

The G-7 Summit: 'Building Back Better'

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Countries today are confronting the combined challenge of mending harm of previous development achievements as rapidly and feasibly as possible, while also responding to fundamental changes altering the world.

In efforts toward a recovery from the COVID-19 epidemic, the phrase "building back better" has been used frequently. It suggests utilizing the disruption to reconsider how to reorganize societies and economies and steer investments toward more equitable, resilient, and environmentally sustainable solutions as part of the recovery process.

Six years ago, during the Sendai Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the word "building back better" (BBB) entered the language of policymakers, relief workers, and researchers. Recently, the term has been used by a growing number of actors from all over the world. During his presidential campaign, Joe Biden used "Build Back Better" as his campaign slogan and it formed his transition motto into the White House. Today, development agencies, think tanks and summits such as the British Academy, the World Bank, a coalition of CEOs and the G-7 Summit are recommending strategies to "Building Back Better" following the pandemic. Nevertheless, everyone is interested in investigating what the term really means.

The 47th G-7 summit is set to take place from June 11 to 13, 2021, under the United Kingdom Presidency. A key objective of this year's G-7 summit is to "unite the leading democracies to help the world build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and to create a greener, more economic future."

The UK has hosted seven ministerial tracks to support the summit's themes covering economic, environmental, health, trade, technology, development and foreign policy issues. Each track contributes to a key component of the plan leading the global efforts to combat and recover from coronavirus.

In addition to ministerial discussions, in preparation for the summit, the UK Presidency has tapped into the knowledge and recommendations of various sectors across each country, engaging with G-7 Engagement Groups, as follows: women7, youth7, business7, civil society7, labor7, and science7. These engagement groups are made up of businesses, unions, charities, advocacy groups, science bodies and networks. The group meetings' discussions are reinforced by advisory groups: the economic resilience panel and the gender equality advisory council.

About three years ago, the World Bank issued its BBB report, describing a stronger, quicker and more inclusive means of building back better from disasters. In addition, the analysis revealed how BBB strategies like financial readiness and adaptive social protection may lessen crisis consequences by one-third, sparing the globe roughly \$170 billion each year in averted losses.

In May 2021, the Brookings Institute published a report identifying three reasons why we may "build back better" following COVID-19. It implies that the manner we were "building" before the pandemic was ineffective. According to the 2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report, one in five nations average income per person was anticipated to freeze or drop in 2020, based on precrisis statistics. One of the reasons for these issues is the lack of political agreement on the necessary reform. So, why would such an agreement be conceivable now? How would COVID-19 affect the political balance in order for these required reforms to take place?

What "better" truly means and how it may be achieved are the questions that need to be addressed. Additionally, whether or not a crisis is an appropriate moment to make far-reaching reforms may also need to be re-evaluated.

At this moment in time, possibilities and risks are linked to a desire to "build back better." Building in the present pandemic setting, with increased acknowledgment of social welfare as a form of "social immune system" and of local community engagement as a longer-term social innovation, might be viewed as an opportunity. On the other hand, risks are related to time. Attempting social transformation in the aftermath of a tragedy may be too difficult since many individuals have pressing demands. To be clear, when we are under pressure making judgments that are based on biases we had prior and our ability to make sound decisions is put to the test.

At least four interconnected traits differentiate the current situation from other disasters.

This is about public health and socio-economic decline, not a physical tragedy. The pandemic is not a fast and dramatic occurrence, but a protracted disaster where a multitude of shocks and issues interact to produce an even greater effect. COVID-19 encompasses the whole globe, and it impacts everyone, but it does so in uneven ways. In the pandemic, health, economic, and social issues are all intertwined. As a result, it generates an unusually complicated and intersecting collection of issues.

This implies that those who advocate for "building back better" are attempting to address an astoundingly complicated set of connections across environmental, social, and economic systems. Apart from that, BBB strategies might face the risks of oversimplification, prejudice, and unforeseen effects.

Various people will have different ideas about what "better" means and how to get there. In times of crisis, we are more prone to rely on predetermined action patterns and succumb to prejudices.

It is critical to address the assumptions we have about what constitutes "better" and how to get it. Including fairness and inclusion, the key criteria for assessing such assumptions and strategies must be the prioritization of needs, aspirations and engagement of the poor and disadvantaged.

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