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**Resum.-** *Estratègies de protecció social dels immigrants de l'Índia a Espanya i a Itàlia: xarxes transnacionals i polítiques de diàspora.*

Des de 1990, el nombre d'immigrants de la Índia al sud d'Europa ha augmentat considerablement amb una afluència constant d'immigrants irregulars. Una gran part d'ells no són elegibles per a feines formals i treballen en l'economia submergida, on no tenen drets laborals ni accés als esquemes formals de protecció social. La seva seguretat social depèn completament de la xarxa transnacional de familiars o amics i associacions socials o religioses, que els ajudin en períodes d'atur, a resoldre problemes legals amb l'administració d'acollida i en situació de malaltia. A partir d'observacions etnogràfiques i 86 entrevistes en profunditat amb immigrants indis a Espanya (36) i a Itàlia (33) i els seus familiars a l'Índia (17), aquest treball primer identifica les principals vulnerabilitats dels immigrants indis al país d'origen i en les dues destinacions (Espanya i Itàlia); segon, descriu "l'entorn de recursos" dels immigrants indis dels dos països i les seves estratègies per afrontar els seus riscos socials que afecten negativament les seves possibilitats de vida; i tercer, s'analitza el paper de les xarxes transnacionals i de les polítiques de la diàspora a l'hora de donar resposta a les necessitats d'immigrants irregulars d'origen indi i de les seves famílies a l'Índia. Els resultats mostren que els parents d'immigrants, xarxes socials i associacions comunitàries tenen un paper fonamental a l'hora de proporcionar seguretat social als immigrants de l'Índia irregulars del sud d'Europa, on normalment no solen ser atesos pels esquemes formals de protecció social.

**Paraules clau.-** Protecció social; Immigrants indis; Transnacionalisme; Xarxes socials; Sud d'Europa.

**Resumen.-** *Estrategias de protección social de los inmigrantes de la India en España y en Italia: redes transnacionales y políticas de diáspora.*

Desde 1990, el número de inmigrantes de la Índia en el sur de Europa ha aumentado considerablemente con flujos de inmigrantes irregulares. Una gran proporción de ellos no son elegibles para ocupaciones formales y trabajan en la economía sumergida, donde no tienen derechos laborales y acceso a servicios formales de protección social. Su seguridad social depende completamente de su red transnacional de parientes o amigos y asociaciones sociales o religiosas, que los ayudan durante los períodos de desempleo, a resolver problemas legales con la administración de acogida y en situación de enfermedad. Basado en observaciones etnográficas y 86 entrevistas en profundidad con inmigrantes indios en España (36) e Italia (33) y sus familiares en India (17), este artículo identifica, primero, las principales vulnerabilidades de los inmigrantes indios en el país de origen y en ambos destinos (España e Italia); segundo, describe el "entorno de recursos" de los inmigrantes indios y sus estrategias para abordar sus riesgos sociales que afectan negativamente sus condiciones de vida; por último, analiza el papel de las redes transnacionales y las políticas de la diáspora para responder a las necesidades de los inmigrantes irregulares de origen indio y sus familias en la India. Los resultados muestran que los familiares de los inmigrantes, las redes sociales y las asociaciones comunitarias desempeñan un papel vital en la provisión de seguridad social a los inmigrantes de la India que se encuentran de forma irregular en el sur de Europa y que generalmente no son atendidos por los esquemas formales de protección social.

**Palabras clave:** Protección social; Inmigrantes indios; Transnacionalismo; Redes sociales; Sur de Europa.

**Abstract.-** *Social protection strategies of Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy: Transnational networks and diaspora policies.*

Since 1990, the number of Indian immigrants in Southern Europe has increased considerably with a steady influx of irregular immigrants. A large proportion of them are not eligible for formal jobs and work in shadow economy, where they do not have labour rights and access to formal social protection schemes. Their social security depends entirely on their transnational network of relatives or friends and social or religious associations, which help them during periods of unemployment, to solve legal problems with the host administration and in situation of illness. Based on ethnographic observations and 86 in-depth interviews with Indian immigrants in Spain (36) and Italy (33) and their relatives in India (17), this paper first identifies the main vulnerabilities of the Indian immigrants in the country of origin and both destinations; second, describes the 'resource environment' of Indian immigrants in both countries and their strategies to address their social-risks that negatively affect their life chances. And finally, analyse the role of transnational networks and diaspora policies in responding to the needs of irregular immigrants of Indian origin and their families in India. The results show that the relatives of immigrants, social networks and community associations play a vital role in providing social security to irregular Indian immigrants in southern Europe, who are usually neglected by formal social protection schemes.

**Keywords:** Social protection; Indian immigrants; Transnationalism; Social network; Southern Europe.

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**SOCIAL PROTECTION STRATEGIES OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN SPAIN AND ITALY:  
TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND DIASPORA POLICIES**

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**1.- Introduction**

At the dawn of the millennium, Italy and Spain, which were traditionally emigrant countries, emerged as the leading recipients of immigrants in the European Union (Arango and Finotelli 2009). According to the national statistical institutes, ISTAT in Italy and INE in Spain, the proportion of foreigners (based on citizenship) in the total population has increased from 1.8% to 8.3% in Italy and 2.2% to 10.7% in Spain from 2000 to 2018. Large-scale influx of mostly unqualified irregular immigrants in a very short period resulted in the increase of socio-economic inequalities and exerted enormous pressure on state welfare institutions in these countries, which were not prepared for their accommodation in the host labour market and civil society (Einaudi, 2007). Further, the economic-crisis (2008-2014) that paralysed the economy of both countries, exacerbated the socio-economic conditions of new immigrants (Castles and Miller 2010, Bonifazi and Marini 2011). In addition, increase in migration controls and the dependence of welfare-state institutions on nationality and residency made it difficult for migrants to access and provide social protection for themselves and for their families left behind (Serra Mingot 2018). As migrant workers, especially irregular ones, are often not covered by formal social protection schemes in their country of origin and destination (van Ginneken, 2013, Chelpi-den Hamer and Mazzucato 2010), they created a class of people in the host societies who are vulnerable to the social risks related to nourishment, employment, health, education and housing and deprived of all social and political rights (Morris, 2002). Several authors have focused on new immigrant's lack of access to formal social protection services in receiving countries and the portability of social benefits from their countries of origin to the countries of destination or the opposite way (Vonk, 2002; Holzmann,

Koettl, and Chernetsky, 2005, Avato et al. 2009, 2010, Faist and Bilecen 2015). In the absence of other sources, these migrants depend mainly on their transnational networks (consisting of relatives and friends) and other socio-religious associations to cope with their social risks and to provide care to children and the elderly (Barglowski et al. 2015). During the last two decades, one of the new immigrant groups, which is trying to make its place in Italy and Spain, is the 'Indian immigrants'.

In 2018, there were 152 thousand registered immigrants of Indian origin in Italy and 47.6 thousand in Spain. However, still they make a very small proportion of the total foreign population in Italy (3%) and Spain (2%). After the United Kingdom, Italy has the highest number of Indian immigrants in Europe. According to the estimates provided by qualified informants, the majority of Indian immigrants in both countries belong to the Punjabi community, which emigrated from the north Indian states of Punjab and Haryana. Other groups of Indian origin are: Sindhis, who come from the western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra, and now settled in different parts of Spain; and Malayalis, who emigrated from the south Indian state of Kerala and currently settled in the capital region of Rome in Italy. Until the 1990s, the number of Indian immigrants in both countries was very small. The large-scale migration of Indian men (mainly from the Punjabi community) to these countries began in the 1990s. It established these countries as new and emerging destinations of the global Indian diaspora (Garha and Domingo 2017). After the independence of India in 1947, the United Kingdom was the most favourite destination of the Indian immigrants, but due to the restrictions imposed on the entry of commonwealth citizens, under the 1968 immigration law, they began to settle in north European countries, like France and Germany. The difficult process of regularisation of third country nationals in these countries affected their plans of family reunion and permanent settlement. On the contrary, the possibilities of regularisation and the availability of manual jobs in the shadow economy, attracted many of them to Italy and Spain. After the settlement of the first migrants, a chain migration of their relatives and friends resulted in a continuous influx of Indian immigrants to these countries (Garha and Paparusso 2018). As most of the new migrants had a very low level of education and skills, and most of them entered irregularly, they are engaged in manual jobs in the shadow economy and do not receive formal social protection from host governments.

