

DRAFT PAPER

Survival strategies of the unemployed African immigrants in the City of Turin based in the North West Region - Piedmont Region of Italy.

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Introduction

This research looked at the daily survival strategies of the individuals who are job seekers who are also immigrants in the developed country. This report also look at how the globalised labour market affect the Black people especially Africans who left their own countries to another countries in search of a “better” living and working conditions for their survival.

The data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews, organisational interviews, as well as observation in study area within the Piedmont Region. This included the City of Turin and a individuals who are job seekers within the area under study.

The specific focus areas of the research related to the strategies adopted by the African unemployed people and who are also immigrants on how they meet their daily needs, the skills they utilised in the securing their daily needs; resources of the unemployed; living conditions of the unemployed and the perspectives of the unemployed people in relation to identity and other social organisations.

The research found that some of the survival strategies included working for low income that is not negotiated of which further indirectly perpetuates exploitation and the maintenance of cheap labour. Food is also accessed through favours from the local communities and as well as the former people from the same country of origin.

The conclusion is that it appears that Africa is still exposed to unequal development as its populace still immigrate to European countries in terms of seeking better to the developed economy. Poverty and underdevelopment of Africa continues because their economies are still dictated and aspire to be developed in line with European needs and values. African workers irrespective of being skilled or unskilled are forced migrate to Europe, as they cannot make a meaning change in their lives in their respective countries: subjected to lower paid jobs, forced into migrant labour of which result into family dislocation, disruptions and unemployment. Government needs to revisit its current economic policy in order to address the decolonisation of African economic system and as well as ensuring the stoppage of migration of African workers to European countries.

Furthermore, to guarantee the self-reliance, equal development and fighting racism in the world economy especially Africa.

Background to the area under study

This research was conducted in the city of Turin of which is rich history and is also best known for industrial heritage, fine museum and spectacular architecture. The area under study fall within the Piedmont Region and the following is the brief overview of the area:

Turin was founded by the Taurini (hence at first called Taurasia) and consequently it was ruined by Hannibal in 218 BC, the city became a Roman military colony during the 1st century BC. After that the city experienced a varying rule from Lombards between 568-774 to French control in 1798-1814 and to the Italian unification movement and also served as the first capital of a united kingdom of Italy between 1861-65. Turin (Italian: Torino) is a city in north-western Italy and is also a capital city of the Piedmont region that occupies the left bank of the Po River 515 km (320 mi) northwest of Rome. Turin is placed as the fourth among Italian cities after Rome, Milan, and Naples. It is surrounded on the western and northern front by the Alps mountain and on the southern front by the hills of Monferrato. The city have four major rivers that pass through it of which are the Po and two of its tributaries, the Dora Riparia, the Stura di Lanzo, and the Sangone.



Figure 1- Regions of Italy. Source: <http://www.big-italy-map.co.uk/>



Figure 2 – Cities of Italy. Source: <http://www.big-italy-map.co.uk/>

Turin is also known as the centre of the Italian automobile industry and it ranks as the second after Milan as an industrial city. Other products include textiles, aircraft, ball bearings, rubber and tires, leather goods, paper, metal goods, plastics, radios and televisions, pharmaceuticals, chocolate, wines, and clothing. It is a major commercial and transportation hub and international airport and is a leading fashion centre. The city also a home of the University of Turin, an art academy, a musical conservatory, and many museums and libraries. Turin is also the birthplace of major aspects of the Italian economy, such as telecommunications Telecom Italia, television (Rai, National TV channel) and cinema. Although most of these industries have moved to other parts of Italy, but Turin still the hosts the National Museum of Cinema and other exciting places of interests.

Today the city is a major industrial centre and also known specifically as the home and headquarters of the main production lines of the car company Fiat. The population of Turin city is estimated to 908,000 according to 2004 census, but with its metropolitan area totals about 1.7 million inhabitants. The province is one of the largest in Italy, with 6,830 square kilometres (2,637 sq. mi), and one of the most populous, with 2,236,941 inhabitants at the 2004 census. Turin is also well-known as host of the 2006 Winter Olympic games. Turin is estimated that it has grown by 0.88% during the last 3 years of

which was attributed to a low birth rate and that also contributed to the aging population. It is estimated that about 16.4% of the population are under 14 years over age, while those in retirement age number 18.8%. The city has experience the rise in immigrants that comprising including the suburban areas. The population remains the majority the [Italian](#) of which is estimated to 96.1% and there are also other population groups such as the [Romanian](#) that are estimated to 2.3%, [Moroccans](#) estimated to 1.5%, [Peruvians](#) that are estimated to 0.5%, [Albanian](#) of which are estimated to 0.4%, and others population groups.

