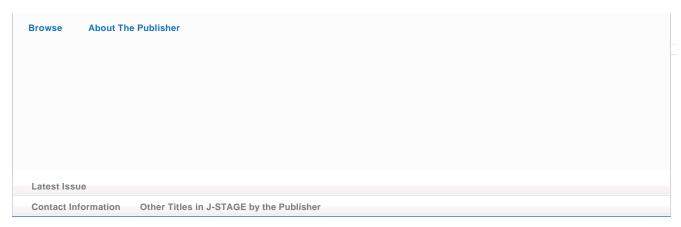
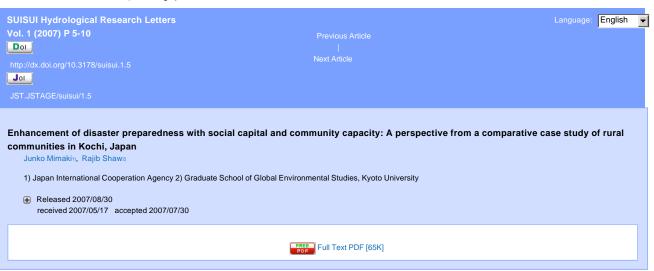


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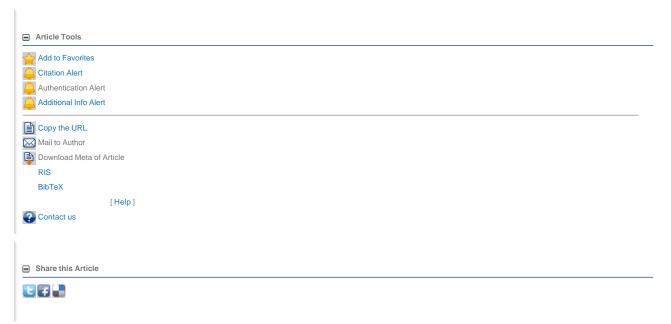
Abstracts References(21) Cited-By(1) Supplementary materials(1)

Social capital is defined as the factors promoting useful cooperative actions, such as social organizations and systems, norms, networks, people's sense of values, consciousness and beliefs, held by members of the community and/or concerned external parties. It is argued that social capital can play an important role in the enhancement of communities' disaster preparedness. Recently the importance of disaster preparedness has been widely recognized, and community based approaches have drawn significant attention. This paper attempts to clarify the key factors that local governments should take into account to in order to enhance a community' s capacity for disaster preparedness, through field observations and surveys in rural communities in Japan. Surveys were carried out in two communities of Tosashimizu city of Kochi Prefecture, which was highly affected by a torrential downpour in 2001. After the experience of the 2001 disaster, different actions were taken in the two communities during the catastrophic disaster of Typhoon 23 in 2004. Through key informant interviews and qualitative comparison of the two communities, it can be concluded that aspects of social capital such as 1) community leader's leadership; 2) community's bonds and networks; and 3) institutions and systems within the community should be considered to enhance a community s disaster preparedness.



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Top of this Page



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