



# IMF ONLINE LEARNING

A Decade of Impactful Capacity Development





## ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

For more than 50 years, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has provided capacity development so countries can build sustainable and resilient institutions.

Since 2013, the IMF's **Online Learning Program** has become an increasingly important channel for comprehensive and accessible training across macro-critical topics: from debt management and financial stability to transformational issues like climate change and digitalization.

After a decade building a global community of 200,000 participants, we chronicle the work, reach, and impact of the Online Learning Program, highlighting the voices and stories of learners who take our courses and the devoted IMF staff who teach them.



JAPAN GOV  
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

The IMF Online Learning Program is funded by the Government of Japan.

# Early Beginnings

In 2013, as an experimental pilot, the IMF made the flagship course, **Financial Programming and Policies**, more accessible to government officials by offering it online for the first time. This was a critical milestone in making IMF courses widely available.

These early courses paved the digital way for providing IMF expertise globally and at scale, equipping government officials with the knowledge and tools needed for sound policy implementation.





IMF staff, **ANDRAS KOMAROMI**, remarks on how courses are a great resource to refresh and improve the skills of our own economists.

## **ANDRAS KOMAROMI**

Institute for Capacity Development, IMF

*I used the online courses twice for my own development. When I interviewed for the IMF, I did the Financial Programming and Policies course on edX on areas where I thought I have some gaps. That actually helped me refresh, learn, and think in a Fund way. So that was super useful. I started by going over the Macroeconomic Forecasting course to bring myself up to speed. I think both these courses were super useful for my own use. You can say that the online courses helped me get into the Fund. And now, that helps our authorities.*

*I was involved in developing this online course, the MPAFx (Monetary Policy Analysis and Forecasting). That was a very good experience and very new for me.*

*We had one scoping mission to Bangladesh, and one gap that we identified is that the staff was not really equipped with the technical knowledge to do forecasting and policy analysis for monetary policy. We realized that you have to start with training. Luckily, we have this online course, which gives the theoretical or technical foundation of the techniques that they should be using later.*





## Responding to Emerging Needs

In 2017, a critical partnership with Japan helped further accelerate the growth of the program and expand the curriculum across a broad range of macro-critical topics.

Since then, the program made strides in offering more specialized courses. Topics include core areas such as monetary policy, public financial management, debt management, and macroeconomic statistics, but also emerging cross-cutting areas such as climate, inclusive growth, and cybersecurity.

Courses are developed by IMF staff with unique expertise, informed by their continuous dialogue with policymakers from member countries.

## ERIC HUTTON

Legal Department, IMF

*I had a very strong background even before university in computers. I had a computer when I was young, and I liked programming. The way that you can model economic systems, and in modeling economic systems, adding in taxes to see the impact afterward. It was just an enjoyable way to learn economics and applying it in a real-world sense.*

*I think my proudest moment at the Fund is the development of the model that we're using and teaching in the RA-GAP VAT Gap Estimation Model course. It is a unique way of doing what we call, Tax Gap Estimation. It's different than what countries had been using. The previous models give you a single response: the tax gap for a country is two billion. And you give that to an administration and they have no idea what to do with it. But the model that we developed here breaks that down by each sector of the economy. So we can tell you not only what the overall is, but where it's coming from.*

*The upfront investment, though it was intense, was well worth it. I've worked with 30-35 countries so far. It's always fresh. I love working with large sets of data, and churning them through, and finding what's going on with them.*



IMF staff, **ERIC HUTTON**, reflects on how the program has helped address the growing demand of training throughout the years.



Self-paced courses flexibly fit the needs of government officials and other busy professionals, ones like **MEDINA HAJDAREVIC**, a learner and government official from Australia.

## MEDINA HAJDAREVIC

Government official, Australia

*I was born in Bosnia, and I came to Australia with my parents as a refugee. So, I was always very aware of international issues and foreign policy. When I started studying international relations, I realized I really liked economics. You can use economics frameworks and trade and investment data to underpin more robust case policy advice.*

*The ability to take IMF courses online and at your own pace is very attractive for mid-career professionals or officials with busy day jobs. You can still meet your ongoing professional development needs and build your technical capability without signing up for a full-time master's course.*

*I particularly liked the Macroeconomic Diagnostics course. When I undertook the course I had just changed professional roles and I felt a bit rusty. The course gave me a lot of confidence with those skills I had previously learned, but had not applied in a professional setting for some time.*



## A Constant Backbone

Since 2020, the IMF Online Learning Program played an instrumental role in ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of capacity development to member countries during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

The high demand for online learning has been reflected in a remarkable surge in participant enrollment.



## NEHEMIAH ODERA ODERO

National Treasury, Kenya

*My interest in the IMF courses is that they relate with what I do on a daily basis. Whenever I took the courses I felt like my knowledge has been refreshed and enhanced. You get experience from another country, another economy. You find that this other person has the same problem that we also experience here. And if they had a solution for it, I can also take on that solution.*

*We experienced drought from 2020 to 2021. The drought affected the subsector of tourism under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. When there is drought, there is increased human-wildlife conflict. We have to find ways of getting water for the wildlife within the parks. And that means getting water bowsers from outside. We have to get hay and pellets for the wildlife to be dropped within the park so that the wildlife does not get out of their secure areas and into people's farms.*

*It gives me pleasure when I get to engage with other departments of the government. It makes me feel that what I'm doing actually is very important because you have to retain someone's income over that period and you have to also find alternative ways of letting these ministries, departments, and agencies raise the revenue to ensure their continuity.*



While the pandemic seemingly brought the world to a halt, government officials, like **NEHEMIAH ODERA ODERO** from Kenya, recognize that their work is even more essential.



