Changing Pattern of Women Migration

What is the issue?

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- A paper titled “Mobility in India, recent trends and issues concerning database” was released recently.
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- The findings of the paper on women migration call for appropriate government response and policies.
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What are the highlights?

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- The paper takes into account the 64th round of the National Sample Survey (NSS).
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- It also takes in figures from the 2011 Census and the National Health and Family Survey (NFHS) IV.
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- As per NFHS IV, women aged 20-24 married before the age of 18 has gone down from 47% in 2005-06 to 27% in 2015-16.
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- Also, women aged 15-19 already mothers or pregnant at the survey time has become half from the 16% in 2005-06.
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- The paper highlights that the number of women migrating within India is increasing at a higher rate than men.
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- Marriage continues to play an important role in women migration.
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- But besides this, economic factors such as employment, business and education have gained in importance.
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- It shows a reduced dependence on marriage as the single factor behind women migration.

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What are the related concerns in India?

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- **Participation** - Labour participation is the share of those employed or is seeking work relative to the working-age population.
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- India’s female labour participation rate is around 33% at the national level.
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- This is well below the global average of around 50% and East Asia average of around 63%.
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- This is partly due to the missing gender perspective on internal migration policies.
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- **Migrants** - Around 80% of migrated eligible female graduates choose not to participate in the organised workforce.
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- They are forced to work in construction sites and as household help for low wages.
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- Women migrants remain invisible and discriminated against in the workforce.
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- This is especially more the case with those in lower-end informal sector occupations.
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- Also they don't have facilities like maternity leave and other such entitlements.
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- Another concern is the lack of access to proper sanitation, with serious health consequences.
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- Migrant women are also more vulnerable to sexual harassment, especially in the hands of agents and contractors.
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- Another persistent issue is the gender pay gap, which is not restricted to lower-end jobs alone.
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- **Dropout** - India sees the highest drop in representation of women from junior to middle-level positions.

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- This is unlike several other Asian countries where such a drop occurs from middle- to senior-level positions.
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- This, in turn, impacts the supply line for higher levels.
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- Almost one-third of women employees do not resume work, in the absence of a support system at home for child-caring.
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What lies ahead?

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- Government's role in labour migration laws and policies is significant to sustain the momentum on migration.
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- The government has to ensure a gender-sensitive and rights-based approach in this regard.
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- Securing public spaces for women and creating an enabling infrastructure are essential.
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- Governments have to ensure that they are safe from stranger violence and harassment from employers.
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- **Kerala model** - Kerala has launched Aawaz, a free health care-cum-insurance scheme for migrant workers.
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- It covers any migrant worker employed in the state, between the ages of 18 and 60.
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- Workers are eligible for free medical treatment worth up to Rs 15,000.
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- Also, an insurance coverage of Rs 200,000 for accidental death is provided.
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- Medical treatment will be available from all government hospitals and also private hospitals empanelled with the scheme.
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Source: Business Standard

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