This paper investigates the effects of international migration restrictions on communities' capacity to absorb income shocks after natural catastrophes. We use the implementation of an emigration ban on female Indonesians as a natural experiment. After an array of violent assaults against female servants in Saudi Arabia, the Indonesian government issued a moratorium in 2011, preventing millions of female workers to migrate as domestic workers to Saudi Arabia. Exploiting the exogenous timing of the ban and that of natural disasters allows us to estimate the causal effect of the absence of international migration as an adaptive strategy. In a panel of all Indonesian villages, we compare poverty rates in the aftermath of natural disasters for villages whose main destination is Saudi Arabia against others, before and after the policy shock. We find that in villages with strong ex-ante propensity to migrate to Saudi Arabia, poverty increases by 12.1% in face of natural disasters after the ban, further aggravating the already severe consequences induced by those events.
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