

The CIIF Evaluation Consortium

Final Report for
Evaluating the Outcomes and Impact of
The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF)

for

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

**Social Trust and its Antecedent Conditions
in the Development of Social Capital**

Department of Applied Social Studies
City University of Hong Kong
March 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research objectives

- 1 The research project addresses the connection between trust and development of social capital. Specifically it attempts to answer two inter-related questions:
 - a) Has the CIIF experience on the part of project group members affected their level of social trust over time and relative to comparison others? and
 - b) What are the antecedent conditions of trust and has the CIIF experience made a difference to them?

Research methodology and data collection

- 2 The project adopted a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodology. For the quantitative part, this project employed survey methodology to collect data on selected stakeholders socio-demographic background, social capital indicators, participation, and trust, in order to examine the antecedent and predictive factors for trust building. The qualitative part of this project employed in-depth interview with project workers, core members and participants to understand from their perspectives which experiences, activities and strategies facilitated their trust building.
- 3 A total of 14 CIIF funded projects were selected. Finally, 263 completed questionnaires were collected for the survey and 61 in-depth interviews were completed for the qualitative analysis.

Participation in the CIIF projects

- 4 Nearly half (49%) of the surveyed persons had participated in the CIIF projects for more than one year. This finding could mean the surveyed CIIF projects generally have a stable and continuing participation. The majority (66.1%) of the respondents spent less than 5 hours per week on the projects, suggesting intensive participation was not common amongst the surveyed CIIF projects.

Findings

- 5 Positive Outcomes:

The involvement in the selected CIIF projects brought about positive outcomes in

the respondents, for example, heightened motivation to participate in the current project now (M=4.00, S.D.=0.69) and in the future (M=4.00, S.D.=0.73); enhanced sense of achievement (M=4.01, S.D.=0.75), self-confidence (M=4.08, S.D.=0.73), self-control (M=3.90, S.D.=0.077), and self-efficacy (M=3.96, S.D.=0.73). Five-point scales were used with '5' denotes most positive.

6. Personalized Trust and Generalized Trust:

The respondents generally showed a relatively high level of trust in the project organization, the project staff and the project core members. Their increase in personalized trust level after having participated in the CIIF project was also the highest with these three targets (Table 6). The mean scores of the 5-point Generalized Trust Scale was 3.43 (SD=0.57186) which was only slightly above average.

7 Social Capital - Experiential Social Capital:

Findings shows that the respondents gave help more than received help, except in relation to professional helpers, the volunteers, the political or governmental units, and local shops/commercial units. Nonetheless, the reciprocal levels of receiving and giving help were more or less similar. This indicates certain level of reciprocity among the respondents and their stakeholders (Table 8).

8 Social Capital - Structural Social Capital:

The Structured Social Capital Scale consisted of three components, namely network density, network homogeneity and network proximity, respectively. "Network homogeneity" generated a mean of 3.13, which reflects a mediocre degree of network homogeneity. So was network proximity with a mean of 3.25. But "network density" generated a mean of 3.46, indicating a relatively higher degree of contact and understanding among the respondents' social circle (Table 9).

9 Social Capital - Anticipatory Social Capital :

A relative higher mean of 3.87 was recorded for the item of "willingness to help others in the future" of the Anticipatory Social Capital Scale, indicating that the respondents' general intention to help others in the future (Table 11).

Predictors of Overall Trust

- 10 Findings show that the respondents' age, life satisfaction, whether they were born in Hong Kong, and feeling at home in Hong Kong predicted the level of overall trust.

Findings indicate that participation was not a predictor of overall trust when it was regressed together with other demographic and psycho-social variables. This reflects that the quantity of participation such as hours spent per week and duration of participation did not have independent effects on trust building.

Specifically, participants who were younger, had greater life satisfaction, being born outside Hong Kong, feeling at home in Hong Kong were more able than their counterparts to develop trust towards people and organizations in general; as well as to increase their degree of trust upon the specific project organization, the specific project staff and the specific project core members (Table 12).

Trust and Social Capital Building

- 11 Regression analysis shows all three types of trust (i.e., personalized trust, changed personalized trust and general trust) were predictors of social capital, that is, the higher the trust, the more ready respondents were to involve themselves himself/herself in the building of social capital. Second, Personalized Trust has a bigger predicting power on overall social capital than Change in Personalized Trust. Thirdly, both Personalized Trust and Changed Personalized Trust have a greater predicting power on social capital than General Trust. This shows that personal trust built on specific organizations/staff/stakeholders have greater influence on participants' readiness to be reciprocal and to network with other people than some general values.

