

# The Tangshan Earthquake's Rehabilitation Village: an Exemplar of Post-disaster Reconstruction and Social Integration

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**Abstract:** Rehabilitation Village in Tangshan Earthquake is a model disabled community that evinces the notion of post-disaster reconstruction and social integration. This paper aims to unfold its establishment process, its social integration practices, and its crucial value to municipality development, as well as look forward to the bright prospects of its future development and the social integration of residents. As long as they recalled the earthquake, survivors remembered firsthand the devastation and panic they underwent: their homes were destroyed, loved ones perished, and entire communities were thrown into chaos. The construction of Rehabilitation Village indicates support from the government and all walks of life. The hardships and struggles in the construction process are described through the personal experiences of the villagers, and the comparison between before, after, and ten years after the earthquake vindicates the improvement of hardware facilities and living facilities.

**Keywords:** Tangshan earthquake; Rehabilitation Village; Post-disaster reconstruction; Social integration

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## 1. Recollecting the Disaster

The Tangshan earthquake is a devastating natural disaster, which has brought devastation and anguish to Tangshan city and its residents. In the aftermath of the earthquake, millions of people strived to survive among the rubble, and the memories of those who lived were often filled with the shock of destruction and inner pain

After the earthquake, the first rescue teams rushed to Tangshan, including the People's Liberation Army of China and volunteers, who braved the danger of aftershocks, regardless of personal safety, to rescue the injured and trapped people. The selfless dedication of these rescuers has saved tens of thousands of lives and is a bright spot in the earthquake.

Survivors experienced the devastation and fear caused by the earthquake. They searched for relatives and friends in the debris, enduring life and death trials; for those who lost family members, the inner pain is unspeakable. Even after more than 40 years, that unforgettable memory is still fresh in every Tangshan citizen's mind.

In the disaster, people had also shown strong vitality and the spirit of unity. The survivors supported each other through difficult times, showing the warmth and strength of humanity. At the same time, many people were participating in debris removal and rescue work, contributing to the reconstruction of the city.

The Tangshan earthquake had a profound impact on the lives and hearts of local people, including the destruction of homes and the breakdown of families. The 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck in the early hours of July 28, 1976, instantly laying Tangshan in ruins, killing 242,769 people, seriously injuring 164,851, shattering more than 7,200 families, and leaving 4,202 orphans. The psychological trauma after the earthquake is difficult to heal, even 40 years later, the Tangshan earthquake memorial wall established in the Tangshan Earthquake Site Park still bears witness to the unforgettable pain in people's hearts.

The impact of the Tangshan earthquake is not limited to that time, and some buildings in the earthquake site park still retain traces of that time, becoming a witness to history. These sites remind people not to forget history, cherish the present, and pay more attention to the safety of the city and the safety of people's lives and property.

The earthquake not only destroyed Tangshan physically but also had a great psychological impact on the local people. According

to the Tangshan Earthquake Museum, 11.6 percent of people wanted to leave Tangshan within a week of the quake, and 1.5 percent still wanted to leave three to six months after the quake. This shows the psychological impact of the earthquake on local people and the sense of insecurity.

However, the people of Tangshan have shown outstanding disaster resistance and resilience in the face of the disaster. They have made great efforts for post-disaster reconstruction and social recovery through a scientific view of earthquakes, effective preventive measures, and timely psychological rehabilitation. Engels's famous saying "There is no great historical disaster that is not compensated by the progress of history" is also verified here. The earthquake-resistant spirit created by the people of Tangshan, such as "no plague after a major disaster", rapid reconstruction, resumption of production, and the rise of the city, has brought valuable experience and inspiration to all mankind.

The earthquake not only brought casualties and material losses but also profoundly impacted family structures, marriage concepts and lifestyles in Tangshan. After the earthquake, the family reorganization, the care of paraplegics and earthquake orphans and the support of orphans have become prominent social problems, and these changes have had an important impact on the stability and development of local society.

## **2. The Reconstruction Process of Rehabilitation Village**

The building process of Rehabilitation Village is closely related to the earthquake. After the Tangshan earthquake, Rehabilitation Village became one of the settlements for paraplegic patients, located on the north side of Lunan District People's Hospital in Tangshan. At that time, there were conditions for staying in Rehabilitation Village, the 26 families living in Rehabilitation Village were family units, and both husband and wife were paraplegic patients caused by the earthquake, also known as wheelchair village, a wheelchair is their only way to travel. Foreign experts once predicted that the survival limit of high paraplegic patients is 15 years, and the villagers in the rehabilitation village here have created a miracle of life, and now they have lived in wheelchairs for 48 years. Here there is the resilience of life. After decades of time, the villagers of Rehabilitation Village gradually returned to the right track of life, although the earthquake brought scars, with the passage of time gradually smooth it, the Rehabilitation Village has eight rows of houses, a clean main road through the middle, near the gate is the activity room, where the old people carry out collective activities.

