

Social Capital in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos 2010-2011

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The purpose of this project, launched in 2009, is to compare social capital in East Asia and explore its possibilities. Our group decided to conduct small-scale questionnaire-based comparative studies on social capital in three countries – Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam – in consideration of the members' areas of specialty so that the experience would be helpful for East Asian studies in the entire project. The questionnaire pertained to social trust, maintenance and improvement of livelihood and social formalities. It was prepared in consideration of the interests held by the project's Groups on Communities and Security. The form and content of the questionnaire was resultantly passed down to investigative studies on East Asian countries. As already reported from different countries, the survey was conducted on an expanded scale, and after that was additionally conducted in Thailand in a South East Asia.

Today the researchers we asked to conduct the survey in Laos, Vietnam and Thailand have joined us. Unfortunately the researcher who was directly involved with the Cambodia survey is now studying in Canada and unable to be here. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all these people with whom my group has worked and coordinated. At the time of panel discussions, supplementary comments will be made on the research results from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam from our group members responsible for those surveys: Mr. Inada for Cambodia, Ms. Iinuma for Laos and Thailand, and Mr. Shimane for Vietnam.

The results of the Laos and Vietnam surveys have already been reported. We now will make comparison in several aspects of social trust, extracted from the research findings, between the three countries and Japan. Essentially, we should add Thailand, but this will be started just after this symposium.

The survey was conducted separately in urban and rural areas using the same questionnaire with a view to shedding light on the difference between these two areas in these countries experiencing rapid economic growth. Due to the small scale, the survey had a limited number of samples, and in this respect produced findings with some limitations. Even so, it observed some outstanding difference in terms of social trust.

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Generally speaking, rural areas tended to have greater social trust than urban areas. Comparison between the three countries demonstrates that the level of social trust was considerably low in Cambodia. It is speculated that the catastrophic destruction of social ties under the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 still has some impact.

The 2002 survey on social trust conducted by Japan’s Cabinet Office made no distinction between urban and rural areas and asked different questions. However, a high percentage of respondents answered that caution was warranted. It can be said that the social trust level is lower in Japan than in Vietnam and in Laos (see Table 1 and 2).

Table1: Q 1 . Do you think that, in general, people can be trusted?

	(%)					
Target Area	Urban Vietnam	Rural Vietnam	Urban Cambodia	Rural Cambodia	Urban Laos	Rural Laos
Survey Year	2010	2011	2011	2011	2010	2011
Sample size	100	100	200	200	116	116
Most people can be trusted*	9.0	35.0	6.0	6.0	26.7	15.5
A lot of people can be trusted*	54.0	40.0	9.5	18.0	37.1	40.9
Some people can be trusted*	33.0	24.0	29.5	41.5	34.5	37.3
A few people can be trusted*	4.0	1.0	53.5	30.5	1.7	4.5
No one can be trusted*	0.0	0.0	1.5	4.0	0.0	1.8

Table2: Q. 1-(1) Do you think that, in general, people can be trusted?

	(%)	
	Mail survey	Web survey
Most people can be trusted	1	3.2
	2	4.3
	3	15.1
	4	11.5
	5	27.1
	6	8.8
	7	8.3
	8	2.8
	9	18.0
	10	1.1

Note:*

Cabinet Office, “Social Capital: Toward A Virtuous Circle of Rich Human Relationships and Civic Activities,” 2003

Division for Volunteering Support Policy, Division for Volunteering Support Policy, Cabinet Office, 2004

With regard to the level of relations with relatives, acquaintances and neighbors, people in rural areas generally had closer intercommunications than those in urban areas, though in Laos the level of relationship with neighbors appeared to be lower than in Vietnam and Cambodia. In Japan, people seem to have fewer close relations with relatives and friends than in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. This tendency was particularly clear in the online survey results involving many young respondents.

So then, what is social trust all about? To clarify this, we asked two different questions: one about people and organizations that were relied on with respect to problems and worries of daily life; the other about people and organizations that were relied on in the event of a major natural disaster or incident.

Regarding reliance concerning daily problems and worries, in each of the three countries a remarkably high percentage of respondents relied on family members and relatives, whereas in Japan the ratio of those giving such an answer was not as high. Laos showed the highest level of reliance on public institutions and organizations, followed by Vietnam and then Cambodia. In this respect, Japan had almost the same tendency as Vietnam. However, the questionnaire in Japan provided a choice of “undecided,” which tended to attract a high number of respondents. Though no simple comparison is therefore possible between the three countries, the percentage of people who found them reliable to some extent was high, yet not as high as in Laos (see Table 3, 4, 5 and 6).