The research process

This research is the qualitative study of which data is collected by conducting two in-depth interviews, conducting meetings with two civil society organisations(that assist the unemployed to get employment) and as well as the obseravtion. These organisations specialise on the reintegration of the immigrants espeacially women and former prisoners to the society and as well as ordinary citizen in terms of not getting employment.

The research was initially intended to conduct a study of the survival strategies of the unemployed people of the city of Turin in general. But because of the low rate of the unemployment in the region of Piedmont and that necessitated to change the focus to look at the survival strategies of the immigrants African job seekers. Because the immigration of Africans from their respective countries (Third World countries) is viewed differently by different people and governments, as other views cite the brain drain and of labour power instead of utilising those resources for their advancement and development. Whilst other view argue that immigration is healthy exercise as it exposes individuals to a better working environment that is compliment by the better income and better living conditions.

Therefore, the area of study was selected after conducting an observation and as well as the convinient to meet the respondents. Respondents were selected through usage of snowball method, as the first interviewed respondent helped in identify the next job seeker. This method was used in order to know the unemployed as I don't know who is employed or not. The first interview that acted as the pilot was conducted on the 21st April 2006 and in-depth interviews were conducted on the 25th April 2006. Meetings with civil society organisations were between 18th and the 28th April 2006. Geographically, the research does not include whole activities in the region of Piedmont and other regions of Italy.

Literature Review

- Global unemployment trends

The current world economy changes are influenced by the developments of the 1970s and the late 19th century. I'm saying this because these changes are characterised by a period of rapid globalisation where capital and labour moved across national frontiers in quantities that were never experienced before and as well as the rise of commodification.

It is also characterised by convergence in living standards of which is termed as the Atlantic economy (Williamson, 1998:51). Williamson argues that most economists used Growth Domestic Product is measured through usage of GDP per capita or per worker-hour to measure of growth of nations instead of real wage rates of which mean purchasing power-parity adjusted and typically urban unskilled workers (1998:52).

Global integration of commodity markets lead to convergence of international factor prices, as countries everywhere expanded the production and export commodities which intensify and used a massive of cheap factor. This also lead to the rise of trade in Europe, as wages and rent ratios increase and falling of wages and commodities in the so called Third World countries (Williamson, 1998:60). The poorest countries tended to experience a high rate of relocation of its populace especially the elite and skilled and unskilled. Williamson highlights that there is a general agreement in the historical literature, as it shows that immigration policy has been sensitive to labour market conditions, wages and unemployment differ from country to country (1998:64). The modern political economists have challenged the traditional Smithian analysis as it argues that the rising inequality would place more income to those who save and that will influence the economy growth and investment rate. The modern political economists argue that in case “where the poorest voters become too poor, richer voters might join poorer voters to pass distortionary redistributive policies that can slow growth” (Williamson, 1998:64). European countries like Britain respond differently to the tariffs and financial policies, as they cling to their free trade and financial policies (Williamson, 1998:66). The globalisation era is also characterised by the “end of welfare state” and this has manifested itself in the means-tested cash benefits that are limited to the “deserving” poor who are mostly unable to work because of not of their fault (Ellwood, 2000:187). In addition, we see the new type of workers who are regarded as the displaced workers who are known to be individual workers who have established histories, involuntary and separated from their jobs by means of mass retrenchment or plant closure and have minimal chances of being recalled to jobs with their former employer (Kletzer, 1998:116). Kletzer argues that this type of workers emerge from four (4) situation of which are when the plant closed down, when the work is lacking, in case when the shift system is being stopped and in case when the seasonal work is finished or self operated business failed or some other reason (1998:117).