In previous research on the Indian community in Italy and Spain, several authors explained their history of migration (Lopez Sala, 2013, Navarro 1974), territorial distribution (Garha et al. 2016), internal diversities (Lum 2010, 2012, Sahai and Lum 2013, Denti et al 2005), level of integration (Garha and Paparusso 2018, Garha and Domingo 2019) and internal mobility (Garha 2019). However, there are still few studies that focus on the main vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants in



the origin and destination countries, their resource environment and strategies to reduce social risks. The initial arguments of this paper are: first, Indian immigration in Italy and Spain has diverse origins and heterogeneous socio-economic profiles, which affects their level of vulnerability and determine their needs of social protection in the origin and the host countries. Second, most Indian immigrants in both countries have used migration as a strategy to avoid social risks in their country of origin. However, they do not get decent jobs and live in the poor stratum of the host societies due to their irregular status and low skills. It makes them vulnerable to all those social risks, which they wanted to avoid through migration. And finally, transnational networks (consisted of relatives and friends) and religious or cultural associations play an important role in providing social security to Indian immigrants during different phases of their migration process and to their relatives left behind. The main objectives of this paper are: first, to identify the main vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants in their place of origin, during the journey, at the destination, and for returned migrants; second, to highlight the actors and the strategies used by Indian immigrants to overcome these vulnerabilities; and finally, analyse the resource environment of Indian immigrants (regulars and irregulars) and draw their constellations of social protection in both countries.

The main reasons behind the selection of Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain as study population are: first, Indian immigrants is a relatively new immigrant group in both countries. Therefore, it provides us the opportunity to study the main vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants in the new countries of the Indian diaspora, which have no historical and colonial ties with India, and their strategies or tactics to cope with them; second, the high number of irregular migrants and the poor socio-economic status of regular migrants of Indian origin in both countries have a considerable impact on their access to formal social protection services. It allows us to study, how the migrants of different legal statuses in the receiving countries construct and use their resource environment to avoid social risks; and finally, the Indian government does not have bilateral agreements to protect the rights of regular or irregular workers of Indian origin in Italy and Spain, which affects their access and portability of social benefits. It allows us to study that how this lack of bilateral agreements affect the access and portability of social protection rights of Indian immigrants in these countries.

## **2.- Migrant's social protection and transnational networks**

Social protection refers to strategies designed to deal with social risks, such as the lack of material, physical, or financial sources for social existence, which arise in fields such as employment, health care and education, which may limit life chances of vulnerable groups (Faist 2013, Bilecen and

Bargłowski 2015, Bilecen, and Sienkiewicz 2015). Therefore, the main objectives of social protection plans are to reduce poverty, manage vulnerability and improve economic growth (Avato et al, 2010; Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003; Shepherd et al, 2004). It has four realms: states, markets, civil society, and family and social networks (Faist 2017). In explaining the relationship between migration and social protection, Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (2003) affirm that “migration is both a social protection strategy as well as a process leading to vulnerabilities that require specific social protection instruments”. Therefore, the decision to migrate can be seen as a way to insure the family against social risks, but it can also lead to vulnerabilities that require social protection for immigrants and their families. Migrants face four types of vulnerabilities, i.e. temporal, spatial, socio-cultural and socio-political, which affect them during the different phases of the migration process, i.e. at origin, during the journey, at the destination, and the returned migrant (*Ibid*). International migrants, especially irregular migrants, are more prone to spatial, socio-cultural and socio-political vulnerabilities.

### **2.1.- Social protection types**

Migrants organize their social protection taking into account state regulations, civil society organisations, supranational frameworks, their own capacities and their kinship network throughout the world (Faist et al. 2015). They use a combination of formal, semi-formal and informal social protection strategies to eliminate their social risks. Formal social protection (FSP) is provided by state welfare institutions and other governmental institutions, international organisations and private market providers (Faist et al. 2015). The FSP provided by the ‘state’ includes all programs financed with public funds that are reinforced by laws, follows the eligibility criteria and are carried out in a formally and organisationally codified state regulatory framework (Bilecen and Bargłowski, 2015). While the FSP provided by the ‘international organizations’, such as the Red Cross, Caritas, the World Health Organization and local NGOs, includes all the activities carried out to respond to the specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks of migrants in several European countries (Serra Mingot and Mazzucato 2017) and ‘private market’ institutions, such as insurance companies, includes social insurance (contribution-based, against the risks of unemployment, ill health, disability, or poverty in old age), social assistance (usually tax based for those unable to support themselves), and labour market interventions designed to promote employment (Magnoni et al, 2010, van Ginneken, 1999).

In relation the migrant population, Sabates-Wheeler and Koettl (2010) have identified three main components of FSP, i.e. access, portability and labour market conditions. First, access to FSP in the

countries of origin and reception is determined at the national level and follows some legally demarcated eligibility criteria. Due to its dependence on the criteria of nationality or legal stay in the receiving countries, it is often not completely available to migrants and their families (Avato et al 2009). Irregular immigrants, who lacks the permission to stay and work in host countries, do not have access to FSP schemes in many European countries (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003). Even temporary regular immigrants hesitate to apply for the FSP, as it may reduce their chances of becoming a permanent resident of the host countries (Mayer et al, 2013). Second, the portability of social benefits or contributory pensions from one employment country to another is important for migrants to avoid financial losses when they leave their country of origin to settle abroad or when they return to their country of origin after working abroad (Avato et al, 2009). In many sending and receiving countries, the portability of old-age pensions, disability and health care benefits is facilitated by bilateral agreements between respective governments (van Ginneken, 2013). The lack of these agreements affects migrants from poor countries of origin, who feel obliged to remain in their country of employment during their old age. In most European countries, the portability of pension and health benefits has remained stagnant for last two decades (Vonk and van Walsum, 2012). Third, labour market conditions also have a very significant impact on the FSP for migrants. In most of the European countries, the migrants' FSP depends mainly on their working conditions (job category, type of employment contract, amount of tax paid and duration of work). Due to their poor labour market conditions, such as being unemployed, underemployed or working without full employment contracts, low-skilled and undocumented migrants fall outside of FSP coverage (Avato et al, 2009; Mayer et al, 2013).

Informal social protection (ISP) for migrants is provided by family members, kinship groups, socio-cultural associations, religious groups or networks of friends, "based on collective norms such as community solidarity, reciprocity, altruism, and obligations" (Bilecen and Barglowski, 2015: 208). It is very important for migrants, especially irregular migrants, in countries where the FSP system is very weak or does not exist (Devereux and Getu 2013; Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011). It includes monetary allocation and strategies related to the production, such as job placement (Faist et al. 2015) and reproduction processes, such as raising children and health care of the elderly (Faist et al. 2012). It plays an important role either in the form of support to meet the basic requirements of migrants in host countries or in the form of assistance to their families in the country of origin through remittances (Azam and Gubert 2006; Sabates-Wheeler and Koettl 2010). Among migrants, it is usually based on reciprocal exchange. Initially, migrants receive help (financial support and information) from their relatives and friends to start their lives in the destination country (which is also called 'reverse remittances' Mazzucato 2011), and after their settlement, they help others

through remittances or by providing information and support during their migration. Some authors consider that migration itself is a form of ISP because it helps migrants, who were in a vulnerable position in their country of origin, to cope with their social risks, and improves the socio-economic conditions of their families through remittances that contributes to greater consumption, investment in productive activities, and elderly care (Schrieder and Knerr, 2000, Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman, 2011; Baldassar, et al. 2007). The remittances sent by the immigrants to their countries of origin ensures the social protection of their families (Mazzucato and Schans, 2011). Migrants through their remittance work as providers of ISP for their families in the fields of employment generation, health care, education and other basic needs (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006; Tevera, 2013, Brown et al, 2014, Azam and Gubert, 2006).

The third intermediate category is semi-formal social protection (SSP). Bouman (1994) describes it as strategies that have different functions including security or insurance (including life cycle events such as births, marriages and deaths or education), economic (provision of loans, collective investments and community development works) and socialising (as cited in Serra Mongot and Mazcutto). The SSP is provided by self-help organisations, such as faith based organizations, community based organizations or NGOs. It offers services such as finance and credit (rotating credit associations), mutual insurance (funeral associations, risk-sharing arrangements) and production (self-help groups with income generating activities), which are financed mainly by member contributors (Devereux and Getu, 2013). These organizations work on the basis of mutual belief and often have a very weak management structure and financial capacity to cope with all contingencies (Kasente et al, 2002). The main type to semi-formal social protection organizations are: Faith-based associations, which serves the need of a certain faith group like Muslim Zakat organisations and the Sikh or Hindu Temples associations. Rotating credit associations, which are groups of individuals that create a fund through regular financial contributions and the fund is assigned to one member of the group at a time (Thieme, 2003). Burial societies provide mutual aid for funerals in the community (Bouman, 1994; Mazzucato et al, 2006).

