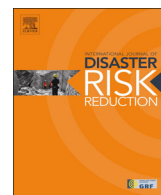


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## Review Article

# The role of social capital and public policy in disaster recovery: A case study of Tamil Nadu State, India



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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to determine what important roles are played by social capital in the implementation of recovery policies for areas affected by disasters. We will compare two districts in India where tsunami recovery has either failed or been successful. In 2004, the Sumatra Tsunami in the Indian Ocean killed more than 14,000 people and left 50,000 people homeless. Regardless of the cultural background or ethnicity of victims, disaster recovery greatly depends on social capital. This research included a questionnaire survey administered to people in two tsunami-affected districts and compared the types of social capital that can be associated with disaster recovery. The result is that the style of each community prior to the disaster and the presence of a strong village leader are both crucial for the successful implementation of a recovery program. We believe that social capital significantly affects successful policy implementation, which will lead people to utilize government resources for disaster recovery.

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## Contents

1. Introduction . . . . .	100
2. The role of social capital in disaster recovery . . . . .	101
2.1. What is social capital? . . . . .	101
2.2. Social capital and human responses for disaster recovery . . . . .	101
3. Tsunami damage and recovery policy in India . . . . .	103
3.1. Damage of the Sumatra tsunami . . . . .	103
3.2. Public policy and activities for tsunami recovery in India . . . . .	103
4. Research method and background . . . . .	104
5. Data analysis . . . . .	105
6. Conclusion . . . . .	107
Acknowledgments . . . . .	107
References . . . . .	107

## 1. Introduction

Central and local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and some international institutions have provided various types of support for victims in the seven years since the Sumatra Tsunami devastated India's

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eastern coast. In the most damaged areas, this support has helped people to recover their lives to a similar or improved state than before the disaster. In addition, we consider that recovery means back to normalcy or to a standard of life very close to the one people had before tsunami. This will be achieved in partnership with NGO or government. Moreover, the people are relocated to a safer place with relatively low chance of being affected by future Tsunami occurrences. However, there are some areas where such support provisions did not function properly. In fact, recovery for the areas most affected by the tsunami has been the highest priority for the national government, international organizations, and NGOs. In contrast, although they are not neglected, the areas where there was less physical damage but the tsunami permanently affected victims' livelihood have been assigned a lower priority for rehabilitation. In this case, "neglected" means that the people generally lead a normal life or very close to the standard of life they had before tsunami but are unable to relocate to a safer area for various reasons. As time passes, the individuals in the lower-priority areas eventually become neglected either permanently or for a long time. Although elements of social capital, such as trust, leadership, and networks, are said to be important for initial recovery from tsunami disasters, little research has been conducted about the role of social capital in long-term disaster recovery. Although national and international organizations put considerable effort into disaster recovery programs, the question remains why some communities can quickly return to pre-disaster conditions and display satisfactory results in terms of participation and empowerment, whereas others do not. By focusing on social capital in two villages in the Tamil Nadu state of southern India (Sathankuppan and Karekupam), This study aims to reveal how social capital affects the successful or vice versa implementation of national policy for recovery in tsunami-affected area in two nearby villages.

## 2. The role of social capital in disaster recovery

### 2.1. What is social capital?

Social capital, which is typically defined as a function of trust, norms, and networks, is thought to be a key factor in community activities. The term was developed by Hanifan [13], who defined it as goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community. He concluded that "The more the people do for themselves, the larger will community social capital become, and the greater will be the dividends upon the social investment," which means that in addition to physical and human capital, social capital also plays an important role in maintaining community. Since many researchers and organizations have applied Hanifan's term to communities' performances.

Coleman [8] argued that social capital, such as obligation, information, norms, and social networks, are crucial for students' educational performance. Putnam et al. [22] revealed that the social capital, including norms and civic engagement, accumulated in a region are mainly affected

by the region's government and economic performance. Woolcock and Narayan [30] extended the concept to development studies, defining the term social capital as the norms and networks that enable collective action. According to the World Bank, "Increasing evidence shows that social capital is critical for societies to prosper economy and to develop sustainability in society." Although various researches have revealed positive aspects of social capital, some studies also reveal negative effects. Portes and Landolt [19] demonstrated that the elements of trust and networks may exclude people from the community. Such exclusion often occurs in Japanese rural society and is known as "1murahachibu." As illustrated in Fig. 1, social capital can be categorized mainly three types: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Bonding social capital is described as "undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity" [20] and defined in terms of relations between communities, such as family, friends, or business associates [31]. Bridging social capital connects members of the group or network to extra-local networks, crossing ethnic, racial, religious groups [4]. Linking social capital is considered as "networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society" [24]. Woolcock and Narayan [30] insisted that different combinations of these types of social capital are responsible for a range of crucial development and environmental outcomes. Uphoff [27] suggested a different categorization of social capital based on its forms. He divided social capital into two groups: structural and cognitive. Structural social capital facilitates information sharing, collective action, and decision making through established social networks and other social structures, supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents. Cognitive social capital refers to shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs and is thus a more subjective and intangible concept. The third categorization is defined as macro- and micro-level social capital. Macro-level social capital is most formal, including institutional relationships and structures, such as the political regime or the rule of law. Micro-level social capital refers to ties within institutions or norms that are relevant for households, villages, and communities [11]. Based on the above examples, the definitions of social capital range widely and include a variety of categorizations.

### 2.2. Social capital and human responses for disaster recovery

For recovering from disaster, reconstructing physical infrastructure such as roads, houses and schools are

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese traditional society follows the concept of Murahachibu. As the people in the country have to grow more food from limited land and other natural resources, they group themselves to help each other. It was generally felt that shared community activities resulted in higher food production. Therefore, people cooperate with each other in sowing, irrigation, and harvesting activities. In the Murahachibu community concept, individual members do not generally go against the intent of the group for fear of losing the group contribution to the activities in the individual's farm.

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