

SM/14/188
Correction 1

July 31, 2014

To: Members of the Executive Board

From: The Secretary

Subject: **Review of the IMF's Communications Strategy**

The attached corrections to SM/14/188 (6/30/14) have been provided by the staff:

Factual Errors Not Affecting the Presentation of Staff's Analysis or Views

Page 9, para. 2, line 2: for "viewed with mistrust" read "perceived relatively less favorably"

Page 19, lines 7 and 8: for "over 200,000 followers—and through Weibo currently" read "over 300,000 followers—and through the Managing Director's Sina Weibo account currently"

Page 23, third paragraph, last line: for "3.8" read "4.5"

Typographical Error

Page 39, third paragraph, line 1: for "Sino" read "Sina"

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.

Att: (4)

Other Distribution:
Department Heads

Box 2. Major Regional Conferences as Outreach Vehicles

In recent years, Fund staff has organized a number of major regional conferences. Led by area departments, in partnership with COM, such events have shown the Fund to be a learning and inclusive institution with the convening power to assemble top-level policy makers, international experts, and non-government stakeholders. The conferences in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (2009) and Daejeon, Korea (2012) were major examples of the Fund engaging and listening to its members and external audiences. Two more recent conferences, in Jordan and Mozambique followed the same path:

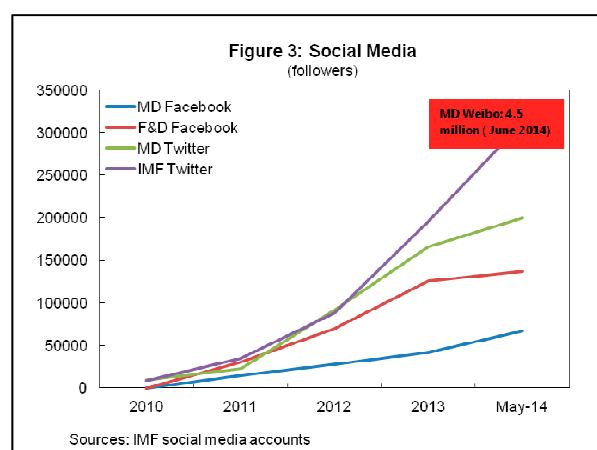
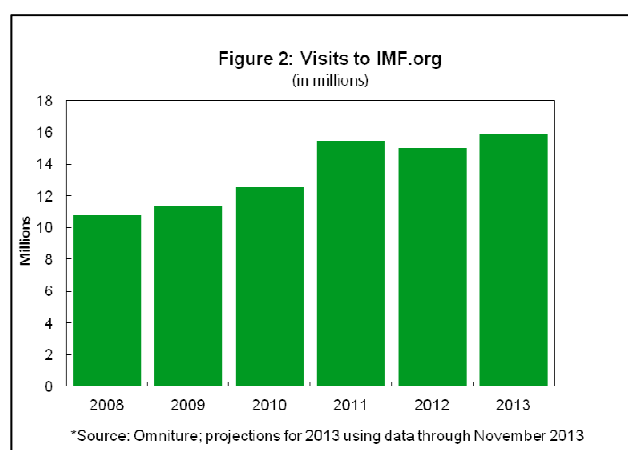
The “Building the Future” conference on May 11-12, 2014 in Amman, Jordan was well received in a region where the Fund is often ~~viewed with mistrust~~ perceived relatively less favorably. With some 300 participants, this was the most inclusive conference on the economic future of the Arab Countries in Transition held in the region by the Fund to date—both in terms of representation across countries (16 high-level delegations) and participants (about half of which were from CSOs, youth, parliamentarians, academics, media). Communications leading up to the conference followed a detailed plan, including a series of blogs and op-eds (also in Arabic language), the launch of a background paper, a major curtain raising speech by the Managing Director ahead of the event, and a Facebook campaign for Arabic youth. Traditional and social media coverage of the conference was extensive and generally positive. The informal and interactive style of the conference reinforced a new tone of listening and engagement. Post-conference communications have focused on deepening traction of the policy agenda at the country level and with specific groups (for example, youth, parliamentarians).

