



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING

As economic and financial globalization and the transition to market-oriented policies progress, members' demand for the Fund's technical assistance and training services has remained strong. Monetary and fiscal aspects of macroeconomic management are the focus, but related areas of statistics, financial law, Fund financial organization and operations, and information technology are also covered (Figure 11). The Fund provides technical assistance and training through its Monetary and Exchange Affairs, Fiscal, Statistics, Legal, Policy Development and Review, and Treasurer's Departments, the IMF Institute, and the Bureau of Computing Services. The Technical Assistance Committee advises Fund management on technical assistance priorities and policies and coordinates assistance activities among Fund departments. The Committee comprises senior staff from each of the Fund's functional, area, and support departments and meets frequently throughout the year.

In the field, assistance is delivered through missions by Fund staff and the assignment of short- and long-term advisors. The Fund requires a contribution from a recipient country for the placement of long-term advisors, where such posts are financed by Fund resources. Such contributions serve more as a sign of the recipient's commitment to the work of the expert than to defray costs. At headquarters, and occasionally abroad, courses and seminars on macroeconomic topics are given by the IMF Institute and the departments that engage in technical assistance (Table 50). In addition, the Fund offers training—organized by the IMF Institute—to officials from transition economies through the Joint Vienna Institute, which is administered by the Fund in cooperation with four other international organizations (the BIS, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, OECD, and World Bank) and with financial support from Austria and Japan.

Resources for technical assistance and training come from the Fund's own budget and from member governments and other multilateral and bilateral institu-

tions. In the current financial year, technical assistance and training accounted for about 14 percent of the Fund's total administrative expenditure (see Appendix IX). External technical assistance resources have been provided by the Japanese government, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union, and the governments of Australia, France, and Switzerland. These external resources have increased in recent years. The Framework Administered Account for Technical Assistance Activities, established by the Fund in April 1995, serves as an instrument through which member governments and other agencies can contribute to the Fund's technical assistance. The Technical Assistance Secretariat, in addition to a number of other functions, coordinates management of external financing and confers with donors and member countries on areas of common interest. Through contacts in the field and consultative group and roundtable meetings, the Fund strives to coordinate its activities with those of other technical assistance providers.

The Board last conducted a general review of the Fund's technical assistance activities in 1994 (see *Annual Report, 1994*, pages 125–26). In May 1996, the Board discussed an external evaluation of the technical assistance provided by the Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department, as well as larger issues pertaining to the provision of technical assistance that were raised by the independent evaluation panel (Box 10).

In the following sections, the technical assistance and training activities of Fund departments during the financial year are briefly described.

IMF Institute

The *IMF Institute* is responsible for training officials from member countries at Fund headquarters in Washington, at the Joint Vienna Institute in Austria, and at national or regional training centers worldwide. It also

provides technical, administrative, and lecturing assistance to other training institutions, manages scholarship programs for Asian officials, and arranges briefings for groups of officials visiting the Fund.

During 1996/97, the Institute trained 604 persons through 15 courses and 3 seminars at headquarters, and 578 persons through 4 courses and 16 seminars at the Joint Vienna Institute. A total of 3,958 participant-weeks of training was provided at headquarters and 1,378 participant-weeks at the Joint Vienna Institute. The training was provided not only by IMF Institute staff but also by staff from the Fund's Fiscal Affairs, Legal, Monetary and Exchange Affairs, Policy Development and Review, Research, and Statistics Departments.

At headquarters, the institute training program included courses on financial programming and policy, techniques of financial analysis and programming, external sector policies, and specialized offerings in the area of public finance, macroeconomic statistics, and monetary and exchange operations. The training at the Joint Vienna Institute largely mirrored that offered at headquarters, although the courses and seminars were of shorter duration and also included seminars on financial market instruments as well as financial transactions for lawyers from economies in transition.