The Village's philosophy is that everyone should be treated with the same respect and equality, regardless of their external disability. Located in more than 20 countries around the world, each community is committed to social renewal with children, youth, and adults through community building, committed to meeting the needs of each community member and promoting high standards of care and self-development.

Uncle Li is an old villager in Rehabilitation Village. He was injured in the Tangshan earthquake and became a paraplegic. After the earthquake, the Tangshan municipal government decided to establish a Rehabilitation Village to provide a safe and comfortable living environment for earthquake survivors. The construction of the Rehabilitation Village is a difficult but hopeful process. The houses in the rehabilitation village are well equipped with special rehabilitation facilities and medical equipment, providing convenient rehabilitation services for the villagers. At the same time, Rehabilitation Village has also established various activities and recreational facilities to enrich the villagers' spare time life and promote their physical and mental health.

Today, Rehabilitation Village has become the home of Uncle Li and other villagers, where they live a happy life, full of hope and vitality. The construction process of the Rehabilitation Village fully reflects the care and support of the government and all sectors of society for earthquake survivors, as well as the successful experience of post-earthquake reconstruction and the power of human love.

## **3. Practice and Exploration of Social Integration**

The practice and exploration of social integration are particularly important in rehabilitation villages. As a colony of earthquake paraplegics, the villagers of Rehabilitation Village face both physical and social challenges. However, it is these challenges that inspire them to persevere and constantly explore new ways to integrate into society.

First of all, Rehabilitation Village has promoted communication and interaction among the villagers by organizing various collective activities. These activities not only enrich their daily lives but also give them the opportunity to showcase their talents and potential. In these activities, the villagers gradually established deep friendships and formed close community relationships, thus enhancing their sense of belonging and self-confidence.

Secondly, Rehabilitation Village also actively contacts the outside world to win more social resources and support for the villagers. They have established good cooperative relations with surrounding communities, schools, hospitals, etc., providing more

rehabilitation opportunities and cultural activities for the villagers. At the same time, Rehabilitation Village also actively participated in social welfare activities, showing their tenacity and optimism, and won widespread attention and praise from society.

In addition, Rehabilitation Village also pays attention to cultivating the self-development ability of the villagers. They encourage villagers to learn new knowledge and skills to improve their cultural literacy and comprehensive ability. In this way, villagers are not only better integrated into society, but also able to find more fun and value in life.

In the practice and exploration of social integration, Rehabilitation Village has achieved remarkable results. The villagers not only gradually adapted to the life changes brought about by disability, but also actively participated in social life and realized their own value. At the same time, the experience of Rehabilitation Village also provides a useful reference for other similar communities.

In general, the practice and exploration of social integration is a long and complicated process. It needs the joint efforts of the government, all walks of life, and villagers to achieve good results. In the rehabilitation village, we see the fruits of this effort and hope for the future.

#### **4. The Important Value of Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Social Integration into Rehabilitation Village**

Rehabilitation Village plays a key role in post-disaster reconstruction, and its importance is reflected in the restoration of homes and life order, which is of great value to the disaster-affected people. With a general increase in national awareness, there is a general desire to continue to promote post-disaster revitalization while restoring reconstruction. The goal of post-disaster reconstruction is to achieve relocation, work relief, industrial park construction, and other measures while paying attention to the restoration of the ecological environment, in order to rebuild the beautiful homeland as soon as possible. Post-disaster recovery and reconstruction is not only an important link in disaster prevention, mitigation, resistance, and relief work but also an important means to ensure regional economic and social development. In this process, it is particularly important to strengthen supervision and inspection, including strict control of project quality, fund use, integrity, and safety, to ensure that funds and materials are used in compliance. At the same time, improving the implementation mechanism is also the key to forming a strong synergy of coordination and close interaction at the upper and lower levels to ensure that all responsible units perform their duties and fulfill their tasks, so as to promote the smooth progress of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

#### **5. Conclusion**

As a model of post-disaster reconstruction and social integration, Rehabilitation Village shows the resilience and unity of human beings in the face of natural disasters and also paints a blueprint for our future development. Looking forward to the future development of Rehabilitation Village and the bright prospect of social integration of residents, we can see bright hope and infinite possibilities.

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