The “Africa Rising” conference on May 29-30, 2014 in Maputo, Mozambique deepened the Fund’s partnership with Africa. It followed up on the 2009 Tanzania Conference, which helped galvanize international support for Africa in the wake of the global financial crisis. The Maputo conference offered a platform to discuss Africa’s strong economic performance, as well as key economic policy challenges ahead in an open forum, and with a view to developing solutions. With about 1,000 participants, the conference brought together policymakers from Africa and beyond, as well as the private sector, civil society, parliamentarians and academics. Key elements of the communications and outreach plan in the lead up to the conference included country conferences (Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon); management visits (Mali, Kenya, Ghana); a high-level seminar during the Spring Meetings; conference websites in English, Portuguese and French; high-profile media interviews and a youth photo contest and online videos to help build understanding and provide a platform for discussions of policy ideas. Media coverage of the conference was extensive, and generally positive, regionally as well as globally, with more than 150 journalists participating. Traffic to the websites was substantial, and social media engagement was extensive. Post-conference outreach is focusing on continuing the Fund’s policy discussions at the country level.

A major regional conference for Latin America will take place in Santiago, Chile in December 2014. Part of the Fund’s work program leading up to the 2015 Annual Meetings in Peru, the conference will focus on managing risks to the region posed by the changing global environment, and sharing the benefits of growth more broadly. A comprehensive outreach effort to prepare for the 2015 Annual Meetings in Peru includes more frequent Management and senior staff visits to Latin America, and their participation in conferences, university events, and other outreach activities—all towards the goal of strengthening engagement and building better understanding of the Fund’s work and policies in the region.

- c) **Raising the impact of communications materials.** The Fund has used new technologies and digital platforms strategically to help boost the impact of its communications. Through an online media briefing center, the Fund now reaches 7,000 journalists all over the world in real time. The design and usability of the external website (www.imf.org) is also being continuously upgraded. Today, [imf.org](http://www.imf.org) is a modern, multi-lingual website, with user-friendly access to a wide array of information—including policies and reports, explanatory content such as IMF Survey stories, factsheets, and multimedia content such as videos. Traffic to [imf.org](http://www.imf.org) has been increasing steadily

(Figure 2). While desktop and laptop computers remain the primary tools for online searches, mobile devices (including smart phones and tablets), are gaining ground fast, and the Fund is increasingly using mobile applications (Apps) to help facilitate access to content.¹ Social media activity—including blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook—has increased sharply in recent years and has been used strategically to reach broader audiences, engage in two-way dialogue (by responding to queries and unfolding developments), and amplify messages (Figure 3). Meanwhile, products in Languages Other than English (LOE) have expanded greatly and in a cost-effective way—a priority established by the Board (Appendix III). The Fund's main publications products (WEO, summaries of GFSR/FM, REOs, the Annual Report and Finance and Development magazine), as well as web pages, press releases, online Survey stories, videos, podcasts, blogs and Twitter feeds are all now available in LOEs. 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 (Appendix IV).



d) **Rebalancing outreach efforts.** The IMF's Office of Internal Audit and Inspection's (OIA) recent review of the IMF's outreach strategy found that "the Fund's framework for outreach is consistent with the comparators surveyed".² While the Fund continues to pay close attention to its traditional interlocutors (including the official sector, think tanks, major newspaper columnists and news wires), more attention is also being paid to new policy influencers. For example, staff missions—in consultation with country authorities—now regularly meet with civil society organizations (CSOs), labor groups, and other stakeholders, and take into account their views in policy discussions. Management, senior staff, and Executive Directors have also increased their

¹ Apps for the 2013 Annual and 2014 Spring meetings, and the Finance and Development magazine have recently been launched. Other Apps include IMF eLibrary and data on the Fund's finances. Developing a mobile-friendly imf.org site is a high priority, and is expected to become available soon. As Apps are being developed it will be important to ensure consistency in their look and branding.

