



Office Memorandum

To: Members of the Executive Board

February 20, 2014

From: The Acting Secretary

Subject: **Update on the Implementation of the IMF's Communications Strategy**

The attached paper providing an update on the implementation of the IMF's communication strategy is being circulated as background for the **informal session to engage** Executive Directors that is tentatively scheduled for **Friday, February 28, 2014**. Questions for discussion appear on page 10.

The staff does not propose the publication of this paper on the Fund's external website after the informal session.

Questions may be referred to Mr. Kunzel (ext. 37570) and Ms. McAuliffe (ext. 39826) in COM.

This document will shortly be posted on the extranet, a secure website for Executive Directors and member country authorities.

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February 20, 2014

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMF'S COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

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A. Background

1. The IMF's Communications Strategy was last formally discussed at the Executive Board in 2007. At that time, Directors set out four broad principles to guide Fund communications: (i) build understanding and support for the role of the Fund and its policies; (ii) further integrate communications and operations; (iii) raise the impact of communications materials; and, (iv) rebalance outreach efforts (Box 1). Directors also emphasized the need to strengthen internal communications, recognizing that effective internal communications is a prerequisite for effective external communications.

2. In December 2013, Directors were briefed informally on the ongoing implementation of the communications strategy. At that meeting, Directors noted that the Fund's communications strategy had been implemented in a rapidly changing context and that the IMF's framework for the communications strategy approved by the Board in 2007 had generally served the institution well—enabling the Fund's communications to be flexible and responsive. At the same time, some Directors raised a number of issues related to current Fund communications and transparency practices.

3. This note is intended to provide a short status update on the implementation of the communications strategy and some context for the informal briefing at the Board at end-February 2014. It provides a brief overview of the main developments in Fund communications since 2007, notes the main issues raised by Directors in December, and points to some of the key communications challenges in the period ahead, for the purpose of seeking further feedback from, and discussion with, the Board. In addition to this note, a short presentation will be made at the informal Board briefing.

Box 1. The Fund's Communications Strategy: Guiding Principles¹

The principles underlying the IMF's communications strategy, as indicated by the Board are to:

- a) **Build understanding and support for the Fund's role and its policies**, with a view to improve the traction and effectiveness of IMF policies.
- b) **Further integrate communications and Fund operations**, including by further coordinating efforts across the institution; disseminating global and regional surveillance products; and expanding on country-level outreach, including assisting Fund departments in the design of appropriate communications strategies.
- c) **Raise the impact of communications materials** through increased emphasis on web-based technologies; aligning publications with institutional and departmental priorities; better marketing Fund publications; and more effective and strategic use of products in languages other than English.
- d) **Rebalance outreach efforts** using a strategic approach to outreach through continued focused interactions with legislators, civil society, and the academic and think tank community, along with further interactions with the private sector and financial markets.

In addition, Directors emphasized **strengthening internal communications**, noting that building a coherent institutional voice is critical to improving the effectiveness of the Fund.

¹ The Acting Chair's Summing Up, The IMF's Communications Strategy, BUFF/07/92, 6/18/07.

B. Evolution of the Fund's Communications Strategy

4. Fund communications have evolved significantly. From being perceived as a “secretive” institution in the 1990s, the Fund is now seen as being more open, transparent and strategic.¹ Guided by the Executive Board, communications at the Fund has shifted over time from increased transparency (i.e. more publication of information on the external website), to active engagement with the media and a wider group of stakeholders, all with a view to better explain Fund policies and operations. Most modern organizations—including central banks—recognize that communications is a strategic tool that can help strengthen their effectiveness.² This is also true for the Fund, and the 2011 Triennial Surveillance Review, in particular, underscored the importance of timely and effective communications to help strengthen the traction of the Fund's policy advice.³ [The 2013 IEO report on the Role of the Fund as a Trusted Advisor](#) noted that the Fund is now perceived as more open, listening and responsive than in the past. The IEO also found that while adverse legacy and stigma issues persist, the Fund's image has “improved markedly” in the aftermath of the crisis.⁴

5. Rapid changes in the global economy have influenced Fund communications. In particular, the unfolding of the global financial crisis affected the Fund's engagement with its members dramatically, including through an unprecedented increase in lending and a corresponding need to explain new programs and policies. While advanced economies were at the center of the crisis, its global spillovers required that Fund communications take into account the implications for the broader membership, including explaining changes in Fund policies.

