

Centre for International Health

**Strengthening Family Resilience during Accompanied
Humanitarian Assignments**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Pepall', written in a cursive style.

Elisa Pepall 13/9/2014

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Abstract

Today, many international humanitarian employees are skilled professionals seeking a long-term career within the industry. Such individuals often have family responsibilities in addition to demanding work duties. While appreciation of the psychological consequences of humanitarian work has seen an increase in staff care services provided to employees, scant attention has been given to the accompanying families of expatriate staff. Given acknowledgement of the important role families play in helping buffer worker stress this shortcoming is intriguing. Additionally, research on missionary or corporate globally-mobile families, has consistently emphasised the significant role family adjustment (especially that of the partner or spouse) has on worker performance, organisational commitment and retention. Given high levels of burnout and staff turnover within the humanitarian sector, and demands for greater fiscal accountability, the need for greater consideration of the experiences and support needs of expatriate families is compelling.

Underpinned by constructivist grounded theory methodology, this qualitative study explored the experiences of accompanying families in the humanitarian international non-governmental organisational (INGO) sector. In particular, it focussed on understanding the stressors faced by such families and the resilience processes used to manage these challenges. Multiple data collection methods, including in-depth partner and key informant interviews and a systematic scoping review were undertaken for this study.

Between December 2010 and October 2012, 23 interviews were conducted with accompanying partners of humanitarian INGO workers in addition to eight key informant interviews with senior human resources (HR) and staff care professionals from humanitarian INGOs. Accompanying partners were recruited for the study from Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe, including partners in remote postings and high-risk conflict settings (e.g. Afghanistan). Aged between 29 and 50 years, most were living abroad, while three had recently repatriated to their home countries. As families (usually with accompanying children) they had lived abroad from one to 22 years. Key informants who included HR and staff care professionals represented a

variety of humanitarian organisations. Their average length of tenure was 10 years, and the majority of key informants had lived as expatriates themselves.

Accompanying partner interview feedback identified eight dominant types of challenges impacting families, highlighting in particular the significant cost accompanied assignments can have on relationships and the careers of accompanying partners. One in four partners also experienced at least one (self-defined) crisis during their time abroad. In addition to highlighting the beneficial aspects of expatriate living, interviews also depicted accompanying families as demonstrating resilience. Specific coping strategies and growth were repeatedly reported at both the individual-level (i.e. accompanying partners) and family-level (i.e. between couples or between parents and children). Family-level strategies closely reflected F. Walsh's (2006) family resilience framework and included beliefs like positive thinking and putting the family first, and behaviours such as seeking social, professional, occupational and economic supports. Both accompanying partners and key informants identified desired organisational family supports at each stage of the deployment cycle. Recommendations included greater pre-deployment communication with families (especially accompanying partners), improved responsiveness and social networking while abroad, and partner debriefing at assignment completion.

This PhD study is among the first of its kind, focusing on resilience within expatriate families and seeking specifically to give voice to accompanying spouses and partners of humanitarian workers. As an understudied topic, the research offers new insights in regards to expatriate family resilience and the mechanisms families use to thrive. More specifically, the research highlights the resilience processes in expatriate humanitarian families. Whilst not exclusive to expatriate humanitarian families alone, the research findings found this population to be particularly vulnerable to unfavorable impacts associated with frequent employee travel, short employment contracts, vicarious trauma and ethical and moral dilemmas. This study also confirmed that the expectations of the humanitarian worker, the accompanying partner and the hiring organisation each significantly influence the success or outcome of an international assignment. Research findings contributed to the development of a new and expanded model of expatriate humanitarian family

adjustment and proposed practical recommendations for expatriate families seeking to pursue resilience and thriving, despite the many risks encountered in the humanitarian sector. This model and separate recommendations for humanitarian organisations were also offered, thereby providing important guidance for agencies desiring to better support expatriate staff and accompanying dependants. Underpinning these recommendations is the assertion that greater acknowledgement and support of accompanying families will ultimately improve employee performance and retention and contribute to better outcomes for the communities the humanitarian worker serves. It is also hoped that the model will help enhance partner and spouse relationships amongst humanitarian workers.

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List of Abbreviations

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AusAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
CCAI	Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory
CSAI	CernySmith Adjustment Index
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAW	Emergency Aid Worker
FAAR	Family Adjustment and Adaption Response
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HQ	Headquarters
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
MA	Master (degree)
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MSc	Master of Science (degree)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
R&R	Rest and Recuperation
ReMAP	Reducing Missionary Attrition Project
RMFAA	Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation
ROI	Return on Investment
SOC	Sense of Coherence

TCK	Third Culture Kid
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCT	U-curve Theory
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees
USA	United States of America
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
WCT	W-curve Theory

List of Key Terms

Accompanied positions: Roles that permit partners and/or dependant children to live with humanitarian workers as expatriates or sojourners in a foreign country. (Other postings are classified as unaccompanied; describing the situation in which a humanitarian worker works and lives in a different country to that in which their family resides).

Development aid: Development aid “responds to ongoing structural issues that may hinder economic, institutional and social development” (Humanitarian Coalition, 2013). Development aid therefore promotes economic growth, health, education, democracy, governance and human rights. Development aid is sometimes referred to as development assistance, international aid, overseas aid or foreign aid and is concerned with sustainability and therefore focuses on the long-term.

Driving forces: Derived from Lewin’s Force Field Analysis Model (as cited in Robbins, Judge, Millett, & Waters-Marsh, 2008, p. 654), such forces direct behaviour away from the status quo. Within the framework of organisational change, driving forces are those that push organisations towards a new state of affairs.

Employment longevity: Defined as “time from hire to termination” (Brennan, Emmons, & Silvers, 1991). Incentives or workplaces that promote longevity naturally improve staff retention.

Expatriate: An expatriate refers to someone who has taken up temporary residence in a foreign country on the condition of guaranteed employment (Wilson, 2011).

Family: “Family refers to two or more individuals who depend on one another for emotional, physical, and economic support. The members of the family are self-defined” (Hanson, as cited in K. Black & Lobo, 2008, p. 34).

Family resilience: Describes the “path a family follows as it adapts and prospers in the face of stress, both in the present and over time. Resilient families respond positively to these conditions in unique ways, depending on the context, developmental level, the interactive combination of risk and protective factors, and the family’s shared outlook” (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996, p. 293).

Humanitarian action: “Activities undertaken to improve the human condition” (Minear & Weiss, 1995, p. 18). It includes both humanitarian relief and development aid.

Humanitarian relief: Humanitarian relief is the provision of life-saving material and logistical assistance, to those in need, including victims of both conflicts and natural disasters (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2008). It focuses on responding to immediate needs and adopts a short-term perspective, usually less than six months. Common humanitarian relief activities include food distributions, emergency shelter, protection activities and provision of basic services such as health and sanitation.

Humanitarian worker: Humanitarian workers are those engaging in the provision of services to “improve the human condition” in the continuum from relief aid through to longer-term development.

Job performance: The work-related activities expected of an employee and how well these activities are executed ("Job performance", 2013). Individual workplace behaviour and performance is influenced by four key factors: motivation, ability, role perceptions and situational factors (McShane & Travaglione, 2003).

Member care: Depicts “the ongoing investment of resources by mission agencies, churches, and other mission organisations for the nurture and development of missionary personnel. It focuses on everyone in missions (missionaries, support staff, children and families) and does so over the course of the missionary life cycle, from recruitment through to retirement” (O'Donnell, 2002a, p. 4).

Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO): NGOs are among the body of third sector not-for-profit organisations that “pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development” (The World Bank, 2013).

Organisational commitment: Refers to “an employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in a particular organisation” (Mowday, Porter & Steers, as cited in McShane & Travaglione, 2003, p. 130). It includes affective commitment (or organisational loyalty) and continuance commitment (when employees believe it is in their own personal interest to remain with the organisation).

Resilience: Defined as “the capacity to maintain or regain wellbeing in the face of adversity” (Ryff, 2014, p. 10). Resilience is observed at multiple levels, including individual, family and community.

Resiliency: Ego-resiliency is “a personality characteristic of the individual, whereas resilience is a dynamic developmental process” (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 546). Moreover, ego-resiliency does not presuppose exposure to substantial adversity, whereas resilience, by definition, does.

Restraining forces: Derived from Lewin’s Force Field Analysis Model (as cited in Robbins, et al., 2008, p. 654), it refers to forces that hinder intervention as they seek to maintain status quo.

Return on Investment (ROI): Measuring ROI is an important step in determining fiscal accountability. Within the HR context, ROI is traditionally defined using the following equation (D. S. Cohen, p. 4):

$$\text{HR ROI} = \frac{\text{Results (actual performance or expectations)}}{\text{Salary + human resource development investment}}$$

HR can use ROI metrics to analyse the value of almost any of its services, as long as a dollar cost can be determined. For example, the value of a new employee

orientation program can be measured in terms of an ROI by assessing the costs saved by correlated reductions in turnover.

Third Culture Kid (TCK): An individual who “has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years other than the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background” (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 19).

Thriving: Represents “something more than a return to equilibrium following a challenge... [thriving] describes a “value-added” model, whereby an individual or community may go beyond survival and recovery from a stressor or illness to thrive” (Ickovics & Park, 1998, p. 237). Thriving may be considered a product of multiple determinants including resilience and available supports.

Vicarious trauma: Vicarious trauma or secondary traumatization is the “stress and trauma reactions that can occur in response to witnessing or hearing about traumatic events that have happened to others” (McKay, 2007b, p. 9).

Wellbeing: Describes “the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012, p. 230). A complex multi-faceted concept, it builds upon the notion of a state of balance that can easily be affected by challenges in life.

List of Presentations and Publications

Presentations:

International:

1. *Challenges affecting expatriate families within the humanitarian community.* Member Care Forum, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, August 14 2012.
2. *Promoting resilience in accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian workers.* 2013 NGO and Missionary Lunchtime Learning, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, March 10 2013.
3. *Don't forget the families! Equipping accompanying families of international humanitarian staff to thrive.* 2013 British Red Cross Resilience Conference, London, UK, April 11 2013.

Australian:

1. *Strengthening family resilience during accompanied humanitarian assignments.* Centre for International Health Doctoral Forum, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia, November 11 2010.

Publications:

1. Pepall, E. (2012, October). The expat family: Recommendations for thriving abroad as an expatriate family in the humanitarian community. *Monthly Developments*, 30, 8-10.
2. Pepall, E. (2013, April 11). *Don't forget the families! Equipping accompanying families of international humanitarian staff to thrive.* Paper presented at the 2013 British Red Cross Resilience Conference, London, UK.
3. Pepall, E. & Earnest, J. (2013). Scoping review: Resilience, expatriate families and humanitarian work. (Manuscript under review).

Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

*What lies behind us and what lies before us are
tiny matters compared to what lies within us.*

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

1.0 Introduction

This thesis makes a contribution to several emerging fields of study, including expatriate family resilience and human resource (HR) management and accountability within the humanitarian sector. As one of few studies that seek the perspective of accompanying partners of aid workers, the present thesis investigates the challenges of and coping processes used by expatriate families of humanitarian international non-governmental organisation (INGO) workers. Drawing on analysis of in-depth interview data and literature review, practical recommendations for strengthening resilience among expatriate families are outlined for humanitarian organisations and families themselves. A context-specific model is also proposed, designed to guide further research and influence family support initiatives provided by humanitarian agencies.

This chapter begins by providing a summary of my motivation for the study, recognising the importance of understanding reflexivity when attempting to evaluate the merits of a study. Background information on humanitarian work, stress and families is then discussed, before outlining the aims and methodology of the research and presenting key findings along with their significance and limitations.

1.1 Researcher's Motivation and Interest

My interest in the resilience of accompanying families¹ of international humanitarian workers (hereafter often referred to as expatriate humanitarian families) is a result of working within the humanitarian sector and more recently, becoming an accompanying spouse of an international aid worker. Between 2000 and 2008 I worked with several aid and development agencies on health initiatives in Mongolia,

¹ For the purposes of this research, Hanson's definition (as cited in K. Black & Lobo, 2008, p. 34) of family was used (see page xvi for definitions of key terms). As such, this definition included married or de-facto couples with or without children.

Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In 2009, I moved with my husband and two month old son to Cambodia, my husband accepting a contract with a humanitarian organisation based in Phnom Penh. Since then we have had another child and my husband has had four different positions and contracts within the same agency.

While employed in the humanitarian sector, I observed that though senior leadership would acknowledge the impact of family wellbeing on staff performance, few practical tools or guidelines existed concerning how best to support expatriate families. Meanwhile, among colleagues in the relief and development sector, I observed a variety of individual and relational coping skills. Some families appeared to thrive despite facing challenges such as frequent time apart, unknown contract lengths, and exposure to security threats; other couples sadly separated either abroad or after returning home.

Given my familiarity with the humanitarian sector, I was surprised at the personal challenges I experienced during my first year in Phnom Penh. A particularly liveable city (especially compared to previous assignment locations), I struggled with the adjustment to motherhood and identity issues, as I was overseas without a job for the first time. Our first year in Cambodia was also affected by my husband's experience with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Given his previous work in emergency relief in Bosnia, Iraq, Syria and Sri Lanka, this diagnosis was not surprising. However, it added to the relationship strain we experienced during our initial year in Phnom Penh.

In short, both personal and professional experience highlighted the significant impact humanitarian work has on accompanying families as well as workers. I sought to produce empirical research that could be used by humanitarian agencies to promote greater resilience among accompanying families. Familiarity with both the industry and the experience of being an accompanying partner provided both motivation and credibility throughout the research process.

1.2 Background and Rationale for the Study

Underpinning the significance of this research is an appreciation of the significant role assumed by humanitarian INGOs and expatriate staff within the aid industry.

While a growing body of evidence (Cardozo, et al., 2012; Connorton, Perry, Hemenway, & Miller, 2012; McCormack & Joseph, 2012; Tol, et al., 2011) examines the causes and implications of work-related stress on humanitarian workers and organisations, few researchers have explored how these stressors directly or indirectly affect worker's families.

From the limited research about families of humanitarian workers, what is stressed is the significant role families play in helping buffer worker stress, and regrettably, the difficulties faced by workers attempting to balance work and family responsibilities. Extrapolating on this, one can assume that strong, resilient expatriate families would provide even greater support to humanitarian workers. Benefits of this may include improved job performance, employment longevity, organisational commitment and return on investment (ROI) (as defined on pages xvi-xix). The following sections expand on this background.

1.2.1 Humanitarian Action and INGOs

This research adopts a broad and inclusive definition of humanitarian action, that being “activities undertaken to improve the human condition” (Minear & Weiss, 1995, p. 18). As such, humanitarian workers are defined as those engaging in the provision of services across the spectrum from relief aid through to longer-term development. When specificity is required, the terms relief or development are used to remove ambiguity.

Humanitarian action is provided by a wide variety of actors. Key players include the United Nations (UN), multilateral development banks (e.g. the World Bank), national foreign aid programs (e.g. AusAID and DFID), international intergovernmental organisations (e.g. the Red Cross movement) and INGOs such as World Vision and HelpAge. The exponential growth and expansion of non-governmental actors has been a major trend in humanitarian action provision over the past 50 years (Chang, 2005; Heyse, 2003; Kinney, 2006).

A diverse group, NGOs range from small sector specific organisations to large formal multi-sectoral agencies. While debate exists as to what constitutes an NGO, drawing on a definition provided by the World Bank they are not-for-profit

“organisations² that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development” (The World Bank, 2013). NGOs often differ from other organisations in the sense that they tend to operate independent from government and are often value-based. In this thesis, the term INGO refers to those NGOs that are international in scope and have representatives across the world seeking to deal with specific humanitarian issues.

Over the past three decades, humanitarian INGOs (hereafter referred to as INGOs), have evolved into a crucial piece of the international humanitarian landscape (Lewis, 2010; Mukasa, 1999; Stoddard, 2003). In 2008 the total value of Global Humanitarian Assistance was “guestimated” to be US\$18 billion, approximately one third of this being accounted for by NGOs (Global Humanitarian Assistance, as cited in P. Walker & Russ, 2010, p. 10). Of significance, a handful of major players – CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Médecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam International, the international Save the Children alliance and World Vision International – dominate the NGO landscape; accounting for almost 40% of NGO spending (Stoddard, 2003; G. Taylor, Stoddard, Harmer, Haver, & Harvey, 2012).

Historically INGOs were generally assumed to be “good” because of their values and the mission they carried out. Their growth in the humanitarian sector, however, has been accompanied by mounting scrutiny of their management and performance (Chang, 2005; Lewis, 2010). The need for greater INGO accountability has been reflected in the development of various charters and partnerships such as the Global Accountability Project of One World Trust, the INGO Accountability Charter and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. Other trends over the past few decades have included increasing numbers of long-term career humanitarian workers (Salama, 1999) and greater professionalisation of the humanitarian sector (Ager & Loughry, 2004; P. Walker & Russ, 2010). Directly linked to this has been increased attention on HR management and development within the sector (Henry, 2004a, 2004b; P. Walker & Russ, 2010; Williamson & Darby, 2011).

² For the sake of consistency, where required, the spelling in all direct quotes has been altered to reflect Australian spelling. For example, in this quotation, organizations was replaced with organisations.

1.2.2 Expatriate INGO Workers

Both secular and religious INGOs have a long history of managing expatriate personnel (Anderson, 2005). Typically, during the process of recruiting international staff it is specified whether the position is accompanied or unaccompanied. Accompanied positions refer to scenarios in which partners and/or dependant children live with the humanitarian worker as expatriates in a foreign country. Other postings are classified as unaccompanied, often due to the level of hardship and/or risks (both personal and security) inherent in the role. These are usually positions in disaster and conflict affected countries. Accompanied or family postings are usually within the development sector and typically associated with mid to senior leadership or technical expertise roles in the organisation. Reasons for this include: the greater expenses incurred with family benefits (e.g. accommodation, insurance); the need for greater past experience; and the fact they are usually based in less volatile locations. Exceptions to these norms occur however, reflecting the overlap and “grey area” that exists in practice between relief and development. For example, prior to the earthquake in January 2010, Haiti was considered a family suitable development posting for many agencies. Within days, however, these same organisations were responding to a massive humanitarian emergency.

The appeal of INGO work is multifaceted; it may include a moral obligation to reduce suffering or personal satisfaction derived from engaging in meaningful work (Bjerneld, Lindmark, McSpadden, & Garrett, 2006). Others seek a career pathway within the humanitarian sector where they hope to gain both professional and fiscal benefits (Beristain, 2006). However, accompanying these rewards are many personal costs and threats (Blachetière, 2006; Palmer, 2005). Moving to a new country exposes one to foreign health risks, the threat of physical violence, and can be socially, culturally and spiritually dislocating. When responding to natural disasters, war or extreme poverty there are the additional burdens associated with seeing the worst of human misery and injustice (Palmer, 2005).

1.2.3 Individual Stress and Humanitarian Work

Drawing upon available humanitarian literature, Blachetière (2006) summarises and categorises the stress factors affecting aid workers into four groups: (1) situational factors particular to a host country or project area, (2) job-related factors specific to

the aid worker profession, (3) organisational and management factors common to the sector, and finally (4) personal risk factors which include an individual's particular history, motivations and relationships with family (Figure 1). This classification, while not exhaustive, offers an overview of the different typical stressors experienced by INGO workers.

<p>(1) Situational factors</p> <p>Insecurity</p> <p>Attacks on personal wellbeing</p> <p>Surrounding poverty and violence</p> <p>Demanding relations with populations, local authorities</p> <p>Health risks, poor facilities</p>	<p>(2) Job-related factors</p> <p>Difficult conditions of living</p> <p>Dislocation: social, cultural, spiritual</p> <p>Heavy workload or inactivity</p> <p>Tense relationships within the team</p>
<p>(3) Organisational, management factors</p> <p>Human resources issues on preparation and follow-up</p> <p>Management issues (bureaucracy, decision making process)</p> <p>Programme roles and objectives (unrealistic, ambiguous)</p> <p>Sector culture 'macho'</p>	<p>(4) Personal risk factors</p> <p>Limited contact with home, pressure from home</p> <p>Lack of experience</p> <p>Unrealistic expectations and motivations</p> <p>Poor self-care behaviour</p>

Figure 1: Stress factors experienced by aid workers (Blanchetière, 2006, p. 4)

The bulk of literature on the psychological impact of humanitarian work concerns relief workers dealing with the horror and devastation of disasters (Connorton, et al., 2012; Dahlgren, DeRoo, Avril, Bise, & Loutan, 2009; Hewison, 2003; Nilsson, Sjöberg, Kallenberg, & Larsson, 2011). Despite the comparative lack of literature on the impact of stress among development workers (i.e. those engaged in long-term international assistance in non-conflict or disaster settings), such individuals are still at psychological risk from the common stressors impacting all humanitarian workers (Loquercio, Hammersley, & Emmens, 2006). Ongoing exposure to continuous "low intensity" trauma rather than discreet obviously dramatic events is reflected in the stress factors identified in Figure 1.

People in Aid, also emphasise this reality:

[Development] personnel working in more stable environments may not face the same “traumatic” experiences, but issues of work-related stress, foreign culture, harsh climate, isolation, illness/disease, professional stagnation, poor management, and dilapidated infrastructures can easily lead to distress, burn-out, and mental and physical deterioration. (2003, p. 11)

The common negative side effects of stress on humanitarian workers are well documented (Ehrenreich & Elliott, 2004; Gushulak, 2012; Leggat, 2005; Palmer, 2005; D. S. Walsh, 2009). Such consequences include:

- **Physical:** tiredness, inability to relax, greater vulnerability to illness
- **Emotional:** mood swings, guilt and shame, depression
- **Behavioural:** irritability, increased smoking, conflict with co-workers, family or friends
- **Mental/Thought patterns:** indecisiveness, self-critical thoughts
- **Spiritual/Philosophical:** loss of purpose, loss of hope, cynicism.

These symptoms may generate different types of traumatic stress: acute, vicarious and cumulative. All three types of traumatic stress can be problematic for humanitarian workers (Headington Institute, 2007). However, research indicates that chronic stress reactions, such as PTSD and burnout, are likely to be problematic for the greatest number of INGO workers (Connorton, et al., 2012; Loquercio, et al., 2006). Despite the known risk factors, humanitarian employees often try to manage their stress through increased dependence on alcohol, other drugs or engaging in unprotected sex (Cain, Postlewait, & Thomson, 2004; Ehrenreich & Elliott, 2004; Palmer, 2005; Salama, 1999). Regrettably, eventually “those who decided to work helping others can end up hurting themselves and those around them” (Headington Institute, 2007, p. 2).

The impact of stress when overcome, may also be positive and considered a personal development, such as a new sense of purpose in life or the discovery of new strengths (Antares Foundation, 2008). Further insights of this personal enhancement and the negative effects of stress are presented in Figure 2.

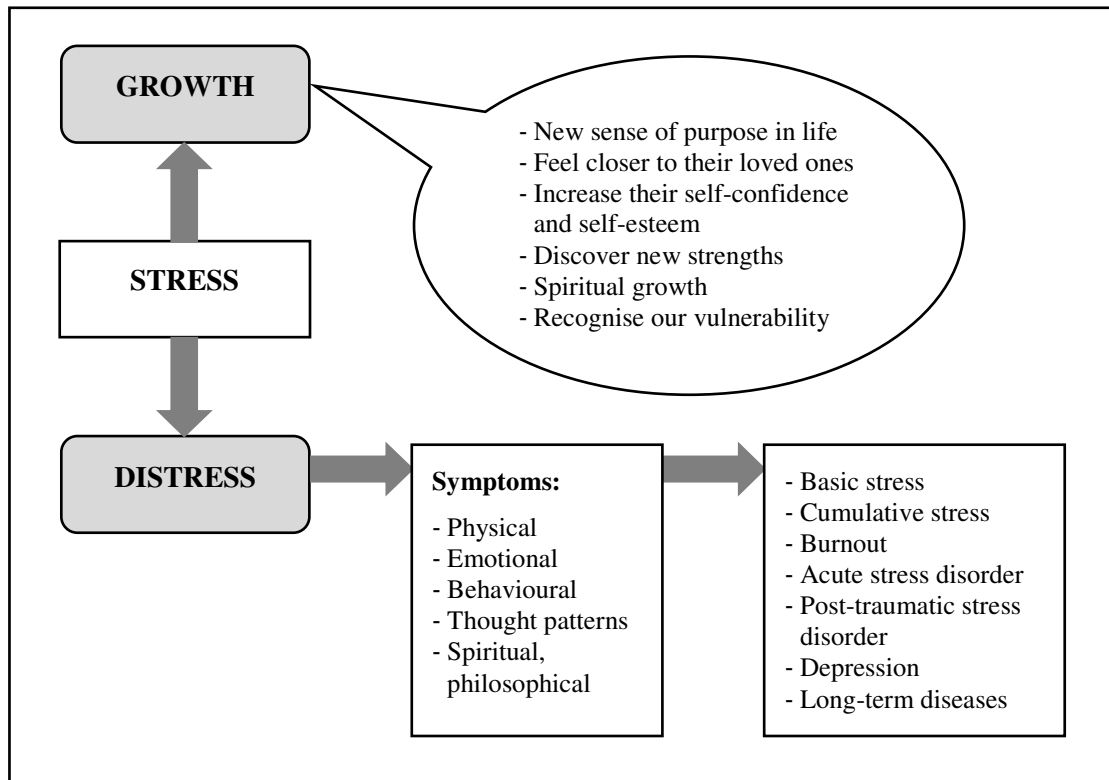


Figure 2: Impact of stress on an individual (Blanchetière, 2006, p. 5)

1.2.4 Stress and Humanitarian Organisations

The consequence of stress upon humanitarian workers goes far beyond the distress experienced by the individuals themselves. For an employing humanitarian organisation, “staff stress and burnout may impede recruitment and retention of qualified staff, increase health care costs, create legal liabilities... and lead to reduced work efficiency and effectiveness” (Ehrenreich & Elliott, 2004, p. 55).

Issues of staff retention and turnover are well documented in the humanitarian sector (Loquercio, 2006; Porter & Emmens, 2009; G. Taylor, et al., 2012), and are problematic and expensive, with detrimental effects on learning and efficiency, and the capacity of agencies to continue existing work and respond to new emergencies (Clarke & Ramalingam, 2008). A Humanitarian Practice Network survey of more than 100 managers from seven NGOs found that, for a significant number of staff, stress influenced their decision to leave the agency (Loquercio, et al., 2006, p. 9). Poor leadership, lack of career opportunities, burnout, disillusionment, frustration, bureaucracy and poor functioning were among the factors also cited. When asked

what the agency would need to do in the future if it wanted to persuade them to stay longer, respondents suggested: introducing or improving career paths and professional development (49%); better pay/terms and conditions, including accompanied status (43%); better work-life balance/family-friendly policies (24%); and better leadership (14%).

1.2.5 Managing Stress

There is increasing awareness over the past decade of the “dual responsibility” of humanitarian agencies’ to carry out their primary mission while also protecting the wellbeing of their staff (Antares Foundation, 2006). Significant guidelines on staff care that include the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2007), the Antares Guidelines of Good Practice (2006), and the People in Aid Code of Good Practice (2003) have been proposed. Such resources aim to assist organisations to help maintain the psychological health of humanitarian workers. Recommendations include comprehensive screening and training of potential staff, staff or peer mentoring, debriefing and appropriate policy development at the organisational level. Central to these guidelines is the belief that “agencies have a responsibility, consistent with their humanitarian objectives, to foster resiliency and strengthen human capacity” (Antares Foundation, 2006, p. 6). Online learning modules and training courses have also been developed with this goal in mind (Blachetière, 2006; Ehrenreich, 2002; Gilbert, 2006; Headington Institute, 2007).

As a group, humanitarian workers have been praised for their resilience as demonstrated by their ability to adapt to the acute and chronic stressors of their work (McFarlane, 2004). However, acknowledgment of the aforementioned stressors and support in managing them is essential to preserve and strengthen resilience processes. Blachetière (2006) provides recommendations to both the individual and organisations to enhance the resilience of aid workers, while McKay (2011) identifies organisational structures and personal factors which impact the resilience of humanitarian managers. The need for greater understanding and research into resilience within the humanitarian sector has also been identified. For example the Headington Institute (2012) in California, USA is conducting research seeking to

develop a Resilience Inventory, while People in Aid and InterHealth have called for the development of a resiliency model within the realm of improving staff care (Porter & Emmens, 2009).

1.2.6 The Families of Humanitarian Workers

Palmer advises humanitarian workers to “accept that everyone in your family will be changed by your deployment” (2005, p. 152). Despite the obvious truth of this statement, research about employee’s families within the humanitarian sector (including accompanying family members, non-accompanying family members and those of national staff³) remains in its infancy. What is acknowledged is the social support provided by families and how this serves as a protective factor for managing and mitigating the stress and trauma workers experience (Blachetière, 2006; Loquercio, 2006; Mayhew, 2002; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Salama, 1999). As such, for many unaccompanied workers, the absence of family is both a risk factor in itself and a source of stress in terms of managing separation issues (Antares Foundation, 2008; McFarlane, 2004; Staff Welfare Unit UNHCR, 2001). The humanitarian literature also acknowledges that for many expatriate staff, family responsibilities are deemed incompatible with being a humanitarian worker (Loquercio, 2006; Mayhew, 2002). An International Committee of the Red Cross survey claimed that 75% of respondents felt that a relationship and/or family ties exerted a strong or moderate influence on their decision to resign (Evaluanda, cited in Loquercio, et al., 2006, p. 8).

Virtually absent from the humanitarian literature is information on the experiences, perspectives or stories of families of humanitarian workers. Exceptions to this include anecdotal personal reflections written by humanitarian workers (Beckett, 2004) and the Headington Institute which has produced several relevant online study modules, including ‘*Family Matters: Self Care for Family Members of Humanitarian Workers*’ (McKay & Hulme, 2009). Despite the limited information available, several researchers have argued for greater education and support for the family

³ Though they represent the vast majority of humanitarian workers, issues related to families of national humanitarian workers were not explored as they lay outside the scope of this research. Likewise, scant attention was directed towards the needs of non-accompanying families. It is critical, however, that agency policies and practices should address the unique differing needs of national and international staff and their families.

(McFarlane, 2004; McKay & Hulme, 2009). Particular areas for improvement have included improved information provision for families experiencing relocation (Quick, 2009), and greater preparation of both the worker and his or her family with regards to re-entry or repatriation (Barron, 1999; Eriksson, et al., 2009).

1.3 Aims and Objectives

In recognising the gaps in knowledge about families accompanying expatriate humanitarian INGO workers, the primary aim of this present study was twofold. First, to document the main challenges and stressors faced by this population, and second, to identify the key resilience processes used by families to manage these stresses and maintain wellbeing. This information was based on the perspective of accompanying spouses or partners⁴.

Specifically, the study objectives were:

1. To document the main challenges experienced by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers based on the perception of expatriate partners. The research also hoped to highlight which challenges, if any, were unique to this particular group of globally-mobile families.
2. To identify the key resilience processes employed by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers from the viewpoint of accompanying partners.
3. To investigate organisational barriers and enablers that impact the support provided to expatriate families by INGOs.
4. To present a model of family resilience relevant to accompanying expatriate families in humanitarian contexts.
5. To propose recommendations for humanitarian agencies aimed at promoting resilience among accompanying expatriate families.
6. To propose recommendations for accompanying families in the humanitarian sector aimed at promoting their own resilience.

⁴ Unless specificity is required, this study generally prefers the more inclusive term, that of partners.

In addition to generating theory grounded in interview data, this research also developed a model and practical recommendations for supporting the resilience of accompanying families.

1.4 Methods

A qualitative constructivist grounded theory approach involving multiple data collection methods was chosen to allow various perspectives on the research questions and to provide context and depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A reference group also provided valuable advice and feedback on the research aims, specific research methods utilised and data analysis processes. Information about the group is elaborated in section 3.8.1. A general contextual review was conducted on the broad topics of expatriate families and family resilience.

Qualitative data was collected from intensive in-depth interviews with 23 accompanying partners of INGO workers and eight semi-structured interviews with humanitarian professionals in senior HR or staff care INGO positions. Key categories explored in the interviews included the challenges facing accompanying families, coping strategies utilised, advice for accompanying partners, and preferred or recommended organisational supports. NVivo 9® computer software was used to manage data and support the coding of interview data based on the constant comparative method of analysis central to grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Each interview was analysed and then compared to previous interviews to allow key categories to emerge. A systematic scoping review, (due to the diverse [e.g. research and non-research, qualitative and quantitative] nature of the available literature), was also conducted of the published and grey literature on two focal areas: 1) families and international humanitarian work; and 2) expatriate families and resilience.

The detailed research methodology utilised in this study is described in Chapter 3 and the scoping review methodology utilised is outlined in Chapter 4.

1.5 Brief Overview of Key Findings

To date, scant information exists about expatriate family resilience and families of humanitarian workers. Study findings emphasise the resilience of expatriate families and the need for improved organisational support for families throughout the deployment cycle. These condensed key findings are summarised below as part of the “overview” of the study, help justify the significance of the research in section 1.6 and are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 to 8.

1.5.1 Lack of Knowledge

Unlike the missionary (Blocher, 2004; Eriksson, et al., 2009; Hay, Lim, Hay, & Ketelaar, 2007), military (Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Saltzman, et al., 2011), and for-profit sectors (Andreason, 2008; Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2012; Selmer & Leung, 2003) that have long recognised the significant impact families have on the success of international assignments, the humanitarian community has failed to conduct research on the needs of worker’s families. This is significant and greatly influences family support provision. The scoping review highlighted the limited research available on expatriate family resilience and confirmed the lack of information known about families in the humanitarian sector.

1.5.2 The Impact of Humanitarian Work upon Families

For families that accompany a humanitarian worker overseas, there are rewarding experiences from the chance to live abroad, however, there are also challenges that can threaten individual wellbeing, relationships and family functioning. Partner interviews revealed eight dominant challenges impacting expatriate families in the humanitarian sector: 1) relationship concerns (both within the accompanying family itself and with distant family and friends); 2) personal and professional concerns of the accompanying partner; 3) transition and relocation issues; 4) parenting concerns; 5) adverse impacts of humanitarian work upon the family; 6) health concerns; 7) safety and security concerns; and 8) environmental, contextual and cultural concerns. Of significance, the experience of dealing with crises was also reported by 25% of partners.

Beneficial aspects associated with expatriate life within the humanitarian context included exposure to travel and different cultures, lifestyle benefits, and the

opportunity for both the humanitarian worker and the accompanying partner to pursue meaningful work or interests.

1.5.3 Expatriate Family Resilience

Study results revealed that expatriate humanitarian families demonstrate considerable resilience. Despite experiencing challenges and potential crises, many individuals and families reported individual-and family-level growth and thriving while abroad. Consistent with normal dialogue, partners rarely spoke of resilience processes used to recover from challenges. However, all participants identified personal-and family-level coping strategies used to mitigate stress. Of interest, the family coping strategies reported closely reflected F. Walsh's (1998a, 2003, 2006) key processes of family resilience.

A major finding of this study was support for the claim that family resilience is enhanced when protective factors are strengthened across all three levels of the ecological model: individual, family and community (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009). While decisions and behaviours at both the individual and family level influence family resilience, interview data also revealed organisational⁵ supports affecting family wellbeing and adjustment.

1.5.4 Organisational Family Supports

Maintaining the health and wellbeing of expatriate families is the responsibility of both the family and the humanitarian employer. While individuals and families can do a great deal to promote their own resilience, agencies should not assume that families know how best to achieve this in a foreign context. This is particularly relevant for families on their first expatriate assignment, those in hardship postings or culturally challenging locations, or families experiencing major life transitions (e.g. adjusting to parenthood). As such, agencies should take the lead in providing families with education and resources (such as the recommendations discussed in

⁵ Within the expatriate context, organisations may be looked to for a greater sense of community than one would typically expect in one's home environment. This can be problematic (e.g. work tensions affecting social interactions outside the office), thus it is advised to source local community support beyond one's hiring organisation. The reality, however, is that often newly arrived families seek considerable social and relational support through the employer's organisations.

section 8.6.2) to ensure they can promote their own resilience and thriving while abroad.

The research findings revealed that organisational family support practices were often ad-hoc, dependent on sympathetic individuals, and varied widely between organisations and even within the same agency. Direct communication with accompanying partners was often lacking, likewise complaints existed about the lack of inclusion in organisational life and networking among families. Very little validation of the supportive and often sacrificial roles played by accompanying families occurred.

Both accompanied partners and humanitarian professionals advocated for improved family organisational supports throughout the expatriate deployment cycle. Acknowledging many of the aforementioned criticisms, the recommendations outlined in section 8.6.1 also advocated for longer contracts in addition to leaders prioritising family needs above work demands.

1.6 Significance

After an extensive literature search, this appears to be the first study to investigate the challenges and resilience-enhancing processes used by expatriate humanitarian families, and among the first to examine family resilience within any expatriate population. A key finding emerging from the data was the widespread support that partners and professionals give for the need for consistent and comprehensive family supports to be embedded into organisational policies and practices. This thesis proposes specific recommendations for family supports aimed at strengthening resilience.

This research is driven by the rationale that enhanced expatriate family wellbeing makes good business sense: promoting stability, improved worker retention and job performance, and ultimately enhancing the impact or value for money associated with accompanied postings.

This study has four levels of significance, with the first level directed towards humanitarian workers. Recognising the multiple work and family stressors faced by

these workers, the study acknowledges the efforts often made to manage these challenges, and proposes recommendations to humanitarian workers on how best to sustain healthy relationships while pursuing their humanitarian careers.

The second level of significance focuses on accompanying partners of humanitarian workers. “Voicing” the experiences and opinions of this often overlooked population, the research puts forward recommendations for partners that foster personal and family resilience.

The third level of significance targets humanitarian organisations; specifically those in senior leadership, HR, staff care and recruitment roles. Improved knowledge about the experiences of expatriate humanitarian families provides an understanding of the factors affecting work performance and commitment. The findings inform those advocating for change, while agency specific recommendations to best promote resilience within accompanying families are also provided.

Finally, this study is significant for myself, as a researcher and as an accompanying spouse and mother. I was able to recognise the strong resilience processes in my family as well as areas for improvement. Having gained greater appreciation of the diversity of factors that affect expatriate family resilience, there is a responsibility to share the results with practitioners and their families, and with fellow researchers.

1.7 Thesis Overview

Chapter 1 provides the motivation for this research, important background for the study, and an outline of the aims and methodology of the research. Key findings have been summarised along with their significance and limitations.

Chapter 2 introduces literature pertinent to the present study on expatriate families and family resilience. Dominant themes and relevant theoretical constructs and models are presented, including: culture shock and reverse culture shock, family systems theory, work-family conflict and enrichment, family stress theory and family strengths.

Chapter 3 describes the research approach, justifying and explaining the application of constructivist grounded theory method used. The collection and analysis of interview data from accompanying partners and key informant (humanitarian professionals) is explained. Data collection tools and procedures are described and strategies to ensure rigour and ethical research practices are addressed.

Chapter 4 presents a comprehensive scoping review focussed on two related areas of enquiry: 1) families and international humanitarian work, and 2) resilience and expatriate families.

Chapter 5 presents profiles of the 23 partners of humanitarian INGO workers participating in the study. The chapter also presents interview findings with regards to the dominant challenges reported, the benefits associated with living abroad, and reports of growth or change by participants and their families.

Chapter 6 reports additional information from the 23 partner interviews, focusing on the coping strategies reported, advice for other accompanying partners and feedback on organisational supports.

Chapter 7 brings together the main findings from the key informant interviews with humanitarian professionals in senior HR or staff care INGO positions. Included in this chapter is demographic information about the eight informants and feedback on perceived expatriate family needs in addition to barriers and enablers influencing the family related supports provided by organisations.

Chapter 8 synthesises findings and responds to each of the research objectives. This includes the proposal of a model for enhancing resilience and recommendations for both humanitarian organisations and accompanying families. Suggestions for future study and the significance and limitations of the research are also discussed.

Chapter Two: Expatriate Families and Family Resilience

“Family? How do we keep in touch? You work long enough for the UN and you don’t have a family. Problem solved.”

(Anonymous United Nations Volunteer (UNV) cited in Robinson, 2002, p. 134)

2.0 Introduction

The focus of this research is on the challenges and coping strategies or resilience-enhancing processes of expatriate families within the humanitarian sector. Given the lack of existent research on this population, this chapter provides background contextual information on the topics of expatriate families and family resilience. This research is relevant to multiple academic disciplines, including: psychology, international aid and development, human resource management, mobility and organisational science.

Chapter 2 provides readers with sufficient context for interpreting the research findings and highlights gaps in research. The chapter is divided into four parts: Part One provides information on expatriate families; Part Two presents theoretical constructs and models related to expatriate family adjustment; Part Three presents information on resilience and family resilience; and, Part Four outlines theoretical constructs and models related to family resilience in addition to identifying the position taken on resilience as adopted within this thesis.

2.1 Part One: Expatriate Families

Expatriate families within the humanitarian sector are just one subset of a growing community of globally-mobile families. These include diplomatic families, families within the corporate sector and missionary families. This section presents dominant findings regarding expatriate families, a topic of substantial interest in fields of cross-cultural psychology and international human resource development (HRD). In particular, lessons can be learnt from the profit sector and faith-based communities on why consideration of the needs of the whole family is important (as opposed to

focusing just on the employee) and effective strategies for family support. Dominant models of expatriate, spouse, and family adjustment within the expatriate literature are also presented as well as a discussion of significant contributing theoretical constructs.

2.1.1 Expatriate Family Roles and Norms

In the process of an international relocation, a family may need to learn a new language, adapt to a different diet, climate and cultural norms, and establish new social networks. This section provides an overview of the main issues concerning the accompanying partner or spouse, the expatriate employee (hereafter generally referred to as the expatriate as is consistent with the HRD literature) and any accompanying children in the context of an expatriate family making the transition to an international location. A general appreciation of the factors affecting both individuals and the family as a unit is essential when considering the challenges, strengths or available resilience related resources influencing expatriate humanitarian families.

The Accompanying Partner

Traditionally, expatriates were male and accompanied by a wife who was viewed as a homemaker. Most organisations did not consider spousal adjustment issues to be their responsibility. A very different reality occurs today. First, many wives work and dual-career couples are the norm (Cole, 2011; Dowling, Festing, & Engle, 2008; Eyring & Eyring, 2005). Second, it is estimated as least 20% of today's expatriates are female (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2012; Cartus, 2012). Finally, considerable research demonstrates that the adaptation of expatriate families to a host country is crucial to successful fulfilment of international assignments (discussed in detail in section 2.1.2).

