



Introduction

1. This evaluation examines the research produced at the IMF between 1999 and 2008.¹ It focuses on the relevance and utilization of the research, particularly as seen by authorities in member countries, and also examines technical quality and the management of research activities. The evaluation identifies ways to improve the relevance, quality, and management of IMF research. Research is defined broadly to capture most analytical publications of the IMF, ranging from surveillance-oriented output—such as selected issues papers (SIPs) prepared for Article IV consultations and the analytical chapters of the *World Economic Outlook (WEO)* and *Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR)*—to more academically-oriented output—such as working papers (WPs) and external journal publications. During the evaluation period these outputs comprised a large body of research, about 650 publications annually, at a cost of about 10 percent of the IMF budget.

2. Research plays an important role in the IMF. It contributes to the development and updating of conceptual models and tools that form the basis for the IMF's analysis. High-quality, relevant research is, therefore, critical to sustain the credibility of IMF policy advice and program design. IMF research also contributes to furthering global knowledge in areas relevant to the IMF's purposes. The possibility of engaging in research activities also helps to attract academically oriented, talented economists and to keep staff skills up to date.

3. This evaluation uses as a reference point the 1999 External Evaluation of Research in the IMF (Mishkin and others, 1999) that was prepared at the request of the Executive Board by a team of outside experts.²

¹ The evaluation also looked at a sample of publications beyond this period to assess whether there had been major changes (e.g., *REOs* and *GFSRs*) and whether they addressed gaps identified in the earlier period (e.g., staff position notes (SPNs)).

² The team consisted of Frederic Mishkin (chair), Francesco Giavazzi, and T. N. Srinivasan.

The focus of that evaluation was on the organization and quality of the research. The Executive Board agreed with its finding that there was “substantial room for improvement in the overall quality of the IMF's research.” Directors endorsed many of the report's recommendations, including the need for greater coordination of research activities and that more of the research should be in areas where it could add the most value: namely research on developing and transition economies, a stronger emphasis on the financial sector, and cross-country work. Progress has since been made in many of these areas and Annex 1 describes the status of implementation of the report's recommendations.

4. The following are some of the main questions addressed in this evaluation:

- *How relevant was IMF research to authorities in member countries, IMF staff, and other stakeholders? How was it utilized? Was the thematic coverage adequate? Was it widely read in member countries? Within the IMF? How familiar were authorities and other stakeholders with its findings and messages? Did it play a role in policy-making? In the dialogue between IMF staff and authorities?*
- *What was the technical quality of IMF research? Did it generate new knowledge or broaden the understanding of policy frameworks? Did it allow for alternative perspectives?*
- *How were IMF research activities organized and managed? How were activities prioritized and coordinated? How was research reviewed? Was dissemination effective?*

5. The remainder of the report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the scope and methods of the evaluation and describes trends in research product lines across IMF units and over time. Chapter 3 discusses the relevance and utilization of IMF research. Chapter 4 presents findings on the technical quality

of research. Chapter 5 describes the management of research activities. Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions and recommendations. This report is accompanied by four background documents providing technical background on how the evidence for this evaluation was gathered (i.e., describing how surveys and interviews

were conducted and how their results were integrated into the overall analysis). Seven background papers, summarized in Annex 4, present the assessment of peer review panels on specific research product lines, for example, *WEO/GFSR* and SIPs, as well as a citation analysis.