Table 3: For help with the problems and worries of daily life (Vietnam)

Q21 For help with the problems and worries of daily life, what kind of person or organization do you feel you can rely on?

	Vi Xuyen ward, Nam Dinh city, Vietnam (%)					Giao Thuy district, Vietnam (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	18	26	24	31	1	25	28	28	17	2
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	18	33	19	28	2	30	20	22	24	4
3)Police or firefighting organization	10	22	20	39	9	19	22	20	35	4
4)Military	12	24	13	34	17	23	19	17	35	6
5)Political party, politician	18	28	7	31	16	33	21	16	27	3
6)Organization in nearby community	22	43	9	11	15	30	32	20	15	3
7)Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	4	23	9	36	28	21	30	17	20	12
8)Religious organization such as a temple or church	4	18	19	45	14	22	19	18	35	6
9)Employer	8	30	16	22	24	6	8	6	11	69
10)Coworkers	18	38	9	16	19	7	12	3	7	71
11)People in neighborhood	21	67	7	4	1	40	45	13	2	0
12)Family	92	6	0	2	*	91	5	2	2	0
13)Relatives	65	26	3	5	1	72	21	6	1	0
14)Friends, acquaintances	35	59	5	0	1	47	46	3	4	0

Table 4: For help with the problems and worries of daily life (Cambodia)

Q21 For help with the problems and worries of daily life, what kind of person or organization do you feel you can rely on?

	Siem Reap district, Cambodia (%)					Baban village, Cambodia (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	3.5	29.5	23.0	41.5	2.5	7.5	47.0	28.5	17.0	0.0
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	8.0	48.0	23.0	21.0	0.0	17.5	57.0	19.0	6.5	0.0
3-1) firefighting organization	0.5	37.0	22.0	18.0	22.5					
3-2) Police	9.0	58.0	21.0	12.0	0.0	11.5	49.0	26.5	10.5	2.5
4)Military	0.5	0.5	1.5	1.0	96.5	1.0	2.0	3.0	3.5	90.5
5)Political party, politician	0.5	3.5	10.0	54.5	31.5	2.5	11.0	15.5	44.5	26.5
6)Organization in nearby community	0.5	11.5	26.0	29.5	32.5	8.0	29.5	27.5	24.5	10.5
7)Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	2.0	11.0	19.5	33.0	34.5	3.5	14.5	25.5	27.0	29.5
8)Religious organization such as a temple or church	1.5	39.0	23.5	14.5	21.5	14.0	47.0	19.0	12.5	7.5
9)Employer	2.0	8.0	6.5	5.0	78.5	0.0	2.0	1.5	1.0	95.5
10)Coworkers	4.0	18.0	5.5	5.0	67.5	0.0	5.5	2.5	2.0	90.0
11)People in neighborhood	6.0	61.5	27.5	3.5	1.5	11.0	70.0	18.5	0.5	0.0
12)Family	92.5	7.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	96.0	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.5
13)Relatives	55.0	35.5	7.0	1.5	1.0	62.0	33.5	4.5	0.0	0.0
14)Friends, acquaintances	6.5	62.0	20.0	9.0	2.5	7.5	68.0	20.5	4.0	0.0

Table 5: For help with the problems and worries of daily life (Laos)

Q21 For help with the problems and worries of daily life, what kind of person or organization do you feel you can rely on?

	Vientiane Municipality, Laos (%)					Nakang village and Done village, Laos (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	64.7	27.6	4.3	3.4	*	67.0	26.1	5.2	1.7	*
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	38.6	51.5	6.9	3.0	*	34.5	47.6	11.9	6.0	*
3)Police or firefighting organization	20.2	54.4	21.1	4.1	*	20.2	45.6	27.2	7.0	*
4)Military	24.6	49.1	15.8	10.5	*	26.5	42.7	24.5	7.3	*
5)Political party, politician	27.0	39.1	18.3	15.7	*	14.0	46.5	18.4	21.1	*
6)Organization in nearby community	27.8	46.1	16.5	9.6	*	15.5	50.0	13.8	20.7	*
7)Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	18.8	47.3	19.6	14.3	*	6.9	54.3	18.1	20.7	*
8)Religious organization such as a temple or church	21.4	45.5	23.2	9.8	*	20.9	38.3	25.2	15.7	*
9)Employer	15.1	35.8	30.2	18.9	*	1.8	31.2	33.0	33.9	*
10)Coworkers	21.3	57.4	12.0	9.3	*	11.8	57.3	23.6	7.3	*
11)People in neighborhood	31.6	53.5	10.5	4.4	*	36.0	50.0	11.4	2.6	*
12)Family	79.8	16.7	1.8	1.8	*	67.2	29.3	1.7	1.7	*
13)Relatives	68.7	27.8	1.7	1.7	*	69.8	27.6	1.7	0.9	*
14)Friends, acquaintances	43.4	46.9	5.3	4.4	*	31.0	48.3	16.4	4.3	*

Table 6: For help with the problems and worries of daily life (Japan)

Q21 For help with the problems and worries of daily life, what kind of person or organization do you feel you can rely on?