The number of dual-career expatriate families has increased significantly (Cole, 2011; Harvey, Napier, Moeller, & Williams, 2010; Selmer & Leung, 2003). The Permits Foundation (2008) survey of 3,300 expatriate spouses and partners reported that while 90% of partners were employed prior to moving, only 35% worked post relocation despite 75% wishing to resume employment. Problems associated with dual-career couples include higher refusal rates to relocate internationally, increased

risk of assignment failure, extended adjustment cycles for dual-career couples and their families, disruption of family income levels, discontinuity in trailing spouse's careers, heightened dysfunctional family consequences (often associated with marital stress), and repatriation and re-engagement issues associated with the trailing spouses' absence from the workforce (Harvey, 1998; Mäkelä, Känslä, & Suutari, 2011; Riusala & Suutari, 2000).

The number of female expatriates with male accompanying spouses has also significantly grown over the past few decades (Altman & Shortland, 2008; Cole, 2011; Selmer & Luring, 2011). The limited research available to date on male spouses suggests that spousal problems may be more serious when men have to adjust to no longer being the primary breadwinner (Cole, 2011; McGill, 2003). While facing all the issues common to accompanying spouses in general, males also experience two significant differences. First, a smaller peer group (support structure) to depend on and, second, the possibility of encountering differing cultural attitudes (Hess & Linderman, 2002; International Gender Studies Centre, 2004). For example, the stay-at-home-dad may not be understood or welcomed by locals in some traditional societies, while within expatriate circles he may find himself the lone man in a women's group, or at school (Coyle & Shortland, as cited in Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010).

Regardless of gender, the stresses of transition are typically far greater for the accompanying partner than the expatriate (Andreason, 2008; Brown, 2008; Fukuda & Chu, 1994). As stated by Alder and Gundersen:

Whereas employees have the organisation and job structure that continue from the home to the new country, and children have the continuity and routine of school, spouses often leave behind many of the most important aspects of their lives, including friends, relatives and meaningful activities... the challenges of adjusting successfully are therefore both different and greater. (2007, p. 314)

Commonly reported stressors facing accompanying spouses include: adapting to a new country and culture (for example dealing with daily power failures, knowing where to purchase items, and overcoming cultural and language barriers when

completing ordinary tasks such as paying bills); making new friends and keeping in touch with family and friends; maintaining a sense of identity and confidence; identifying meaningful activities to pursue; lack of one-on-one time with the working partner impacting relational communication and intimacy; child adjustment concerns and education needs; and, loneliness or a sense of isolation (Brown, 2008; Hess & Linderman, 2002; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Wilson, 2011).

The Expatriate Employee

Employees on international assignments are often faced with an entirely new work role, completely different cultural practices and expectations, and are under pressure to perform effectively (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Van Der Zee, Ali, & Salome, 2005). Expatriates usually work longer hours abroad than they did at home and report that travel schedules and long working hours negatively intrude on family life (ORC Worldwide, 2007). Challenges with work-life balance mean the partner and children are likely to experience increased stress levels which may adversely impact family relationships (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Harvey, 1995). Therefore, expatriates (especially females) often experience excessive demands in both their professional and personal life at the same time, and as a result, are likely to experience work-life conflict (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Mäkelä, et al., 2011).

These observations are confirmed by Brown (2008) who investigated the dominant sources of stress on expatriate couples on assignment, testing the hypothesis that the stressors differ between employee and spouse roles. Whereas spouses often reported struggling with a reduced sense of self-esteem or competence, isolation, and daily hassles or frustrations, expatriates experienced greater stress as a result of relationship strains. These stressors included coping with too many conflicting demands/expectations, dealing with their partner's assignment disappointment, and the declining quality of relationship with their partner.

Accompanying Dependents

Children who have lived abroad for significant periods are often called Third Culture Kids (TCKs⁶). The term was coined by John and Ruth Useem in 1963 who studied the experiences of American expatriate families posted to India (McLachlan, 2007). The complex nature of TCK relationships may cause children to feel they relate to many cultures, but lack a sense of belonging to any specific culture (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Because of their experience with cross-cultural moves, TCKs tend to adapt well to new social settings, make friends quickly and relate well to a diverse group of peers and adults (Hess & Linderman, 2002). Unfortunately, repeated relocation and living in a transient community predisposes internationally mobile children to experience loss and grief due to frequent loss of friendships (Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998; McLachlan, 2007; Pascoe, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Young children may be enthusiastic about an international move, and their very presence in a family often facilitates easier spousal adjustment as the spouse must continue to carry out similar parental responsibilities as they would at home (Bauer & Taylor, 2001). Conversely, teenagers may react more negatively and intensely to a proposed move, feeling angry and afraid at how the move will disrupt their friendships and social activities (K. P. Weeks, Weeks, & Willis-Muller, 2010). Parents and teenagers themselves are also concerned at quality of education opportunities available and the impact of transition upon academic success (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010; K. P. Weeks, et al., 2010). The encouraging news for families with teenagers abroad, is that expatriate families often find themselves spending more time together and depending on each other more, both during and after their overseas experience (Tsang-Feign, 2013).

The Family Unit

Harvey (1998) found the employed spouse was more pre-occupied with work-related measures of adjustment while the non-working spouse focused on family adjustment. Each spouse often feels unsupported by the other and marital strain may result

⁶ Today the term TCK also encompasses individuals who are raised within different cultural worldviews, without ever leaving their country of birth (as cited in K. Black & Lobo, 2008, p. 34). Within the context of this research, the use of the term TCK is limited to its more traditional definition given its relevance to the expatriate family.

(Bauer & Taylor, 2001; Pascoe, 2003). This pattern is reflected in surveys of expatriate families. For example the ExpatExpert.com/AMJ Campbell International Relocation Survey (2008) found that marital breakdown was given the highest rating for factors impacting negatively on international assignments (rated higher than children's education, spousal career concerns and adjustment in general). Anecdotal feedback provided in the aforementioned survey included comments such as: "The children and I are closer but the demands of my husband's job have made him absent. It has been stressful on our relationship and I am sad that he is losing out on raising his children" (p.11).

Despite the stresses and strains placed upon individual family members and the family unit, for many families expatriate living has greater advantages than disadvantages (Hess & Linderman, 2002). It exposes children and adults to different cultures, languages, and alternate ways of viewing the world; helping individuals to become more flexible and understanding of other people's differences (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). The processes of working through the dominant stressors impacting expatriate couples, such as work-family balance and creating new social supports can also strengthen relationships and some globally-mobile families report closer marriages and family ties (Copeland & Norell, 2002; McLachlan, 2007; Munton & Forster, 1990). Without a familiar support network, expatriate families often become more cohesive as means of supporting each other's needs and avoiding crisis, creating what Schaetti and Ramsey (1999, para. 3) call the "family bubble."

Hess and Linderman (2002, p. 126) liken the family unit to a "lifeboat" in the first weeks in a new location, whereby family members rely closely on one another to manage a new situation. These authors claim the "strong ties that develop in such a situation can be enduring, permanently strengthening the family." Though not specific to expatriate families, these findings are consistent with the work of Stinnett and DeFrain (1985b) who observed that families who weathered a crisis together often reported their relationships were enriched and more loving than they might have been otherwise.

McLachlan (2007) argued expatriate families are not simply passive agents who move around the globe pursuing work. Rather, many consciously implement a range

of resilience fostering strategies to help reduce the difficulties associated with transition, while ensuring that their family not only survives, but actually thrives. Recent research by Rosenbusch and Cseh (2012) also demonstrated that expatriate families who have higher perceptions of family flexibility have easier adaptation experiences during an international transition.

2.1.2 Expatriate Families in the For-Profit Sector

While research shows an increase in the use of third country nationals, commuter assignments and short-term expatriation (less than one year), the need to deploy expatriates on long-term international assignments among multinational corporations (MNCs) continues to grow (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010; Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Tungli & Peiperl, 2009). This trend, coupled with a desire to ensure a satisfactory ROI (McNulty, De Cieri, & Hutchings, 2009), has ensured expatriate family issues have been a major source of interest in the HRD literature (Andreason, 2008; Harvey, 1995; McNulty, 2012; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Wilkinson & Singh, 2010). Factors that emerge from the for-profit expatriate literature relevant to promoting greater resilience amongst accompanying humanitarian families include the cost and attributing factors associated with failed assignments, evidence that the spouse and family play a significant role in the adjustment process of the expatriate, and recommended organisational supports.

Expatriate Assignment Failure

“Expatriation is a high-risk exercise for the company, if things go wrong the costs will be very high, both to the employee and to the customer” (Bill Thomas, President of Ceridian Multinational Services as cited in Beagrie, 2005, p. 27). The available estimates ranging from \$250,000 to \$1 million per failed expatriate assignment (as defined by premature return) for MNCs in the United States do not include indirect costs such as damaged customer relationships, discredited corporate reputations, difficulties with the host government and decreased staff morale (Chew, 2004; Mezas & Scandura, 2005; Miser & Miser, 2009). For the expatriate themselves, these costs may include a loss of self-esteem and confidence, family relationship problems, and impaired future job prospects (Andreason, 2007).

Many researchers and scholars have drawn attention to high failure rates of expatriates (Chew, 2004; Mezas & Scandura, 2005; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Tye & Chen, 2005). While Harzing (1995) questioned the magnitude of the premature return problem⁷, research between 1985 and 2005 showed a “consistent ranking of the ‘inability of the spouse/partner/family’ to adjust as a primary cause of early recall” (Dowling & Welch, as cited in Andreason, 2008, p. 391). Reasons for this include not coping with culture shock, a trailing spouse regretting giving up a good career and marital problems. Furthermore, premature return rates reflect only one type of failure, often ignoring expatriates who complete their assignment but perform poorly or those who are unable to successfully re-adjust during repatriation (Anderson, 2005; Harzing, 1995).

Interplay between Family and Expatriate Employee Adjustment

Drawing upon family systems theory and crossover theory (both explained in greater detail in section 2.2), a number of studies have examined the relationship between partner adjustment and expatriate adjustment (Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998; Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Van Der Zee, et al., 2005). These have revealed a significant reciprocal relationship (Andreason, 2008; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002); where partner/family adjustment has a great impact on the adjustment of the worker, just as the experiences of the employee can have a significant positive or negative impact on the adjustment and transition of their partner and/or children.

While accompanying partners have often been cast as a negative influence on expatriate assignment success (i.e. their dissatisfaction with the posting being a source of considerable stress and a major cause of premature return), evidence indicates partners can have a positive influence on worker performance (Kupka & Cathro, 2007; Mäkelä, et al., 2011; N. Wood, 2001). Luring and Selmer (2010) presented accompanying partners actively trying to support and further their husbands’ careers and repatriation opportunities through use of social strategies, such as establishing networks with influential others. Supportive behaviours documented

⁷ Harzing (Szkudlarek, 2010) advised against providing exact figures on expatriate failure rates as measured by premature re-entry. Her article highlighted both the limited number of solid empirical studies in this field and the lack of rigour and verification concerning many of the figures often quoted.

in the literature include consultation and giving advice regarding work, practical help with reconciling work-life balance, creating a comfortable living environment, adopting a lead role in parenting and taking responsibility for organising accommodation, schools etc. (Valimaki, Lamsa, & Hiillos, 2009). These behaviours support a positive association between being married and the work effectiveness of expatriates (Selmer & Luring, 2011).

While many models have been developed to explain the expatriate adjustment process, in a meta-analysis of 63 studies on expatriate adjustment, Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, and Luk (2005) described the Framework of International Adjustment⁸ (see Figure 3) as “easily the most influential and often-cited theoretical treatment of employee experiences on international assignments” (p. 257). The framework emphasised that adjustment must be treated as a multifaceted construct (Gabel, Dolan, & Cerdin, 2005) and identified a broad range of both anticipatory (pre-deployment) and in-country inputs to adjustment. Integrating both the domestic and international adjustment literature, it identified three key specific domains of adjustment: work adjustment, which involves adaptation to new job tasks, work roles, and the new work environment; interaction adjustment, which involves the comfort achieved in interacting with host nationals in both work and non-work situations; and general adjustment, which means adjustment to daily living issues such as food, housing, transportation etc. (J. S. Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). The framework acknowledged family-spouse adjustment inasmuch that it influences the expatriate’s work, interaction, and general adjustment.

⁸ Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou’s (1995) *Framework of International Adjustment* is also known as the Social/Cultural Adjustment Model.

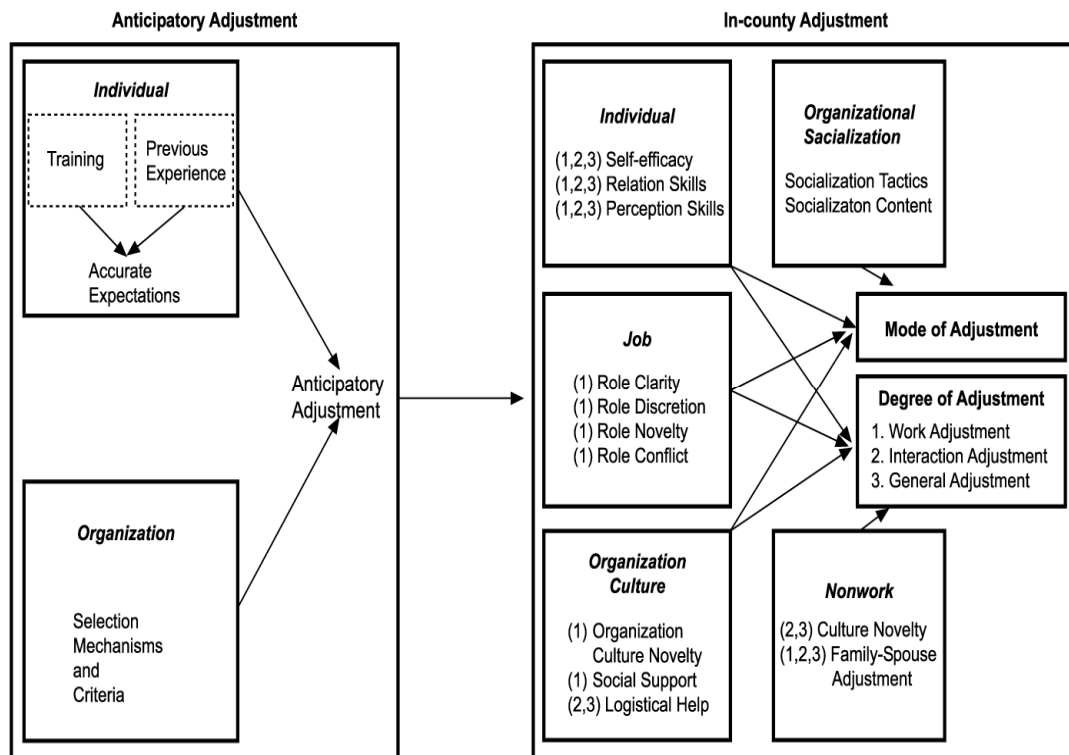


Figure 3: Framework of international adjustment* (J. S. Black, et al., 1991, p. 303)

*Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbered facet(s) of adjustment to which the specific variable is expected to relate. For example, the nonwork variable of culture novelty is linked with (2) interaction and (3) general adjustment, while family-spouse adjustment is expected to affect all three degrees of adjustment: (1) work, (2) interaction, and (3) general.

Organisational Support

Despite widespread acknowledgement of the significant impact of partner adjustment on expatriate assignment success, many argue that MNCs offer insufficient assistance to partners and families throughout the international experience, from pre-departure through to reintegration (Andreason, 2008; Cole, 2010; El Mansour & Wood, 2010; McNulty, 2012; Selmer & Leung, 2003; E. Wood, 2010). While this may be the case, the recent Brookfield Global Relocation Trends Survey (2012) revealed specific family-related organisational supports are often provided. For example 78% of respondents stated their organisation supported accompanying spouses or partners with language training, 41% sponsored work permits, 33% provided education/training assistance, and 30% career-planning assistance. Other approaches used to ease family transition include assistance with securing suitable accommodation and school enrolment (Dowling, et al., 2008; ExpatExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008). Central to these programs are international HR

staff who assume a lead role during staff recruitment and selection, pre-deployment support, language and cross-cultural training and repatriation support (Beagrie, 2005; Chew, 2004; Dowling, et al., 2008). It has been argued personal relocation experience should be a necessary pre-requisite for such HR personnel (McNulty, 2012).

Whether implemented or not, a wealth of research recommends partner/family supports associated with enhancing expatriate performance (Andreason, 2008; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Deen, 2011; McNulty, 2012; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Takeuchi, et al., 2002). Wilson (2011) condensed the existing literature into a summary of the variables proposed to influence spousal cross-cultural adjustment (see Figure 4).

Reviewing these variables, the literature to date strongly advocates the need for a mix of the following practical, professional, emotional and social supports:

- Language training for all members of the expatriate family (Andreason, 2008; Cole, 2010; McNulty, 2012; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).
- Multi-stage delivery of cross-cultural training and debriefing, with different components provided before departure, during the assignment and post assignment (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).
- Clear and complete information provision, particularly during pre-departure and during the initial weeks in a new country (Cole, 2011; Deen, 2011).
- Prioritisation of communication and quality time within marital relationships (McNulty, 2012; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).
- Partner career and social networking assistance (Copeland & Norell, 2002; Deen, 2011; Harvey, 1998; McNulty, 2012).
- Emotional support for partners, such as that provided through counselling (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001).
- Helping families develop realistic expectations of what challenges to expect as well as “the personal attributes they may bring to their situation to overcome some of these challenges” (McNulty, 2012, p. 431). This can be facilitated through coaching, counselling, and mentoring, in addition to the

provision of books and various online resources (McNulty, 2012; Takeuchi, et al., 2002).

Predictors of Expatriate Spouse Adjustment

Firms seeking the spouse's opinion about the international assignment^[1]
 Spouse's self-initiated pre-departure training^[1]; firm provided cultural training^[1]
 Social network resources, e.g. network size, breadth of support, depth of support from host country nationals^[6]; social support^{[10][11]}: from host country nationals^[1]; from family^[1]; from the organisation^[4].
 Living conditions^{[1][6]}
 Culture novelty^{[1][2][3][6][7][12]}
 Family cohesion and family adaptability^[4]; satisfaction with family relationships^[9]
 Personality traits e.g. open-mindedness^[4]; self-efficacy^[6]
 Organisational support^[4]/assistance^[9]
 Expatriates work satisfaction^[4]; adjustment of the expatriate^{[6][7][8][12]}
 Assignment duration^{[4][6][12]}
 Economic situation^[4]
 Command of local language^{[4][6][12]}
 Age of the expatriate spouse^[12]
 Having visited the host country prior to relocation^[4]
 Identity disruption^{[5][6]}
 Having accompanying pre-school aged children^[6]
 A favourable opinion about the overseas assignment^[7]; level of motivation^{[1][12]}
 Previous international experience^[12]
 Gender of the expatriate spouse^[13]

References cited: [1] Black & Gregerson, 1991b; [2] Black, 1990; [3] Fontaine, 1986; [4] Ali et al., 2003; [5] Andreason, 2008; [6] Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; [7] Black & Stephens, 1989; [8] Takeuchi, Yun & Tesluk, 2002; [9] De Cieri et al., 1991; [10] Copeland & Norell, 2002; [11] Herleman, Britt & Hashima, 2008; [12] Mohr & Klein, 2004. [13] Punnett, Crocker & Stevens, 1992.

Figure 4: Predictors of expatriate spouse adjustment (Wilson, 2011, p.11)

Of interest, evidence suggests that the most valued organisational supports are often low-cost initiatives, such as ensuring direct communication between organisations and partners (Cole, 2011; ExpatExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008; McNulty, 2005, 2012) and “buddy” or mentor systems in which already-settled expatriate families help, welcome and orientate newly arrived families (Hess & Linderman, 2002; Mezas & Scandura, 2005; Quick, 2009). Low-cost accessible online tools designed to assess the degree to which an individual is adapting to a second culture also exist, such as the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995) and the CernySmith Adjustment Index (CSAI) (Cerny & Smith, 2007).

2.1.3 Missionary Families

The literature on expatriate missionary families offers a perspective in which the whole family is supported albeit within constrained financial limits, unlike some MNCs (Laing, 2009; Mundis, 2008). Though representing only one subgroup of cross-cultural sojourners, missionaries are, in themselves, a varied group; coming from a number of world religions⁹ and residing abroad for varying lengths of time. Their religious commitment influences their motivation to go overseas, their adaptation, coping and repatriation (Bikos & Lewis Hall, 2009). Faced with the human and economic costs of high attrition (Anderson, 2001; Dean, 2001) and burnout (Eriksson, et al., 2009), research from the missionary sector emphasises the importance of recognising the needs of the whole family for promoting retention and wellbeing. This research is significant given the absence of existing similar published research within the humanitarian sector.

Member Care

A key concept in the Christian literature on missionary families is member care. Representing a shift away from pastoral care, the term member care “offers the positive ownership of caring for each other, thus weaning us away from the idea of a top-down dependency” (Rajendran & Rajendran, 2003, p. 4). Member care addresses all aspects of wellbeing among missionaries and their dependants and includes

⁹ As extant missionary research has largely focused on missionaries in the Protestant Christian tradition and from English-speaking countries, the perspective offered here is limited in this sense (1991).

spiritual, emotional, relational, physical and economic matters (Global Member Care Network, n.d.). It involves developing both inner resources (e.g. perseverance, stress tolerance) and providing external resources (e.g. team building, skill training, and logistical support) (O'Donnell & O'Donnell, 2009).

O'Donnell and Pollock developed a trans-cultural Best Practice Model of Member Care to serve as a framework for fostering resilience within the missionary community (O'Donnell, 2002b). The framework consists of five permeable spheres that flow into and influence each other (see Figure 5). At the core of the model are two foundational spheres; master care (i.e. from God) and self/mutual care. These are encircled by a middle linking sphere called sender care, and then surrounded by the two outer spheres of specialist care and network care. The model includes the sources of member care such as pastors from sending churches and mutual care between colleagues, and the different types of member care such as medical and debriefing care.

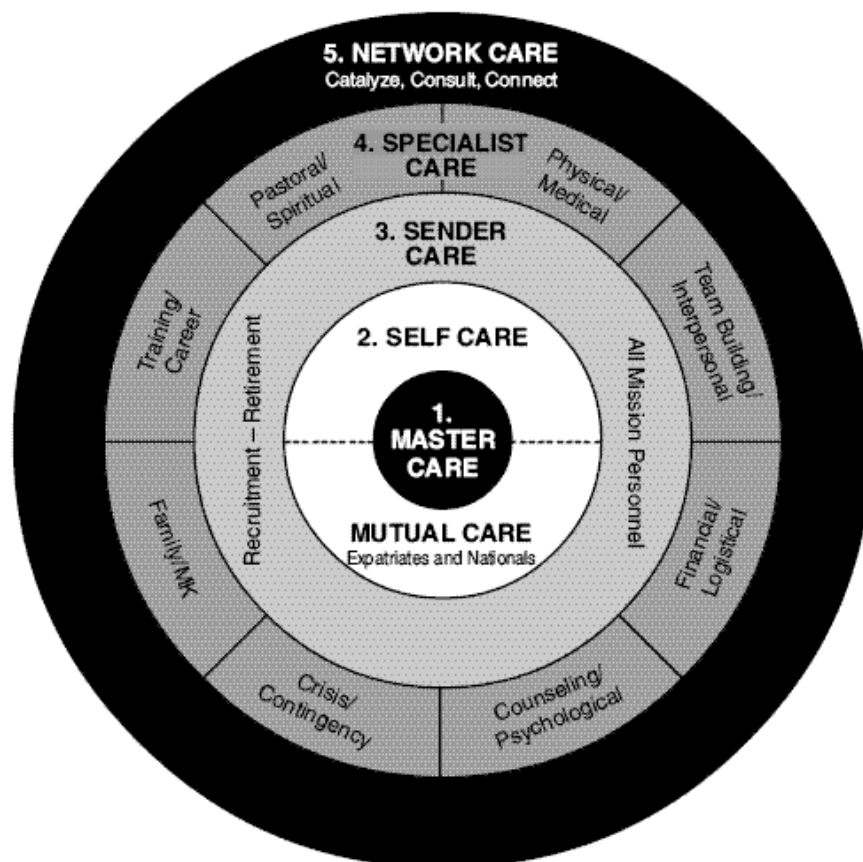


Figure 5: A best practice model of member care (O'Donnell, 2002b, p. 4)

Though scope for improvement exists (Bikos, Kocheleva, et al., 2009; Hawley, 2004; Selby, Moulding, et al., 2009), significant shifts in member care practices and understanding have occurred within churches and missionary organisations since the mid 1990's (O'Donnell, 1995; Rajendran & Rajendran, 2003). Central to this has been the greater appreciation of the family as a unit during the processes of missionary recruitment and retention.

Missionary Recruitment and Retention

B. A. Anderson (2005) compared the manner in which Australian private, public and missionary organisations selected their expatriates. In contrast to that of public and private sector organisations¹⁰, she observed that missionary organisations assessed the potential expatriates' domestic circumstances by a number of means, including the use of personal confidential references, psychological assessments, and interviews with spouses in attendance. Interestingly, among missionary repatriates 67% stated the organisation considered their partner's suitability for the posting and 39% their partner's career. This compared with 12% and 10%, respectively, among repatriates from the private sector, and 7% and 2% among repatriates from the public sector (Anderson, 2005, p. 578). This research is consistent with Szkudlarek's (2010) observation that one of the central characteristics of the missionary literature is the comprehensive treatment of the family as a unit.

Like the for-profit sector, the mission community has also invested significant research into understanding the key factors affecting retention, wellbeing and productivity among missionaries. Key endeavours include the Missions Commission 1994-1997 Reducing Missionary Attrition Project (ReMAP) that resulted in the publication, *'Too Valuable to Lose: Examining the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition'* (W. D. Taylor & World Evangelical Fellowship, 1997). Eight years later, a follow-up study was launched; ReMAP II: An International Study on Missionary Retention, which confirmed a major improvement in attrition (Hay, et al., 2007). Both studies represented massive efforts in coordination and planning between multiple organisations. For example, coordinators from 20 participating countries

¹⁰ For some public and private organisations, legal concerns such as discrimination laws restrict their ability to assess spouse or family suitability during the recruitment process of expatriate staff (Bikos & Lewis Hall, 2009). In such circumstances, however, once an applicant is selected, preparation and support of the whole family should be given priority.

representing over 3,000 agencies and more than 150,000 missionaries, met together to finalise the REMAP II survey research instrument and receive orientation on administrative procedures (Rajendran & Rajendran, 2003). The publication resulting from the REMAP study was translated into four languages, a Mission Commission Member Care Network was created (www.membercare.org), and significant improvements in missiological training requirements and candidature selection processes occurred (Hay, et al., 2007).

2.2 Part Two: Theoretical Constructs Related to Expatriate Adjustment

Adjustment, adaptation, and acculturation are key terms, often used interchangeably, in the expatriate literature to refer to the process and result of change induced in individuals and families by the move into an unfamiliar cultural environment (Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). This research shares the premise that “expatriation is a stressful event and... adjustment is needed to reduce stress” (Wang & Kanugo, as cited in Bright, 2009, p. 27). Expatriate cross-cultural adjustment has been defined as “the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a host country” (J. S. Black & Gregersen, 1991, p. 463). Several bodies of literature underpin expatriate family adjustment models and frameworks. These include: 1) culture shock and reverse culture shock; 2) family systems theory; 3) work-family conflict; 4) work-family enrichment; and 5) family stress theory. This section will briefly summarise these concepts and their related models while section 2.2.1 will present models of expatriate family adjustment.

Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock

Some of the earliest studies in the expatriate field resulted in the term culture shock (Oberg, 1960). Culture shock describes the feelings of helplessness and confusion people experience while trying to adapt to a new and different environment (Bright, 2009). Theorists proposed that adjustment to culture shock in a host culture occurs in four phases, as depicted in the U-curve Theory (UCT) developed by Lysgaard (as cited in J. S. Black & Mendenhall, 1991, p. 227) (see Figure 6). The initial honeymoon stage begins immediately upon arrival and is characterised by excitement and fascination at the new culture (Hess & Linderman, 2002; Liu & Lee,

2008; Pascoe, 2009). Once the individual starts to contend with the realities involved in managing daily life, the culture shock or crisis stage sets in. Defined as “the anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg, 1960, p. 177), common emotions reported during this stage include hostility, fear, confusion, anger and frustration (J. S. Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). With time, the subsequent stage of adjustment is reached. During this period the sojourner gradually adapts and improves understanding of host country cultural norms and values (Liu & Lee, 2008). Finally, it is claimed, the individual can function effectively in the new culture (J. S. Black & Mendenhall, 1991).

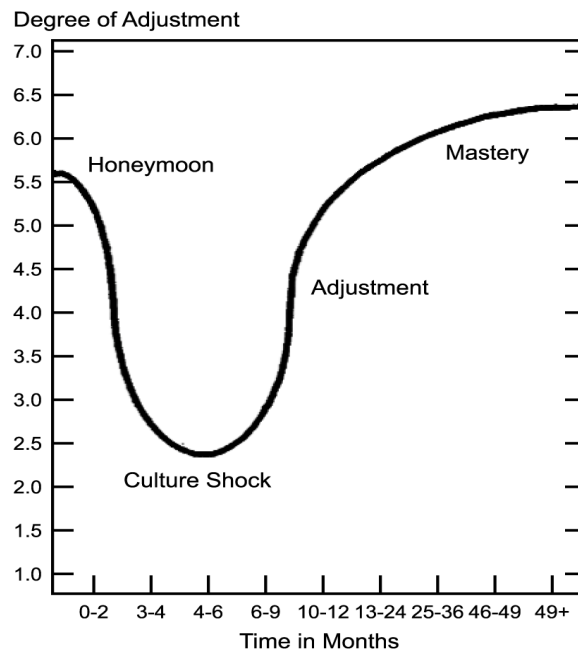


Figure 6: The U-curve (theory) of cross-cultural adjustment (J. S. Black & Mendenhall, 1991, p. 227)

For some expatriates, re-entry to their home country is the greatest transition hurdle (Hess & Linderman, 2002). Many researchers have adopted the term re-entry syndrome or reverse culture shock to highlight this transition (Gaw, 1994; Szkudlarek, 2010). Typical problems associated with reverse culture shock include cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety and interpersonal difficulties (Pascoe, 2009; Simonsen, 2008). Re-entry challenges are well documented in the literature on expatriates in the corporate sector (Chew, 2004; Iverson, 2005; Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 2000), missionary families (especially

children) (Bikos, Kocheleva, et al., 2009; Hawley, 2004; Selby, Moulding, et al., 2009) and international humanitarian workers (Ehrenreich & Elliott, 2004; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Porter & Emmens, 2009; Thomas, 2011). The UCT was revised to the W-curve Theory (WCT) by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) to take into consideration repatriation adjustment issues.

Culture shock and reverse culture shock often associated with negative connotations, can equally be considered an essential part of the overall adaptation process (Simonsen, 2008). Shifting the focus from the trials that accompany cross-cultural moves, Adler (1987) argued that culture shock provides valuable experiences that can lead to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth. As discussed in section 2.1.1, the impact of cultural shock is usually greater for the accompanying partner than for the expatriate.

While the UCT and WCT have remained dominant theoretical perspectives in cross-cultural research, the stages of culture shock are not universal (J. S. Black & Mendenhall, 1991). Not everyone experiences the honeymoon stage and the average time required to transition through the stages varies significantly (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, et al., 2005; Jones, 2000).

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory (Hill, 1949; H. I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Minuchin, 1974) sees the family as a whole in which all of the members are interdependent. It proposes that families are complex cultural systems that go through developmental stages, seeking to maintain a sense of equilibrium and enhance each member's growth (Minuchin, 1974). According to family systems theory, an expatriate assignment is a change that requires the family to restructure, develop, and adapt in response to the demands of the new context (Ali, Van Der Zee, & Sanders, 2003). Therefore, if one member is having adjustment problems, this will impact the equilibrium of the entire family (Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998). This supports research identifying the premature return of expatriates being linked to the inability of the spouse and children to adjust to a new environment.

Work-family Conflict

Researchers have argued that expatriates' boundaries between work and family are more permeable than comparable boundaries for those with domestic assignments (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2005; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). As such, there is not as clear a refuge in one domain from the stressors of another (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, et al., 2005). Work-family conflict represents various ways in which the intersection between work and family life is a source of difficulties for workers and family members (Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992). Although work-family conflict is reciprocal in nature, research by Grant-Vallone and Ensher (2001) showed that expatriate employees report significantly higher levels of work-family conflict than family-work conflict. For example the demanding nature of highly emotional and mentally challenging humanitarian work may leave the expatriate with little energy to pay attention to the demands of family life, whereas family demands are often less likely to intrude into the workplace.

Key theories invoked in the study of work-family conflict include spillover and crossover theory. Spillover theory describes the process by which affect, attitudes, and behaviour carry over from one role or domain to another within the same individual (Lazarova, et al., 2010), for example, issues at home affecting one's performance at work. Crossover theory adds another level of complexity by considering this interplay between individuals (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). Crossover can affect the same role in both individuals or it can affect different roles, and as with spillover, the effect may be either positive or negative (Westman, 2001). Through isolation and loss of existing support systems, expatriates and their spouses may become more dependent on one another for support (Harvey & Buckley, 1998). The impact of crossover and spillover is therefore particularly salient (Takeuchi, et al., 2002).

Work-family Enrichment

An emerging body of research concerning work-family enrichment (also known as positive spillover or work-family enhancement) (Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006; McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010), argues that too often work-family research has overlooked the positive interactions between the work and family spheres. Work-family enrichment has been defined as the "extent to which participation at work (or

home) is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home (or work)” (Frone, 2003, p. 145). In a recent study exploring the work-family interface among expatriate and recently repatriated families, the enhanced cohesion commonly reported among families was cited as one example of positive work-family enrichment; the heightened dependency on one another being associated with increased family travel and family activities during the assignment (Schütter & Boerner, 2013).

Family Stress Theory

Family stress theory considers why some families adapt and even thrive when faced with stress or transitional events, while other families struggle and disintegrate under similar circumstances (M. A. McCubbin, 1993). It was developed from the stance that stress is normal and that individuals and families seek to adapt to stress, the theory serves as a useful conceptual background for understanding transitions and cross-cultural adjustment in families (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). The first family stress model to be developed, Hill’s (1949) ABCX model was designed to address families and individuals in crisis. This model formed the basic building block for subsequent family stress models¹¹ (H. I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; H. I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 2002), and family resiliency models (M. A. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993).

Initially, H. I. McCubbin and Patterson (1983) expanded Hill’s model into the Double ABCX model, emphasising factors that played a role in adaption after a crisis. This model evolved into the process model named the Family Adjustment and Adaption Response (FAAR) model (H. I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 1988, 2002) which was then further elaborated into the T-double ABCX model (also known as the Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation) (M. A. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1987). This model claimed that family type influences how resilient a family will be in response to a crisis. More recently, M. A. McCubbin and McCubbin (1993) combined the T-ABCX double model and the FAAR model to

¹¹ It is beyond the scope of this present thesis to discuss these models in any detail. For additional information, please refer to Van Breda’s (Anderson, 2005) comprehensive resilience literature review document in which he clearly highlights the theory development between each of these models.

develop the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (RMFAA).

A final contributing model also based upon family systems theory that features in a great deal of expatriate family adjustment research is the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1984). Through a process of “conceptual clustering of over 50 concepts developed to describe marital and family dynamics,” three predominant family characteristics were identified as indicators of family functioning (Olson, et al., 1984, p. 60). These characteristics are family cohesion (or support), family flexibility (or adaptability), and family communication. The terms have been defined (by Olson & Gorall, 2003) as:

- Family cohesion: “The emotional bonding that couple and family members have towards one another.” (p. 516)
- Family flexibility: “The amount of change in its leadership, role relationships and relationship rules.” (p. 519)
- Family communication (considered a critical facilitating dimension for altering levels of cohesion and flexibility): “Listening skills, speaking skills, self-disclosure, clarity, continuity tracking, and respect and regard.” (p. 520)

Various prominent researchers have examined these three characteristics in greater depth in the context of expatriate family adaption (Ali, et al., 2003; Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998; Creed, 2006; Rosenbusch, 2010).

2.2.1 Theoretical Models Related to Expatriate Family Adjustment

While many researchers explored the determinants of expatriate and spousal adjustment, and to a lesser extent, child adjustment, Caligiuri, Hyland, and Joshi (1998) took the unusual position of examining the impact of an international relocation upon the whole family. Integrating multiple theoretical concepts (family systems theory, the Double ABCX model, the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems, and spillover theory), their Theoretical Model of Family Adjustment and Expatriate Performance (see Figure 7) is one of few available models that identify factors influencing family cross-cultural adjustment.

Caligiuri, Hyland, and Joshi’s (1998) research is significant in that data was collected longitudinally. It considered entire families (including children) and demonstrated

support for the following hypotheses: (1) family characteristics (cohesion, adaptability and communication) are related to family cross-cultural adjustment to living in a foreign country; (2) families who possess a positive perception of moving internationally adjust better to living in a host country compared to families with a negative perception; and (3) family adjustment is a mediator of the relationship between family characteristics and expatriate adjustment to working in the host country (thus validating spillover and crossover theory) (Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998). Limitations of this research included a lack of examination of how individual family members impact the family level of adjustment, and while it considered the impact of the family on the cross-cultural process, it did not offer a theoretically-based multi-dimensional model of cross-cultural adjustment at the collective level (e.g. including contextual factors, organisational factors etc.) (Rosenbusch, 2010; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).

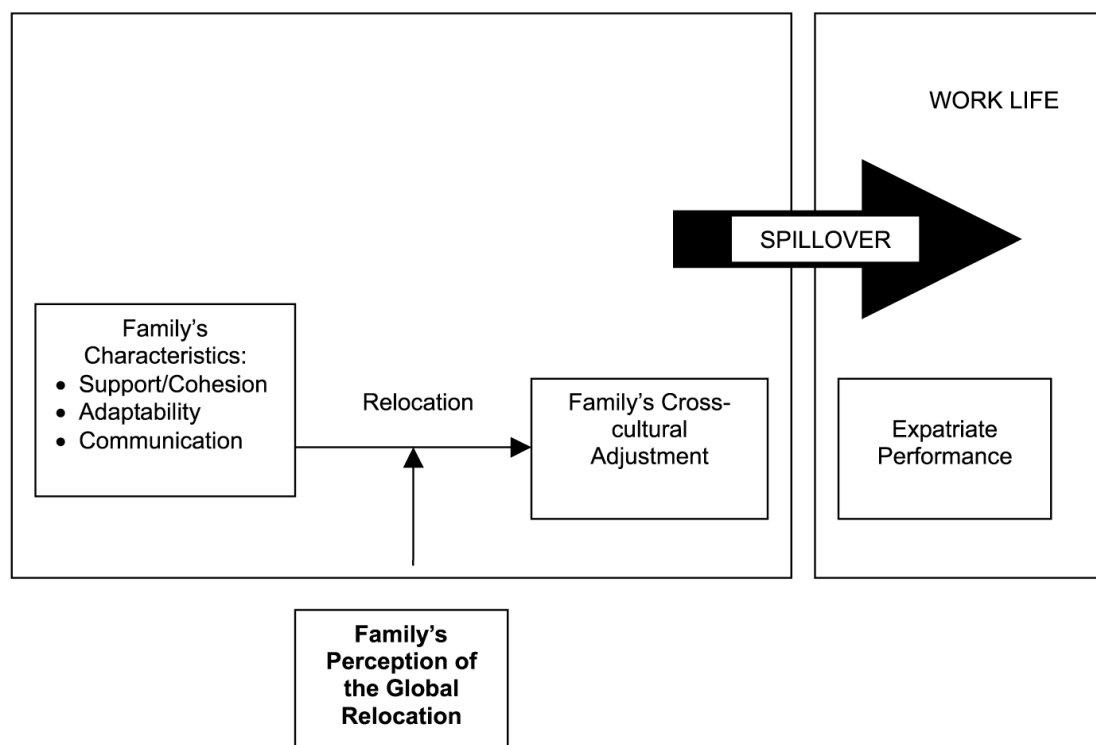


Figure 7: Theoretical model of family adjustment and expatriate performance (Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998, p. 317)

Haslberger and Brewster (2008) also developed a model to explore expatriate family adjustment (see Figure 8). Utilising the FAAR model (H. I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 1988, 2002), this model examined the demands of stressors, strains and daily hassles, the capabilities of the family, and shared meanings to understand the experiences of an expatriate family in another country (Rosenbusch, 2010). It revealed how one person's stressors may become stressors for another, or that they may develop into strains for either or both persons (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). The aforementioned researchers also highlighted systematic gaps in the extant research on expatriate families and identified suitable research agendas for future research.

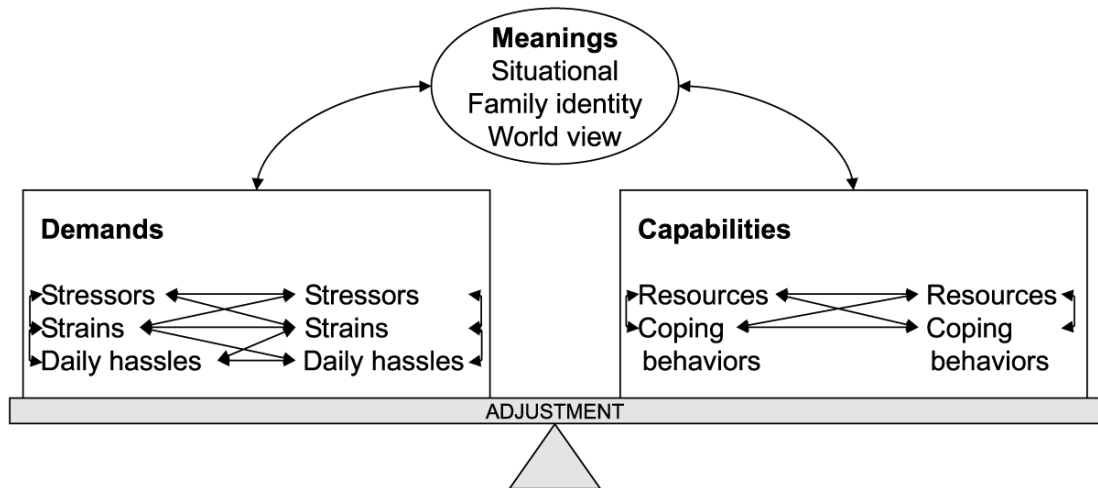


Figure 8: Interactions among demands, capabilities and meanings for expatriate families
(Haslberger & Brewster, 2008, p. 336)

2.3 Part Three: Family Resilience

Resilience at both the individual and family level is becoming one of the most salient and debated terms in contemporary psychology and sociology (K. Black & Lobo, 2008; De Haan, Hawley, & Deal, 2002; Luthar, et al., 2000), as well as within the humanitarian sector (Kindra, 2013). While primarily focussed on the resilience of disaster-affected communities, the construct has also been applied to humanitarian organisations as a whole and their employees.

