

# Forming Social Capital for Climate-Related Adaptation of Fish Pond Farming in Northern Thailand

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## ABSTRACT

Social capital is potentially important to adaptation in freshwater aquaculture as there is often a need for collective action. Ostrom and Ahn (2007) emphasized that the forms of social capital, their particular conformations, and their interaction with other factors enable collective action, by enhancing trust among the actors. While understanding of social networks is growing, there is still limited understanding of how these reflect or translate into social capital that is useful for adaptation. This paper explores how trust, social networks and institutions, contribute to the formation of social capital of fish pond farmers in the context of their needs to adapt to climate-related risks and socio-economic stresses in Northern Thailand. Data was collected from fish pond farming households and other stakeholders. Trust among fish farmers is generated from exchange, reciprocal helping, and sharing information and resources over time. Strong social networks are formed around kinship, place and livelihood interests. Not all ties are beneficial and thus represent accessible social capital. The development and acceptance of institutions in cooperatives and trading groups was another line of evidence of social capital formation; but it was not an inevitable outcome of organizing. Transparency and accountability were important as well. Finally, community context matters. The capacity, and opportunities, for an individual household to make useful links to others is constrained and enabled by overall levels of bonding capital, and less obviously, also bridging capital, in the community. In the latter case the individual behavior of large-scale fish farmers in these communities is significant: if they share the knowledge from their better external links, all in the community can benefit.

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