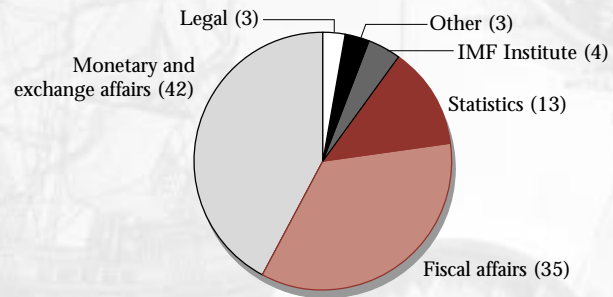
The seminar program for high-level officials at Fund headquarters consisted of three offerings. "Current Legal Issues Affecting Central Banks" was the subject of a seminar conducted by the Legal Department in May 1996. The Institute and the Policy Development and Review Department jointly conducted, in collaboration with the World Bank, a seminar/conference in December 1996 on "External Financing for Low-Income Countries." Finally, the Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department conducted a seminar in January 1997 on "Banking Soundness and Monetary Policy."

The Institute continued to consolidate its overseas training program in 1996/97, with some 23 courses, 9 seminars, and 6 instances of lecturing assistance around the globe. About 1,100 participants took part in these sessions, accounting for 1,817 participant-weeks of training. The courses were mainly two-week training programs on financial analysis and programming. The seminars tended to focus on the special needs of senior officials from the participating countries. The overseas program continued to emphasize training for officials from economies in transition. The Institute receives

Figure 11

Composition of Technical Assistance

(As a percent of total resources in effective person-years)¹



¹ An effective person-year of technical assistance is 260 days. For the IMF Institute, figure excludes training provided or coordinated by the Institute at headquarters.

financial support, among others, from the UNDP, the French and Japanese authorities, and the European Union for participants' costs in connection with its overseas activities.

During 1996/97, the Institute delivered two courses and coordinated the delivery by the Fiscal Affairs and Statistics Departments of two other courses in support of the pilot phase of the new regional training institute for eastern and southern Africa in Harare, Zimbabwe. Institute staff also assisted the governors of central banks of the Anglophone countries of West Africa to set up a similar training institute in that region. In the past year, the Institute was host to two missions from the Asian Development Bank and provided advice on administrative aspects of their new training institute in Tokyo.

The Institute has been managing a number of scholarship programs, largely aimed at Asian economists, with financial assistance from the Japanese and Australian authorities. The Japan-IMF Scholarship Program provides training opportunities for junior officials from Asian economies in transition at Saitama University in Japan. The Australia-IMF Scholarship Program enables officials from the same group of countries to study at the Australian National University in Canberra. Japanese financial assistance also provides subvention for an introductory course at the Shanghai University for Finance and Economics to prepare candidates for admission to both Saitama and Australian National Universities. Graduates of the scholarship programs benefit from internships with host institutions in Australia; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Korea; Malaysia; Thailand; and New Zealand. In 1996/97, some 65 officials were trained at Shanghai, 25 at Saitama, and 10 at Australian National Universities. The Institute, in collaboration with the Fund's

Table 50

Technical Assistance Delivery*(In effective person-years)¹*

	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
Fund technical assistance resources	194.0	220.0	211.4	172.7
Staff	100.9	115.7	108.6	97.1
Headquarters-based consultants	20.5	22.1	23.5	20.1
Experts	72.6	82.3	79.3	55.5
External technical assistance resources	68.6	80.5	97.5	104.2
United Nations Development Program	19.3	16.6	25.0	21.5
Japan	40.1	51.4	65.0	67.3
Other	9.2	12.4	7.5	15.4
Total technical assistance resources	262.6	300.6	309.0	277.0
Total resources by department				
Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department	105.7	138.1	137.3	114.6
Fiscal Affairs Department	94.8	95.1	99.8	96.2
Statistics Department	35.5	37.9	39.2	36.6
IMF Institute	13.0	14.6	14.0	11.0
Legal Department	7.5	7.9	11.0	9.3
Other ²	6.0	7.0	7.7	9.3
Total regional use by department	243.3	271.1	280.1	251.0
African Department	63.8	60.6	62.4	54.5
Asia and Pacific Department ³				
Central Asia Department	25.6	27.7	27.5	—
Southeast Asia and Pacific Department	15.6	23.6	25.0	—
European I Department	24.6	27.8	24.4	22.5
European II Department	65.9	79.3	73.5	57.6
Middle Eastern Department	11.5	16.9	23.4	26.5
Western Hemisphere Department	30.9	27.4	32.3	31.2
Interregional	5.4	7.9	11.7	9.6
Nonregional use	19.3	29.6	28.9	26.1
Total technical assistance use	262.6	300.6	309.0	277.0