Given the focus of the research is on the experiences and coping strategies of expatriate families of humanitarian workers, this section will review resilience as it

applies to the family. However, family resilience is an emerging construct; its origins lie in the study of individual resilience. This section will first begin with a brief overview of resilience at the individual level. Following this, key issues within the available literature on family resilience will be presented. Prominent theoretical frameworks and models of family resilience will be summarised. The stance adopted within this thesis on these constructs and other key terms associated with resilience will then be discussed. Finally, as family resilience has not been extensively studied in either the expatriate or humanitarian fields, justification for the appropriateness of the theoretical construct with regards to this research will also be provided.

2.3.1 Resilience

The focus of attention across various disciplines, resilience has been defined and operationalised in different ways. Bonanno (2004, p. 20) defined resilience as the ability of an individual to “maintain relatively healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning” despite exposure to potentially highly disruptive events. Bonanno claimed resilience is more common than is often believed, and that there are multiple pathways to resilience. Others have placed emphasis on the ability not only to cope with stress, but to grow and prosper because of it. Werner’s definition (as cited in Hawley & DeHaan, 1996, p. 4) of “successful adaptation following exposure to stressful life events” is one such example. Consistent among these definitions is the fact the main antecedent to resilience is adversity. According to F. Walsh (1996, p. 7) “resilience is forged **through** adversity, not **despite** it” (emphasis in original). In addition, resilience carries a property of bouoyancy, that is, resilient individuals are those who can achieve positive adaptation or “rebound” despite experiencing such hardships (Luthar, et al., 2000; Mullin & Arce, 2008).

Following Werner’s pioneering studies on children in Hawaii (Werner, Bierman, & French, 1971; Werner & Smith, 1977) research on resilience expanded to include various ages and adverse conditions, such as poverty and violence, chronic physical and mental illness, and catastrophic life events (K. Black & Lobo, 2008; Luthar, et al., 2000). Whereas initial attempts to describe resilience focused on personal qualities and coping strategies (such as autonomy and problem-solving), later it was appreciated that resilience is influenced by factors outside the individual, including family systems and wider social and environment characteristics (Kalil, 2003;

Mackay, 2003; Masten, 2001). It has thus been argued, resilience should not be examined from a purely psychological viewpoint but should incorporate social science theory and a perspective that recognises the interrelatedness and interdependency of individuals and social systems (Ungar, 2013).

Influential in the development of resilience was Antonovsky's (1979) seminal work on salutogenesis and sense of coherence (SOC). Salutogenesis literally translated means the "origins of health" (Van Breda, 2001, p. 12). SOC refers to a personal paradigm that indicates an individual's global outlook on life (Antonovsky, 1979). Following Antonovsky's lead, various other theories associated with salutogenesis were also developed including thriving, hardiness and learned resourcefulness (Van Breda, 2001).

While academic and clinical interest in resilience has surged over recent decades (De Haan, et al., 2002; Ganong & Coleman, 2002; A. Greeff & Van der Walt, 2010; Rutter, 1993), substantial concerns exist about the rigour of theory and research in this field (Atkinson, Martin, & Rankin, 2009; Luthar, et al., 2000). A dominant criticism concerns the aforementioned issue of a lack of consensus about definitions, with considerable variation in the operationalisation and measurement of key constructs (Luthar, et al., 2000; Mackay, 2003; Polk, 1997). This critique is clearly articulated in the following quote (emphasis in original):

Resilience requires exposure to significant risk, overcoming risk or adversity and success that is beyond predicted expectations. Of course, problems arise when researchers and practitioners attempt to agree on what constitutes **significant risk** and **successful** outcomes that are **beyond predicted** expectations. For adaptations to be classified as resilient, should the outcomes be **highly** successful adaptations or can they be adaptations and outcomes that are at the level of **social competence** and **functionality**? (Richman & Fraser, as cited in Ungar, 2003, p. 87)

In the research on resilience, adversity conditions have ranged from normative stressors (e.g. the birth of a child) to exposure to war (Berk, 1998; De Haan, et al., 2002). Similarly, there has been substantial diversity in defining positive adjustment among individuals at risk (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Luthar, et al., 2000).

Furthermore, discrepancies have existed concerning the conceptualisation of resilience as a personal trait, a dynamic process or an outcome (Lee, et al., 2004; Mackay, 2003). While the lack of agreement over definitions has led to ambiguity, the diversity of meanings also highlights the complexity of the construct.

2.3.2 Family Resilience: An Emerging Construct

Traditionally, resilience was seen as an individual factor with the family serving as a protective or risk factor (Caplan, 1982; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). A separate emerging body of research has considered resilience as a family-level construct, in which the family is portrayed as a unit of analysis within itself (H. I. McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han, & Allen, 1997; Patterson, 2002; F. Walsh, 1996). Though it has been debated whether it is valid to conceive resilience as a family-level construct (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996; Lee, et al., 2004), families can respond to risk in ways that can be described as resilient. For example, mobilising protective factors to help manage a range of stressful circumstances (Kalil, 2003).

Family resilience has been defined in multiple ways in the literature (K. Black & Lobo, 2008; Lee, et al., 2004; H. I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002; F. Walsh, 2006). According to Hawley and DeHaan:

Family resilience describes the path a family follows as it adapts and prospers in the face of stress, both in the present and over time. Resilient families respond positively to these conditions in unique ways, depending on the context, developmental level, the interactive combination of risk and protective factors, and the family's shared outlook. (1996, p. 293)

This definition emphasises several key elements consistent with contemporary understanding of this construct. First, resilience is not a static categorical state that can be applied to some families but not others (De Haan, et al., 2002; Mackay, 2003). Rather, it reflects a dynamic contextual process that is specific to time, culture, ecological and developmental factors, and the stressor itself (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996; Kalil, 2003; F. Walsh, 1996). Families can also display resilience in one realm of functioning and not others (Kalil, 2003).

Second, this definition also draws attention to the fact resilience involves more than avoiding negative outcomes; rather it entails facing adversity and coping successfully with the challenge (i.e. a buoyant or elastic response) (Lee, et al., 2004; H. I. McCubbin, et al., 1997). Resilient families are assumed to return to a level of functioning equal to or above¹² their pre-crisis level (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996).

Third, it acknowledges the importance of risk and protective factors, in addition to shared outlook, that is unique to each family. As such, it recognises the “development of the notion of a family ethos (that is, schema, world view, sense of coherence), which attempts to describe a shared set of values and attitudes held by a family unit” (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996, p. 287). These authors see this schema or coherence as a noteworthy and distinct contribution resulting from family resilience research that sets it apart from other family stress and strengths research. The sentiment parallels the emphasis placed by F. Walsh (1998a) on coherence and connectedness as critical components of family resilience.

Fourth, family resilience tends to be viewed in terms of wellness rather than pathology; thus it reflects the growing movement in positive psychology or strengths based family functioning (Silberberg, 2004; F. Walsh, 2002). Thus it views individuals and families “as decision makers, with choices, preferences, and the possibility of becoming masterful” (Seligman, 2002, p. 3).

The shift from individual resilience to viewing the family as a unit for analysis has not been without contention (Van Breda, 2001). However, many of the critiques represent an extension of those already noted in the resilience literature (Ganong & Coleman, 2002; Mackay, 2003; Patterson, 2002). Family resilience is a relatively new construct and is still in the early stages of definitional and theoretical development (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996).

Not surprisingly, a key methodological concern in researching family-level resilience is measurement (Van Breda, 2001; F. Walsh, 1996); in particular those aspects of the

¹² Carver (1998) would argue that functioning above pre-crisis level is defined as thriving, whereas resilience refers to functioning at pre-crisis level. For the purpose of this research, resilience describes functioning at or above pre-crisis (transition) level, the latter or “better-off-afterward” scenario also being referred to as thriving.

construct that rely on shared perceptions of reality (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996). To date, researchers have generally sought to observe family resilience indirectly through a range of different aspects of family functioning and strengths (Mackay, 2003; Van Breda, 2001). Common forms of assessment have included (1) rating scales, inventories and checklists such as personality inventories and family support scales (examples include D. L. Gardner, Huber, Steiner, Vazquez, & Savage, 2008; Lietz, 2006; Vandsburger & Biggerstaff, 2004), and (2) interviews (examples include O. Cohen, Slonim, Finzi, & Leichtentritt, 2002; DuPont, 2010; Lee, et al., 2004; Mullin & Arce, 2008). Resilience-driven interviews seek to discover and explore unique family strengths, interests, and coping abilities (Simon, Murphy, & Smith, 2005).

2.4 Part Four: Theoretical Constructs relating to Family Resilience

Salutogenesis, ecological theory, family systems theory, and developmental and life cycle theories have provided the foundational basis upon which researchers have advanced the understanding of family resilience. In particular, these interrelated and complementary theories have underpinned the two bodies of literature which have contributed most to the development of family resilience, namely, family stress (H. I. McCubbin, et al., 1997; H. I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 1988, 2002) and family strengths (Olson & Gorall, 2003; Olson, et al., 1984; Silberberg, 2004; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985a). Located at the intersection of these two frameworks, family resilience has been described as how families use their strengths in times of stress (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996). Since family stress theory has been discussed (see section 2.2), this section will briefly present family strengths.

Family Strengths

Family strengths literature dates back to the 1960s, beginning with the pioneering work of Otto (1962, 1963, 1975). Criticised for lacking a coherent theoretical framework, family strengths research tends to be descriptive (Van Breda, 2001). There are various different definitions of family strengths. For example, family strengths have been described as the “competencies and capabilities of both various individual family members and the family unit that are used in response to crises and stress, to meet needs, and to promote, enhance, and strengthen the functioning of the family system” (Trivette, Dunst, Deal, Hamer, & Propst, 1990, p. 18). Key

propositions generally agreed upon by family strengths researchers include: all families have strengths that are unique and depend upon the family's beliefs, cultural backgrounds, ethnicity etc.; what is important is family functioning, not family structure; and, strong marriages are at the centre of strong families (Asay & DeFrain, 2012; Trivette, et al., 1990).

Many extensive descriptions of the traits and personal resources of healthy, strong families have been developed, as well as a proliferation of assessments that measure various aspects of family strengths (H. I. McCubbin, et al., 1997; Olson, Larsen, & McCubbin, 1983; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985a). Synthesising the work of many family strengths authors, Van Breda (2001) identified the following eleven clusters of family strengths: 1) cohesion (or closeness); 2) good communication; 3) effective problem-solving; 4) shared sense of spirituality and values; 5) strong sense of family identity in which family rituals (including celebrations, traditions and rituals of daily family life) play an important role; 6) affective responsiveness; 7) clear boundaries and hierarchies between family roles (i.e. between members and generations); 8) flexibility or adaptability; 9) utilisation of social supports; 10) promotion of intimacy and individual autonomy; and 11) family-level coherence.

2.4.1 Theoretical Models Related to Family Resilience

This section will focus on the contribution of two dominant scholars in the field of family resilience: Hamilton McCubbin and Froma Walsh. Though not the only existing models of family resilience¹³, the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (RMFAA)¹⁴ (M. A. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993) and F. Walsh's (1998b) Family Resilience Framework are presented as they offer a meaningful bridge between advancements in the family stress and coping literature and resilience orientated family strengthening practices (Simon, et al., 2005).

¹³ For an alternate model consider Drummond, Kysela, McDonald, & Query (2002).

¹⁴ While resiliency is often defined as an individual personality trait (see section 2.4.2), it should be noted, that the authors have applied the term to a family level model. As stated previously, family resilience is an emerging field in which contributing researchers are yet to agree on key terms and definitions.

Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation

The RMFAA (see section 2.2) was developed by H. I. McCubbin and associates after continued research spanning several decades on family stress and coping (Van Breda, 2001). Factors featured in the RMFAA¹⁵ include the stressor or stressors, pre-existing vulnerability, family resistance resources, family appraisal of the stressor, and family problem-solving and coping strategies. Family schema and family type were included as salient factors in determining a family's level of adaptation to crisis in this model (K. Black & Lobo, 2008). Families with a strong schema stress their investment in the family unit, emphasise a shared orientation (i.e. favour "we" more than "I"), tend to adopt a realistic view of life and demonstrate a willingness to accept less than perfect solutions to life's challenges (M. A. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993).

The family strengths literature reviewed previously highlighted the importance of 'family coherence, flexibility, time together and rituals, celebrations and traditions.' The RMFAA also highlighted four domains of family functioning influencing the harmony and balance of the family: interpersonal relationships; development, wellbeing and spirituality; relationship with and nature of the community; and structure and function (M. A. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993). The model was underpinned by an appreciation of the influence ecological and developmental factors have on resilience, recognising that family protective factors vary in their importance by life cycle stage and family ethnicity (H. I. McCubbin, et al., 1997).

Family Resilience Framework

F. Walsh's Family Resilience Framework (1998b) was developed as a conceptual map to guide clinical interventions and prevention efforts with vulnerable families. The framework stresses that transformation and growth can be forged out of adversity (F. Walsh, 2002). Interventions aim to build family strengths, thereby allowing families to emerge stronger and more resourceful. As this occurs, the ability of the family to meet future challenges is enhanced; thus, each intervention is also a preventive measure (F. Walsh, 2003). The framework was grounded in family

¹⁵ Given the complexity of reproducing the RMFAA it is not presented in image form. Readers interested in viewing the model are referred to M. A. McCubbin & McCubbin (1993, p. 23), or an alternate clearer print version (Van Breda, 2001, p. 111).

systems theory, combining ecological and developmental perspectives to depict the family as an open system that functions in relation to its broader socio-environment (F. Walsh, 1996). In practice, this means interventions may involve community agencies, workplaces, schools and stresses that resilience processes will vary over time, as challenges unfold and families evolve across the life cycle (F. Walsh, 2002).

F. Walsh's framework (1998b) drew together findings from clinical practice and research, identifying key processes that operate as protective factors within three domains of family functioning (Kalil, 2003). These include family belief systems, organisation patterns, and communication processes (see Table 1). As it is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe these processes in detail, a brief summary follows.

Family belief systems: Family resilience is promoted through shared beliefs that help members make meaning of crisis situations, facilitate a positive outlook, and provide transcendent or spiritual values and purpose. Families can be helped to gain a sense of coherence by “recasting a crisis as a shared challenge that is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful to tackle” (F. Walsh, 2002, p. 132). The dominant beliefs within a family system shape how they cope with adversity, while shared beliefs mould family norms including family rituals and traditions (Kalil, 2003).

Organisation patterns: Coping with adversity effectively demands mobilisation and reorganisation of the family's resources to meet changing conditions. This requires flexibility, connectedness (demonstrated through family member's commitment to each other while also maintaining a balance with respect to individual needs and differences) and mobilisation of social and economic resources (including extended kin and community resources) (F. Walsh, 2006).

Communication processes: Well-functioning families are characterised not by an absence of problems, but rather by the presence of skills that enable them to overcome such problems (F. Walsh, 1998a). Such skills include communication processes that clarify ambiguous situations, open emotional expression and empathetic responses, and fostering collaborative problem-solving (F. Walsh, 1998b).

Table 1: Key processes in family resilience (F. Walsh, 2006, p. 131)

Belief systems

Making meaning of adversity

- Viewing resilience as relationally based – versus “rugged individual”
- Normalising, contextualising adversity and distress
- Sense of coherence: viewing crisis as challenge; meaningful, comprehensible, manageable
- Explanatory attributions: How could this happen? What can be done?

Positive outlook

- Hope, optimistic bias; confidence in overcoming odds
- Courage and en-courage-ment; affirming strengths and build on potential
- Seizing opportunities: active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)
- Mastering the possible; accepting what cannot be changed

Transcendence and spirituality

- Larger values, purpose
- Spirituality: faith, healing rituals, congregational support
- Inspiration: envisioning new possibilities; creative expression; social action
- Transformation: learning, change, and growth from adversity

Organisational patterns

Flexibility

- Rebounding, reorganising, adapting to fit new challenges
- Stability through disruption: continuity, dependability, rituals, routines
- Strong authoritative leadership: nurturance, protection, guidance
- Varied family forms: cooperative parenting/care giving teams
- Couple/co-parent relationship: equal partners

Connectedness

- Mutual support, collaboration, and commitment
- Respect for individual needs, differences, and boundaries
- Seeking reconnection, reconciliation of wounded relationships

Social and economic resources

- Mobilising kin, social and community networks; models and mentors
- Building financial security; balancing work/family strains
- Institutional supports

Communication/problem-solving

Clarity

- Clear, consistent messages (words and actions)
- Clarity about ambiguous information; truth seeking/truth speaking

Open emotional expression

- Sharing range of feelings (joy and pain; hopes and fears)
- Mutual empathy; tolerance for differences
- Taking responsibility for own feelings, behaviour; avoid blaming
- Pleasurable interactions, respite; humour

Collaborative problem-solving

- Creative brainstorming; resourcefulness
 - Shared decision-making; conflict resolution: negotiation, fairness, reciprocity
 - Focusing on goals; taking concrete steps; building on success; learning from failure
 - Proactive stance: preventing problems; averting crises; preparing for future challenges
-

Walsh distinguished between these three domains by likening belief systems to the heart and soul of resilience (located at the core of all family functioning), organisation patterns to family shock absorbers, and communication processes as the facilitators of mutual support and problem-solving (F. Walsh, 2006). She stressed that family processes that are highly effective in dealing with one set of challenges may differ in alternate contexts and at different points in the family life cycle. As such, it is assumed that no single model fits all families or their situations and families can be considered resilient even if they do not demonstrate all the protective factors in this model (Kalil, 2003; F. Walsh, 2006).

2.4.2 Reflections on Resilience and Family Resilience

Resilience is a dynamic process (Halabuza, 2009; Luthar, et al., 2000; Mullin & Arce, 2008; F. Walsh, 1996) and differs from resiliency, the latter referring to a personality trait which does not pre-suppose exposure to significant adversity (Luthar, et al., 2000; Masten, 2001). The definition which most closely aligns itself with resilience as viewed in this study is “the capacity to maintain or regain wellbeing in the face of adversity” (Ryff, 2014, p. 10). This definition therefore leads itself to a brief discussion on the meaning of the term ‘wellbeing’.

Like resilience, wellbeing is a complex multi-faceted concept that has lacked a universally agreed definition. Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders proposed a definition for wellbeing as “the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (2012, p. 230). The authors provided a diagram (see Figure 9) to accompany this definition, emphasising a state of equilibrium or balance that can be affected by life events or challenges. Influencing this definition were several dominant influential wellness related theories, including set point theory (Headey & Wearing, 1989), equilibrium or homeostasis (Cummins, 2010) and resources and challenges (Hendry & Kloep, 2002) and how these affect Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) concept of ‘flow’; “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4).

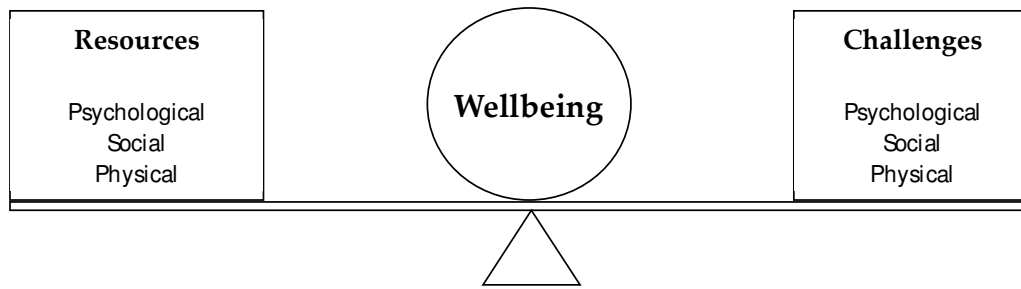


Figure 9: Definition of wellbeing (Dodge, et al., 2012, p. 230)

Wellbeing and resilience are closely linked. However, wellbeing describes a psychological state at a point in time, whereas resilience is dynamic, taking into consideration both the past and the future (Bacon, Mguni, & Brown, 2012). An individual or family can build resilience before they encounter a crisis and be more likely to cope with future problems (Alvord & Grados, 2005; F. Walsh, 2006).

Drawing on the work of Dodge et al. (2012), Bacon, Mguni and Brown (2012), Hawley and DeHaan (1996) and Ryff (2014) this thesis takes the position that resilience is the ‘dynamic dance’ or ‘balancing act’ that is performed in order to maintain wellbeing (where an individual’s or family’s resources are not outweighed by their challenges) or to thrive (where an individual or family is functioning at a higher state than pre-challenge or crisis, that is, their positive resources exceed their demands or stress). It is the ongoing process of ensuring that one’s protective factors/strengths/resources and/or coping skills are sufficient to manage one’s risk factors/stressors/demands/challenges and/or crises.

Key terms often found in the resilience literature, including coping, growth out of adversity, and thriving have also been used in varied ways (Kaplan, 2005; Luthar, et al., 2000). This section defines and distinguishes these terms and highlights the interpretation of these concepts in relation to this research.

- **Coping:** Family resilience depends on processes that either promote wellbeing or protect the family against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (F. Walsh, 2006). These processes can include individual or family-level coping skills or strategies, whereby coping is defined as conscious effort

to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimise or tolerate stress or conflict (Snyder, 1999; Weiten & Lloyd, 2008; Zeidner & Endler, 1996). While coping does not equate with resilience, coping skills help build resilience. Furthermore, coping skills or strategies represent a meaningful term that most people can readily identify with, providing an appropriate avenue to explore resilience.

For this reason, this research involved asking participants about their coping strategies, as opposed to their resilience-enhancing processes. The decision to do this is consistent with the opinions of Jütersonke and Kartas (2012, p. 4) who discussed the challenges associated with investigating resilience:

It [resilience] certainly can be studied, but perhaps not as a social fact in its own right. One way of expressing this is to say that resilience is part of the external observer's vocabulary used to make sense of what is being observed, rather than a term that is necessarily meaningful to the individuals involved in the societal dynamics that are being examined.

- **Growth out of adversity:** While growth is not the same as resilience, many researchers have highlighted psychological growth associated with resilience (Polk, 1997; Simonsen, 2008). For example, Aldwin claimed that resilience is “more than stoicism or survival; it assumes post-stress growth” (as cited in Atkinson, et al., 2009, p. 139). This research specifically examined the growth experience of accompanying partners and their families, as such growth is often an indicator of past and present resilience processes and is an important resource and resilience-enhancing buffer when future stressors are encountered. Positive adjustment or transformation is part of what distinguishes resilience from merely surviving or enduring a difficult situation. As stated by Froma Walsh, resilience is “an active process of endurance, self-righting and growth in response to crisis and challenge” (F. Walsh, 2006, p. 4).
- **Thriving:** Unlike resilience, thriving is less developed in the literature. For the purpose of this research, thriving is described as a psychological state in

which an individual or family is somehow enhanced despite their exposure to a specific challenge or stressor (see also the explanation provided on page xix). Thriving is therefore best understood as an outcome of multiple determinants including resilience and available supports (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011; Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007; McKay, 2011).

2.5 Family Resilience within Expatriate Families and the Humanitarian Sector

Family resilience has been the focus of research in a number of different contexts, including: illness and disability (Abelenda & Helfrich, 2003; Frain, et al., 2007; Rolland & Walsh, 2006), poverty and economic hardship (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Mullin & Arce, 2008), military and war-affected families (O. Cohen, et al., 2002; Saltzman, et al., 2011; Van Breda, 2001), and divorce (A. P. Greeff, Vansteenwegen, & DeMot, 2006; Halabuza, 2009). Scant research has discussed the resilience of globally-mobile expatriate families (examples include Hervey, 2012b; McLachlan, 2007; Selby, Braunack-Mayer, et al., 2009), despite the fact many expatriate families demonstrate a great array of strengths, including cohesiveness, self-reliance and independence.

McLachlan (2007) in her qualitative study of 45 internationally mobile families commented upon the resilience of such families who used a range of strategies to face the difficulties inherent in living transitional lives. Such strategies included helping children to maintain contact with absent friends, scheduling regular family meetings, active involvement in international schools, and mothers intentionally deciding to put their careers aside in order to spend more time with their children. Hervey (2012b) pilot tested a work-book titled *'Supporting Healthy International Family Transition'* designed to help facilitate the preparation of families as a unit for cross-cultural transitions. Underpinning that resource and the activities recommended was the concept of family resilience. Focusing on the expatriate missionary population, Selby et al. (2009) drew attention to the construct of resilience in the qualitative study titled *'Resilience in re-entering missionaries: Why do some do well?'*

While not specifically focussing on the topic of family resilience, several other references comment on the hardiness or resilience of expatriate families¹⁶. For example, the “Family Matters” survey (ExpatriateExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008) was designed to provide a snapshot of how globally-mobile families viewed the support they receive from their respective organisations during their relocations. Featuring feedback from 656 participants representing more than 40 countries it was noted that for families who reported experiencing no organisational support, such families “found their own way with the help of other expats or their own inner resilience” (p. 4). McKay and Hulme (2009) also discussed resilience (of the individual) in the Headington Institute’s self-study module aimed at the partners and families of humanitarian workers.

Combined with the previously discussed theme of resilience observed in the literature on stress and the humanitarian worker, it seems fitting that the emerging construct of family resilience underpins this research. A family resilience approach offers several advantages. First, it is based on the conviction that all families have inherent strengths and the potential for growth (K. Black & Lobo, 2008). In the process of identifying and promoting family strengths, these can become the foundation for continued growth, thereby preparing families to meet future challenges. Therefore, the second advantage is family resilience support or intervention can also be considered a preventative measure (F. Walsh, 1996). By encouraging families to anticipate likely challenges and learn from past experiences, expatriate families are more likely to cope with difficulties as they arise and maintain their health and wellbeing during their time away and the process of repatriation. Third, family resilience can be promoted at three levels, through strengthening the individual, the family as a unit and the community in which the family is located (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009). Fourth and last, this approach also supports the growing body of scholars who request that expatriate research be approached from a salutogenic perspective (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Luring & Selmer, 2010; N. Wood, 2001).

¹⁶ Given the brevity of references easily identified depicting the intersection of literature on expatriate families and resilience, this focal area is explored in greater depth in the scoping review presented in Chapter 4 (in addition to references exploring the intersection between humanitarian work and families).

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to provide readers with sufficient understanding about the two areas of interest in which this research is centrally located: expatriate families (Part One and Two) and family resilience (Part Three and Four). Due to the volume of material on each topic, it was necessary to condense the material into key themes relevant to the focus of this research; that of understanding the resilience processes of accompanying families within the humanitarian sector. The contextual literature review to date has indicated a paucity of research pertaining to expatriate humanitarian families and resilience in expatriate families. Little is known regarding whether accompanying families of INGO staff face similar or unique challenges to those documented in the general expatriate literature, or the dominant coping strategies used by this population to manage the difficulties they face.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological considerations of this study, while Chapter 4 presents the findings of a scoping study that aimed to ensure the literature review was as exhaustive and thorough as possible.

Chapter Three: Methodology

“Good research questions spring from our values, passions, and preoccupations” (G. M. Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 7)

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study aims and objectives, the underlying methodological approaches influencing the study, and outlines the specific data collection methods used. An introduction to scoping study methodology is also presented, along with participant recruitment procedures and data collection tools. A qualitative research design guided the study, using constructionist grounded theory methodology and constant comparative analysis. Finally, the ethical considerations and quality criteria of the study are discussed.

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the main challenges and stressors faced by families accompanying expatriate humanitarian INGO workers overseas and to identify the key resilience processes used by families to manage these stresses and maintain wellbeing. A secondary aim of this research was to propose recommendations and a context-specific model to assist humanitarian agencies and expatriate partners seeking to promote resilience among such families. This research also sought to highlight the challenges, if any, unique to this particular group of globally-mobile families.

To meet these aims the following six objectives were developed:

1. To document the main challenges experienced by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers based on the perception of expatriate partners.
2. To identify the key resilience processes employed by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers from the viewpoint of accompanying partners.

3. To investigate organisational barriers and enablers that impact the support provided to expatriate families by INGOs.
4. To present a model of family resilience relevant to accompanying expatriate families in humanitarian contexts.
5. To propose recommendations for humanitarian agencies aimed at promoting resilience among accompanying expatriate families.
6. To propose recommendations for accompanying families in the humanitarian sector aimed at promoting their own resilience.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Rationale for use of Qualitative Research

Both the research questions and my theoretical and philosophical orientations influenced the research design process. Foremost, a qualitative approach was selected given such methods are well suited to research questions that ask ‘*how*’ and ‘*what*’ questions, when examining sensitive personal experiences, when little is known about a topic, and when the phenomenon is not quantifiable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Morse, 1991; Silverman, 2011). Qualitative studies are also inductive, allowing a researcher to explore a topic in a flexible manner, providing for rich in-depth descriptions of complex experiences, their interpretation and organisation and simultaneously accommodate the potential emergence of theory and/or theoretical frameworks (Carr, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Silverman, 2011).

Qualitative methods are particularly complimentary to the study of family processes, concentrating on the means by which families create, sustain and interpret their own family realities (Burck, 2005; Daly, 1992), and therefore appropriate for looking at factors that influence family coping and adaptation. Besides being used to elicit and add ‘power’ to minority or marginalised voices, qualitative research is also considered to offer a significant contribution to the field of resilience research, avoiding the problem of arbitrariness in the selection of outcome variables (Ungar, 2003).

Different qualitative research methods exist based on underpinning philosophical beliefs and assumptions, including narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory,

ethnographic and case study traditions (Creswell, 2007). Constructionist grounded theory methodology was chosen for this study; the specific methods used being particularly influenced by the constructionist interpretive paradigm. Constructivism emphasises the “subjective interrelationship between the researcher and the participant, and the co-construction of meaning” (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 2). The following section will present an overview of grounded theory methods, including the origins and development of grounded theory, defining components of grounded theory and rationale for the use of constructionist grounded theory in this research.

3.2.2 Grounded Theory

Origins of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory as a research approach was developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss and illuminated in their seminal text outlining grounded theory methodology, “*The Discovery of Grounded Theory*” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At that time, their work was viewed as revolutionary because it challenged the dominant quantitative research paradigm, claiming instead that qualitative research could be systematic and rigorous, and could produce not only descriptive case studies but also theory development (Charmaz, 2007). Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their pioneering work provided guidelines for orderly qualitative data analysis with clear investigative procedures and research strategies.

Grounded theory is rooted in symbolic interactionism (an interpretivist methodology supported by pragmatism) and objectivism (a belief that social events and processes have an objective reality irrespective of the researcher) (A. Gardner, et al., 2012). The goal was to discover an emerging theory that “had grab, would fit the data and would work in the real world” to explain a process or deepen understanding of the phenomena being studied (Glaser & Strauss, cited in D. Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 548). As an inductive approach, grounded theory derives its name from the practice of generating theory from research that is “grounded” in data (Babchuck, 1997).

The Development of Grounded Theory

The grounded theory method is now more diverse, with subtle shifts in epistemological positions influencing theorists and researchers since Glaser and

Strauss's (1967) pioneering work (Charmaz, 2005; Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005; A. Gardner, et al., 2012). Significantly, even the two creators later disagreed about the nature of the method and how it should to be practiced. As a result, several versions of grounded theory have emerged. Currently three main versions dominate the field (Willig, 2013) and include the Glaserian version, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) (Straussian) approach, and Charmaz's (2006) constructivist version.

In 1990, Strauss collaborated with Corbin to co-author the book "*Basics of Qualitative Research*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In 1992, Glaser responded to Strauss and Corbin with "*Emergence vs. Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*" (Glaser, 1992), critiquing what was presented in their earlier text. Straussian or 'Second Generation Grounded Theory' built upon the earlier grounded theory approach but moved the method towards a more epistemologically subjectivist and deductive approach, including providing detailed step-by-step guides to the method (A. Gardner, et al., 2012; Willig, 2013).

The primary area of contention between Strauss and Glaser focused around the issue of 'forcing' fit, rather than allowing fit to emerge. Glaser (1992) claimed elements of the theory should be allowed to organically emerge from the data through the grounded theory process, whereas Strauss and Corbin (1990) provided guidelines to assist with fitting the data. Glaser referred to this as 'forcing', whereas Strauss and Corbin referred to it as 'a coding paradigm' (Levers, 2013).

Over several decades, Kathy Charmaz (1990, 2005, 2006, 2007) continued to adapt grounded theory, developing a social constructivist approach to grounded theory research that sought to advance interpretive inquiry (A. Gardner, et al., 2012). Whilst Glaser and Strauss described grounded theory as featuring the "discovery of theory from the data" (1967, p. 1), Charmaz claimed that "neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (2006, p. 10). In constructivist grounded theory it is therefore acknowledged that the researcher's decisions, the specific research questions, the particular methods used, as well as his

or her personal and philosophical background shape the research process and, ultimately the findings (Willig, 2013).

Defining Components of Grounded Theory

Founding scholars, Glaser and Strauss, emphasised certain principles that underpin all grounded theory research. Charmaz referred to these principles as “defining components” (2006, p. 5) and in discussing these highlighted the importance of concurrent data collection and constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, and memoing. According to Elliott and Lazenbatt these methods are “not optional extras but instead are an integral part of the systematic and rigorous research approach of grounded theory” (2005, p. 52). These methods are explained in brief below.

Concurrent data collection and constant comparative analysis: In grounded theory, data collection and analysis are parallel processes. The constant comparative method is an inductive process of reducing the data through constant recoding. It involves breaking down the data into discrete ‘incidents’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or ‘units’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and comparing these to other incidents or units during the process of coding. The original, Glaserian, Straussian and constructivist versions of grounded theory have all differed in their approach to coding, while all emphasising the importance of constant comparative analysis. According to Charmaz, constructivist grounded theory coding consists of at least two main phases; “1) an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by; 2) a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesise, integrate and organise large amounts of data” (2006, p. 46).

Theoretical sampling: In grounded theory research, purposeful theoretical sampling guides the process of data collection as one seeks pertinent data to develop the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical sampling is cumulative (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); each interview provides data that influences the selection of subsequent data sources. It is concerned with the refinement, and ultimately saturation of existing and increasingly analytic, categories (Willig, 2013). Research participants should be sought out who can provide “depth... variation... [and]

density” of experience regarding the phenomenon under study to allow for expanded theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 178).

Theoretical saturation: Charmaz defines theoretical saturation as “the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties or yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory” (2006, p. 189). However, theoretical saturation functions as a goal rather than a reality (Willig, 2013). It has been a contentious topic, reasons for this including the fact researchers often proclaim saturation rather than proving they have achieved it (Bowen, 2008; Morse, 1995), and the possible consequences for saturating categories; for example, forcing data into preconceived frameworks (Charmaz, 2005; Morse, 2003). In light of this, Dey has proposed the alternate term “**theoretical sufficiency**,” contending that rather than establishing categories saturated by data, grounded theory research should “have categories **suggested** by data” (1999, pp. 257, emphasis in original).

Memoing: Memos provide a track record of the analysis and are essential building blocks in grounded theory towards theory development (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005). Memos can be about events, cases, categories, relationships between categories, changes in direction in the analytic process as well as reflections on the adequacy of the research question (Willig, 2013). Memos both stimulate and document the researcher’s developing thinking, including the comparisons made (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011).

Rationale for the Use of Constructivist Grounded Theory in this Research

This research sought to move beyond just describing the lived experience of accompanying partners with regards to challenges of expatriate living to exploring the resilience processes used by expatriate humanitarian families. In grounded theory approach the focus is on a social process and “takes a view from the outside in, whereas phenomenology proceeds from the inside out” (Willig, 2013, p. 78). Grounded theory research seeks participants who have experienced the phenomenon under different conditions, whereas phenomenology favours those that prioritise common features of the lived experience (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Given these factors, and a lack of existing research on the topic of expatriate families within the

humanitarian sector, grounded theory was identified as a preferred research approach.

Constructionists begin with “specific questions on a particular substantive area; as opposed to classical grounded theory which starts with a desire to know more about a substantive area but has no preconceived questions prior to the study” (Hernandez & Andrews, as cited in Evans, 2013, p. 45). Given I had previously reviewed some literature in the area of enquiry, a natural outcome of being interested in a topic of significant personal relevance, I approached the study with some predetermined questions. As previously discussed, constructivist grounded theory is interpretivist in nature, implying that the notion of a shared reality is interpreted by the researcher. Appreciation of this ‘constructed’ approach significantly influenced my decision to pursue constructivist grounded theory.

Within the social constructionist community there is debate between those who favour a more critical realist approach versus a more relativist position. I align myself with the more moderate critical approach, believing “reality exists independent of the human mind regardless of whether it is comprehensible or directly experienceable” (Levers, 2013, p. 2). More importantly, however, I favour pragmatic focused research. The following quote highlights my position:

The epistemological issues that separate different strands, or branches of the grounded theory methodology family, can then be set to one side provided that people’s research writings do not seek to make strong epistemological claims: the ultimate criterion of good research should be that it makes a difference. (Bryant, 2009, p. 32)

Finally, the results of grounded theory studies are usually expressed as substantive or formal theory development (Sbaraini, et al., 2011). This research, which used an application of grounded theory, differed from traditional grounded theory research in that the aim was to identify a model and propose recommendations directed at promoting family resilience, this being considered of greater practical benefit to the intended audience as opposed to theory development. In doing so, this research aligned itself with previous researchers including Locke (2003) and Burden and Roodt (2007) who held “to the opinion that ‘theory’ in grounded theory does not

(and should not) refer to a rigid application of one theoretical concept... but [theory] does (and should) also refer to at least typologies and models” (Mouton, 2002, p. 196).

3.2.3 Reflexivity and Reducing Researcher Bias

Reflexivity is underpinned by self-awareness; researchers are reflexive when they are aware of the multiple influences they have on research processes and on how research processes affect them (Gilgun, 2010). Given the constructionist’s assumption that findings are dependent on the researcher’s personal view of reality, reflexivity is essential to good research processes, outcomes and research critique.

Willig (2013) identifies two types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity involves appreciation of how one’s own values, experiences, interests, beliefs and social identities shape the research, while also considering how the research may have possibly changed or impacted the researcher. Epistemological reflexivity requires researchers’ to consider how the research questions, research design and methodologies pursued impacted the research findings.

In brief, underlying values that I brought to the research process in relation to expatriate assignments included the importance of wellbeing and balance, supportive family relationships and planning and preparedness. I also believed in shared personal and corporate responsibility or duty of care towards expatriate families as well as a conviction that longer-term assignments (at least 2-3 years) are associated with enhanced cultural effectiveness and productivity. Assumptions that I held at the beginning of the research process included the fact that INGO HR staff often demonstrate little concern for families, and that accompanying partners frequently feel unsupported and isolated from the INGOs with which they are affiliated. Documenting my underlying motivations (see section 1.1), values and beliefs, and prior assumptions before data collection were essential steps in helping me identify potential bias I could bring to the research process.

Aligning myself with the constructivist position, believing that as researchers how we conceptualise and understand the constructs being interpreted “cannot be

approached as a blank slate with the goal of observing something in its true form” (Levers, 2013, p. 4) prompted a desire for transparency in both this thesis and during the interview process. This included disclosure of relevant previous roles I have held (i.e. being an INGO humanitarian worker) in addition to my current position; that of being an accompanying partner of a humanitarian worker, a mother and a researcher. Whilst having personal experience with the phenomena under study, as a researcher I foremost endeavoured to distance myself and critically examine how my personal familiarity with the phenomena under enquiry may impact data collection and analysis.

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate my commitment to reflexivity. This has been done to the extent to which is feasible, recognising the extent to which researchers can completely account for themselves in their research is debatable given “so much of what transpires takes place within the deeper levels of consciousness” (Cutcliffe, as cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 31). To this end this thesis features the use of first person and of direct quotes as “a way of acknowledging that the voices of researchers and those whom we research are not the same yet are interconnected” (Gilgun, 2005, p. 259). Furthermore, I have included text boxes titled ‘personal reflections’ throughout the thesis that highlight some of my thoughts, observations and ideas as documented in my memos and reflective journal; a practice strongly recommended during constructivist applications of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Ortlipp, 2008; Watt, 2007).

Personal reflections: Journal

I am an accompanying humanitarian partner interviewing other accompanying humanitarian partners. I am a former NGO employee interviewing other NGO staff. In the context of this research, however, I am foremost a researcher.

My motivation to do this research, to encourage organisations to care more and to equip families to support their own resilience needs, to be set aside as I look at the data as objectively as possible. However, as I look back at my diary and at the questions I was struggling with just before I embarked on this PhD journey, I can draw comfort from the fact I know now I was not alone.

Do all new mums living in a foreign country spend so much mental energy just trying to stay positive? Is this depression? Is it loneliness? Is it a need to return to work? Is it fatigue... especially young baby fatigue? It doesn't help that I feel so isolated and my husband is so busy with work.

I must separate myself from the data and research process to ensure rigour and trustworthiness and be as objective as I can (A. Gardner, Fedoruk, & McCutcheon, 2012; Levers, 2013). I need to 'bracket' my strong concerns and opinions about the support (or lack of) provided towards accompanying families by humanitarian NGOs and be the researcher.

3.3 Research Methods

Charmaz accepted the invitation from Glaser and Strauss (1967) to use grounded theory strategies in flexible ways, describing "grounded theory methods as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages" (2006, p. 9). As such, grounded theory research may use different and multiple kinds of data, including field notes, interviews and information in records and reports. Multiple data collection methods were used in this present study. Methods were chosen to allow rich, detailed perspectives on topics of interest, and to 'triangulate' findings that might otherwise be isolated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The data collection methods utilised included a scoping study of published and grey literature, intensive in-depth interviews with accompanying partners and semi-structured interviews with key informants from the humanitarian sector. Ethics approval (see Appendix 1) was obtained before commencing data collection. Table 2 summarises the methods used to address the study's objectives. This table also presents where the associated results are presented and discussed in the thesis.

