Gendering the Gravity Model of Migration in South Asian Context: Evidence of Capabilities-Growth Nexus

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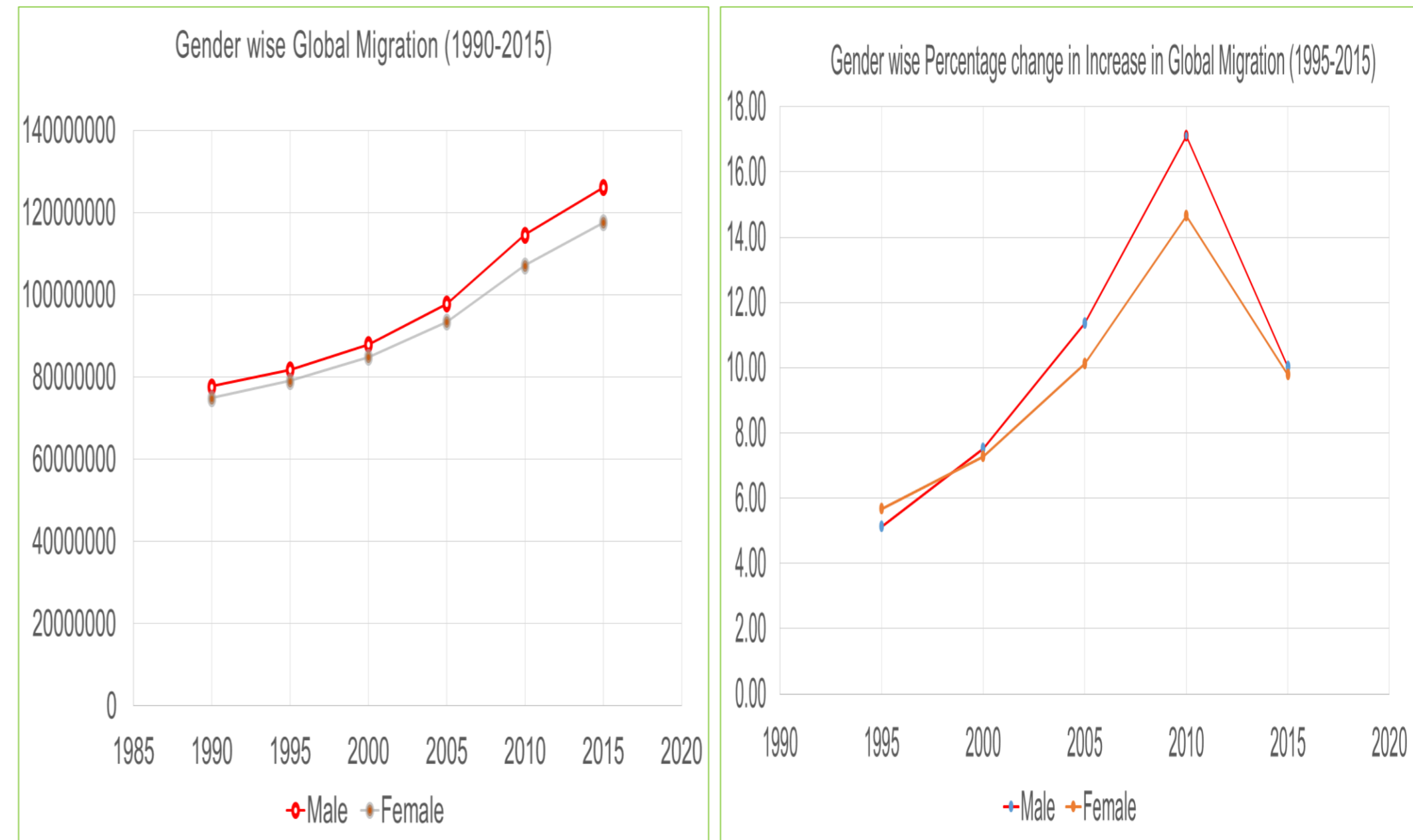**TISS**
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ABSTRACT

The present paper focuses on women's migration from South Asia and argues about the limitations of aggregate migration studies in delving on differing determinants that shape unique choices in moving to destination. Drawing from exiting literature, the panel data analysis for two time points (2000, 2010) is across three countries: India. Bangladesh and Nepal.