Strategies in trust-building

- 12 According to the core members and service users, the common factors that built trust among the participants included: shared altruistic values and norms; being non-calculative; frequent contacts, communication and working together; having social gatherings together; open discussion; having meaningful experiences together, and then reflected and learned from them. Negative experiences, if handled well, could actually build trust, such as when conflicts were openly faced and honestly discussed, differences in opinions were settled democratically, and different views were listened to and respected.
- 13 The majority of workers identified the following factors as instrumental to building trust between agency/worker and the participants:

- a) Positive agency image - positive track record, appropriate promotional strategies.
 - b) Workers' performance: show of concern, appreciation and respect instead of being too task-oriented; personal qualities such as being honest, fair, keeping promises, and efficient; providing autonomy and opportunities to service users but giving support and advice when necessary.
 - c) Concrete help should be provided especially at the initial stage of relationship building, but long-lasting trusting relationship depended on reciprocal mutual-benefit in the process.
- 14 The workers also identified the following principles and tactics in building trust among the participants:
- a) Careful screening and selection of participants with similar interests and agreement with the service objectives.
 - b) Collaboration opportunities provided for participants to work, share, discuss, and have fun together.
 - c) Identification and sharing of values through communication, reflection and delivering tasks together.

Recommendations

- 15 The following recommendations were made on the basis of the research findings:
- a) Involvement in CIIF projects should be encouraged as this will bring about the enhancement of trust in individuals, groups and organizations in general, and trust in stake-holders related with the projects in particular; and other positive outcomes such as reciprocity, strengthened network, enhanced life satisfaction, sense of achievements and self efficacy.
 - b) Importance of agency image and track records should be emphasized since this would attract people to the service and to have initial confidence in the service projects. Should an agency plan to launch a project in a new district, effort should be devoted to building up the community network, and to promote the rationale and values of the specific project. These two factors may also be included in considering the funding application.
 - c) Personal qualities are crucial in mobilizing partners, volunteers and in turning service-users into help-givers; and it is crucial for the agency to recruit suitable workers with the qualities preferred by the participants. This is also essential for the agency to offer appropriate terms of employment to recruit and maintain qualified staff for the project. If necessary, adequate funding support from the

CIIF is essential, especially in the beginning stage.

- d) Further studies should be carried out to find out why the predictors could explain/predict social trust building, and the building of social capital, such as the reasons why people born outside Hong Kong, and, younger people became more trusting after participating in CIIF projects.

Chapter 6 Recommendations and Conclusion

Previous studies acknowledge the construct of trust forms a core part of social capital in a dynamic, mutually reinforcing relationship. Trust helps people to relax their self-interest, become more receptive of forming win-win relationships of reciprocity and mutual benefit, and engage in community-based collaboration for solving problems. It thus plays an important role in the development of a more robust and vibrant community. The latter, in turn, strengthens the social base for building greater trust.

This research addresses the connection between trust and development of social capital. Specifically it attempts to 1) address the connection between trust and the development of social capital; 2) identify the antecedent conditions for trust building; and 3) evaluate the effectiveness of various trust building strategies as adopted by different projects. In this chapter, the major findings of the study will be discussed according to these 3 areas; then recommendations on trust building and on enhancing social capital will be made.

6.1 Major Findings of the Study

Respondents of the study tended to have a stable and continuing participation of more than one year in the CIIF projects, though majority of them only spent less than five hours per week in the projects. At the same time, many of them also attended other groups and associations, though their participation was neither long nor intensive.

6.1.1 CIIF experiences enhanced trust and psychological well-being

It is found that the respondents' experiences in the projects were beneficial to trust building, especially their trust towards individuals, groups and organizations that were related with the projects (i.e. the Personalized Trust). They tended to have a high level of personalized trust especially on the project organizations, project staff and project core members. The increase of their trust on these three targets was also the highest among all other collaborators or stake-holders, such as groups/associations, participating commercial units or local government units. Moreover, CIIF experiences also brought about other positive outcomes, including a higher sense of achievement, self-confidence, self-control and self-efficacy. Many interviewees appreciated the projects as providing them with the arena to develop and actualize their potentials and skills (such as looking after children, cooking, contacting people)

6.1.2 CIIF experiences promoted social capital

Generally speaking, certain level of reciprocity (i.e. Experiential Social Capital) was found among the respondents and their stake-holders. There was also enhancement in the building of Structural Social Capital, especially in the Anticipatory Social Capital (i.e. the respondents were more willing to help others/contribute, and to have faith in reciprocity) and the Network Intensity (such as frequency of contacts with people in their social circle and the level of friendliness).

6.1.3 Antecedent conditions for trust building

Contrary to expectation, the study found that participation did not predict trust building. This suggests that the quantitative dimensions of participation, such as duration and intensity of participation, could not affect trust and trust building. The qualitative comments from the in-depth interviews may shed light on the reason behind. The respondents of the in-depth interviews acknowledged that after participating in the CIIF projects, they became more ready to trust others, had greater faith in human nature, became more ready to take the initiative and to reach out to help. It was in fact the quality of participation that really mattered, such as the nature and types of personal experiences in the projects: what they went through, the up-and-downs in the process, what they learned and reflected, how they felt in the process, how they interacted with stake-holders, how they handled unsuccessful experiences, and how they celebrate successes.

Rather, respondents who were younger, having greater degree of life satisfaction, born outside Hong Kong but feeling at home in Hong Kong tended to have higher level of overall trust.