¹An effective person-year of technical assistance is 260 days.²"Other" includes the Policy Development and Review Department, Bureau of Computing Services, and Technical Assistance Secretariat.³Effective January 1, 1997, the Central Asia and Southeast Asia and Pacific Departments were merged into a single Asia and Pacific Department.

Administration Department, also manages the Advanced Studies Program (with financing from Japan) that provides scholarships to Asian officials to study at leading North American universities. Ten officials were sponsored for training under this program during the financial year.

The in-house Economics Training Program of the Institute, aimed at Fund economists, expanded significantly in 1996/97. Some 131 internal training sessions were organized in the financial year, providing over 1,500 staff-days of training. The program included two seminars for senior staff.

During 1996/97, the Institute hosted some ten groups of official visitors consisting of 280 officials

from member countries. Briefings were held on a wide range of topics, including the role and organization of the Fund. Institute staff also organized seminars for senior World Bank managers in collaboration with the Learning and Leadership Center of the Bank, and a one-week course on financial programming for the U.S. Foreign Service Institute. The outreach and impact of the IMF Institute's training program was enhanced in 1996/97 through the use of video conferencing, an instructional CD-ROM, and the introduction of a site on the World Wide Web.

Fiscal Affairs Department

In 1996/97, the volume of technical assistance provided by the *Fiscal Affairs Department* was a little below the level reached in 1995/96; the small reduction was caused by difficulties and delays in fielding long-term resident advisors (assignments of six months or longer). The program of technical assistance continued to be diverse both geographically and by fiscal discipline.

In 1996/97 a total of 97 person-years of technical assistance was provided to 101 member countries, compared with 103 person-years and 111 countries in 1995/96. Within this total the regional distribution of assistance did not change significantly. As in the previous financial year, countries of the African continent, together with the Baltic countries, Russia, and other countries of the former Soviet

Union, were the recipients of about half of the technical assistance provided. The other half was provided to countries of Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere, without any noteworthy change in the respective shares of these regions. The department was again able to respond quickly to urgent requests for assistance; thus, missions were fielded to Bulgaria and Bosnia and Herzegovina on a very short notice, while the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Haiti, and Rwanda continued to receive assistance on a high-priority basis. As in previous years, assistance to help the authorities with the building of tax administration and public expenditure management institutions absorbed about 80 percent of the department's total

Box 10

External Evaluation of Technical Assistance in Monetary and Exchange Affairs

In developing the evaluation function in the Fund (see *Annual Report, 1996*, Box 13, page 219), the Board and Fund management commissioned an external evaluation of technical assistance provided in recent years by the Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department (MAE). The three-member independent panel convened in June 1995 and submitted its report in January 1996. Terms of reference for the study were to evaluate the department's technical assistance activities—with the emphasis on institution building—in terms of the quality of advice given, its usefulness to the recipient authorities, its adaptation to specific country circumstances, its implementation and modes of delivery, and the coordination of technical assistance with other related Fund activities. The sample for the study consisted of some 20 countries that the panel chose from the roughly 130 members that had received technical assistance during 1992–94,¹ taking into account geographical balance and economic size, the type and importance of technical assistance received, and the absence or presence of a concurrent Fund program.