6. New technologies have also played a significant role. The speed and scale of communications has changed dramatically in recent years. For example, 75 percent of the global population now has access to mobile phones to send and receive information, 3 million emails are sent each second, and there are over 1.5 billion social media users worldwide.⁵ This “hyper-connected” world is transforming how policy is influenced and shaped. One important consequence of these changes is that the news cycle is even faster, placing a premium on rapid and proactive communication. In addition, traditional policy influencers (governments, business, academia, and elite media) have been joined by a broader set of new influencers (coalitions and networks of civil

¹ The [2013 Review of the IMF's Transparency Policy](#), for instance, notes that two decades of reforms have improved significantly the Fund's transparency, with over 90 percent of country documents and policy papers now published.

² For example, former US Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke in a November 2013 speech on [Communication and Monetary Policy](#) noted that: “...following the stabilization of the financial system, supporting our economy's recovery from the deepest recession since the Great Depression has required a more prominent role for communication and transparency in monetary policy than ever before”.

³ As input to the 2011 TSR, the [External Report on Interviews with Country Authorities](#) noted, for example, that most authorities generally found press conferences held by staff at the end of Article IV missions useful (see p.7).

⁴ See [the 2013 IEO report on the Role of the Fund as a Trusted Advisor](#) p.10.

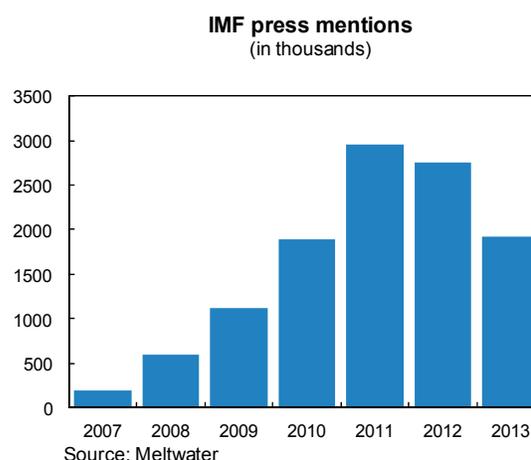
⁵ Sources: McKinsey Global Institute's Social Economy Report (2012), the World Bank's Information and Communications for Development Report (2012), and the Radicati group (2013).

society organizations, activists, youth, and social media users). These developments have created new challenges and opportunities to explain the Fund and its policies and operations.

C. Implementing the Communications Strategy in a Rapidly Changing Context

7. The guiding principles established by the Board in 2007 provide a framework that has enabled Fund communications to respond flexibly and effectively to the rapidly changing global economy and to the challenges facing the membership. These principles, along with guidance from the Triennial Surveillance Reviews and reviews of the Fund's Transparency Policy, have helped the Fund to implement its communications strategy.

- a) **Building understanding and support for the Fund's role and its policies.** Using a combination of traditional and new media, and reaching out to a broader group of stakeholders, communications has aimed to support a better understanding of Fund policy advice during the global financial crisis. Communications efforts have supported the spectrum of policy advice—fiscal, financial, monetary—with a strong focus on, and coordination of, the Fund's global surveillance products (World Economic Outlook (WEO), Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR), and the Fiscal Monitor (FM)). As the Fund grappled with issues at the center of the crisis, particularly in the advanced economies, staff sought to maintain an appropriate regional communications balance, including through the Regional Economic Outlooks (REOs) and departmental seminars and outreach across countries and regions. While the Fund's role in the global crisis has undoubtedly led to an increase in its relevance and visibility, enhanced communications have also helped to support the Fund's policy messages and raise the profile of the Fund's work, including in the press.
- b) **Further integrating communications and operations.** Significant efforts have been made to better integrate communications with the Fund's work—at both the country level (in surveillance, programs, technical assistance) and policy level (e.g. revamp of the lending toolkit)—through media and non-media outreach. While the Communications Department has supported these efforts (Appendix I), it is often the area and other functional departments that have been at the forefront of implementation. As such, area and functional departments have increasingly integrated communications plans into their accountability frameworks and work programs. Furthermore, efforts have been made to coordinate external communications on country policy issues through close consultation between area departments, the Communications Department