² OIA's [2012 Review of the Fund's Outreach Strategy and Implementation](#), p.19. The comparator institutions in the OIA report included the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the World Bank.

and now surpasses 1.5 million views. By highlighting key points of analysis and policy recommendations—and explaining them in clear language—blogs have supported better understanding of the Fund's work and deeper engagement.¹ LOE versions of the blog have also been developed (in Arabic and Spanish). The manner in which this social media platform has been managed—growing in a measured way and with careful oversight—offers a useful model for other forms of social media engagement. The institutional Twitter account (@IMFNews) also began gradually and has now grown to over ~~200,000~~ 300,000 followers—and through [the Managing Director's Sina Weibo account](#) currently reaches over 4.5 million Chinese followers. To help guard against reputational risks, the Fund's social media engagement uses carefully-crafted engagement plans and activity is actively monitored, and responded to, as needed.

23. Further expansion of social media activity—which several Executive Directors have urged²—needs to be conducted in a similarly careful and strategic way. Important considerations include ensuring coherence of messages, the ability to effectively monitor activity and engage in two-way dialogue, and adequate support, including through training. Taking account of these considerations, the Fund's social media engagement is being expanded in a prudent and strategic way. For example, Twitter accounts for resident representatives in four countries (South Africa, Peru, India, and Pakistan) were established in 2013 on a pilot basis.³ The resident representatives participating found Twitter useful, enabling outreach to a broader audience, and the tone of the dialogue on this platform was generally factual. At the same time, the pilot program showed again that social media accounts require active engagement through development of topical and timely content, responsiveness to unfolding circumstances, and close coordination with headquarters on message delivery. It also requires proper resourcing. This experience suggests that expanding social media accounts would be effective, but only if done gradually and strategically and with adequate oversight, and with support provided through appropriate training and guidelines on engagement.⁴ The latter are being prepared by COM in consultation with other departments, taking best practices into consideration.

24. New media—including social media—have become a key feature of the communications functions of most modern institutions.⁵ The Fund's engagement so far in this sphere has yielded overall positive results. As the institution increases its work with new media, it will be important to move forward in a careful and calibrated way, as has been done in the past (for example, the experience with blogs).

¹ iMFdirect was named among the top 40 most influential economic blogs in 2013 by Onalytica, a marketing and communications firm that specializes in influencer identification and relationship management.

² For example, at the informal Board meeting in February 2014.

³ A twitter account was also recently opened for the Fund's new office in Brussels.

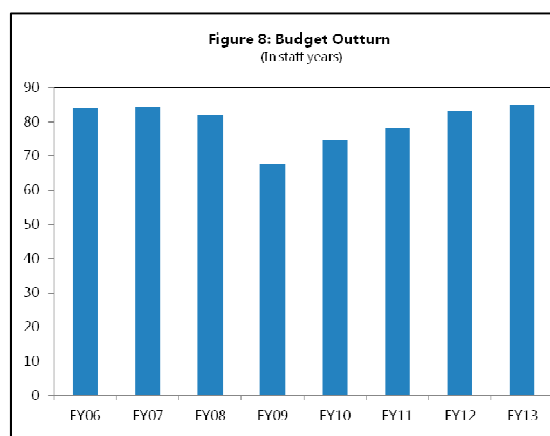
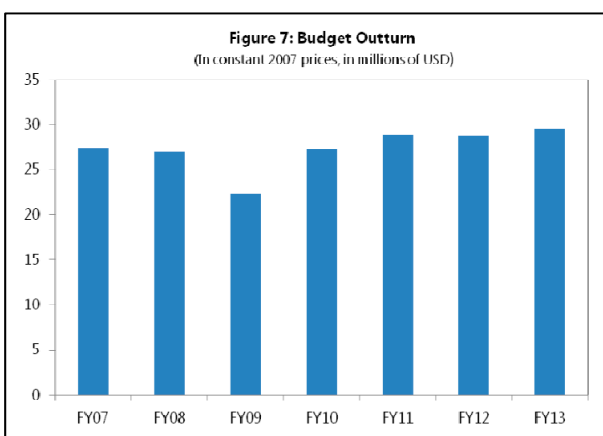
⁴ While Twitter was used as the means for engaging in social media in the countries under the pilot program, it may be that other social media platforms are better suited for different countries and regions.

