR has maintained a global database—now numbering over 6,000 entries—for the electronic circulation of civil society updates. However, this list has had limited coverage of many IMF members, including the six SSA

countries examined closely for this research. In any case there appears to be no regular exchange of information on CSOs between EXR and the country teams in the area departments of the Fund. Moreover, in no country examined in detail for this research have the resident representative office or the desk office in Washington maintained files with notes on past meetings with CSOs, documents received from CSOs, etc.

90. The lack of specific analytical training coupled with a poor information base leaves most IMF staff without firm groundings to make a careful selection of CSO interlocutors and to engage them effectively. Even a senior Fund official with extensive field experience can face circumstances where, as one such individual working on SSA recently confided, “I want to talk with civil society, but I don’t know who to engage.” A CSO leader in SSA who has also previously encountered the IMF as a finance ministry official concludes:

The IMF struggle to grasp what is going on in civil society. With government they can talk data. With civil society they don’t know what to say. The current resident representative [in our country] seems open, but he does not know what to do with us.

91. Low understanding of civil society could also, if staff are not careful, expose the IMF to less scrupulous elements. Like government, commerce or any other arena of human relations, civil society houses some poorly accountable actors to whom the Fund should accord no influence. The 2003 guide offers principles and good practices to assist staff in assessing the legitimacy of CSOs; however, recent research offers no evidence that IMF officials have invoked this framework to inform their work. That said, the six recent country studies in SSA brought up only one occasion where a resident representative was (mildly) deceived regarding the nature and purpose of a particular CSO that sought contact with the IMF.

92. Rather than falling into such situations, IMF staff have more usually responded to their limited understanding of civil society by becoming overly cautious about engaging with CSOs. This tendency towards risk aversion has been widely observed across the various countries and in all three phases of this research. It fits a more general pattern whereby IMF staff tend to shy away from bottom-up initiative within the institution. The Fund is on the whole a steeply vertical organization where lower levels of the hierarchy tend quite strictly to follow orders from higher ranks. Hence IMF field staff are unlikely to deviate from established procedures even when they feel quite secure about the subject at hand. In areas where officials are uncertain—as in regard to civil society—action cannot realistically be expected at the IMF unless management issues explicit and consistent directives—preferably backed by clear incentives—to adopt a new course.

H. Finding 8: IMF Consultations with CSOs are Generally Wanting as Regards the Preparation, Execution and Follow-up of Dialogue

93. A third major circumstance at the IMF that obstructs better relations with CSOs—that is, in addition to low visibility and limited staff knowledge—is deficient consultation practices. To be sure, there have been certain positive experiences in this area. For example, relevant CSOs were closely and constructively involved at all stages of the 2007 revision of the *Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency*. However, judging from recent case studies in SSA, the IMF’s in-country consultations with CSOs (when such exchanges are held at all) remain quite wanting, in spite of the availability of detailed procedural advice as laid out in the annex to the 2003 *Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations*.

94. The problem is not that IMF staff bring ill will to their meetings with CSOs. On the contrary, a large majority of the civil society practitioners met in the six countries of recent research have regarded nearly all Fund mission chiefs and resident representatives as open, well-meaning, pleasant people. CSO criticisms of arrogant behaviour on the part of IMF officials—heard quite widely a decade ago—have declined considerably. Across the six focal countries of recent research, this study encountered only one instance where a resident representative office has refused to receive a bona fide CSO, and that misjudgement was rectified once the mission chief was alerted to the situation. CSOs today also report much fewer occasions when Fund staff refuse to answer questions on grounds of confidentiality. Advances in IMF transparency have clearly improved dialogues with civil society on that count, as so much more relevant policy material is now in the public domain.

95. However, in other important respects the procedures of IMF consultation of CSOs remain inadequate. For example, across all countries and all sectors of civil society covered in both recent and earlier research, CSOs complain that IMF officials do not allow them to prepare well for meetings. Resident representatives usually make little or no attempt to forewarn CSOs about forthcoming IMF staff missions to the country. If the visiting IMF officials do consult CSOs, the meeting is normally called less than a week in advance. No written agenda or briefing papers are ever provided. “We are caught by surprise and cannot develop our positions,” reports an NGO leader in Malawi. “If the IMF called us earlier we could prepare feedback,” echoes a counterpart in Mali. “With notice of 1–2 days our position cannot be more substantive than some bullet points,” says a CSO program officer in Mozambique. Other CSO respondents point out that other commitments can prevent them from accepting IMF invitations issued at short notice.

96. Another refrain in CSO complaints about IMF handling of consultations is that meetings are usually called late in the policy cycle, after the key decisions have already been taken. In the six focal countries of recent research several business forums report meeting with IMF staff in early or middle stages of an activity such as an Article IV surveillance, a program negotiation/review, or a technical assistance project. However, the Fund more usually meets CSOs from other sectors (as well as some business associations) towards the

end of an activity, when the “consultation” serves more to report outcomes than to take inputs. Indeed, a number of CSOs relate that their meeting with an IMF mission was a final appointment squeezed in before the visitors departed to the airport. “We should be associated from the start and not just at the end,” argues a trade unionist in the DRC, voicing a widely heard CSO viewpoint. An NGO convener in Mali asks, “If the IMF meets us on the penultimate day of the mission, does it want us to contribute to its analysis or merely to validate its conclusions?” A veteran activist in Uganda suggests that, in such manner of consultations, “we are ‘participated’ rather than participating.”

97. Evidence from recent as well as earlier phases of this research suggests that the record of IMF meetings with CSOs is also mixed as regards the substance of discussion. A minority of respondents—especially from business circles, though also some research institutes and NGOs—have expressed satisfaction that their consultations with the IMF have covered important policy matters. However, quite a number of CSOs in recent interviews have talked of “repetitive meetings without point” (labour union, DRC) in which “the IMF simply parrots its positions” (research institute, Malawi). Many CSOs across the six countries perceive that Fund staff meet with them only perfunctorily: “to tick a box” (business association); “to do a duty” (development NGO); “without real motivation” (governance NGO); so resulting in “a polite waste of time” (consumer association). Some IMF staff openly confirm such negative impressions regarding the substance of talks. In recent interviews, one mission chief to SSA described his meetings with CSOs as “mostly PR.” A resident representative in another SSA country affirmed that “there is a lot of truth in the perception that the IMF holds pro forma meetings with civil society.”

98. Even if some CSO criticisms of IMF consultation practices might seem overly severe as blanket assessments, it is evident from all of the country case studies done across the several phases of this research that IMF staff meetings with CSOs rarely have much follow-up. CSOs remark that Fund officials in attendance take no notes during some of these discussions. On certain occasions even a basic list of participating civil society actors has not been filed. In most cases no public notice to report on meetings with CSOs is posted on the relevant country page of the IMF website. No minutes of encounters with CSOs are prepared and shared with participants, so that the next conversation might more easily build on preceding exchanges. Nor do Fund officials send informal notes to CSOs to indicate what staff have taken from the meeting and how the IMF might act upon that input. Many times even a simple note of thanks to CSOs for their time and thoughts is overlooked. This lack of follow-up has disappointed a number of CSOs. “In the absence of feedback it has been difficult to sustain CSO interest in the IMF,” reports an NGO convener in Uganda. “It shows a lack of respect not to feed back,” says one business association figure in Mali, with a hint of irritation that was also heard from a number of civil society actors in other countries and sectors.

99. In sum, judging in particular from recent country case studies, process aspects of IMF staff consultations of CSOs would appear to have made little progress since the 2003 guide

offered explicit advice on these matters. All of the shortcomings identified above were specifically addressed in that guide, but to seemingly little effect. Fund officials generally retain much the same loose ad hoc approach towards meetings with CSOs that also prevailed before 2003. The concern is that many civil society actors might conclude, along with one development NGO in Mali, that “if the consultation is not done professionally, why go again?”

I. Finding 9: IMF Relations with CSOs Tend to Encompass a Narrow Social Base and Replicate Social Inequalities

100. In addition to continuing with procedural flaws that the 2003 guide could have helped to rectify, current IMF relations with CSOs also remain weak because staff have generally neglected to resist embedded institutional tendencies to focus the Fund’s civil society contacts on fairly narrow elite circles. As an NGO director in Mali recently observed, “The IMF may meet civil society, but which civil society?” The guide specifically warned that, in the absence of conscious efforts to the contrary, the IMF could easily skew its interactions towards those CSOs that voice the views and interests of privileged quarters of society. In contrast, CSOs that mobilise for marginalised groups tend, in the absence of proactive steps for inclusion, to be left out of dialogue with the Fund. Such dynamics of exclusion have indeed tended to operate in IMF-CSO relations.

101. The preponderance of privilege is witnessed for one thing in the metropolitan urban bias of IMF contacts in civil society. In the six case studies of recent research, as well as elsewhere in earlier fieldwork, the Fund’s in-country interchanges with CSOs have been highly concentrated in the national capital. Exceptions arise in those countries where the principal commercial center is located elsewhere than the government center, such as Blantyre in Malawi or Lagos in Nigeria. In these situations the IMF has also had some focus on CSOs (mainly business associations) based in the second city. Evidence from research in 2007–09 indicates that, in the six countries of SSA, Fund missions have almost never contacted CSOs outside the national hub(s). The aforementioned IMF staff visit to CSOs in a rural district of Malawi stands out in its uniqueness. Even many resident representatives, in spite of being stationed full-time in the country, have not met with CSOs in provincial towns and rural areas.

102. Within the main urban centers IMF staff have focused their civil society links far more on big (and often transnational) capital than on other socioeconomic circles. Across most countries of this research, the Fund has maintained its closest ties outside government with large financial companies and the country’s banks association. Behind finance capital the top tier of CSO interlocutors for the IMF tends to include business-backed economic forums, industrialist associations, and major business schools.

103. To be sure, as has been indicated under earlier findings, IMF consultations are generally thin with all types of CSOs, including associations of big capital. Many business

lobbies complain as much as groups in other sectors of civil society about limited relations with the Fund. It would be a far stretch indeed to suggest that the IMF operates an explicit “capitalist plot” with big business. On the contrary, business forums often report failed attempts to bring the IMF around to their preferred public policies. Nevertheless, in comparison with other socioeconomic constituencies, large capital certainly has by some measure had the greatest access to the IMF through CSOs. Thus, for example, associations representing big business can, far more than other players in civil society, expect informal meals with, and casual telephone calls from, IMF staff.

104. In contrast, Fund officials have, in the focal countries of this research, made no efforts to engage with CSOs that assemble small capital, in spite of the large memberships of some of these associations and the significance of small business in these economies. For example, the IMF has developed no relations with organizations such as the National Federation of Artisans, Small and Medium Enterprises of the Congo (FENAPEC), the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS), or the Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Nor have IMF staff sought links with FBOs such as the Muslim Association of Malawi and the Islamic Council of Mozambique (CIM), which *inter alia* address the important role of Muslims as small traders in the economies of those two countries.

105. IMF staff have likewise done little proactively to connect with labouring classes through CSOs. True, since 2002 the Managing Director of the IMF has, together with the President of the World Bank, convened a biennial summit with trade union leaders from around the globe. Yet in the field IMF outreach to labour movements has, judging from recent research in SSA, dwindled to a minimum. In the late twentieth century the Fund was often pushed to engage with in-country trade unions owing to their outspoken opposition to IMF-supported structural adjustment programs of that day. However, as those debates have receded and trade unions have become weaker, particularly in SSA, the IMF has reduced in-country interchanges with organised labour. Research across six countries of SSA in 2008–09 revealed only one instance where the IMF currently maintains more than biennial exchanges with a labour association (namely, the National Union of Malian Workers). In Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda bilateral dialogues between the IMF and trade unions have in recent years ceased altogether.

106. Meanwhile studies of IMF-CSO relations across 18 countries and three time periods have brought no evidence of initiatives on the part of Fund staff to engage with farmer unions and peasant movements. Smallholding cultivators constitute a large proportion, and sometimes a large majority, of the population in countries of SSA. Yet Fund officials working in the six focal countries of recent research have not even considered to contact, say, the National Smallerholder Farmers Association of Malawi, the National Confederation of Peasant Organizations (CNOP) in Mali, or the National Peasants Union (UNAC) in Mozambique. In the DRC the IMF has had no contacts with the African Institute for Economic and Social Development (INADES), which has actively sought to organise

peasants in that country, even though the INADES office lies only a few hundred metres from the resident representative bureau.

107. On the same general pattern of skewing CSO contacts towards business elites and neglecting more subordinate groups, IMF staff have not sought contact with self-help associations of other marginalised populations either. The many examples of such groups across the six focal countries of recent research include the Society for the Advancement of Women in Malawi, the Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, and the Uganda Community-Based Organization for Child Welfare. One resident representative suggested that “it is hard to get contact with grassroots associations;” however, this assessment may say more about the dispositions of IMF officials than the accessibility of the community groups.

108. Indeed, several IMF staff in recent interviews openly questioned the purpose of meeting CSOs that convene underprivileged socioeconomic circles. For example, a mission chief in one of the six focal countries was “not sure how relevant that would be” to meet farmers associations. Another in a second country declared that it was “boring” to meet with social welfare groups. A resident representative in a third country found it “hard to make a direct connection” between the IMF’s work and women’s associations. Another in a fourth country shrugged that “I would not know what to say to farmers.” A number of Fund staff discounted the importance of trade unions in SSA owing to their relative weakness.

109. Yet the evident counterpoint is to ask how well the IMF itself can be “relevant” to poverty reduction strategies and material welfare concerns generally without the contacts to marginalised socioeconomic circles that many CSOs can provide. Arguably the world of central banks, finance ministries and donor agencies is far removed from most of the population whose lives the Fund is meant to improve. Indeed, an elite-focused engagement of civil society—such as the IMF has practised to date—could in effect (if largely unwittingly) reinforce social inequalities and associated injustices.

J. Finding 10: IMF Relations with CSOs Tend to be Disproportionately Concentrated in the Global North

110. As well as tending to overlook social inequalities, the IMF has also generally neglected to conduct relations with CSOs in ways that would level the playing field between what are loosely termed “the north” and “the south” in the global economy. The largest number and the greatest depth of IMF interactions with civil society have so far always involved associations based in North America and Western Europe, even though the Fund has since the 1970s pursued its most numerous and most intensive activities in other regions of the world. Thus, instead of helping the Fund to qualify some of the northern predominance that marks the governmental aspect of the institution (and colours its legitimacy in the eyes of many stakeholders), IMF relations with CSOs have tended to reconfirm the north-south hierarchies.

