

Disaster Mitigation Policies and Practices in South Asia With Focus On Social Capital

Jayant K. Routray and Saswata Sanyal

Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Management (DPMM) Interdisciplinary Academic Program

Asian Institute of Technology

routray@ait.asia

routray53@gmail.com

Contents

- *Climate Change and Disaster*
- *Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Policies: South Asia*
- *DRM Issues: South Asia*
- *Concepts of Social Capital*
- *Applications of Social Capital*
- *Social Capital and DRM: Emergence*
- *Social Capital and Phases of a Disaster*
- *Social Capital and Disaster Mitigation*
- *Conclusion*

Climate Change and Disaster

- *Climate is changing at an unprecedented rate across the globe.*
- *Climate change is a natural phenomenon but has been substantially accelerated by anthropogenic activities.*
- *Impacts of climate change are global, but the actual changes and the risks can differ strongly from region to region.*
- *Effects of climate change is the most in the least developed countries, where they are most poorly equipped to deal with these adversities.*
- *A potential impact of climate change is the increasing damage from extreme climatic events or disasters like cyclones, floods and droughts.*
- *One of the most affected regions in the world by climate change-induced disasters is South Asia.*
- *With widespread poverty in South Asia, these extreme events create a devastating impacts on the lives of people living in this region.*

"We should not take longer... if we are slow to adapt to climate change, risk making disasters even more catastrophic than they already are. We should build on the HFA and DRR awareness to protect vulnerable populations against climate change."

*- Ban Ki Moon, UN SG, 29
September 2008*

DRM Policies: South Asia

- *Some major incidents in the past (cyclone, floods, and tsunami) created alertness for response and resilience.*
- *Almost all countries have institutional framework from national to state/province and district levels.*
- *Developed Disaster Management Acts.*
- *Countries recognize the paradigm shift of DRM from relief based reactive to proactive (risk reduction and resilience) approach.*
- *Policies are gradually evolving in line with experiences drawn from past disasters.*
- *CBDRM is well recognized approach by all stakeholders and reflected in selected donor driven projects.*

DRM Issues: South Asia

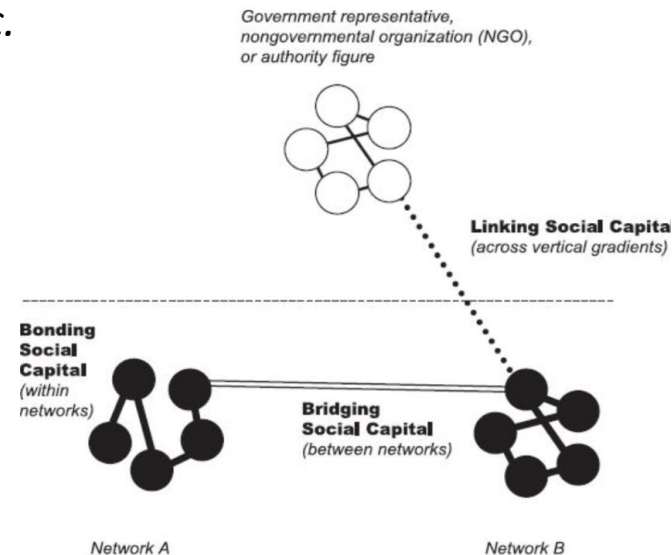
- *Most of the countries follow a command-and-control/ top-down approach when dealing with disaster response.*
- *Capacity of responsible organizations/agencies at different levels varies from country to country.*
- *In some countries lack in technical expertise and capacities at the national as well as local level for DRR.*
- *Enforcement of Acts and policies in the context of DRR is weak.*
- *Structural centric DRR practices.*
- *Need arises to formalize in the policy framework with clear practice framework for CBDRM.*