Some of the key findings are:

- Overall migration continues to be dominated by classical gravity determinants (GDP, population in destination, inflation and share of migration stock).

- Female migration, however, is driven by various socio-cultural determinants that are dominated by human development variables.

- It is equally important that qualitative variables like the political stability and cultural index are extremely crucial in capturing the role of women in migration process, especially among developing countries.

- Choices of Female mobility among South Asian migrants is strongly controlled by the rule of law, political stability, cultural proximities

TRENDS IN SOUTH ASIAN MIGRATION

Gender wise Global Migration (1990-2015)

Gender wise Percentage change in Increase in Global Migration (1995-2015)

DATA & METHODOLOGY

- ❖ Panel data for three South Asian countries (India, Bangladesh and Nepal) across 129 destination countries over two-time points
- ❖ Random-effects GLS regression:
  - ❖ Classical gravity model (distance, population, and gravity),
  - ❖ Human development variables,
  - ❖ Regional dimensions
  - ❖ qualitative parameters
- ❖ Estimation of Principal components of qualitative indicators representing political freedom and cultural proximity

SELECTION OF INDICATORS
Double Log Function

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE		
ECONOMC GRAVITY	GDP, Population, Inflation	
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT	GDP PPP, Health Expenditure, Health Personnel	
POLITICAL & CULTURAL	Rule of Law, Control of Corruption, Political Stability, Common Language, Borders, and Colonial Past	
REGIONAL	Regional Dummies	

SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANT: PROFILE & POLICIES

Male
- Young
- Diverse Human Capital: Low amidst High
- *Temporary Employment to West & S. E. Asia; Permanent Employment to Developed Countries*

Female
- Dependent Population
- Invisible Human Capital
- Sub-regional mobility; Undisclosed and not captured adequately

WHO IS A SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANT?

- ❖ Signatories to global conventions like CEDAW and Beijing Platform; *But varying interpretations and half hearted implementation*
- ❖ The SDG Migration Framework recognizes multiple types and directions; **But does not penalize countries for failure to comply or discrepancies in regional commitments**

