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Abstract

Digging in?

Migration preferences in communities affected by climate change – evidence from Bangladesh

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We analyse unique survey data on the migration intentions of 400 households in two extremely climate exposed unions in coastal Bangladesh. Few households in these areas expect to relocate elsewhere over the coming five-year period. Surprisingly, households that have experienced environmental shocks do not express higher migration intentions or expectations of future shocks. These results hold controlling for variables reflecting household constraints, vulnerability and coping capacity, and likely reflects the population remaining in the region being a highly selected sample whose preferences for mobility are low and remain limited in the face of environmental shocks. Moreover, an embedded discrete choice experiment shows that shock-exposed households are *less* likely to move in scenarios of worse future environmental conditions. We argue that this is hard to explain through selection or increased resilience alone, and may instead reflect preference change among shock-exposed households that have chosen to remain. Our results suggest that in contexts of ongoing exposure to climate shocks, migration may over time become an increasingly unimportant adaptation strategy in affected areas.