The Independent Panel's Findings

The panel's main findings were that MAE technical assistance had been critical in supporting recipients' structural reforms in central banking and financial markets and had made a valuable—in some cases essential—contribution to the transition to a market economy; that the technical assistance had, on the whole, been relevant and useful to recipients; and that the analytical and technical quality of the assistance had generally been of high standard. In the panel's view, technical assistance advice designed to build and improve central banks' capacity to operate in a changing environment had contributed to the countries' abil-

ity to cooperate with the Fund in meeting performance criteria under Fund programs and to participate in the Fund's surveillance function. However, full integration of technical assistance with the macroeconomic work of the Fund appeared to be harder to achieve in cases where the economic transformation process had been incomplete.

In addition to recommendations tailored specifically to the provision of technical assistance by MAE, the panel made recommendations pertaining to the provision of technical assistance by the Fund generally. First and foremost, assistance should be confined to the Fund's areas of expertise. Second, given the changing role of technical assistance, such assistance—particularly that provided to central banks—should be viewed as self-liquidating. Third, since provision of technical assistance at below-market price had entailed excess demand, alternative rationing devices—such as positive pricing, conditionality based on past performance in implementing technical assistance, and tranching of technical assistance beyond some benchmark—should be considered.

The Board's Response

At the Board's meeting in May 1996, most Directors commended the panel's work and agreed with its findings that the quality and usefulness of MAE's technical assistance had been high. In particular, the department's cooperative program with central banks in the transition economies had made an essential contribution to the process of transformation to a market economy. The Board also concurred that certain areas of MAE's technical assistance delivery could be strengthened further. Directors supported the panel's finding that the scope of technical assistance be carefully reviewed, to ensure that it pertained to areas of core interest to the Fund. Continued assistance in such areas as banking supervision and restructuring, accounting, and the payments system, in which the Fund would play a largely coordinating role,

would be appropriate because it contributed to effective macroeconomic policy.

Directors agreed with the report's recommendation that the monitoring and evaluation of MAE's technical assistance should be improved, and they urged staff to enhance self-evaluation. Directors also concurred with the report's emphasis on training the staff of institutions receiving MAE's technical assistance. In the Board's view, the current framework of courses in the context of activities of the IMF Institute and the Joint Vienna Institute, MAE workshops, and the department's training projects with cooperating central banks—with European Community financing—provided a solid basis on which to build and adapt to changing needs. The Board also agreed that specific technical assistance activities should in principle be self-liquidating, but Directors recognized that during the next several years demand would continue to strain available resources.

The Board gave considerable attention to the report's proposals to ration technical assistance, given the excess demand, including through the introduction of Letters of Intent and a certain measure of conditionality. Many Directors took a negative view of conditionality for technical assistance; other Directors thought that the subject merited further consideration. There was broad agreement, however, on the importance of assessing a recipient's track record in implementing the recommendations of past technical assistance before agreeing to additional requests. A number of Board members stressed that further consideration should be given to the issue of the pricing of technical assistance. Other Directors pointed out that technical assistance was recognized as one of the Fund's core activities alongside surveillance, to which no charge was applied; further, it was precisely those countries with the least ability to pay that needed technical assistance the most.

¹Bolivia, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Guyana, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mongolia, Namibia, Poland, Russia, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam, and Zambia.

technical assistance resources. The department also remained active in providing policy advice in both the tax and expenditure areas as well as in fiscal management and fiscal federalism.

The provision of such a high volume of technical assistance was made possible by more intensive use of outside fiscal experts to help Fund staff in the field and at headquarters. In 1996/97, assistance provided by fiscal experts, drawn from a panel maintained by the department, amounted to 63 percent compared with 58 percent in 1995/96. Difficulties in filling long-term expert assignments, in part because of unsettled political situations in some countries, resulted in more short-term assignments (less than six months in duration) than in 1995/96 (205 versus 230). Despite the difficulties in filling long-term resident posts, 70 long-term experts were fielded compared with 60 in 1995/96.