Concept of Social Capital

- *Social capital very simply can be defined as 'the invisible resource that is created when people cooperate' and do collective actions for social good.*
- *Social capital refers to trust, norms and networks that affect social and economic activity within a community and goes beyond community.*
- *Social capital contributes significantly to social, political and economic performance.*
- *Depending upon how Social Capital is used, it can have both positive or negative impacts on a community or its members.*

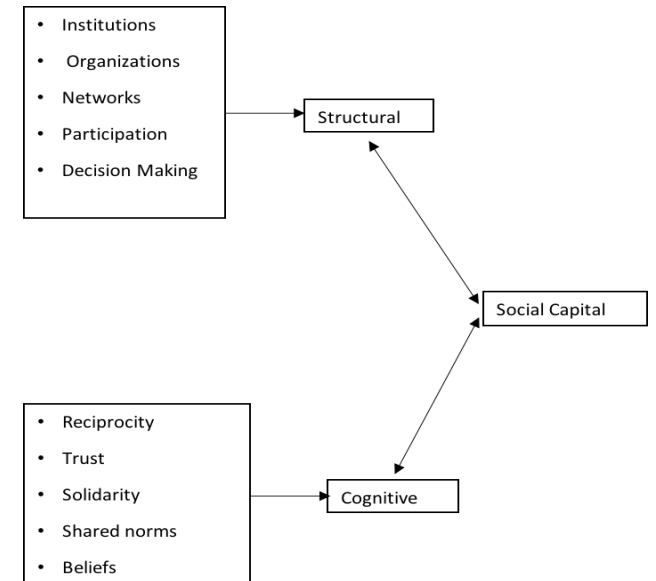
Concept of Social Capital

- **Bonding:** *This kind of social capital refers to connections to people like you. E.g. family, relatives, kinship.*
- **Bridging:** *It refers to connections to people who are not like you in some demographic sense. E.g. from a different network or community.*
- **Linking:** *It generally pertains to connections with people outside who are in power, whether they are in politically or financially influential positions. E.g. Government representatives, politicians, leaders, NGOs, businesses, etc.*