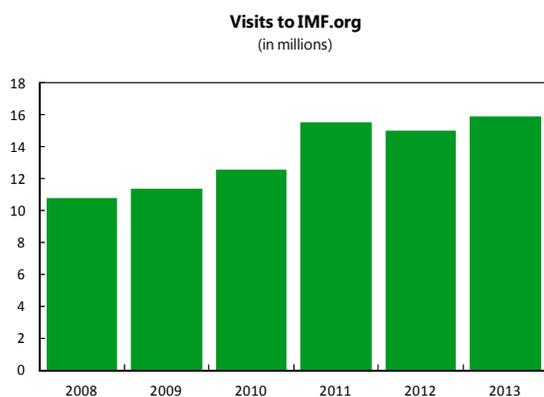


and, of course, country authorities. For example, mission concluding statements are discussed with country authorities, who authorize their publication. In addition, as suggested by the Board in 2007, communications training and information for mission chiefs and resident representatives—who play a key role in building relations and improving outreach with member countries and other stakeholders—has increased with a view to strengthen the Fund's communications. The communications "toolkit" (<http://www-intranet.imf.org/News/message/Pages/default.aspx>) launched in 2009, for example, provides up-to-date information for all staff on key Fund issues and messages, topical presentations, and questions and answers. In addition, the introduction of a Fund-wide outreach database in July 2013 aims to strengthen coordination of the staff's outreach activities and enhance cost-effectiveness.⁶

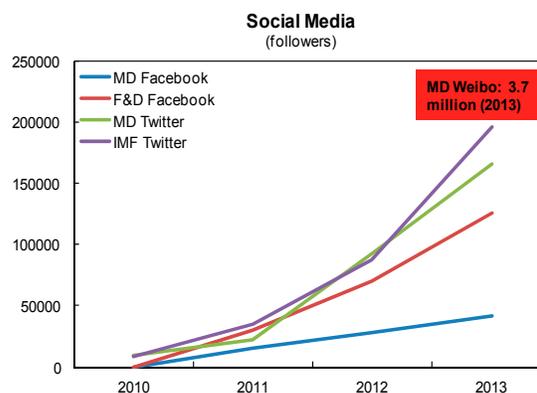
- c) **Raising the impact of communications materials.** The Fund has used new technologies strategically to help boost communications impact. The external website (www.imf.org) has been continuously upgraded, most recently in 2013. Today, [imf.org](http://www.imf.org) is a modern, multi-lingual website, with user-friendly access to a wide array of information—including Fund reports, factsheets, and videos. Web traffic has been steadily increasing. Social media—including blogs, Facebook and Twitter—have also been used strategically to reach broader audiences, engage in two-way dialogue (by responding to queries and unfolding developments), and amplify messages—while guarding against reputational risks through carefully-crafted engagement plans and close monitoring of the Fund's social media activity.⁷ Meanwhile, products in Languages Other than English (LOE) have expanded significantly and in a cost-effective way—web pages, the Fund's main publications products (WEO, summaries of GFSR/FM, REOs, the Annual Report and Finance and Development magazine), press releases, survey stories, videos, podcasts, Twitter feeds and blogs are released in LOE (Box 2). There has also been a transformation in the Fund's publications function—including through digitization and the introduction of an e-Library—which provides access to audiences all over the world, and has considerably improved the Fund's global reach (Box 3).

⁶ The database, which captures the Fund's main outreach activities, is updated regularly by departmental representatives and is available on the Fund's intranet at <http://IMF> outreach.

⁷ The Fund's Twitter account @IMFNews has grown to over 200,000 followers, and through Weibo reaches over 3.8 million Chinese followers, while the global economy blog *iMFdirect* has received more than one million views since its launch in August 2009. In terms of reputational risks, the main concern relates to triggering audience sensitivities that can spread rapidly through the internet.