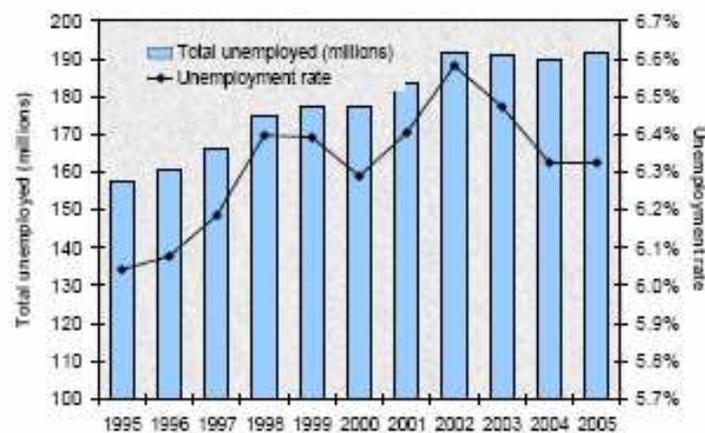


Figure 3 – Global unemployment trends, 1995 -2005
Source: ILO Global Employment trends

Figure 3 above shows that the current unemployed rate is between 6.3 and 6.4 percent and the total number of the unemployed remain high between 130 and 140 million who have no income. Ellwood argues that such reforms are designed to give support to working people and fails to help who cannot find job besides the well known Unemployment Insurance system (2000:193). Many writers have highlighted that most welfare families experienced various obstacles to work that ranges from drug or alcohol addiction to physical abuse in strong and bad economic periods (Ellwood, 2000:194). Ellwood argues that such policies further fails to address the underlying source of poverty and insecurity of single parent, as the family is usually depended one person in cases such as a low-skilled woman (2000:195). Furthermore, the wage gap has widened and less educated and younger workers are exposed to absolute suffering despite the attempts to reverse this trend (Ellwood, 2000:196).

There is broad consensus on the employer-employee relationship has been developed in countries like United States where markets processes and as well as labour markets have generated a vast wealth despite their imperfectness and its self-regulating mechanisms (Anderson, 2000:207). This consensus consider human resources as people “who have needs, aspirations, hopes, and fears and who have personal lives as well as work lives”. Whilst the elements of the consensus on worker protection are personified in a restricted social contract, secured in many labour management agreements, and codified in the laws and regulations administered by the state. There is also the excess to educational institutions, especially in the higher learning, as we still experience the unequal rates between black and white people in the enrolment and graduation from the university (Anderson, 2000:208). Anderson argues that these changes are go together with the transformation of job market, as the manufacturing continue to way to service s as the main provider of jobs to the unemployed. This trend is expected to create more that 17 million new jobs in this sector between 1996 to 2006. This has manifested itself in the business services as it has grown rapidly as outsourcing of business activities has increased drastically and employment in the business industry happened to smaller firms and usually organised by new entrepreneurs and mostly by women. In short, all these changes in the international economy has shown itself in the immigration, racial, and ethnic pattern, education, industry mix and the global economy and all this mean the need for a flexible labour force (2000:209). Furthermore, Anderson argues that most workers in the global economy especially inn sectors such as the garment manufacturing have limited job skills and afraid to to complain or challenge the deliberate abuse and the failure by the employer to pay or to offer them what can be regarded as the living wage and sound working conditions (2000:211).

- Unemployment in Italy

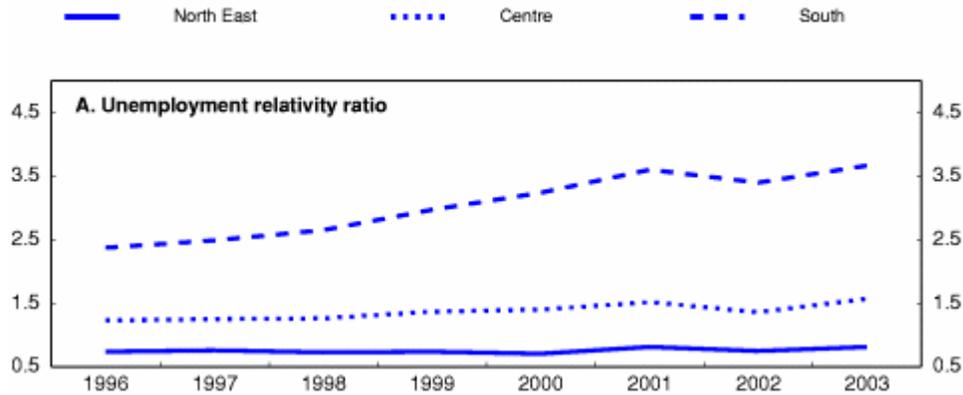


Figure 4 - Regional unemployment and productivity relativities.
Source: Economic Survey of Italy 2005: The economic impact of immigration