111. True, recent years have witnessed several welcome small steps at the IMF to improve access for CSOs in the global south, including from the six countries of SSA examined closely in this research. As noted earlier, a civil society liaison official (of African birth) was appointed to EXR in 2007 with a brief to focus on countries of the south (albeit among other responsibilities). In addition, the IMF has (together with the World Bank) in the past few years sponsored around 15 civil society actors from the global south to attend each edition of the Annual and Spring Meetings. Certain individuals from the six focal countries of this research have gone to Washington under this initiative (although most have focused their visits on the World Bank more than the IMF). A handful of other civil society actors from the six countries (mainly business forum executives and NGO leaders) have attended the Annual and Spring Meetings on a self-funded basis or have made other visits to Fund headquarters. In addition, a number of nongovernmental economists from SSA have had spells in Washington as visiting scholars in the IMF Research Department. Also, in a step that several CSO respondents in recent interviews specifically applauded, the Fund has appointed staff who herald from the region to some in-country posts. On this last point one CSO director in the DRC urged that “having an African resident representative helps the dialogue,” although another CSO leader in Mali noted that “the quality of the person and not just the region where they come from is important [in a resident representative].”

112. Beyond these limited measures, however, the IMF has done little proactively to counter dominance of the global north in its relations with CSOs. The bulk of civil society delegates to the Annual and Spring Meetings, and most civil society visitors to headquarters, continue to come from North America and Western Europe. A faith-based activist in SSA observes in this regard that “having the IMF civil society office in Washington is the start of our exclusion.” Concentrating IMF country teams at headquarters rather than placing them in the field (following World Bank and UNDP practice) also greatly reduces possibilities for national CSOs in the south to access the Fund. Three-quarters of resident representatives in the six focal countries of recent research have come from the global north. In addition, the IMF’s transparency enhancement strategy has emphasised modalities such as the internet and English-language publications that are generally more accessible to CSOs in the global north.

113. Sometimes—particularly at headquarters—IMF staff have relied rather heavily on CSOs based in the global north to transmit information and views from the global south. For example, the IMF has tended to engage global trade union bureaus in Washington and Brussels, whose leadership is moreover drawn mainly from the north, more than national trade union confederations in the south. Likewise, Washington-based associations of global business such as the Institute of International Finance and the Bretton Woods Committee have brought few southern voices directly to the IMF. Fund staff have pursued many exchanges on questions of economic development in the global south with research institutes in the global north. In contrast, as per evidence from the six recent case studies, IMF staff links with think tanks and university faculties in countries of SSA have generally remained thin.

114. This problem of the north “speaking for” the south in civil society has particularly marked many NGO studies of IMF performance. Exceptionally, evaluations of IMF policy advice undertaken by ActionAid International have in recent years rested on shared initiative between northern and southern researchers. All stages of these investigations—from drafting the terms of reference to writing up the results—have been undertaken together. In other cases, however, NGO assessments of IMF involvements in the global south have normally been executed through policy research units located in, and by consultants drawn from, the global north. In such situations civil society actors in the affected countries tend to have little role beyond supplying information. The resultant analysis is not thereby rendered invalid, of course; however, Fund staff could obtain a fuller picture by seeking supplementary views from south-based CSOs, a step that officials have usually not taken.

115. On certain policy questions, too, CSOs in peripheral countries have reason to caution that trying to hear the south through the north carries risks that actual priorities and views from the south are not heard. On campaigns to promote IMF reform, for instance, an NGO program officer in Mozambique remarks that north-based CSOs “apparently do not have the time to listen to local associations in poor countries.” Indeed, *New Rules for Global Finance* took a rare step in this direction by convening dialogues on IMF governance in several low-income countries in 2008. Voicing a widely expressed concern among in-country CSOs in SSA, a veteran NGO campaigner in Malawi asserts that “colleagues in the north don’t have our mandate and legitimacy.” A peasant organiser in SSA impatiently affirms, “We do not want the international NGOs to be our bridge. Let them pass their capacities and resources to us so that we can have our own voice.” Other observers worry that, even when such resource transfers occur (to business forums, research institutes and trade unions as well as NGOs), north-based donors still have undue influence on the programs of their south-based clients.

116. Yet—certainly on evidence from the six recent case studies in SSA—it is precisely these transnational CSOs and donor-supported national CSOs on which IMF staff tend to focus much of their (limited) in-country dialogues with civil society. In the process, unfiltered bottom-up local voices can easily be lost, unless Fund officials make concerted attempts to seek out these inputs. So far such efforts have been lacking. In this way, too, the IMF has not developed links with CSOs in ways that put the institution in close touch with all of those whose lives it substantially affects.

K. Finding 11: The IMF Tends to Select Its Interlocutors in Civil Society in Ways that Avoid More Searching Policy Debates

117. As noted under Finding 2, one of the major benefits to be had from IMF-CSO interchanges is the injection of alternative perspectives into what can thereby become a deeper, more challenging and more creative policy deliberation. However, Fund staff have generally left these potentials underdeveloped by focusing their (in any case limited) interactions with CSOs on associations that broadly endorse and replicate the institution’s prevailing policy discourses. This approach of linking with the likeminded might smooth

Fund relations with CSOs in the short term, but it can in the longer run also undermine the quality of the IMF's policy advice.

118. The scope of IMF-CSO discussions has been unduly narrow in one sense on disciplinary lines, with a near-exclusive focus on economic analysis. Across three phases and 18 countries, this research has encountered very few instances of significant policy deliberations between Fund officials and non-economic or interdisciplinary research institutes. Nearly all the links have involved economic policy think tanks and university faculties of economics (or sometimes business studies). Likewise the IMF has predominantly engaged with economists in business associations, NGOs and trade unions. Fund staff normally gauge the usefulness of CSO interlocutors in terms of their competence in academic economics. This monodisciplinary inclination is understandable to the extent that the IMF mainly addresses macroeconomic conditions and has a professional staff that is composed overwhelmingly of economists. However, economy does not exist in isolation from society as a whole. Cultural, ecological, geographical, historical, political and social dimensions perpetually interrelate with and shape the economic aspects. Successful macroeconomic policy depends *inter alia* on suitable governance arrangements and appropriate attention to sociocultural contexts; yet IMF officials have generally not sought out interlocutors in civil society who could advise on these associated matters.

119. The near-comprehensive IMF avoidance of contacts with faith-based organizations is striking in this regard, particularly in SSA where religion figures so large in the societal landscape. Some staff contacts with FBOs developed surrounding debt relief, particularly when churches took a leading role in popular mobilisation on the issue. For the rest, however, IMF links with faith circles have been limited to an occasional courtesy call on religious leaders, even though many FBOs have programs that address socioeconomic concerns. One resident representative who, in a rare initiative of this kind, attended a more substantive FBO workshop (on health policy) concluded, "It was not very helpful. I felt like I was on a different planet." Meanwhile, one mission chief to SSA dismissed the policy relevance of IMF links to religious organizations with a quip that "the wives of staff do that sort of thing."

120. More narrowly still within economics, IMF staff have tended to focus their more substantive exchanges on those CSOs who follow orthodox analysis. In this more restricted sense, too, Fund officials have directed their attentions mainly towards CSOs who "speak the same language" of neoclassical assumptions and econometric methods. In Uganda, for example, Fund staff have long cultivated relations with the mainstream Economic Policy Research Center while repeatedly bypassing the more heterodox Center for Basic Research. In Nigeria IMF officials have developed extensive links with the mainstream Lagos Business School while neglecting the more pluralist Nigerian Economic Society. In the DRC Fund personnel have had links with the mainstream Institute of Economic and Social Research (IRES), but not with economists at the more alternative African Center of Interdisciplinary Research (CARI). One well-placed academic economist in SSA confides that "I watch my language with the IMF. If you do not embrace neoliberalism and have a different language it

is impossible to work with them.” Again, it is understandable that busy officials at the Fund would pursue the line of least resistance in links with CSOs, but the resultant avoidance of deeper debate is not necessarily best for policy performance.

121. Outside academic circles, too, IMF staff have tended to steer CSO links towards those associations that reinforce the Fund’s own preferred discourse of private sector-led economic development. In this vein a mission chief in one focal country of recent research characterised input from business associations as “very organised, very detailed and fruitful,” whereas it was problematic to identify “a suitable counterpart” among NGOs. An IMF staffer working in a second country of SSA noted the difficulty of “finding a common subject” with NGOs. A Fund economist in a third country, jokingly, described the party line around IMF policy discussions as “a new communism.” An NGO leader in a fourth country complained that the Fund “are not critically engaging civil society views and only promote their own vision.” An NGO program officer in a fifth country was “tired of chasing the IMF agenda rather than thinking outside the box.” In the sixth country of the latest research an observer remarked that “the IMF does not see—and welcome—CSOs as change agents.”

122. From recent interviews it is clear that the IMF still has to convince some sceptics that its engagements with CSOs genuinely aim to stimulate deliberations for the generation of improved Fund policies, as opposed to only cultivating support of existing IMF policies. An NGO leader from one focal country in SSA felt that, in a Fund-sponsored visit to Washington, “we were being indoctrinated to become IMF thinkers and pro-IMF advocates.” A researcher at a think tank in a second country worried that “the IMF only want to give an impression of openness to slow down criticism.” An academic in a third country concluded that “the IMF wants to control agitation without however addressing the real issues.” A veteran activist in a fourth country was troubled generally, not only in relation to the IMF, that many NGOs “want to be buddies, ‘understanding’ and ‘rational’ in order to keep their policy space.”

123. More disturbingly—albeit happily not too often in the evidence collected for this study—IMF staff have sometimes actually halted links with persistent dissenters. Expressing a common sentiment among Fund officials, one resident representative in SSA recently recounted, “Some CSOs make a living out of being anti and do not want to engage in constructive dialogue. We tried at the beginning to dialogue with them, but we gave up.” An activist in Malawi claims to have “vanished from [the IMF’s] list of invitees” after criticising Fund policies. An NGO leader in Mali suggests that “the IMF know me but don’t include me, because I speak my mind and people don’t like that.” Another activist in Bamako also complains that the Fund only invites less critical NGOs to consultations. A researcher in Mozambique reports that IMF officials once walked out of a conference rather than listen to criticisms of their work. (The present author witnessed firsthand a similar IMF staff action in an academic conference at the Bank of England in 2000.) Across all phases and all countries of this research IMF staff have repeatedly expressed reluctance to meet with

“unconstructive” trade unions; yet a labour movement that does not agitate is arguably not doing its job.

L. Finding 12: IMF Management have Given Staff a Weak Lead on Relations with CSOs

124. A last principal finding of this research has already been intimated at several earlier junctures in this report: namely, that IMF management have not provided sufficiently strong direction on the matter of the Fund’s relations with civil society. For one thing (Deputy) Managing Directors, Executive Directors and departmental heads have not, on the whole, taken an institutional lead in pursuing their own significant interactions with CSOs. For another the Executive Board has not provided staff with a clear and consistent policy line on the need for a higher quantity and quality of IMF engagement of civil society. These shortfalls in leadership have manifested themselves both at headquarters in Washington and, even more so, in field situations such as the six countries recently examined in detail.

125. In Washington, management has set a positive example inasmuch as senior officials of the IMF have often made themselves available to meet with civil society actors. For example, the MD has held repeated meetings at headquarters with officers from prominent CSOs such as the Brookings Institution, the Institute of International Finance, and Oxfam. In addition, the MD has since 2002 held the aforementioned biennial summits with trade union leaders as well as an hour-long so-called “town hall” gathering with civil society groups at the Annual Meetings. Both of these interactions are done together with the President of the World Bank. Since the late 1980s, EDs have granted interviews to CSOs during the Annual Meetings, although this practice peaked in the late 1990s and is less prevalent today. Many EDs have also met with CSOs in Washington at other times. (Deputy) Directors of IMF departments have also opened the doors of their Washington offices to some local and visiting CSOs.

126. However, on the whole management has not set IMF staff an example of wider, deeper and more proactive engagement with civil society. In Washington, for instance, more substantive encounters between senior Fund officers and CSOs have normally not extended beyond a narrow circle of seasoned civil society practitioners. MDs, EDs and department heads have rarely taken initiatives to broaden their range of contacts in civil society. Moreover, the majority of this small circle of regular interlocutors in civil society herald from the global north as well as from privileged socioeconomic circles. Management has thereby set the overall institutional tone of skewing CSO links towards sites of greater power and wealth.

127. Nor did IMF management taken a lead in engaging CSOs in the field during the 2001–08 evaluation period. The six countries in SSA that were highlighted in recent research have between them had only five visits from MDs and three visits from Deputy MDs over the eight-year period. Usually these sojourns lasted only a day or two. On just three occasions

(in Mali in 2001, Nigeria in 2005, and Uganda in 2007) did the MD/DMD included a substantive exchange with national CSOs in the itinerary. Particularly in Mali, CSOs in interviews for this research urged that the MD of the IMF take a lesson on positive engagement with civil society from James Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank.

128. As for EDs, these members of the IMF Board have since the mid-1990s occasionally undertaken group travel to one or the other region of the world, where among other things they have sometimes met a few CSOs. In this vein a delegation of five EDs visited Mali in 2006, and a group of seven EDs visited Mozambique in 2008. The ED trip to Mali apparently involved no meetings with CSOs, while the stay in Maputo included one two-hour dialogue with half a dozen national CSOs. Research for this report found no evidence that the two African EDs or their Advisers have in recent years pursued any exchanges with CSOs across the six countries.

129. The front office of the African Department likewise did not develop any noteworthy links with in-country CSOs during the 2001–08 period, at least to judge from the six case studies done here. Research uncovered only one instance when (Deputy) Directors of the African Department have sought any substantive contacts with CSOs during their periodic visits to these six countries. This exception involved the Bankers Association of Malawi in 2005 or 2006. In general the front offices of area departments at the IMF have regarded civil society liaison as a matter for policy *executing* mission chiefs and resident representatives rather than policy *making* senior officials.

130. Nor has management given a strong lead on IMF-CSO relations in terms of policy directives. From time to time the MD and the Board have issued general urgings for greater staff outreach to civil society and other nonofficial circles. However, the only more concrete statement of policy to reinforce this message has been the 2003 guide. Even that document was classed as voluntary advice and, as indicated earlier, has so far generated no follow-up.

131. Management plays a key role in the institutional development of any organization; yet that leadership function is all the more crucial at the IMF in the light of its strikingly hierarchical character. Given this organizational culture, Fund officials are unlikely to take initiatives to expand and deepen relations with civil society so long as: (a) management does not give clear and consistent signals that staff should engage with civil society; (b) staff are not supported with sufficient resources to execute meaningful relations with CSOs; (c) institutional rewards for effective staff interaction with CSOs are seemingly insignificant; and (d) institutional culture strongly discourages deviation from established procedures (which include only minimal relations with CSOs). In these circumstances a new and more positive logic of staff action vis-à-vis civil society is dependent upon a change in management visions and directives. Otherwise the increasingly unsatisfactory situation of limited and ineffective IMF relations with civil society will persist.

IV. POLICY SUGGESTIONS

132. Diagnosis provides grounds for prescription. Each point in the above analysis of deficiencies in IMF-CSO relations can prompt suggestions to counter those shortcomings. It is well to close this paper by laying out in summary fashion various steps that the IMF could take to improve its relations with civil society and thereby obtain the important gains in policy effectiveness and institutional legitimacy that were elaborated under Finding 2.