External resources continued to be available for financing technical assistance delivered through outside fiscal experts for both short- and long-term assignments. In 1996/97, these funds financed 77 percent of assistance delivered, compared with 74 percent in 1995/96. The largest single source of external financing was the Japanese government (51 percent, through the Administered Technical Assistance Account Japan). The UNDP (25 percent) and other sources such as the World Bank and the European Union (24 percent) also provided financing for outside fiscal experts. The availability of external financing allowed the department to provide three additional person-years of expert assistance compared with the previous financial year.

The department also remained active in providing training, both at headquarters to visiting delegations and through specific courses offered in Africa (for example, Senegal and Zimbabwe), Asia (for example, China), the Middle East (Arab Monetary Fund), the Western Hemisphere (for example, Argentina, Brazil), and through the Joint Vienna Institute. The number of overseas seminars, conferences, and workshops in 1996/97 (22) remained roughly the same as in the previous financial year (25).

Legal Department

During 1996/97, the *Legal Department* provided technical assistance in the areas of central banking, commercial banking, foreign exchange, fiscal, collateral, and bank insolvency law. This assistance included drafting legislation, commenting on draft legislation prepared by the authorities of member countries, drafting implementing regulations, and providing other legal advice. Most of the assistance took the form of short-term missions by members of the department and experts under its supervision and involved the discussion and joint formulation of drafts with the authorities. Assistance was provided to a broad range of

countries, although an important share continued to be directed to members with economies in transition from central planning that are seeking advice to establish an appropriate legal framework for a sound fiscal structure, modern financial sector institutions, and market-oriented financial transactions.

In several cases the legislative reform effort was envisaged in economic programs supported by the Fund. The department helped to build capacity among local officials both through the discussions involved in giving advice and by conducting courses and seminars. A number of pieces of legislation drafted principally by the department became law during the year.

Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department

During 1996/97, the *Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department* maintained an active technical assistance program, which included missions, seminars and workshops, expert assignments, and coordination of technical assistance with other organizations. Major areas of technical assistance advice included banking regulation, supervision, and restructuring; foreign exchange operations and reserves management; central bank accounting, clearing, and settlement systems for payments; monetary operations and money market development; monetary analysis and research; and the development of government securities markets. Technical assistance provided by department staff was supplemented by almost 22 person-years of short-term expert assignments and 57 person-years of long-term expert assignments.

In carrying out its technical assistance activities, the department undertook 120 missions (93 of which were full-size, country-specific advisory missions), 17 workshops, and 405 short-term expert assignments; in addition, the department supervised the work of 80 long-term experts, residing in 52 countries. Assistance was provided to all regions of Fund membership, but a comprehensive effort was maintained in a few countries in central and eastern Europe, the Baltic countries, Russia, and the other countries of the former Soviet Union. The Baltic countries, Russia, and the other countries of the former Soviet Union absorbed 28 percent of all staff advisory missions, 41 percent of workshops, and 38 percent of all short-term expert assignments. Central and eastern Europe absorbed 14 percent of staff advisory missions and 10 percent of short-term expert assignments. The largest number of long-term expert assignments was placed in Africa, with 29 percent of such assignments.

The department continued to rely on subject-specific technical assistance workshops for a fourth year. These continued to be targeted toward the economies in transition in Europe and Asia. In 1996/97, particular attention was devoted to China, which absorbed 35 percent of all workshops. A major

objective of the workshops is skill building among the participants as a means of enhancing the effectiveness of technical assistance.

The department continued to play a catalytic and coordinating role in central bank technical assistance (see Box 10), especially with regard to the countries of the former Soviet Union. Since 1992, the department has organized annual conferences at the BIS in Basle to review the status of central banking and related financial system reform in these countries; the most recent of these was scheduled to take place on May 12, 1997. Moreover, the department co-chairs with the Central Bank of Russia the International Steering Committee on Payment Systems Reform in Russia and is coordinating a training project for the Central Bank of Russia and the National Bank of Ukraine funded by the European Union and with the support of 13 cooperating central banks and the BIS. The department's technical assistance program has also been enhanced by the provision of external funding from the Administered Technical Assistance Account Japan, the UNDP, the European Union, and other sources.