	Mail Survey (N=1,589) (%)					Web Survey (N=2,000) (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Undecided	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Undecided	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	3.4	31.0	34.5	15.2	16.0	0.6	16.4	37.5	29.6	16.0
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	8.2	49.1	23.3	8.0	11.4	2.8	33.9	32.0	17.8	13.6
3)Police	3.8	34.4	31.1	15.4	15.4	1.4	27.6	32.5	23.5	15.2
4)Residents' association	2.3	21.9	33.8	17.4	24.6	0.8	13.5	34.0	31.0	20.8
5) Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	1.6	19.8	30.4	16.0	32.2	1.1	11.1	20.6	30.2	28.1
6) Employer	5.7	30.0	30.4	14.7	19.2	2.2	21.8	29.7	25.0	21.5
7) Coworkers	7.8	35.1	26.3	11.7	19.2	3.8	25.4	25.8	20.2	24.0
8)People in neighborhood	6.2	36.9	28.4	13.3	15.2	2.6	23.3	32.4	25.1	16.8
9)Family	52.3	37.8	6.5	1.2	2.1	39.4	41.2	11.1	4.0	4.5
10)Relatives	20.1	43.7	22.9	6.3	7.0	10.4	39.1	25.4	15.3	9.8
11)Friends, acquaintances	20.6	53.1	15.3	3.8	7.2	15.4	50.4	18.8	6.2	9.2

Moving to the next question about reliance in the event of a major disaster or incident, the level of reliance on public institutions and organizations is higher than for daily problems and worries. This was already mentioned in the report on Vietnam. Even so, it is remarkable that a very high proportion of people relied primarily on family members and relatives even in these cases (see Table 7, 8 and 9).

Table 7: For help when the major natural disasters or incidents happened (Vietnam)

Q25 In the community where you live, if a major natural disaster or incident happened, what kind of person or organization could you rely on?

	Vi Xuyen ward, Nam Dinh city, Vietnam (%)					Giao Thuy district, Vietnam (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	48	30	17	5	0	60	22	12	5	1
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	23	39	15	23	0	43	27	15	12	3
3)Police or firefighting organization	33	32	19	13	3	43	22	17	15	3
4)Military	37	32	10	16	5	46	26	12	13	3
5)Political party, politician	34	36	10	13	7	53	25	15	6	1
6)Organization in nearby community	29	44	10	5	12	45	32	16	5	2
7)Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	5	35	12	26	22	35	28	16	9	12
8)Religious organization such as a temple or church	4	18	23	39	16	28	26	10	31	5
9)Employer	6	30	18	16	30	8	7	5	13	67
10)Coworkers	16	35	11	12	26	11	4	7	10	68
11)People in neighborhood	32	62	5	1	0	49	39	7	5	0
12)Family	93	5	1	1	0	88	10	2	0	0
13)Relatives	71	25	1	3	0	73	21	4	2	0
14)Friends, acquaintances	44	50	5	1	0	52	39	5	4	0

Table 8: For help when the major natural disasters or incidents happened (Cambodia)
Q25 In the community where you live, if a major natural disaster or incident happened, what kind of person or organization could you rely on?

	Siem Reap district, Cambodia (%)					Baban village, Cambodia (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	3.0	28.0	30.5	38.0	0.5	4.5	47.0	29.5	19.0	0.0
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	6.5	46.0	31.5	16.0	0.0	9.0	58.5	27.0	5.0	0.5
3-1)Firefighting organization	4.5	28.5	21.5	23.5	22.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	99.0
3-2) Police	5.5	45.5	25.5	21.5	2.0	2.5	44.5	28.5	17.5	7.0
4)Military	0.5	2.0	1.5	2.0	94.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	93.0
5)Political party, politician	0.5	4.5	9.0	55.5	30.5	0.5	15.5	20.5	40.5	23.0
6)Organization in nearby community	0.0	12.0	25.0	32.5	30.5	5.5	33.0	31.0	20.5	10.0
7)Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	25.0	14.0	24.0	33.0	26.5	2.0	21.5	29.0	23.0	24.5
8)Religious organization	1.5	57.0	19.0	5.5	17.0	17.0	54.5	18.0	4.5	6.0
9)Employer	2.5	6.5	7.0	3.5	80.5	0.0	1.0	2.5	3.5	93.0
10)Coworkers	3.5	14.0	7.5	4.0	71.0	0.5	2.5	5.0	2.5	89.5
11)People in neighborhood	4.5	67.0	21.5	6.0	1.0	9.5	72.0	18.0	0.0	0.5
12)Family	91.5	7.5	0.5	0.0	0.5	90.0	9.5	0.0	0.0	0.5
13)Relatives	55.0	35.0	7.0	2.0	1.0	60.5	36.0	3.5	0.0	0.0
14)Friends, acquaintances	7.0	61.0	20.0	9.0	3.0	9.0	67.5	22.5	1.0	0.0