The figure 4 above shows that the unemployment in Italy vary according to regions, as it is low in the north and high in the south. The overall national rate of unemployment is in low level since 1992. It is argued that chronic problems such as the inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and organized crime act as hindrances to investment and job creation in the south. In addition to that a significant underground economy absorbs substantial numbers of people although they work for low wages and without standard social benefits and protections. The unemployment rate also affects gender differently because men are not much affected by it when compared to women and youth. Italy has labour force estimated to 24.49 million. The unemployment rate in Italy is estimated to 7.9% and in the more prosperous Northern and Central regions are under 5%. The southern regions continue to register rates at least three times higher, and the gap has diminished only marginally since 1998. The chronic problem of low mobility of unemployed southern Italians towards the other regions perhaps influenced by the growing importance of equalisation transfers, is in contrast to the comparative success of immigrants in integrating themselves into the economy. Typically, immigrants, and especially illegal immigrants, arrive in the south of the country and head north to where the jobs are . Successive regularisation programmes have resulted in very large numbers of illegal immigrants joining the formal sector, thus widening the tax base and enhancing social security revenue. The largest number of immigrants is from Africa, followed by Eastern and Central Europe and women are estimated to constitute 45% of the legal immigrant.

The participation rates for prime-age males are well above 90%, but the figure drops to barely over 30% in Italy for males over 60 years old. Female participation rates are low by international comparison at all ages. Less than 50% of women are in the labour force compared with an EU average of 60%. And as in other southern European countries, part-time employment of women accounts for a relatively low proportion of their total employment. Participation rates of women and older males are lower than the EU average even in the prosperous Italian regions that experience chronic labour shortages. There is therefore considerable room for expanding output for some time to come by raising

participation and employment rates of women and older males, including in the northern and central regions, towards international levels.

The recent labour market reforms have increased the supply of part-time jobs, which may be particularly attractive to women. Liberalisation of opening hours in the retail sector, and encouraging the spread of large retail outlets, as well as reforms in other product market areas, would further expand job opportunities for women along similar lines. As in other Mediterranean countries, there is a traditional culture of women staying at home to look after their children, and to care for their ageing parents. Concerns about the low rates of female participation can be addressed by greater public investment in child-care facilities and care support for the elderly in order to help women stay in paid work.

The Italian government has enacted numerous short-term reforms aimed at improving competitiveness and long-term growth. Italy has moved slowly, however, on implementing needed structural reforms, such as lightening the high tax burden and overhauling Italy's rigid labour market and over-generous pension system, because of the current economic slowdown and opposition from labour unions. But the leadership faces a severe economic constraint: the budget deficit has breached the 3% EU ceiling. The economy experienced almost no growth in 2005, and unemployment remained at a high level. There is a high proportion of youth which is in neither education nor the labour force, suggesting a difficult school-to-work transition. The risk of unemployment later in life is also considerably higher for those with only lower secondary education.