133. To repeat the vital point underlying this entire paper, fuller and more effective IMF engagement of CSOs is not an optional extra. Substantive relations with business forums, faith groups, labour associations, NGOs, research institutes and other social movements should be part of the core of the Fund's relations with member countries, and not at the margins. The casual approach vis-à-vis civil society that continues to prevail in many quarters at the IMF (especially towards in-country CSOs) is now very much behind the times and costly for Fund performance and public standing. Until management and staff take on board this key thesis, any IMF initiatives to upgrade relations with CSOs are likely to remain unsystematic, half-hearted and little more than cosmetic.

134. To achieve greater progress is, of course, partly a question of resource allocation. Across all three phases of this research, scores of IMF staff have continually rued that they lack resources to do more in respect of relations with civil society. These complaints have been just as pervasive during the Fund's heydays of the mid-1990s as during its budgetary hard times in 2007–08. However bright or dark the financial horizon of the moment might be, IMF management has thus far not accorded relations with civil society the priority that they warrant. Increased resources are not a full answer in themselves, but the Fund must accept that more extensive and effective relations with civil society cannot be accomplished on a shoestring. Other global governance institutions with similar or greater resource constraints as compared with the IMF have managed to pursue more substantive engagement with CSOs. In this respect the question of resources for relations with civil society is not just an objective constraint, but a matter of policy choice. The Fund could—and hopefully will—set future priorities differently.

135. The following proposals for improved IMF relations with CSOs are arranged broadly in respect of the 12 general findings elaborated in Section III. Some of the recommendations are more resource-intensive than others. Some measures are available for immediate implementation, while others require a longer period of execution. A full array of 50 suggestions is presented in order to indicate the range of possible actions.

136. No doubt simultaneous and immediate pursuit of the whole package of proposals would be overly challenging for even the best resourced institution. However, it would also poorly serve the IMF to approach an upgrade of relations with CSOs through a series of haphazard half-measures. The feasible middle road for maximising coherence and returns would be for the IMF to formulate an explicit forward strategy on relations with civil society

for the institution as a whole. To bear effective results, such a vision and plan would need to be developed, implemented and reviewed under the auspices of the Executive Board (and not devolved to a staff department).

Raising the priority of relations with CSOs at the IMF

- sensitise staff to the material costs to Fund performance and legitimacy of underdeveloped relations with CSOs
- appoint to the front office of each area department of the IMF a specialist on political economy who advises *inter alia* on matters concerning civil society
- incorporate liaison with civil society into the job descriptions of all relevant professional positions at the IMF
- include a heading on engagement with CSOs in annual staff performance reviews
- reverse the posting pattern of country teams for long-term clients of the IMF, so that the chief and 2-3 economists are resident in situ and a single liaison person works from headquarters in Washington
- encourage greater IMF staff initiative to engage with CSOs, accepting that the risks of certain mishaps are outweighed by the benefits of more intensive relations
- resist imagined or exaggerated concerns about government sensitivities as a (misplaced) excuse for staff not to develop relations with CSOs

Heightening IMF staff capacities to engage CSOs

- appoint a senior professional specialist on civil society matters to the Policy Development and Review Department to oversee CSO relations across the IMF as a whole
- develop training on civil society engagement for IMF staff, including a half-day general sensitisation for all professional staff and a more extensive offering for officials such as mission chiefs and newly posted resident representatives
- enhance institutional memory at the IMF with better records on CSOs (especially regularly updated contact details and systematically filed notes of meetings)
- follow, learn from and where relevant participate in civil society engagement activities by other global governance institutions with greater experience in this area

Improving CSO capacities to engage the IMF

- convene periodic meetings through the resident representative bureau to brief CSOs in a country on the IMF and its involvements in the national, regional and global economy
- give staff lectures at a major universities, especially in the global south, to help introduce the next generation of professional cadres to the IMF
- contribute staff talks to civil society efforts at civic education on (global) economic issues (e.g., CSO training courses on budget monitoring)
- convene through the resident representative a periodic meeting with strategic civil society actors to discuss a major macroeconomic policy question of the day
- conduct exchanges with key civil society actors on macroeconomic aspects of future PRSPs, so that CSOs are better aware of these facets of poverty reduction strategies
- interact with civil society sites that convene public discussions on economic policy (such as the DRC Social Forum and the Mozambique Association of Economists)
- engage with civil society research on economic policy questions related to the IMF (e.g., by providing data, giving feedback on draft papers, and debating published results)
- include civil society practitioners in courses of the IMF Institute and/or develop a short course at the Institute for relevant CSOs on macroeconomic policy and the involvement therein of various global, regional and national agencies
- encourage greater donor support of civil society initiatives on questions of global economic governance, especially from CSOs that give voice to marginalised countries and social circles

Boosting IMF visibility to CSOs

- create a presence on the IMF website for those resident representative offices that currently lack one
- integrate all materials related to a country into a single easily found location on the IMF website (as opposed to dispersed content as at present)
- include on country pages of the IMF website news of forthcoming and recently completed staff visits, new technical assistance projects, meetings with CSOs, etc.
- prepare for each country a single-page summary information sheet ('The IMF in X') that can be handed out to CSO visitors and posted at the top of each country location on the IMF website

- take care not to overestimate the effectiveness of the website as a tool of IMF transparency
- maintain in each resident representative office an electronic mailing list of key civil society interlocutors in the country and use it to circulate any IMF document relevant to the country as soon as that paper is publicly released
- circulate on the country civil society mailing list a short advance notification of each impending management and staff visit
- deposit a hard copy of incoming IMF documents at the local World Bank information center (where such a center exists and is open to the public)
- upgrade the number and speed of translations of key IMF policy documents for countries where English is not the principal language
- complement the website and e-mailings with greater IMF presence in the press and broadcast media
- undertake, on the arrival of a new resident representative, a round of courtesy calls to the main CSOs in a country
- become more involved (especially through resident representatives) in the many forums of public consultation (governmental and nongovernmental) where CSOs are present

Upgrading IMF consultation practices vis-à-vis CSOs

- form a civil society consultative group with open membership in each country where the IMF is active, possibly in coordination with the World Bank
- explicitly address relations with CSOs in the terms of reference and briefing papers for all IMF activities where a civil society angle is relevant
- have *consultations with* CSOs earlier in staff visits, rather than only *reports to* CSOs at the end
- improve preparations of consultations with CSOs by issuing invitations earlier, drawing up a written agenda, and circulating relevant background papers
- pursue substantive consultations that deliver the distinctive information, analysis, advice, debate and support that CSOs can provide the IMF
- follow up CSO consultations with a note of thanks that also indicates what the IMF gained from the exchange; better still to agree with the CSOs a short minute of the discussion and, where both sides concur, post it on the website

- add a section in back-to-office reports on engagement with CSOs

Broadening the social base of IMF contacts among CSOs

- seek out and invite to consultations actors in relevant areas of civil society that the IMF currently often overlooks, such as associations of small business, farmers, workers (in the informal as well as formal sector), and women
- expand CSO links outside the governmental and commercial capital(s) of a country
- make a staff visit to a “grassroots” setting at least once a year in each country

Bettering north-south balances in IMF-CSO links

- increase staff time in the front offices of relevant area departments as well as in EXR to develop relations with CSOs in the global south
- expand listings of southern CSOs in the global mailing list for civil society maintained by EXR
- enlarge participation in the Annual and Spring Meetings by southern CSOs
- develop more relations with in-country NGOs, trade unions and research institutes relative to the north-centered transnational actors in these sectors
- encourage greater policy research on macroeconomics and the IMF by CSOs in the global south

Widening debates in IMF-CSO dialogues

- actively seek from CSOs different kinds of evidence that complement macroeconomic statistics: e.g., qualitative analysis, micro data, political economy perspectives
- be especially alert in exchanges with CSOs to evidence that contradicts existing data and perspectives, thereby avoiding possible inclinations to hear only evidence that confirms existing positions

Strengthening the lead from management on IMF-CSO relations

- include at least one consultation of CSOs in each country visit by senior IMF officials
- pursue more MD and ED country visits, especially in the global south, and include meetings with CSOs in each itinerary
- widen management contacts with CSOs to include more associations from the global south and from less privileged socioeconomic circles

- institute a periodic review of the *Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations* under the auspices of the Executive Board
- draw up through the Executive Board an institution-wide strategic plan for upgrading the quantity and quality of IMF engagements of CSOs

137. Clearly, these suggestions encompass a broad range of reforms and would require substantial time and resources for full elaboration and implementation. Yet the measures if adopted would effect a notable and very constructive reinvention of the IMF. The Fund would hereby let go of the narrow intergovernmentalism that it inherited from 1944 and move forward to the hybrid multi-actor networks that mark global governance in the twenty-first century. If executed well, this institutional reorientation would contribute to greater effectiveness and legitimacy of the IMF, helping to secure its long-term role in a more global world. To stress again, however, the key to success in this matter lies with a clear lead from the Board on policy, backed by the means required to realise the vision.

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ANNEX. COUNTRY REPORTS

The background paper “IMF Interactions with Member Countries: The Civil Society Dimension” draws especially on fieldwork concerning six countries of Sub-Saharan Africa undertaken in 2007–09. Each country study resulted in a set of findings and suggestions that were shared with the CSOs and IMF staff involved and then revised in the light of their feedback. (NB: time constraints prevented consultation on a French translation of the draft report regarding the DRC.) The reports are reproduced here as supplementary evidence to the analysis in the paper.

The reports are structured under five headings. The first set of points covers general features of civil society activities in the country regarding macroeconomic issues. The remaining headings respectively address four key dimensions of accountability: namely, transparency, consultation, evaluation and correction. In other words, the research presumed that positive relations with CSOs could help the IMF to become more accountable—and thereby more effective and legitimate—in respect of the people whose lives are affected by the Fund’s policy recommendations.

A first aspect of accountability considered is *transparency*: CSOs can only have effective engagement with the IMF to the extent that the Fund is visible to them. A second aspect of accountability is *consultation*: CSOs can promote a more effective and legitimate IMF through constructive exchanges of views with the multilateral agency. A third aspect of accountability is *evaluation*: CSOs can contribute to enhanced IMF operations with proficient monitoring and assessment of the Fund’s activities and their impacts. A fourth aspect of accountability is *correction*: CSOs can build on transparency, consultation and evaluation to promote change in IMF positions, particularly in cases where the Fund’s involvements might have been flawed or harmful.

Under the four headings of transparency, consultation, evaluation and correction it is also possible to suggest some measures that could improve IMF-civil society relations in the country concerned. A number of these steps are quite straightforward and low in cost, although as stressed in the paper qualitative improvements in IMF engagement of civil society are probably not available without a meaningful commitment of resources. These country-specific suggestions—which built up to the general suggestions in the main paper—are also detailed in the various reports below.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Introduction

The study of the DRC is mainly based on discussions with 48 persons at the heart of IMF-CSO relations in the country. From the Fund head office in Washington, DC I spoke with the current IMF country team for the DRC, as well as the Executive Director representing DRC. Two discussions were had with the current IMF resident representative (“res rep”) in

Kinshasa as well several of the local staff of the office. A visit to the DRC on February 27–March 10, 2009 included discussions with a broad spectrum of civil society associations in Kinshasa. In all, conversations were had with 39 civil society actors spread across 3 business associations, 4 trade unions, 3 FBOs, 16 secular NGOs, and 3 research bodies. The male/female ratio among DRC respondents was highly uneven at 34:5, broadly reflecting the gender imbalance that currently prevails in civil society leadership in the country.

The findings detailed below regarding the DRC generally confirm the IEO assessment that IMF-civil society relations in SSA tend to be “limited and ineffective.” In respect of transparency, for instance, although some IMF documents concerning the DRC are now publicly available, Fund staff have on the whole taken little action to enhance the agency’s visibility to CSOs in the country. Regarding consultation, higher management at the IMF has never exchanged views with CSOs in the DRC. Meanwhile CSO encounters with visiting IMF staff have, outside the business sector, been sparse and superficial. The resident representative office in Kinshasa, too, has had no noteworthy engagement of civil society apart from the main business federation and the banking association within it. For their part, few CSOs in the DRC have taken initiatives to develop contacts with the IMF or to enhance their capacity in respect of macroeconomic issues. In relation to evaluation, CSOs have undertaken no careful tracking of the Fund’s involvement in the DRC. As for correction, CSOs have so far had little substantive impact on the Fund’s involvement in the DRC, so that a number of potential contributions (e.g., on governance, poverty and general sensitisation to context) have not been realised.

Civil society and macroeconomic policy in the DRC

Findings: General contours of civil society

- formally organised civil society in the DRC includes some associations founded in the late colonial period, but most (including almost the entire NGO sector) have appeared with political liberalisation in the country after 1990
- most CSOs in the DRC have their seat in Kinshasa; a few have branch offices elsewhere in the country; some though certainly not all national CSOs maintain close links with village and district associations
- with the exception of certain business, church and labour organizations national and local CSOs in the DRC have small memberships
- almost all national and local CSOs in the DRC operate with heavily constrained and uncertain resource bases
- civil society in the DRC has little in the way of peasant associations, consumer groups, private sector labour unions, and policy think tanks; efforts to organise informal workers (the vast majority of the labour force) are at an early stage

- women's organizations in the DRC are little visible, and women hold very few decision-taking positions in CSOs generally
- on the whole, there is limited cross-sectoral collaboration in civil society in the DRC (i.e., between academic, business, faith, labour, NGO and social movement circles), although some has occurred around questions of external debt, and a four-day Congolese Social Forum involving several thousand participants was held in 2007, with a second edition planned for June 2009
- divisions also occur within sectors of civil society in DRC, as forums of big business do not engage with associations of small business, and the trade union movement is highly fragmented
- many CSOs in the DRC are heavily dependent on funding from transnational donors
- affiliates of transnational CSOs figure substantially in relief and development work in the DRC, and most of their management positions are occupied by expatriates
- relations between transnational and national CSOs in the DRC can be testy, particularly in the area of humanitarian relief where there is substantial competition for funds
- several transnational advocacy NGOs (e.g., Europe-Afrique Centrale, Friends of the Congo, Global Witness, Rights and Accountability in Development) work on DRC issues without having an office in the DRC; others such as Christian Aid and Oxfam GB have a presence in DRC to support projects, but run their advocacy work on the country from outside
- quite a number of leading civil society actors in the DRC have close collaborations with, financial ties to, or even positions in government
- some formal mechanisms for public dialogue between civil society and the state exist in the DRC, including a Social and Economic Council, a National Labour Council; a Civil Society Consultative Council created in 2002 is not operational, although the Ministry of Planning is preparing a one-off Civil Society Symposium for 2009
- accountability regimes for CSOs are very weak in the DRC, especially in respect of purported beneficiaries; rumour mills contain many stories of graft in CSOs
- on the whole, then, a fragile state in the DRC is complemented by a fragile civil society, particularly among national and local associations

Findings: Civil society and macroeconomic issues

- CSOs in the DRC with potential interest to engage the IMF and its concerns for macroeconomic policies extend across academic, business, faith, labour, NGO and social movement sectors