Source: Omniture



Sources: IMF social media accounts

d) **Rebalancing outreach efforts.** While the Fund continues to pay full attention to its traditional interlocutors (including the official sector, think tanks, major columnists and news wires), increased attention is also being given to new policy influencers. For example, Fund missions—in consultation with country authorities—now regularly meet with civil society organizations (CSOs), labor groups, and other stakeholders. Management, senior staff, and Executive Directors have also increased their engagement with these constituencies, recognizing the influential role that they can play in developing and supporting effective economic policies. When conducting major outreach activities, staff consult with country authorities, and take into account country-specific circumstances, and, at a more general level, aim to ensure that communications are coordinated and strategic across countries and regions.⁸ Again, the introduction of specific departmental outreach strategies, as well as the recently-introduced outreach database, helps to support these customized efforts.⁹

8. Internal communications has been a key element of the communications strategy.

There is a well-recognized synergy between effective internal communications and effective external communications. Good internal communications involves, inter alia, informing and engaging with staff on key institutional issues, listening to different points of view, and building internal understanding and cohesion around policies adopted by the Board and Management. To this end, efforts have been made in recent years to (i) overhaul the Fund’s intranet content to keep staff better informed, including through more articles on important topics (e.g. on policy and other staff work,

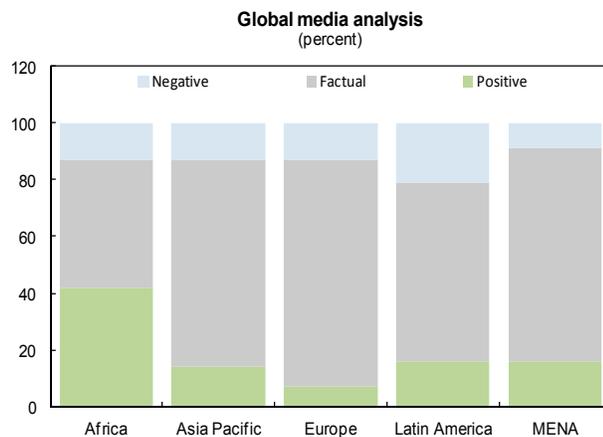
⁸ The IEO report on the Role of the Fund as a Trusted Advisor noted that, in many cases, authorities wanted the Fund to do more outreach (more than 60 percent of authorities that responded to the IEO’s survey said they wanted resident representatives to do more outreach with stakeholders, rising to 75 percent for authorities in low-income countries). At the same time, survey respondents noted the importance of understanding a country’s policy-making process so that outreach is appropriately suited for local conditions (see p. 19).

⁹ The OIA’s [2012 Review of the Fund’s Outreach Strategy and Implementation](#) found that: “The Fund’s framework for outreach is consistent with the comparators surveyed”—the comparator institutions being designated by OIA as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the World Bank (see p. 19).

HQ1 renewal, HR reforms, “meet the teams” series, interviews with department heads and Executive Directors), which have gained in popularity¹⁰; (ii) revamp the Fund’s intranet platform in 2013 to improve design, search functionality and information architecture, and establish a sound governance structure—all in line with current intranet best practices¹¹; (iii) encourage more feedback and two-way dialogue with staff through the intranet, interactive Town Halls, and informal interactions with management; and, (iv) support knowledge-sharing across the organization through more seminars and Fund-wide briefings on topical issues, including departmental updates. The most recent internal communications survey from 2010 suggests that while staff continues to value direct interaction with Management, they also value intranet interaction as a complement to face-to-face meetings.

9. Board communications have also evolved. The Executive Board plays a key role in the Fund’s communications strategy, including through the guiding principles set out in 2007. The Board approves the Fund’s Transparency Policy, most recently in 2013, which is a key Fund policy governing *what* the Fund communicates to the public. In addition, since 2007 there has been a significant increase in communications support for Board-related decisions and activities—for example by developing, with relevant departments and Management, communications plans on key policy decisions taken by the Board, including with the media, CSOs, think tanks, and updated materials on the internet (IMF survey articles and factsheets). The Board’s Annual Report has also changed considerably, and is now streamlined, available in print and digital form, and published in seven languages. Internally, efforts have been made to strengthen staff awareness of the Board and its role, including through the “Meet the Executive Director” series on the intranet and by providing staff with more information on the main policies and issues discussed by the Board, for example through communications around the Board-approved Work Program of the Fund. Finally, Executive Directors have their own interactions with the press and other external constituencies, governed by the Board’s code of conduct.

10. Impact assessment can help guide Fund communications. Quantifying the impact of communications is complex, given the difficulties associated with measuring sentiment, disentangling the effect of communications from content, and the length of time it takes to change perceptions. Nonetheless, staff track basic media indicators, conduct occasional opinion research (Box 4), and produce impact reports around major outreach



Source: Burson-Marsteller, June 2012

¹⁰ Overall, readership of Intranet articles has more than doubled from 23,793 visits in 2011 to 49,852 in 2013 and staff engagement on the Intranet has increased by over 40 percent (measured by number of voters and comments).