As migrants use various types of social protections, provided by multiple actors at different stages of their migration process, some authors used the concept of '*resource environment*' of migrants (Levitt et al, 2017), or '*assemblages*' (Bilecen and Barglowski, 2015) to describe the combination of different forms of social protections schemes available for immigrants to cope with their social risks and improve their life chances. All the schemes complement each other and migrants use different tactics to benefit from them (Faist et al, 2015; Bilecen and Barglowski, 2015; Boccagni, 2015). Some of them employ '*patchwork*' social protection (de Jong, 2005), combining different resources (e.g. money, personal care), different circles of significant others (e.g. family, friends, social services),

and – linking informal to formal social protection – different legal systems (e.g. emigration and immigration states) (Faist 2016: 2).

## 2.2.- Transnational social protection

Migrants, their relatives and friends in the country of origin (*left behinds*) and in other diaspora countries, create a transnational social protection (TSP) network that deals with the social risks of all members of the network through the exchange of resources and information, and unite the societies of origin and destinations (Basch et al 2005). The transnational structure of migrant's social protection network that extends across the borders of nation-states and involve several different formal and informal actors, arises the need of a transnational approach towards social protection research (Opiniano, 2010, Tognetti Bordogna and Piperno, 2013). It avoids dividing the lives of migrants in disconnected areas and allows a broader understanding of the different social situations and relationships that migrants must confront and reconcile, both here and there (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008).

Levitt and co-authors (2017) define the TSP as “the policies, programmes, people, organizations and institutions, which provide for and protect individuals in the areas of elder care, health, family, labour market, housing and education, in a transnational manner ... [It] includes non-mobile actors who provide for and protect people who move transnationally; transnational actors who provide for and protect non-mobile individuals; and transnational actors who provide for and protect transnational individuals” (p. 6). The concept of ‘resource environment’ is introduced to operationalize the TSP, which includes a “combination of all the possible protections available to them from four potential sources (states, markets, third sector, and social networks) ... and the characteristics of individual migrants and their families. These characteristics include the migrant's nation of origin, place of residence, and the breadth and depth of his or her social networks, in addition to the individual's gender, race, ethnicity, religion, wealth, income, and education” (p. 7).

Following the theoretical framework proposed by Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (2003), this paper explains the main vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain, at different stages of their migratory process, and their access and portability of social benefits. Secondly, it focuses on the *assemblages* (Bilecen and Barglowski 2015) of different actors that provide social protection to migrants and their relatives in the country of origin. And, finally, how the transnational nature of migration and multiple social protection strategies (Levitt et al. 2017) translates into different constellations of social protection for Indian immigrants with different legal statuses (regular or irregular) in both receiving countries.

### 3.- Data Source and Methodology

The data has been collected through a combination of methods including a three-year ethnography with Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy and their families in India (2015-2018), 86 semi-structured interviews, participant observation and expert interviews with representatives of religious and cultural associations of Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy. The interviews were conducted with an open ended questionnaire. Of the total interviews, 36 were conducted with Indian immigrants in Spain, 33 in Italy and 17 with the migrants' matched samples (parents, spouses, siblings or children) in India. The interviews were conducted during the period between 2016-2018, in the seven cities where Indians are mainly concentrated in Italy, i.e. Rome (13,702), Brescia (15,028), and Latina (10,003), and Spain i.e. Barcelona (5,895), Valencia (2,276), Madrid (2,262), and Santa Cruz de Tenerife (1,146). In India, interviews were conducted in the *Doaba* region of Punjab, which is the homeland of most Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain. Respondents in Italy and Spain were selected using the snowball sampling technique (Johnson, 2014) with different starting points, including personal contacts, religious associations (Gurudwaras and temples), and Indian associations. The heterogeneity that characterizes the Indian community in Italy and Spain in terms of ethnic origins, socioeconomic status, legal statuses, and time of permanence in both countries allowed a maximum variation in sampling, which gave me several social protection arrangements depending upon individual characteristics. The eligibility criteria for respondents in Spain and Italy, was at least 1 year long stay in any of the host countries. The sample included roughly two-thirds of men and one-third of women, who were between 16 and 60 years of age.

The interviews were conducted with a semi-structured questionnaire. The respondents were asked to express themselves on the following topics: family background, education, migration history, major causes of migration, ways and routes, cost of migration, life at the destination, major problems in host countries, strategies to survive, attitude of local people, regularisation process, present socioeconomic condition, and future perspectives. The interviews were conducted at the place of residence of the interviewees, in one of the following languages: Punjabi or English, as per the convenience of the respondents. The average duration of the interviews was 45 minutes and all the interviews were audio recorded.

All interviews were coded in the Atlas.ti computer program, using a thematic classification offered by Boyatzis (1998). Following the steps mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the thematic analysis, the topics highlighted by the respondents were searched and the content of the interviews was codified with primary codes. The families of the primary codes were formed to classify the

information related to one theme in one place of all the interviews and prepare the primary data for the analysis. Then, the patterns and themes that were repeated in all the interviews were searched and quotes were selected to present different points of view regarding the themes under study. Finally, a report is prepared on the overall pattern and trends regarding the main vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain, their strategies of social protection and the breadth and depth of their resource environment which stretches around the world.

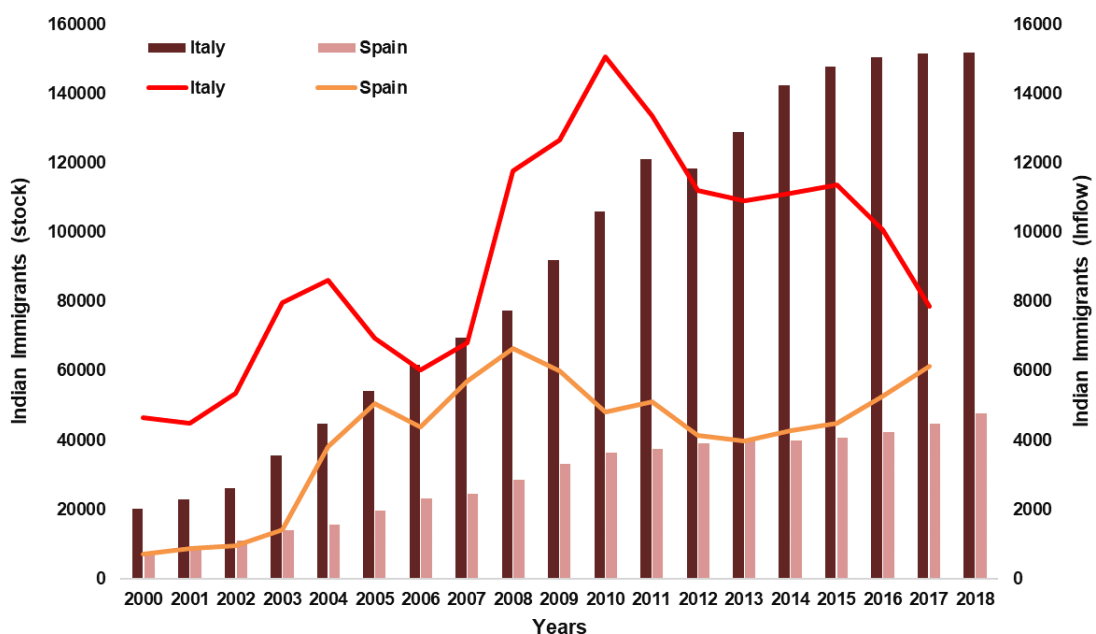
#### **4.- Indian immigration to Italy and Spain: evolution and internal diversity**

Italy and Spain were never on the list of favourite destinations of Indian immigrants. The pioneer Indians entered Italy during the Second World War, as part of the British imperial army (Bedi 2011), but they returned to India after the end of the war. Later, in the 1970s, a considerable number of Malayali Christian nurses from the state of Kerala, in southern India, entered Italy to serve in Catholic institutions such as churches, hospitals, schools and convents, and settled in the capital region of Rome in Italy (Gallo 2008). This migration consisted of young women, who later reunited their husbands from India to settle permanently in Italy (Gallo, 2005). In Spain, the first Indian immigration consisted of Sindhi merchants who entered for the sole purpose of trading in tax-free port cities of the Canary Islands in the mid-twentieth century (Navarro 1974). This migration was circular in nature and consisted mainly of young men (Lopez Sala 2013). The number of permanent residents was limited to a few hundreds and they were segregated in the wealthy residential areas of the port cities. The continuous influx of Indian immigrants to Italy and Spain began in the last decades of the twentieth century (Garha and Domingo 2017). In this influx, unqualified men of working age groups from the north Indian states of Punjab and Haryana entered in search of manual jobs in agriculture, construction and services sectors (Garha and Domingo 2019). Some of them were also immigrated to regulate their legal status, for family reunion, or to settle permanently in these countries. After the permanent settlement of the first immigrants, their kinship and social networks helped the chain-migration of the Indian immigrants to these countries (Garha 2020).