- like the state in the DRC, civil society in the country has low capacity to address macroeconomic policy, with no notable programs and few professionally competent advocates in this area
- many CSOs concerned with socio-economic issues in the DRC have little awareness of the IMF role and activities, although certain individuals are quite well briefed
- the DRC has no reasonably funded economic research institutes; nor do other CSOs in the country have socio-economic research departments; nor does the country have an association of professional economists; nor does it have a regular public forum where macroeconomic directions can be debated
- the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for the DRC in 2007 involved substantial civil society input, but macroeconomic aspects of the plan were not included in the public discussion, which centered on sectoral matters
- no CSOs in the DRC have given substantial and sustained attention to the IMF; nor have their members and/or funders provided them with the resources to do so
- CSOs in the DRC have pursued no programs of civic education on macroeconomic policy and the IMF role

Findings: IMF awareness of civil society

- IMF staff assigned to the DRC have generally had very limited knowledge of the shape and workings of its civil society
- the office of the resident representative compiled a fairly substantial catalogue of CSOs in the DRC around 2004, but most of the associations on the list have never been contacted, and much of the information regarding organizational leadership is now out of date

Suggestions

- CSOs in the DRC could devote more attention to macroeconomic policy, given its significance in shaping the broad lines of development strategy
- CSOs in the DRC could encourage greater public deliberation of macroeconomic concerns
- CSOs in the DRC could give priority to economic literacy training for their staff and highlight this need in applications for funding; the IMF resident representative could contribute to such endeavours with occasional talks
- the IMF resident representative could convene a periodic (say, quarterly) meeting of interested CSOs to discuss a major macroeconomic issue of the day and thereby contribute to capacity development that serves policy effectiveness in the long run

- in the absence of an adequate public regulatory framework CSOs in the DRC could develop a self-regulatory code of conduct; recognized certification of this kind could also increase confidence in IMF and other official circles about building relationships with CSOs
- IMF staff involved with the DRC (especially the resident representative) could become more aware of the shape and role of civil society in the country
- the resident representative office in Kinshasa could update its records on relevant CSOs in the DRC and also expand the list to include some important actors that are currently missing

Transparency

Findings

- the IMF is effectively invisible to most of civil society in the DRC; even some leading civil society figures are unaware that the IMF has an office in Kinshasa; news of IMF staff visits, if heard at all, comes from the press
- the IMF office in the DRC is unmarked and hidden from public view in the Hôtel des Monnaies premises of the central bank
- the first IMF resident representative of the post-conflict period undertook some proactive distribution of information and documentation to CSOs in Kinshasa, but this practice ended after his departure in 2005
- IMF resident representatives in DRC have made very occasional ad hoc public appearances, but nothing in the way of more systematic public communications (e.g., as pursued by the local World Bank office) has developed
- CSOs in the DRC have rarely requested specific information from the IMF, although two attempts by the Coalition on External Debt were declined
- CSOs in the DRC have had no involvement in (Northern-led) global CSO campaigns for greater transparency at the IMF, although a number of NGOs in the DRC have pressed for more openness of government in the country
- the IMF has posted on its website country reports and other staff papers concerning the DRC since 2001; however, none of these documents have been translated into French, in a country where few civil society actors have fluency in English; French material is limited to a few pages of general country information and a handful of press releases
- not surprisingly, then, few CSOs in the DRC use the IMF website; moreover, internet access is limited in much of the country, and local cultural predispositions favour oral over written communication

- the IMF resident representative office in the DRC has a very basic public web page whose ‘The DRC and the IMF at a Glance’ has not been updated in 5 years
- few if any CSOs in the DRC are aware of the “IMF and Civil Society” web area, whose front page and main links are moreover not available in French
- low visibility and transparency of the IMF in the DRC have encouraged substantial distrust and suspicion towards the institution across much of civil society in the country—noticeably more than in most other parts of Africa

Suggestions

- the IMF could place considerably higher priority on enhancing its visibility in the DRC
- the IMF could better inform CSOs in the DRC about its work, particularly in view of the role that CSOs can play as agents of wider citizen education in the country
- the resident representative in the DRC could make more public appearances at conferences, seminars and workshops, including those convened by civil society groups, in order through formal presentations and informal conversation to communicate what the IMF does in the country
- the resident representative in the DRC could give at least one lecture per year, say, at the economics faculty of the University of Kinshasa
- the IMF could update its “The DRC and the IMF at a Glance” web page and also produce a hard-copy version for distribution to CSOs and others
- the IMF could give better advance public notice—including to interested CSOs in particular—of management and staff visits to the DRC
- IMF staff missions to the DRC could at the close of their visits release a more substantive statement of their findings and recommendations than currently appears in rather bland press releases
- the IMF could translate into French its key country papers and staff reports related to the DRC, ensuring in particular that the translations are released in good time
- the resident representative could assemble an updated made-for-purpose electronic mailing list of relevant CSOs in the DRC and use it to circulate (translated) IMF notices and papers relevant to the country as they appear
- such a DRC country mailing list of CSOs could be integrated into the global mailing list maintained by the External Relations Department in Washington, DC

- the resident representative web page for the DRC could be supplemented with information on past and forthcoming missions, notes of meetings held with CSOs and other stakeholders, etc.
- the country documents area and country office page could be integrated into a single DRC domain on the IMF website, preferably with the sort of user-friendliness that characterises the IMF home page
- CSOs campaigning for greater transparency in the DRC government could learn from earlier CSO struggles to open up the IMF (and other multilaterals)

Consultation

Findings

- the IMF lacks a defined mechanism for exchanges with civil society in the DRC and earmarks no resources specifically for consultation of CSOs in the country
- CSOs in the DRC have no awareness of the IMF's published "Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations" (also translated into French); indeed, many if not most believe that the IMF only deals with government and has no interest in consulting them
- IMF consultations with CSOs in the DRC have been limited to regular discussions with the Congo Federation of Enterprises (FEC) and the Congo Association of Banks (ACB), occasional exchanges with certain trade unions, and mostly one-off meetings with a handful of NGOs
- the IMF has had no consultations at all in the DRC with associations of small and medium enterprises, public policy research institutes (since 2000), national church agencies, the main national and transnational development NGOs, and community organizations
- the current focus of the IMF's CSO contacts on the FEC and ACB prompts many civil society actors to regard the Fund as an agent of "big business" and "international capitalism" with no concern for "the people"
- the IMF has in its very limited outreach to civil society in the DRC avoided consultations that would challenge its general framework of knowledge and policy
- CSOs in the DRC have had no exchanges whatsoever with the IMF at board and management levels, or with senior officials in the African Department
- such IMF contacts with CSOs as have occurred have taken place in the context of staff visits from Washington for policy review and Article IV surveillance; the resident representative has had few contacts with CSOs between staff visits aside from with the FEC and the ACB

- IMF staff have had no contacts with CSOs in the DRC outside Kinshasa
- only a handful of civil society figures working on the DRC have visited IMF offices in Washington, DC; only one civil society actor from the DRC has obtained sponsorship to attend the Annual or Spring Meetings
- IMF staff have not followed up meetings with CSOs in the DRC to indicate what they took from the discussion and how they have acted on it; this oversight has prompted mild irritation on the part of some CSO interlocutors
- few CSOs in the DRC have taken the initiative themselves to open consultations with the IMF; one that tried (the External Debt Coalition) was twice refused a meeting with the resident representative
- as with the lack of visibility, the lack of IMF consultation of CSOs in the DRC leaves many of these associations deeply suspicious of IMF intentions and actions

Suggestions

- the IMF could substantially widen its range of consulted CSOs in the DRC; in a first step in that direction the new resident representative could make courtesy calls at the offices of 8-10 key CSOs
- the resident representative could distribute to CSOs in the DRC the French language version of the IMF guide on relations with civil society, so that those associations become aware that the IMF is in principle open to meet them
- the IMF could expressly encourage consultation with civil society associations that challenge prevailing assumptions and methodologies at the Fund
- IMF higher and middle management could open contacts with CSOs in the DRC
- IMF staff visits to the DRC could increase consultations of CSOs; those discussions could also be undertaken earlier in a visit on the basis of a non-confidential summary of mission concerns that is circulated beforehand
- IMF review missions could incorporate a visit to a rural area or some other grassroots context into their engagement of civil society in the DRC
- IMF technical assistance staff in the DRC could consult more CSOs as appropriate, particularly beyond business circles (for example, visitors from Fiscal Affairs Department could meet with NGOs working on transparency)
- IMF staff could develop better practices of follow-up to consultations with CSOs
- the IMF and North-based CSOs could sponsor more civil society actors from the DRC to visit IMF offices in Washington

- CSOs in the DRC could take more initiative to arrange exchanges with IMF staff and, in preparing for such exchanges, better brief themselves on the institution and its activities

Evaluation

Findings

- even in the country's elite universities and main business federations, CSOs in the DRC have limited capacities to research and assess macroeconomic policies and the IMF role
- CSOs (transnational as well as national, academic as well as non-academic) have undertaken no systematic evaluation of IMF activities in the DRC since 2000, so that judgements of the institution tend to be based on generality and anecdote
- the civil society calendar in the DRC includes no major events where macroeconomic policies and the IMF role in the country are assessed, although the forthcoming Civil Society Symposium organised by the Ministry of Planning and the second Congolese Social Forum in June 2009 might well raise such issues
- the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has not engaged CSOs in the DRC in its assessments of IMF work except through the present study and through a recent email questionnaire posted to a handful of individuals
- CSOs in the DRC have taken no initiatives to stimulate greater and improved legislative and media scrutiny of the IMF role in the country
- in sum, then, CSOs currently perform little of a watchdog function vis-à-vis the IMF in the DRC

Suggestions

- funders could give greater priority to building research and advocacy capacity on the IMF (and macroeconomic policy generally) among CSOs in the DRC
- relevant civil society conferences in the DRC could attend more to the IMF role and engage the IMF more actively
- CSOs in the DRC could establish a working group for collective monitoring of macroeconomic policy, including the IMF role
- CSOs in the DRC could build deeper collaboration with parliamentarians and journalists in order to upgrade public scrutiny of IMF involvement in the country

Correction

Findings

- on the whole CSO engagement of the IMF in the DRC has had few and small impacts in terms of shifting policy
- one exception is that IMF relations with the main national business confederation and its banking arm have reverberated to increase the access and influence of the formal private sector vis-à-vis the national government
- pressure from transnational and national NGOs helped make the IMF (along with the World Bank) amenable to the principle that the DRC renegotiate its mining contracts with multinational companies
- although the global debt campaign has succeeded in securing the principle to cancel unsustainable external debts, the national debt coalition in DRC has received no hearing from the IMF, and cancellation of DRC debt under HIPC has been repeatedly deferred
- the IMF and CSOs have not fully exploited possibilities of their exchanges to enrich Fund understandings of the DRC with, for example:
 - (i) exposure to information and analysis that contrasts with that of government
 - (ii) more sensitisation to specific DRC contexts, especially in relation to the fragility of the state and the conditions of impoverished circles
 - (iii) more awareness of situations at provincial and local levels
 - (iv) more qualitative evidence alongside quantitative data
 - (v) better integration of macro and micro analysis
 - (vi) greater interdisciplinarity beyond unidimensional economic analysis
- neither the IMF nor CSOs (especially locally based NGOs) have done much to enlist each other as allies in efforts to build more publicly accountable government in the DRC
- CSOs in the DRC have not actively advocated for change in the governance of the IMF itself, although many of them regard the IMF as a tool of western power that needs fundamentally to rethink its operations

Suggestions

- IMF staff engaged with the DRC could take more seriously the notion that CSOs (including outside the business sector) can provide valuable corrective information and insights on macroeconomic policy
- CSOs could more fully explore the nature and extent of connections between IMF-supported macroeconomic strategies and problems of poverty and inequality in the DRC
- greater IMF relations with consumer, environmental, labour, small business, women and youth groups in the DRC could help further social dimensions of IMF policy advice for the country
- CSOs and the IMF could pursue possibilities of collaboration to advance more accountable governance in the DRC
- civil society campaigns to change IMF governance—initiated and run almost entirely from the global north—could do more to include participants from the DRC and other low-income countries

Malawi

Introduction

The study of Malawi is mainly based on semi-structured interviews with 29 persons at the heart of IMF-CSO relations. At the IMF head office in Washington, DC I met with the present and previous mission chiefs for Malawi, as well as the immediate past resident representative (“res rep”). During a visit to Malawi on May 13–25, 2008, I furthermore had two meetings with the current IMF resident representative in Lilongwe. The country discussions also encompassed 25 civil society actors, spread between the government center Lilongwe, the commercial center Blantyre, and the university center Zomba. The cross-section of civil society groups met encompassed 2 academic bodies, 5 business associations, 3 faith-based organizations, 13 secular NGOs, and the trade union congress. It was unfortunately not possible to meet with the national chamber of commerce (my visit coincided with its annual trade fair) and the national NGO council. In addition, no meetings were held with associations in rural areas. In gender terms the male/female ratio among civil society respondents was highly uneven at 22:3.

The findings detailed below regarding Malawi in certain respects confirm the IEO assessment that IMF-civil society relations in Africa tend to be “‘limited and ineffective.” For instance, the Fund has on the whole not been particularly proactive in distributing information to CSOs in Malawi. Higher management at the IMF has almost never consulted CSOs in Malawi, while the consultations done by IMF missions have involved small numbers of CSOs and have generally had limited depth. For their part CSOs have done

hardly any systematic monitoring or research of IMF involvement in Malawi. Meanwhile, apart from major influence in the cancellation of multilateral debts, and some shifts towards greater social sensitivity in policy recommendations, CSOs have so far had little corrective impact on IMF involvement in Malawi.

Yet the balance sheet of IMF-CSO relations in Malawi has positive sides as well. On transparency, for example, many of the main CSOs in Malawi make use of the IMF website, and several pursue civic education efforts to raise awareness of the Fund among the wider public. Regarding consultation, the last couple of resident representatives have gradually broadened and deepened IMF contacts with CSOs in Malawi, and the present resident representative and mission team are expanding links especially with NGOs. Several CSO initiatives in Malawi are attempting to upgrade parliamentary and media scrutiny of macroeconomic policy, including the IMF role. Possibly ongoing CSO efforts to bring the Fund “closer to the people” will bring still greater social sensibility in IMF policy advice regarding Malawi.