In 1996/97, progress continued to be made in integrating the analysis, review, and jurisdictional functions of the department with its technical assistance activities. The department coordinated efforts to ensure members' compliance with the Fund's jurisdiction over exchange systems and, in collaboration with other departments, provided advice on technical aspects of the exchange regimes of various countries and on issues related to the transition to full acceptance of obligations under Article VIII of the Fund's Articles of Agreement and full convertibility. It was also responsible for executing the Fund's role in financial sector surveillance and capital flows through, among other activities, contributing staff to 24 missions by the Fund's area departments.

Statistics Department

In 1996/97 the level of technical assistance activities of the *Statistics Department* remained close to the peak established in 1995/96, with 140 missions, 6 of which were multisectoral, to 78 countries.

As in recent years, the scope and composition of the department's technical assistance program in 1996/97 reflected an effort to sustain a high level of technical assistance to countries in transition, as well as to meet the needs of countries in other regions. However, as the technical assistance to the transition countries began to achieve its intended objectives, the level of technical assistance to these countries showed a further small decline in 1996/97. About 25 percent of the department's short-term technical assistance activity during 1996/97 was directed to central and eastern European countries, the Baltic countries, Russia, and other countries of the former Soviet Union, compared

with nearly 50 percent in 1994/95 and about 30 percent in 1995/96.

In addition to providing technical assistance to countries in transition, the department continued to provide technical assistance to other member countries, in particular to those that were actual or prospective users of Fund resources or whose statistical infrastructure was at an early stage of development. In 1996/97, the department mounted 105 missions to these countries. Technical assistance also continued to be provided through the participation of Statistics Department staff in seven missions of other departments.

The main vehicle for the delivery of technical assistance continued to be short-term missions conducted by Fund staff, headquarters-based consultants, and outside experts. The use of outside experts for both short-term and long-term assignments also remained at a high level in 1996/97, with 68 active expert assignments, 13 of which were long term. About 28 percent of the assignments using such experts—8 short-term and 11 long-term—were financed with resources made available to the Fund by the Japanese government under the Administered Technical Assistance Account Japan, and 4 assignments—2 short-term and 2 long-term—under the Executing Agency Agreement with the UNDP.

The department's technical assistance program centered on its main areas of expertise in balance of payments, government finance, money and banking, national accounts, and price statistics (consumer and producer price indices) and in international trade statistics. During 1996/97, 36 missions were fielded in balance of payments statistics, 35 in money and banking statistics, 10 in government finance statistics, and 28 missions in the areas of consumer and producer prices, international trade, and national accounts statistics.

In addition to short-term, single-sector missions, the department continued its efforts to undertake multisectoral statistical missions that would provide detailed recommendations for reforms in methodology, collection, and compilation practices in all areas of statistics. In 1996/97, the department undertook six multisectoral statistical missions, compared with five in 1995/96. These missions addressed not only the issues related to each sector but also emphasized the importance of the consistent treatment of data across macroeconomic statistical systems and provided a framework for follow-up missions in the topical areas covered by the multisectoral mission. In March 1996, the Fund established the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) to guide member countries that have, or that might seek, access to international capital markets in the provision of their economic and financial data to the public. To assist countries that had subscribed to the SDDS, the department fielded 17 technical assistance missions, including 3 seminars.

As in recent years, an important component of the department's technical assistance program was to support its short-term efforts with the placement of long-term statistical advisors. This approach has proven particularly appropriate for the transition countries where there was an urgent need to build a statistical infrastructure that would buttress the move to market-oriented economic systems. During 1996/97, multi-sectoral statistical advisors continued to be assigned to Russia, Ukraine, and the Kyrgyz Republic, and multi-sectoral statistical advisors were appointed to the Baltic countries and Belarus. The department also continued its efforts in the placement of regional statistical advisors to provide ongoing technical assistance in specific areas of statistics to selected groups of countries. The regional balance of payments statistical advisor to Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova completed a one-year assignment and was extended for another year; and the regional balance of payments statistical advisor to the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan took up a one-year assignment in July 1996.