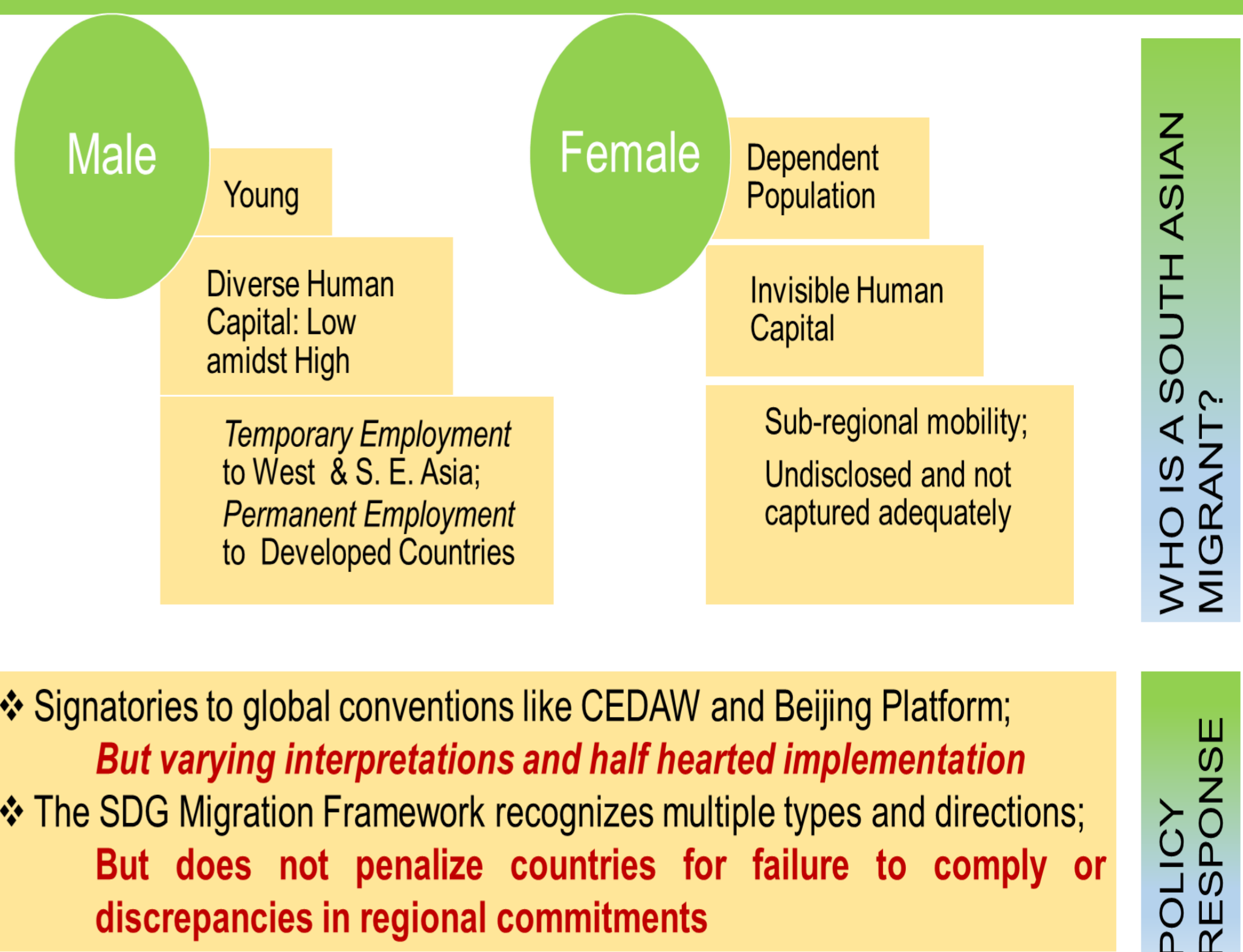**POLICY RESPONSE**

RESULTS

Gravity Model Analysis

All variables are statistically significant at 1-5 per cent, with varying levels for total and female migration specification

- ○ Highly inelastic values (ranging 0.02-0.78) of GDP indicates strict choices of migration
- ○ Higher elasticity values w.r.t. population (0.500-0.900) esp. for females

Inclusion of Human Development Variables

- ○ HD coefficients had higher elasticities than economic gravity indicators
- ○ GDP(PPP) values were positive and ranged between (0.112-0.553) indicating the intrinsic importance migrant lay on the standard of living
- ○ Migration stock in the destination are extremely critical component of South Asian Migration, particularly women (Bangladesh & Nepal), esp. for female migrants
- ○ Health expenditures, availability of health care personnel and infrastructure contribute to improved quality of life; inelastic coefficients range between (0.113-0.330) significant at 1 per cent level
- ○ Political stability index is highly significant for migrants from Bangladesh and Nepal, whereas cultural index was significant for Indian migrants
- ○ Note, coefficient for estimations for female migrants were higher in most HD estimations
- ○ Inverse elasticity coefficients indicate higher the cost of living the lower possibility of migrant population

CONCLUSIONS

- ○ The diversity of shores has increased from 134 countries in 1990 to 142 countries in 2015, esp. to Latin America and South Asia.
- ○ In absolute terms the neighborhood migration in South Asia appears to be reducing relative to other regions
- ○ Women migrants from this region need to be relooked at discarding the gaze of 'distressed, trafficked, and vulnerable' women
- ○ Women's preferences for cultural harmony and political stability have emerged as a glaring dimension of South Asian migration
- ○ To sum up, the ambivalence of South Asian regional policies on issues related to migration and the inability of the global setting to reorient agendas for local development continues to be the key challenge