Civil society and macroeconomic policy in Malawi

Findings

- CSOs in Malawi with interests to engage the IMF extend across academic, business, faith, labor and NGO sectors
- only several dozen CSOs in Malawi have given substantial and sustained attention to macroeconomic issues
- several of these CSOs date from the 1960s, but most have been created since the early 1990s, and Malawi-based NGOs with special concern for economic issues have mainly appeared after 2000
- several of these CSOs are membership bodies, usually involving modest numbers, while others are entirely donor funded and board governed
- most CSOs in Malawi that address macroeconomic policy have limited resources and operate with secretariats of less (often well less) than 10 professional staff
- CSO competence in Malawi regarding macroeconomic questions is limited on the whole, but it is quite strong in certain academic, business and NGO bodies
- CSOs in Malawi undertake some intra-sectoral collaboration (mainly within business circles and within NGO quarters), but inter-sectoral coordination (that is, between academic, business, faith, labor and NGO circles) is generally weak
- several CSOs in Malawi that work on social and economic problems have faced governance problems, but most are attuned to issues of their own accountability

- CSOs in Malawi working on macroeconomic issues are concentrated in the larger cities, are mostly drawn from elite circles, and are led almost entirely by men
- considerable resource disparities exist in Malawi between North-based and locally based CSOs, inequalities which sometimes translate into uneasy power relations between the two
- IMF staff assigned to Malawi have generally had limited knowledge of the shape and workings of civil society in the country

Suggestions

- CSOs with interests in macroeconomic policy could take more initiative to make themselves known to the IMF, e.g., by visiting the resident representative and sending copies of their documentation
- IMF staff (especially the resident representative) could keep more extensive and systematic files of contacts in and exchanges with CSOs in Malawi, both for their own records and as a bank of knowledge for their successors
- CSOs could further develop the role of the Malawi Economic Justice Network as a focal point for civil society relations with the IMF (without thereby compromising direct relations between the Fund and other CSOs, of course)
- CSOs in Malawi could attend more explicitly and systematically to their own accountability, thereby increasing IMF confidence to engage them more seriously
- CSOs could reduce the glaring gender imbalances in civil society engagement of macroeconomic issues in Malawi, for instance, by bringing the NGO Gender Coordinating Committee into these activities
- North-based CSOs could nurture a facilitating as opposed to directive approach towards the work of locally based CSOs on macroeconomic issues in Malawi

Transparency

Findings

- a decade of greater outreach has made the IMF fairly visible to CSOs in Malawi
- yet many CSOs in Malawi still have low understanding of how the IMF operates
- the IMF has distributed little information and documentation to CSOs in Malawi
- for their part CSOs in Malawi have also requested little information from the IMF
- some CSOs in Malawi know that many IMF documents are publicly available, online and in hard copy, but other relevant civil society players do not

- some CSOs in Malawi make regular and quite detailed use of the IMF website, though many CSOs lack internet access and most suffer from slow speeds
- several civil society leaders in Malawi receive the IMF *Civil Society Newsletter* and find it useful, though most are unaware of its existence
- several CSOs in Malawi are pursuing civic education programs that touch on the IMF, so that CSO and wider public awareness of the Fund will likely rise

Suggestions

- the resident representative could maintain and expand the public face of the IMF in Malawi
- a public IMF-CSO exchange, as was pioneered in January 2008, could be made a periodic event, on future occasions exploring, say, a recently released IMF staff report on Malawi or a jointly selected policy theme
- the resident representative could create an electronic mailing list of relevant CSOs in Malawi and use it to circulate IMF papers relevant to Malawi as they become available
- the same listserv could also be used to widen circulation of the IMF's *Civil Society Newsletter* in Malawi
- the IMF could create a web page for the Malawi res rep office, including contact information, dates of upcoming missions, notes of meetings held with CSOs, etc.
- CSOs with interests in the IMF could do more homework on the institution, so that they are better equipped to take advantage of opportunities for engagement
- ActionAid, the Economic Association of Malawi, the Malawi Economic Justice Network, the Human Rights Consultative Committee, and the Public Affairs Committee could expand their economic literacy programs, with particular attention to reaching women and youth
- the IMF resident representative could contribute talks to these civic education programs
- North-based NGOs campaigning for increased information disclosure by the IMF could consult CSOs in Malawi on the latter's priorities regarding transparency

Consultation

Findings

- CSOs in Malawi perceive and welcome a recent greater readiness of the IMF to engage with them

- CSO-IMF exchanges in Malawi have become quite regular in program missions since 2001, although they are sporadic in technical assistance work
- levels of resident representative contacts with CSOs have also risen over this period, but can vary with the personal inclinations of individual staff members
- where the resident representative has had active and open engagement it has generated substantial goodwill towards the Fund, as well as greater readiness on the part of CSOs to give the IMF full information and frank opinions
- CSOs in Malawi have had almost no exchanges with the IMF at board and management levels
- among CSOs in Malawi IMF exchanges are relatively greatest with certain business associations and a handful of NGOs
- IMF exchanges in Malawi are few or completely absent with academic institutes, the employers association, farmers organizations, the Muslim association, trade unions, and women's groups
- with the exception of a single mission visit to rural districts in March 2008 (which gained the Fund considerable plaudits among CSOs) the IMF has had no contacts with civil society in Malawi outside Lilongwe and Blantyre
- only half a dozen leading civil society figures in Malawi (all NGOs) have had opportunities to visit IMF offices in Washington, DC
- in contrast to various other countries, CSOs in Malawi do not in general emphasize negative comparisons between the IMF and the World Bank as regards relations with civil society, and a few associations report positively on their engagement with the Fund
- however, most CSOs in Malawi feel that IMF program missions engage them in a pro forma fashion, with little inclination to incorporate CSO input into policy
- a number of CSOs in Malawi complain that meetings with the IMF are called at short notice, are poorly prepared, and lack feedback and follow-up

Suggestions

- the IMF could widen its range of contacts with CSOs in Malawi, especially in respect of the currently overlooked groups mentioned above; a checklist of sectors could help to ensure that significant stakeholders are not inadvertently omitted
- visits to rural districts and other grassroots contexts could become a regular feature of IMF engagement with Malawi

- were the Managing Director of the IMF to visit Malawi his rounds could include a consultation with CSOs
- IMF Executive Directors (especially the ED office responsible for Malawi) could visit the country periodically and meet with CSOs
- the IMF and North-based CSOs could sponsor a wider circle of civil society actors from Malawi to visit IMF offices in Washington, including to meet with EDs and management
- technical assistance missions in Malawi could consult CSOs as appropriate, as FSAP visits have done in respect of business associations in the financial sector
- to encourage more substantive discussions the IMF staff could, ahead of meetings, provide CSOs in Malawi with a summary of the mission briefing paper that reviews the main issues without divulging confidential details
- the IMF could consult CSOs in Malawi earlier in the mission cycle, thereby giving the staff more opportunity to reflect and possibly act on CSO inputs
- the quality of IMF-civil society consultations could improve with earlier notice of the meetings and advance indication of discussion points
- at the close of a mission in Malawi IMF staff could circulate a note of the points that they have taken from consultations with CSOs and possible action on them
- the res rep in Malawi could have more exchanges with CSOs between missions and also make more overtures to meet CSOs at their offices and events

Evaluation

Findings

- only a few CSOs have undertaken monitoring and assessment of macroeconomic policy in Malawi, and little of this work has specifically examined the IMF role
- CSOs have undertaken only a handful of published studies of IMF involvement in Malawi, so generating little research base for advocacy
- the few existing CSO studies of IMF involvement in Malawi have been done mostly by NGOs in the global north, with limited initiative and input from Malawian actors
- apart from a single email questionnaire to certain associations the IEO has not engaged CSOs in Malawi in its evaluations of IMF activities
- several CSOs in Malawi have pursued initiatives to stimulate greater and improved legislative and media scrutiny of macroeconomic policy, including the IMF role

Suggestions

- funders could give greater priority to building research capacity on the IMF (and macroeconomic policy generally) among CSOs in Malawi
- North-based NGOs could build more initiative and voice from Malawi into their evaluations of IMF activities in the country
- the IEO could increase the involvement of CSOs in Malawi and other low-income countries in relevant evaluation exercises
- CSOs in Malawi could build deeper collaboration with parliamentarians and journalists in order to upgrade public scrutiny of IMF involvement in the country

Correction

Findings

- all in all CSOs have had limited impacts to shift IMF policy positions in respect of Malawi
- CSO critiques of the Malawian government have sometimes strengthened the IMF hand, for instance, on fiscal discipline, reduced inflation, anti-corruption, and liberalisation of the financial sector
- IMF staff have sometimes used exchanges with CSOs in Malawi to check data and analysis, including against the information that they receive from government
- CSOs in Malawi have occasionally alerted IMF staff to overlooked or underestimated issues, such as the fiscal consequences of trade liberalization, the social reverberations of certain proposed privatizations, possible risks of selling government food reserves to raise revenue, and shortfalls of basic services for most inhabitants of the country
- critiques from CSOs (and other actors) have arguably attenuated certain IMF positions on, say, the removal of agricultural subsidies, the sale of the parastatal Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, and fiscal targets
- cumulative pressure from civil society in Malawi has arguably helped, alongside civil society urgings across the world, to push the IMF after 2000 to accord greater attention to social dimensions and poverty concerns
- CSOs in Malawi played a relatively marginal role in obtaining debt cancellation for the country through the 2005 Multilateral Debt Reduction Initiative, with the principal initiative and coordination in this campaign coming from CSOs in the global north

Suggestions

- IMF staff could take more seriously the possibility that CSOs can have corrective information and insights on conditions in Malawi
- IMF staff could emphasize that the importance they attach to maintaining good working relations with the Malawi government does not preclude, and in fact is enhanced by, their need to heed sound policy suggestions from CSOs
- greater relations with employer, farmer, labor, women and youth groups could help further consolidate the social dimension of IMF policy advice in Malawi
- CSOs could build on their increased knowledge of the workings of the IMF and macroeconomic policy to help the Fund and government develop viable alternatives when existing approaches are not delivering

Mali

Introduction

The study of Mali is mainly based on semi-structured interviews with 32 persons at the heart of IMF-CSO relations. I met the IMF team for Mali first in Washington on 19 October 2007 and again in Bamako on 20 February 2008 at the end of their latest Article IV mission. I had an initial telephone interview with the IMF resident representative in Mali on 12 December 2007, followed by two meetings in person at the IMF office in Bamako on 22 and 29 February 2008. During the period February 20–29, 2008, I further had conversations with 24 persons from 16 CSOs in Bamako. This cross-section included 2 academic bodies, 3 business associations, 2 labor unions, 5 national NGOs, 3 international NGOs, and 1 broader civil society council. In spite of efforts, I was unfortunately unsuccessful in meeting the chamber of commerce and any peasant organization. Time limitations meant that I also did not meet any associations outside the capital. In gender terms the male/female ratio among civil society respondents was highly uneven at 7:1.

Findings regarding Mali, detailed below, broadly confirm the IEO statement that IMF-civil society relations in Africa tend to be “limited and ineffective.” IMF transparency vis-à-vis civil society in Mali is on the whole still quite low. IMF consultations with civil society in Mali are in general fairly superficial. Weak transparency and shallow consultation, coupled with limited research capacity on the part of CSOs in Mali, mean that civil society actors have undertaken very little systematic and detailed evaluation of IMF involvement in the country. Finally—and not surprisingly given the gaps in transparency, consultation and evaluation—CSOs in Mali have so far contributed little to correct situations where IMF positions could be misinformed, incomplete, flawed or damaging.

Civil Society and Macroeconomic Policy in Mali

Findings: General contours of civil society

- formally organised and officially registered CSOs have mainly emerged in Mali since the early 1990s
- CSOs in Mali are interconnected through an array of national umbrella groups with often overlapping membership, including CCA-ONG, CNSC, FECONG, FONGEM, SECO-ONG
- most CSOs in Mali—particularly locally based bodies—have limited resources
- most CSOs in Mali are largely if not entirely funded by transnational donors
- considerable resource disparities exist in Mali between North-based CSOs and locally based associations
- close ties between government and certain CSOs blunts the critical edge that civil society has vis-à-vis the state in Mali

Findings: Civil society and macroeconomic issues

- CSOs in Mali with interests to engage the IMF extend across academic, business, faith, labour and NGO sectors
- relatively few CSOs in Mali have given substantial and sustained attention to macroeconomic issues and the IMF role
- CSO competence in Mali regarding macroeconomic questions is generally weak, though available in certain academic institutions and business associations
- CSOs in Mali working on macroeconomic issues have undertaken some national and regional collaboration through the Mali Debt and Development Coalition
- CSOs in Mali that work on macroeconomic issues are heavily concentrated in Bamako, are mostly drawn from professional circles, and are led almost entirely by men

Findings: IMF awareness of civil society

- IMF staff assigned to Mali have generally had limited knowledge of the shape and workings of civil society in the country

Suggestions

- CSOs in Mali could devote more attention to macroeconomic policy, given its significance in shaping the broad parameters of development

- CSOs in Mali could encourage greater citizen involvement in macroeconomic issues at provincial and district levels, as happens to some degree in the annual People's Forum
- North-based CSOs could increase support for capacity development of locally based CSOs on macroeconomic issues in Mali
- CSOs in Mali with interests in macroeconomic policy could take more initiative to make themselves known to the IMF, for example, by visiting the resident representative and/or by sending that office copies of their documentation
- IMF staff involved with Mali (especially the resident representative) could maintain more extensive, systematic and updated records on CSOs in the country, in order to have a better informed engagement

Transparency

Findings

- most CSOs in Mali have low (often very low) awareness of the IMF
- this limited knowledge is exacerbated by low visibility of the IMF in Mali
- the IMF has distributed almost no information to CSOs in Mali
- CSOs in Mali have sought almost no information from the IMF
- almost no CSOs in Mali know that many IMF documents are publicly available
- very few CSOs in Mali use the IMF website, finding little of relevance to them
- all CSOs questioned urged that the IMF create a resident representative website for Mali
- CSOs in Mali provide almost no civic education on the IMF for the wider public

Suggestions

- in general the IMF could expand communications with CSOs in Mali, including a French translation of the *Civil Society Newsletter*
- the res rep could offer CSOs a short seminar with a basic introduction on the IMF, starting with apex groups and subsequently expanding the circle
- the IMF could invite CSO subscriptions to *Finance & Development*, beginning by sending a copy to relevant associations

- the res rep could create a CSO listserv and use it to circulate IMF papers relevant to Mali as they become available
- the IMF could accelerate translations of Mali-relevant documents into French
- the IMF could create a Mali country website, preferably including non-technical presentations and an interactive aspect
- the IMF website home page (French language version) could include a link to the country websites, which are currently invisible to those who do not know that they exist

Consultation

Findings

- CSO-IMF exchanges in Mali have increased somewhat since 2005 but remain sporadic on the whole
- most IMF exchanges with CSOs in Mali go via the res rep and the country team
- CSOs in Mali have almost no exchanges with the IMF board and management
- among CSOs in Mali IMF exchanges are relatively greatest with business groups, the main trade union confederation UNTM, and a handful of academics
- IMF exchanges in Mali are few and thin with NGOs and with academics outside the field of economics
- in a country with a majority of agriculturalists the IMF has no links with peasant organizations
- the IMF has no contacts with CSOs based outside Bamako
- only a handful of leading civil society figures in Mali have had the occasion to visit IMF offices in Washington, DC
- few CSOs in Mali now complain of IMF arrogance, as was often heard in the past
- however, IMF staff tend to approach meetings with CSOs in Mali as an exercise to validate existing information and analysis, rather than as an occasion to obtain new data, hear different perspectives, and possibly adjust positions
- given this orientation IMF staff tend to be reluctant to engage more critical CSOs in Mali

- across all sectors (academics, business, labor, NGOs) CSOs in Mali urge that they can provide the IMF with crucial insights that the institution otherwise lacks regarding the country's economic dynamics, political forces and cultural values
- across all sectors most CSOs in Mali complain that meetings with the IMF are inadequately prepared and also lack feedback and follow-up from the Fund
- the FSAP mission to Mali in early 2008 illustrates the benefits available from more thorough IMF consultations with CSOs