⁵ For example, finance ministries and central banks all over the world are now active on Twitter.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION, RESOURCES AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS

25. The Fund's communications strategy is implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Much of communications at the Fund is carried out by departments, in partnership with COM, and a recent OIA study assessed the overall outreach efforts.⁶ Efforts to enhance Fund-wide efficiency have focused on ensuring close coordination between COM and other departments and further integrating communications and operations (e.g., through the departmental communications strategies, the communications toolkit, and the outreach database).

26. Within COM, cost-effective communications have also been a priority. For example, since the time of the last formal Board review of communications in 2007 COM's resources have remained basically constant—both the budget in real terms and the number of regular staff (Figures 7 and 8). At the same time, there has been a large increase in output and workload, especially given the imperative need to support the Fund's response to the financial crisis. This challenge has been met through prioritization, savings and efficiency gains—although high work pressures have also resulted (Box 3).



⁶ OIA's [2012 Review of the Fund's Outreach Strategy and Implementation](#).

Appendix I. COM at a Glance

This appendix describes the organizational design of the Fund's Communications Department (COM), which has six divisions focused on various aspects of communications work and a Front Office.

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 2013 show a high degree of interest: IMF Survey (890,000 views), F&D (1.5 million views), videos (540,000 views), blogs (550,000 views), factsheets (1.2 million views), and podcasts (90,000 followers).

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 ~~3.84~~3.84.5 million followers.

Editorial and Publications: Runs the Fund's publishing program. 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.¹

¹ The numbers 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. In 2013, there were over 300 briefings/meetings for general public, legislators, think tanks, academics, labor, and CSOs. Also manages the Civic and Community Program, including Helping Hands (annual employee giving campaign). The IMF Civic and Community Program raised over 1 million dollars in 2013 for local and international charities.

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.

In addition to the organizational configuration, COM maintains an active matrix structure (comprised of intra-departmental teams of communications specialists with various expertise dedicated to one specific area or functional department or subject area) that keeps it in close touch with all departments in the Fund. This matrix structure is used to connect departments with COM staff in respective areas and thus create a coordinated and supportive network for communications across the institution.

Appendix XI. The New Media Landscape

Blogs are personal internet journals that provide commentary on a particular subject. Blogs allow the writer or “blogger” to easily share views, receive comments, and provide links to useful websites. The growth of blogs has been substantial, with over 150 million blogs in existence. The Fund maintains four blogs: two in English, one in Spanish, and one in Arabic.

Social networking sites are online platforms to build communities and share information. Facebook has more than 1 billion users, though recently many of its youngest users are spending more time on competing services. Finance & Development and the Managing Director both maintain Facebook pages but there is currently no institutional Fund Facebook page. The Fund also has a LinkedIn page which reaches a more professional audience.

Microblogs sites such as Twitter or ~~Sino-Sina~~ Weibo in China allow posts of strictly limited character length and/or images. With more than 500 million users, Twitter is commonly used to discuss specific topics such as breaking news stories, which are identified and followed using “hashtag” keywords and to link to other material available on the web. The Fund currently has several Twitter accounts (including for LOEs, the Managing Director, and, resident representatives in a pilot program) and a Sino Weibo account for Chinese language communications.

Instant messaging. While sites like Facebook and Twitter offer possibilities for instant messaging and chat, specialized platforms can be used for virtual meetings and seminars. Google Hangouts have been used to hold discussions with an invited audience.

Online images/videos. Online services for private storage or community/public sharing of images and videos have experienced rapid growth, partly fuelled by the increase in use of smartphones. The Fund currently has accounts for YouTube (videos) and Flickr (photos).

Infographics are visual representations of data, often designed to present information or comparisons in an immediate and compelling way. Infographics are well suited for dissemination through social networks and increasingly used to disseminate Fund messages, including for the 2014 World Economic Outlook.

Podcasts are audio recordings delivered via the Internet, which listeners can subscribe to and download. Weekly podcasts on key economic and financial issues are released. IMF podcasts are widely distributed to radio broadcasters in sub-Saharan Africa, and distributed by UN Radio to their network of partner stations. They are also freely available on iTunes and on the IMF's Soundcloud page.