According to the ISTAT, the annual influx of Indian immigrants to Italy increased considerably from 4.6 thousand immigrants per year in the year 2000 to 15 thousand in the year 2010. But after 2010, due to the economic crisis and the consequent loss of jobs, it began to decrease and reached 7.8 thousand immigrants in the year 2017. This continuous influx of Indian immigrants has contributed to the formation of the sixth largest foreign community in Italy. In the year 2000, the number of registered Indian immigrants was 22 thousand, but their number increased almost six times to 121

thousand in the year 2010. After 2010, under the impact of economic crisis and the shortage of work opportunities, many Indians left Italy and moved to other countries, some of them also returned to India. Consequently, despite of the largest influx in 2010, the size of the Indian community reduced to 118 thousand individuals in the year 2011. After this small decrease, the size of the Indian community began to grow rapidly in the coming years and reached its peak, for instance 152 thousand in the year 2018. In Spain, according to the INE, the annual influx of Indian immigrants in the year 2000 was merely around 539 individuals, but this number increased sharply to 6.6 thousand in the year 2008. It was mainly due to the regularisation program of 2001 and 2005 that attracted a large number of irregular Indian immigrants directly from India or other destinations of Indian diaspora in Europe and Middle East countries, where they lived irregularly. Subsequently, due to the negative effects of economic crisis, this flow decreased, amounting to around 4 thousand individuals per year until 2013. After 2013, due to the large number of family reunification, the influx began to increase and reached 6.1 thousand immigrants in the year 2017. As a result of this influx, the total population of Indians in Spain increased from 7 thousand individuals in the year 2000 to 47.6 thousand in 2018. The gender-composition and age-structure of the Indian immigrant population in both countries are characterised by the predominance of men in the working age groups (15–49 years) (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1.- Annual influx and stock of Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy, 2000-2018**



Source: own elaboration, from municipal register, 2000–2018, INE, Spain, and ISTAT, Italy



In 2018, the population of Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain consisted of three main ethnic origins, namely Sindhis, Malayalis and Punjabis. All these ethnic communities have different times, purposes, ways and migration routes to these countries. These differences shape their settlement process, labour trajectories and level of integration in different spheres of the host countries (Garha and Paparusso, 2018). First of all, Sindhis is a trading community in western India. They entered Spain as merchants and still maintain a very high socio-economic status in the host society. An estimated one-third of the total Indian population in Spain belongs to Sindhi community. For the most part, they are business owners and live a very comfortable life. They have a very good relationship with the local administration and enjoy a privileged position in the host business community. New immigrants in Sindhi community usually come with regular work permits or family visas, and have easy access to labour market and the formal social protection system. It reduces their level of vulnerability or social risks in Spain. Secondly, the initial migration of Malayalis was composed of Christian nurses, who migrated to Italy with the clear purpose of serving in Catholic institutes. They were emigrated from the rural areas of Kerala and entered with legal permits of work and stay (Kodoth and Jacob 2013). Later, most of them reunited their husbands from India, who entered Italy with family visas. Currently, the Malayali community makes up a quarter of the total Indian immigrants in Italy. The social security provided by the state and the church, helped the Malayali immigrants to improve their life chances in their new destination. Usually they work in professional services and have a relatively good socio-economic status in Italy. Finally, the Punjabi community is the most recent group in both countries. Most of them immigrated in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but due to the continuous influx of new immigrants, they are currently the majority of Indian immigrants in both countries, i.e. estimated two-third of the total Indian immigrant population in Spain and three-fourth in Italy. They have a high proportion of irregular immigrants, who have entered irregularly or become irregular by overstaying their tourist, working or study visas in both countries. Some of them also coming from other neighbouring countries, such as Germany, France or Austria, where they failed to regularise their legal status. They have a very low level of education and skills, which reduces their chances of getting better jobs in the host labour market. They are occupationally segregated in agriculture, dairy farming, construction, hospitality services and manual jobs in small-scale factories. The proportion of women in Punjabi community is around one-third of the total population and most of them entered Italy as wives or daughters. Their participation in the labour market is very low. Due to low skills, the precarious position in the labour market and the high rate of irregularity, the Punjabi community is the most vulnerable part of the Indian immigrant population in Italy and Spain. Therefore, this paper focuses on the vulnerabilities, the resource environment and the strategies of Punjabi immigrants to ensure their social security in both countries.

## 5.- Main vulnerabilities of India immigrants in Italy and Spain

Indian immigrants face several types of vulnerabilities in different places and phases of their migration process. Migration in India is often considered an investment for the better future of migrants and their families. But often due to the lack of easy access to desired destinations and skills to have regular employment, Indian immigrants become vulnerable to several social risks in their migration process.

### 5.1- Vulnerabilities in India

The majority of Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain belong to middle-class rural families in the states of Punjab and Haryana in India. The traditional occupations in these states are agriculture and armed services. For centuries, the farmers of this region have fed a large proportion of the population in India and until the independence of India in 1947, it was the richest region of India. But due to the high natural growth of the population and the division of land between brothers, the size of land-holdings becomes smaller, and the mechanization of agriculture under the Green Revolution project, made agriculture not profitable for the farmer with small land-holdings. Therefore, the fear of unemployment in the rural areas forced many young men to leave their villages in search of their livelihood abroad.

*"I belong to a rural agrarian family. I have two elder brothers. The ancestral land was not enough for the survival of all of us. Therefore, to avoid the situation of unemployment, I decided to emigrate."*  
(Resham, man, 34, Barcelona)

Until the 1980s, Punjabi men were heavily recruited into the Indian armed services. However, after the succession battle in Punjab, also called the *Khalistani* movement, their recruitment into the Indian army and national police forces dropped drastically. It expelled a large number of young men from their traditional occupation. Therefore, to avoid the situation of poverty and unemployment, many decided to emigrate to the western countries.

*"All men in my family have served in the Indian army. But after 1990, the recruitment of Sikhs in the Indian army reduced considerably. Therefore, I left without work. I decided to emigrate to avoid unemployment."* (Kuldeep, 28, man, Rome)

In addition, the political crisis of the 1980s and the neoliberal turn of India's economic policies in the 1990s caused the destruction of public education and vocational training centres in Punjab to promote private institutes in the region. These private institutes were unaffordable for the majority of the rural population. It leads to the creation of a pool of unskilled young men with little education, who could not obtain any government job in India or any professional job abroad. Due to the lack of skills and low demand of unskilled labour, they were not allowed to emigrate to Western countries. Therefore, they began to migrate irregularly, by paying huge sums of money to the human traffickers.

*"I left school after completing matric. I had no chance of getting a job in India. Due to the failure of the crops, my family was under huge debt. So I tell my father to sell land and invest in my emigration. My father paid 9 lakh rupees to an agent for my irregular entry into Europe." (Kamal, 28, man, Brescia)*

*"In our villages [northern India], young men have little education and are not trained. They are not eligible for any government job in India and other highly qualified jobs abroad. So they forced their parents to pay huge sums of money to travel agents [smugglers of people] to go abroad." (Kartar, 56, man, India)*

The high rate of inflation and the stagnation of real wages in northern India during the last three decades have thrown a large part of its population below the poverty line. These poor families do not have any social protection and live in extreme poverty. Even full-time workers struggle to feed their families and send their children to schools. Therefore, to break the vicious circle of poverty, they decide to emigrate, leaving their wives and kids in the villages.

*"I got married at the age of 21 and at the age of 26, I had 2 children. I was doing a carpenter job in India, but my income was too low to take care of the family. Therefore, I decided to emigrate for the better future of my children." (Mandeep, 34, man, Brescia)*

Government employees who have retired after finishing their services in the armed forces also feel the burden of high living costs. In India, pensions are comparatively low and do not allow a decent standard of living for pensioner's families. In the armed services, the majority of the lower-ranking soldiers retire in their late thirties. At this age, these retired men usually have family responsibilities that require regular income. Therefore, most of them migrate to provide social security to their families.

*"I retired from the army at the age of 36 years. At that time, I used to get a pension of 5 thousand rupees, which was not enough for the family. Therefore, I decided to migrate." (Jagtar, 35, man, Barcelona)*

Some of the Punjabi migrants have also faced the backlash of the succession movement in Punjab. Their families have been continuously targeted by local police departments and they have some serious security issue in their villages. Most affected families send their young sons abroad to avoid confrontation with local police authorities.