Table 2: Summary of objectives and associated methodologies

Objectives	Methods	Data Analysis	Discussion of Results
Document the main challenges experienced by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers based on the perception of expatriate partners.	Partner intensive in-depth interviews (3.5)	Chapter 5	Chapter 8
Identify the key resilience processes employed by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers from the viewpoint of accompanying partners.	Partner intensive in-depth interviews (3.5)	Chapter 6	Chapter 8
Investigate organisational driving and restraining factors that impact the support provided to expatriate families by INGOs.	Key informant interviews (3.6)	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Present a model of family resilience relevant to accompanying expatriate families in humanitarian contexts.	Critical analysis of study findings and literature		Chapter 8
Propose recommendations for humanitarian agencies aimed at promoting resilience among accompanying expatriate families.	Critical analysis of study findings and literature		Chapter 8
Propose recommendations for accompanying families in the humanitarian sector aimed at promoting their own resilience.	Critical analysis of study findings and literature		Chapter 8

3.4 Scoping Study Methodology

The ideal time to conduct a literature review and how extensive this should be are contentious topics within the field of grounded theory research (Dunne, 2010). Original grounded theorists Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued for delaying the literature review until after completing the analysis, thereby avoiding viewing one's data through the lens of previous ideas. However, grounded theory is often advocated as an effective research strategy for topics that have been subject to relatively little research and about which there is limited knowledge (Miliken, 2010). This then leads to a dilemma articulated by McGhee et al. (cited in Dunne, 2010, p. 116), who queried, "How can this paucity of knowledge be ascertained unless an initial review of the literature is undertaken?" This research aligned itself with the position of Dunne (2010) and other researchers (e.g. Lempert, 2007; Suddaby, 2006) who advocate for the need for a middle ground on this particular issue. As such, the scoping study aimed to provide background contextual information and determine what level of knowledge existed about this under-researched population. Further review in the literature of specific issues that emerged from interview data (i.e. paradoxes in expatriate life) took place after data collection as a means of supporting the emerging findings and highlighting the credibility of the data.

Conducting systematic literature reviews on the topics of expatriate families and resilience, and expatriate families in the humanitarian sector proved challenging. Issues included a general paucity of relevant literature and difficulty comparing the wide diversity of both research and non-research literature. Faced with this dilemma, I considered using an alternative type of literature review, the scoping study, to better examine the available reference material. The scoping review was undertaken several months after interview data collection and analysis was commenced.

Appendix 2 provides a summary of the literature on scoping reviews including the general purpose and nature of such reviews, methodology of scoping reviews, their limitations and strengths. Well suited to emerging topics, scoping reviews represent a viable methodological approach for examining and mapping the breadth of research and conceptual development in a particular area (Rumrill, Fitzgerald, & Merchant, 2010). Given the diversity of material included (i.e. published, grey, qualitative and

quantitative), scoping reviews do not typically evaluate the qualities of the studies considered in the review (Levac, Colquhoun, & O'Brien, 2010).

The scoping review of the literature concerning resilience within accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian workers was conducted systematically in accordance with the 'Arksey and O'Malley framework'¹⁷ (2005). Consequently the review was guided by the following five stages:

1. Development of an initial research question;
2. Identifying criteria for selecting studies (i.e. search strategy);
3. Searching for studies using various research databases (i.e. study selection);
4. Charting the data whereby studies located can be grouped into themes; and
5. Collating and summarising the findings using a systematic approach.

To avoid repetition, rather than outlining the methodology of the scoping review in this chapter, the review methods and findings are presented together in Chapter 4.

3.5 Intensive In-depth Interviews with Accompanying Partners

The following section details the recruitment procedures, data collection tools and data analysis processes used for in-depth interviews with accompanying partners.

3.5.1 Accompanying Partner Recruitment

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Grounded theory studies utilise purposeful and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006; Sbaraini, et al., 2011). Purposeful sampling involves “information-rich” individuals who can contribute to the aims of the research, whilst theoretical sampling is driven by ensuring saturation and refinement of the emerging categories or theory (Coyne, 1997). Several selection criteria were established to guide the selection of suitable participants with good understanding and experience of the phenomena being studied. To be eligible for this study, participants needed to be:

- English speaking adults;
- Aged 18 years or over;

¹⁷ With the latter recommendations offered by Levac et al (2010) taken into account where possible, recognising these were written for health research evidence reviews.

- (At the time of interview) be accompanying their partner or spouse abroad while this individual is employed with a humanitarian INGO; and
- Able to reflect on and willing to share detailed information about their own or their families' experiences in accompanying a humanitarian worker abroad.

Such criteria excluded persons who did not accompany their partner abroad or whose involvement in the humanitarian sector was not through an INGO (i.e. those linked with a UN organisation or the Red Cross). Further exclusion criteria specified that persons were not eligible if their partners had not been employed with an INGO in a paid position for at least one year, thereby avoiding volunteers or those in the initial months of their accompanying journey. This was based on the rationale that in order to be able to reflect and process the experience, a minimum amount of time was required¹⁸, and also to avoid interviewing persons still actively settling in to their first assignment. Lastly, persons who had obtained full-time employment prior to arriving in their new country of residence were also excluded on the basis that discussions about 'accompanying experiences' may be irrelevant.

Partner Recruitment Procedures

Both convenience (also known as opportunistic) and snowball techniques (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011) were used within the purposeful sampling process to recruit accompanying partners. Theoretical sampling was then used to identify partners who had different or extended experiences, (in addition to modifying the questions asked), in order to achieve theoretical saturation.

At all times the intent was to ensure the sample reflected the diversity of accompanying partners observed in the 'real world'; thus accompanying partners included males and females, employed and unemployed partners, and individuals with and without children. The geographical location of partners varied, as did the length of time they had spent abroad. It was estimated that approximately 15-25¹⁹

¹⁸ Though adjustment is an individual process and therefore variable depending on personal circumstances, according to Hippler (cited in Bright, 2009, p. 18) nine months after deployment, most expatriates have generally concluded the adjustment process.

¹⁹ An analysis by Thomson (n.d.) of 49 research articles that used grounded theory published between 2002 and 2004 across various disciplines showed the average number of interviews conducted was 24. The author claimed that saturation usually occurred between 10 to 30 interviews.

participants would be selected for in-depth interview; the final number being determined once theoretical saturation was achieved.

Initial contact with potential accompanying partners was made via an introductory email that included a promotional flyer about the study (see Appendix 3). Upon expressing willingness to be involved, a subsequent email was sent which included the partner interview resource pack. This included a study information sheet, a consent form, and a brief demographic survey; the latter including questions to confirm the person's ability to meet the inclusion criteria.

Personal reflections: Journal

Yet another email sent out today trying to recruit potential partner interviewees. While there are plenty more eligible partners I could interview here in Cambodia I don't want to: 1) over-represent the sample with persons whom I think are based in one of the 'softer' development postings; 2) limit the diversity of my sample, and 3) over-represent 'known' contacts.

Eight partners previously known to me met the eligibility criteria and were willing to be interviewed. The majority of other participants were recruited through repeated promotion through relevant contacts (asking friends, old colleagues and current humanitarian employees to circulate the flyer among potentially suitable partners) and snowball sampling techniques (two partners were interviewed based on referrals by previously-interviewed partners). Though time consuming, opportunistic networking proved to be the most effective way of soliciting interest in the study and ensuring that the sample population were not all known contacts. A series of three reminders were sent via email to encourage participation when a person expressed interest in participating in the study or after receiving the contact details of a potentially suitable person.

Revised Complementary Partner Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

As indicated in Table 3, in addition to the 19 interviewed partners who met the initial inclusion criteria outlined above, four other partners were interviewed as

complementary sources of rich data about two specific themes: family repatriation and relationship breakdown. During the concurrent process of data collection and analysis it was felt that the initial inclusion and exclusion criteria limited the potential for the research to also consider the challenges and stresses associated with re-entry or to dialogue with partners that, for reasons unknown, had initially accompanied their partner abroad but were no longer in relationship. In keeping with grounded theory tradition, these gaps were considered serious enough to warrant further exploration (following discussions with reference group members and my primary supervisor) and as such, attempts were made to recruit an additional small number of persons who could comment on these emerging categories.

Table 3: Expatriate and relationship status of partner sample

	In relationship (married or de-facto)	Separated	Total
Expatriate	19	1	20
Repatriate	2	1	3
Total	21	2	23

Beyond the criteria of being at least 18 years or age, able to speak English, willing to reflect and share personal information, and having lived abroad at least one year as an accompanying partner of a humanitarian INGO worker, the following specific conditions were required for these additional interview participants:

- [Repatriated Partners]; to have been residing in their home country for no longer than two years, prior to which they were an accompanying humanitarian partner.
- [Separated Partners]; to have been separated from their partner or spouse no longer than three years, prior to which they were an accompanying humanitarian partner.

Similar recruitment strategies and participant engagement processes to those discussed previously were employed for these specific participants. Slight amendments to the forms used in the partner resource pack were made as necessary.

3.5.2 Accompanying Partner Data Collection Tools

Whereas an interview is often a directed conversation, an intensive or in-depth interview allows for deeper exploration of a specific topic with a person who has had the relevant experiences (Charmaz, 2006). In-depth interviewing using a semi-structured guide was chosen as the preferred research method because the interview style is informal, consistent with the grounded theory method and focuses on participants' experiences, meanings and interpretations, and allows for clarification of questions and responses.

The semi-structured interview schedule developed for accompanying expatriate partners (see Appendix 4, section A4.0) was guided by the study objectives, the literature reviewed, my professional and personal experiences in the humanitarian sector and feedback from reference group members. The interview schedule consisted of 22 questions structured across the following four themes:

- Setting the scene/warm-up questions (two questions);
- Problems, challenges and coping strategies (nine questions, including those discussing challenges, crisis events, sources of support, family routines, intention to remain abroad and strengths);
- Organisational support (six questions); and
- Closing questions (five questions, including benefits or greatest value from being abroad, and advice for others).

Revised interview schedules were also prepared for participants having separated from their partner or having repatriated (see Appendix 4, sections A4.1 and A4.2). For separated partners, questions sought to better understand what impact participants felt living abroad within the humanitarian context had on the relationship (with questions directed to suit either those still living as expatriates or those who had returned home). For repatriated participants, the focus was on uncovering the reasons for returning home, the main challenges experienced during re-entry, and what supports, if any, were provided by the INGO to assist the family during this period.

Flexibility and responsiveness was encouraged during interviews. For example, additional questions were added based upon interviewee responses and the sequencing of questions varied between participants. While these steps sought to lessen interviewer control, the need to maintain a balance between adaptability and control was constantly sought.

Of the 23 interviews, the majority (N=20) were conducted using Skype, a popular Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). These were either possible via free Skype-to-Skype connections, or where the interviewee's Internet connection was not adequate, using Skype-to-Phone technology. Three interviews were conducted face-to-face in Cambodia. Partner in-depth interviews took place between December 2010 and February 2012. Interviews ranged from just under one hour to almost two hours, the average interview duration being 80 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by an independent person. I checked every transcription against the recording and made corrections as appropriate.

Immediately after each interview I also made memos of any prominent interview observations or issues (e.g. dominant emotions, interview distractions), emerging categories (e.g. loneliness, moral dilemmas), or other decisions (e.g. additional questions to ask). The reflective journal served as a central document to keep observational, theoretical, and methodological memos (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) with the notes aiding in the process of tracking research activities and making sense of the data.

3.6 Key Informant Interviews

This section details the recruitment procedures, data collection tools, and data analysis processes used for key informant interviews with senior HR or staff care professionals from INGOs.

3.6.1 Key Informant Recruitment

Informant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Informants were sought to represent the diversity of large and small-scale, faith-and non-faith-based INGOs in the humanitarian sector. Eligibility criteria for informants required that such individuals be:

- English speaking adults;
- Employed within INGOs in senior roles directly connected with staff management issues. Such positions could be at country, regional or headquarter (HQ) levels and may include HR roles, staff care roles, country directors and senior managers.
- (At the time of interview) have been employed at least 18 months with their current humanitarian INGO; and
- Able to reflect on and willing to share detailed information about their respective agencies family support policies and practices and their own perceptions of issues related to expatriate families in the humanitarian sector.

Key Informant Recruitment Procedures

Eight key informants were successfully purposely recruited using a mix of convenience (two were known to me) and opportunistic techniques (six were referred by personal and professional contacts). Like the recruitment process for accompanying partners, a number of potential informants were also contacted but chose not to engage or reply.

Upon expressing a willingness to be involved, potential informants were sent an email that included the informant interview resource pack that consisted of a study information sheet, a consent form, and a brief demographic survey (see Appendix 5). Throughout the recruitment process, a maximum of three follow-up emails were sent in circumstances in which individuals had either not conveyed their interest or disinterest in the study, or had expressed their support but had subsequently not replied to an email.

3.6.2 Key Informant Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed for informants from humanitarian organisations (see Appendix 6). The interview schedule consisted of 23 questions grouped into the following themes:

- Family orientation and perceptions (four questions);
- Family supports (ten questions);
- Relationship strain and assignment completion (three questions);

- Work-life balance (two questions); and
- Closing questions (four questions, including advice for others, family attributes for success, and enquiring whether the interview process generated any new thoughts about family support needs and the role of organisations).

Preceding these questions was discussion relating to the informant's own experience living abroad, for many individuals this serving as a 'warm-up' to the interview. Again, flexibility in the sequencing of questions and the use of additional questions was also applied. Care was taken to disclose only the broadest aspects of commonality and international experience (i.e. years abroad, experience both working within the NGO sector as well as that of being an accompanying spouse and mother of young children) to avoid influencing interviewee responses with personal opinions on organisational responsibilities to support families, dominant expatriate challenges etc. Interviews were conducted between August and October 2012 and utilised Skype, with the exception of one face-to-face interview. The average interview lasted just over one hour. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and checked for accuracy using the same process outlined for partner interviews.

3.7 Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed in full using an inductive multi-stage coding process similar to that described by Charmaz (2006). Unlike the Glaserian approach of open, selective and theoretical coding (Glaser, 1992), Charmaz favoured initial and focused coding, with the optional third stage of theoretical coding (2006). In this study, initial coding involved line-by-line coding, a strategy prompting close review of all content, and aiming to generate as many ideas as possible inductively from the data (Sbaraini, et al., 2011).

Following this focused coding aimed to re-categorise the most useful or relevant initial codes. Developing focused codes arose from the constant comparative method of continually enquiring, "what are the similarities and differences between data?" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). This process was essential in helping condense the volume of data (allowing codes to become categories) and stimulated new perspectives or questions that I had not previously considered.

As data analysis and interviewing were concurrent processes, the insights gained (or information gaps noted) from previous interviews coded were used to influence subsequent interviews. Table 4 offers a worked example of the coding process. This was not a one off process, but rather multiple versions of the codes and emerging categories were discussed with my supervisor and reference group members and were constantly compared with other interview analysis in the process of seeking theoretical saturation.

The final stage of data analysis involved coding for model development (similar to Charmaz's theoretical coding). Having created and refined categories and subcategories of focused codes, I then presented the relationship between these codes in an integrated model. The proposed model of factors influencing humanitarian expatriate family adjustment (see section 8.5) aimed to provide coherence to the various but related codes.

Following grounded theory methodology, interview coding did not try to 'force' partner feedback into dominant theories or models of family resilience described in the extent literature. On the contrary, emergent categories arising from the interview data itself formed the basis for further detailed review of the existing literature to confirm findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This practice of "locating your work within the relevant literature" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 166) is central to grounded theory research, and in this circumstance, highlighted many similarities between the coping strategies reported by participants and those of F. Walsh's (2006) family resilience key processes. The dominant strategies also held true to the protective factor model of resilience and highlighted the socio-ecological dimensions of family resilience.

"Empathetic" interviewing acknowledges the need to interact as persons with the interviewees (realising that neutrality is not possible) and advocates the researcher revealing personal feelings and private situations to the interviewee as *quid pro quo* of good faith (Fontana & Frey, 2005). As such, I verbalised empathy and concern and at times contributed some of my own experiences to the conversation. This revealed a sense of commonality and understanding during the research encounter and helped satisfy the frequent interest shown by participants about my life.

Table 4: Example coding process

Raw data	Initial coding	Focused Coding	Coding for Model Development
<p>Q. What are the strengths that you have discovered or developed as an individual while living overseas? I think I now know I could go anywhere and survive. I can survive without my western comforts and lifestyle... I've realised that I as a person can cope with things I never thought I could... Like being the single parent; if 20 years ago had someone had told me I'd be bringing up my kids, doing 80% of it... I would have said, "No that's not the case, [husband's name] is going to be a very hands on parent and it's going to be more like 60/40." I would've thought no, I wouldn't be able to do that. But now I know I've done it, so I know I can.</p> <p>Q. If I was to ask that same question concerning your family as a unit – what are the strengths you have discovered or developed? ... it certainly opens your mind... The longer you live in a place, the things that when you got there, you questioned why on earth do they do it that way? The longer you live somewhere the more and more it makes sense. You reach a stage where you realise the way you do things is one way and there are many other ways of doing things... It makes you less judgmental... my daughters have had a completely different upbringing from me. I grew up in the same little village and didn't leave home until I was 18... whereas they have travelled all over and seen all sorts of things.... They have been exposed to many experiences, which to use a cliché, has really widen their world view to open their minds. When you grow up in one place, even if you consciously don't agree with all the prejudices all around you, you are affected by them and by the way your own culture looks at other cultures; whereas it doesn't bother them who they are talking to, what culture the person is from, race, nationality, and religion... They are very open to all of that and they are able to relate to different people. I wouldn't have been able to at their age because I just didn't have that exposure. We've been able as a family to travel widely; ... we have been all over the world.</p>	<p>Confidence Sense of being a survivor Reduced need for comforts, western norms Self discovery Stronger than previously believed</p> <p>Single parenting, due to partner's work commitments</p> <p>Mind expanding / opening Questioning prior beliefs and assumptions Greater appreciation of cultural diversity and variety Less ethnocentric / judgmental</p> <p>Comparison of raising TCKs when one wasn't also a TCK</p> <p>TCK benefits: open, expanded worldview, able to relate to wide range of persons, enhanced maturity</p> <p>Opportunity to travel widely</p>	<p>Individual growth through adversity Individual growth through prior experience (confidence, belief in self, inner strength)</p> <p>Adverse impacts of humanitarian work upon the family (frequent travel / work-family balance; later expanded in interview)</p> <p>Benefits of expatriate living; exposure to travel and alternate ways of living Growth through cross-cultural engagement</p> <p>Parenting TCKs</p>	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience and thriving / heightened personal growth <p>In-country adjustment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner family wellbeing and relationship prioritisation <p>In-country adjustment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational support for family relationships Humanitarian worker work-life balance

NVivo 9® software was used to manage various data related to this study, including providing electronic storage of all transcribed material and multiple versions of data coding. Used appropriately, it is generally accepted that computer assisted qualitative data analysis software can enhance the data handling and management process (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004; Crowley, Harre, & Tagg, 2002).

Like others who have used NVivo® as a tool to assist with data management and analysis (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006; Brody & Simmons, 2007; Richardson, 2006; Selby, Braunack-Mayer, et al., 2009), I greatly appreciated the benefits afforded through this program. These included: easy data search and retrieval functions (e.g. text searches, coding comparisons between different participant or informant attributes); the ability to easily differentiate between coded data (for example, data which depicted exceptions to the norm or majority feedback were identified with a specific colour); and, the ease with which observational, theoretical and methodological memos could be created.

The analyses within the present study were concluded when available data sources had been exhausted and when categories and links to sub categories were well defined, with no additional new information being reported. Data was sufficient to enable clear categories to emerge in relation to the aims and objectives of this research, and feedback from the reference group members indicated the emergent categories were both logical and yet exhaustive. Member checking was also done with accompanying partners on specific aspects of the findings (e.g. advice for potential accompanying partners) by providing them with the opportunity to review and comment on any non-academic publications developed by myself (see Appendix 9).

3.8 Research Rigour / Trustworthiness

Rigour in qualitative studies is critical. While in quantitative research emphasis is placed on the canons of reliability and validity, qualitative researchers argue for the use of different criteria when determining the rigour of a qualitative study (Guba, 1981; B. R. Johnson, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The overarching concept when considering rigour in qualitative studies is trustworthiness.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) operationalised trustworthiness as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Trustworthiness is also dependant on ensuing the sampling technique and data analysis steps also adhere to the specific methodology being used. Table 5 summarises many of the steps taken in this research to maximise rigour and trustworthiness. These included the use of “thick descriptions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) of a particular reality construction, and reflexivity, as discussed in section 3.2.3. In addition, specific to grounded theory, Charmaz (2006) claimed that credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness are the decisive factors for evaluating grounded theory research. While Table 5 outlines steps taken to ensure credibility, efforts to address the other three factors included:

Originality: The target population of the research is novel. As far as I am aware, no other authors have published research that solely focuses on the perspective and experiences of globally dispersed expatriate families in the humanitarian INGO sector. As such, the emergent model and recommendations are original.

Resonance: The final model and recommendations were shared with participants to verify whether it reflected their experiences and made sense to them. Furthermore, preliminary findings were shared with several groups of non-participants (e.g. senior humanitarian staff and missionary member care workers) to elicit their feedback on the accuracy and usefulness of the emerging categories and recommendations.

Usefulness: Chapter 8 presents practical recommendations that can be applied at an individual, family or organisational level to promote resilience among expatriate families. Suggested avenues for further research are also identified.

Table 5: Techniques to ensure trustworthiness²⁰

Traditional Criteria	Trustworthiness Criteria	Techniques Used in This Study to Address Each Criteria
Internal validity	Credibility	<p>Triangulation of data sources (partners, key informants) and data methods (interviews, literature reviews)</p> <p>Interview participant member checking (during interviews, and sharing of publications and the final model and recommendations)</p> <p>Regular review of research methods and findings, particularly for adherence with constructivist grounded theory practices</p> <p>Memo writing that complements data obtained from interviews and literature reviews</p> <p>Self-reflection by drawing upon extended personal engagement in the field</p> <p>Conducted six pilot interviews (three face-to-face and three via Skype) before commencing data collection to refine interviewing skills and the semi-structured interview outline</p>
External validity	Transferability	<p>Detailed “thick” descriptions of concepts and categories emerging from the data</p> <p>Reference group member checking to ascertain data findings resonate with non-participants also familiar with expatriate family life and the humanitarian sector</p> <p>Member checking of responses (e.g. core issues or meaning) with participants during interviews</p>
Objectivity	Confirmability	<p>Use of semi-structured interview collection tools to guide data collection</p> <p>Verbatim transcription and careful editing of interviews</p>
Reliability	Dependability	<p>Detailed description of research methods (e.g. data collection tools, sampling process, data analysis)</p> <p>Participant’s confidentiality protected</p> <p>Initial and periodic reflexive analysis of my preconceptions and bias regarding the topic</p> <p>Repeated checking with reference group members and my supervisor of the emerging categories from data analysis, thereby helping validate the process</p>

²⁰ This table is adapted from trustworthiness criteria delineated in Lincoln and Guba (1985). The first column refers to traditional criteria as used typically in positivist research. The third column contains specific steps or actions recommended by Lincoln and Guba and others (Krefting, 1991; Seale & Silverman, 1997), but are specific to the present study.

3.8.1 Reference Group

Enhanced validation of the research process and data analysis by non-participant member checking was sought through the establishment of a reference group (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 90; Pyett, 2003). Comprised of four members, three had considerable prior experience in the humanitarian field as employees themselves. All members were familiar with basic research processes and were themselves accompanying expatriate partners during the research process (see Table 6 for summary biographical information about reference group members). The reference group members were from Australia, Canada and South Africa and had spent between nine and twenty four years living overseas.

Feedback from reference group members was sought throughout the research process to provide feedback on the scoping study methodology, interview guides, and the recruitment strategy in addition to emerging categories, interpretations and conclusions. As highlighted by other researchers, the diversity and experience of reference group members is “important in guarding against interviewer bias and against the privileging of any one type of information or any one analytical perspective” (Warr & Pyett, 1999, p. 293).

Reference group members were invited via email to consider this role. The purpose of the study and what was expected of them in terms of time and frequency of contribution was clearly outlined. Research progress updates were shared with group members at periodic intervals throughout the research process.

Table 6: Summary biographical data about reference group members*

Reference group member	Location	Family status	Number of countries lived in	Years engaged in humanitarian work	Professional background; Areas of interest	Partner's current occupation
1	Nigeria	Married with two children	4 countries	12	Education; Organisational development, education, gender, voice and accountability	Humanitarian work
2	Indonesia	Married with two children	6 countries	15	Conflict resolution; Resilience, organisational change, gender, human rights	Humanitarian consultancies and local business development
3	Laos	Married with two children	10 countries	10	Psychology and peace studies; Resilience, stress, trauma, humanitarian workers, spirituality, long-distance relationships, expatriate living	Humanitarian work
4	Cambodia	Married with two children	4 countries	Nil	Occupational psychology; Geographical transitions and the concordant stress and coping strategies that individuals encounter	For-profit social enterprise

* Permission was given by reference group members for inclusion of this information within this thesis

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In order to protect participant's rights, strategies were devised to manage informed consent and confidentiality. The Curtin University Graduate Studies Committee approved these strategies, as well as the overall research design, in August 2010 (#HR CIH-11-2010).

3.9.1 Informed Consent

A one-page information sheet was provided to all interview participants prior to seeking their informed consent to proceed with the interview process. All forms (see Appendices 3 and 5) were trialled during an interview pilot testing process to ensure compatibility with various computer platforms and ease of use. At the start of each interview participants were again reminded that interviews would be recorded and that any future publications would assure their anonymity.

3.9.2 Confidentiality

Interview participants (both accompanying partners and key informants) were initially offered the opportunity to choose an alias, however most declined. Therefore for consistency, I assigned each individual a pseudonym number for data storage purposes. Chapters 5 and 7 provide summary demographic information about participants (see Tables 14 and 18), offering contextual understanding of the interview feedback to readers of the present thesis, while at the same time ensuring data was de-identified and maintaining participant confidentiality²². Within this thesis, all detailed quotations are identified with reference to the partner or key informant number (e.g. Partner 8 or Key Informant 3).

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the aims and objectives for the study, the study design, and the qualitative methods used in the study. It has also drawn attention to the manner in which I sought to ensure research reflexivity and rigour. The following chapter presents the methodology and findings from the scoping study conducted to better understand what is known from the existing literature about resilience, expatriate families and the humanitarian sector.

²² Limited demographic data was included to help protect confidentiality. For example the hiring organisation and specific location within a country was not specified.

Chapter Four: Scoping Review

“There is no single ‘ideal type’ of literature review, but rather all literature review methods offer a set of tools that researchers need to use appropriately.”

(Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 20)

4.0 Introduction

Chapter 2 presented background narrative literature summaries on key themes pertinent to this research: expatriate families and family resilience. Chapter 3 justified the decision to pursue a scoping literature study to systematically review the intersection between these two themes and referred readers to Appendix 2 for additional information about scoping studies. Chapter 4 now details the ‘Arksey and O’Malley (2005) framework’ method (as outlined in section 3.4 and Appendix 2) used to conduct the scoping review. The results of the review are then presented, distinguishing between the two topics: ‘families and international humanitarian work’ and ‘resilience and expatriate families.’ A discussion of the overall main findings from the review follows, emphasising what the literature about resilience and expatriate families in the humanitarian sector reveals. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the complementary literature sourced from social networking sites and blogs.

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Development of a Research Question

Scoping review research questions are broad in nature as they seek to provide breadth of evidence (Levac, et al., 2010). Drawing on an initial scan of the literature and feedback received from the reference group, the overriding research question was defined as: *What is known from the existing literature about the resilience-enhancing processes used by expatriate families who accompany international humanitarian workers abroad?*

The rationale behind this question was to ensure relevant existing published and grey literature was reviewed in order to contribute to the secondary aim of this study - that

of developing a context-specific model of factors influencing humanitarian expatriate family adjustment and developing recommendations designed to help strengthen the resilience of accompanying expatriate families in humanitarian contexts.

A preliminary review of published literature quickly revealed that literature on the subject of families of humanitarian workers is scarce; let alone literature specifically exploring the experiences and strengths of these families. Informed by stakeholder consultation and further reading, two specific focus areas were developed:

1. To summarise and disseminate known information about families of international humanitarian workers.
2. To summarise and disseminate what is known about resilience within expatriate families.

With regards to families of international humanitarian workers, literature concerning accompanying and non-accompanying families was considered, though greater attention was directed towards literature on accompanying families.

4.1.2 Stakeholder Consultation

The optional stage of consultation within the scoping review process is strongly advised, adding methodological rigour and providing additional sources of information, perspectives, meaning and applicability to the scoping study (Levac, et al., 2010). In addition to the four members of the reference group, two other stakeholders representing researchers and professionals in the humanitarian health and wellbeing sector were involved. All were contacted via email and briefed on the research question, focus areas and intended search strategy. Five of the six stakeholders expressed interest and provided valuable input on the review process.

4.1.3 Search Strategy

Multiple literature sources searched and reviewed included electronic databases, reference lists of relevant literature, and relevant websites.

Electronic Literature Database Searching

The terms ‘expatriate,’ ‘families’ and ‘humanitarian workers’ were broadly operationalised, consistent with prior definitions given in this thesis. As such,

‘expatriate’ included those living and working attached to an assignment outside their home country, ‘families’ included literature both about children and partners²³, and ‘humanitarian workers’ sought to include all those involved in relief, recovery or development. As the preliminary scan of the literature yielded few results, the term resilience was defined in its broadest sense, not limiting the concept to ‘family resilience’ though this term was also included in the keywords searched.

Terms related to stress and challenges were also included on the assumption that material exploring the trials and problems of expatriate life may include some discussion of the strategies used to manage these. Some experimentation was required to develop an appropriate search strategy and to identify priority key words (see Table 7). Initial trial searches included scanning keywords identified in relevant articles to check that no significant terms were overlooked. Through this process several additional keywords were added, including sojourner and global citizen. A librarian also reviewed the planned search strategy and affirmed the selection of key words and appropriate use of Boolean operators.

During November and December 2011 the following databases were searched: PsycINFO, Science Direct, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Proquest All Subscribed Content (New Platform), Informit and Current Contents Connect. Where search parameters allowed, database searches were limited to the English language and material published between 1990 and 30 November 2011.

Table 7: Keywords included in the search strategy (partial list only)

Expatriate terms:	expatriate / sojourner / accompanying / international / globally mobile / internationally mobile / global citizen / third culture kid...
Family terms:	family / families / spouse/ partner / husband / wife / child / children / dependant...
Humanitarian terms:	humanitarian / aid / development / relief / industry / sector / agency / work / worker / international / non-governmental organisation...
Stress terms:	stress / hardship / challenge / complexity / trial / hassle / difficulty...
Resilience terms:	resilience / resiliency / resilient / family resilience / adaptation / adjustment / strengths / protective processes...

²³ Both married and non-married partners were included in the definition of family, recognising that the union between couples may not be formalised in a legal wedding ceremony.

Individual advanced search strategies were tailored to suit each database. Table 8 provides an example of the final search strategy used to search PsycINFO. As the goal was to conduct an exhaustive search of the literature, search terms were kept broad, resulting in many irrelevant publications being eliminated in the next phase (section 4.1.4). As several relevant key documents I was familiar with were not identified through the databases, Google Scholar was also searched in December 2011. Key terms searched included ‘humanitarian family expatriate,’ ‘NGO expatriate family,’ ‘NGO family stress,’ ‘international development agency family needs,’ ‘humanitarian family stress,’ and ‘family resilience.

Table 8: Final PsycINFO search strategy

PsycINFO - Ovid SP host

1806 - 12/2010

Searched: 31/01/2011

Advanced search

English only

1. (family resilienc*).mp.
2. (resilience or resiliency or resilient).mp.
3. (strengths or protective processes or protective factors or risk processes or risk factors or adjustment or adaptation or adversity activated development).mp.
4. #2 or #3
5. (expatriate or sojourner or (accompanying relocation) or (accompanying assignment) or (accompanying deployment) or (accompanying famil*) or (accompanying spous*) or (accompanying partner) or (accompanying husband) or (accompanying wife) or (accompanying wives) or (accompanying child*) or (accompanying dependant) or (international relocation) or (international assignment) or (international deployment) or (international famil*) or (international spous*) or (international partner) or (international husband) or (international wife) or (international wives) or (international child*) or (international dependant) or (globally mobile) or (internationally mobile) or (global citizen) or (third culture kid) or (third culture child*).mp.
6. (famil* or spouse or partner or husband or wife or wives or child or children or dependant).mp.
7. ((humanitarian industry) or (aid industry) or (development industry) or (relief industry) or (humanitarian sector) or (aid sector) or (development sector) or (relief sector) or (humanitarian agency) or (aid agency) or (development agency) or (relief agency) or (humanitarian work*) or (aid work*) or (development work*) or (relief work*) or (international humanitarian) or (international aid) or (international development) or (international relief) or (non-governmental organi#ation).mp.
8. (stress or challenge or complexit* or trial or hardship or hassle or difficult*).mp.
9. (repatriat* or returnee).mp.
10. #5 and #6 and #7
11. #6 and #7
12. #5 and #6 and #8
13. #5 and #6 and #8 and #9
14. #5 and #6 and #7 and #8
15. #4 and #5 and #6
16. #4 and #5 and #6 and #7

Key to abbreviations, as used in PsycINFO

* / truncation

/ alternative letter substitution

mp / searches the title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts

Reference List Hand Searching

To ensure that all appropriate references were identified, hand searching of reference lists of all literature sources that met the inclusion criteria was undertaken. In other words, bibliographies of all included references (e.g. journal articles, book chapters) were systematically reviewed with the aim of identifying additional relevant references. If any titles within the bibliography seemed potentially relevant, these references were then examined in full.

Website Searching

In addition to electronic database searching and hand searching reference lists, a selective search of relevant websites was performed. Through stakeholder consultation, a list of potentially relevant organisations/websites was compiled (see Table 9). Where possible, websites were searched in a systematic fashion. For example if a website had a link to research or publications then this was reviewed first for suitability and, if suitable, the reference list of this publication was also checked. Links to other websites from within one website were also reviewed.

The entire search was repeated and subsequently updated in April 2013 to allow for inclusion of more recent publications.

Table 9: List of organisations and websites included in the targeted website searching

Organisations		Websites
The Headington Institute (USA)	The Management Centre (UK)	Missionary Care Resources (USA)
Antares Foundation (Netherlands)	The Interchange Institute (USA)	Expatriate Expert (USA)
People in Aid (UK)	Expatriate Focus (Global)	Expatriate Women (Global)
InterAction (UK)	United Nations Local	The Trailing Spouse (China)
Centre for Humanitarian Psychology (Switzerland)	Expatriate Spouse Association Rome (Italy)	David Baldwin's Trauma Information Pages (USA)
Interhealth (UK)	Families in Global Transition (USA)	
Mindfulness for NGOs (UK)	United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team (Switzerland)	
The Mandala Foundation (Australia)	Diplomatic Service Families Association (UK)	
Satori Worldwide (Indonesia)	United States Department of State Family Liaison Office (USA)	
The Konterra Group (USA)	Heartstream Resources (USA)	
Humanitrain (UK)		
Integration Training (UK)		

4.1.4 Study Selection

Given the nature of the focus areas under inquiry, it was appropriate to include research articles and grey literature. In order to separate the irrelevant material from the significant volume generated (the initial database search alone identified over 12,000 references), specific inclusion and exclusion criteria was developed. For inclusion in the scoping review, electronic literature abstracts had to indicate that the article acknowledged the family in relation to resilience or adjustment to expatriate life and/or humanitarian work. Potentially relevant papers were retrieved in full and assessed for compliance with the criteria, as were papers that were not clear from the abstract whether they were suitable. In addition to peer-reviewed articles, the scoping review included theses, books and book sections. Excluded were book reviews, editorials and any literature published prior to 1990. Due to time and cost constraints, the search was limited to English language publications. Literature unable to be actually sighted was also excluded (i.e. journal articles or books for which full access could not be obtained online or through the assistance of university librarians).

A similar screening process was used for literature uncovered through reference lists and website searching. Material sourced from blogs and social networking sites was excluded due to difficulties identifying authorship (many written anonymously or under pseudonyms) and challenges in thoroughly investigating a frequently changing information source. (Section 4.5 presents a separate summary of the key themes and content gained from relevant blogs and social networking sites).

4.1.5 Charting the Data

A generic template for charting the data (similar to the process of data extraction in systematic literature reviews) was developed for each focus area and revised at multiple stages, focusing on extracting sufficient information to gain an overview of the scope (amount, focus and nature) of literature obtained. Levac et al. (2010) suggest that charting should be considered an iterative process in which researchers continually update the data-charting form. Descriptive characteristics extracted included general citation information, the authors' disciplinary backgrounds and location, the type of publication, and a summary of the family-related content as it related to either international humanitarian work or resilience among expatriates.

4.1.6 Summation, Collation and Synthesis

The aim of this final stage of the scoping review is to provide a structure to the literature uncovered (Brien, Lorenzetti, Lewis, Kennedy, & Ghali, 2010). A descriptive summary of the material was presented for each topic, using the categories of amount, focus and nature of the literature (L. C. Weeks & Strudsholm, 2008), and a summary of the scoping review results. More specifically:

- To describe the amount of literature in each respective field, references were grouped according to their type (e.g. journal article, book, website) and year of publication.
- To describe the focus of the material, data was extracted regarding the nature of the reference (e.g. research, general information) and the primary perspective it considered.
- To describe the nature of the literature, information was extracted regarding the author's disciplinary background and the source location.

Given the objective was to scope the field, priority was given to summarising the main results as presented across the references, as opposed to reviewing the quality of such work.

4.2 Results: Families and International Humanitarian Work

4.2.1 Search Strategy, Study Selection and Data Extraction

Figure 10 outlines the results of the search strategy and study selection processes. Of 12,571 references identified during the electronic database searches, 12,301 references were excluded due to irrelevance. Duplication resulted in a further 74 references being excluded. A search of Google Scholar identified an additional 10 references for inclusion, while a website search generated 25 more references. Therefore a total of 231 references were identified, of which a review of abstract content or web content identified 30 as relevant to international humanitarian work. Of these three were excluded, one due to not being able to obtain the full text (Fawcett, 2003), another as it focused solely on the issues facing national humanitarian workers and their families (Ahmad, 2002) and one as it represented a blog or online social networking site.

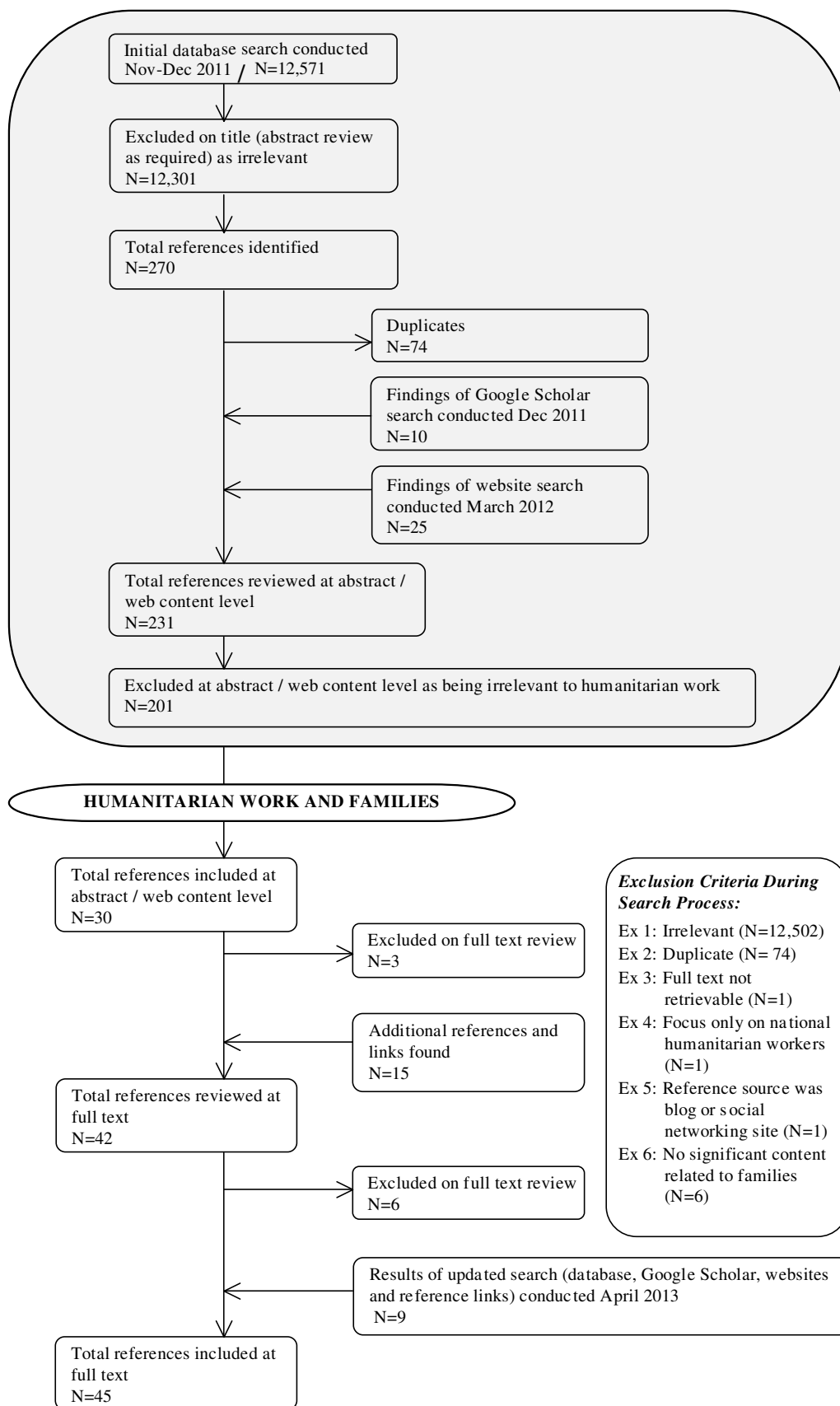


Figure 10: Schematic map of the 'Families and Humanitarian Work' scoping review process

Searching of reference lists and electronic links identified a further 15 relevant full text references, yielding a total of 42 references for charting and detailed review. Of these a further six references (Antares Foundation, 2008; Bikos, et al., 2007a, 2007b; Chang, 2005; Ehrenreich, 2006; Staff Welfare Unit UNHCR, 2001) were eliminated due to lack of significant content pertaining to family issues (i.e. the reference either merely acknowledged the existence of families in the humanitarian sector or the well-established fact that social support through family members can help mitigate the effects of stress on humanitarian workers). Updating the search in April 2013 yielded an additional nine references.

