

Cyclone-Induced Migration in Southwest Coastal Bangladesh

Bishawjit Mallick

Summary

This research investigates the relationship between disasters, migration, and resulting social change in southwest coastal Bangladesh. The focus is on individual households' adaptation strategies in the aftermath of cyclones. Migration is understood here in the context of Cyclone Sidr (2007) and Cyclone Aila (2009), and is defined as the temporary or even permanent migration of at least one family member in search of better economic opportunities. The corresponding social change for the affected households, their home locations, and their new locations is described as an outcome of their migration. The research results are based on field surveys that were conducted in 2009 and 2010 with 1,555 respondents from 45 villages in southwest coastal Bangladesh, as well as on additional qualitative interviews. The findings show that after the phasing out of emergency aid, male members of a significant number of households started moving to neighboring cities. These migration patterns were then related to the distribution of income and assets at the community level.

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Introduction¹

Environmental disasters have across the globe and throughout history influenced population movement in different ways, depending on the affected countries and communities. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2012), there is a lack of clear evidence for a systematic trend of migration patterns — in the sense of actively pursued migration — in the aftermath of episodes of extreme climate events. To date, only the impact of extreme hydrometeorological events on immediate population displacement has been confirmed. For example,

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