

Relevance, Responsiveness, and Results in Post-Conflict and Disaster Recovery

By Enrico Orr

Relevance, Responsiveness, and Results are credos that any institution should want as a part of its foundational principles. These three principles are especially important in the context of post-conflict/disaster recovery and aiding developing countries. It is in this context that I will address how Bretton Woods institutions and their partners can embrace and enable Relevance, Responsiveness, and Results. The mission of Bretton Woods Institutions is to address critical issues in the financial system, including destabilizing factors like war and disaster. Re-examination of how to use the aforementioned principles will be crucial to solving the dire situations facing Bretton Woods Institutions.

An important aspect of Relevance is the ability for an organization to retrieve material that satisfies the needs of the user. This aspect of Relevance should be utilized as a guiding light for Bretton Woods Institutions. Relevance should be defined by the populations Bretton Woods Institutions wish to serve: all those who live in post-conflict, disaster, or developmental contexts. Particularly, understanding the local needs of people in a given country is imperative. This idea is repeated in Stabilization & Reconstruction literature, however Bretton Woods Institutions must ensure that local needs are being met in practice. When the needs of the population are not heard or met, issues will persist, mitigating the impact of Bretton Woods institutions and their partners.

Embracing Responsiveness is a tough challenge, as the situations Bretton Woods institutions involve themselves in require strategic thought and measured action. Both of these require time in order to ensure the best plan is chosen and executed. Even still, there are ways for Bretton Woods Institutions to enable Responsiveness without sacrificing high-quality performance. First, the Institution should work to ensure that bureaucratic processes are streamlined, and regularly re-examine the conditions for loans to developing countries. Many countries who need aid are delayed in receiving it because their government is either unable to meet the conditions stated or refuse to meet those conditions. This impacts the ones who truly need the aid: the local population.

Second, it is crucial for Bretton Woods Institutions to strengthen their partnerships with NGOs. A closer partnership with NGOs automatically increases Responsiveness in three key ways. First, NGOs quickly develop a relationship with the local community, meaning they have access to local resources and information that would be useful to Bretton Woods institutions. Second, NGOs are usually the first responders to any situation, and a strong partnership would mean early intel and opportunities to prevent a larger disaster. Third, many NGOs are ready to make long-term commitments to post-conflict or disaster situations, which adds stabilization to the local population. Aiding NGOs also ensures that the money distributed will reach the intended recipients, the local population, and does not get misspent by national governments or militaries. Finally, in order to embrace and enable Responsiveness, Bretton Woods institutions and their partners must have a willingness to dialogue with all parties in a given country. For example, in post-conflict situations, most of the dialogue is focused on getting governments, militaries, and non-state forces to the table. By doing this, the actual civilians (and the various parties contained within) are ignored which means any response will not be comprehensive enough.

Results are the bottomline of any aid operation. With that being said, it must understood that the process informs the results of an operation. This means that if Relevance and Responsiveness concepts are developed fully with the proper considerations, then desirable Results will be achieved on a consistent basis. Achieving consistent results includes the regular assessment of outcomes. For example, after implementing conditions on aid and seeing these be met, Bretton Woods Institutions should endeavor to produce short and long term impact studies. These studies would: assess the impact of rapidly implementing these conditions, if the conditions were truly implemented or merely superficial, and how the implementation of conditions affected the distribution of aid.

Relevance, Responsiveness, and Results are important concepts that should be considered by any institution. For Bretton Woods Institutions, these concepts are the difference between success and failure in the situations they address. Streamlining bureaucratic processes, strengthening partnerships with outside institutions, listening to the needs of all parties being affected, and short and long-term impact assessments will allow Bretton Woods Institutions to embrace and enable these concepts.