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Elements in the Politics of Development

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SHOCKS AND POLITICS

Understanding Disaster Preparedness

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Shocks and Politics

Understanding Disaster Preparedness

Elements in the Politics of Development

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Abstract: When will government elites prepare for natural hazards? Existing research posits that governments will respond to disasters, but rarely have incentives to prepare for them. This Element argues that disaster preparedness can, and does, occur in the context of both motivated ruling elites and a capable state. Ruling elites can be mobilized to lead preparedness efforts when there is a risk that past exposure to hazards will lead to political instability in the face of a future hazard. Where elites anticipate a threat to their rule in the face of a future hazard, due to substantial past exposure and significant opposition strength, they will be motivated to engage in disaster preparedness. The quality and character of these efforts subsequently depend on the government's capacity to coordinate the design and implementation of preparedness plans. The Element tests this argument using a medium-N, country case study approach, drawing on evidence from ten countries in Africa and three in South Asia, as well as subnational analysis in India.

Keywords: Disasters, preparedness, capacity, India, Africa

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