¹¹ The Fund’s Intranet was named among the Top 10 Best Intranets in the World in 2013 by the Nielsen Norman Group.

events (e.g. Annual Meetings, flagship events, REOs). The latest global media analysis was conducted in June 2012 and covered influential press in some 30 countries. While by no means definitive, the main takeaway was that coverage of the Fund appears to be predominantly neutral, with some variations across regions. At the same time, the media study suggests that while the Fund is well-respected for its analysis, it is perceived by some as having different standards in its approach to addressing the crisis in Europe relative to other countries, and concerns over governance and even-handedness remain.

D. Issues Raised by Executive Directors

11. During the informal discussion of the Fund's communications strategy in December 2013, Directors raised a number of issues:

- a) **Transparency Issues.** A number of transparency-related issues were discussed: (i) the time lag for public access to most Executive Board meeting minutes, (ii) ensuring greater differentiation between official Fund policy and views, and staff views through appropriate disclaimers in various documents; and, (iii) whether more should be done to publicize the diversity of Executive Directors' views, for instance, through improvements to the Board summing up process. Some of these issues are already being addressed. The issue of the time lag for public access to most Board meeting minutes is being put forward for consideration in a separate Board paper. Staff is also considering whether the Guidance Note on Cover Pages for Board Documents needs to be revised to better distinguish documents for formal Board consideration from staff policy papers that are informally discussed by the Board. On the issue of better publicizing the diversity of Directors' views, staff will remain guided by the Board.¹²
- b) **Advance notice of major Management communications.** Some Directors asked to be better apprised ahead of major Fund communications (e.g. major speeches by Management) or meetings with external groups (e.g. Labor). The regular bi-weekly press briefings provide information about Management's main external engagements, and if Directors found it useful, staff could circulate more systematically this information to the Board. Informal meetings or lunches with Management might also be opportunities to discuss major upcoming events and public messaging. Executive Directors may have further suggestions on this issue.
- c) **Clarity and consistency of staff communications.** [Communications guidance](#) is already provided to staff, particularly regarding media interactions.¹³ Some Directors suggested that the

¹² The February 2013 Report of the Executive Director's Working Group on Summings Up found that a significant reform of the summing up process was not called for, and emphasized instead the need for consistent application of best practice when implementing the summing up process.

¹³ This guidance encapsulates the N-rules, GAO, and the Staff Code of Conduct as they relate to communications, with GAO 34 setting forth the procedures for clearance of publications and public statements of staff members, pursuant to Rules N-5 and N-6 of the Fund's Rules and Regulations. It requires that all staff members obtain the approval of their head of department, who shall consult with COM, prior to publishing material relating to the policies

(continued)

consistency of staff communications could be improved, especially around concluding statements at the time of Article IV consultations and press releases for program missions. They asked whether more could be done to make even clearer that these communications represent staff's preliminary views and that they are subject to Board discussion, approval, and communication.¹⁴ To this end, staff could circulate to the Board refined guidelines for end-of-mission concluding statements and press releases. In addition, staff would welcome suggestions from the Board as to how to support more effectively the Board's communications.

- d) **Enhancing engagement with important constituencies.** Staff engages strategically with key constituencies around important issues using proactive communications plans, recognizing that building relations and understanding takes time. A few Directors suggested that there is scope for further enhancing Fund engagement with some important constituencies. Staff looks forward to further discussion of this issue.
- e) **Languages other than English.** While substantial progress has been made in recent years, a few Directors considered that even more could be done in this area. Staff looks forward to Executive Director's suggestions, subject to resource and cost-effectiveness considerations.

E. Communications Challenges Ahead

12. Changes in the global economy will continue to present communications challenges for the Fund. Evolving issues—including the Fund's role in the post-financial crisis world, the impact of unconventional monetary policies, sovereign debt, and governance reforms—will require continued flexibility in the Fund's ability to implement the communications strategy and effectively promote public understanding of the Fund's work and policy advice. While the 2013 IEO report stated that the perception of the Fund had improved markedly in recent years, there remain legacy reputational and stigma issues that still need to be addressed.