Suggestions

- IMF officials concerned with Mali could learn from the World Bank office in Bamako on its experiences of civil society consultation, which CSOs generally regard as having improved significantly in recent years
- the Managing Director of the IMF could tour West Africa with particular emphasis on meeting CSOs, as James Wolfensohn did so effectively for the World Bank
- Executive Directors of the IMF could increase visits to Mali and meet with CSOs
- the IMF could widen its range of contacts with CSOs in Mali, especially with NGOs (many of whom work closely with the poor majority of the country's population), the smaller trade union confederation CSTM, and academics outside the field of economics
- the IMF could engage more with more critical corners of civil society in Mali
- the res rep in Mali could have more regular exchanges with CSOs between missions from Washington, for example, by convening quarterly discussions that center on a key theme such as export diversification or macro-micro links
- on suitable occasions videoconferencing could be used to increase consultations between IMF headquarters and CSOs in Mali
- the IMF could consult CSOs in Mali earlier in the mission cycle, thereby giving the staff more opportunity to reflect and possibly act on CSO inputs
- to encourage more substantive discussions the IMF staff could, ahead of meetings, provide CSOs in Mali with a summary of the mission briefing paper that reviews the main issues without divulging confidential details
- at the close of a mission in Mali the IMF staff could circulate a note of the points that they have taken from consultations with CSOs and how they may act on them
- one civil society respondent in Mali suggested that *Finance & Development* could include a rubric for submissions from CSOs that stimulate substantive debate

Evaluation

Findings

- in good part owing to shortfalls in transparency and consultation, only a few CSOs in Mali undertake meaningful monitoring and assessment of the IMF
- no national CSOs in Mali currently have the resources to publish systematic studies of IMF involvement in the country
- the few published studies by CSOs of IMF involvement in Mali are done mostly by NGOs in the global north, with limited initiative and input from Malian actors
- the IEO has not engaged CSOs in Mali in its evaluations of IMF activities
- CSOs in Mali have made few efforts to stimulate greater legislative and media scrutiny of the IMF

Suggestions

- funders could give greater priority to building research capacity on the IMF among CSOs in Mali
- international NGOs could build more initiative and voice from Mali into their evaluations of IMF activities in the country
- the IEO could engage CSOs in Mali in relevant evaluation exercises
- CSOs in Mali could build more coalitions with parliamentarians and the press in order to upgrade public scrutiny of IMF involvement in the country (although legislators and journalists in Mali also need greater knowledge of the Fund in order to become more effective watchdogs)

Correction

Findings

- not surprisingly given the various shortcomings noted above, CSOs in Mali have only occasionally (e.g., with respect to public sector wages in 2006) brought shifts to IMF policy positions and program measures
- arguably cumulative pressure from across civil society in Mali helped, alongside civil society urgings from across the world, to push the IMF after 2000 to accord greater attention in its strategies for Mali to social dimensions and poverty concerns
- civil society groups in Mali played a relatively marginal role in the campaign for multilateral debt relief, with the principal initiative and coordination coming from CSOs in the global north

Suggestions

- IMF management and staff could take more seriously the possibility that CSOs could have information and insights on conditions in Mali that might in certain circumstances warrant revisions of policy
- collectively, the various proposals made under other headings above could raise the capacities of CSOs in Mali to effect constructive corrections in IMF policies where changes are indicated

Mozambique

Introduction

The study of Mozambique is mainly based on semi-structured interviews with 33 persons at the heart of IMF-CSO relations in the country. At the IMF head office in Washington, DC, I met with two members of the mission team for Mozambique, as well as the Adviser for the country in the relevant Executive Director office. Further discussions were had with the IMF resident representative (“res rep”) in Maputo, first by telephone in advance of fieldwork and then twice in person during a visit to Mozambique on June 16–27, 2008. Those in-country discussions also encompassed 27 civil society actors, mostly in the national capital, with the addition of a visit to a provincial NGO forum in Xai-Xai. The cross-section of civil society groups met encompassed 4 academic bodies, 2 business associations, 3 faith-based organizations, 10 secular NGOs, the 2 trade union confederations, and 2 bodies with participation from across these constituencies. Attempts notwithstanding, it was unfortunately not possible to meet with the banks association. In a further limitation to the work, only one meeting was held outside Maputo, namely, with a provincial NGO forum in Xai-Xai. In gender terms the male/female ratio among civil society respondents was highly uneven at 22:4, thereby rather straining Mozambique’s reputation for greater political participation by women.

The findings detailed below regarding Mozambique generally confirm the IEO assessment that IMF-civil society relations in Africa tend to be “limited and ineffective.” For instance, the Fund has on the whole not been particularly proactive in distributing information to CSOs in Mozambique, although a number of civil society actors have on their own initiative made substantial use of the IMF website. Higher management at the IMF has almost never consulted CSOs in Mozambique, while consultations done by IMF review missions and the resident representative have involved small numbers of CSOs and have generally had limited depth. For their part CSOs have taken little initiative to develop contacts with the IMF, although several organizations have undertaken detailed evaluations of the Fund’s involvement in Mozambique. Meanwhile, apart from having notable influence on the cancellation of multilateral debts, and some limited effect in bringing greater social sensitivity to IMF policy recommendations, CSOs have so far had little substantive impact on the Fund’s involvement in Mozambique.

Civil Society and Macroeconomic Policy in Mozambique

Findings: General contours of civil society

- after repression of civil society activities under colonialism and their marginalization in the one-party state after 1975, formally organised and officially registered CSOs have mainly emerged in Mozambique since the early 1990s
- although certain CSOs in Mozambique today have notable resources and impact, many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are small; the trade unions have limited membership; most business associations are fairly rudimentary; and policy think tanks are few in number
- a national CSO umbrella body (i.e., that encompasses the full range of sectors and issues) is lacking in Mozambique since the recent demise of LINK
- while some CSOs in Mozambique are partly supported by local members, most associations are largely if not entirely funded by transnational donors
- considerable resource disparities exist in Mozambique between North-based CSOs and locally based associations, inequalities that sometimes translate into uneasy power relations between the two
- close ties between government and certain CSOs, coupled with the absence of laws on conflict of interest and disclosure, creates some governance challenges for civil society in Mozambique

Findings: Civil society and macroeconomic issues

- CSO engagement of macroeconomic policy in general and IMF operations in particular is quite recent, dating from the late 1990s
- CSOs in Mozambique with interests to engage the IMF extend across academic, business, faith, labour and NGO sectors
- relatively few CSOs in Mozambique have given substantial and sustained attention to macroeconomic issues and the IMF role
- that said, CSO competence in Mozambique regarding macroeconomic questions is strong in certain associations (such as IESE among think tanks, CTA among business groups, and ActionAid among NGOs) and also exists in less expected quarters (such as the peasant association UNAC and the Islamic Council)
- CSOs in Mozambique working on macroeconomic issues undertake noteworthy collaboration through the Group of 20 (G20) and the Mozambique Debt Group (GMD)

- CSOs in Mozambique that work on macroeconomic issues are heavily concentrated in Maputo and are mostly drawn from professional and elite circles

Findings: IMF awareness of civil society

- with the exception of a few business associations, IMF staff assigned to Mozambique have generally had limited knowledge of the shape and workings of civil society in the country

Suggestions

- CSOs in Mozambique could devote more attention to macroeconomic policy, given its significance in shaping the broad parameters of development
- CSOs in Mozambique could encourage greater citizen involvement in macroeconomic issues at provincial and district levels (as is beginning to happen with some budget monitoring activities, for example)
- North-based CSOs could further nurture a more facilitating role (and a less directive approach) towards the work of locally based CSOs on macroeconomic issues in Mozambique
- CSOs in Mozambique with interests in macroeconomic policy could take more initiative to make themselves known to the IMF, for example, by visiting the resident representative and/or by sending that office copies of their documentation
- CSOs could further develop the role of the G20 and the GMD as focal points for more systematic civil society relations with the IMF, although care perhaps needs to be taken that emphasis on these two hubs does not hamper capacity development on macroeconomic policy in other CSOs
- IMF staff involved with Mozambique (especially the resident representative) could maintain more extensive, systematic and updated records on CSOs in the country, in order to have a better informed engagement (subsequent to this report action was taken on this point)

Transparency

Findings

- the IMF office in Maputo is among the most publicly accessible and welcoming Fund premises anywhere in the world
- the IMF resident representative in Mozambique maintains a fairly detailed office web page
- nevertheless, the IMF remains largely invisible to most CSOs in Mozambique

- although the resident representative office includes a publicly accessible library, the IMF has done little targeted distribution of information and documentation to CSOs in Mozambique (subsequent to this report action was taken on this point)
- little IMF documentation on Mozambique is available in Portuguese, and the limited translations that are prepared have until recently tended to appear only slowly
- few if any CSOs in Mozambique received the IMF *Civil Society Newsletter* in 2002-7 or are aware of the new ‘IMF and Civil Society’ web page
- for their part CSOs in Mozambique have sought little information from the IMF
- but a number of CSOs in Mozambique make regular and quite detailed use of the IMF website
- these CSOs often turn to the IMF website for data that is not available from the Mozambique government
- aside from training on budget monitoring, CSOs in Mozambique have undertaken little civic education activity that touches on the IMF

Suggestions

- the IMF could follow the World Bank example of producing a booklet (in Portuguese) for CSOs and others that summarizes its activities in Mozambique
- the resident representative could update and refine an electronic mailing list of relevant CSOs in Mozambique and use it to circulate IMF papers relevant to Mozambique as they become available (implemented)
- the same mailing list could also be used to alert CSOs in Mozambique to updates on ‘The IMF and Civil Society’ webpage (implemented)
- the resident representative web page for Mozambique could be supplemented with information on past and forthcoming missions, notes of meetings held with CSOs and other stakeholders, etc.
- the IMF could make available more and faster translations into Portuguese of key documents relating to Mozambique (implemented)
- the IMF resident representative office could better publicise its library facilities
- the IMF could deposit hard copies of all key documents relating to Mozambique with the World Bank information center in Maputo (implemented)
- CSOs in Mozambique could expand their economic literacy programs, including more attention to the IMF

- the IMF resident representative could contribute more actively to such civic education initiatives, as well as to already ongoing training on budget monitoring
- North-based NGOs campaigning for increased information disclosure by the IMF could consult CSOs in Mozambique on aims, rather than assuming that civil society colleagues in the South have the same priorities regarding transparency

Consultation

Findings

- IMF consultations with CSOs in Mozambique are on the whole irregular, improvised and superficial, with little advances made over the past decade
- the current resident representative has generated goodwill among CSOs in Mozambique with what they appreciate as an open and frank engagement
- however, most CSOs across all sectors (academic, business, faith, labour, NGO) perceive the IMF as an institution to be closed, inflexible and arrogant
- CSOs in Mozambique frequently contrast the IMF in an unfavourable light with the World Bank in respect of consultation
- the IMF and the Mozambique government have kept macroeconomic questions outside consultations with CSOs on poverty reduction strategy
- review missions from the IMF African Department usually (but not always) have consultations with the CTA business confederation and, more briefly, a handful of NGOs
- some (though not all) CSOs in Mozambique complain that meetings with IMF missions are called at short notice, are poorly prepared, have a seemingly perfunctory character, and lack feedback and follow-up
- IMF technical assistance missions to Mozambique undertake no consultation of CSOs, apart from occasional meetings with business groups
- CSOs in Mozambique have had almost no exchanges with the IMF at board and management levels, or with senior figures in the African Department
- IMF consultations in Mozambique are few or completely absent with academic institutes, business associations apart from the CTA, the Muslim association, trade unions, and women's groups
- the resident representative has attended regional conferences of the CTA, but otherwise the IMF has had no contacts with Mozambique CSOs outside Maputo

- only two civil society figures in Mozambique (both from NGOs) have visited IMF offices in Washington, DC

Suggestions

- the IMF could widen its range of consulted CSOs in Mozambique, especially in respect of the currently overlooked groups mentioned above
- the IMF resident representative could deepen consultations with a core circle of strategically interested CSOs, for example, through a discussion group that met bimonthly to exchange views on a major macroeconomic question of the day
- IMF review missions could upgrade their consultations of CSOs, for instance, by undertaking discussions earlier in the visit, by circulating beforehand a non-confidential summary of the mission briefing paper, and by jointly agreeing a written record of exchanges
- IMF Executive Directors (especially the ED office responsible for Mozambique) and management could increase exchanges with CSOs in Mozambique
- the IMF resident representative and review missions could incorporate a visit to a rural district or other grassroots context into their engagement of civil society in Mozambique
- IMF technical assistance missions in Mozambique could consult more CSOs as appropriate, particularly beyond business circles (for example, visitors from Fiscal Affairs Department could meet with NGOs working on budget monitoring)
- the IMF and North-based CSOs could sponsor more civil society actors from Mozambique to visit IMF offices in Washington, including to meet with EDs and management
- CSOs in Mozambique could take more initiative to arrange consultations with IMF staff, keeping in mind that the IMF is more likely to accept invitations if the meetings relate to macroeconomic concerns, have a clear focus, and are not long
- CSOs in Mozambique with interests in the IMF could do more homework on the institution, so that they can better take advantage of opportunities for engagement
- CSOs in Mozambique could, where relevant, exploit more possibilities to solicit feedback from the IMF on their (draft) reports and advocacy papers
- CSOs in Mozambique could take care not to rely overly on a handful of individuals at the G20 and the GMD to develop civil society links with the IMF

Evaluation

Findings

- with several notable exceptions, nationally based CSOs in Mozambique generally have limited research and advocacy capacities on macroeconomic issues
- CSOs have several significant opportunities to evaluate macroeconomic policy in Mozambique, including through the Poverty (now Development) Observatory since 2004 and through the Joint Review of aid effectiveness since 2007; however, the IMF has kept its distance from these assessment exercises
- CSOs in Mozambique increasingly monitor national, provincial and local budgets, albeit usually without making links to macroeconomic parameters recommended by the IMF
- in an exception to this approach, several studies by CSOs in Mozambique have examined the role of the IMF in respect of fiscal space issues, especially as regards education expenditure
- the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) engaged a handful of CSOs in Mozambique during its 2006-7 assessment of IMF involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa
- CSOs in Mozambique have done little to stimulate greater and improved legislative and media scrutiny of macroeconomic policy, including the IMF role

Suggestions

- funders could give greater priority to building research and advocacy capacity on the IMF (and macroeconomic policy generally) among CSOs in Mozambique
- the IMF could become more fully involved with CSOs in the context of the Joint Review and the G20's reports for the Development Observatory
- CSOs in Mozambique could further develop their scrutiny of fiscal space issues, including by extending their studies beyond education to agriculture, health, etc.
- the IEO could expand the involvement of Mozambique CSOs in relevant evaluation exercises and could also extend such involvement to more countries in Africa
- CSOs in Mozambique could build deeper collaboration with parliamentarians and journalists in order to upgrade public scrutiny of IMF involvement in the country