4.2.2 The Scope of the Literature

The following discussion relates to the 45 references that met the inclusion criteria for the ‘family and international humanitarian work’ review and were subject to data extraction (see Appendix 7, section A7.0).

Amount of Literature

The 45 references identified included nine journal articles, three books or book chapters, 19 codes of practice, reports, online guides or handouts, four magazine articles, three websites, three online self-study modules, a news story, a conference paper, and notes from two meetings/conferences. Seven of the references were published between 1990 and 1999, 21 references between 2000 and 2009, 16 since 2010, and one reference had no date; thus suggesting interest in this topic has increased in recent years.

It should be stressed that the main focus of the 45 references was seldom families and humanitarian work (exceptions being the American Red Cross, n.d.; Bikos, Klemens, et al., 2009; Burnmore, 2012; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Paton & Kelso, 1991; Pepall, 2012; Steinberg, 2012; Tam, 2004; United Nations Local Expatriate Spouse Association Rome, 2011). Rather those references represented all that were identified during the search process that included some content about families and the international humanitarian sector.

Focus of Literature

Most references provided general information or recommendations, while 15 presented the findings of research related to families and international humanitarian work. This included interviews with spouses of disaster relief workers on the stresses of separation, agency staff interviews on the types of supports and services provided to families, and evidence of family-related factors affecting staff turnover in the humanitarian industry. Information about families was often presented from the perspective of the worker or the humanitarian agency. From the 45 references, only 11 emphasised the perspective of the partner or family of the humanitarian worker.

Fewer references discussed the needs and experiences of accompanying families as opposed to non-accompanying families. Finally, though the focus of this review was on families of international humanitarian workers, the search terms used in the electronic database search did not exclude families of national humanitarian workers. Given this, I was surprised at the limited number of references identified during the selection process that discussed the unique issues facing families of national humanitarian workers (exceptions included Ager, et al., 2012; Ahmad, 2002; Danieli, 2002; Macnair, 1995; McFarlane, 2004; Vergara & Gardner, 2011).

Nature of Literature

Publications in this field have been developed through a variety of disciplinary perspectives, most commonly psychology, management, medicine, nursing and psychiatry. The majority of authors were located in the United States (N=17) and the UK (N=13), with authors from Europe, Canada, Asia, Africa and Australia also represented. Three were identified through electronic database searches, five from Google Scholar and 21 from website searching. The remaining 16 were found through checking reference lists and links within websites.

Table 10 presents information and an overview related to ‘what is known about international humanitarian work and family’ extracted during the scoping review process from the main perspectives presented (agency, worker, or family).

Table 10: Summary of scoping information on 'What is known about humanitarian work and family?'

Humanitarian Agency (22 references)

Staff retention and recruitment	<p>Significant influence of families upon (International Health Exchange & People in Aid, 1997; Loquercio, 2006; Loquercio, et al., 2006; Macnair, 1995)</p> <p>Senior career aid workers are critical to retain, yet subject to greater family responsibilities (Henry, 2004b; Salama, 1999)</p> <p>Importance of providing family-related benefits (Henry, 2004a; McKay, 2011)</p> <p>Importance of prioritising accompanying postings (Salama, 1999)</p> <p>Communication and travel allowances needed for unaccompanied postings (Augsburger, et al., 2007; McFarlane, 2004; McKay, 2011)</p> <p>Need to consider marriage, parent-child relationships and family-organisational fit during recruitment (Dodds & Gardner, 2011)</p>
Agency supports for worker and family	<p>Examples of best practice in humanitarian organisations, including agencies that extend post assignment debriefing and counselling to partners and children (Henry, 2004a; People in Aid, 2003)</p> <p>Training and practical support strategies (e.g. spouse support network) for families of humanitarian workers (Headington Institute, 2011; InterHealth, 2013; McKay, 2011)</p> <p>Strategies for supporting expatriate families during the preparation and deployment phases, including family liaison (InterHealth, 2013; People in Aid, 2012; Quick, 2009)</p> <p>Provision of support for workers upon their return home, including family member education (Barron, 1999; Ehrenreich & Elliott, 2004; McCormack, Joseph, & Hagger, 2009)</p> <p>Preparing/managing worker accident or death (United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team, 2012; United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team & Office of Human Resources Management, 2011)</p> <p>Discretion and special consideration of supports needed for accompanying gay and lesbian partners (Steinberg, 2012)</p> <p>Supporting the interpersonal relationships of humanitarian workers is often overlooked by organisations (McCormack, et al., 2009)</p>

International Humanitarian Worker (24 references)

Accompanying or unaccompanied assignments (not specified)	<p>Family connections affect worker resilience and thriving (McKay, 2011)</p> <p>Connections with family represent a significant form of spirituality for many (McKay, 2010)</p> <p>Balancing work and family life is challenging (McKay, 2012; United Nations Development Program, 2007)</p> <p>Strategies for maintaining communication with family members while abroad (Burnmore, 2012)</p>
Accompanied assignments	<p>Stress upon worker of ensuring family security and safety (Arès, 2002)</p> <p>Parental concern regarding relocating children abroad (Dodds & Gardner, 2011)</p> <p>Enhanced family life can be a significant motivator for expatriate religious and humanitarian workers (Oberholster, Clarke, Bendixen, & Dastoor, 2013)</p>

Unaccompanied assignments	
<i>Communication with family</i>	Stress of separation from families and need to ensure resources exist to allow regular communication (Antares Foundation, 2006; Augsburger, et al., 2007; Danieli, 2002; McFarlane, 2004) Reality that communication with family may not be feasible all the time (American Red Cross, n.d.; Augsburger, et al., 2007; Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action World Health Organisation & International Centre for Migration and Health, 1998)
<i>Re-entry</i>	Workers to understand that partners and/or children will adjust to their absence and may appear disinterested (Ehrenreich, 2002; Macnair, 1995; McCormack & Joseph, 2012; McCormack, et al., 2009; Palmer, 2005; Porter & Emmens, 2009) Difficult re-entry experiences may prompt some workers to return to the field where empathic colleagues become a source of validation (McCormack, et al., 2009)
<i>Other</i>	Deployments affect families in addition to workers (Ehrenreich, 2005; Palmer, 2005) Interpersonal conflict arising from stress and relationship grief and loss is common among humanitarian workers (Antares Foundation, 2006; Augsburger, et al., 2007; McCormack, et al., 2009) Recommendations to help address difficulties (including family issues) associated with frequent travel (McKay, 2007a) Tension during home leave arising from the need to rest conflicting with family expectations (Danieli, 2002) Concept of “fictive families” (Thomas, 2011) Application of “survivor’s guilt” to one’s wider family (Stearns, 1993)
Family (11 references)	
Accompanying or unaccompanied	Information for families on common stressors associated with humanitarian work, the potential impact of these and subsequently how to better care for oneself and one’s relationship to promote resilience and wellbeing (McKay & Hulme, 2009; Pepall, 2012) Recommendations for organisations regarding how to better support expatriate families (McKay & Hulme, 2009)
Accompanied assignments	Emphasises the resilience of expatriate families (particularly the accompanying partner) to adjust to common challenges (Dodds & Gardner, 2011; Pepall, 2012) Research depicting female spouses of humanitarian workers and missionaries (N=5) having lower marital satisfaction and global psychological functioning scores during their first year abroad than other female spouses (N=27) (Bikos, Klemens, et al., 2009) Provides examples of social supports offered to expatriate families (United Nations Local Expatriate Spouse Association Rome, 2011) Expatriation motivated by parental desire to expose children to another culture (Oberholster, et al., 2013; Tam, 2004) Re-entry challenges for accompanying children (Ehrenreich, 2005)
Unaccompanied assignments	Research depicting non-accompanying female partners of disaster workers (N=5) and children as being subject to various stressors that vary with deployment stage and child age (Paton & Kelso, 1991) Discussion of the adjustments made by families while workers are away and related re-entry challenges (Thomas, 2011) Recommendations for families on preparing for humanitarian worker re-entry (American Red Cross, n.d.; McKay & Hulme, 2009) Recommended agency supports from the perspective of partners of disaster workers (Paton & Kelso, 1991)

4.3 Results: Resilience and Expatriate Families

4.3.1 Search Strategy, Study Selection and Data Extraction

Figure 11 outlines the results of the search strategy and study selection processes. From the 231 potential references identified, (see section 4.2.1 outlining how this figure was reached), a review of abstract content or web content identified 161 as potentially relevant to resilience within expatriate families. Of these, 143 were excluded; 19 due to inability to obtain full text versions, 121 as a full text search review looking for the key terms (resilience, resiliency or resilient) found no references in the body of the literature, two as the discussion of resilience was limited only to the employee, and one as the reference represented a blog. A total of 18 references were identified which explicitly featured a reference to resilience in the discussion of expatriate families. No subsequent additional references were identified through hand searching the reference lists or links to these resources, but an updated search in 2013 yielded three additional references.

4.3.2 The Scope of the Literature

The following discussion relates to the 21 references that met the inclusion criteria for the ‘resilience within expatriate families’ review and were subject to data extraction (see Appendix 7, section A7.1). While the construct of family resilience is primarily concerned with the family as a unit, this scoping review also included references in which the resilience of expatriate children and/or expatriate spouses was the subject of attention. Such references are relevant to the driving question of ‘what is known about resilience within expatriate families?’ and are significant given how individual resilience influences family resilience (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009).

Amount of Literature

The 21 references identified included six journal articles, two on-line books, two masters’ theses, three PhD theses, two published books, one self-study module, one magazine article, one online video, one survey report, one advertisement and one website. Aside from an article I had published (Pepall, 2012), two references were published between 1990 and 1999, six between 2000 and 2009, 11 since 2010, and one (the website) had no identifiable date; thus suggesting interest in this topic has increased in recent years. Expatriate resilience was the main focus of nine of the

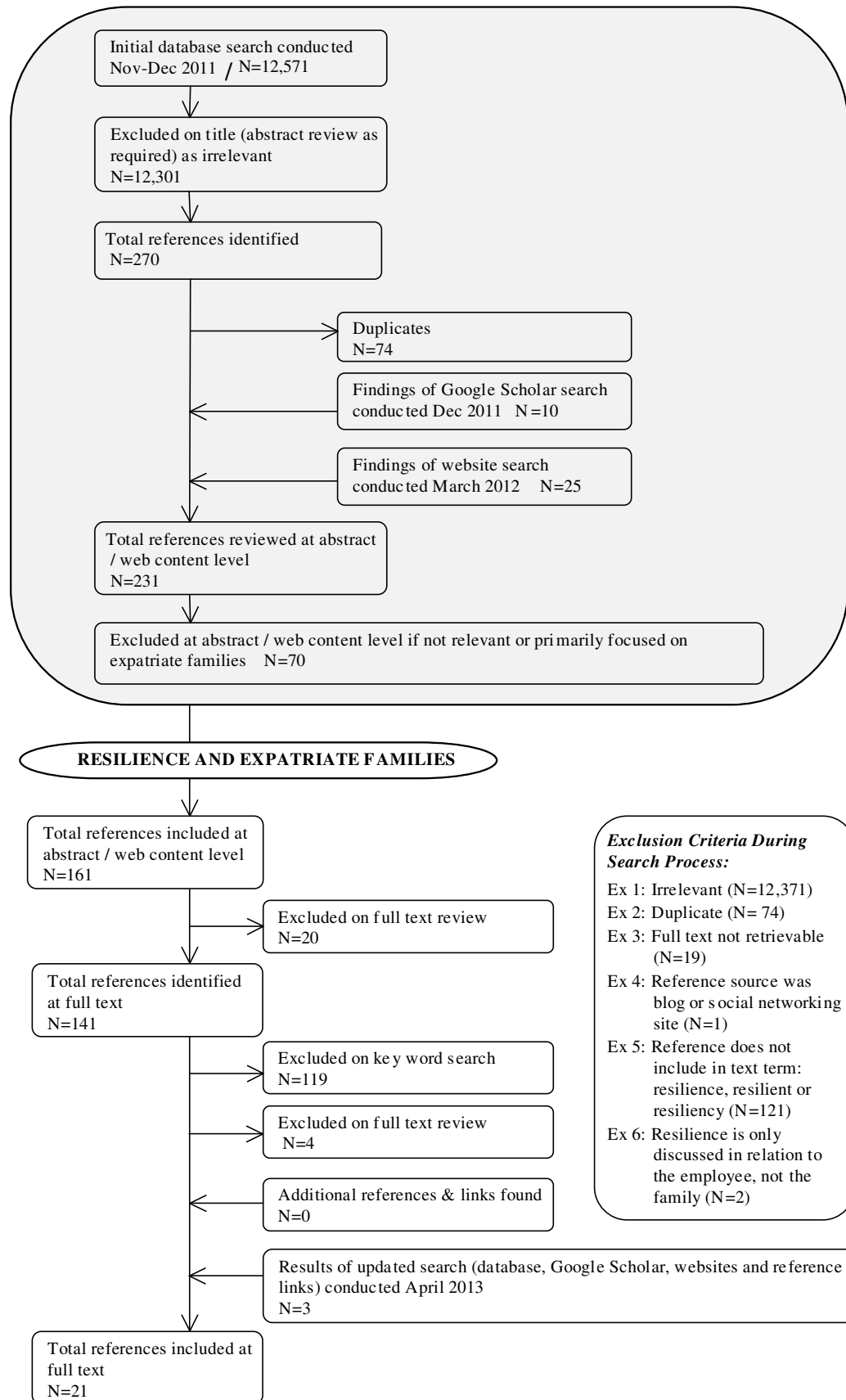


Figure 11: Schematic map of the 'Resilience and Expatriate Families' scoping review process

21 references identified; (Bowers, 1998; Hervey, 2012a, 2012b; Pascoe, 2010a; Pepall, 2012; Simens, 2011; Simonsen, 2008; Summers, 2011; United States Department of State Family Liaison Office, 2012), while the others merely included some content related to resilience and expatriate families.

Focus of Literature

Most references provided general information or recommendations, while 10 presented findings related to expatriate families and resilience. These included interviews with accompanying spouses of international students and humanitarian workers, interviews with parents of children attending international schools and students themselves, pilot testing of a workbook aimed at strengthening family resilience in expatriate families, and quantitative research looking at how family flexibility and cohesion impacts the adjustment of expatriate employees and their accompanying families. Resilience-related references focused upon the family as a whole (N=14), children (N=5) or the specific experiences of accompanying female spouses (N=2). McKay and Hulme (2009), Pepall (2012) and Dodds and Gardner (2011) focused specifically upon families in the humanitarian sector (the target audience for the latter reference being Christian workers in a humanitarian mission). Other authors focused upon missionary families (Bowers, 1998; Hervey, 2012a, 2012b), families attached to MNCs (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Rosenbusch, 2010), government foreign service families (United States Department of State Family Liaison Office, 2012), and families of international students (De Verthelyi, 1995; Grayson, 2011; Teshome, 2010).

Nature of Literature

Publications in this field have been written from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including education, psychology, business, management, family and child development, international health and nursing. The majority of authors were located in the United States (N=10), with some references being co-authored globally (N=4). Authors from Europe, Canada, Africa, Asia and Australia were represented. Of the 21 references, nine were identified through electronic database searching, one from Google Scholar, 10 from website searching and one from checking reference links (during the updated search).

Four main themes of information were identified (see Table 11) during the scoping review process: (1) evidence of resilience, (2) factors influencing resilience processes, (3) resilience-related benefits, and (4) recommendations related to resilience.

4.4 Discussion

A diverse body of peer-reviewed and grey literature was uncovered by the scoping review, with information pertinent to the subject of resilience-enhancing processes used by expatriate families who accompany humanitarian workers abroad. Recognising that the initial focal interest was too narrow in scope, two separate scoping reviews were conducted using the same initial references generated from searching electronic databases, Google Scholar and websites. Combined, these searches identified material from which information could be selectively “cut and pasted” to build a broader picture of what is known about resilience and expatriate families in the humanitarian sector.

4.4.1 Challenges and Limitations

There are limitations to this scoping review that should be considered when interpreting the results. As non-English references and those published prior to 1990 were excluded, it is possible that relevant information was possibly excluded.

The inclusion criteria for each review were broad, thereby hoping to capture all related content (e.g. a paragraph about the role of family concerns might appear in a larger paper looking at the issue of staff retention in the humanitarian sector). Given the desire to exhaustively search all the potential bodies of literature and awareness from the outset that the volume of relevant literature would be limited, it is believed that the rationale for this decision was sound. A consequence, although, was that the references included were diverse, including organisational websites, news stories, peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings. Charting the data therefore required maintaining a “big picture” perspective and the material summarised varied, depending on the nature of the reference material. For some qualitative research, summarising only partial results has “thinned out the desired thickness of particular descriptions” (L. C. Weeks & Strudsholm, 2008, p. 7) and resulted in a loss of the complexity in the individual studies.

Table 11: Summary of scoping information on 'What is known about resilience and expatriate families?'

Evidence of Resilience (7 references)	
Based on researcher opinion	Accompanying female partners of international students (De Verthelyi, 1995; McLachlan, 2007) Families (including students) within international schools (Grayson, 2011; McLachlan, 2007)
Based on research participant feedback	Female accompanying spouses of international students describe their own survival in terms of “resilience and growth” (Teshome, 2010, p. 108)
Based on anecdotal stories or examples	Research depicts expatriate families who regain balance or equilibrium after dealing with considerable challenges (ExpatriateExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008; Simonsen, 2008) Stories of expatriate families demonstrating resilient behaviours and qualities (http://www.expatriatefocus.com/)
Factors Influencing Resilience in Expatriate Families (14 references)	
Strengthening individual resilience	Identifies individual strategies aimed to help expatriates thrive, including having a strong sense of purpose and meaning and prioritising good relationships (McKay & Hulme, 2009; Summers, 2011)
Strengthening the resilience of children	Children are often thought to be more resilient than they are; limits to resilience exist (Bowers, 1998; Pascoe, 2010a) Promoting resilience in children involves prioritising close parent-child connections and relationship continuity and formation (Ebbeck & Reus, 2005; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Pascoe, 2010a; Simonsen, 2011) Though teachers play an important role, strengthening the resilience of children is best done at home (Bowers, 1998)
Strengthening whole family resilience <i>Organisational influence</i>	Identifies organisational strategies aimed to help expatriate families thrive (McKay & Hulme, 2009) Stresses the importance of organisational sensitivity towards the family, especially during the initial adaptation period (Simonsen, 2008)
<i>Other</i>	Resilience and the ability to function well can be learned and strengthened (Bowers, 1998; Dodds & Gardner, 2011; Ebbeck & Reus, 2005; Pascoe, 2010a; Simonsen, 2008) Common traits and behaviours are observed in resilient families and individuals. These include family rituals and routines, shared vision, a focus on preparation, teamwork, building networks, motivation, humour, a sense of fun or playfulness, tolerance and forgiving behaviours and a commitment to one another (Bowers, 1998; Dodds & Gardner, 2011; ExpatriateExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008; Hervey, 2012a, 2012b; Pepall, 2012; Simonsen, 2008; Summers, 2011)

Family flexibility is a key predictor of family resilience (Rosenbusch, 2010)
Employee emotional resilience positively affects the general adjustment of the spouse, thereby influencing the adjustment and engagement of the family (Lazarova, et al., 2010)

Resilient Expatriate Families: The Benefits (14 references)

General

Family resilience lessens the negative effects of transition stress and enhances the likelihood of experiencing positive growth and change (Hervey, 2012a, 2012b)
An individual's degree of resilience strongly influences their ability to adjust to changes in routine, roles and environment and thrive as an expatriate (Lazarova, et al., 2010; McKay & Hulme, 2009)
Resilient families often report becoming closer (Simonsen, 2008)
The important of resilience for expatriate success is increasingly recognised by employees as a criterion for selection (Summers, 2011)
Thriving, resilient families directly impact humanitarian worker performance, retention and the quality of aid service provided (Pepall, 2012)
'Strengthening the resilience of expatriate children and families' is a popular training topic among international schools and organisations (Bowers, 1998; United States Department of State Family Liaison Office, 2012)

Children

Despite parental concerns about the impact of expatriation on children, most children (with the exception of those having special needs that can't be met while abroad) benefit greatly from the experience of living abroad (Dodds & Gardner, 2011)
International exposure to "many nationalities, customs and ways of doing things" often results in advanced maturity (Dodds & Gardner, 2011; Hervey, 2012b)
Investment in the resilience processes of TCKs assists both in the present and longer-term with adjustment to transitions and relocations (Ebbeck & Reus, 2005)

Other (3 references)

Expatriate research

Future research should have a greater salutogenic orientation (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; McLachlan, 2007)
Need for research focusing on the psychological domain of adjustment, "specifically paying close attention to the family stress literature which covers the resiliency component" (Rosenbusch, 2010, p. 123)
A lack of (secular) training materials for preparing whole families for cross-cultural transition exists (Hervey, 2012b)

Though Arksey and O'Malley (2005) did not indicate that a team approach to study selection was imperative, some researchers have argued that scoping studies should involve multidisciplinary teams (Levac, et al., 2010; L. C. Weeks & Strudsholm, 2008). While a single researcher completed decisions concerning study selection and charting, any concerns related to rigour were addressed through soliciting stakeholder feedback throughout the scoping process.

By definition, scoping reviews are not intended to assess the quality of the literature scoped (Brien, et al., 2010). However, the existence of published material on a particular topic does not necessarily mean it is based on facts or provides sufficient evidence to base decisions on (Grant & Booth, 2009). Within this review, given that many of the references identified were not peer-reviewed, the findings need to be viewed with some caution. Furthermore, given that several of the peer-reviewed primary research publications included featured particularly small sample sizes (e.g. Bikos, Klemens, et al., 2009; Paton & Kelso, 1991), the findings may not be generalisable. Lastly, scoping reviews provide information on the scope of a body of literature at only a single moment in time. Thus, they are out of date shortly after their completion. Although the review was updated in April 2013, it is possible that additional literature may have been published since.

4.4.2 Key Findings

Despite the limitations mentioned, several tentative conclusions can be drawn from the scoping literature review. The limited number of references identified for each topic confirms that families within the humanitarian sector and resilience within expatriate families are emerging topics, subject to limited research. Aside from my work (Pepall, 2012), only three references (Danieli, 2002; Dodds & Gardner, 2011; McKay & Hulme, 2009) included comments from accompanying spouses or children of international humanitarian workers, the perspective of such families being rarely acknowledged. Second, with reference to families in the humanitarian sector, the scarcity of material identified through traditional search engines is not surprising. This reflects that publications related to humanitarian work are usually aimed at practitioners and decision makers in the sector (often via online humanitarian reports) as opposed to academic peer reviewed literature. For example, four of the resources related to families in the humanitarian sector (Burnmore, 2012; McKay &

Hulme, 2009; Pepall, 2012; Steinberg, 2012) were identified in one issue of the *'Monthly Developments Magazine,'* an InterAction publication providing news and commentary on global trends affecting relief, refugee and development work.

The reviewed literature underscores the claim that general challenges facing expatriate partners and children also apply to accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian workers. These include managing the practical logistics of the move, settling children into new environments, culture shock, coping with additional couple relationship stress and re-entry challenges (Bikos, Klemens, et al., 2009; Dodds & Gardner, 2011; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Pepall, 2012). Common environmental stresses affecting expatriate families also include heat and humidity, frequent power cuts, security risks and exposure to health risks. Expatriate humanitarian workers are often expected to travel frequently which can further strain the family (McKay & Hulme, 2009; Pepall, 2012). Problems maintaining balance between work and family responsibilities are well documented (United Nations Development Program, 2007), as is the potential for vicarious trauma and chronic stress to affect families of humanitarian workers (McKay & Hulme, 2009).

While expatriate families are often resilient and self-sufficient (ExpatriateExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008) none of the identified references explicitly presented specific resilience-enhancing processes used by accompanying families. It is assumed that families who willingly choose to remain abroad within the relief and development sector demonstrate a degree of resilience in their ability to adjust to the above-mentioned challenges. That is, they have sought out strategies that allow them to maintain a functioning family despite the additional stressors.

The scoping review also highlighted the complexity of researching resilience, and specifically how “the concept of resilience is heavily laden with subjective, often unarticulated assumptions and it is fraught with major logical, measurement and pragmatic problems” (Glantz & Sloboda, as cited in Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009, p. 5). The result of this is the need to build from the bottom up, recognising the lack of resilience-related research supported by articulated specific theories within the expatriate literature.

Practical Implications

Drawing together strategies identified within the literature reviewed, key recommendations exist (see Table 12) which aim to help maintain the health and wellbeing of the worker and their family. Advice for organisations builds upon the three priority actions advocated by McKay and Hulme (2009, p. 48):

1. To help families feel more directly connected to the organisation and more appreciated for the role they play in supporting their loved one;
2. To support the relationships between employees and their families; and,
3. To provide ways for the families of their employees to connect with each other.

Strategies reiterated and proposed in the literature include the use of “family buddies” or sponsors, assistance for accompanying spouses seeking work (McKay & Hulme, 2009; Quick, 2009; United Nations Local Expatriate Spouse Association Rome, 2011), and the importance of providing comprehensive and accurate information to families about practical matters and policy issues before their departure (Dodds & Gardner, 2011; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Quick, 2009). Given the significant influence family-related factors has on the recruitment and retention of humanitarian workers, especially senior managers and career humanitarian workers, this review highlights that it is prudent to consider the recommendations depicted in Table 12 (Henry, 2004a; International Health Exchange & People in Aid, 1997; Loquercio, et al., 2006).

While organisational policies and strategies influence the potential for families to thrive, decisions and actions taken at a personal, parental and relational level can also enhance the resilience and hardiness of expatriate families (Dodds & Gardner, 2011; Hervey, 2012b; McKay & Hulme, 2009; Pepall, 2012). Making decisions as a family (including seeking the input of children), considering the future role of the accompanying partner, practicing good communication skills and being mindful of the impact of expatriation on relationship issues are all key factors (McKay & Hulme, 2009; Pascoe, 2010a; Simonsen, 2008).

Table 12: Key recommendations to protect and support the wellbeing and resilience of expatriate families in the humanitarian sector

Recommendations for families and workers	
Preparation Stage	Relocation decisions should be made jointly after careful consideration of all the implications of the move for all family members. Involve children in this process as much as possible ^{1,2,3,4} Families should spend time as a unit (including children) preparing emotionally and relationally for cross-cultural transitions ³ In addition to planning practical moving tasks (e.g. packing, closing accounts), consider the future role or occupations for the trailing partner ^{1,4} Workers should prepare for the unexpected, e.g. having a will, ensuring their family understand entitled benefits ⁵
Settling in/ Transition Stage	Practice good communication skills within the couple and family relationship / Adopt good self-care habits / Spend meaningful and fun time together regularly as a couple and/or parents with children / Prioritise family routines / Involve children in decision making / Prioritise social supports for children (i.e. maintaining contact with extended family and seeking new local friendships) ^{1,3,4,6,7}
Living Abroad	Make time (e.g. six months after arrival) to review the impact of relocating on your family relationships ¹ Prioritise staying in touch with distant family while abroad ^{4,8}
Re-entry	Recognise that repatriation is not easy ¹

Recommendations for organisations	
<i>Help families feel more directly connected to the organisation and more appreciated for the role they play in supporting their loved one</i>	
Preparation Stage	Provide families with general information (e.g. schooling options, living conditions, health and security issues, “what to bring” advice) ^{1,9} Inform families about policies related to schooling, housing, availability of health care, and any expectations of the accompanying partner ¹⁰ ; consider how policies and benefits apply to gay or lesbian partners/family ¹¹
Settling in/ Transition Stage	Provide a basic resource pack of information for new families (emergency numbers, embassy contact details, grocery stores) ⁹ Have an organisation “point person” or family liaison officer to contact for all logistical concerns and communicate directly with accompanying partners ^{1,9} Include the accompanying partner in any language training ¹ Provide reasonable air-freight allowances to provide adequate goods until shipments arrive (especially for families with children) ⁹ Demonstrate organisational sensitivity during the initial adaption period ⁶ ; regularly check-in with the family to see how they are coping ⁹

¹(McKay & Hulme, 2009), ²(Pascoe, 2010a), ³(Hervey, 2012b), ⁴(Pepall, 2012), ⁵(United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team & Office of Human Resources Management, 2011), ⁶(Simonsen, 2008), ⁷(Simens, 2011), ⁸(Burnmore, 2012), ⁹(Quick, 2009), ¹⁰(Dodds & Gardner, 2011), ¹¹(Steinberg, 2012)

Living Abroad Provide assistance for spouses seeking to pursue work (e.g. contacts, networking opportunities, volunteer roles within the office)^{9,12,13}
 Circulate newsletters for families to provide “insider” information about the organisation, its people and programs^{1,13}
 Provide financial support for family home leave, and for children’s education costs abroad¹
 Extend psychosocial support and professional counselling to families as well as workers¹⁴
 Support and educate families of disaster workers (recognising that not all disaster workers are unaccompanied). E.g. Offer annual seminars/workshops on topics such as vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, self-care, and care for your partner¹³

Support the relationships between employees and their families

Preparation Stage Provide resources and training to families as a whole (treating as a unit) to help strengthen resilience before cross-cultural transitions³

Settling in/
 Transition Stage Provide the employee with paid time off to help the family settle in^{1,9}
 Reduce travel demands on workers during the first few months^{1,9}
 Provide families flexibility when choosing to make the move^{1,9}

Living Abroad Encourage staff to work reasonable hours so that they can invest in family life^{1,15}
 Encourage and enable staff to take their vacation time (and any rest and recreation leave)¹
 Be flexible with scheduling to allow staff to be present when family most need them, or for important events (e.g. births)^{1,16}
 Know where to refer staff if they need relationship counselling¹
 Look for ways to include family members in work-related social events¹⁶
 Enable employees to connect more easily to family when travelling (e.g. cover the cost of phone calls to immediate family members and/or cover the cost of Internet access in locations that allow for it)¹
 Encourage employees to take a personal day off after international trips to rest and reconnect with family before returning to the office¹

Re-entry Include families on training on reverse culture shock and financial consultations¹

Provide ways for the families of their employees to connect with each other

Settling In/
 Transition Stage Provide mentors/buddies/sponsors to families to help introduce them to culture and communities.^{1,9,12} (Consider recruiting socially adept partners of existing expatriates for this role and either compensate them or recognise them officially as volunteers)¹
 Facilitate a spouse support network that provides names, contact numbers, email addresses, and social events to foster relationship building¹³
 Organise activities, social events for relationship building between international and national staff and families^{1,9,17}

¹²(United Nations Local Expatriate Spouse Association Rome, 2011), ¹³(Headington Institute, 2011), ¹⁴(People in Aid, 2003), ¹⁵(United Nations Development Program, 2007), ¹⁶(McKay, 2011), ¹⁷(Grayson, 2011)

4.5 Blogs and Social Networking Sites: What do They Reveal?

For the reasons outlined in section 4.1.4, the decision was made during the scoping review selection process to exclude blogs and social networking sites, although these forms of media provide a rich source of current thought and opinion. Given the limited volume of published material related to families in the humanitarian sector, it was thought such material should not be overlooked entirely, but rather the subject of a brief separate narrative summary of key themes. Table 13 identifies the relevant electronic sites that were reviewed between December 2011 and April 2013 and believed to include material complementary to the scoping review.

Table 13: Electronic media complementary to the scoping review

Social Networking Sites	Blogs
AidSource	Careermatters: The Devex Blog
Stuff Partners of Expat Aid Workers Like (Facebook group)	Development Crossroads
	Expatriate Backup
	Expatriate Connection
	On Motherhood and Sanity
	Tales From the Hood

An independent humanitarian aid and development social network, *AidSource* (<http://aidsource.ning.com/>) features articles and comments from a variety of humanitarian professionals, students and partners of humanitarian workers. Material relevant to families is predominately featured in the ‘Work and Life’ section which includes a piece on the challenges of managing the competing demands between work and family (J., 2012), member questions about how to care for young children and meet travel responsibilities (Pia, 2012) and another written from the perspective of the partner of an Emergency Aid Worker (EAW) (Fredrick, 2012). In the latter article the very pointed advice is given that if considering entering into a relationship with an EAW, “one should break up now.” Reasons provided for this include avoiding constant stress due to separation anxiety, fear of unfaithfulness and caring for an exhausted partner between work assignments. Similar complaints are voiced on the Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/>) group *Stuff Partners of Expat Aid Workers Like*, which lists problems associated with being in a relationship with an aid worker. These include distant partners who multi-task work activities while

listening via Skype to family concerns, the reality of regularly saying goodbye to a travelling spouse, and the pain of relationship breakdown (2012).

CAREERMATTERS, a blog linked to the popular international development website *devex* (<http://www.devex.com/en/>) features a number of relevant posts by various authors. This includes a piece on the obstacles and strategies used by dual-career couples in the international development industry (Kennedy, 2011) and a self-disclosing post titled 'Daddy Aid Worker' which explores the experiences of a husband and father in the industry, highlighting challenges related to frequent travel (Webb, 2012). Other articles explore the trade-offs common to working parents in the sector, and the specific concerns of working parents (S. M. Johnson, 2012a, 2012c).

Resilience within accompanying expatriate partners and children is explored in a five part series in Anne Gillmé's blog titled *Expatriate Connections* (<http://expatriateconnection.com/>). Beginning with the post 'The One Skill Which Will Make All the Difference When You Live Abroad' (Gillmé, 2012), successive posts include resilience self-assessment tools, keys to resilience, and advice for raising resilient children abroad.

Various independent blogs exist written by those engaged in the humanitarian sector. Though no doubt more exist than those listed in Table 13, these blogs all feature content emphasising the reality for families within the humanitarian community. For example, in addition to exploring the issues of emotional resilience for aid workers, Elie Calhoun (2011) provides recommendations for moving with children in her 'Expatriate Backup: Guide to Moving,' S. M. Johnson (2012b) explores the challenges and benefits of managing travel as a working mum in international development, the latter including working flexible hours when home, establishing supportive networks, and raising more independent and globally aware children. The issue of travel demands is also discussed by mother and aid worker Angelica (2012a) in her post exploring the gender challenges of working in the humanitarian industry. She also wrote of the disconnect humanitarian families can feel with host and home countries and the implications of frequent mobility on children with regards to their sense of identity (Angelica, 2012b, 2012c).

Personal reflections: Journal Memo

Reading the various blogs that talk about pursuing a career in humanitarian work while maintaining a family are both depressing and refreshing. Quotes like the following are a sad reflection of how hard it is, but at the same time resonate with why I believe this research is important.

Don't waste your breath saying that his agency must only believe in child rights for other people's children, since the only time he sees his own children is when they are sleeping. Don't bring up that you could use a little family reunification or peace and reconciliation or gender equity program at home. Just don't even go there (Shotgun Shack, 2011)

Whilst such honesty is lacking in peer reviewed material... blog content helps validate the need for this research. It also strengthens my motivation to finish this thesis and publish my research; providing empirical data that draws attention to both the benefits of expatriate life as well as the potential costs to families in the humanitarian sector.

Lastly, though no longer an open access blog, 'Tales from the hood' by J, a well-known blogger in humanitarian networks included multiple posts around the theme that working in the humanitarian sector is hard on marriages, regardless of whether one is on an accompanied position abroad or home based. He reviewed the trade-offs between family and work required in the industry (2011b), the burden of travel as felt by one's partner and children and their eventual resentment of one's work and lifestyle (J., 2009a, 2009b), and the reality that all too often marriages end in divorce (2011a). While advising aid workers that they should "never get married, never have children," J. also emphasised that for those already married, "your family always comes first" (2009b).

Candid, honest and opinionated, the blogs and social networking sites offer an alternative perspective and "insiders" view on the issues facing families in the humanitarian sector. Though they do not comment on the resilience or resilience-enhancing processes of such families, it is clear that for those families who remain together, many challenges and, at times, painful experiences have been overcome. While their frank perspectives tend to emphasise the challenges faced and perhaps

the negative aspects of the industry, acknowledgement is also made of the benefits of living as expatriate families in the humanitarian industry.

4.6 Chapter Summary

Scoping reviews are useful for mapping diverse bodies of literature and capturing the extent, range and nature of existing material on a subject. The present review, possibly the first in the area of family resilience, has revealed the little that is 'known to date' about resilience-enhancing processes in expatriate families accompanying international humanitarian workers. Instructive for further research in this field, the review also provides a basis on which to compare and build future research. The review clearly portrayed expatriate families as generally being resilient in the way they manage and adjust to a wide array of relocation challenges. The literature reveals a wide array of strategies at the individual, family and organisational level for promoting wellbeing in expatriate families. The limited volume of relevant existing literature validates the need for further study on the topic, particularly research which "gives voice" to expatriate families within the humanitarian sector. Chapters 5 and 6 seek to present such research, summarising the findings of in-depth intensive interviews with accompanying partners of humanitarian INGO workers.

Chapter Five: Partner Interviews – The Challenges and Rewards of Expatriate Family Life

“Expatriation is an initiation. It provides many keys but with no indication as to which doors they can open.”

(Amat, 2012, p. 167)

5.0 Introduction

A key objective of the research was to document the main challenges experienced by accompanying families of international humanitarian workers as based on the perception of expatriate partners. This chapter seeks to address this objective as well as presents the benefits or rewards of expatriate life. The structure of the chapter is: 1) information about participants (demographic profile and international experience); 2) summaries of the main challenges reported; 3) summaries of the main benefits reported; and finally, 4) stories of individual-and family-level growth and change.

5.1 The Participants and Their International Experience

5.1.1 Demographic Profile of Participants

Twenty of the 23 partners were living abroad at the time of the interview, while three participants had already repatriated to their home country (see Table 14 for a summary of participant demographic profiles). The majority of participants were married and living together (N=20) or in a long-term de-facto relationship (N=1). Two participants were legally married but had recently separated from their partner and were commencing divorce proceedings. The majority of participants were parents (N=20) with one to five children. The age of accompanying children ranged from 1 month to 14 years of age. Two partners had adult children living independent lives in different countries. Partners spanned a 21-year age range of 29 to 50 years of age, with the mean participant age being 37.7 years. Nine partners reported English was not their first language.

Table 14: Demographic summary of partner profiles

	Accompanying Partner Status	
	<i>Expatriate (n=20)</i>	<i>Returnee (n=3)</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	16	3
Male	4	-
<i>Participant's Age</i>		
26-30 years	3	-
31-35 years	5	-
36-40 years	8	3
41-45 years	-	-
46-50 years	4	-
<i>Relationship Status</i>		
Married or De-facto	19	2
Separated	1	1
<i>Duration of Marriage (n=20)</i>		
0-5 years	4	-
6-10 years	6	-
11-15 years	4	1
16-20 years	1	1
≥21 years	3	-
<i>Number of Children</i>		
0	2	1
1	5	-
2	8	2
3	3	-
≥4	2	-
<i>Years in Current International Posting (n=20)</i>		
Less than one year	5	-
1-2 years	6	-
3-4 years	7	-
5-6 years	1	-
7-8 years	1	-
<i>Years Abroad in International Postings as a Family</i>		
1-3 years	4	1
4-6 years	7	2
7-9 years	7	-
10-12 years	-	-
13-15 years	-	-
16-18 years	1	-
19-21 years	-	-
22-24 years	1	-
<i>Employment Status of Participants</i>		
Full-time work	2	1
Part-time work	5	1
Volunteering	4	-
Not working	9	1
<i>Nationality</i>		
American	4	-
Australian	2	2
British	5	-
Canadian	1	-
Dutch	2	-
German	-	1
Indian	1	-
Mozambican	1	-
New Zealander	2	-
Sri Lankan	1	-
Zimbabwean	1	-

Participants represented 11 different nationalities. Three individuals reported birth countries different from their nationalities, consistent with the fact many globally mobile citizens come from multi-generational expatriate families and thus may have been born in a different country from that of their citizenship. Four persons reported being of a different nationality to their partner, reflecting the common practice of mixed cultural marriages within expatriate populations. While the vast majority of partners (N=19) were from first world or developed countries, four participants identified themselves as from developing countries.

Representing a diverse group of professionals, the majority of partners had completed tertiary-level education. Additionally, almost half the participants (N=11) reported prior employment within the humanitarian industry, while four participants stated they had held small volunteer roles. The remaining eight participants had no experience within the sector.

5.1.2 The International Experience of Participants

At the time of being interviewed, participants were recruited from Asia (N=12), Africa (N=6), Europe (N=3) and Australia (N=2). For expatriate partners (N=20), the length of time spent in their current posting location varied from just 1 month²⁴ to 8 years. Two expatriate partners were based in remote settings (non-capital city) and four lived in locations typically considered hardship safety and security postings. Repatriated partners had been home between 4 to 30 months. Experience in living as an expatriate family varied considerably among participants; ranging from 1 to 22 years. The mean length of time abroad was 6.5 years.

Seventeen humanitarian INGOs were represented in this research: Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA), Catholic Relief Services, Christian Blind Mission, Cooperative Housing Foundation International, Dan Church Aid, Food for the Hungry, Hagar International, International Assistance Mission, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Malteser International, Oxfam International, Population

²⁴ Interview inclusion criteria required participants to have had at least 1 year's experience as an expatriate. This restriction did not require, however, that participants needed to have resided in their current location for 1 year.

Services International, Save the Children, Tearfund, United Mission to Nepal²⁵, VSO and World Vision. Most are faith-based Christian INGOs (N=10) while the remainder are secular organisations (N=7). With the exception of World Vision (with whom 7 participants were affiliated), INGOs were each represented by one participant.