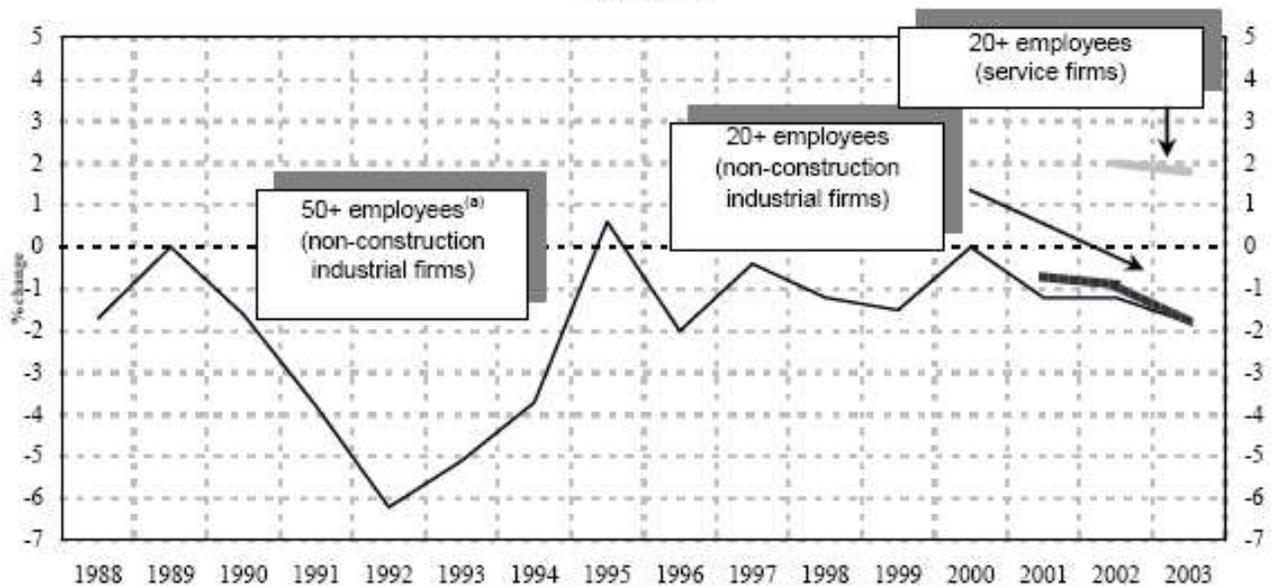
Government has developed some labour market policies that attempt to avoid the negatives effects of the unemployment by introducing support schemes, as the means to reintegrate the unemployed people to the workplace and also granting the social assistance (Richiardi and Contini, 2006:2). For example the policy that is meant for poverty reduction is the training support that is geared for the increment of chances of employability. The government started developing programmes as from the 1980s and such subsidisation targeted certain forms of unemployment: first subsidy focussed on the unemployed people for a short period through provision of 80% that equivalent to the salary. This subsidy was introduced in the 1980s. The second subsidy focussed on the workers who lost their job temporary but their contract is still guaranteed when the economic situation improves in the particular firm and it also equals to 80% of the salary that was earned during the contract. This subsidy was also established in the 1990s. The last subsidy focused on the workers who have lost their jobs for a period equals to one and half year and that equals to 40% of the salary that was earned whilst workers were working. This was also introduced in the 1990s but it has been improved form time to time (Luciano - Interview: 29 April 2006).

Therefore, the government has developed three models as the strategy to deal with the unemployment: the rational choice model, the expectancy model and the cultural model.

- *Globalised Italian Economy*

An alternative (but less than fully convincing) interpretation of recent employment, output, and trade statistics is that there are measurement problems. For example, employment growth may be overstated as informal labour “emerges” into the formal sector. However, a reason why this interpretation is less than fully convincing is that national accounts data already include estimates of the informal economy, which therefore cannot represent a significant source of bias in the productivity statistics. Employment costs may be overstated as tax credits for contract conversion are registered as higher profits rather than lower labour costs and growing use of flexible labour contracts reduce non-wage rather than wage labour costs, while output may be understated because of quality improvements. Cyclical labour hoarding may have also played a role in the deceleration of productivity. However, persisting relatively high core inflation and relatively large current account deterioration suggest that there is a structural – rather than just a measurement or a cyclical – problem with productivity and competitiveness in Italy. It would therefore be wise to base policy decisions in such an important area on the awareness that those structural problems are at the origin of the slowdown in economic performance. This is even more the case when the appropriate policy actions are ones that are desirable in themselves. The overall participation rate for those of working age is 63%, compared with an EU average of close to 70%.

Annual changes in employment in 1988-2003
(per cent)



(a) The data for 1988-1998 refer to manufacturing firms; those for 1999-2003, to industry excluding construction.