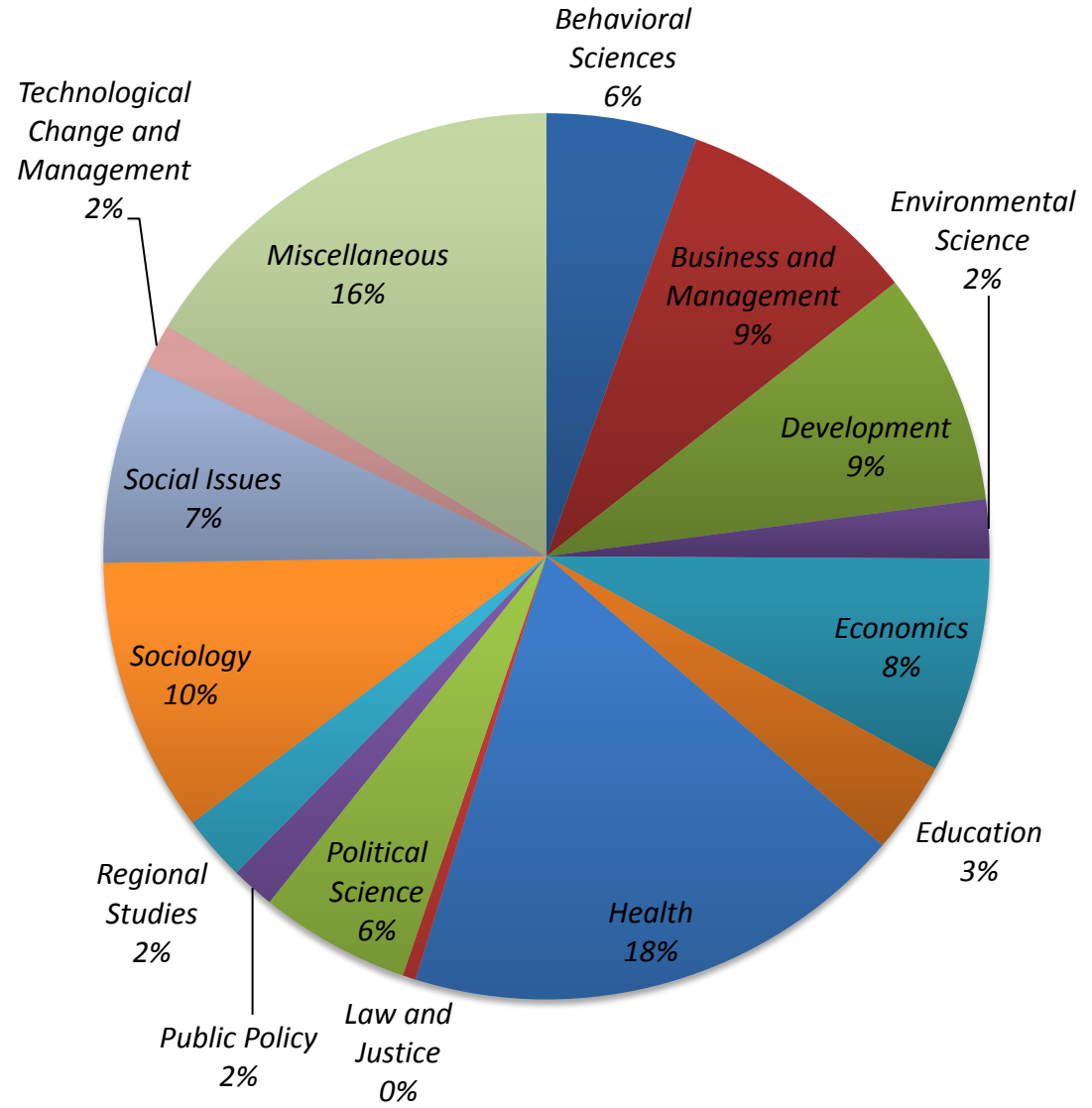
(Aldrich, 2012)

- **Structural Aspect:** It facilitates information sharing, participation, and decision making through established roles, social networks and other social structures supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents.
- **Cognitive Aspect:** It refers to shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs among the community members. Therefore, it is more subjective and intangible concept.



(based on literature review)