In order to protect accompanying partners' confidentiality, throughout Chapter 5 and 6 interview quotations are referenced with a participant number. Table 15 provides a summary of key demographic data associated with participating partners. The participants were between 29 years and 50 years, nearly all were expatriates living in another country with only two being repatriates.

²⁵ Whilst the INGO "United Mission to Nepal" works only exclusively within Nepal, the organisation defines itself as an INGO by virtue of the fact its activities reflect a cooperative effort between the people of Nepal and a large number of organisations from nearly 20 countries on four continents.

Table 15: Summary chart of accompanying or partner participants*

Gender	Family Status	Country
Female	Living with husband and children	United Arab Emirates
Female	Living with husband and children	Switzerland
Male	Living with wife and children	Cambodia
Male	Living with wife and children	Cambodia
Female	Living with husband and children	Kenya
Female	Living with husband and child	Democratic Republic of the Congo (H)
Female	Living with husband and children	Malawi
Female	Living with husband and child	Bangladesh
Female	Living with husband and children	Afghanistan (H)
Female	Living with husband	Laos (R)
Female	Living with husband (adult children elsewhere)	Pakistan (H)
Male	Living with partner and child	Cambodia
Female	Living with husband and children	Thailand
Female	Living with husband and child	Cambodia
Female	Living with husband and children	Kenya
Male	Living with wife and children	Afghanistan (H)
Female	Living with husband and child	Zambia
Female	Living with husband and children	Nigeria
Female	Living with husband (adult children elsewhere)	Kosovo
Female	Living with husband and children	Germany
Female	Living with husband and children	Australia
Female	Separated	Cambodia (R)
Female	Separated	Australia

5.2 Challenges and Crises: Expatriate Families within Humanitarian INGOs

This section presents the dominant eight challenges²⁶ described by accompanying partners: 1) relationship concerns; 2) personal and professional concerns of the accompanying partner; 3) transition and relocation issues; 4) parenting concerns; 5) adverse impacts of humanitarian work upon the family; 6) health concerns; 7) safety and security concerns; and 8) environmental, contextual and cultural concerns. The experience of dealing with a specific crisis or multiple crises while away from familiar support networks is also documented. The section concludes with a condensed summary of participant feedback regarding how their stressors or experiences abroad may differ from other globally-mobile families.

5.2.1 Relationship Concerns

Relationship issues were the most commonly reported challenges shared by participants, with issues arising both between the accompanying family and distant family and friends and within the accompanying family unit.

Relationship Concerns with Distant Family and Friends

Almost half of the partners commented on the challenges of experiencing homesickness: *“The first time it was difficult, I was depressed. I wanted to go home,”* and/or feeling the loss of supportive networks of distant family and friends: *“Losing my support networks, all my friends and family are suddenly on the other side of the world, that was quite difficult.”*

Missing out on special family occasions and observing the homesickness of children were commonly identified difficulties. A growing sense of disconnect was reported as the experience of living in a foreign country often separates individuals from their family and friends back home, as one *“grows and changes in a different way from someone who may have never left their home country.”*

²⁶ Please refer to section 3.7 for a review of the data analysis process. Based on the example shown in Table 4, further coding was performed to code all interview transcripts in entirety. One outcome of this was the identification of eight dominant categories from the interview data related to challenges.

Maintaining regular close communication with distant loved ones was identified as a common challenge. Partners spoke of the ease with which time can elapse without talking to people, thereby creating distance that is “*hard to get back*,” and for some, the difficulty of trying to maintain both distant and local relationships.

Open long-distance communication was hampered for some partners by a reluctance to be honest in an attempt to reduce the anxiety or concern of loved ones. The sense that persons back home were often busy and not that interested in the daily lives of individuals abroad was also expressed.

“The support from home was as good as it could be considering I couldn’t tell them all of the truth because they were so worried. If I said anything that wasn’t great they would just break down and my mom would be really upset, so I learnt not to say anything because it would cause a lot of stress.”
[Partner 23]

“There are only a few people that are in tune with us. I don’t blame them because everyone is really busy. It’s a little bit out of sight, out of mind.”
[Partner 18]

Several partners spoke of the challenges of having indifferent or non-supportive families, problems including guilt and pressure to return home (particularly where grandchildren were involved), lack of contact about special or significant events (e.g. birthdays, death of a family member) and lack of support about the decision to pursue work overseas. Three partners spoke of the expectation to spend holiday time with extended family and the cost, time and fatigue associated with this. Though not a major challenge, this was particularly acute in situations where extended family were separated and/or the expatriate couple came from different countries.

“Every single holiday we have to go back and spend family time. So we spend a week with his mum and his parents’ split up, so one week with his dad, and then one week with my mum. I don’t feel like we get very much time where we can go to an exciting location that we would choose to go on holiday.”
[Partner 6]

A number of participants raised the issue of concern regarding aging parents. Partners spoke of difficulty in reconciling feelings of responsibility and how the existence of elderly relatives impacted decisions concerning which assignments to accept.

“To know when to come, when to stay, and when to go home. How to live here when other people need us there, that would be one of the main difficulties we have had.” [Partner 9]

While advancements with Internet and phone communication were acknowledged, challenges with available communication (e.g. expensive phone connections, unreliable Internet availability or Internet speeds being unable to support programs such as Skype) were reported. For partners from developing countries, distant family or friends often did not have easy access to Internet facilities (especially aging parents).

Relationship Concerns Within the Accompanying Family

When asked about the main challenges faced while living abroad, participants frequently spoke of difficulties within their own relationship: *“I think our marriage has been damaged by it,”* or the observation of seeing other couples struggle, or even separate, while abroad: *“We’ve also known of couples that have split up on the field.”* Over a third of partners spoke about relationship challenges that arise when lacking one’s normal support networks in life.

“In your [home] country if you are having a fight or disagreement it’s easy for you to go back to your friends or family or anyone to complain or find a solution. But in a foreign country you don’t have that choice. Where are you going to go? You have to make it work or pack and leave.” [Partner 1]

The impact of uprooting one’s relationship was compared to *“taking a magnifying glass on everything”* with regards to how existing *“weak spots”* in the relationship can quickly become aggravated, while the significant stresses associated with settling into a new country naturally affect couple relationships. Partners spoke of heightened tension and conflict, particularly in the initial weeks and months in a new location: *“The first six months were really stressful and made our struggles in marriage even*

harder.” Such challenges were compounded when either member felt like their experiences were not well understood or appreciated by the other.

“Heath²⁷ and I were at odds here because I was really hating it and he was really enjoying it and loving his work... for him it’s a really comfortable posting, you know, he’s used to the hardship postings. So he didn’t understand why I was finding it hard, and I was getting frustrated because I felt that he was away a lot the first few months as well, trying to settle into the region. He was in India and Nepal; all over the place, and I just hated every minute of that.” [Partner 8]

“He comes from a developed country and a culture where it is normal to travel. He had travelled already a lot. But for me in my culture I’d never left neighbouring countries... So I never moved that far, and now I was in Europe in Austria where it was so many hours away from my home... In terms of our relationship that was hard.” [Partner 1]

The above quote also stresses the additional relationship challenges faced by dual nationality couples (in this scenario the couple were from Mozambique and Australia), in which familiarity with travel or family ties or expectations can vary considerably between partners.

With regards to humanitarian work commitment and job demands, partners who felt their partners were “workaholics” often expressed struggling with the sense that they were living “*separate lives*” and that their support was not appreciated.

“All he did was work. He pretty much told me at one point ‘I don’t want to do anything but my job.’ He said ‘you can take care of everything else.’ He felt that would make me happy. But I was quite offended by it, but he never understood that.” [Partner 23]

Frequent travel demands resulted in some couples learning to live independent lives or pursue “*separate paths*” in which the accompanying partner felt they no longer depended on each other. This was not viewed as a healthy relationship trait, and was

²⁷ All names have been replaced with randomly assigned pseudonyms to protect the identity of the partner and their family.

described by one participant as a major contributing factor to the end of their marriage. The effort required to constantly adjust to the dynamics of having someone often absent was also reported as challenging.

“Our own relationship has gone through periods of being quite difficult, just that he travels a lot. So you get into certain routines, ways of doing things and then he comes back for three weeks and then goes off on another trip. I think that’s hard on any couple. For us it’s constantly working out our routine of being a family together and then he’s off again.” [Partner 18]

Lastly, partners repeatedly reported feelings of resentment and bitterness being commonplace if the decision or commitment to move was not shared.

5.2.2 Personal and Professional Concerns of the Accompanying Partner

A dominant group of concerns expressed by partners emphasised the personal and professional difficulties they experienced while abroad. These feelings included loneliness, boredom or struggling with a lack of purpose, dual-career challenges, and wrestling with ethical or moral dilemmas.

Feeling isolated, lonely and with limited social networks were common experiences. These challenges were often compounded for accompanying male expatriate partners and expatriate partners located in more isolated (non-capital city) postings.

“I didn’t find it very friendly as a school for me, the parent group. But that’s possibly because I’m a male and caregiver. And most of the people picking up are either mothers or nannies.” [Partner 12]

Personal reflections: Interview memo

This morning’s interview was really interesting. The participant’s strong feelings about the expatriate bubble being a world removed from his life at home echo other sentiments I am hearing often, and again, much time was spent discussing his perception of his wife’s organisation, particularly poor leadership and overwork. Despite this line of enquiry not being one I pursue, it seems participants often have strong opinions on this, which they feel are important to share.

Personal reflections: Interview memo continued...

I wasn't sure how I would get away in the end; even after the interview finished he didn't want me to leave. He seemed to be really appreciating the opportunity to talk about the experience of being a trailing partner. In addition to his disclosure about it being difficult to find friends, it seemed to me he was quite lonely. Both this interview and the last one have refuted my prior assumption that male interviewees might be less willing to share information... possibly they are even more keen to talk as they have few others with whom they do so.

Another commonly reported challenge was boredom or difficulty pursuing meaningful pursuits. This was particularly emphasised by those who had previously always worked and in contexts in which cultural constraints affected the ability of partners to pursue their own interests.

"I felt very frustrated in Thailand because I was so bored living in this paradise. I wanted to do some work and get appreciation and not stay at home. I felt like I was in a cage." [Partner 20]

"It's not a very easy place to be in. It's always been difficult for women but now even more so. Security is always an issue. So your world is now very small, where you can go and that kind of thing." [Partner 11]

Linked to this issue was the feeling of lost identity: *"People don't know who you are, what you have done,"* and the sense that one is somewhere solely because of the working partner.

More than ten partners highlighted dual-career challenges negatively impacting their lives abroad. Problems included finding suitable work opportunities (including visa restrictions), concern about the long-term impact of taking time out from one's career (especially for accompanying male partners), making decisions about whose career to prioritise, and managing work and family responsibilities where both partners have demanding jobs.

"In terms of my career when I go back to the UK it's going to be up in the air, with all the cuts going on and all that. For Odele, for her career it's been

brilliant, really, really good. For me, not so much and I might have to do a bit of remedial work when I get back to the UK. I certainly won't go back to the level I was before.” [Partner 12]

Interviews also revealed the ethical or moral dilemmas felt by some accompanying partners. Partners highlighted difficulties in adapting from home country norms and values to popular expatriate lifestyles and norms, and difficulties moving from hardship postings in less developed countries (where one typically has greater interaction with the beneficiaries of humanitarian projects) to more senior postings in regional offices in cities such as Bangkok.

“When I'd walk down to school in those early days, I'd walk past all these big flashy houses, big cars, Lexus's, drivers, and nannies and that world... I'm a UK trade union activist. This is not my world. Where we live in London is not a posh area and here we are living in a posh area, attending private school, all this sort of stuff. On a personal level for me, that was quite challenging.” [Partner 12]

“Our benefit is working to serve the poor, but then you are here in this expat bubble and it feels so contradictory; like you are living a luxurious life and though you see some poor people on the street... you are not relating to them. And so in the beginning I was very judgmental about the other expats and I was really angry about the position I was in.” [Partner 13]

Feelings of embarrassment about the enormous gap in lifestyle and privileges between expatriate families compared to host populations was reported in addition to difficulty reconciling employing house help or the type of home one is provided to live in.

“That disparity, that the way we lived and our opportunities and so forth were so different from most people there, [that awareness] was really awful all the time. It's still the same living here, but you don't have to be thinking about it constantly. There you are constantly fighting tensions. Say you want your kids to have tennis lessons, but then you think the cost of this tennis lesson is someone's daily wage. It just made me feel like, what are we doing?” [Partner 21]

5.2.3 Transition and Relocation Concerns

Given the stressors associated with relocation and the short-contract lengths typical within the humanitarian sector, it is not surprising that many partners discussed challenges relating to settling in and leaving, confusion or concerns around the concept of home, and the impact of transitional lives upon relationships.

When asked how long it took partners to feel settled into a new country, answers varied from 3 months to over a year. Most responses ranged between 6 and 12 months, with the first month being described as the *“hardest time of all.”* Compounded by exhaustion, jet lag, culture shock and sudden changes in climate, first impressions were at times very negative: *“I can’t believe we are going to stay here for two years, at least. What have I done? I’m so trapped,”* however these usually improved considerably with time. Partner feedback emphasised that their own adjustment challenges exceeded those faced by the working partner.

“It is harder to be the other one. The worker is set up with a natural place to go and have people to meet. Whereas, the other person is starting a whole new life of their own in a whole new place.” [Partner 11]

Interview feedback also revealed the heightened challenges associated with the first international posting. With no prior experience or learning, partners reflected on the stressors they recalled from this time and how the lessons learnt proved valuable during future relocations.

“When we went to Sri Lanka I didn’t know what to look for, in terms of housing or school and support systems. It was the first time for us to live away. It was just like being dropped in the deep end of it. In Zambia I knew what to look for. The first week I went out and met as many people as possible so that I could have someone to call and ask, ‘Where can I get this and this?’ Now I am more proactive because I’ve done it before.” [Partner 17]

Partners frequently raised issues around the concept of home, including feeling like one was in a constant state of transition, i.e. *“living in boxes”* or expressing *“I haven’t really felt like I’ve lived in a home base for a very long time.”* A number of participants spoke of feeling like they no longer fit in when returning to their home

country, an experience they observed their children also shared. For partners from developing countries, their sense of disconnect was even greater if families and friends at home did not also have international experience: *“I realised that this expat position has created this kind of disjoint with our family and the rest of the friends we have in Delhi.”*

For others there had been the difficult realisation that their children no longer associated their passport country with home, but rather their world and home was firmly rooted in the posting in which they have lived much of their lives. Lastly, a sense of having to co-exist in very different worlds: *“It is hard for me to live in two worlds. I prefer to focus on wherever I am,”* was reported as a challenge by some partners.

“It’s been quite an adjustment for us to realise this is home for our kids. The house we live in is the house they call home. They don’t call New Zealand home. We were recently in New Zealand on home leave... they were really wanting to be in Kenya and to have Kenyan food and be in their Kenyan house because that is home to them.” [Partner 15]

Re-entry challenges were also a dominant category, including that *“some things don’t hit you until you come back,”* and the fact leaving and settling in at home again was demanding and time consuming: *“It takes a long time at both ends, saying goodbye and then starting again back home. It is quite a tiring process.”* Unlike settling into a new country, partner feedback indicated leaving a country did not necessarily get easier with practice.

“I don’t think it probably gets any easier... it probably gets more difficult. I think with any place you give a little bit of yourself and it’s really hard to leave each time.” [Partner 14]

Four partners highlighted the difficulty of finding meaningful work for the humanitarian worker back in their passport country as opposed to seeking additional expatriate postings.

“I think Australia has a lot more opportunities in the humanitarian sector, but New Zealand doesn’t... The only type of work is probably linked to the Pacific Islands. We would like to stay in the INGO field, but it looks like to

get a job eventually in New Zealand, then he has to move into the corporate sector.” [Partner 15]

A final commonly reported struggle associated with the transitional nature of expatriate lifestyles was the frequent experience of saying farewell. Compounded for some by the belief that *“as expatriates you often have a deeper relationship with those living around you, than you would in your home countries,”* saying goodbye was described as difficult for adults and often particularly hard for children.

“The pain of making close relationships then people leave. We have had some very dear friends that have gone away and we will probably not ever see them again. That is just hard. It’s not always even only close friends; it’s the continual change in the community here. You can be gone for a year and come back and all the people you know have left.” [Partner 9]

While needing to rely on in-country friendships to provide support normally available through social networks back home, *“reluctance for people to get to know people”* and hesitation to establish close connections was also discussed due to the reality that *“always working to meet someone new”* was tiring and required constant effort.

5.2.4 Parenting Concerns

Parents identified challenges concerning raising children in a foreign context. These included adapting to parenthood and coping with the responsibilities of young children without extended family, feelings of guilt and anxiety based on observations of their children struggling to adapt at different times, and recognition that their chosen lifestyle and career choice was likely to result in a globally-dispersed family as children become adults.

While *“the total shock you get when you’ve suddenly got a first baby”* is common among first-time parents, the transition can be harder when one is removed from close family and friends, traditional providers of support and advice during such times. While most humanitarian expatriate families have access to house help, which may include a nanny, caring for a baby or toddler is difficult and often features considerable anxiety and culturally influenced decisions regarding issues such as

discipline and sleep norms. For non-working partners at home with young children, this time can also be quite socially isolating unless one is networked into parent groups and the like. Individuals whose partners are frequently absent due to work travel commitments are even more isolated during these years.

“I see women at home who are quite unhappy; the hardest time was when I had two small children at home, and wasn’t working much. It can be terribly isolating just being at home all the time with a toddler or a couple of toddlers.” [Partner 9]

Specific issues related to parenting TCKs raised by participants included:

- Anxiety about children absorbing undesirable aspects of the host culture: *“We don't want Abigail to take on a lot of the culture. She has taken on some, by default. The way she acts around men, for instance.” [Partner 16]*
- Children struggling with frequent transition in their lives and parental guilt about frequently “uprooting” them: *“Farrukh was really looking forward to coming back here but he just really struggled to find his place. That was really hard to see and none of us were expecting it. They miss things about Australia, places and things that we could do as a family there that we can’t do here.” [Partner 9]*
- Awareness that one is raising a family that will probably become very globally-dispersed: *“What’s hard is our kids are spread out all over. They are not likely to stay where they are. You kind of make that choice by working overseas and bringing them up that way.” [Partner 11]*

5.2.5 Adverse Impacts of Humanitarian Work upon the Family

This section aims to highlight the reported family-level challenges and adverse impacts of certain norms within the humanitarian industry. Listed in order of those most frequently identified during interviews, these include: frequent travel by the worker, struggles with maintaining a healthy work-life balance, the humanitarian worker feeling stressed, overworked or dissatisfied with their work, and job security fears impacting one’s ability to make personal or family-related requests.

Despite having already relocated for an expatriate assignment, frequent travel (both domestically and/or internationally) is a requirement for many humanitarian workers.

Travel schedules often vary, and travel can be planned (e.g. to attend regional workshops) and unplanned (e.g. emergency response support to disaster-affected areas). Interview feedback depicted working partner's travel commitment ranged between 25% and 60% of the time, however how this looked from month to month varied considerably. For some, the additional loneliness, stresses and responsibilities faced while their partner was away were challenging. For such partners, this aspect of the job is begrudgingly accepted: *"Whenever he went on a trip it was extra difficult for me, so I would resent that,"* and can lead to problems within the couple relationship as discussed in section 5.2.1. Travel by the worker was also reported to affect children's behaviour, create anxiety among partners in terms of worrying how their family would manage certain scenarios: *"When I'm sick I'm thinking how will I get to the hospital and who will look after the kids?"* and necessitate periods of adjustment during and after time away.

"When they were smaller it was very, very difficult for them when he travelled. I would notice when he was away on deployment for significant periods of time, let's say for six weeks. Around week five or week six they would become very fretful and fighting with each other much more, more disobedient, they were unsettled." [Partner 2]

"It does take a week for us to get back into communicating normally because he is travelling to places where he doesn't get much sleep and he's on weird flight times and it takes him some time to get back into feeling up to talking." [Partner 15]

In addition to travel demands being emphasised by partners, approximately one-third of participants spoke of humanitarian workers dealing with demanding workloads: *"She has never worked so hard... I mean she's always worked hard, but I've never seen her work quite so hard. Huge, huge workloads."* Working during weekends and evenings was discussed; as was the acknowledgement that certain positions entail more responsibility and demand being on call all the time, every day of the week.

"I imagine if you are in more of the development side of things it's more long-term, it would be easier to set boundaries in that situation. But when you are relief side of things, these disasters happen and you have to go and give more than 100%." [Partner 2]

Not everyone perceived working hours as excessive, with several participants saying the working partner successfully confines their work into a typical work day, for example from 8.00 AM to 6.00 PM. However, some participants spoke negatively of their own experience or observations of families in which the humanitarian worker was described as having a *“crazy amount of energy for the work and lack of energy for our relationship.”* For these partners, job security and promotion concerns were often perceived as taking precedence over family or relationship concerns.

Several partners expressed the belief that problems with prioritising work above families is associated with the type of individuals attracted to work within the humanitarian industry, namely high-achievers and adrenaline seeking persons. The addictive nature of this type of employment, especially in relief settings, was stressed, as was the sense that it bonds workers together: *“Everyone was chasing that feeling of being super important and everything being so urgent. Feeling that adrenaline going through their bodies; it was the most bonding thing for them.”* Such ties between colleagues were thought to be at the expense of strong couple relationships, and given the reality that there will always be more that *“can be done for beneficiaries,”* partners expressed the opinion that agencies need people who can recognise when a day’s work has been done and not promote a culture of long working hours etc. Being self-sacrificial was described as common among humanitarian employees, as well as a value promoted by INGOs.

“The culture within [Christian Relief and Development INGO] I think is very self-sacrificial; they work really ridiculous hours and it is okay. I think it is encouraged, like a Christian sort of thing... we all [should] give up something personal because it is a higher calling.” [Partner 23]

As with many organisations, staffing and management issues were expressed by participants. These included *“challenging organisational dynamics,”* poor organisational hierarchy structures (e.g. being responsible for supervision of too many staff), negative management support, lack of interest in staff wellbeing, and lack of clarity with regards to job descriptions and responsibilities. Particular agencies were described as more *“dysfunctional”* than others and blamed for *“[burning] out a lot of people; lots went home just exhausted.”*

Lastly, participants were asked whether they or their working partner felt comfortable presenting requests to their respective INGO. While two participants believed their partner did not hesitate doing this, most feedback indicated that a degree of reluctance, fear or anxiety about the potential negative implications was typical: *“He just didn’t want to bring it up [request for assistance to review workloads and work-related stress] because he didn’t want to be seen as someone that couldn’t cope.”* It was reported that such concern was often justified, with personal or observational experience of those asking for support being stigmatised, treated differently or missing out on future opportunities. Examples of the types of requests made included house repairs and maintenance, rescheduling of meetings to avoid weekend travel by workers, asking to utilise rest and recuperation (R&R) allowances, assistance with managing workloads and requests for more flexible working arrangements. One participant also reported analogous concerns regarding why her ex-partner was hesitant to disclose his mental illness to his work colleagues: *“Nobody overseas knew about it. He has now told his boss in Australia that he’s got depression. I think he was very paranoid about telling anyone because he thought he would be victimised and his opportunities would be limited.”*

5.2.6 Health Concerns

Most participants reported health-related challenges and crises while abroad. Recurring categories were managing illnesses, concerns about the quality or availability of health care services, and anxieties related to medical conditions and care.

Partners spoke of the experience of being unwell themselves: *“In the first year in Sri Lanka I got dengue fever, twice,”* or caring for dependants. Observing and caring for sick children away from normal supports and familiar medical services often provided significant anxiety: *“When Josh got the fever-thing like dengue, Darren was away travelling for work to the US, so I was here [in Cambodia] by myself so it was really tough and scary.”* Besides the lack of familiarity with the context or with care providers, an additional issue concerned dealing with diseases or illnesses not common in one’s home country. Examples discussed included dengue fever, malaria, hepatitis A and various parasites.

“I had malaria. I was four weeks in my own flat, very, very sick and then it took another month to get back to normal. That was really hard. And you do start to get anxious about the kind of medical treatment available here, which is really quite hit and miss... And if your children get sick that is quite stressful.” [Partner 18]

In addition to physical health conditions, several partners spoke of the impact of mental illness upon either themselves or their partner.

“I suffered from very severe post-partum depression. But it went undiagnosed for about two years; probably because we were living abroad there was no one there to pick up on it. Many times when I felt very down and desperate I attributed all of that to the fact we were living away from family and life was harder. It wasn’t until we were in Haiti and I was reading a baby book and I thought this is what I have and this is why things are so difficult for me. I think had I been diagnosed a year to 18 months before, things would have been a lot different.” [Partner 2]

“Brian has a mental illness and it really became apparent when we were overseas, it exacerbated his condition; it became worse and worse because of all the strain and stress. His line of work doesn’t help, it actually makes it worse.” [Partner 23]

The sense that living abroad compounded or exacerbated a medical condition was not limited to mental illnesses, but extended to a variety of health concerns including lymphoedema, asthma and coeliac disease.

A significant issue for many expatriate partners was the quality or lack of available health care services where they lived. Interview feedback highlighted concerns at the competence of medical staff, (e.g. describing experiences where conditions were misdiagnosed or inappropriate drugs prescribed), lack of diagnostic tests and treatment facilities, and limited ability to communicate with health personnel in a shared language. Closely related to the issue of standards of available health care and the experience of being sick, a number of partners expressed fear or anxiety around “what if” scenarios while living abroad. While these challenges had not actually

eventuated, there was concern around how one would manage: *“How’s it going to be having a baby in a place with no good doctors and no easy access to good medical care?”* or the consequences of certain diseases or conditions: *“I’m really nervous about the possibility of malaria, for both myself when I was pregnant, and now my son.”*

5.2.7 Safety and Security Concerns

While INGOs may determine specific locations to be non-family duty stations, often due to the perceived level of security concerns and hardship involved, organisations differ in their assessment of such risks. As such, partners interviewed included those located in places such as Kabul and Kinshasa. While other locations may be considered less insecure, accompanying family members may still be exposed to theft, car-jacking, or exposure to violence. As such, it is not surprising that security and safety-related challenges were commonly raised during interviews. Specifically partners highlighted the general fears and challenges associated with living amidst civil tensions and violence; experiencing grief, shock or stress from exposure to violence, and feeling the burden of risking the safety and wellbeing of children.

Interview feedback highlighted that expatriate partners may be anxious and fearful of heightened risk of violence in their new location: *“We arrived in Nairobi during post-election violence, so I was a little bit scared to be honest. I had been told about ‘Nairobbery’[robbery often violent in Nairobi] and to expect this.”* For some, relocation exposed them to a whole new potential type of threat, not experienced before (e.g. suicide bombers in Colombo, Sri Lanka). For others, the type of violence was no different to that which they were previously exposed in their home country, however concern lay in the fact they did not speak the language, understand the laws or had doubts whether the judicial system was fair or functioning.

“We used to hear about bag snatching in Cambodia in Phnom Penh and we used to get scared. Delhi’s law and order is very bad, we hear of bag snatching, robberies and drug deals, but we don’t fear this when in Delhi. Because there, the feeling of home, being surrounded by your own people, you know the laws, you know your rights, so you don’t feel that insecure. But in Cambodia we felt very insecure; because we knew the constitution is weak.

We knew that the criminals could get away with anything and everything.”
 [Partner 7]

For those located in less secure hardship environments, daily living was often not easy, such settings being simply “*hard places*” to live. Leaving one’s home or compound always involves safety and security precautions, significantly impacting one’s ability to pursue recreation or move freely.

“It has really become more and more insecure. Suicide bombers are targeting much softer targets. So you can’t just reassure yourself you can go anywhere and feel like you might be safe.” [Partner 9]

Partners also spoke of changing security conditions affecting the accompanied status of a posting and the associated challenges of leaving a country with one’s children while the humanitarian worker remains behind.

Many partners conveyed direct experience with conflict and violence while abroad. This included exposure to bombs and rocket fire: “*A rocket hit our house, three times actually. We were living in a war zone,*” observing shooting and murder, mugging and knife attacks: “*We were mugged in the middle of the day, and the guy had a knife and my friend got cut really badly,*” narrowly avoiding being caught up in gun fire, police harassment, rioting: “*We got caught in a traffic jam when tear gas was going off and all five kids were in the car,*” kidnapping of family pets for the purpose of being sold to meat markets, and the loss of life of friends and colleagues.

These incidents were not limited to locations typically considered high-risk from a security perspective (e.g. Pakistan, Afghanistan); rather they took place in locations such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, Uganda and Kenya. Not surprisingly, such experiences often left people questioning their decision to accept the humanitarian assignment, especially when incidents happened soon after arriving: “*I’m thinking where on earth, have we moved to.*” Other outcomes included increased stress reactions and feelings of fear, grief or loss, and depending on the perceived level of risk, changes in behaviour or routines, or even location: “*We did leave Karachi, it was a bad situation. There was someone who was intimidated by my husband. They*

said that he was working in drugs and we almost got kicked out of the country and we had to shift up north. That was a really stressful time.”

The unpredictability and reality of violence affecting expatriate partners and their families was demonstrated during the research process when a scheduled interview was postponed because the participant was distressed by the murder of a Dutch expatriate father and the physical assault of his wife, a family known to the participant through church.

While many people experience feelings of anger, fear or grief when directly or indirectly affected by hostility or trauma, alternate coping responses discussed included normalisation and becoming numb to the associated thoughts and feelings.

“You kind of get used to it, it seems normal after a while. The first few days were really difficult. We never had seen so many soldiers around. After a few weeks it was a part of life.” [Partner 17]

Linked to normalising the experience, some partners living in high level conflict settings appeared to have “raised the bar” on what was considered a “bad day” or acceptable conditions to remain with their families through long-term repeated exposure.

“A bad day would be a day when there is a suicide bomb. For example, recently they bombed a supermarket and then they bombed West Shopping Centre. It affects us; you just worry until you hear if any of your friends were there or anyone you know. Then it’s no one you know but still you just feel horrible about it. I think if anyone else we know ends up dying by a suicide bomb or kidnapped or whatever, that might be enough for us to go home too.” [Partner 9]

One in four partners spoke of feeling the burden of risking children’s health, wellbeing and safety while abroad. The heightened sense of responsibility when one becomes a parent was repeatedly emphasised, as was the recognition that kids can be “suffering psychologically” from frequent or significant exposure to conflict and hostility. While countries at war are obvious places of heightened risk, those

stationed in countries prone to natural disasters were also concerned about the possibility of such an event.

“We have lost a lot of friends here through death. I mean the expatriate graveyard here, we know personally six people there. And then about ten others whose bodies have been taken away through incidents here. Concerning the kids, a close friend of ours was killed a year ago. It's hard, the kids lost an aunty” [Partner 16]

“The school is this four storey higgledy-piggledy thing that would come crashing down on everyone if it [an earthquake] happens. It was a constant stress. I wasn't really worried about myself working at the school because adults can get out of a building faster. I was worried for the kids.” [Partner 21]

In concluding this section, it is important to note not all participants reported concerns with crime or violence while abroad: *“As a family living in Dubai I like it because it's secure. Anytime of the day I can walk.”* Of interest, three partners expressed frustration with the preoccupation with security and safety among expatriates in general and INGOs.

“We frequently get told as INGOs that we are not supposed to drive to this place or this is dangerous. Actually it is quite safe, they just want a 100% security record, which you wouldn't get if you lived in London. But you start to really believe that you live in a dangerous place and you don't really know where you do stand. I think that is a really awful, awful thing for INGOs because the difference between us and the rest of the people who come for other reasons here, is that we are supposed to be working with these people, and you can't do that if you are scared of everybody.” [Partner 6]

5.2.8 Environmental, Contextual and Cultural Concerns

While not considered as significant as the challenges previously discussed, over half the participants commented on difficulties living with contextual aspects of life abroad. Lack of infrastructure and services, limited recreation and play spaces, problems with traffic, law and order, extreme climates and pollution were all sources of discontent. A number of partners also spoke of the challenges in forming local

friendships and fitting in, and the difficulties of dealing with cultural norms such as corruption.

Living in developing countries, accompanying partners commented on daily problems such as the Internet not working, accommodation issues: *“We haven’t had hot water for a long time,”* power cuts: *“The electricity goes and the generator won’t start,”* and needing to visit multiple places to obtain the necessary supplies and groceries. This was reflected during Skype interviews in which call dropouts, noise interference and interruptions due to lack of electricity were not uncommon. For those based in hardship postings (i.e. remote locations or conflict affected places), these frustrations were particularly acute. While these problems were often anticipated, the frequency and combined effect of such annoyances means that for some: *“It adds up to more than a minor hassle.”*

“We lived more than six hours from the capital and there was no good health care and we always had to stockpile things. It was difficult living there.”
[Partner 4]

“It is the everyday things, like when the Internet doesn’t work or when the power goes in and out or when the water doesn’t come into the tank and the house has got no water... It just takes so much effort to do. Like to fill up my car with petrol, the petrol station down the road always runs out of petrol, so I have to drive a couple of extra kilometres to get to a petrol station that has petrol. Something that should take five minutes ends up taking a half hour or something.” [Partner 15]

Partners repeatedly expressed a lack of recreation options, particularly parks and *“kid friendly spaces.”* Again this experience was compounded for those living in hardship postings. Contextual challenges were also shared with regards to: driving norms and congestion: *“Definitely the worst [traffic] I’ve seen anywhere in the world,”* the police system: *“If you are in a car accident and the police come, it’s just a nightmare,”* pollution (including noise): *“We moved four times to different houses ‘cos of construction and noise”* and, difficulty coping with extreme climates: *“The heat has been horrendous during the hot season.”*

Interacting with the host culture and forming local friendships were commonly cited difficulties for accompanying partners and their families. Cultural norms of engaging and working included hostile behaviours, corruption and nepotism. Certain countries were described as being less receptive towards foreigners: *“They were not friendly, they were really discriminating; most of the people that we knew were not helpful,”* possible reasons including historical or recent experience with colonisation, conflict or international aid. A sense of distrust, hostility or indifference towards ‘outsiders’ adds an additional burden to families living in such places and impacts their experience of local friendships.

“When you drive outside your gate the people there resent you because you are white and they see you as the cause of their problems. It was a difficult place to live because of that; a very hard place to get to know local people. When we went to Haiti we went with [Christian Relief and Development INGO] and changed to [another Christian Relief and Development INGO] half way through. In the [latter] office there was resentment towards expats coming in. There wasn’t any help given there, we had to figure it all out ourselves.” [Partner 2]

The experience of standing out and attracting unwanted attention, especially for children: *“He gets loads of hassle... unwanted pinching of cheeks and stuff and ruffling of hair”* and for individuals of different ethnicity (e.g. black African individuals in Asia or Europe) was shared as a problem by several partners.

5.2.9 Specific Crises or Challenging Experiences

Six participants shared honest and painful accounts of experiencing a crisis or potential crisis while abroad. These times were described as being incredibly challenging and they reported feeling afraid and vulnerable. One participant was informed during an in-country adoption process to return a child to an orphanage despite the fact she had been living with a family for four months: *“Not knowing if we were going to have to give her [subsequently adopted daughter] back or not, that was very, very stressful for me,”* and confusing: *“I went through this huge dilemma of what to do?”* Another described seeking In Vitro Fertilisation treatment in a distant country from one’s working partner (due to unavailability of such services in the international posting). In the case of the participant whose marriage ended within

18 months of returning home, the entire experience of her international experience was influenced by the pain of a strained relationship and feeling isolated with whom she could share this issue.

“I can talk about this now. I cried and cried and cried in Sri Lanka. I just didn’t know how to deal with it when I was there. When you are isolated in a country like that, with maybe \$2,000 dollars in your bank account, you don’t know what to do... It was just so confusing.” [Partner 23]

Others reported the angst of making the decision to end a relationship while abroad, the pain of reconciling terminating a pregnancy, and experiencing an emotional breakdown or *“crisis in faith.”*

5.2.10 Unique Challenges or Features of Expatriate Humanitarian INGO

Families

Participants were questioned whether they felt families in the humanitarian INGO sector typically experience any unique challenges or are distinct from other families in the expatriate community, e.g. missionary, diplomatic or corporate families. Feedback was mixed, with five partners stating there were minimal differences between the various expatriate groups with everyone facing *“the same kind of frustrations.”* Taken as a whole, the remainder of responses depicted a continuum with regards to commitment, tolerance for hardship, and remuneration expectations.

Missionaries were generally depicted at one end of the continuum, having long-term commitment to a place and receiving fewer financial benefits. Missionaries were seen as having fewer travel demands, being less overworked than humanitarian workers and linked into a tighter knit community. Corporate, diplomatic and business families were positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum, viewed as being more focused on the benefits and money they can earn while abroad, experiencing greater luxury and “perks” and for some, experiencing their time abroad through more of a “hardship lens.”

“There are people here in diplomatic circles who view their life here as hardship. Nigeria has a reputation as being a very difficult place, so people that come here often resent it from the moment they arrive here. That isn’t the

case if working with an NGO; I think your mentality can be different.”
 [Partner 18]

Compared to humanitarian workers, diplomatic or corporate workers were described as having greater job security and less likely to be “*emotionally manipulated*” in terms of the importance attributed to the work they are engaged in. In general, partners of INGO workers often viewed their families in the middle of the aforementioned expatriate continuum. It was also acknowledged that between INGOs, there was considerable variability with regards to the length of contract offered, tolerance for hardship amidst staff and the salary and benefits provided. When considering humanitarian agencies as a whole (i.e. including UN bodies, the Red Cross etc.) the diversity is then even greater.

5.3 Benefits: Expatriate Families within Humanitarian INGOs

While partner interviews revealed the challenges faced by families accompanying international humanitarian workers, they also highlighted the many benefits and favourable opportunities associated with expatriate living. While participants acknowledged, “*there are lots of great things about living abroad,*” a number of key categories emerged. These included exposure to travel and different cultures (considered beneficial for the whole family but especially for children), lifestyle benefits, the chance to spend more time with family, diverse and supportive social networks and the opportunity for both the humanitarian worker and the accompanying partner to pursue meaningful work or interests.

5.3.1 Exposure to Travel and Alternate Ways of Living

Partners spoke of the incredible opportunity of “*seeing a different world*” and the experience afforded through relocation of “*having my eyes open to other cultures, being able to travel.*” Becoming more culturally aware, gaining a greater understanding of poverty and humanity in general (and in the process becoming more grateful for one’s own circumstances), and having previously held assumptions or worldviews challenged were all recurring categories.

“Just being able to live in different cultures and not visiting them, not coming in as a tourist, but sinking in and getting to know people and getting to know

a country is just one of the greatest privileges. It is not an opportunity that most people have.” [Partner 19]

An extension of being introduced to an alternate way of living and culture was the feedback that international living offers “*a great way for children to grow up.*” Parents commonly expressed sentiments such as introduction “*to another culture or having a more global perspective is amazing.*” Besides exposure to a second language, parents appreciated the influence of positive cultural values: “*Modesty here is a beautiful thing amongst women*” and different physical environments and experiences: “*They go out and find lizards and insects they would never know if they were living in the UK.*” Partners also commented on the heightened maturity observed in expatriate children and the sustained impact international living has on TCKs. Finally, several partners commented on the value of actually seeing fieldwork firsthand in terms of understanding the nature and impact of the worker’s role and gaining greater appreciation of one’s own circumstances: “*I enjoy that my boys have had the chance to see a different life style. A big difference can be observed between us here [our lifestyle] and between people in the project areas.*”

5.3.2 Lifestyle Benefits

A number of participants drew attention to various lifestyle benefits associated with living abroad. The affordability and assistance provided through paid helpers was highlighted, particularly with regards to enabling partners with children to pursue interests, including work.

“I’ve got someone who helps me with the house, so I don’t have to wash baby clothes and nappies or wash my floors. I would never be able to have house help in the UK, especially not someone so lovely.” [Partner 6]

Gratefulness for access to facilities such as hotel pools or expatriate clubs was expressed, as were some of the more common benefits provided by many INGOs such as paying all or a sizable percentage of accommodation and education fees. Many partners commented on the financial benefits of living abroad, including both partners not feeling pressured to work: “*Just to not feel the financial stress of needing full-time work. You can do it in the US too, but you know here you can do it and you don’t have to worry about it,*” and reduced regular living expenses: “*Life is*

quite cheap for us. There is nothing for us to buy. We only really spend money when we are on home leave.” Exceptions were presented to this picture of fiscal comfort however, including families attached to smaller INGOs (including those which adopt a fundraising or team support approach similar to many missionary organisations): *“A number of times we have been running ourselves on the smell of an oily rag”* and families who found their isolated location necessitated greater expenses with regards to travel, groceries etc.

5.3.3 Family Time

Partners spoke of life abroad often being much simpler, with fewer demands on one’s time: *“When we were at home it was quite busy... you have family and friends pulling you in all kinds of ways.”* With both partners not feeling financially pressured to work, and with fewer commitments, a commonly reported outcome was the chance to spend more time as a family. (It is recognised that this benefit appears to contradict relationship and work-related challenges discussed previously. This paradox is acknowledged in greater depth in Chapter 8, section 8.2.4).

“We spent a lot more time just having evenings together, playing games, and reading books together as a family than we had in Australia. Because Craig had been in an extremely busy job before we went to Nepal. [While in Nepal] he would be away for a couple of weeks at a time, several times a year because he did a lot of field visits. But when he was home he had time to be with us, so we enjoyed that.” [Partner 23]

Spending *“a lot more time with my children”* was repeatedly emphasised as a significant blessing while abroad. This was particularly true for partners who previously worked full-time, but now found it economically viable to stay at home and parent full-time. The quality of interaction and time spent with children was also described as much more meaningful without the constant pressure of *“mundane tasks: cleaning, cooking, paying bills”* and time spent commuting between work and home etc.

While certainly there were exceptions to the experience of having more time as a family (as discussed in section 5.2.5), some families in particular noted a significant favourable difference in the quality and amount of time spent together. These

families included those who would normally live with extended family in their home countries or for whom extended family had a strong influence on their lives. For families in which the humanitarian worker had previously accepted non-accompanied positions, partners also expressed appreciation at having more time together.