The Statistics Department also continued to be active in the work of the Steering Committee on the Coordination of Technical Assistance in Statistics to the Baltic Countries, Russia, and Other Countries of the Former Soviet Union that was established in 1992. The department provided technical support to the Steering Committee and acted as focal agency in the areas of balance of payments, government finance, money and banking, national accounts, and consumer price statistics. Meetings of the Steering Committee were held in June 1996 and in February 1997. In October 1996, the Steering Committee produced its *Second Report to the Heads of Member International Organizations*, and a joint Meeting of the Steering Committee and the Ukrainian Government on Technical Cooperation in Statistics took place in Kiev in May 1997.

The technical assistance work of the Statistics Department is reinforced by training courses and seminars to national statisticians on statistical methodologies and their applications, offered at the IMF Institute at headquarters and at the Joint Vienna Institute. During 1996/97 the department conducted four courses at headquarters covering the areas of balance of payments, government finance, money and banking, and national accounts statistics; and three seminars at the Joint Vienna Institute covering balance of payments, money and banking, and macroeconomic statistics for users. The department continued to expand its training program through the provision of 15 regional and local seminars in recipient countries, comprising 3 seminars in balance of payments statistics, 3 seminars in government finance statistics, 5 seminars in money and banking statistics, 1 seminar in real sector statistics, and 3 seminars on the SDDS. Of the 15 seminars, 8 were

regional, and 5 were funded by the Administered Technical Assistance Account Japan.

Treasurer's Department

The *Treasurer's Department* provides technical assistance to member countries on the establishment and maintenance of Fund accounts, the Fund's financial organization and operations, and matters related to members' transactions with the Fund, including the payment of quota subscriptions. Such technical assistance has increased in recent years, primarily in response to the needs of new members of the Fund.

In addition to technical assistance missions, training courses and briefings on Fund operations and accounting are provided to visiting officials from member countries, and aide-mémoire are prepared for new members on financial accounting matters and on the reporting of the Fund position in the balance sheet of the central bank. In 1996/97, countries receiving missions or training at headquarters included Azerbaijan, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Poland, Russia, Spain, and Venezuela. Department staff also brief technical assistance experts on contract with the Fund on the Fund's financial transactions and operations prior to the experts' assignments.

Bureau of Computing Services

In 1996/97 the *Bureau of Computing Services* provided 11 technical assistance missions to 10 member countries in the modernization of computer systems in central banks, ministries of finance, and statistical offices. Owing to resource constraints, the Bureau's technical assistance program provides for only short-term missions to member countries in direct support of the economic and financial work of the Fund. During 1996/97, missions were undertaken to Belarus, Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Tanzania, and Uganda. The technical assistance missions were directed toward the planning and development of computer systems for the processing, analysis, and reporting of economic, financial, and administrative information.

Advice and guidance were provided in the areas of technology infrastructure design and planning, economic information systems, central banking operations, tax administration, and budget and treasury operations. Much of the technical assistance focused on furthering the development of computer systems to collect, store, and process economic data, and to improve the processing of financial data in member countries. A principal benefit of the technical assistance is the improved electronic exchange of data and documents between member countries and the Fund. As a result of rapid technological change within member country institutions, the growth of networks and

associated computer applications, and the expansion of the Internet as a communications medium, requests for short-term computer technical assistance are expected to increase.

During 1996/97 the Bureau received visitors from China, Haiti, and the Arab Monetary Fund for techni-

cal discussions and training. Various short seminars and demonstrations were given to explain the Fund's application systems. The training focused on statistical time-series, database applications, office and document processing, standard desktop software, and network and communications facilities.