Applications of Social Capital

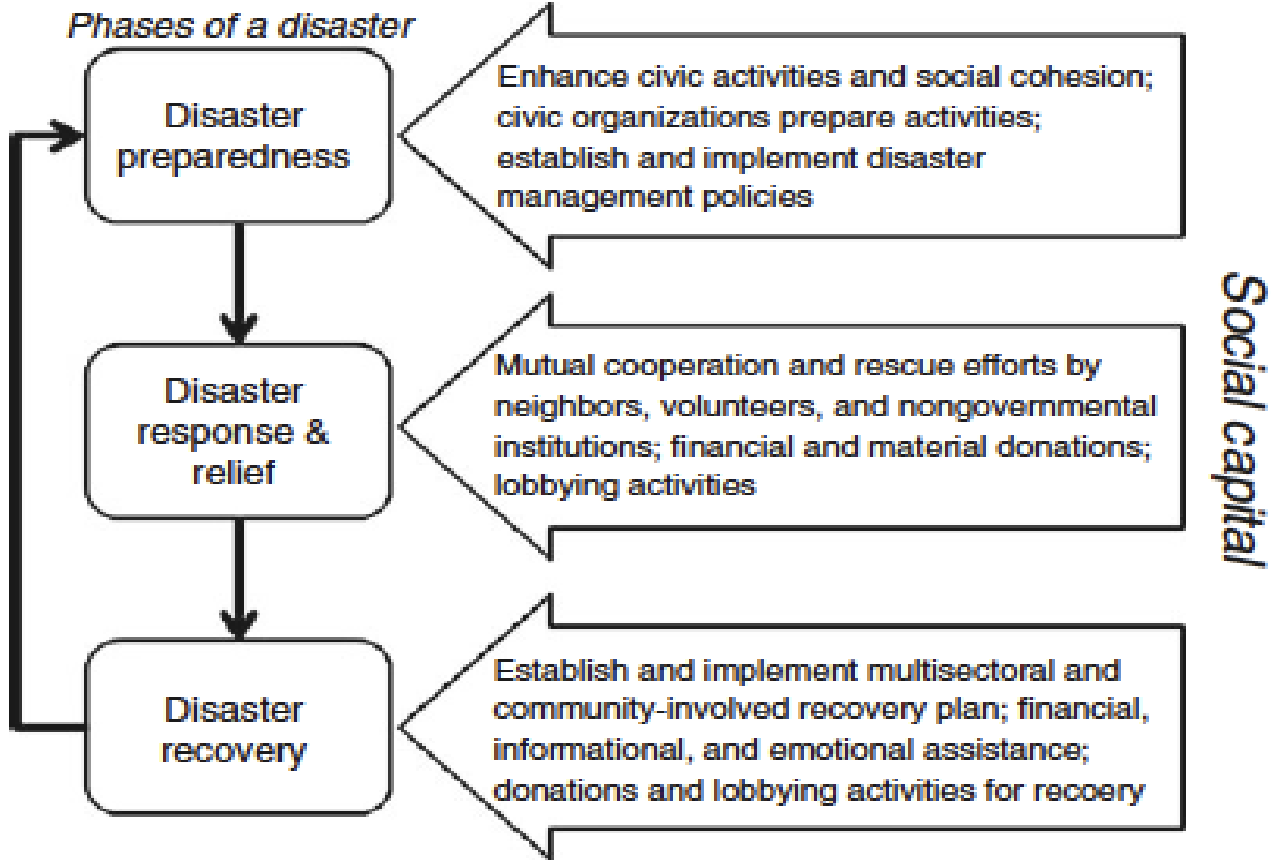


(Castillejos, 2009)

Social Capital and DRM - Emergence

- *Paradigm shift in the disaster management approach towards risk reduction.*
- *Disaster brings a lot of changes in the society and creates stress because of limitations of the government`s top-down approach.*
- *The resources embedded to the social structures/systems can be vital for better mitigation, preparedness and response which can lead to risk reduction.*
- *Social capital is an integral part of social structure, serves as an informal insurance at the community level, where amazing results can be achieved through coordinated action in disaster risk reduction.*
- *There has been rather limited research on how social capital can contribute to disaster risk reduction.*
- *New trend is emerging, where social capital is gaining momentum for disaster risk reduction.*

Social Capital and phases of a Disaster



(Aida et. al, 2013)

Social Capital and Disaster Mitigation

- *Proper Disaster Mitigation can be done when there is use of both structural and social measures.*
- *The social capital networks can effectively help in understanding the local risks, and needs, for better mitigation strategy.*
- *Social capital can help in:*
 - *Community risk assessment*
 - *Community risk reduction planning*
 - *Building public awareness*
 - *Strengthening of community disaster management organisations*
 - *Mobilize resources in the community for mitigation*
 - *Giving the community a sense of acceptance and ownership in the mitigation projects*

Conclusion

- *Community at risk faces the consequences of extreme climatic events and tries to respond first always with individual and collective resources at the local level.*
- *Community strength and resources are very often either overlooked or ignored in the DRR system and more particularly in policy instrument.*
- *Local level administration is not yet energized in capacity and with technical and financial resources for DRM.*
- *Involvement of the community is vital for disaster mitigation.*
- *Social capital if used carefully can help in better understanding the risks and thus having better mitigation towards impending disasters.*
- *Advantages that social capital poses should be taken into consideration by policy makers while planning for DRR measures in the future.*