*"Due to my family's participation in the Khalistan movement, we were under regular threats from the local police. My family was afraid that they will kill me in a fake encounter, so they decided to send me out of India." (Jagjit, 34, man, Brescia)*

*"My son was not willing to go abroad, but I forced him to emigrate because here you never know when the police will kill you in an orchestrated encounter" (Balbir, 53, female, India)*

## 5.2-Vulnerabilities during the journey

Indian immigrants, who enter Italy and Spain through clandestine ways, suffer several vulnerabilities during their journeys. Most of them who enter through *donkey flights* (Smith 2014), which include all illegal ways to cross the international borders (land or sea) without a visa, live in very inhuman conditions, where they face enormous physical (hunger, accidents, diseases) and psychological stresses. Some of them lose their lives trying to cross borders to enter Europe. Indian immigrants use three main *donkey* routes: African route, Moscow route or Middle East route. During their journeys, they travel through deserts, jungles, or sail in overcrowded boats without any protection.

*"I entered Spain through Africa. My agent first landed me in Mali. From there I travelled with other immigrants from different countries to Morocco. Then, from Morocco they [human traffickers] smuggled me in a truck to the Ceuta camp... I had a lot of physical and psychological stress during the journey through the Sahara. Some of the group members died with malaria or yellow fever." (Kamaljit, 28, man, Valencia)*

*"I entered Italy with the help of agents. I paid 6 lakh rupees for my donkey [irregular journey]. I travelled with 3 other men from different villages of Punjab. We arrived in Moscow by air and then crossed the border of Europe hiding in fruit trucks. We had to travel in a closed truck for 9 hours continuously. It was a very horrible journey." (Arsh, 26, man, Rome)*

*"I first migrated to Dubai in 1995. Then, after completing my contract with the company in 1999, I paid money to a Pakistani agent who prepared false documents for me to enter Greece. From there I moved to Italy in 2001." (Shinda, 38, man, Latina)*

*"We arrived in Egypt with a tourist visa, and from there we entered a ship that was bound for Malta. In the Ship, we hide in a container. We spend all day without food or water waiting for our turn to exit. In Malta, agents helped me out of the port." (Jot, 25, man, Brescia)*

*"I arrived in Moscow in 2008. From there I entered Latvia by crossing the border during the night with the help of an agents. Then, a Pakistani taxi driver helped me cross over to Lithuania in exchange for 1000 Euros. From there I got into a truck that left me in Poland. During the journey I had no food to eat or clothes to change. When I arrived in Poland, I had very bad conditions. After staying in Poland for a few days, I emigrated to Spain to join my friends." (Amrit, 24, man, Barcelona)*

### **5.3- Vulnerabilities at the destination**

#### **5.3.1.- Irregular Indian immigrants**

Since most of the Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain enter without legal work and stay permits, they cannot have formal jobs in the host labour markets. Their irregular status force them to work in the shadow economy, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation. Local businessmen or farmers take advantage of their irregular status and pay them lower wages and treat them as slaves.

*"I do not have work and stay permit in Spain due to my irregular status. Therefore, I am obliged to sell beer cans, water bottles and snacks on the beach for my survival." (Ankush, 27, man, Barcelona)*

*"I work in a Pakistani store from 8:00 am to mid night seven days a week. He pays me 600 Euros a month. I accepted this job because I do not have legal permission to work in Spain." (Kala, man, 32, Valencia)*

*"I work in a cow shed. The owner of the shed is very exploitative. He pays me 25 euros for the 10 hours of work per day. I do not have vacations or day off. He knows that I do not have legal permission to work, therefore, he treats me like a slave." (Malkit, man, 38, Brescia)*

The lack of formal jobs also exposes them to illegal activities such as selling beer cans on the streets or drug trafficking, which makes them vulnerable to legal problems and reduces their chances of regularising in the receiving countries. Sometimes they also become addicted to the same drugs they sell to others, which ruins their health and their lives.

*"I was willing to work in a factory or farms, but the employers were asking for papers. When I did not get a regular job, I started selling toys on the streets. There I got in touch with the drug peddlers who*

*encouraged me to sell drugs. Then I started selling drugs. Later, I also become addicted to these drugs that ruined my life.” (Jaggi, 31, man, Barcelona)*

Irregular immigrants cannot rent an apartment in both receiving countries. It obliges them to live in the substandard housing areas, which are mainly abandoned by the local population. As a result, they become segregated in poverty stricken areas, which reduces their chances of upward social mobility and makes them vulnerable to social exclusion.

*“Irregular immigrants cannot rent an apartment. Here the apartments are very expensive, therefore, I am forced to live with other immigrants from India. Now in my case, 9 people live in a two-bedrooms apartment.” (Gurnam, 29, man, Madrid)*

Unlike in Spain, in Italy, irregular immigrants cannot get registered in the municipal register, enrol in language schools, or receive health facilities in public hospitals (except emergency services). It makes them totally dependent on their relatives and socio-cultural associations to comply with the basic requirements, to learn the host language or to receive treatment during the illness.

*“In Italy, irregular immigrants do not have social or political rights. They cannot enrol in adult schools to learn language or other professional skills, or participate in social events. It reduces their chances of having a decent life and upward socio-economic mobility.” (Sandeep, 26, man Latina)*

*“Here [in Italy], if you get sick nobody cares about you. Government hospitals only treat legal immigrants. Irregular immigrants can go to emergency services, but due to fear of being exposed to the authorities, they don’t go to the hospital. They just buy some medicines from chemists and eat without prescriptions.” (Sonu, 29, man, Rome)*

### **5.3.2. Regular Indian immigrants**

The majority of regular Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy, have regularised their legal status in the host countries. The segmented nature of the host labour markets and the lack of skills among the regular Indian immigrants, translates into their occupational segregation in low-wage manual jobs in agriculture, construction and hospitality service. In these jobs, they often lack regular work contracts, which protects the rights of workers and guarantees their social security. Their poor conditions in the labour market make them vulnerable of social risks.

*“I work on a Farm in Latina. The farm workers have temporary contracts and the owners pay us less wages. When we ask for more money, they threaten us by saying that they will replace us with other*

*irregular immigrants, who are ready to work with low wages. We are forced to work with minimum wages.” (Sandeep, 38, man, Latina)*

*“Due to the lack of skills, the majority of the Punjabi community works in the service sector, where they work with minimum wages and enjoy very limited worker rights. They are the most vulnerable of exclusion at the time of the crisis.” (Balbir, 42, man, Barcelona)*

*“In Italy, the unemployment benefits are only limited for the people who have contributed to the social security system. If you do not get a job for a long time or you do not have any family responsibility, you will not receive government assistance.” (Manjit, 43, man, Brescia)*

*“I have been unemployed for the last six months. I received the unemployment benefit for three months, now I have nothing.” (Major, 31, man, Madrid)*

In both countries, most social benefits are limited for families. Single Indian immigrants, mostly men who have their families in India, receive no social benefits from host governments. In addition, in Spain most of the family benefits are limited for the *Familia Numerosa* (families with three or more children). Since, in the Indian community, the majority of the families have only two children, they are not eligible for these social benefits.

*“In Spain most Indian families have two children. They do not receive any help from the government, since most of the aid is limited to large families (with three or more children).” (Savneet, 34, women, Barcelona)*

In addition, for regular temporary immigrants, it is necessary to remain active in the labour market to renew their temporary residence or work permits. Due to the lack of job opportunities for unskilled workers, temporary regular immigrants of Indian origin struggle to renew their residence permits. Sometime, they pay for a work contract and all taxes with their own savings or borrow money from their friends or relatives to save their temporary residence permit. Even in the situation of unemployment or illness, some of them hesitate to request social security services, as they fear that this will reduce their chances of renewing their temporary work permits.

*“Here if you don’t have a job, the Spanish government refuses to renew residency permits. It forces many people to the irregularity. Sometimes people pay money to employers to have work contracts that allows them to obtain legal residence permit.” (Ravinder, 33, man, Barcelona)*

#### 5.4.- Vulnerabilities of the returned migrant

As India has a very weak social protection system and the government of India has not signed any bilateral agreements with Italy and Spain regarding the portability of social protection benefits of Indian workers, the regular Indian workers who have spent their entire lives working in these countries suffer from a lack of portability services. They cannot return to India during their old age, as this will cause the loss of social benefits.