Figure 5 – Unemployment in the manufacturing sector .
Source: <http://www.bancaditalia.it/statistiche>

Statistically, the reason why per capita incomes have continued to rise a little in the past few years, despite apparently falling total factor productivity, is that employment creation has been vigorous. Indeed, more jobs were created in the recession years 2001-2004 than

in the preceding 4 years of brisker GDP growth. The unemployment rate fell in each year of the recession, and is now below the estimated NAIRU. The labour market reforms of earlier years and more recently led to the increase in employment, although employment data may have been somewhat boosted by flows of previously under-recorded informal labour, especially newly regularised immigrant labour, into the formal force. The reforms have made it easier and cheaper to adjust enterprise labour forces via temporary contracts, and tax incentives have facilitated their conversion to permanent contracts. Thus employers have been more willing to take on low-skilled or inexperienced employees on flexible contracts, which have allowed them to gain work experience and build up skills, without them necessarily remaining indefinitely in a state of precariousness. The large increase in employment, particularly of the low-skilled, goes some way to explaining the weak growth of productivity. But the example of other countries, for example the United States before 2001, and especially Ireland, shows that it is possible to have strong growth in both employment and in total factor productivity for a prolonged period. Competitive product markets seem to be needed as well as flexible labour markets.

Italy is facing losses of productivity, efficiency and competitiveness and at the same time holds the record of being one of the oldest countries in the world in terms of population and experience an increase in life expectancy and a continually aging population.

Findings

- Biography

The respondents that were interviewed are between 21 and 31 years old of age and they come from Nigeria- North East Africa. They differ in years that they have arrived in Torino as those were interviewed they had 3 and 4 years and also differ in terms of reasons for their immigration as others came to seek political asylum and employment and other just for employment as this place is known as the industrial region in Italy and also a “First World”.

They live with their friends and the other don't pay rent because he don't have any income but only assist in buying food when he got “street work”- temporal job. The other pay rent that equal to € 150 per month and is obliged get some job in order meet monthly rent. Although some other months he fail to meet the rent obligation and is forced to double or pay in the mid month in case he get some money.

Both respondents live with friends and they are three (3) in their respective households and this help. The joint stay help them to meet daily needs such as food and accommodation especially when they did not get any income in that particular month. The respondents that were interviewed differ in educational qualifications as their highest education is start from lower classes such as Standard 3 up to the highest qualification such as the diploma. For example, the respondent highlighted the he had the Ordinary

National Diploma in Business administration of which is known as the OND as it is known in his country (*Black - Interview : 25 April 2006).

- Job seeking strategies

The respondents indicated that they started seeking employment approximately two(2) years ago and the other started seeking employment when he arrived in Italy but they could not find one. Due to lack of employment they opted not to seek employment anymore.

The respondents also experienced problems when they seek employment as some don't have legal documents that will enable them to seek employment and that does not just forced them to seek part-time jobs along the streets but also face police harassment(*Black and Ethiop - Interview : 25 April 2006). There are different reasons that led the respondents to come to Italy because other came to seek political asylum but it was refused. Some of the respondent could not afford to go back home because they cannot afford financial constrains, as they don't have money and they also fear for their lives in case they go back home as they lost almost everything due to "wars or violence" at home. Whilst reasons of the women vary as others indicated that they came because of the invitation from their boyfriend and when they arrive in Italy, their relationship dissolved and they were forced to come up with their ways of survival. This confirmed by Zanj when she highlighted in her interview that "I came to Italy because my former boyfriend invited me and later we separated and I did not know how to survive but other women told me about the Alma Mater, where today I can say its home, as I got other women who acted as my mother because they are older than me as I came here when I was about 21 years old of age"(Interview: 26 April 2006).

The respondents differ in getting assistance as they highlighted that there are no organisation that helps them to get employment or top get social assistance. Male respondents highlighted that "I survive by getting help from my friends as they understand my state of affairs in terms of not have money"(Black- Interview : 25 April 2006). The respondents also highlighted that its hard for them to negotiate a daily wage in case they get a "street work" or temporal that usually takes about few hours because of their status as beggars and have no proper documents. They are forced to accept whatever the "master" is offering because their desperation. Furthermore, Ethiop stated that he don't remember got permanent employment except street work that help them to fight hassling and able to buy things such as cigarettes. On other hand women get assistance from organisations such Group Abele and Alma Mater towards getting employment, accommodation, security and getting necessary documents to be eligible job seekers in Italy (Meetings: Group Abele – 19 April 2006 and Alma Mater – 26 April 2006).

- Survival strategies

* Real names are not used as means to protect the respondents.

