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Staying through Salinity: Household Mobility Decisions in Southwestern Bangladesh

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Abstract

Rising salinity can alter livelihoods without producing a simple choice between permanent migration and remaining in place. This study investigates household mobility decisions in four villages in southwestern Bangladesh. Three survey rounds with 312 households were combined with soil and drinking-water salinity measurements, livelihood calendars, and 38 interviews conducted over eighteen months. Household models examined associations between salinity exposure, income diversification, and temporary work away from home. Higher dry-season salinity was associated with more short work trips among households able to finance travel, while poorer households often reduced cultivation without sending a worker elsewhere. Care responsibilities and uncertainty about destination jobs also shaped decisions to stay. Residents distinguished maintaining a home from keeping all household members continuously present. The findings connect environmental pressure to unequal capacities for both movement and continued residence. Measurements from selected sites cannot capture every household's exposure, and observed associations do not establish salinity as the sole driver. Adaptation support should address water access, livelihood options, and the costs of constrained mobility together.

Keywords: salinity, environmental mobility, immobility, livelihood diversification, southwestern Bangladesh

1. Introduction

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2. Methods

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