Table 9: For help when the major natural disasters or incidents happened (Laos)
Q25 In the community where you live, if a major natural disaster or incident happened, what kind of person or organization could you rely on?

	Vientiane Municipality, Laos (%)					Nakang village and Done village, Laos (%)				
	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know	Very reliable	Somewhat reliable	Not very reliable	Cannot rely at all	I don't know
1)City hall, town or village hall etc.	73.9	16.5	5.2	4.3	*	73.9	21.7	4.3	0.0	*
2)Public institutions such as school or hospitals	39.1	49.6	6.1	5.2	*	37.9	44.0	12.1	6.0	*
3)Police or firefighting organization	36.5	40.9	17.4	5.2	*	37.4	33.0	27.0	2.6	*
4)Military	31.3	46.1	10.4	12.2	*	33.6	33.6	26.4	4.3	*
5)Political party, politician	23.4	40.2	17.8	18.7	*	22.8	38.6	23.8	14.9	*
6)Organization in nearby community	35.7	42.6	12.2	9.6	*	20.7	49.1	18.1	12.1	*
7)Volunteer, NPO, or civic group etc.	20.7	51.7	17.2	10.3	*	15.0	50.4	18.6	15.9	*
8)Religious organization such as a temple or church	33.0	37.4	13.9	15.7	*	25.9	30.2	30.2	13.8	*
9)Employer	11.0	37.0	23.1	28.7	*	3.7	31.5	38.9	25.9	*
10)Coworkers	23.0	51.3	13.3	12.4	*	16.8	43.4	26.5	13.3	*
11)People in neighborhood	37.1	45.7	12.1	5.2	*	43.5	40.0	14.8	1.7	*
12)Family	77.4	17.4	2.6	2.6	*	73.3	21.6	5.2	0.0	*
13)Relatives	71.6	25.0	1.7	1.7	*	71.6	25.0	3.4	0.0	*
14)Friends, acquaintances	48.3	39.7	6.0	6.0	*	33.3	44.7	16.7	5.3	*

Based on that, it is distinctive that Laos also showed the highest level of reliance on public institutions and organizations in this case, followed by Vietnam and Cambodia.

We have made a comparison in survey results on social trust and its characteristics between Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Japan. In Japan, social trust is poorer than in Laos and Vietnam, while that in Cambodia showed a huge difference, being at a significantly low level.

Even so, both with regard to daily worries and in the event of a major disaster, people in all three countries surveyed placed far greater reliance on their family members and relatives than on other choices. In either case, it is characteristic that their social trust concentrates on such reliance. It is notable that in Japan the level of reliance on family members and relatives is lower than in the three other countries.

Regarding trust in public institutions and organizations, it is conspicuous that Laos shows a much higher score than the two other countries. In Japan, people find them reliable to some extent, though their level of reliance is inferior to that in Laos.

At the moment, steady economic growth continues in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, which reminds us of Japan's rapid economic growth in the 1960s. Undergoing this process, Japan saw a drastic change in its social structure, relations and norms. In the future, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and other East Asian countries will probably see social trust centered on familial and kin relationships changed for a long time. These countries will unavoidably shift from social relations based on reliance on family members and relatives to formation of society based on increased interaction among strangers. Their relations with public institutions and organization or with non-governmental and non-profit organizations will increase. A society with harmony established by strangers based on an exchange of goods, which I would like to call a civic society, or social relations like this will be broadly constructed. This project inspires us to more carefully monitor how social capital will change in Asia in line with the expansion and deepening of civil social relations, i.e., how social relations will change and how the normative consciousness among individuals will change accordingly. I think it will be highly beneficial if this can be illuminated through joint research with overseas researchers, as reported today. I will press ahead with research exchange with those present at today's conference. Thank you very much for your attention.