*"I have worked 20 years of my life in Italy. I have paid to the health and pension systems. Now in my old age when I need it the most I would like to stay here. If I get the same facilities in India, I can return but it is not yet possible." (Manjit, 43, man, Latina.)*

Some of them who have tried to return to their homeland, regretted their decisions and returned to Italy or Spain again. The poor state of the social protection system in India, especially public health services, does not allow the return of migrants who are willing to spend their retirement days in their native villages.

*"I came back from Italy after working there for 20 years. I receive a monthly pension, but since I now live in India, I do not have health coverage here. If I get sick, I have to pay for my treatment with my pension. Sometimes I feel I should return to Italy, since my children live there." (Surinder, 66, man, India)*

*"I returned to India few years ago, but It was a mistake. I felt very lonely there because nobody was there to take care of me. I returned to Spain to spend the rest of my life. Here at least the government takes care of the elderly" Karnail, 62, man, Madrid*

#### 6.- Resources environment of Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain.

##### 6.1.- Social protection actors and strategies

Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain depend on the support provided by different formal, semi-formal and informal actors to cope with all the vulnerabilities mentioned above in different places and phases of their migration and settlement process. The combination of all these actors creates a broad resource environment for Indian immigrants in both countries. Firstly, the main actors of the FSP for Indian immigrants are state welfare institutions in countries of origin and destination, international organizations (Caritas, International Migrant Organizations and Red Cross) and private



insurance companies. Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain and their families in India do not receive any social protection from the government of India. The Indian diaspora policy has remained focused mainly on Indian immigrants in the countries of North America or the Gulf region.

*"The Indian government does not provide us any help. Young men go abroad to work at their own risk, if someone dies on the way, government does not support the family." (Sukhwinder, 56, man, India)*

Indian consulates in both countries only provide passport services to regular Indian immigrants, but irregular immigrants even struggle to obtain passport services, which is their legal right as citizens of India. Due to the role played by the Indian consulates in facilitating the deportation of irregular Indian nationals in both countries, irregular immigrants have little faith in them.

*"The Indian embassy does not help us in any way. If our passport expires or lost here, they do not renew our passports, which is their duty towards their countrymen. Rather, they help the host government deport irregular Indian immigrants to India." (Major, 28, man, Rome.)*

Consequently, in both countries they depend on the host welfare departments for their social security. Given that the FSP provided by the state welfare departments depend on the legal status, family situation and working conditions of migrants, regular Indian immigrants receive support during the period of unemployment, disability, childbirth, marriage, illness and old age, based on their contribution to the social security system.

*"In Spain, the government give Paro [unemployment benefits] to all workers. If you work for a year, you will receive Paro for two or three months, which is basically 70% of the total salary. But after finishing Paro, if you do not have family responsibility, you do not receive any help." (Kuljit, 37, man, Barcelona.)*

In addition to this contributory financial support, all regular immigrants have free access to the public hospitals in both countries and receive discounts on medications. Their children receive free compulsory education in state public schools. All regular Indian workers who marry in the host countries receive a 14-days matrimonial leave in Spain and 7 days in Italy. In the same way, at the birth of a child, they receive maternity (4 months in Spain) and paternity (14 days) leaves. Unemployed regular immigrants do not receive these benefits. Due to the lack of affordable public childcare facilities, most working Indian women left work after childbirth.

*"I got 4 months off at the birth of my first child, but after 4 months, I find it very difficult to leave the baby in the nursery, because they were very expensive. Therefore, I left the job." (Manpreet, 31, women, Barcelona)*

After a certain age (65 years) and a period of contribution to the social security system in both countries (minimum 15 years in Spain and 20 years in Italy) regular immigrant workers can apply for an old-age pension. Due to their small time of stay and young age structure, there are still very few Indian immigrants, who are eligible and receive contributory pensions in both countries. Many of them feel that they will not reach the age limit of the pension, as it increases continuously.

*"For the past 17 years, I have contributed to the pension system in Italy. In three years, I will be eligible for the pension but as the age limit is increasing, I don't know if I will ever get a pension or not." (Jagdeep, 39, man, Brescia)*

Low-income immigrant families can apply for some benefits from the municipal welfare departments in the form of food receipts, social housing, help paying house-rents, and support for children. But due to lack of knowledge, cumbersome paperwork and the feeling of embarrassment of receiving government aid, most Indian families do not apply for these services.

*"In Barcelona, the city council provides financial help to low-income families with young children. Indian community does not apply, because they feel ashamed of it." (Jeet, 34, women, Barcelona)*

*"The housing department in some municipalities provide assistance to low-income families, but due to the lack of information and huge paperwork, Indian immigrants do not apply for these grants." (Param, 34, man, Madrid)*

Due to the high rate of irregularity and poor working conditions, most Indian immigrants do not have access to the FSP in both countries. Contrary to Italy, where irregular immigrants have no social rights, the education and health departments in Spain provide free services to all immigrants, regardless of their legal status in the country. New Indian immigrants use these services to learn host languages and integrate into the host labour market and mainstream society.

*"Here [in Spain] public hospitals are very good. They provide free service to everyone. Whenever I have some problem I go there for treatment." (Das, 52, man, Madrid)*

*"Municipal councils provide language courses to all immigrants. It makes them capable of searching jobs and have contact with the host society." (Simran, 23, man, Barcelona)*

Apart from the state welfare departments, many international and national NGOs also provide social protection to migrants during the journey and at the destination. Irregular Indian immigrants, who entered through clandestine ways (*donkey flights*), highlight the role of international NGOs in providing support during their journey.

*“When I was in Ceuta camp, the human rights organisation supported our application for legal entry in Spain. They used to provide us with food and shelter. Without their help we were surely dead.”*  
(Inder, 24, man, Barcelona)

*“The police sent us to a UN refugee camp. The people in the camp used to treat us very kindly and provide us with all basic necessities. They gave us identity cards and allow us to move freely”* (Kamal, 31, man, Valencia)

*“In our camp, the Caritas association used to provide us food and cloths.”* (Paramjit, 31, man, Rome)

These international organisations also provide assistance to irregular Indian immigrants in their new destination countries. This assistance includes the provision of basic needs, advice on legal matters, and information of regularisation process.

*“The Red cross association helped me to register in Barcelona. It is necessary for all irregular immigrants, since it is a mandatory pre-requisite for Arrigo Law of regularisation in Spain.”* (Surjit, 28, man, Barcelona)

*“Ibn Batuta immigrant association helps all irregular immigrants to raise their voice and provide legal help at the time of regularisation.”* (Major, 31, man, Barcelona)

*“Caritas provide food and clothes for the poor families, but Indian families do not ask them for help.”*  
(Daljit, 39, man, Brescia)

A very small number of Indian immigrants in both countries have access to social protection from private insurance companies. Insurance services are limited to the regular migrants, and operates on the basis of premiums paid by individual users. The insured families receive support at the time of the accident, sickness, death or theft.

*“A few days back I had an accident. My insurance company paid all the damages and saved me from the financial crisis.”* (Gurnaib, 35, man, Barcelona)

Secondly, semi-formal actors, such as religious (Gurudwaras, Hindu temples, Ravidass Temple, Hare Krishna society) and socio-cultural (Bhai Ghanahiya group, Kabaddi association and Hindustani club)

associations play a very important role in providing social security to new Indian immigrants and their families who lack other sources of social protection. Since, most of the Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy belong to the Sikh religion, Gurudwara (Sikh temple) is the most important provider of social security. Indian immigrants who do not have relatives or friends in host countries come to gurudwara for support and guidance. It helps all migrants regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliations.

*“The gurudwara helped me a lot to survive my first days in Barcelona. I had no relatives or friends in Spain. Therefore, I searched for gurudwara. Here they provided me with food, shelter and cloths. I feel very fortunate to be part of the Sikh community.” (Ranjit, 38, man, Barcelona)*

*“The gurudwara in Latina helped me survive in Italy. I had nothing when I arrived at gurudwara. In Gurudwara, I made new friends who helped me in search for work and residence. Currently, I am working at a farm near this gurudwara.” (Sunny, 27, man, Latina)*

The gurudwaras not only provide help to the Indian immigrants in the destination, but also provide support (financial or moral) to their families (through community funding) during the time of serious health or financial problems in India.

*“My father had a stroke in India. I asked for help from gurudwara in Barcelona. Gurudwara committee head announced my problem in the Sunday prayer and all members of Sangat [congregation] contributed some money. I received a help of thousand euros from gurudwara, which I send to my family for his treatment. It saved his life” (Jagtar, 32, man, Barcelona)*

Gurudwaras also provide resources and religious services for the funeral of migrants who died in the destination country. *Bhai Ghanahiya* group, an association of young Sikh workers in Spain, offers funeral services to all migrants who died in the country of destination and sends financial aid to the family of the deceased person in India.