“Usually when I’m at home I’m living with many other people. There is no opportunity for us to live just as a family, just the three of us. That is an African thing; that is just the way it is. We are a young couple, so it was a really nice thing to be able to go and just live together as a family, the three of us.” [Partner 17]

“The biggest benefit has been to have a chance to live in a normal routine, which sounds so bizarre that we had to move from LA to Laos to find that rhythm. We have been able to spend time with each other without long separations and without highly charged pressures that come from short-term assignments like [unaccompanied postings in] Sudan.” [Partner 10]

5.3.4 Social Networks

After enduring the initial difficulties of settling into a new country, many partners spoke of having *“established a great network of friends.”* This was particularly true for those living in hardship security postings that emphasised the comradeship aspect of life abroad: *“I love living in a community of people who share much in common, and caring for and supporting each other.”* Though not all partners shared the experience of having close relationships with local persons, for those who did, they were often very supportive and meaningful connections: *“We have some great Afghan neighbours who know us and care for us. I went to Australia recently and my Afghan Pashtun neighbour’s wife cooked for Cath knowing she is busy. There is a real community feel.”*

Repeatedly emphasised was the notion that living abroad promotes interaction with a wide variety of people, such diversity often uncommon in one’s home country. Expatriate friendships were also described as often being *“deeper”* and requiring less time to develop than at home.

5.3.5 Meaningful Work and Volunteer Opportunities

Participants often spoke of their partner enjoying their work and attributing significant value to their occupation: *“He really feels like he makes a big difference in his work.”* The opportunity to combine *“passion and profession in one role”* was in some instances shared by both members; with each person feeling the decision to move and support the humanitarian work was *“the right thing to do at this time in our lives.”* This sentiment was especially true for those whose faith also influenced their decision to work in the humanitarian sector.

“We both have a sense of purpose; this is the way we needed to go. I think the biggest reward is in that you feel like you are taking the step that you needed to take. It feels like we are living a life where we are listening to what our hearts or what God is saying to us.” [Partner 13]

Several accompanying partners also emphasised appreciating the meaningful work or volunteer opportunities available to them. As highlighted in the following quote, living abroad can provide the chance to *“do things voluntarily and see if I like them,”* learn new languages and pursue alternate interests such as writing.

“I would never get to do a [photo] exhibition in the UK because I’m not really that good... but here I’ve been able to do this and loads of different types of work and get reasonable at a couple of them too. In the UK sometimes your day-to-day work is very repetitive, whereas overseas I’ve had really quite wildly different things. I really love that.” [Partner 6]

5.4 Growth by Participants and their Families

Beyond sharing the diverse rewards experienced from expatriate living, including potential relational, lifestyle and spiritual gains, partner interviews also emphasised growth during the expatriate journey. This section summarises the main types of growth reported, beginning with a discussion of the factors participants identified as being necessary precursors or stimulates for such change. Key factors included difficulties or hardships (i.e. growth out of adversity), cultural novelty (i.e. growth out of cross-cultural engagement) and experience (i.e. growth through practice). The use of the term growth in this section is grounded in partners’ descriptions of personal or relational improvements, as observed in their own lives or within their family.

5.4.1 Antecedents for Growth: Adversity, Cross-cultural Engagement and Experience

When probed with questions such as: “How did you manage challenges abroad rather than decide to return home?” or: “Do you feel your experiences with any of your past struggles has made you stronger as a couple, family or individual?” partners revealed numerous examples of growth and development while abroad. In particular, individuals spoke of the value of being “*tested*” through difficult experiences (e.g. period of sickness, feeling isolated) and the subsequent growth that can result: “*We have seen a lot and have gone through a lot of tragedy and that changes you.*” Linked to this partners emphasised the importance of active reflective practices aimed at greater self-understanding, such as asking oneself “*what’s the bigger picture here?*” and “*trying to learn what my coping strategies are.*”

Adjusting to non-familiar contexts without “*my western comforts and my nice western lifestyle*” was also described as influential in making individuals realise “*I can cope with things I never thought I could cope with.*” Similarly, partners emphasised the maturation and increased open-mindedness that can result from “*getting outside of my home culture*” and exposure to different nationalities and cultures: “*The two ladies who worked in our house are probably the two people who I have learnt so much from, because they shared so much of their life.*”

Learning from prior experience was emphasised as being particularly valuable with regards to thriving as a couple. Examples that were given included the adoption of sustainable practices to living abroad: “*In the past we would do everything 200% but what we are learning now is balancing more,*” and adjusting during the initial settling in period to a new country. Finally, with regards to language acquisition skills and improving communication skills within relationships, several partners emphasised the importance of time and practice.

5.4.2 Stories of Growth: Individuals and Families

Without exception, all partners discussed observing maturation or growth within themselves or their family relationships while living abroad. This section presents a summary of the main types of growth and self-improvement shared.

Individual Growth and Development

Personal development while abroad included: improved self-awareness, becoming more patient and respectful: *“I have settled as a person and have lots of respect for people,”* enhanced social networking skills prompted by the need to make relationships in a much shorter period of time: *“I am definitely much more a go-getter than I ever was and enjoy meeting people which I never used to enjoy,”* and an appreciation that one is stronger and more adaptable than one previously realised: *“I’ve really realised how strong and independent I am now. How I can do anything I set my head to.”* Partners also commented on how the experience of living abroad can provide greater clarity about what is important in life, for example how one views conflict in the family and appreciation of one’s living situation.

“Normally when you are with your family every single day, you fight about several things... Living abroad you don’t experience that and when you go back home, your main purpose is to spend as much time as you can with them. That has made me also look differently; small things are not worth bickering about.” [Partner 1]

“In the UK I find people very insular and they don’t really understand how good they’ve got it... When you go to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, or other places like that, you can understand how other people live and you really understand how lucky we are.” [Partner 8]

Several individuals commented on how the international experience also resulted in changes to their faith, including reappraising the foundation for perceiving one’s identity and helping to distil what is core to one’s beliefs.

“It was a lesson in faith... I realised I was a proud person, how my identity was in my position as an intensive care nurse and all the things that I did before, my achievements. I had more time to realise my identity in Christ, which is very different. I think I went into the desert place.” [Partner 13]

“Living here and seeing faith lived out means a lot of that rubbish falls off and you get left with this tiny little thing that I still regard as faith and it gives me purpose. I think the faith side of things has become smaller, but a lot more concentrated.” [Partner 16]

Growth and Development within Families

Ten participants spoke of becoming “stronger” or “closer” as a couple while abroad, and working “better as a team overseas than we did at home.” This experience was frequently attributed to the fact that in-country support networks are often limited and, as such, individuals are more dependent on one another.

“Just being overseas has meant that we have been forced to work everything out and did not rely on our families. Peter and I work more as team and are stronger because we have to rely on each other because there is no one else.”

[Partner 5]

Specific relationship attributes associated with this change included always making “decisions together” and having a “better understanding of each other and ourselves.” Many partners with accompanying children also spoke of the family as a whole becoming stronger or closer while abroad.

“We might have friends wherever we are, but I think that we have learnt to rely on one another and have drawn close as a family. That has been the greatest gift to us; we have managed to stay together, love one another, and accept the other person’s mistakes or bad habits or whatever.” [Partner 1]

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the demographic profile and international experience of participants interviewed, the main challenges of expatriate humanitarian families, and the benefits and resultant growth from expatriate life based on the perspective of partners. Interview feedback revealed that while many experience challenges and crises, couple or family relationships may also prosper and thrive while abroad. Evidence of individual-and family-level growth, particularly growth out of adversity, in addition to the fact most partners remain abroad with their families despite the many stressors experienced, gives credence to the belief that expatriate families in the INGO sector often demonstrate great resilience. The nature of the resilience processes employed by such families is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Partner Interviews – Coping Skills, Advice and Agency Supports

“Come to the edge, life said.

They said: We are afraid.

Come to the edge, life said.

They came. It pushed them... and they flew.”

Guillaume Apollinaire

6.0 Introduction

Chapter 6 reviews: 1) the individual-and family-level coping strategies used by accompanying partners and their families; 2) the key recommendations participants proposed to enable other partners and families in similar circumstances to adjust well and thrive; and 3) feedback on INGO supports and practices. The chapter responds to the study objective of identifying the key resilience processes employed by accompanying families of expatriate humanitarian INGO workers from the viewpoint of accompanying partners. Individuals when speaking with friends and family, rarely speak of resilience processes and practices in their lives, however they do talk of personal-or family-level coping strategies or supports used to mitigate stressors. Studying resilience by exploring how accompanying partners and families cope with stress and challenging circumstances is consistent with the view that resilience is an adaptive capacity that changes over time and context. Kolar, Erickson and Stewart (2012) have also argued that understanding coping strategies is essential to better appreciating the resilience processes of under researched populations.

6.1 Coping Strategies Employed by Participants and their Families

Interview analysis revealed two levels of coping strategies: personal strategies employed by partners, and practices performed or promoted at a family level (either between the couple or between parents and their children). This section will consider individual and family coping strategies separately.

6.1.1 Accompanying Partners' Individual Coping Strategies

Interview analysis revealed five dominant coping strategies utilised at the individual level. These included: 1) social and professional supports; 2) pursuing meaningful occupations and interests; 3) preparation, planning and experience; 4) positive thinking, perseverance and acceptance; and 5) faith, spirituality and purpose. Each of these approaches is summarised below with examples provided from interview transcripts.

6.1.1.1 Social and Professional Supports

Without doubt, partners reported social connections as being foundational to their coping and adaptation to life abroad. Maintaining connections with distant family and friends and pursuing new relationships in the host country were key to soliciting this support. Partners emphasised the importance of the Internet: *“The Internet is a big one for me, to be able to be connected with family back home, that’s really important,”* and programs such as Skype: *“I’ve spent a fortune on the Internet Skyping... they were my support system really; old colleagues, mates, family”* to facilitate long-distance communication. Participants also spoke appreciatively of visits from family and friends while abroad, resulting in them gaining a better understanding of their expatriate experience.

Both men and women reported proactive efforts to engage in relationships abroad: *“There is very little formal support... you do need to make things happen.”* Beneficial outcomes included, acquiring practical information: *“You get every little tip that you can get,”* a broadening of personal and professional networks, support with personal difficulties and during times of need (e.g. periods of illness), and the development of deep long-lasting friendships.

“I have guys who I meet with... and it’s a very unusual thing for a guy to do as a Kiwi, just to talk about difficulties and struggles. That’s really been a good thing for me, to express some of the difficulties in [our] lives and keep healthy. Isolation, you have to fight it.” [Partner 16]

“The International Mums Group that meets twice a week in each other’s homes. We kind of play for the children but more importantly it is a support

for mums to chat about being a mum here and that's a real lifeline.” [Partner 18]

Partners also highlighted the value of friendships with others who can relate and understand the lived experience of being abroad, particularly with regards to some of the common frustrations (e.g. traffic congestion, limited health facilities) and typical expatriate norms and lifestyles in developing countries.

“To have close friends here is great because they understand what you are going through and they understand the frustrations and everything. Whereas, back home they honestly think I live in a little hut in the village in Africa, whereas I live in a five bedroom house in town. They will never understand.” [Partner 15]

Despite not necessarily being easy to establish, relationships with local nationals was identified as important by several participants. These offered an alternative perspective: *“The international group can sometimes tend to be a little jaded”* and assisted with helping feel connected to a foreign country in a meaningful way.

“I had to have an operation and the best support came from my Khmer friends; I was like really, wow, this is unexpected! Maybe I had more impact on their lives than I ever knew. That did me really well. I wanted to stay for a longer period of time” [Partner 22]

Engaging in one's environment was also put forth as means of helping mitigate feelings of detachment and confinement: *“As soon as I stayed at home I felt totally isolated; you have to move out as well and live in the country, and have a feeling that you live there.”* Linked to the importance of engaging with the host culture, several partners had made considerable efforts to learn local languages and strongly espoused the value of this as a coping strategy and safety precaution.

Finally, while relationships with distant and immediate family and friends was emphasised, seeking professional counselling support was also acknowledged by several partners as an important coping strategy: *“I have had a lot of counselling at different stages. That has helped me.”*

6.1.1.2 Meaningful Pursuits and Occupations

Partners repeatedly spoke of the importance of finding purposeful interests and roles to help overcome feelings of boredom, loss of former occupations and identity struggles while abroad. Staying busy was particularly crucial for interviewees who were unemployed.

“When I started the jewellery business and I decided to train jewellery makers... I’d feel happy that I’d actually done something productive. I was independent of Brian’s work and it was not about him, because most of the time when we were overseas it was all about his job and I really lost who I was.” [Partner 23]

“I’ve done a few volunteer projects, like I did a photography exhibition on a mental health institute. It’s just nice to get out and see what’s going on in this country rather than being in a massive glamorous wonderful house. Anytime that I actually manage to escape and get out I really enjoy that.” [Partner 6]

While some prioritised finding paid or volunteer work: *“I always at least try to find a job if I’m not doing anything,”* others emphasised the importance of sport, hobbies or further education: *“I feel like I’ve done something and I’ve learnt something, so that is a good day for me.”* For expatriate families with children, accompanying partners particularly stressed the importance of regular time away from parenting responsibilities: *“I found I need to get out to play some basketball or sports once or twice a week; just to get out and not to be with kids.”*

6.1.1.3 Preparation, Planning and Experience

Closely associated with the intent to stay busy with meaningful tasks, partners revealed efforts they had taken to prepare and be *“well-informed”* for their overseas experience. This included taking steps to consider one’s needs and interests while abroad: *“I have no excuse to complain that I’m bored and I need a new book because I brought hundreds with me,”* and seeking greater general knowledge about a country, both the reality of living there based on the experiences of others and its history: *“The first thing I did was I read two or three books on Cambodia in the first month. It gave me a fair good amount of Cambodian history and knowledge about the troubles in the past.”*

Participants spoke about the importance of adequately understanding the nature of the humanitarian role their partner committed to, including “*what sort of routines, working hours, travel schedule they are going to.*” While seeking to be prepared, feedback was also given of the importance of not having “*any preconceived ideas... because as soon as you go and thinking it’ll be like A and it turns out like B then you have a problem.*” Maintaining a balance between planning and yet being flexible was presented as the optimal approach in which to manage the challenges of relocation.

6.1.1.4 Positive Thinking, Perseverance and Acceptance

Thinking optimistically was a recurring coping strategy highlighted during partner interviews. Beliefs related to the importance of being positive and appreciative were clearly applied to various stressors, including, relationship challenges: “*There was no question of not getting through it [period of relationship strain while abroad],*” health crises: “*I was like I have to do this [deal with possible cancer diagnosis] to prove to myself I can do it, I’m independent. I want to be stronger than I was before,*” and dealing with initial feelings of dislike towards a new country and posting: “*I always said earlier I wasn’t going to give up as such. I need to give it a go really before I decide I really hate it.*” Likewise, several partners emphasised the beneficial aspects of living overseas and having more unstructured time and individual space, as opposed to focusing on the potential monotony or alienation that could result: “*When I was working full-time before, I didn’t have much time to write. Moving has allowed me to shift the balance between my professional self and my creative self.*”

The previous quote depicts a belief in ‘seizing the opportunity’ or ‘living for the moment,’ additional consequences of thinking positively. In addition, discussions with many partners revealed a self-reliant mindset, with individuals commenting that they are “*more proactive*” and “*independent.*” Examples of partner initiative included calling doctors back home for second opinions, actively seeking networks and information upon arriving in a country, and not being afraid to make requests for assistance during times of ill health. This extended to being willing to pursue counselling as required, recognising the need for skilled assistance in managing issues such as depression or relationship strain. Partners also provided examples of

determination and persistence: *“I looked for [paid work] probably for six months or so, because it was just very competitive there.”*

Coming to terms with reality, or acceptance, was another approach used by several partners to avoid feeling frustrated or annoyed by their present situation. Not necessarily a conscious decision, this strategy was applied across a range of stressors. These included: recognising that one is lonely or isolated, dealing with the frequent problems associated with housing maintenance in developing countries, and accepting the reality of the humanitarian worker’s travel schedule and workloads upon their ability to engage and provide parenting support: *“I won’t complain because it is part of his job.”* For partners who choose to commit themselves to someone already actively engaged in the humanitarian industry, several reported being mindful and accepting of the probable long-term implications of this.

“The moment I decided to get married or the moment I started to be with Oliver I knew that in my life would never be the same. My life would be about the packing and leaving.” [Partner 1]

6.1.1.5 Faith, Spirituality and Purpose

At the individual level, an additional coping strategy noted during multiple interviews was the importance attributed to religious beliefs, a sense of spirituality or believing in a greater purpose. Partners who identified themselves as Christians spoke of their faith as playing a significant role in sustaining them while abroad. For some it assisted coping with the experience of isolation: *“My faith helps, because then I never feel completely on my own.”* For others it helped mitigate the fear that the challenges faced abroad would become overwhelming: *“I believe I’m not going to be put in a situation that is too difficult to cope with. I will rely on God to take care of me or put in my way people who can help if things get very difficult.”* Others spoke of the influence their faith has on relationship difficulties: *“My marriage is still going; partly because we have children, but more importantly it’s because I am a Christian and I made a commitment when I married for life.”* The experience of living abroad was also reported to prompt deeper reflection and evaluation of one’s beliefs.

On a broader level, several partners spoke of reflective practices that they found meaningful and enriching. These included meditation, consciousness seeking, and reviewing philosophical and spiritual literature. Believing in a greater purpose for why one is abroad, such as God's leading and/or the value of humanitarian work was repeatedly stressed as being *"why I'm here at this point in my life."* Conviction about the importance of the work also helped partners reconcile some of the challenging aspects of living abroad (e.g. being on call all the time, frequent travel, lack of reliable services such as Internet and power): *"He [the humanitarian working partner] is helping people in need, so it helps me to accept the difficult things."*

6.1.2 Family Coping Strategies

The five key coping strategies presented in the previous section were not only applied at a personal level, but also reflected actions or mindsets shared between couples or larger family units. This section summarises those five strategies as applied to the family unit in addition to the following six adaptive initiatives that were only detected within families: 1) routines, rituals and stability; 2) time together, holidays and recreation; 3) relational commitment and respect; 4) communication patterns; 5) sacrifice and support; and 6) family safeguarding and defence.

6.1.2.1 Social and Professional Supports

Mirroring individual strategies, social support was the most frequently cited factor expressed when partners were prompted to say how couples and families managed the difficulties they faced: *"I think the social interactions are the most important."* Purposeful seeking of relationships while abroad took various approaches, including, attending faith communities: *"We try and connect quickly with the church,"* socialising from home: *"We have games nights,"* via schools and sporting groups. Being very intentional about developing friendships was often considered an ongoing priority given the constant turnover and departure of expatriates.

"We have to be more conscious; we have this family we get along very well with, but for ourselves and our kids we have to branch out our friend network because they are going to be gone." [Partner 3]

Pursuing meaningful friendships where families could share both the *"ups and downs"* of expatriate life was also emphasised as important.

“Finding some friends with whom we share humor and learning and developing intimacy has been really important. The last two times we have been here we have had this New Zealand family where their kids are similar ages as ours, and we all get on well. That has become an important friendship. They are like the extended or pseudo family.” [Partner 9]

Prioritising connections with host citizens was advocated, avoiding the inherent tendency to “look for your own nationality” or those more similar to your own family while abroad. Beyond recognising the “unique opportunity to know about the different cultures,” partners spoke of relationships with local neighbours as helping reduce feelings of isolation, increasing their enjoyment and engagement within community and as a valued security measure (especially in insecure contexts).

The value of maintaining connections with distant friends and family was also highlighted: “We do have strong family support from our families. We speak to them nearly every week,” viewing this as a preventative strategy to facilitate repatriation. Other strategies included assisting with preserving close ties with separated adult children and helping children connect with their extended relatives and countries of origin.

“I prefer face-to-face contact, but it's [Skype video calls] definitely very, very helpful with grandparents, particularly for the children. For the little one, when we came back, each time he knew them really well, and that made a big difference to all of the grandparents. We had to Skype them once a week to maintain that.” [Partner 21]

Lastly, several participants acknowledged the value of seeking qualified counselling or relationship enrichment activities. In addition to pursuing marriage courses or counselling, family-targeted wellness retreats were also attended with the intent of enriching and equipping families to remain abroad and improve family functioning.

“About a year and a half after being here we saw a counsellor; I needed more support and I needed him [my husband] to acknowledge me... Those four weeks of counselling really got us back on track and really helped us. Since then, our relationship has gotten better and better, now it's the best ever. We've been married 16 years.” [Partner 5]

“As a couple, we did something with the church, which was a marriage course. I found it incredibly helpful. It was an eight-week course on different topics.” [Partner 18]

6.1.2.2 Meaningful Pursuits and Occupations

While many accompanying partners spoke of the challenge of staying busy with meaningful occupations, in several instances partners stressed a sense of shared engagement and strong commitment to humanitarian work that was very fulfilling for them.

“I’ve had a lot of pleasure and satisfaction out of the work I’ve done here. It doesn’t at all feel like I’m just here because of Quentin. I enjoy the work I do and work opportunities, however part-time they might be. In a way I don’t feel like a wife of an NGO humanitarian worker. I don’t feel like an accompanying partner, I feel like a full person in my own right. This is something we have always done together. It’s only been since we had children that he works full-time for the NGO and I don’t.” [Partner 9]

Several partners also commented on their partner’s job satisfaction: *“He’s very happy doing what he does; he loves his job.”* Awareness and recognition of the worker’s enjoyment regarding their role was utilised by some participants to help rationalise some of the negative aspects of expatriate life.

6.1.2.3 Preparation, Planning and Experience

In response to a broad array of challenges, including health and safety fears, partners provided numerous examples of careful preparation and scenario planning.

“The biggest purchase while we were in India every trip home was medicine. We’d buy bulk medicine and take it to Cambodia. We’d heard a lot of stories about fake medicines in Cambodia.” [Partner 7]

Experience and familiarisation also aided with coming to terms with one’s new reality and managing the practical, emotional and relational challenges associated with transition and settling in. Learning from experience and simply developing networks and coping skills over a period of time was also emphasised with regards to dealing with the impact of frequent travel by the worker.

“Initially when we first came I would really resent him going away. I didn’t have the network of friends that I have now; I didn’t have so much going on. That was very hard. Four years into it we are both better at dealing with it. We both need to adjust, to have a day or two, feeling our way at getting back into our family routine.” [Partner 18]

Participants with long-term experience living in volatile high-risk settings reported the need for additional security-related preventative or risk-avoidance measures that included integration with the local population and adherence to agency risk management policies. Avoiding standing out: *“I drive an old beaten up Volkswagen bus, it’s quite good. No one looks at us twice,”* and building strong ties with local people were described as important security measures, while the same participants emphasised having *“always taken security seriously.”* This included constant monitoring of the context and respect for INGO security policies and procedures: *“You can’t be blasé here, you’ve got to have some sort of security policy in place and then live by it... Otherwise, when bad things happen you are going to blame yourself for not doing enough.”*

6.1.2.4 Routines, Rituals and Stability

Partners, especially parents, frequently described behaviours or routines in their lives that served to provide consistency to family interactions. Some referred to daily practices: *“We pray together at night with the kids, it is a small ritual every night,”* while others spoke of weekly routines: *“Once a week we try to have a family movie, usually on a Friday.”* Yet others identified traditions reserved for special occasions (e.g. celebrating Advent or Halloween). Recognising the multiple stressors associated with relocation, several partners also described rituals aimed to make this period more dependable and unifying for the family as a whole.

Seeking stability during disruptive periods was a recurrent strategy that emerged during interviews, particular for families with accompanying children. As highlighted by the following quote, education and schooling were seen as particularly important means for achieving this.

“For the kids the stability came from within the home. We moved often and that is why I ended up home schooling them, which is something I didn’t think

I would ever do. But it was the one constant thing for the kids with all the shifting around. I think they felt safe in the family wherever we were.”
[Partner 11]

6.1.2.5 Time Together, Holidays and Recreation

While routines and rituals often aimed to foster consistency and unity, an equally important outcome of these practices was to ensure regular time together between couples or parents and their children. To this end, partners prioritised “*date nights*” or “*family nights*” where “*we can get back together and talk about things*” and daily practices such as praying, debriefing the day or sharing a meal together. Regular time together was reported as being instrumental in mitigating the effort of long working hours, frequent travel, general relationship strains and the isolation attributed to limited immediate support networks. Finding ways of having fun, enjoying humor and being able to relax were expressed as central to sustaining families in ‘hard places’ and possible despite limited recreational opportunities.

“We are very good at taking family days, so for the weekends a good day would be spending time with the kids. We are just chilling out and might stay at home or go out on the roof because we don't have any land... or we might go to a park, although there aren't many. Family days are good and they keep us sane” [Partner 16]

Partners, especially in hardship postings, also stressed the importance of regular breaks: “*I would say at least twice a year we should get out of the country.*” Despite various factors that often negatively affect the willingness and ease with which humanitarian workers pursue holidays (e.g. work deadlines or a sense of guilt), acknowledgement of the health benefits of such breaks was made.

“If you don't book your holidays, you just keep putting it off because you always have stuff to do. And you know the idea of the frog in a pot? It has no idea it is getting warmer and warmer and has no idea where it is health wise and it's about to be cooked alive. We realise that we need to take more regular trips out of the country.” [Partner 16]

Acknowledging the burden shared by several participants about the expectations of distant family and friends during holidays or home leave, one partner described the

decision she made concerning the importance of scheduling family time away from the obligations of others.

“This has been very difficult to do because you go back and you think you really must make the most of seeing family. But I think in terms of our life here, it’s really important that we can just be alone together on holiday. That has been a thing we have learnt over the years to try and do.” [Partner 18]

Spending time together as a family and taking holidays were general strategies used to maintain relationships and address work-family balance issues. A number of partners also provided specific examples of how humanitarian workers specifically sought to ensure they were aware and responsive to family needs, as opposed to being overly preoccupied with work-related matters. These included:

- Adjusting one’s role or position depending on the developmental stage and needs of the family: *“It was hard with the kids and he would temper it... he wasn’t into humanitarian aid work [instead pursuing development postings] during child raising.” [Partner 19]*
- Seeking partner input when discussing and planning work travel: *“We try to keep them [work trips] in two weeks and not three weekends because weekends are the hardest for me with the kids. I think he had to do a three week trip to Haiti when the earthquake happened, and even then we talked about whether it [going to Haiti] was ok with us a family.” [Partner 15]*
- And, prioritising time to reconnect with family members upon returning from travel: *“When he gets back from a trip he always takes the first day off to spend with me. He used to go right back to work so we never really got to catch up, but now we usually do lunch while the kids are at school.” [Partner 5]*

6.1.2.6 Relational Commitment and Respect

Many participants’ comments revealed strong commitment to the couple or family relationship. For some partners, this dedication was very explicit: *“Another goal of mine, as a mother who is living overseas, [is] to really teach my children to be their own friends, and really develop a tight unit within our own immediate family.”* Very often this sense of responsibility was associated with a sense of isolation coupled with the need to depend upon one another: *“We realise that our immediate family is*

just the four of us, so we need to get along together.” Prioritising relational health was also not limited to those with children, the following quote depicting one couples’ dedication to their relationship above their shared interest of both pursuing humanitarian work: *“We moved back to the Netherlands after one year of relief because I wanted to be able to assess how much it would impact us; our lives and our marriage.”*

While being committed to one another, the importance of avoiding being overly dependent on each other was also discussed: *“We were more conscious as soon as we arrived we needed to meet more people so Fiona doesn’t just vent to me but vents to other people at work. And I can do the same.”* Participants also stressed the importance of respecting individual needs and differences, including being sympathetic to the different adaptation hurdles faced by workers and accompanying partners. This was particularly the case where partners came from different cultural backgrounds and did not share familiarity with travel and expatriate living.

“I’ll be honest, there were too many trips of me going back. At that point if I want to go back home, I’d go back home. Oliver just had to understand, he had no choice, although we used to fight about it sometimes, the money we wasted and all that. But he also understood that it was all new for me, so I had to adapt to it.” [Partner 1]

6.1.2.7 Family Communication

Implied in many of the aforementioned coping strategies is the importance of communication between family members. In particular, while managing the stressors of life abroad, it was evident that particular qualities or dimensions of communication were particularly significant. These included:

- Honest and open sharing;
- Frequent and regular dialogue;
- Goal orientated or problem-solving focussed discussions; and
- Inclusion of the whole family.

Healthy communication within families aided with managing a wide array of difficulties. These included: managing relationship difficulties within families,

weathering transition and relocation stressors, promoting greater couple support for dealing with some of the personal and professional challenges affecting the accompanying partner, avoiding resentment and relationship strain associated with humanitarian work norms and responsibilities, re-evaluating the impact of safety and security threats, and dealing with crises while abroad.

6.1.2.8 Sacrifice and Support

Almost without exception, partners emphasised the importance of sharing the decision to move abroad as key to not feeling resentful about one's circumstances.

"I know people in diplomatic circles, whose wives hate living abroad and hate being here in Nigeria, they resent it completely; they are only here because their husband's job brought them here. We are here, because we both choose to be here. We both see it as our role." [Partner 18]

Building upon this, partners emphasised the need to remain committed to living abroad. Among many participants, a readiness to accept sacrifices, particularly related to one's sense of identity and professional opportunities, was also noted.

"I want to work, but I understand the situation... I am flexible; I can do it later. I can go home anytime. With her, I think this is the best time for her to work." [Partner 4]

A willingness to put their own needs secondary to those of their partner and/or children was indicated during the initial difficult period of settling in.

"I have to be strong for the whole family. I cannot go into pieces because there is no one to pick up the pieces. The strength is that I have to be sure I will be there for the kids." [Partner 1]

"I've seen my role in the first six months has very much been just to be stable person in our family. Everyone went through a big transition; it was important that I was there, calm and happy at the end of the day for everyone to come back to and to have a happy home. Sounds like an American housewife with her apron on, but that is true." [Partner 9]

Accompanying partners providing specific support towards the humanitarian worker was a dominant category that emerged during interviews. Support offered included providing a listening ear, helping with problem-solving, providing emotional support, making the home environment a “*comfortable place to come home to*” and practising social networking and hospitality on behalf of the worker. In addition to promoting the need for “downtime” from work and work-life balance (e.g. watching a movie in the evening or planning family holidays), partners also spoke of the assistance provided through meeting the needs of the family, thereby freeing up the worker to focus on their paid role.

“The only way James would have been able to do his job in the way he’s done it, is because I’ve done what I’ve done behind the scenes, particularly because we have children.” [Partner 2]

Several accompanying partners also reported providing support to the INGO in addition to their partner. Examples included taking the initiative to set up “*coffee mornings*” for newly arrived accompanying partners, organising welcome information packs for new families and providing practical assistance in times of emergency.

“When the earthquake happened we dove in; I ended up being in the office coordinating the volunteers.” [Partner 11]

6.1.2.9 Family Protection and Defence

Closely linked to the support offered and sacrifice accepted by accompanying partners, was evidence of beliefs about the centrality of family wellbeing and the need to protect the family above all else. Such mindsets were clearly evident in both humanitarian workers and accompanying partners. Workers were depicted as putting family welfare ahead of work in the manner in which they responded to crises or stressors within their family, the consideration of family needs when considering travel demands and new job opportunities: “[*The decision to accept the job*] was driven by both of our perceptions about what was best for the team, the overall wellbeing of the team, rather than one person,” and in the way in which they safeguarded family time: “*One factor that makes our relationship work is that I feel we are more important than work to Quentin, and I know that the kids know that. I don’t feel that work crowds out family time.*”

Several accompanying partners were very focused in their intent to defend and safeguard family relationships: *“I think I was pretty stubborn about making sure that we were gonna have a good marriage,”* this belief being closely related to the issue of relational commitment. For some, an outworking of this commitment was a refusal to consider unaccompanied postings. Given the desire and the belief that the family should be a safe place, worthy of protecting and defending, it is not surprising that one participant described her family *“like a castle.”* Finally, prioritising the needs of children was also evident among many parents. Outcomes of this perspective included:

- Ensuring the support of children when considering relocation;
- The accompanying partner choosing not to pursue work in favour of being more present for the family;
- Being mindful of children’s transition needs;
- Returning home due to the children’s reluctance to remain abroad;
- Making decisions about exposure to security risks and length of time abroad due to concerns about child welfare; and
- Considering the impact of living abroad and the timing of relocations on child’s education and schooling options.

6.1.2.10 Positive Thinking, Perseverance and Acceptance

Interviews revealed families adopted a positive or ‘can do’ attitude: *“We made the decision that this is what our life is going to be and whatever happens we will be together and we just stick it out,”* and being mindful to *“enjoy the good things on offer.”* For example, several partners appreciated babysitting opportunities afforded by employing local helpers to allow them to spend quality time together, while others recognised the positive aspects of residing where *“the cost of living is quite low.”* Despite limited available resources, many families seized what opportunities could be found and exercised creativity and persistence to meet their needs: *“My children are on holiday now, so with my few close friends we made a program of activities, so every day we have something we do together. I am of firm mind that you do need to make things happen.”* Also observed was family-level adjustment and acceptance: *“We had to adjust our expectations as well,”* as well as reconciliation of the realities

of a particular location: *“We just had to deal with the stresses of war and health concerns and get on with life.”*

6.1.2.11 Faith, Spirituality and Purpose

A number of families emphasised depending heavily on their faith and religious convictions for their motivation to engage in humanitarian work and remain abroad despite the challenges faced.

“As a family we have a huge faith in God, we believe that God is the reason we are here... it’s a huge part of why my husband does what he does and everything” [Partner 5]

Believing in the value of prayer was a source of comfort for several families, while for others simply identifying with a greater sense of meaning or purpose (whether this was affiliated with a particular religion or not) was very important.

“You take one person's life, one woman out of slavery; it makes a huge difference to her, it makes it worthwhile. We could be making a lot more money in New Zealand or Australia, but we choose to be here because we love it; the fact that we are part of changing people's lives.” [Partner 16]

Finally, the majority of participants expressed that they themselves, and often their children (depending on age), strongly believed in the value of humanitarian work: *“I know both of my daughters are very proud of what their daddy does.”*

6.1.3 Coping Strategies: Pulling it All Together

Table 16 presents the dominant coping strategies that emerged during partner interview analysis. The table highlights those that were applied at both the individual and family level and attempts to distinguish between behavioural initiatives and those more influenced by cognitive beliefs. Related strategies have been clustered together under broader subheadings with the aim of simplifying the number of key concepts. For example, ‘Preparation, Planning and Experience’ and ‘Routines, Rituals and Stability’ are grouped together under the broader heading of ‘Adaptability and Consistency.’

Table 16: Dominant individual and family coping strategies

Coping Strategy	Components of Coping Strategy	Person	Family
Beliefs / Cognitions			
Positive Thinking, Perseverance and Acceptance	[Be positive, optimistic and appreciative; Live for today, 'seize the moment'; Believe it's up to you and persevere; Accept and 'come to terms' with reality]	✓	✓
Faith, Spirituality and Purpose	[Faith and spirituality; Larger purpose or values]	✓	✓
Family First	Sacrifice and Support: [Partner and parental sacrifice and support; Make relocation decisions together]		✓
	Family Protection and Defence: [Family welfare comes first; 'Family fortress' mentality (to be defended, unbreakable, a safe place)]		✓
Behaviours / Actions			
Social, Professional and Occupational Supports	Social and Professional Supports: [Proactively seek and commit to relationships abroad; Maintain distant family and friend networks; Engage and explore your environment and seek cultural connections; Seek professional or counselling supports as needed]	✓	✓
	Meaningful Pursuits and Interests: [Pursue meaningful occupations or interests]	✓	✓
Adaptability and Consistency	Preparation, Planning and Experience: [Preparation, information and risk avoidance; Learning from experience or normalisation through exposure; Flexibility, open-mindedness and 'letting go' of expectations]	✓	✓
	Routines, Rituals and Stability: [Consistency through routines and rituals; Stability through disruption]		✓
Family Connectedness	Time Together, Holidays and Recreation: [Quality time together (via routines and rituals); Balance work-family demands; Prioritise holidays and recovery times; Fun and recreation]		✓
	Commitment and Respect: [Commitment to relational health and each other; Respect individual needs and differences]		✓
Family Communication	[Clarity and honesty; Problem-solving or goal orientated; Regular; Inclusive of children]		✓

It should be emphasised that the dominant strategies described in this chapter were applied across a wide array of different stressors. For example, Table 17 summarises the key coping strategies evident from interview analysis applied to dealing with conflict within the couple relationship. This table highlights the use of multiple strategies to prevent, minimise or manage common relationship strains frequently experienced by accompanying partners of international humanitarian workers.

Table 17: Main coping strategies reported to prevent, minimise or manage couple relationship stressors

BELIEFS	
Positive Thinking, Perseverance, and Acceptance:	Believing one will endure or resolve relationship strains, optimistic view or acceptance regarding frequent worker absence, acceptance of globally-mobile lifestyle
Faith, Spirituality and Purpose:	Faith influencing relationship commitment
Family First [Sacrifice and Support]:	Joint decision to relocate, willingness to put career on hold, consideration of worker's needs
Family First [Family Protection and Defence]:	Being intentional about the desire to thrive as a couple
BEHAVIOURS	
Social, Professional and Occupational Supports [Social and Professional Supports]:	Intentionally seeking social networks beyond each other, attending marriage counselling, courses or family retreats. Adaptability and Consistency [Preparation, Planning and Experience]: seeking information on humanitarian working norms and expectation
Family Connectedness [Time Together, Holidays and Recreation]:	Sharing regular time together, scheduling holiday time (including time just as a family)
Family Connectedness [Commitment and Respect]:	Being sympathetic to one another's needs and different adaption issues, being mindful of the impact of humanitarian work upon the relationship
Family Communication:	Not allowing grievances to build up, being honest with feelings

6.2 Advice for Others

This section summarises the main recommendations participants provided in response to the question: “What advice would you give to someone considering moving overseas as the partner of a humanitarian worker?”

Be patient, open-minded and flexible: Partners strongly emphasised the importance of “*adaptability*,” keeping an “*open mind*,” being comfortable with uncertainty, and aware that “*you are just going to have your ups and downs*” during the settling in process. The importance of patience and flexibility were underscored as key qualities both during the process of moving and also while residing abroad. These qualities were described as key to maintaining one’s own inner wellbeing and coping with frustration over unfamiliar environmental and cultural norms.

Prioritise social networking opportunities: Partner feedback emphasised the need to ‘fight isolation’ and of the importance, especially as new arrivals, to make significant efforts to meet people. Where invitations are not forthcoming, accompanying partners were encouraged to seek out local groups (e.g. women’s clubs, church groups, playgroups, sporting clubs) and “*plunge in.*” Though it was recognised that this is often the period in which one feels weary from relocating, it is the critical window in which to network and identify professional and social opportunities. Several participants also advised that one should “*be willing to approach people and ask. If you don’t it’ll be difficult to find out where things are and how things are done.*”

Stay busy and pursue your own meaningful roles and interests: Participants stressed the need for self-motivated initiatives to avoid boredom, loneliness and doubting one’s own value and identity, especially for non-working accompanying partners: “*Seeking out something that will be meaningful and enjoyable in your own life is really important.*” Such endeavours will vary considerably between individuals. Some will be content to focus on parenting, others may want to work part-time or volunteer while, for some, the chance to pursue interests like sewing or yoga can be meaningful. Failure to consider one’s own occupations abroad, and to merely follow a humanitarian worker, places partners at “*huge risk for feeling stuck and resentful and confused.*”

Prioritise relationship issues within your family: The importance of strong family relationships (both within the couple relationship and between parents and children) was consistently highlighted as essential to adjusting and thriving while living abroad: *“Looking after each other and caring for each other as a family is really important.”* Keys to ensuring strong relationships included the importance of honest, open and frequent dialogue: *“Keep communicating and talking with each other; sharing what is going well and what is hard.”*

Given the travel demands typical of many expatriate humanitarian positions, long-distance communication skills were advised in addition to communication tools, such as those acquired through relationship counselling: *“If you’ve had some counselling... as a family to endure stresses, then I would suggest that. Those skills mean when those tough times come, you’ve got something to fall back on.”* Also vital is acknowledging children’s feelings and opinions, particularly in regards to decisions about moving. Prioritising regular *“quality”* family time was emphasised in addition to the fact that all family members should be confident that the family, not work, is the *“first priority.”* Finally, partners are advised to be mindful of supporting each family member’s unique transition process and to be intentional in the role of looking *“after your relationships”* and keeping one’s *“family and marriage together.”*

Make decisions together and appreciate each other’s challenges: Participants repeatedly emphasised the importance of making the decision to move together and being committed to life abroad: *“The main thing is that you both agree where you’re going. The couples that have really struggled are the ones who haven’t made the decision together. We have seen friends almost split up because of this.”* Thriving as a couple is also dependent on recognising the different challenges and responsibilities each member faces. Accompanying partners were encouraged to appreciate that the steep learning curve and volume of work for employees would *“probably seem extreme for the first four to six months when they are getting their feet under them.”* This does not need to remain this way for the entire posting however, and couples were encouraged to clearly articulate goals in terms of working hours. Equally important is for the humanitarian worker to appreciate that

“they will have their job to occupy their time and that it is often much harder for the spouse and children to adapt than it is for them.”

Prepare; practically and mentally: In order to minimise adjustment difficulties, disappointments and frustrations, partners should be *“well informed before you go.”* Suggested useful information sources include talking to people who have lived there, books, websites and blogs. Where possible, a country visit can also provide valuable information, such as accommodation and education options and foodstuffs and supplies generally available. A proactive approach to adjustment involves finding out as much as possible about potential future viable occupations, interests for oneself and about the nature of the humanitarian role.