13. Technology also continues to evolve at rapid speed. Fund communications will need to continue to adapt in line with these changes and employ new technologies strategically and in a way that maximizes benefits and minimizes risks.

14. In addition to these broader challenges, several communications-specific issues will remain challenging going forward:

or activities of the Fund, or to any national political questions. The OIA's 2012 Review of the Fund's Outreach Strategy and Implementation found that: "All departments indicated that they follow the requirements of GAO 34 and routinely collaborate with COM in drafting public statements and publishing documents and publications" (see p. 18).

¹⁴ Currently the disclaimer box at the top of all Article IV concluding statements reads as follows: "Describes the preliminary findings of IMF staff at the conclusion of certain missions (official staff visits, in most cases to member countries). Missions are undertaken as part of regular (usually annual) consultations under [Article IV](#) of the IMF's Articles of Agreement, in the context of a request to use IMF resources (borrow from the IMF), as part of discussions of staff monitored programs, and as part of other staff reviews of economic developments."

- **Social media:** While the Fund has already begun to engage in this area, social media has been primarily limited to institutional and the Managing Director's accounts. Further expansion of activities—which several Directors also called for in December—for instance, through different platforms or accounts would need to be conducted in a careful and strategic way. A number of important considerations in this regard include ensuring coherence of messages on Fund policies, the ability to effectively monitor social media activity and engage in more profound two-way dialogue, training, and ensuring adequate support. The challenge is thus to implement the social media strategy in a way that capitalizes on the benefits of reaching a broader audience at great speed, while also taking into account the operational and resource implications, as well as the risks of engaging in this medium.
- **Impact measurement:** More abundant and frequent communications data provide an opportunity to conduct high-frequency analysis. Similarly, new analytical tools and software can be used to develop metrics and frameworks for better analyzing the Fund's communications. More frequent opinion research can also help gauge how communications contribute to effective traction of Fund policies. In this context, Directors suggested that more impact assessment should be done to measure the effectiveness of Fund communications. Work in this area has begun and staff views it as a priority to conduct impact measurement in a way that is both cost-effective and that can help guide and strengthen Fund communications further.
- **Outreach and coordination:** Departmental communication strategies, the Fund-wide outreach database, and training for Resident Representatives have been put in place to help strengthen coordination of the Fund's outreach activities. Further assessment of these activities—for instance, using information contained in the outreach database—will be useful to help strengthen the Fund's outreach efforts going forward.
- **Internal communications:** remains a key priority in terms of building understanding and cohesion around Fund policies and engaging with staff on key institutional issues. Immediate priorities—as defined in the Communications Department's accountability framework—include (i) communicating transparently and effectively around follow-up to the recent Staff Survey; (ii) keeping staff informed of implementation of the HQ1 renovation project, and (iii) providing further scope for expression of staff views on key issues.

F. Questions for Discussion

- Do Directors agree that the Board's guiding principles from the 2007 Board discussion continue to provide an effective framework for implementing the Fund's communication strategy?
- Do Directors agree that the communications issues raised at the time of the informal discussion in December merit emphasis going forward?
- Are there any other specific communications challenges that Directors consider should be given particular attention beyond those described above?

Box 2. Fund Materials in Languages Other Than English

The Fund has attached considerable attention to the publication of materials in languages other than English (LOE) in recent years.¹ Only one in three of the Fund's member countries use English as the main language. The availability of material in LOE is an important part of the Fund's communications strategy—to help the Fund communicate more widely, more effectively, and more strategically; to build consensus around its policy advice; and to be more accountable to its members.

Since 2007, based on the recommendations of the 2006 Working Group on LOE, the Fund has significantly increased the communications impact of LOE material. This was accomplished despite a cut in the publications budget and staff by 50 percent in 2007 through: broader LOE coverage for shorter key materials (flagship summaries, major press releases); improved web access to LOE material; better planning and coordination of upcoming translation demands; immediate web-posting when materials are translated; and development of a clearer budget framework. Some of the highlights are:

- **Enhanced LOE access on www.imf.org.** Web pages in the Fund's six most heavily used languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish) were introduced in 2007. Links to all six sites feature prominently on the homepage of the Fund's website.
- **Simultaneous release of major Fund documents in LOE.** The Fund's flagship *World Economic Outlook* (WEO) (chapters 1 and 2) are published in French and Spanish simultaneous with the English version and full versions are published in five languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish) shortly thereafter. Summaries of other flagship reports—the *Global Financial Stability Report* (GFSR), *Fiscal Monitor* (FM)—are also released simultaneously with the English versions. Other major Fund documents available in LOE include Regional Economic Outlooks (REO), the Annual Report, and Finance and Development.
- **Release of shorter information materials on institutional issues.** Press releases, *IMF Survey* Stories, and *IMF Factsheets* are translated into multiple languages and posted on the web.
- **Social media.** Blogs and twitter are also released in LOE. The Fund's Spanish and Arabic blogs have over 50,000 followers, while the Chinese Weibo account has over 3.8 million followers.
- **Videos and podcasts.** 324 videos in 12 LOEs have been released since 2007.
- **Resident Representative Websites.** Of the 119 resident representative websites, 31 are in LOE, including documents posted in local languages.

¹ A March 2006 report by the *Task Force on Publication of Fund Documents and Information in Languages Other than English* (LOE), also known as the *Kashiwagi Report*, prepared a comprehensive review of LOE publication at the IMF and made a number of recommendations to strengthen LOE practices in a cost-effective way. A 2006 inter-departmental staff Working Group made specific cost-effective recommendations for strengthening policies and practices on LOE publications, building on the Kashiwagi Report.

Box 3. Transforming Publications at the Fund

Publishing around the world has been radically transformed in recent years by the Internet, new digital technologies, and the globalization of mobile devices. While the Fund still uses print strategically for key products, it is [riding the digital wave](#), publishing in multiple electronic formats, harnessing new technology to work smarter and more efficiently, experimenting with multimedia products, and tapping social media for promotion and marketing. Some of the highlights include:

- About 900 titles are published each year, consisting primarily of country reports, selected issues, and related material (400 titles), working papers (some 300 published per year), as well as flagship publications (WEO, GFSR, FM), books, SDNs, data and statistical material, manuals, guides, and the Annual Report.
- Some 1.7 million digital and print copies distributed worldwide per year.
- Introduction in 2010 of a pioneering digital [eLibrary](#) and [Bookstore](#) that provides global access to Fund publications and data reaching over 600 institutional subscribers (free-of-charge in developing and low-income countries).
- The eLibrary now has more than 14,000 IMF digitized titles, including multiple languages, dating back to the Fund's inception, and is considered a standard-setter among international agencies, within the scholarly and library communities, and among commercial publishers.
- Distribution of Fund content, much of which is free of charge on the revamped [imf.org](#), through a network of about 50 national and regional distributors to ensure a global availability of IMF research and analysis.
- Fund content is now also available on Amazon, Apple, Google, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, China's CNP eReading, and other platforms.
- IMF research is now included in major bibliographic databases such as *Research Papers in Economics (RePEc)*, a centralized index that includes working papers, articles, and software, as well as the *Social Science Research Network*, which gives additional prominence to IMF research. More than 560,000 research and policy papers have been downloaded through RePEc since 2002.

Box 4. COM Surveys of Selected Countries

COM engages external consultants to conduct occasional opinion research of the Fund. An overview of the main findings of such research was included in the 2013 IEO Report :

“Between 2009 and 2011, the IMF Communications Department undertook qualitative opinion research in a small sample of countries in Latin America, Asia, and Europe to assess key stakeholders’ perceptions of the Fund.”¹ The research—based on interviews with a random sample of opinion makers—focused on the IMF’s overall image, strengths and weaknesses; effectiveness during the financial crisis; and potential role in the future at the country and global level. Where the Fund had contributed with programs during the crisis period, stakeholders felt the Fund had moved speedily and flexibly, combining well its technical expertise with financing. The Fund was perceived as collaborative and adaptable to the circumstances. They acknowledged the Fund’s increased openness and its contribution in terms of cross-country knowledge and training.

In Asia and Latin America, however, the responses were more mixed. In Asia, there were lingering perceptions that the Fund is “Western-centric” and needs to re-establish its relevance as a key voice in the region. In Latin America—where attitudes varied widely among countries—there was still a view that Fund advice was overly rigid and influenced by a US/Euro/Western-centric tradition, that the Fund’s monitoring/watchdog function was limited to developing and emerging countries, and that it lacked the influence on advanced industrial economies needed to reform. In both regions, the perception of an equal playing field was seen as critical for the future.”