*“My friend died in Valencia from heart-failure. The gurudwara paid all the money for his cremation and for sending his ashes to India to his family. A financial support of 5 thousand euros also sent to his family.” (Tirlo, 38, man, Valencia)*

In most of the Indian families, women still do not work in paid jobs and are totally dependent on their husbands. Upon the death of the husband, these women become vulnerable to social risks.

Gurudwara provides support to widows to claim their rights and seek employment opportunities for them.

*"After the death of my husband in Barcelona, I was in a very critical financial situation. The local gurudwara helped me to claim my rights and provided me with some work, which helped me take care of my children." (Kiran, 37, women, Barcelona)*

For immigrants who do not have relative in the country of destination, Gurudwara also provide a place where they come in contact with their marriage partners. Gurudwaras perform religious marriage ceremonies for Sikh couples.

*"I met my wife in the Gurudwara. My family lives in India. Therefore, the head of Gurudwara played the role of father to carry out my marriage ceremony. After the marriage, I regularised my residence permit in Italy." (Gagan, 23, man, Rome)*

Finally, in the informal actors, the family of migrant in India plays a very important role in the migratory process and provide support (*reverse remittances*) during the journey and initial phase of settlement in the countries of destination. In rural areas of north India, migration is generally considered a family project, in which a member, mostly young men migrate to make a fortune for the family. All members of the family contribute financially, mainly by giving their savings or by mortgaging the family home or ancestral land, to pay for the journey, and then, after regularising his legal status the migrant pays back the debt in the form of remittances or by facilitating emigration of others (mainly younger brothers).

*"My parents gave me full support in planning my journey to Europe. They paid 4 lakh rupees to the agents for my journey. Later, when I got stuck in Moscow, they sent me 2000 dollars. When I arrived in Italy, they again transfer me 800 euros to pay my expenses for the first three months." (Lal, 38, man, Italy)*

Relatives in the country of origin also provide care to dependents of migrants, such as children or elderly parents in their absence. This supports includes spending time with them, helping them with administrative works, accompanying them during medical check-ups and helping them in shopping.

*"My elder brother took care of my children in my absence. He used to take them school and also buy groceries for my family." (Kirat, 36, man, Brescia)*

*"My uncle take care of my parents. I sent him money and he brought everything for them. He takes them to the regular visits to the doctor and bring them their medicines" (Manjot, 28, man, Madrid)*

The relatives settled in the country of destination satisfy all the basic needs and help new immigrants to settle, find work and regularise their legal status in the country. Most of them do it because some other relative had done it for them, when they were new to the country and now they feel it as their responsibility to help someone else. Mostly elder siblings who migrate first by using the family savings feel responsibility for their younger siblings.

*"My brother arrived in Barcelona before me. He arranged everything for me. I just landed at his home and start working with him." (Happy, 34, man, Barcelona)*

*"My brother looked for work for me in a restaurant. Now I am working with his social security number." (Kartar, 23, man, Valencia)*

*"My uncle let me stay at his house free of cost. I stayed with him for four months until I got a job in a restaurant" (Raman, 32, man, Rome)*

Relatives in the diaspora countries also send financial support, social network links or information, which help new immigrants cover their basic needs and seek work in the host countries. They also facilitate the movement of new migrants from one country of the diaspora to another in search of work and permanent settlement.

*"My uncle from the United Kingdom paid money for my journey. He also sent me money when I was out of work in Italy. Without his help it was difficult for me to survive" (Parminder, 27, man, Brescia)*

Indian immigrants who do not have relatives abroad depend on their friends and social network. Immigrants from the same village or from the same schools help new immigrants to cope with all vulnerabilities during their journey and at destinations. Many migrants give more importance to their circle of friends than their relatives.

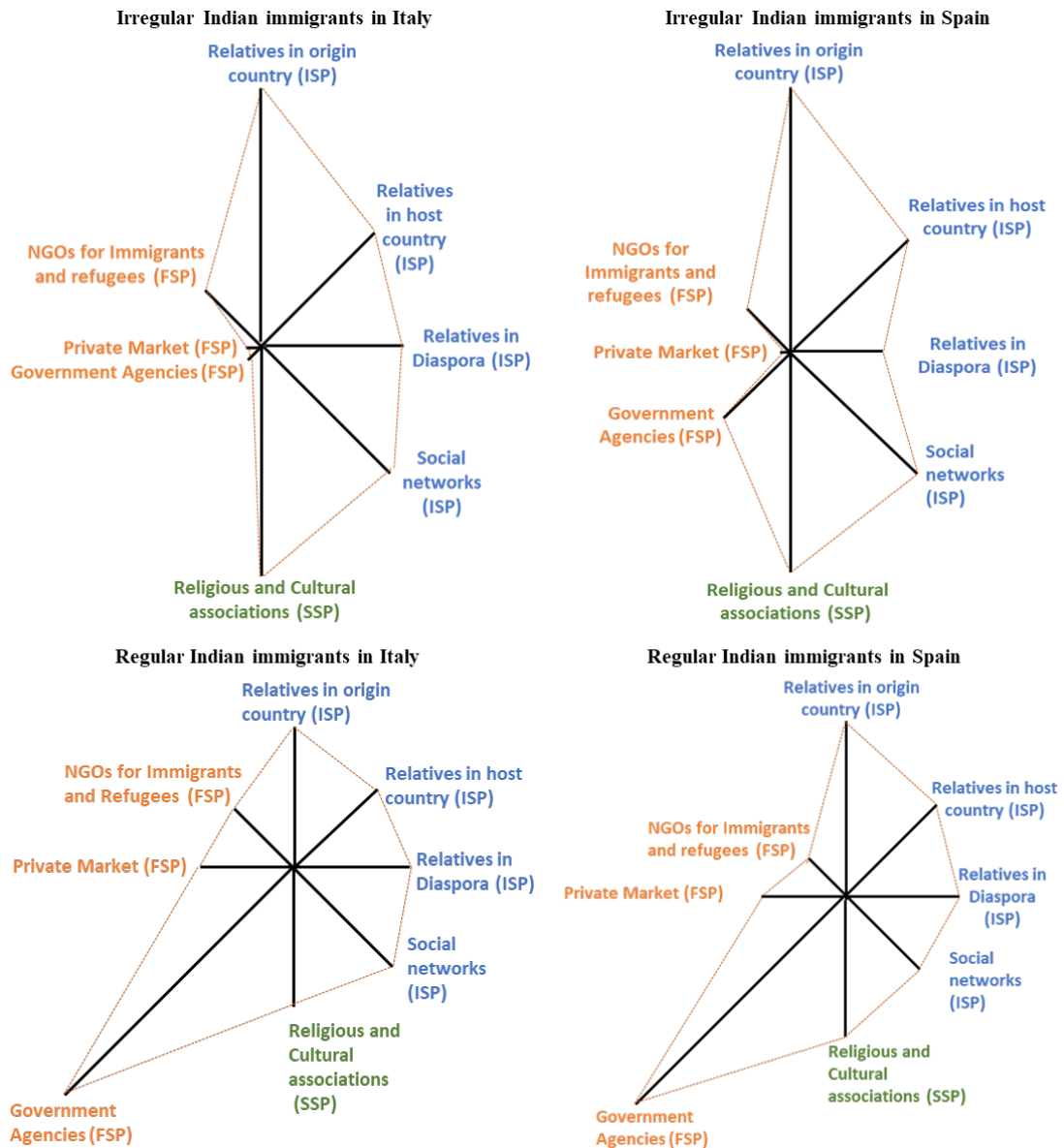
*"When I was new here, one of my friend from Germany sent me money to pay for the residence and food. He gave me financial support for six months until I got some work in a store. Later I paid him the debt" (Gurjant, 23, man, Barcelona)*

## **6.2.- Transnational links and different constellations of social protection for Indian immigrants**

Indian immigrants with heterogeneous legal and socioeconomic profiles use different 'assemblages' of social protection (Bilecen and Bargłowski 2015) to cope with their personal social risks and those of their significant others in the country of origin and in the diaspora, based on the socioeconomic capital and expansion of their transnational resource environments. The unequal

size and strength of resource environments result in different constellation of social protections for Indian migrants in both countries of destination (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2.- Different constellations of social protection for Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy.**



Source: Own elaboration.