Correction

Findings

- on the whole CSOs have, apart from certain interventions from business groups, had limited impacts in shifting IMF policy positions with regard to Mozambique
- inputs from the CTA have impressed upon the IMF various issues relating to the business environment in Mozambique, such as taxation policies and constraints on obtaining credit
- critiques from CSOs have arguably somewhat attenuated certain IMF positions, for example, on the speed and social harms of certain marketization measures, as well as on fiscal space for education expenditure
- cumulative pressure from civil society in Mozambique has arguably helped, alongside parallel civil society urgings across the world, to push the IMF after 2000 to accord greater attention to social dimensions and poverty concerns
- CSOs in Mozambique, in coalition with the government and transnational NGOs, actively pressed the case for cancellation of debts owed to the IMF and other multilateral institutions

Suggestions

- IMF staff could take more seriously the possibility that CSOs can have corrective information and insights regarding macroeconomic policy in Mozambique
- in particular IMF staff might look more to CSOs for sensitization to contextual circumstances in Mozambique, for qualitative analysis to supplement quantitative evidence, and for links between macroeconomic and microeconomic conditions
- IMF staff could make more use of exchanges with CSOs in Mozambique to check data and analysis, including against information that is supplied from government
- greater relations with farmer, labour and women's groups could help further consolidate the social dimension of IMF policy advice in Mozambique
- CSOs could build on their increased knowledge of the workings of the IMF and macroeconomic policy to help the Fund and government develop viable alternatives when existing approaches are not delivering or underperforming

Nigeria

Introduction

The study of Nigeria is mainly based on discussions with 39 persons at the heart of IMF-CSO relations in the country. From the Fund head office in Washington, DC, I spoke with the present and immediate past head of the IMF country team for Nigeria, as well as the Executive Director representing Nigeria and his Advisor from the country. Three discussions were had with the current IMF resident representative (“res rep”) in Nigeria, on one occasion also including the local staff of the office. A visit to Nigeria on January 12–23, 2009 included discussions with a broad spectrum of civil society associations in three locations: the governmental center Abuja; the commercial center Lagos; and the University of Ibadan. In all, conversations were had with 30 civil society actors spread across 6 business associations, the main national trade union confederation, 3 FBOs, 10 secular NGOs, and 3 research bodies. The male/female ratio among Nigeria respondents was highly uneven at 26:4, broadly reflecting the gender hierarchy that currently prevails in civil society leadership in the country.

The findings detailed below regarding Nigeria generally confirm the IEO assessment that IMF-civil society relations in SSA tend to be “limited and ineffective.” In respect of transparency, for instance, although many IMF documents concerning Nigeria are now publicly available, Fund staff have on the whole taken limited action to enhance the agency’s visibility to CSOs in the country. Regarding consultation, higher management at the IMF has very rarely exchanged views with CSOs in Nigeria. Meanwhile CSO encounters with visiting IMF staff have been relatively sparse and superficial, and the resident representative office in Abuja has only recently begun to explore possibilities of a wider and deeper engagement of civil society. For their part few CSOs in Nigeria have taken initiatives to develop contacts with the IMF or to enhance their capacity in respect of macroeconomic issues. In relation to evaluation, CSOs have almost completely neglected careful tracking of the Fund’s involvement in Nigeria. As for correction, CSOs have so far had little substantive impact on the Fund’s involvement in Nigeria, so that a number of positive potentials are not realised.

Civil Society and Macroeconomic Policy in Nigeria

Findings: General contours of civil society

- formally organised civil society in Nigeria has shown a gradual expansion since the 1930s, with partial interruption during the interval of military rule
- civil society is especially complex in Nigeria with a multi-tiered (transnational-federal-state-local) and considerably decentered structure, which parallels complex multi-scalar governance arrangements in the country
- civil society in Nigeria reflects the country’s large diversities of region, ethnicity, language and religion

- certain CSOs in Nigeria have sizable memberships and notable resources, including a number of business associations and FBOs
- however, in Nigeria most NGOs are small, trade unions are fairly weak, and policy think tanks are modest in number
- on the whole there is limited cross-sectoral collaboration in civil society in Nigeria (i.e., between academic, business, faith, labour, NGO and social movement circles)
- quite a few CSOs in Nigeria obtain (partial) funding from transnational donors, but to a generally lower degree than in many other parts of SSA
- some CSOs in Nigeria have close collaborative relations with, and financial ties to, government, while others operate in a more autonomous and critical relationship to government
- affiliates of transnational CSOs figure relatively modestly in Nigeria, and most have in good part ‘Nigerianized’ their staff and leadership
- accountability regimes for civil society—both official and voluntary—are quite weak in Nigeria

Findings: Civil society and macroeconomic issues

- CSOs in Nigeria with potential interest to engage the IMF extend across academic, business, faith, labour, NGO and social movement sectors
- in Nigeria CSO concern for and competence on macroeconomic policy is mainly concentrated among business associations, labour unions and research institutes, with little attention and expertise among FBOs and NGOs
- unlike most other low-income countries, Nigeria lacks large inflows of official development assistance that elsewhere tend to generate clusters of NGOs that address macroeconomic issues
- the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) acts as something of a cross-sectoral convener on macroeconomic issues in Nigeria, bringing together elements from business, academe, labour and NGOs, as well as official circles
- very few CSOs in Nigeria have given substantial and sustained attention to the IMF; nor have their members and/or funders provided them with the resources to do so
- CSOs in Nigeria have pursued no noteworthy programs of civic education on macroeconomic policy and the IMF role
- CSOs in Nigeria that work on macroeconomic issues mainly draw from narrow urban, professional, elite, male circles

Findings: IMF awareness of civil society

- although the IMF has been involved in Nigeria for several decades, staff assigned to the country have generally had limited knowledge of the shape and workings of its civil society

Suggestions

- CSOs in Nigeria—particularly in FBO and NGO circles—could devote more attention to macroeconomic policy, given its significance in shaping the broad parameters of development strategy
- CSOs in Nigeria could encourage greater public deliberation of macroeconomic concerns
- CSOs in Nigeria could develop more economic literacy training both for their staff and for the wider public; the IMF resident representative could be invited to contribute to such endeavours
- CSOs in Nigeria with interests in macroeconomic policy could take more initiative to make themselves known to the IMF, for example, by visiting the resident representative and/or by sending that office copies of their documentation
- in the absence of an adequate public regulatory framework—and perhaps even to preempt an imposition of illiberal government measures—CSOs in Nigeria could develop self-regulatory codes of conduct of the kind employed by the Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGO); recognized certification of this kind could also increase the confidence of IMF staff in building relationships with CSOs
- IMF staff involved with Nigeria (especially the resident representative) could become more conscious of the role of civil society and maintain more extensive, systematic and updated records on relevant CSOs in the country
- IMF staff could appreciate civil society in Nigeria more as a multi-tiered (transnational-federal-state-local) and decentered phenomenon, rather than assuming that national apex bodies provide the best entry point

Transparency

Findings

- the IMF maintains welcoming premises in Abuja, but the office is rather hidden on the fringe of the city at some distance from the central business district
- activities of the Fund in Nigeria are largely invisible to CSOs and the public at large; sometimes the IMF has deliberately maintained this low profile, particularly in view of past tensions

- the IMF has undertaken limited proactive distribution of information and documentation to CSOs in Nigeria
- IMF resident representatives in Nigeria have made ad hoc appearances at several business and policy conferences; however, a larger and more systematic program of public talks has not been developed
- CSOs in Nigeria have rarely sought information from the IMF and have made little use of the publicly accessible library at the resident representative office.
- substantial IMF documentation regarding Nigeria has been published on the web, including information that is difficult to obtain from the Nigerian government
- a number of CSOs in Nigeria periodically check the IMF site, albeit mainly for purposes of general research rather than for advocacy on the Fund itself
- the IMF resident representative office in Nigeria has a public web page, but it attracts little traffic
- few if any CSOs in Nigeria received the IMF *Civil Society Newsletter* in 2002–07 or are aware of the ‘IMF and Civil Society’ web page
- CSOs in Nigeria have had no involvement in (Northern-led) global CSO campaigns for greater transparency at the IMF, although a number of NGOs in Nigeria have pressed for more openness of federal, state and local government
- in sum, the IMF has generally had poor visibility to CSOs and the wider public in Nigeria, and CSOs have made no particular efforts to alter this situation

Suggestions

- the IMF could place higher priority on enhancing its visibility in Nigeria
- the resident representative in Nigeria could give at least one lecture per year, say, at the social science faculty of a leading university
- the IMF could produce a handout pamphlet for CSOs and others that summarizes its activities in Nigeria and also post such a description on the country web page
- the IMF could give better advance public notice—including to interested CSOs in particular—of management and staff visits to Nigeria
- IMF review missions to Nigeria could release a more substantive overview of their findings and recommendations at the close of their visit, rather than make interested parties wait some months before Board approval of the official report

- the resident representative could assemble a made-for-purpose electronic mailing list of relevant CSOs in Nigeria and use it to circulate IMF notices and papers relevant to Nigeria as they become available
- such a Nigeria country mailing list could be integrated into the global mailing list maintained by the External Relations Department in Washington, DC
- the resident representative web page for Nigeria could be supplemented with information on past and forthcoming missions, notes of meetings held with CSOs and other stakeholders, etc.
- the country documents area and country office page could be integrated into a single Nigeria domain on the IMF website, preferably with the sort of user-friendliness that characterises the IMF home page
- NGOs campaigning for greater transparency in the Nigerian government could learn from earlier CSO struggles to open up the IMF (and other multilaterals)

Consultation

Findings

- the IMF lacks a defined structure for exchanges with civil society in Nigeria and earmarks no resources specifically for consultation of CSOs in the country;
- indeed, many if not most CSOs in Nigeria believe that the IMF only deals with government and has no interest in consulting them
- IMF consultations with CSOs in Nigeria are on the whole irregular, unsystematic and (with exceptions in certain business and research circles) of little policy substance
- IMF consultations with civil society in Nigeria have mainly concentrated on certain business associations and research institutions; the dialogue has omitted chambers of commerce, the employers federation, CSOs in the large informal sector, farmer groups, FBOs, and many fields of NGO work
- the IMF has in its outreach to civil society in Nigeria mainly veered towards groups that share its starting principles (i.e., of mainstream macroeconomic theory) and avoided consultations that would challenge its knowledge frame
- aside from a lecture by Anne Krueger in 2004 and an informal seminar with Rodrigo de Rato in 2005, CSOs in Nigeria have had no exchanges with the IMF at board and management levels, or with senior officials in the African Department
- Article IV and other review visits to Nigeria from the African Department of the IMF have often involved consultation with one or the other business group; however, mission consultations with trade unions have ceased (also when unions did not reply

to an IMF invitation); and a first mission meeting with NGOs did not occur until November 2008

- IMF technical assistance work in Nigeria has not involved consultation of CSOs, aside from an occasional meeting with a business (usually financial) association
- IMF staff have had almost no contacts with CSOs in Nigeria outside Abuja and Lagos, apart from a national consultation on the PSI held in December 2008 and indirect contacts between the resident representative and CSOs at several events hosted by state governments
- only a handful of civil society figures in Nigeria have visited IMF offices in Washington, DC, usually in the context of the Annual Meetings
- IMF staff have not followed up meetings with CSOs in Nigeria to indicate what they took from the discussion and how they have acted upon it; this oversight has prompted irritation in some CSOs

Suggestions

- the IMF could widen its range of consulted CSOs in Nigeria, especially in respect of the currently overlooked circles mentioned above
- the IMF could expressly encourage consultation with civil society associations that challenge prevailing assumptions and methodologies at the Fund
- IMF Executive Directors (especially the ED office responsible for Nigeria) and management could increase exchanges with CSOs on their visits to Nigeria
- IMF review missions could upgrade consultations of CSOs, for instance, by undertaking discussions earlier in a visit and by circulating beforehand a non-confidential summary of the mission briefing paper
- IMF review missions could incorporate a visit to a rural area or some other grassroots context into their engagement of civil society in Nigeria
- IMF technical assistance staff in Nigeria could consult more CSOs as appropriate, particularly beyond business circles (for example, visitors from Fiscal Affairs Department could meet with NGOs working on transparency)
- the IMF resident representative could deepen consultations with (and contribute to capacity development of) a core circle of strategically interested FBOs and NGOs, for example, through a discussion group that met at regular intervals to exchange views on a major macroeconomic question of the day
- the IMF resident representative could attend a World Bank consultation of civil society in the field to get some exposure

- IMF staff could develop better practices of follow-up to consultations with CSOs
- the IMF and North-based CSOs could sponsor more civil society actors from Nigeria to visit IMF offices in Washington
- CSOs in Nigeria could take more initiative to arrange exchanges with IMF staff
- CSOs in Nigeria with interests in the IMF could in preparation for such exchanges better brief themselves on the institution and its activities

Evaluation

Findings

- outside the country's elite universities, CSOs in Nigeria generally have limited capacities to assess macroeconomic policies and do not coordinate amongst themselves to maximise their research effectiveness in this area
- the aforementioned seminar on the PSI is a rare instance of explicit evaluation of the IMF by civil society groups in Nigeria, though even that discussion has so far had no follow-up
- certain events on the civil society calendar in Nigeria involve assessments of macroeconomic policies, including the annual Nigerian Economic Summit, the annual Banking and Finance Conference organised by the Chartered Institute of Nigerian Bankers, the annual conference of the Nigerian Economic Society, and biannual outlook meetings hosted by Economic Associates; however, none of these events has focused on the IMF role
- apart from a handful of academic writings with limited circulation and a little-known study by the Bretton Woods Project and Christian Aid on the energy sector, CSOs have produced few position papers that focus on the IMF in Nigeria
- the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has not engaged CSOs in Nigeria in its assessments of IMF work except through two questionnaires emailed to a small circle of individuals and through the present study
- CSOs in Nigeria have done nothing of note to stimulate greater and improved legislative and media scrutiny of the IMF role in the country

Suggestions

- funders could give greater priority to building research and advocacy capacity on the IMF (and macroeconomic policy generally) among CSOs in Nigeria
- relevant civil society conferences in Nigeria could attend more to the IMF role and engage the IMF more actively

- CSOs in Nigeria could establish a mechanism for collective monitoring of the IMF role, possibly drawing on the Civil Society Consultative Group convened through the World Bank
- CSOs in Nigeria could better exploit possibilities to solicit feedback from the IMF on their (draft) reports and advocacy papers regarding macroeconomic matters
- CSOs in Nigeria could build deeper collaboration with parliamentarians and journalists in order to upgrade public scrutiny of IMF involvement in the country

Correction

Findings

- on the whole CSO engagement of the IMF in Nigeria has had few and small impacts in terms of shifting policy
- a notable exception occurred in 1985 when concerted opposition from many civil society circles prompted the Babangida government to halt negotiations of a structural adjustment program with the IMF
- CSOs in Nigeria have rarely called the IMF to task on poverty issues, perceiving these problems to be a consequence of mismanagement of the country's oil wealth rather than an outcome of macroeconomic strategies advised by the Fund
- the IMF and CSOs have not fully exploited possibilities of their exchanges to enrich Fund understandings of Nigeria with, for example:
 - i) exposure to information and analysis that contrasts with that of government
 - ii) more sensitisation to context in Nigeria, also at zonal, state and local levels
 - iii) more qualitative evidence alongside quantitative data
 - iv) better integration of macro and micro analysis
 - v) greater interdisciplinarity
- CSOs have not nurtured possibilities of enlisting the IMF as an ally in their efforts to build more publicly accountable government in Nigeria, including in fiscal and monetary arenas
- CSOs in Nigeria have not actively advocated for change in the governance of the IMF itself
- some (although not all) CSOs in Nigeria perceive the IMF to lack readiness to learn from others and where warranted to change its course—a perception that has discouraged those associations from (more fully) engaging the institution

Suggestions

- IMF staff engaged with Nigeria could take more seriously the notion that CSOs can provide valuable corrective information and insights on macroeconomic policy
- CSOs could better explore the nature and extent of connections between IMF-supported macroeconomic strategies and problems of poverty and inequality in Nigeria
- greater IMF relations with consumer, environmental, farmer, labour and women's groups in Nigeria could help further social dimensions of IMF policy advice for the country
- CSOs could explore possibilities of collaborating with the IMF to advance more accountable governance in Nigeria

Uganda

Introduction

The study of Uganda is mainly based on semi-structured interviews with 34 persons at the heart of IMF-CSO relations in the country. At the IMF head office in Washington, DC, I met in October 2007 with the then outgoing head of the country team for Uganda. Two further discussions were had with the IMF resident representative ("res rep") in Kampala during a visit to Uganda on September 15–26, 2008. The in-country discussions also encompassed 32 civil society actors in the national capital. The cross-section of civil society groups met included 3 academic bodies, 5 business associations, the national trade union confederation, 2 faith-based organizations, and 8 secular NGOs. No meetings were held outside Kampala, although my earlier visits to Uganda have involved discussions with civil society groups in Mbale and Nkozi. In gender terms the male/female ratio among Uganda respondents was, at 22:10, substantially skewed but relatively more even than in the other five countries examined.

