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**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN DISASTER
MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF A TSUNAMI AFFECTED
COASTAL VILLAGE IN EASTERN SRI LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the role of social capital in disaster management in a tsunami affected coastal village in Eastern Sri Lanka. The study explores the role of social capital before the tsunami disaster, at the time of tsunami disaster and post tsunami disaster recovery process in the village. It also examines how far tsunami disaster and post tsunami disaster recovery process strengthened or weakened the existing social capital in the village.

The social capital thesis centers on the assumption that when people possess higher level of bonding, bridging and linking social capital, socio-economic benefits follow, such as proper disaster management, less conflicts and better-functioning democratic political processes and etc... This study mainly focuses on the role of social capital in the tsunami disaster management in the village.

The findings bring out the fact social capital could vary in different contexts and at different times. High level of bonding social capital prevailed before the tsunami disaster and at the time of tsunami disaster has vanished in the post tsunami disaster recovery process as internal community networks except religious organizations could not contribute in post tsunami disaster recovery process. Meanwhile, low level of bridging social capital witnessed before the tsunami disaster in the village became stronger at the



time of tsunami disaster and post tsunami disaster recovery situation as the other ethnic communities and NGOs played a tremendous role in the village. On the other hand, low level of linking social capital witnessed before the tsunami disaster, at the time of tsunami disaster and post tsunami disaster recovery process in the village since lack of intensity shown by the government and other governmental sectors to address the grievances of the people.

The study shows that the tsunami disaster and post tsunami disaster recovery process strengthened the trust/ network with kinship and religious organizations thereby strengthening the bonding social capital. The tsunami and post tsunami disaster recovery process strengthened the bridging social capital in the village as the people were able to interact with NGOs and other ethnic communities in a lasting way. The tsunami and post tsunami disaster recovery process significantly weakened the linking social capital.

The findings also reveal that the assistance provided by NGOs and other donor agencies at the time of tsunami disaster and post tsunami situation contributed to hostility, tension, competition and misunderstanding among the tsunami disaster victims. The findings also exhibits that NGOs made use of the resources and the capacities of local people were found to be successful and effective compared to the projects implemented by NGOs without involving the local communities.