The respondents highlighted that they do any good thing that the people request them to do as part of survival and they have also formed a “*Hip-Hop*” band in 2005 as part of attempting to survive in the foreign land. Although they have formed a band but they also have problems in maintaining the band as they have problem of recording their music due to the fact that it cost too much and they don’t have money to meet such demands. They have try to record one music album after they fundraised in the community and they were able to purchase recording machine as part of reducing recording costs. After they managed to record their first album they in March 2006, they had a problem in registering their first compact disc- CD album with the S.I.A.E. They highlighted that they recorded 1000 copies of which cost about € 0.03 per copy to enable them to get a sticker that shows that they a right to sell their product in Italy.

The national diploma that is possessed by the other respondent helped the group or band to design and print their own CDs and as well as fundraising in order to reduce costs of recording. Because if the recording in the formal studio is extremely expensive and they could not able to meet costs.

The respondents were asked what things they would like to share with the researcher. They said, “We experience racism especially African men and that is witnessed especially when they are standing with a group of whites, the police will only search the Africans and ask documents and leave whites although some they are also immigrants like us”. They also highlighted that their music tend to help them as “legitimising” document, when police question them about their presence in Italy, “When police question us what we are doing here, we are able to show them that we are promoting our music and let us go”(Black - Interview : 25 April 2006). Although women have organisations that help them to get shelter and legal assistance towards attaining documents for legal immigrant status but they also experience racism in those organisations but they tolerate it because they have no other alternative (Zanj: Interview - 26 April 2006).

The male respondents highlighted that they don’t receive any benefits from the government or any organisation for them to survive as the unemployed immigrants. The respondents did not know any organisation that help the immigrant in this country and they highlighted that it will be helpful if there was one.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to present a summary of the survival strategies that are adopted by the African immigrant to meet their daily needs with data collected from the organisations and individuals in Turin. The intervention is situational in nature and survival strategies that are adopted by the immigrants in particular African, it depicts that their exposed to unemployment, racism, lack of meeting their daily needs and to live on favours from their fellow citizens from their respective countries. The documentation of the approaches that are adopted by the government in dealing with immigrants vary, as it

looks that it seems to be favouring women and not assisting African immigrant who are men.

All interviewees indicated that they were forced to immigrate to a developed country like Italy, as they have hope to get employment and better living conditions and security. The selective approach by the government and organisations in dealing with differing gender continues to adopt what I will call a “blind folded” approach. I’m saying this because in this approach, tend to ignore the fact that both genders were and still exposed to unequal development in their countries, as we see them today flock to the developed countries. They flock to developed countries as part of dealing with problems of unemployment, insecurity and underdevelopment that severely affect them in their respective countries. Furthermore, I will argue that this approach will perpetuate the unequal development of both genders and between the so called developed Europe and Third World countries like Africa as it happened during the colonisation period. The questions that I think can be exposed to government and civil society organisations would be:

- ◆ How should the government and social civil organisations intervene equally and fairly in dealing and supporting the African immigrant to European countries?
- ◆ What programmes or strategies can be adopted in dealing with destruction of pillars of persisting colonialism in the Third World countries?
- ◆ What strategies that can be adopted by the European and Third World governments in instilling the self reliance to the African immigrants, so that they can return and utilise their expertise towards developing their countries?

There is a need for a conducive environment to enable the African immigrants to see the need to develop their countries instead of leaving their countries to deteriorate further and exacerbating of dependency syndrome. Finally, the government need to assess whether is feasible to extend the current benefits that are enjoyed by the Italian citizens who are unemployed. Furthermore, a thorough study need to be undertaken to understand the deeper problems encountered by the African immigrants in European countries.

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Group Abele in Turin – 19 April 2006

Alma Mater in Turin – 26 April 2006

Interviews:

- *Jomba Mlaleli - Job seeker Interview : Turin - Italy (20 April 2006)
- *Africana Ethiop - Job seeker Interview : Turin - Italy (25 April 2006)
- *Azania Black - Job seeker Interview : Turin - Italy (25 April 2006)
- *Gloria Zanj – Former immigrant: Interview : Turin - Italy (26 April 2006)
- Prof. A. Luciano (Sociologist and Director of Corep) in Turin (29 April 2006)