The findings detailed below regarding Uganda generally confirm the IEO assessment that IMF-civil society relations in Africa tend to be "limited and ineffective." For instance, although many IMF documents concerning Uganda are now publicly available, Fund staff have on the whole taken little action to enhance the agency's visibility to CSOs in the country. Higher management at the IMF has almost never consulted CSOs in Uganda, while exchanges held with visiting IMF staff and the resident representative have been irregular, in most cases superficial, and involved small numbers of CSOs. For their part few CSOs in Uganda have taken initiatives to develop contacts with the IMF or to build their capacity in respect of macroeconomic issues. Only a handful of CSOs have undertaken an occasional evaluation of the Fund's involvement in Uganda. Meanwhile, apart from having had notable influence on the cancellation of multilateral debts, and some limited effect in bringing greater social sensitivity to IMF policy recommendations, CSOs have so far had little substantive

impact on the Fund's involvement in Uganda. Taken in sum, the accountability relationship between civil society associations and the IMF in Uganda has regrettably not made notable advances in comparison with the situation that prevailed when I previously examined this question in 1997.

Civil Society and Macroeconomic Policy in Uganda

Findings: General contours of civil society

- formally organised civil society activities in Uganda were limited up to the 1960s, repressed under the Amin regime in the 1970s, and heavily constrained during civil war to the mid-1980s
- as a result most CSOs operating in Uganda today have a continuous history of less than twenty years
- certain CSOs in Uganda have sizable memberships and resources, including several business associations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- however, most NGOs and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are small in Uganda, trade unions are weak, and policy think tanks are few in number
- although several existing associations could in principle fulfil the role, an effective national CSO umbrella body (i.e., one that encompasses the full range of sectors and issues) is lacking in Uganda
- while some CSOs in Uganda are partly supported by local members, most associations are largely if not entirely funded by transnational donors
- some CSOs in Uganda have close collaborative relations with the state, while associations with a more critical posture tend to mute their opposition owing to concerns about provoking civil strife and/or government crackdown
- CSOs in Uganda are currently undergoing a broad generational shift as the founders and early leaders that emerged in the 1990s hand over to younger successors

Findings: Civil society and macroeconomic issues

- CSOs in Uganda with potential interest to engage the IMF extend across academic, business, faith, labour and NGO sectors
- CSO engagement of macroeconomic policy in general and IMF operations in particular emerged in Uganda in the late 1990s
- however, after an initial rise these activities have simmered since 2000, without growing into larger and concerted research and advocacy

- relatively few CSOs in Uganda have given substantial and sustained attention to macroeconomic issues and the IMF role
- civil society in Uganda lacks a convening group on macroeconomic concerns (such as the Economic Association of Malawi or the Mozambican Association of Economists) that sponsors deliberations amongst academics, activists, business leaders and official circles
- CSO competence in Uganda regarding macroeconomic questions is generally limited to a few think tanks and business associations and a handful of NGO activists
- apart from some noteworthy training on budget surveillance, CSOs in Uganda have pursued little systematic, large-scale or lasting programs of civic education on macroeconomic policy and the IMF role
- apart from limited joint action on the government budget, CSOs in Uganda who work on macroeconomic issues have developed no noteworthy collaboration amongst themselves, e.g., to mirror NGO coalitions in the country on trade, health, etc.
- CSOs in Uganda that work on macroeconomic issues are almost entirely concentrated in Kampala and mostly draw from professional and elite circles

Findings: IMF awareness of civil society

- although the IMF has been intensively involved in Uganda since 1987, staff assigned to the country have generally had limited knowledge of the shape and workings of local civil society

Suggestions

- CSOs in Uganda—particularly outside the business sector—could devote more attention to macroeconomic policy, given its significance in shaping the broad parameters of development strategy
- one or the other CSO in Uganda (e.g., the Economic Policy Research Center, the Uganda Debt Network, or a newly created body) could sponsor greater public deliberation of macroeconomic concerns
- CSOs in Uganda could develop more training on macroeconomic issues (and invite the IMF resident representative to contribute to such endeavours)
- CSOs in Uganda could encourage greater citizen involvement in macroeconomic issues at district and sub-county level (as has happened with some budget monitoring activities, for example), instead of so heavily concentrating on Kampala

- North-based NGOs could further nurture a more facilitating role towards the work of locally based CSOs on macroeconomic issues in Uganda, as opposed to concentrating capacity in their own ranks
- CSOs in Uganda with interests in macroeconomic policy could take more initiative to make themselves known to the IMF, for example, by visiting the resident representative and/or by sending that office copies of their documentation
- CSOs could look to one of their number—e.g. the Uganda National NGO Forum—as a convener for more systematic civil society interaction with the IMF
- IMF staff involved with Uganda (especially the resident representative) could become more conscious of the role of civil society and maintain more extensive, systematic and updated records on CSOs in the country

Transparency

Findings

- enclosed in the Bank of Uganda, the IMF office in Kampala is poorly accessible to nongovernmental actors
- visits to Uganda of Fund staff from Washington are largely invisible to CSOs and the public at large
- the IMF has undertaken little proactive distribution of information and documentation to CSOs in Uganda
- IMF review reports on Uganda are released several months after the staff visit in question, when the moment for meaningful feedback has passed
- few if any CSOs in Uganda received the IMF *Civil Society Newsletter* in 2002-7 or are aware of the 'IMF and Civil Society' web page
- for their part CSOs in Uganda have sought little information from the IMF
- substantial IMF documentation regarding Uganda has been published on the web since the late 1990s; however, many CSOs have limited internet access and/or have a cultural preference for oral transmission of information
- few CSOs in Uganda make regular use of the IMF website, and then mainly for purposes of general research rather than advocacy vis-à-vis the Fund itself
- the IMF resident representative office in Uganda has had a public web page for 5-6 years, but the content is limited and the site attracts little traffic
- CSOs in Uganda have had no involvement in (Northern-led) global CSO campaigns for greater transparency at the IMF

Suggestions

- the office of the IMF resident representative in Uganda could be located in a publicly accessible building (as in Malawi, Mali and Mozambique)
- the IMF could give advance public notice—including to interested CSOs in particular—of management and staff visits to Uganda
- the IMF could produce a pamphlet for CSOs and others that summarizes its activities in Uganda and also post such a description on the country web page
- IMF review missions to Uganda could release a more substantive overview of their findings and recommendations at the close of their visit
- the resident representative could assemble an electronic mailing list of relevant CSOs in Uganda and use it to circulate IMF papers relevant to Uganda as they become available
- the same mailing list could also be used to alert CSOs in Uganda to updates on ‘The IMF and Civil Society’ webpage
- the resident representative web page for Uganda could be supplemented with information on past and forthcoming missions, texts of speeches given, up to date press releases, notes of meetings held with CSOs and other stakeholders, etc.
- the IMF could deposit hard copies of its key documents relating to Uganda with the World Bank information center in Kampala
- North-based NGOs advocating for increased information disclosure by the IMF could consult CSOs in Uganda on aims and activities of these campaigns, rather than assuming that civil society colleagues in the South have the same needs and priorities regarding transparency

Consultation

Findings

- IMF consultations with CSOs in Uganda are on the whole irregular, ad hoc and (apart from with certain business associations) of little substance
- IMF consultations with CSOs in Uganda have in fact declined in frequency in recent years across all sectors (academic, business, labour and NGO)
- the IMF and the Government of Uganda have kept macroeconomic questions outside consultations with CSOs over poverty reduction strategy
- review missions to Uganda from the IMF African Department have met hardly any CSOs, particularly since 2004

- IMF technical assistance missions to Uganda have not consulted CSOs, apart from occasional meetings with academics and business groups
- CSOs in Uganda have had almost no exchanges with the IMF at board and management levels, or with senior officials in the African Department
- IMF consultations in Uganda have overlooked the chamber of commerce, the farmers' federation, economic programs attached to faith groups and women's associations, and (since 2000) trade unions
- IMF consultations with commercial circles in Uganda often involve individual firms rather than business associations, thereby carrying a risk that particularistic concerns might prevail over sectoral issues
- IMF staff have had no contacts with CSOs in Uganda outside Kampala or in rural areas
- only 4-5 civil society figures in Uganda (all from NGOs) have visited IMF offices in Washington, DC
- many CSOs in Uganda draw unfavourable comparisons between the IMF and the World Bank with respect to consultation
- most CSOs in Uganda with concerns for macroeconomic issues are broadly sympathetic to the IMF's work on stabilisation, and many declare an interest to develop exchanges with the Fund; however, few have taken initiative to engage the IMF

Suggestions

- the IMF could seek to recover earlier levels of civil society consultation in Uganda and then build further
- the IMF could widen its range of consulted CSOs in Uganda, especially in respect of the currently overlooked groups mentioned above
- the IMF resident representative could deepen consultations with (and contribute to capacity development of) a core circle of strategically interested CSOs, for example, through a discussion group that met at regular intervals to exchange views on a major macroeconomic question of the day
- IMF review missions could upgrade consultations of CSOs, for instance, by undertaking discussions earlier in the visit and by circulating beforehand a non-confidential summary of the mission briefing paper
- IMF Executive Directors (especially the ED office responsible for Uganda) and management could increase exchanges with CSOs in Uganda

- the IMF resident representative and review missions could begin to incorporate a visit to rural areas or other grassroots contexts into their engagement of civil society in Uganda
- IMF technical assistance missions in Uganda could consult more CSOs as appropriate, particularly beyond business circles (for example, visitors from Fiscal Affairs Department could meet with NGOs working on budget monitoring)
- the IMF and North-based CSOs could sponsor more civil society actors from Uganda to visit IMF offices in Washington, e.g., around the Annual and Spring Meetings
- CSOs in Uganda could take more initiative to arrange exchanges with IMF staff
- CSOs in Uganda with interests in the IMF could in preparation for such exchanges better brief themselves on the institution

Evaluation

Findings

- with the partial exception of a few academic institutes and the Private Sector Foundation Uganda, nationally based CSOs in Uganda have limited research and monitoring capacities on macroeconomic issues
- certain CSOs in Uganda have tracked and assessed policies (e.g., on trade liberalisation, government budget, and use of debt relief monies) where the Fund has played a part, but without explicitly considering the IMF role
- CSOs in Uganda have generated few position papers and advocacy platforms on macroeconomic policies
- business associations have significant opportunities to evaluate macroeconomic policy in Uganda through the Presidential Investor Roundtable and the Private Sector Donor Group, but neither forum has specifically examined the IMF role
- transnational development NGOs have produced occasional studies of IMF policies in respect of Uganda, but these (generally critical) evaluations have had little local circulation and have attracted little local debate
- the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has not engaged CSOs in Uganda in its assessments of IMF work except in the context of civil society surveys under the current evaluation and the SSA evaluation
- CSOs in Uganda have done little to stimulate greater and improved legislative and media scrutiny of macroeconomic policy, including the IMF role

Suggestions

- funders could give greater priority to building research and advocacy capacity on the IMF (and macroeconomic policy generally) among CSOs in Uganda
- CSOs in Uganda could establish a mechanism for collective monitoring of poverty reduction policies (including the IMF role), much as the so-called Group of 20 has done in Mozambique
- CSOs in Uganda could turn their generally rather loose scrutiny of fiscal issues into more solid position papers on education spending, health budgets, infrastructure expenditure, etc.
- CSOs in Uganda could better exploit possibilities to solicit feedback from the IMF on their (draft) reports and advocacy papers regarding macroeconomic matters
- the IEO could involve Uganda CSOs in relevant evaluation exercises
- CSOs in Uganda could build deeper collaboration with parliamentarians and journalists in order to upgrade public scrutiny of IMF involvement in the country

Correction

Findings

- on the whole CSOs have had few and small impacts in shifting IMF policy positions with regard to Uganda
- many CSOs in Uganda, across all sectors, perceive the IMF to lack readiness to learn from others and where warranted to change its course—a perception that has discouraged them from engaging the institution
- cumulative pressure from civil society in Uganda has arguably helped, alongside parallel civil society urgings across the world, to push the IMF after 2000 to accord some greater attention to social dimensions and poverty concerns
- CSOs in Uganda, in coalition with the government and transnational NGOs, had eventual success in pressing the case for cancellation of debts owed to the IMF and other multilateral institutions

Suggestions

- IMF staff engaged with Uganda could take more seriously the possibility that CSOs can have corrective information and insights on macroeconomic policy
- in particular IMF staff might look more to CSOs: for sensitization to contextual circumstances in Uganda; for qualitative analysis to supplement quantitative

evidence; and for links between macroeconomic policies and microeconomic conditions

- IMF staff could make more use of exchanges with CSOs in Uganda to check data and analysis, including against information that is supplied from government
- greater relations with farmer, labour and women's groups could help further consolidate the social dimension of IMF policy advice in Uganda
- CSOs could, once they have increased knowledge of the workings of the IMF and macroeconomic policy, help the Fund and government develop viable alternatives when existing policies are not delivering or underperforming