6.1.4 Trust predicted the building of social capital

It is found that trust predicted both experiential and structural social capital, as well as anticipatory social capital. The higher the trust, the better the social capital. That is to say, respondents having developed a higher level of trust towards people and associations around him could establish social network that have more frequent contacts and are more cohesive.

6.1.5 Strategies in trust-building

According to the core members and service users, the common factors that built trust among the participants include: shared altruistic values and norms; being non-calculative; frequent contacts, communication and working together; having social gatherings together; open discussion; having meaningful experiences together, and then reflected and learned from them. Negative experiences, if handled well, could actually build trust, such as when conflicts were openly faced and honestly discussed, differences in opinions were settled democratically, different views were listened and respected. Otherwise, mistrust would be resulted, such as when there were gossips or when breaking promises.

Majority of the staff did not employ a systematic or formal strategy to build up the trust of their core members and service users. Apparently they were mostly reactive, and performed according to their conscience. Very often they identified the following factors as instrumental in building trust between agency/worker and the participants: (1) positive agency image: including positive track record in the community, appropriate promotional strategies; (2) Worker's performance: show of concern, appreciation and respect instead of being too task-oriented. Personal qualities also played an important role, such as being honest, fair, keeping promises, and efficient; providing autonomy and opportunities to service users but giving support and advice when necessary. Many workers frequently shared values and objectives with their colleagues and core members in order to enhance their identification with the projects. (3) Concrete help should be provided especially at the initial stage of relationship building, but long-lasting trusting relationship depended on reciprocal mutual-benefit in the process.

The workers also identified the following principles and tactics in building trust among the participants: (1) Careful screening and selection of participants with similar interests and agreement with the service objectives. (2) Collaboration opportunities: lots of opportunities were provided for participants to work, share, discuss, and have fun together. (3) Identification of values through communication, reflection and delivering tasks together.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1. Involvement in CIIF projects should be encouraged

This will bring about the enhancement of trust in individuals, groups and organizations generally, and trust in stake-holders related to the projects in particular. Involvement in CIIF projects may also enhance the sense of reciprocity, strengthen social supportive

network, and promote altruistic helping. Other positive outcomes, such as enhanced life satisfaction, sense of achievements and self efficacy may also result.

6.2.2 People born outside Hong Kong should be encouraged to participate in CIIF projects

The study found that people born outside Hong Kong (such as new arrivals, ethnic minority people etc.) benefited from their involvement in CIIF projects more than people born in Hong Kong, regardless of whether they were core members or general service users. Generally speaking, these non-local born people may require some adjustment in various aspects of their life, such as language, life style, job/study before they can tune in with the local community. Apparently their involvement in the CIIF projects may enhance their adjustment, help them to feel at home in Hong Kong, and foster a higher level of trust in individuals and groups in Hong Kong.

6.2.3. Children and youth should be encouraged to participate in CIIF projects

The study found that the younger the age of the participants, the higher would be their degree of overall trust. This suggests that trust raising would be more effective to start from a younger age.

6.2.4. Importance of agency image

Human service agencies should be mindful of the importance of building a positive image in the community since this would attract the general public to the service and to have initial confidence with the service projects. Agency image is also built up by the presence of the agency in the community, through its physical presence (e.g., an office or centre within the community or nearby) and / or its track records in serving the community. Should an agency plan to launch a project in a new district, effort should be devoted to build up the community network, and to promote the rationale and values of the specific project. Such factors - physical presence and track record as the basis of agency image - can also be included in considering funding proposals.

6.2.5. Dissemination of the good practices of various projects

There are abundant success stories and practice wisdoms from the projects. These should be disseminated and shared with relevant stake-holders, such as social workers, physicians, nurses, educators, religious leaders and others who are concerned with

building a harmonious society, and empowering people with special needs or poor means of living. These may best take the form of workshop or round table to facilitate interactive and reciprocal exchange, since everyone would have something to contribute.

6.2.6 Project workers' personal quality is crucial

In the process of investigation, it is observed that the personal qualities, not only the skills or knowledge but also including the values, orientations and visions, are crucial in mobilizing partners, volunteers and turning service-users into help-givers. It is crucial for the agency to recruit suitable workers with the qualities preferred by the participants in order for the project to become successful. This is also essential for the agency to offer appropriate terms of employment to recruit and maintain qualified staff for the project. If necessary, adequate funding support from the CIIF is essential, especially in the beginning stage.

6.2.7 Further studies

Further studies should be carried out to find out why the predictors could explain/predict social trust building, and the building of social capital, such as the reasons why people born outside Hong Kong, and younger people became more trusting after participating in CIIF projects.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

As most projects did not keep a comprehensive list of all participants, the sampling frame for the present study was not entirely representative and this limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the sample size of 263 was not large enough for more detailed analyses of various other factors. Within these limitations, however, the results converged sufficiently strongly to suggest some broad findings on which certain recommendations, referred to above, could be proposed for the present stage of CIIF development as well as the continual improvement of CIIF-funded projects.