Irregular Indian immigrants in Italy and their families in India do not receive any FSP from the government of India. On the contrary, they are afraid to contact the Indian consulate in Italy, since it supposedly facilitates the deportation of irregular citizens of Indian origin. Similarly, the Italian government treats them as delinquents or lawbreakers, as they entered or remained in their

country without any legal permit. Therefore, they do not provide social support to them, except for medical treatment during health emergencies. Due to their irregular status and lack of resources to pay the premium, they do not have access to the services provided by the private insurance companies. International organisations, such as Caritas or the Red Cross, provide them with some basic necessities and information about the asylum or regularisation laws. The most important actors of social protection for irregular immigrants are their relatives in the country of origin, destination and diaspora, social network (friends and neighbours) and the religious association (mainly Gurudwaras) in the host country. Relatives living in Italy, apart from providing them shelter, food and other basic necessities, guide them in the search for jobs and regularisation processes. Relatives or friends who settled in other destinations in the Indian diaspora send them financial support to survive in the initial phase of settlement. Those who do not have relatives or friends in Italy or in other countries of the diaspora receive basic help from gurudwaras and other religious associations. These associations attend to the basic needs of irregular immigrants and provide them a space to spend initial days of settlement and to expand their social network.

As in Italy, irregular Indian immigrants in Spain and their relatives in India do not receive any FSP from the government of India, except some services related to the passport renewal. In Spain, irregular Indian immigrants, who can prove their legal stay of at least 2 years in any municipality of Spain, can request the renewal of their expired or lost passports. Since, the Indian consulate does not allow new irregular immigrants to apply for a valid passport, most of them who have lost their documents during the journey (donkey flights), struggle to register in Spain. It leaves many of them without social rights, which are available to irregular immigrants in Spain. Similar to Italy, most irregular immigrants criticise the negligent attitude of the Indian embassy in Spain towards their needs and problems related to their regularisation process. Irregular immigrant of Indian origin with valid passports enjoy some social rights, such as registration in the municipal continuous register (*Padrón Continuo*), enrolment in language courses and access to public libraries, and most importantly, free access to health services in public hospitals. In addition to the government sponsored services, they also receive support from NGOs such as Carita, which provides food and clothes to the irregular immigrants, and the Red Cross organisation, which helps them to register in the municipal register, if they do not have permanent address in Spain. Moreover, some immigrant associations provide them with necessary information about the regularisation laws and help them present their case in court. In addition to the FSP, they also receive support from their transnational network of relatives in the origin, host and diaspora countries, to cover their basic needs and to pass the period of irregularity. Those who do not have relatives depend on religious institutions such as Gurudwaras and Hindu Temples.



The regular Indian immigrants and their relatives in Italy receive passport services from the Indian consulate maintained by the government of India. They do not provide any financial help for poor migrant families in Italy or India. Therefore, regular immigrants depend to a large extent on the social security department of the host country during the time of unemployment, disability, illness, old-age or death. In Italy, the government provides social security to all workers and their dependent families. They have free access to public health and education services, and during old age they have right to receive a pension according to their contribution to the system. Regular workers (mainly from single earner households), who have family responsibilities also receive monthly allowances depending on the size and age structure of the family. Low income regular immigrants, who have long periods of unemployment or seasonal work, also receive help from the international NGOs, such as Caritas, but mostly they feel reluctant to apply for these services as they are entitled to extremely poor people. Some of the regular immigrants, who have good jobs or own businesses, also have private health, life and property insurances. These insurance companies provide services at the time of illness, accidents, theft or death.

Regular immigrants also receive help from religious and socio-cultural associations at the time of a severe crisis, such as death or serious illness of a family member in the country of origin or destination. Those who have limited access to the FSP and the SSP, depend on their relatives and friends to cope with their social risks in the host and origin countries. Since it is very difficult for Indian immigrants to reunite their relatives in Italy, especially parents, they depend on their relatives in India to take care of their old parents. In Italy, Indian women who do not work outside provide support to care for the children of families in which both members work outside. Relatives and friends (throughout the world) also support for investment purposes (with rotation credits) to start small businesses or buy apartments.

As in Italy, regular Indian immigrants in Spain do not receive the FSP from the government of India. They depend on the social security system of the host country for their social protection. In Spain, due to poor working conditions of regular Indian immigrants, they often lack social security benefits. Unlike Italy, most regular Indian immigrants with family responsibilities in Spain do not receive any monthly allowances from the government. Temporary regular immigrants with low income and family responsibilities receive some help from the international organisation, but their number is very small. Still most of them depend on their relatives and friends in different countries and religious associations in the host country for social protection.

## 7.- Conclusions

With a detailed analysis of interviews, I found that the large-scale Indian immigration to Italy and Spain began in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It was composed of low-educated and unskilled Punjabi men, who emigrated from the rural areas of the north Indian states of Punjab and Haryana. Unemployment, high cost of living and political turmoil in Punjab were their main vulnerabilities (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003) in India, which expelled them to western countries. In India, they had limited access to the legal channels of emigration due to their low level of education and skills. Therefore, most of them emigrated through clandestine ways (*donkey flights* through Africa, Middle East or Moscow) paying huge sums of money to the human traffickers. It made them vulnerable to abuse and violence during their journeys. The possibilities of regularising their legal status and the availability of work in shadow economy attracted them to Italy and Spain. Their irregular status in these countries made them vulnerable to exploitation in the labour market and social exclusion in the host societies. Even after their regularisation, they remained segregated in some low-paid occupational niches due to their lower level of skills and segmented host labour markets. It affected their upward social mobility, access to the FSP schemes and integration into the mainstream host societies in both countries. In addition, after retirement regular Indian immigrants cannot transfer their social benefits to their country of origin due to the lack of strong diaspora policy and bilateral agreements between the host governments and the government of India. In summary, emigration, which was considered as a tool to cope with social risks, have created new social risks for Indian immigrants in Italy and Spain, and their families in India.

To address these vulnerabilities, Indian immigrants use different *assemblages* (Bilecen and Barglowski, 2015) of social protection actors available in their resource environment. It include, state departments of origin and destination countries, international organisations and private market companies (FSP), which provides social protection to the regular Indian immigrants in both countries; socio-cultural and religious associations (SSP), which provides support to irregular Indian immigrants and their families in India and the poor families of Indian origin in the host countries; finally, relatives and friends of Indian immigrants from around the world (ISP), who provide support to both regular or irregular immigrants and their families. Among the FSP actors, the government of India is the weakest. It largely ignores the vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants at origin and during their dangerous journeys to Europe, and does not provide necessary services, especially to irregular immigrants, in the countries of destination. The lack of a strong diaspora policy for immigrants in southern Europe makes them vulnerable to losses related to the lack of social protection portability

services. In addition, state institutions in host countries also limit their responsibility to regular Indian immigrants, who contributes to the social security system. The international organisations help irregular immigrants with basic needs and legal advices. While, the private insurance companies only serve a small number of regular Indian immigrants who have good jobs or own businesses in the host countries. Using the measure of the effectiveness of FSP given by Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (2003), I can conclude that the Indian immigrants in both countries have very limited access to the FSP, they are not allowed to transfer their social benefits to or from their country of origin, and the labour markets in the host countries do not offer them opportunities to fully benefit from the social security system.

As a result, the majority of Indian immigrants in both countries depend on their relatives in the host country and in the diaspora in the time of crisis. These relatives support them during their journey, help their families in India, their settlement in initial phase of immigration, regularisation, and search of work opportunities in the host countries. After their own settlement, these Indian immigrants become part of transnational social protection network, which provide support to other migrants and their families with the transfer of resources and information. Those who do not have relatives in the host country or in the diaspora seek help from cultural and religious associations for their own social security and that of their families in the country of origin or in host countries. Gurudwaras provide food, shelter, clothing, job information and contacts with other members of the community in both host countries.

The detailed study of the current state of social protection for Indian immigrants in Spain and Italy, highlights some measures that should be taken to reduce the vulnerabilities of Indian immigrants in different phases of their migration process. First, the creation of new employment opportunities in the rural areas of northern India and investment in the human capital, can reduce the risks of unemployment in the region and a strong diaspora policy of the Indian government can facilitate emigration of semi-skilled and unskilled labour. These measures can save Indian immigrants from the dangers involved in the journey and their exploitation in the countries of origin by human traffickers. Secondly, control over the shadow economy, severe punishments for human traffickers, easy renewal of residency permits and fast process of regularisation can reduce the vulnerabilities of the Indian immigrants in both countries and improve their status in the labour market, which is an essential requirement to have access to FSP schemes.

Currently, the majority of Indian immigrants in both countries belong to the first or one and a half generation, and have a very low socio-economic status. Irregularity and lack of skills hinders their access to the FSP system and the lack of bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries do not allow the portability of their social benefits. In the future, it will be interesting to

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see that how their children, who are born in the host countries, will create their own social protection constellations using their resource environment in both host countries.

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