A more recent survey on Fund perceptions in Asia conducted in 2013 is more optimistic. The survey shows that the region has effectively moved past the Asian crisis and sees the Fund as a key partner. Respondent praised the quality of the Fund’s surveillance, unique multilateral perspective and analyses of spillovers. They see important changes taking place at the Fund in recent years, including a more open culture that is receptive to different views, and would like the Fund to build on these gains through more timely analytical engagement, especially in the context of Article IV consultations. They also would like the Fund to deliver more on “early warnings”, reach out to stakeholders beyond our comfort zone, and develop further our trusted advisor role. The APD Director summarized these findings in an informal Board briefing in mid-2013.

¹ The interviews were conducted by phone.

Appendix I. Communications Department at a Glance

Front Office: Defines and implements the overall strategy for the department and manages human resources and the budget. Leads departmental contacts with Management and the Executive Board, and develops networks inside and outside the Fund. Meets day-to-day departmental business needs and provides oversight over Front office staff, divisions and intra-departmental teams.

Current Communications: Drafts, edits and publishes *Finance & Development* magazine and *IMF Survey Online* (in English and other languages), manages the Fund's blog *iMFdirect*, its Spanish-language blog, *Diálogo a fondo*, and its Arabic blog, *Economic Window*, and produces material about the Fund, including videos, podcasts, and more than 60 online factsheets (in multiple languages). Annual figures of various products from 2012 show a high degree of interest: IMF survey online (540,000 views), F&D (770,000 views), videos (770,000 views), blogs (609,000 views), factsheets (1.1 million views), and podcasts (80,000 hits).

Digital Communications: Manages the Fund's external website *imf.org* as well as 6 multilingual websites, and 119 resident representative websites. Manages digital platforms such as *Twitter* (English plus 3 LOEs), *Weibo*, and *LinkedIn*. Scope of work includes web design; packaging, publishing, and updating of Fund's news and outreach content on websites and digital channels; social media messaging; live webcasting; and gathering and analyzing data. More than 7,300 items were posted in 2013 and *imf.org* received an average of 1.325 million monthly visits. There were 358,470 followers for the IMF's Twitter accounts in English and LOEs as of January 2014. In addition, the Sina Weibo account (China) has over 3.8 million followers.

Editorial and Publications: Drafts, edits, and produces the Annual Report (in 7 languages), and edits and publishes key IMF reports including WEO, GFSR, Fiscal Monitor, Regional Economic Outlooks (REOs), Occasional and Departmental Papers and Books. Develops and manages the IMF's *eLibrary*—an online subscription-based portal of IMF publications—and manages the online *IMF Bookstore*. About 900 titles are published and some 1.7 million digital and print copies distributed worldwide each year.

Internal Communications: Helps foster staff engagement and community building through a range of tools, including by maintaining a vibrant intranet news space, and by facilitating internal events such as town halls, seminars, brown bag lunches, and coffees with management. Promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing by providing a space for staff dialogue; and enhances knowledge and productivity by keeping staff informed of key policy, country, and institutional developments. The number of daily visitors to the intranet homepage range from 2,500 to 3,500, and close to 400 news stories are posted every year.

Media Relations: Manages the Fund's interactions with media and fosters relations with journalists in all member countries, including via a 7,000-strong database. Advises Management and staff on their media interaction; drafts, reviews, and issues press releases in multiple languages. Organizes regular press briefings at Headquarters with Spanish simultaneous interpretation, and supports Management and missions with press outreach in the field. Produces videos, including in LOEs, and organizes training for journalists to promote a better understanding of the Fund. Monitors and disseminates news to staff and Management, and provides analysis of news trends. In 2013, Media Relations issued 622 press releases, arranged 40 Management interviews, managed some 60 press conferences and conference calls at HQ, produced about 500 news digests and special news packet editions, organized 10 media training courses, and produced about 40 videos.

Public Affairs: Develops and fosters outreach to non-media stakeholders, including legislators, think tanks, academics, civil society, and the general public. Also manages the Civic and Community Program, including Helping Hands (annual employee giving campaign). In 2013, there were over 300 briefings/meetings for general public, legislators, think tanks, academics, labor, and CSOs. The IMF Civic and Community Program raised over 1 million dollars in 2013 for local and international charities.