The role of social capital in post-flood recovery in
Ba District, Western Viti Levu, Fiji Islands

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Abstract

Floods are among the most significant and frequent hazards that affect communities in the Western Division of Fiji, often leaving in their wake displacements and death, and putting thousands at risk of sliding into poverty. Using the 2009 and 2012 floods, we examine how social capital aids in post-disaster recovery among residents in five selected villages in the Ba District of western Viti Levu. It is conventionally believed that moving supplies, aid and expertise into flood-affected areas offers the best path to effective recovery. To test this assumption, data were collected with a questionnaire survey administered to 97 households. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a further 20 respondents. Our results indicate that residents of the Ba District are using four approaches to create and deploy social capital among them to facilitate recovery. Our findings may be used to generate policies concerning the integration of social capital as a component of flood disaster recovery mechanisms.

Keywords: disaster recovery, flood, social capital, Ba, Fiji Islands