The pandemic also showcased the adaptability and resilience of online learning. IMF staff, **DAVID BAILEY**, notes how courses became vital for the timely dissemination of knowledge and practice.

## DAVID BAILEY

Statistics Department, IMF

*I was originally a physicist. And there wasn't much going on in the field of nuclear fusion in Wales at that time. Because I had a mathematical background, I worked then for the Welsh government on statistics, education statistics.*

*The work that I've done has always involved looking at things through that kind of mathematical lens, through creating models to understand the world, whether it's a nuclear fusion reactor, to now trying to understand what's going on in the government finance statistics or the wider economy of a country. It's not such a big difference, as you might think, between the world of physics and the world of statistics and measuring the economy.*

*One of the things that I'm very proud about is the work on the online Government Finance Statistics course that I helped develop and push through. The timing was really fortuitous, because in 2020 we weren't able to go to countries to provide technical assistance. This online course became a really important tool for compilers to teach themselves both the theory and the practice of compiling government finance statistics and we got a huge response to it. In our first roll out we had 1000 government finance officials from around the world signed up.*

# Global Interests, Local Solutions

The Online Learning Program continues to be enriched in key areas of global interest. This 200,000 strong global community spreads across 191 countries. Beyond English, courses are also offered in Arabic, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. A growing range of learning products, including blended and microlearning, help to meet the needs and interests of the membership.

While topics are of global interest, our community is able to find ways to apply skills and knowledge gained in local contexts, be it in their country, work, or home.





IMF staff, **ALAIN GAUGRIS**, shares ways in which traditional online courses can be creatively repurposed for different regional audiences.

## ALAIN GAUGRIS

Statistics Department, IMF

*I previously worked in a small country of about 1 million inhabitants with only one university with no statistical line in the studies. When I was there, the problem was finding statisticians. You would find people willing to work in the office but not necessarily with the right skills. And then you will need to train them.*

*We needed to find ways to train them using the most efficient tools possible. And online learning quickly came as one precious tool for us. Having online learning developed by the IMF or by others is something that we realize is very important for countries that are developing their skills to be able to produce quality statistics.*

*Some steps have been taken that are very important for the possibility for countries, especially in Africa, to attend those courses. The translation into French and Spanish really scaled up the participation rate of those courses. And slicing the courses in smaller videos that could be posted in the public domain, like YouTube, were very important for people to access short videos on very specific concepts at any point in time.*

## MIRIAM WANGUI

Kenya Revenue Authority

*Right now, I'm in a leadership role where I have a team of about ten people. The Strategic Management course [which is part of Virtual Training to Advance Revenue Administration] helped me bridge the gap between my reportees and the people above me. It also allows me to envisage where my section, my unit, my department would want to be in the future.*

*Good leadership allows me to better relate to these people and understand where they're coming from and how their actions are informed in one way or the other, based on other experiences not necessarily related to work.*

*My kids already know what their mama does: I'm a tax collector. When they ask, "What is tax?". I explain with an example: I pay them a little money for chores around the house, and then I take a bit of it away. This is a tax. Then, I explain to them what they are used for. If I'm the government in this example, I'm taking this much so that I can use it to pay for health care, for workers, public transportation. I explain to them about the role of taxes for the development of a nation.*



**MIRIAM WANGUI**, a learner and official from Kenya, describes ways in which courses helped her personally navigate around work.



## Keeping True to the Heart

There is an analogy colloquially used among IMF staff to describe surveillance, lending, and capacity development, the three pillars of the IMF's work. Surveillance stems from the brain, lending from the hand, and lastly, capacity development from the heart.

The ultimate goal of the Online Learning Program, now a dynamic mainstay of the IMF's capacity development, is to help our member countries build effective economic institutions and promote global economic stability and growth. Online learning, and capacity development as a whole, can be further strengthened through better integration with the other pillars, all of which rely on the most important resource of the IMF: *its people*.

## LAURA KODRES

Former IMF staff

*My father was a mathematics professor at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. I guess that whole concept of being close to your students rubbed off on me. My first professional job after receiving my PhD was to be a professor myself. I found that the teaching part of my job the most satisfying: to be in front of the classroom and to teach and to interact with the students face to face.*

*When I began my fund career, I was in the Research Department, with no teaching responsibilities. But I realized that every economist in the IMF is, in fact, a teacher, able to educate the people around them. When I was asked to participate in the Financial Development and Financial Inclusion course, it really changed the way I viewed online training.*

*Having these courses be accessible to literally anybody is doing an incredible service for basic financial and general economic education. I think that service is way more valuable than one gives it credit for.*

*This online practice really started as a way to reach more of the country officials. But I think the true benefit is not just to the country officials. It is to the average person that wants to log in and learn something new and is curious about how things operate economically in the world.*



Former IMF staff, **LAURA KODRES**, reflects on the roots of her passion for teaching and training, as well as the immense value that the Online Learning Program offers to anyone, wherever they are in the world.





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