Partners should also *“be prepared for it [transition] to be tough”* and appreciate that it *“takes about six months to start becoming comfortable.”* Realism is vital, as is recognising the limits of what one can achieve in terms of development or poverty relief: *“You’ve got to be realistic; it’s good to do stuff and be involved and walk along side people, but you are a tiny drop in the ocean. I think people underestimate how huge a change it is to go and place yourself in another country and culture.”*

Keep a positive outlook: Gaining the most from the expatriate experience involves ensuring one favourably frames the opportunities and experiences available. For example, rather than focusing on the risk of boredom if no longer working, one can instead look *“at it as a way to build your own skills and have your own experience.”* With planning, various opportunities can be pursued, such as distance study, photography, or online business development. Learning to be content with what is available is also critical: *“You have to bloom where you are planted.”* Lastly, while it is easy to become fixated on the things lacking in a host country, it is important to *“take advantage of where you are. There will always be something really wonderful about being where you are in some country, even the crazy ones.”*

Seek connections with the local culture: Human nature means that we often seek out people like ourselves, thus expatriates often socialise with other expatriates. However, accompanying partners stressed pursuing connections with the host culture is key to maximising the learning potential of expatriate living: *“It is a very unique*

opportunity, to know a country like Malawi. So it is better to open ourselves up a little bit; adapt to local culture a little bit. That's what makes you grow as a person and also for your family.” Central to this experience is making efforts to “*learn the language.*”

Maintain connections with distant loved ones: Partners spoke of the ease with which time can pass without communicating with family and friends back home, creating “*distance*” between loved ones that can be hard to reverse. For assisting accompanying children to maintain or build connections with extended family, and for one’s own support and ease of transition when returning home, the advice was given to be “*really intentional about how and who you want to stay connected with back home.*”

Have fun and laugh: A final recommendation for thriving as expatriate families regarded retaining a “*sense of humour*” or playfulness while abroad: “*Life is not meant to be all work and hard grind... seek out ways to have fun and enjoyment together, even if limited, they can still exist.*” Given the demanding workloads common to humanitarian work, regular relaxation is critical to maintaining strong family relationships and preventing chronic stress and burnout.

6.2.1 Advice for Others: Pulling it All Together

The ten most common recommendations outlined above reflect the key lessons learnt based on the personal experiences of each participant and their observations of other expatriate families. While these recommendations appear repetitive of the coping strategies outlined in section 6.1, it should be acknowledged that these recommendations are based on participant’s reflective opinions and advice, while the coping strategies previously outlined summarised the actual reported actions or mindsets used by accompanying partners themselves to manage challenges or crises while abroad. This reiteration therefore helps validate the significance of these beliefs and behaviours.

6.3 Humanitarian INGOs and Families

Partner interviews included a discussion on INGO support towards expatriate humanitarian families. Topics explored included policies or the provision of practical

assistance that partners valued, areas in which support was perceived lacking, and general suggestions for improvement. Before presenting a summary of this feedback, two crosscutting categories emerged with regards to INGO support. Firstly, recognising that *“each humanitarian organisation is so different,”* what was surprising for some was not the inter-agency variation in family-related benefits, but rather the difference in support between different offices within the same INGO. Rather than a consistent approach to family care and support being promoted from headquarters, partners reported the support received *“all depends on the local office.”* Valued support was also often dependent on individual people taking the time to help, rather than being policy driven. The difference between assistance received when arriving in developing countries (field offices) versus arriving in western countries (support offices) was also striking.

“In Mozambique they have a whole team dedicated to you and your family to settle in. In the US, it is totally different; for me it was a shock. I mean we are not American, why didn’t somebody pick us up from the airport to show us around? There was nothing. We had to discover it on our own.” [Partner 1]

Secondly, partners’ expectations of what constitutes family support and how well INGOs provide this were notably diverse, and affected by factors including familiarity with the humanitarian industry, the size, values and organisational structure of the INGO they were affiliated with, and previous international experience.

“Part of the reason we had a good transition is because I didn’t expect any of that. But that comes from a long history of working with humanitarian organisations and doing a lot of moves. I had relatively realistic expectations.” [Partner 10]

Partners were often insightful of this and thus commented on the challenges of being too specific with regards to recommendations for INGOs: *“Some people might find that support incredibly patronising. Every family has different needs.”*

6.3.1 Effective Family Support Strategies

Every organisation, family and specific location presents very different attributes, resources and specific challenges. Influencing factors, to name just a few, were the

size and particular mandate of the organisation, the family life cycle or developmental stage, prior international experience by the family and the nature of the expatriate community in a given context. Despite these variables, interview analysis identified six key potential areas for targeted support of expatriate families: 1) Organisational culture and family-friendly policies and practices (including family benefit packages); 2) Staff recruitment and selection; 3) Pre-deployment; 4) Deployment or settling in; 5) Sustainment or ongoing management; and 6) Transition and post-deployment. These reflect the underpinning issue of policy and organisational culture and five commonly depicted stages in the humanitarian deployment cycle²⁸.

6.3.1.1 Organisational Culture and Family-Friendly Policies and Practices

A number of partners described the benefits provided by humanitarian INGOs as evidence of them being family-friendly organisations: *“They are very supportive of the family. I think that is demonstrated by the fact they pay school fees for children.”* While the specific benefits and allowances related to accommodation, schools fees, health insurance and return flights home differed between INGOs, participants were usually appreciative of the general conditions: *“We get a house, they pay for all school fees; the package is brilliant,”* or *“The fact that there is this 100% support behind us, even for our kids, the health insurance etc... all of that alleviates a huge stress.”* Though a number of partners were critical of specific benefits provided (e.g. rental allowances being set too low, health insurance policies not covering their needs), others spoke highly of specific benefits that they greatly appreciated. Several examples have been provided below, chosen primarily as they depict more creative or unusual approaches to considering family supports.

“They also do a really nice thing in July and in December; they allow you a certain amount of extra pounds, so for example the grandparents can send the Christmas presents. I don’t think a lot of organisations do that and it’s really a nice benefit.” [Partner 14]

“[Christian Development INGO] organises the housing, they relate to the landlord, and if we have a problem they fix the stuff. When there was a leak

²⁸ The humanitarian deployment cycle is clearly presented by the Antares Foundation (2006) and Williamson (2010).

in the roof and Quentin was at work they came and fixed it. The housing in Afghanistan often has plenty of problems; leaks, plumbing problems and so on are endemic. So the support with housing is really good.” [Partner 9]

“[Christian Development INGO] have a scheme, I can’t remember what they call it; I call it the spouse sanity scheme. They will fund you to work with a local NGO, or a school if you are a teacher or a health practice if you’re a medic... Keeps you a bit more sane; keeps your brain working and it gives you more pocket money; a reasonable local wage. It works to about \$400 USD a month. It’s good to provide a framework someone can slot in to and do something.” [Partner 12]

Support with finding accommodation was one of the more contentious topics with regards to benefits provided by INGOs. Some agencies take responsibility for providing accommodation (a practice met with mixed feelings by accompanying partners) or providing real estate agents or local staff to help families locate suitable homes. Conversely, other families’ spoke of feeling completely unsupported in the process of finding a house and pressured to find something within *“the time frame that the international manual said you should find a suitable house.”*

Moving beyond policies related to family benefit packages, many participants emphasised much more could be done to *“help families to feel more part of the organisation and feel they are appreciated for what they do in their support role.”* In particular, a lack of direct communication with partners was highlighted: *“A general improvement would be for them to have contact with me as well”* as well as the need for *“pastoral support”* or putting *“structures in place to help or have any idea that the spouse might be unhappy sometimes.”* Positive feedback was shared about INGOs in which partners were welcomed: *“I didn’t feel awkward showing up at work”* and managers who enquired about the wellbeing of families as well as staff.

Again, this was not the experience for all: *“I met the country director here once in the last month and we have been here for four and half years. That is ridiculous in my opinion.”* One partner spoke of an *“Accompanying Wives Group”* that she had helped initiate whose purpose, among other things was to organise social welcoming

events for new families. She expressed considerable frustration, however, that despite agreements with a HR employee to provide the details and names of new families, the reality was *“she’s not really following through.”* Other valued family-work intersection points included occasional conferences, retreats or work field visits for which partners and/or families were invited.

“When [Christian Relief and Development INGO] had the one person I keep talking about, he had it that every spouse of every country director was invited to the annual regional meeting. Those two years I met so many other wives of different countries directors in the area and it was just wonderful. Since he left, it hasn’t happened.” [Partner 5]

“When we’ve had a hard time sometimes we’ve felt quite isolated. To get together with other families and realise they often had the same problems was really refreshing and made us not feel so alone.” [Partner 9]

Opportunities such as those mentioned above were the exception, not the norm among partners interviewed. Moreover, these benefits and supports were often subject to increased frugality with *“cutbacks in the NGO world”* being a dominant category during interviews.

“Two or three years ago [Christian Relief and Development INGO] stopped this trip. I know they did it to save money, but it was something I really appreciated and I know a lot of people did. I think it was a very good way, which didn’t cost the organisation very much, to allow spouses to get that inside look. It was quite short-sighted to do away with it.” [Partner 2]

Finally, appreciation was expressed for family support through employment practices such as flexible working hours and conditions: *“It is really important that the workers know that they have permission to take time off if their family needs them; you don’t have to pretend you are sick,”* the ability to work remotely: *“He got permission from the office to work one day a week from home,”* and making policy exceptions on issues like leave allowances to attend births or funerals: *“Chip’s parents passed away... they were hugely supportive during that time for him to have time off.”*

6.3.1.2 Staff Recruitment and Selection

Three participants spoke favourably of a recruitment experience in which they felt very included. While all were hired by Christian INGOs, they represent very different organisations in terms of operating budgets and development philosophies. Significant to the partners was a sense of being included from the outset and that family coping, safety and wellbeing were prioritised by the organisation.

“[When] Keith was offered the job it was tentative because it was pending an interview. It was very important we went as a family; they didn’t want to see Keith on his own. We went [to Germany] for one week and there were 20 other candidates. It was a week teaching about [the history and ideology of Christian Development INGO], interviews, and at the end they asked, “Do you still want to work for us?” Then they would say, yes or no; you have been offered a job. I loved that aspect of it; I wasn’t being pulled along or ignored in the decision. We were considered very much as a family from that point.”
[Partner 18]

“[Christian Relief and Development INGO] recruited us, so we both got flown to Melbourne and were both orientated. They brought in an external counsellor; he was amazing, really good. He basically did all these tests and said Peter would be fine, but I would struggle. So he then focused on me for the next hour or so.” [Partner 15]

Providing clear information on family-related policies and benefits to prospective staff and their partners was also identified as necessary in order for families to make an informed decision prior to expatriation.

6.3.1.3 Pre-deployment Support

Linking families soon to depart with others familiar with that country was repeatedly advised, both for providing practical information such as the availability of pharmaceutical supplies or the reliability of power, and to *“talk about some of the risks and traps of being overseas. How things could be and how they can do things to ensure their relationship stays on track.”* Acknowledgement and education from the INGO of the impact of work, especially emergency-related work, on family relationships was also requested.

“As an organisation they didn’t really educate the spouse or the worker as to what it was really like to be in emergency and how relationships need to be nurtured. Apart from the counselling when things were going wrong, there really wasn’t enough preparation. The literature they gave me before I left was really out of date and it was about army wives, a very different focus from what the reality was for us. I don’t think their resources really reflected that they cared enough about families, even though they say they value families and value relationships... That was the big joke at the office; we value people, ha ha, just not the workers.” [Partner 23]

Feedback from multiple partners also emphasised the importance of “responsiveness” among INGOs to requests, and “keeping people informed of their benefits.” Failure to adhere to these practices was a commonly expressed criticism of INGOs: *“I have met other [Christian Relief and Development INGO] families and you say to them, there is such and such a benefit and they have never heard of it because no one has ever told them.”* Negative consequences of this included additional stress (especially during the already difficult initial weeks in a new country), feeling *“disappointed and frustrated”* and resentment towards the organisation.

“You could generate a long laundry list of what organisations could do but providing information would have to be near the top of it, before the move, really good communication, and being very responsive to requests. Even if you can’t meet them, try to understand why they are being asked and explain why you can’t meet them. That is really important. The better organisations can help manage people’s expectations the more likely they can avoid frustrated expectations and disappointments down the track.” [Partner 10]

On a practical note, positive feedback was provided by those who benefited from assistance with shipping and moving personal effects: *“They provided shipping for us to bring goods which I think is hugely important for helping people feel like they can set up home and feel a bit settled and put down some roots.”*

6.3.1.4 Deployment or Settling In

Participants' opinions varied markedly concerning the welcome and orientation provided by INGOs. For some, positive memories were associated with this phase: *"The organisation was great in helping us settle in."* Such assistance was usually provided through informal social connections within the INGO, rather than a deliberate practice by the organisation.

"We were lucky in terms of housing, there was a lady that worked for [Christian Relief and Development INGO] and her second job was in real estate, so in the evenings she went around showing us places."

[Partner 1]

"He does have one other expat colleague here, and they were really helpful in those early months settling in. They invited us to lunch every so often. Charity, the wife of his colleague would pop over every so often to see how I was doing. I felt they were interested." *[Partner 18]*

Unfortunately, not all partners shared such positive experiences. Seven participants spoke of difficulties during the initial settling in period exacerbated by a lack of INGO support. Feedback included: *"The first month was really, really hard for us. They didn't give any support,"* and *"They weren't just unhelpful, I felt actively ostracised by that organisation. They really did not make me feel welcome at all."* Three specific requests repeatedly made by participants included: 1) allowing sufficient time for the worker and their accompanying family to settle in before commencing full-time work: *"It would be great if for the first week you could come in and not work but set up, find a house, find a school";* 2) promoting social networks between families: *"There are things you could do to network families or spouses a little bit more";* and 3) providing a "welcome pack" of useful information such as maps, key phrases, taxi numbers, emergency contact numbers etc.

6.3.1.5 Sustainment or Ongoing Management

Partners again underscored the importance of INGOs being *"really responsive to requests"* as a valued dimension of family support while abroad. Examples were provided across a wide range of scenarios. These included seeking general information on policies and benefits, expert medical advice in places where there are

limited medical services, receptiveness to working flexible hours, financial assistance, and specific accommodation needs.

“When we first came to Kabul in 1999, we couldn’t live on what [Christian Development INGO] set as our budget. We told them and they increased it. We found that really supportive. They didn’t say why can’t you live on it or obviously you are not trying hard enough, they just increased it.” [Partner 9]

“If there are ever any questions on benefits or health insurance they are always very quick to respond and provide updated information when things change. They keep us well informed.” [Partner 14]

Five partners identified confidential counselling or debriefing support provided through the INGO as something they appreciated. Reasons for the counselling varied from coping with exposure to trauma: *“When the shooting happened, they were pretty keen that Heath and I both had some sort of counselling,”* to managing relationship strain: *“We asked for help with our relationship issues. We went to counselling through [Christian Development INGO] and that was helpful; they covered the cost for it and didn’t probe.”* Ensuring counselling support can be accessed anonymously was also stressed. Another participant discussed the pros and cons of Member Care, a form of support common among missionary groups but unusual in INGOs.

“Member Care... they try to keep an eye out for the spiritual, emotional health etc. of team members... There is only one full-time position doing it and here... [there is] probably over 50 expats including children just in Kabul, so one person can’t do all that well. And mostly people who are in Member Care positions haven’t got formal training. However, as a concept Member Care can work really well; it is very possible for people to burn out here, to have too hard a time and go home. If the organisation does Member Care properly and really looks out for people they are more likely to stay for longer.” [Partner 9]

Several participants valued the *“prayer support”* they received through the Christian INGO they were affiliated with abroad. Conversely, others were critical of agencies that they felt used prayer as an excuse to not really address the needs in question: *“I*

couldn't see that they... really focused on our needs. We just heard this sentence, 'be strong we pray for you.' I can't see that they really supported us." All partners offering feedback on this matter identified themselves as Christians. Participants stated it was unreasonable to expect INGOs should meet their emotional, mental and spiritual needs: *"I don't really know how an organisation could take on the mental health of the families. I just don't see how that could be part of their mandate."* It was considered imperative, however, that agencies should *"pay for support"* with regards to accessing professional debriefing or mental health services.

6.3.1.6 Transition and Post-Deployment

Beyond practical assistance such as packing and shipping personal effects, the importance of having debriefing opportunities for both the worker and the accompanying partner was emphasised. This was particularly desired in circumstances where the posting varied significantly from what was anticipated or tension between the INGO and family was experienced.

"We had our expectations, we wanted to stay there for at least one year and it didn't work out. What had we done wrong? What could have been done better? It wasn't possible to talk to them. We kind of felt left alone with all the rubbish we experienced. It would have been good to get feedback and review the mistakes of the past." [Partner 20]

Extended health insurance was also recommended depending on whether families were returning home or being re-assigned to a new location.

6.3.2 Why Family Issues Matter

This section summarises interview feedback regarding why the support of families is, or should be, of significant importance to INGOs. Discussion on this subject was either raised by participants themselves or elicited in response to the question: "Do you believe that INGOs have a responsibility to provide support to accompanying partners/families as well as to the worker?"

Partners felt strongly that organisations have responsibilities towards expatriate families on accompanying postings. Agency acceptance of this responsibility was often perceived through the various family-related benefits provided: *"They do offer*

a good family package; the school fees and spouse sanity scheme and the health plan. So they acknowledge the fact they've got a duty to the extended family." Several partners expressed their belief that HR staff "*should take the lead*" (though this may involve delegating specific tasks) with regards to being "*very aware of the role of the family... to check how the family is doing.*" Other respondents felt the discussion shouldn't focus on a sense of responsibility; they emphasised family support is a business matter which impacts employee efficiency and value for money.

"INGOs invest a lot of money in people like Nathan; it's a big investment. It takes a lot of time for them to pick up culture and office dynamics and language and figure out how to work with the government, and it's often because family is not coping for one reason or another that people like Nathan leave their posting early or don't renew. If you just look at it from a sheer economic viewpoint, even leaving aside the morals of the whole thing, then it still makes sense to think strategically how can we support these families and how can we ease their transition?" [Partner 10]

Central to the logic of family support being "*good business practice*" is the issue of staff retention. Accompanying partners repeatedly emphasised their influence on their INGO-employed partner with regards to decisions to remain abroad and the relationship between family satisfaction and employee turnover: "*If you want to hold on to good employees you need to make sure they are happy and their family is happy.*" Also highlighted was the association between family wellbeing and employee effectiveness: "*If they have an employee somewhere who has a wife and children who are unhappy, that employee is not going to perform to their best.*" The presence of accompanying partners and children was also affiliated with improved employee work-life balance as well as a source of work-related support (hospitality, problem-solving, debriefing etc.) as outlined in section 6.1.2.

"My husband is much happier if I'm there; it makes a big difference to him if I'm around. I think having one's partner or family provides balance and allows one's personal life to continue as well. Life isn't just about whatever emergency that has happened." [Partner 19]

While consensus existed regarding the impact of family functioning on retaining employees, lack of agreement was observed with regards to whether INGOs were doing enough to support families. While some requested greater support: *“I really do think that they should have more of a responsibility towards the [family] support system, because the worker is affected by what’s going on at home,”* others stressed *“every family will need different things”* and the fact families should take responsibility for their circumstances: *“I made the choice to go to Sri Lanka, it would be nice to have all those things laid out, but I think it is good to be proactive as well.”*

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter expanded on the findings from participant interviews, focusing on the individual-and family-level coping strategies actually employed by accompanying partners. Advice that participants would offer to individuals considering becoming an accompanying partner of an international humanitarian worker was also presented. Considerable similarities existed between the coping strategies utilised and the recommendations given, suggesting most participants were intentional in their desire to “buffer” or adjust to the challenges they faced. Others shared advice that they regretted not applying to themselves, appreciating in hindsight that this would have aided in their overall functioning. Feedback on the types of organisational support considered most valuable or helpful was also highlighted. Enhanced employee performance and retention, with associated ROI benefits, were emphasised as outcomes of agencies becoming more family focused. The following chapter seeks to better understand the issues concerning family support from the perspective of humanitarian professionals, recognising that the ideal circumstances for family resilience and thriving involve a combination of proactive individual and family coping strategies and supportive organisational policies and practices.

Chapter Seven: Key Informant Interviews – Expatriate Families and Family Supports

“People don’t care how much you know till they know how much you care.”

Theodore Roosevelt

7.0 Introduction

In accordance with the definition provided of wellbeing (section 2.4.2), strengthening one’s resources helps maintain a state of equilibrium or balance when one is faced with greater challenges than usual, as is the case typically during an expatriate posting. As such, the prioritisation and provision of family supports is an important means by which organisations can help strengthen family resilience. Organisation driven family supports represent an important component of a family’s available resources. A specific objective of the research was to better understand the organisational driving and restraining forces that impact the support provided to expatriate families by INGOs. It was considered imperative, therefore, to understand issues surrounding family support from not only accompanying partners, but also the perspective of key senior HR or staff care employees representing INGOs. To this end, this chapter features: 1) information about key informants; 2) perceptions concerning the needs, important family attributes and experiences of accompanying families; and lastly, 3) feedback on INGOs and family support (including why family support matters, who should be responsible for providing it, current supportive practices and areas for improvement, and barriers and enablers influencing the amount and type of support provided).

7.1 The Key Informant Sample

7.1.1 Demographic Profile of Key Informants

Eight key informant interviews were conducted with senior staff from various INGOs. They represented seven different nationalities and spanned a 30-year age range from 31 to 61 years of age (see Table 18). Three informants were married with dependent children. At the time of the interview, all informants held full-time senior positions with humanitarian INGOs.

Table 18: Demographic summary of key informant profiles

	n=8
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	6
Male	2
<i>Participant's Age</i>	
31-35 years	2
36-40 years	1
41-45 years	2
46-50 years	1
51-55 years	-
56-60 years	-
61-65 years	1
<i>Relationship Status</i>	
Married	3
Single	5
<i>Nationality</i>	
American	1
British	2
Cambodian	1
Filipino	1
South African	1
Spanish	1
Swiss	1
<i>Years in Current Organisation</i>	
1-3 years	2
4-6 years	1
7-9 years	3
10-12 years	1
---	-
33-36 years	1
<i>INGOs Represented</i>	
ADRA	2
Christian Aid	1
Hagar International	1
Help Age	1
World Vision	3
<i>Location</i>	
Cambodia	1
Cyprus	1
Mongolia	1
Thailand	1
United Kingdom	1

Three individuals reported only prior working experience within their current employing organisation, while five informants had experience working both with for-profit organisations as well as humanitarian agencies. Five humanitarian INGOs employed the eight key informants. All were Christian organisations with the exception of Help Age.

7.1.2 The Expatriate Experience of Key Informants

It was considered of interest, to determine whether key informants had prior or current expatriate experience themselves. At the time of the interview, four informants were living as expatriates, two as single persons and two with accompanying partners and children. Of the remaining four informants, two had no expatriate experience, while one had former experience living abroad as a single and another had prior experience living as an expatriate with an accompanying family. Across the sample as whole, informants had experience living and working in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

Though a small sample (N=8), it is useful to appreciate the diversity of age, nationality, assignment location and experience of the informants. Their roles varied, from purely HR to combined HR and financial management, while other positions focused on a particular organisational focus like Staff Care. The fact 75% interviewed had personal experience living as expatriates (of which half had accompanying partners and children), was considered advantageous when discussing the needs of accompanying families within the humanitarian sector.

To protect key informants' confidentiality, throughout this chapter interview quotations are referenced with a key informant number.

7.2 Perceptions of Expatriate Families in the Humanitarian INGO Sector

Key informants were asked questions which sought to appraise their understanding and appreciation of family needs with regards to living abroad, the risks and benefits of expatriation, the type of advice they would give to prospective accompanying partners and family traits or qualities that they believed help foster a successful transition and international experience.

7.2.1. Needs of Accompanying Expatriate Families

When prompted with the question: "What do you think are the greatest needs of accompanying partners?" informants identified four key priorities. First, they drew attention to the need for meaningful occupations or work, the perception being this is often overlooked and places partners at risk of boredom and dissatisfaction, which

may result in them leaving a posting. Second, was the importance of validation, being described as hiring organisations that make the effort to acknowledge the existence and needs of spouses, and ideally “*providing the atmosphere that they are welcome and are important.*” Informants also stated that working partners should be encouraged and educated by organisations to express their appreciation of the role often played by accompanying partners.

“They [accompanying spouses] are sacrificing their career for the other person and I find a lot of times they don't feel validated... I think we need to work with our employees to understand how to value their spouses and make them feel important in our enterprise because the reality is we couldn't perform our jobs if spouses weren't supporting.” [Key Informant 2]

Personal reflections: Interview memo

I find myself surprised at how sympathetic the key informants are towards the needs of accompanying families, particularly partners. This probably exposes some prejudice and bias on my behalf, and definitely challenges my assumptions before conducting this research. What I am learning from these interviews is that the lack of concern for families lies much higher-up the leadership chain.... not at the level of HR managers and support care staff as I previously assumed.

Third, the need for social connections and inclusion into organisational and partner networks was also stressed: “*There is a huge amount of loneliness. They spent a lot of time alone by themselves or with the children,*” or: “*It's very easy for family once they arrive in country to be left on their own.*” Finally, the importance of cultural orientation to a new posting, including the opportunity for language learning was emphasised.

When informants were asked what they thought were the main issues for expatriate families with children, responses related to education concerns and information about included family benefits. Informants claimed “*the most important thing for an organisation wanting to retain someone with children is to think about the schooling,*” highlighting the fact international school fees can be extremely expensive. Linked to this was parental concern about the benefit coverage provided

by the organisation (e.g. health insurance, educational benefit policy) and ensuring that details about such policies were made clearly available from the outset: *“To understand all these conditions before they accept the job.”*

7.2.2. Risks and Benefits for Accompanying Expatriate Families

Informants were queried on their opinions concerning potential risks and benefits for families relocating abroad. Feedback highlighted a range of risks or challenges, including:

- Expatriation having a negative impact on couple relationships. Reasons for this included an accompanying partner *“being bored and feeling not valued and all the risks of unemployment”* or the working partner having an affair. Six of the eight informants acknowledged that they were very familiar with strained relationships within the humanitarian community.
- Education concerns, particularly for high school aged children. Informants stressed this concern was beyond just the issue of affordability. In many locations there were also valid concerns regarding the availability of schools (particularly in the preferred language of the student) and the standard of education provided.
- Risk of illness or health concerns.
- Being distant from aging parents.
- Career interruptions and problems finding suitable work for the accompanying partner.
- Children being brought up in atypical circumstances and being distant from family and friends: *“The children are in a sense not brought up in normality... They are away from extended family, grandparents, aunts and uncles, things like that.”*
- Repatriation issues, including finding valued employment, retirement planning and social reintegration: *“Go back when you are still young and you can still find work. But if you work in humanitarian aid for a long time when you go back there may be no work for you in your home country... and there is no retirement plan.”*

In terms of potential rewards from living abroad, almost all informants identified the “*fantastic opportunity to be exposed*” to alternate cultures and worldviews, the probable outcome of this being “*your way of thinking about life will change.*” This was especially stressed for children. Linked to this was the ability to travel regionally, often at reduced expense (e.g. the INGO paying for one or more airfares). Other benefits expressed included the stronger family bonds often promoted through expatriate living and the lifestyle benefits that are possible when “*life is cheaper and you have extra benefits like... having people helping you at home.*”

Professional benefits for the worker were also acknowledged: “*Definitely it develops us, professionally as better administrators because you are looking at different ways, different cultural approaches of doing things.*”

7.2.3 Advice for Accompanying Partners and Recommended Family Strengths

When asked what they felt was important to convey to prospective accompanying partners, the most frequently repeated advice concerned the need to “*research the place*” before going and “*make connections*” with individuals already there. Included in this preparatory information and research period was the need to consider future occupations.

“Always try to consider what type of activity you will be doing. So now I tell people that after one month they will be bored. So have an option B. Have some activity ready to do.” [Key Informant 7]

Informants also raised the issue of setting “*parameters*” or boundaries regarding the humanitarian employee’s working norms (e.g. working hours, weekend working habits) before starting the new position. Other advice included setting “*your own time to arrive to the place,*” recognising that while organisations often put great pressure on families to arrive as soon as possible, often it is more important to attend special family events or finish school terms before relocating. Avoiding countries with poor Internet connection (in terms of maintaining communication with friends and families) and certain emergency-related postings²⁹ was also cautioned.

²⁹ While emergency-related postings are often non-family duty stations, many exceptions to this assumed norm occur. The informant’s feedback was based on experience of working in Sri Lanka

“It's not really helpful to bring the family if the posting is an emergency or post emergency. The work is so hectic. Family postings are good only for development work.” [Key Informant 3]

Feedback was also given on the benefits of being willing to spend a little more with regards to maintaining health and wellbeing.

“Some families are willing to spend and others want to save. I've seen that those willing to spend a little bit more do much better. Now I don't know each and everybody's circumstances and I'm not judging them, but somebody told me when I first went to India, they said, ‘Just spend money; that is the only way you'll survive.’ And I think that is true.” [Key Informant 5]

When prompted to identify qualities that enable families to adjust and thrive during their time abroad, half the informants spoke of relationship traits that foster a healthy couple partnership. These included having shared interests and *“doing things together,”* the ability of workers to relax and not feel compelled to work all the time, appreciating each other's transition challenges, both having *“100% support and commitment for accepting the role”* and open communication practices.

“The families that I know who really struggled, got through it because they have talked and worked it through, and been honest with each other. They acknowledged the tough times and good times and what they each needed.” [Key Informant 5]

Other important family qualities identified included sharing a belief in God (or comfort or support greater than themselves), good social skills: *“To be able to adapt and make friends quickly,”* and to not depend too greatly on external facilities or resources for ensuring family fun and enjoyment.

“If people rely a lot on cinemas and theatres, playgrounds and television and all these things, they may be very disappointed when they go abroad because there are often not a lot of things, there is nothing to do, but be together. It is a good strength if you are able to spend time together without lots of things around, just spending time together.” [Key Informant 7]

during the post tsunami period, a massive humanitarian response involving hundreds of agencies that employed both accompanied and non-accompanied expatriate staff.

7.3. INGOs and Family Support

7.3.1 Why Family Support Matters

Rationale for the need to provide support for humanitarian expatriate families was offered from the perspective of the organisation, the perspective of the worker and from a philosophical or religious standpoint.

From an agency perspective, informants reported that providing family support helps with recruitment, improves worker performance and facilitates retention (*“If you have someone moving with a family, they will stay longer.”*)

“We have believed for years that the spouse is a very important part of the team, a crucial part of the performance of the employee. We feel that there is no way a worker can actually be comfortable and do a good job if the spouse is not comfortable.” [Key Informant 2]

From the employee view point, the presence of a supportive partner or family is considered to offer *“stability,”* to provide meaningful support including *“taking care of the kids at home or making sure things are ok at home,”* to help with work-life balance, and to foster a sense of normalcy or routine to life.

“Most of them have work-life balance because they spend time here and then they go home and spend time with their family... the single persons tend to work longer hours.” [Key Informant 4]

“When the families have gone home to their countries for a month and left the individuals [humanitarian workers] by themselves, I’ve seen such a relief when they return to have their children with them and have some normalcy, some family life together.” [Key Informant 5]

Three informants revealed a philosophical position: *“The way we perceive it is a package. It’s not a little bit of value, it’s a package”* or a faith-based position: *“Having the families there is a good Christian principle,”* when discussing why family issues matter in the humanitarian sector.

7.3.2 Who Should Be Responsible For Family Support?

Informants were asked to consider within their respective organisations, which roles (HR, line managers etc.) should be responsible for taking an interest in the needs of

accompanying families. Feedback was mixed; highlighting the fact that family support can be complex and depends on the presenting needs, the deployment stage and the size and structure of the organisation. Overall, most feedback indicated that providing support to families needed to be a team effort with leadership and guidance ideally provided by senior HR personnel: *“I would say that it is a joint responsibility from the line manager and the HR person in that region.”* In scenarios in which the recruiting or hiring office is different from the posting location (e.g. World Vision Australia recruits someone to work for World Vision Cambodia) it is important that HR staff from both offices are involved and that consistent information is presented to the prospective employee and partner. While this may involve *“some duplication, it is best to duplicate than not to do at all.”*

Feedback indicated HQ-or regional-level HR personnel should take an active role during the recruitment, hiring and pre-deployment stages. Partial hand-over to the regional-or country-level HR personnel and/or line manager should then occur once deployment had taken place. Upon repatriation or re-deployment to a new location, again some handover would be appropriate. While country offices were best suited to providing family supports such as orientation and networking, it was thought that issues of safety and security should always receive attention at the regional-or HQ-level.

“We [London Relief and Development INGO office] haven’t gotten very involved with the family or family issues. One of the few times we have was when one of our staff was receiving death threats against him and his family in Bangladesh. We made the decision then to take him out of the country. Obviously, I think safety and security is a bigger concern at our head office. Then locally we would expect them [country-level offices] to do more of the localisation, you know making sure they know where things are.” [Key Informant 6]

In agencies in which HR staff may be less experienced or postings in which the expatriate employee and his or her family represent the entire international population of that specific office, the need for greater ongoing regional or HQ monitoring and support was discussed.

While line managers should take an interest in families it was recognised that leadership of this issue should come from HR. This includes formalising the orientation process, creating guidelines for managers etc. HR personnel should delegate tasks as appropriate, ideally fostering an organisational culture that values both employees and their families.

“It needs to be led by HR, then it will be a shared responsibility. I don't think others are going to see it as part of their scope to create a corporate solution. Also it's not within their objectives, or budget or their span of responsibility.”

[Key Informant 1]

Finally, if family-related issues start negatively “*impacting performance*” it was stressed that HR, not line managers, should try to address the matter as otherwise conflict of interest problems may arise.

7.3.3 Family Support Strategies

This section attempts to summarise informant feedback with regards to current and emerging family support practices and areas for improvement across each stage of the deployment cycle. The subject of organisational culture and family-related policies and practices is presented first.

7.3.3.1 Organisational Culture and Family-friendly Policies and Practices

Discussion around the nature of the responsibility humanitarian INGOs have towards accompanying families typically revealed two dominant approaches. Firstly, several informants emphasised the importance of organisations taking “*security very seriously*” which had particular significance when determining whether positions should be accompanied or not.

“We did have some discussions about whether we should make it [Haiti] an accompanied post. A couple of other organisations are starting to look at this; one, to make it more attractive for people to work there and secondly, because they are getting some more infrastructure there. We still felt it wasn't the right environment for people to bring their family in terms of the level of schooling and the security situation. Before we decide whether a job is accompanied or unaccompanied we do give thought to whether it is safe for the family.” [Key Informant 6]

Other informants equated the typical benefits package with organisational responsibility or duty towards families: *“Mainly we are responsible for insurance, visas, accommodation, and child education and relocation expenses.”* As the fiscal cost of such benefits were considerable, the willingness to cover such benefits were considered an indicator of support for employing staff with accompanying families.

“The benefits package is very much geared towards the family. I say that first from an expense perspective. The education benefit for kids in school is very generous. Depending on how many kids are in school; the cost of education might exceed the cost of salary. That is an indicator of valuing the whole family.” [Key Informant 1]

One informant expressed concern with this commonly held perspective, suggesting that in addition to ensuring basic needs such as health, education and accommodation, organisations should do more to consider the relational or emotional health of accompanying families.

“It [Christian Relief and Development INGO] sees responsibility in terms of safety and security, education and in terms of healthcare, but I don't think a lot else apart from that. I honestly don't think emotional or mental or relational wellbeing fits into their understanding” [Key Informant 5]

Typical family benefit packages included medical insurance (full or majority), return tickets (usually annually or every two years), visa provision, accommodation assistance (full or partial rental coverage within budgetary limits), education assistance for school aged children (ranging from full to partial coverage), assistance with shipping goods (variable quantities), and depending on the location, possible R&R benefits.

Three INGOs assisted with finding work for accompanying partners, ranging from providing informal support via recommending potential contacts or circulating resumes to short-term consultancy projects (while stressing the need for this to be done professionally and competitively, thus avoiding issues of nepotism etc.). One organisation reported a policy for providing accompanying spouses part-time work within the options available in the office.

“One of the benefits is our spouses are entitled to get a job for at least 50% of the time. If he or she feels comfortable with the options that are in their office, the [Christian Relief and Development INGO associated church] will pay them a salary of up to half a day for doing the work that they are doing.”

[Key Informant 2]

Half of the informants also emphasised workplace policies that aimed to assist people with *“balancing their work demands and their families.”* These policies or strategies included flexi-working hours, allowing staff to work from home and to manage their own time: *“Because ultimately you are required to do your job, not required to keep the eight hours a day.”* Feedback from one informant depicted an INGO active in prioritising an organisational culture that recognised the importance of work-life balance.

“[Christian Relief and Development INGO] is trying to promote more work-life balance through a system of flexible hours. If you accumulate too many hours the line manager will tell you off; it’s not a good thing to work too many hours. I find this very positive. Your line manager says ‘What is this? You have to slow down and take one day off and use these hours.’”

[Key Informant 7]

With regards to weaknesses or areas for improvement, a number of categories emerged under the umbrella of organisational culture and family-friendly policies. These included the fact that culture and behaviour is often dependent on leadership or individuals, as well as being culturally influenced. This issue is presented below as well as other areas where a change in priority or need for communication or training were also discussed.

The majority of informants indicated that supporting family and staff wellbeing is usually an outcome of specific circumstances (e.g. individuals or cultural norms) as opposed to being promoted by the organisation: *“It’s individuals who care rather than the organisation.”* It was noted that promoting work-life balance can be difficult when senior leadership *“tend to model the opposite”* and may reject various suggestions and initiatives.

“I introduced flexi-time to a couple of countries and it worked very well. People were happy and really working according to community needs. Other countries it was a no, not even discussed. It's very inconsistent. It very much depends on the country director. It's very top down still.” [Key Informant 5]

Given the impact of culture and the very different challenges that specific postings present, it was also suggested organisations should “*categorise countries*” in order to recognise “*when you are struggling with a hardship country you need more assistance or more understanding.*” Similarly, informants spoke of the need for greater support to be extended to staff going to locations where there were few other expatriates or where the staff member may look similar, but still struggle with cultural and language barriers.

“When you turn up in Romania, everybody looks European. Well they are European, but they don't behave like other Europeans. You don't speak the language. You can't find food and people don't have the patience they would if they could see from a mile off you are a foreigner. So it can be more difficult in those more similar situations that sometimes really opposite extreme locations.” [Key Informant 8]

Several informants also stressed that organisations should periodically challenge themselves and their staff as to their priorities with regards to work and family. The irony of working for agencies that are “*committed to women and children and families*” and yet fail to extend this line of thought to their own staff was noted, as was the practical reality with regards to drafting contracts, policies or providing career guidance.

“From a Christian point of view we believe that family is very important and it is more important than our job. But we could do much more of having it as a priority and considering it when we create job descriptions or procedures or how much we can allow a worker to be away from home.”

[Key Informant 2]

“If someone was in a career coaching process with me and came up with my most important thing is my family; I've got young children. And my career aspiration is to be in a position XYZ and XYZ requires 70% travel, I would

send them back to the drawing board. They need to re-evaluate which of these statements is accurate because they don't match. My concern is having gone through many interview processes [this feedback], it's not said or prioritised." [Key Informant 1]

More than one informant advocated the need for greater communication and information provision to families, particularly with regards to benefit entitlements, available supports, and security updates (rather than just assuming the working partner is accurately and regularly sharing the information).

"I had some feedback by a couple of people who have left recently saying that [Relief and Development INGO] is very good when you ask for support, you get it. But nothing is on offer up front, so you always have to ask for it. This is something to look at." [Key Informant 6]

While giving verbal recognition to the fact families on their first ever interational posting deal with considerable adjustment challenges: *"I'm sure it's a lot more traumatic for families the first time,"* most organisations made no distinction of such families nor provided any additional support. This was acknowledged as an additional area in which improvements could be made. Other suggestions included providing greater validation of accompanying partners' support and sacrifices and, linked to this, assistance with finding work if desired, as well as the need to ensure expatriate senior staff were not hired for roles that featured unrealistic work demands.

"We have been talking recently about the pressure on country directors and the fact that the role is meant to be all singing and all dancing. One of the answers is to provide more senior support just beneath those roles or otherwise you are never going to achieve work-life balance because everything goes through that one person." [Key Informant 6]

7.3.3.2 Staff Recruitment and Selection

Most informants were of the view that typically the *"recruitment process is very much about the individual,"* focusing on their competency to perform the role. Little consideration was given to whether family would be accompanying or not until the offer stage, with the exception of one organisation that was reported to also interview

the spouse when recruiting for Country Director positions. A new practice being rolled out across one large INGO was an online assessment tool for accompanying partners as well as staff to “*help predict their likelihood of success in a foreign assignment.*” As the assessment had reportedly only just been deployed, the informant was unable to provide information regarding what point in the recruitment process the tool was used or the usefulness or accuracy of the program.

When asked if informants thought more should be done to meet the family and assess their suitability before going overseas, general feedback indicated that despite the additional workload and expenses this would create, that for senior positions or positions in difficult locations this should be conducted.

“In the mid-80's we used to do psychometric testing. But the pace of everything we do now and the urgency, and the cost of all these overheads for someone going out for a one or two year program, it makes it really difficult to justify. I feel now that if you are going to work in a high-risk location or a difficult location... or even if you had been with the organisation for years and are suddenly moving to a completely different location... I would recommend that people did go through that kind of testing, just to make sure they are okay and they will be ok as a family, because we are not good at keeping families together.” [Key Informant 8]

Feedback was also given that organisations needed to improve the ease with which information was provided to families in order to enable informed decisions to be made about whether to accept a job offer.

“It is so stressful, because you need to know about your children’s schools and medical cover, they are important issues. You need to look through the system and ask different people and get different opinions. So [improving] access to this information is crucial.” [Key Informant 7]

7.3.3.3 Pre-deployment Support

When asked whether organisations had any contact with partners in the pre-deployment period, the common response was “*No, it all goes through the employee.*” This was seen as a weakness as partners often have questions and

relaying everything through the worker does not acknowledge the transition concerns of the accompanying family.

“I just got an email from somebody that is going to Bangladesh and he wants to see pictures of the house and know about the schooling. The spouse is the one asking all the questions. She is relaying the questions to her husband and he is relaying them to me and I'm relaying them to a fourth person and by the time the questions are answered we have another new set of questions. I think if there was a direct communication with somebody in the field that understands the questions and could give answers that would be a great help.” [Key Informant 2]

Most informants conveyed that this period should also be a time of intentional and thorough information provision to prospective employees and their families. Reasons for this included it being described as the optimal period in which to receive and process information.

“I think the post-hire to pre-start date stage is the best time to provide the initial resources because that seems to be when people are not caught up in their new world yet, so they are not too busy. Usually before somebody starts a job they are anxious to be prepared and learn and they are excited.” [Key Informant 1]

Setting fair expectations was described as “*due diligence*,” a key responsibility of any organisation being to explain “*what the conditions are that they are going to.*” The analogy of the “*frog in the boiling water*” was also referred to within this discussion in regards to preparing couples for relationship strain. That is, without sufficient information being given to couples about normative changes and transition stresses, it became “*difficult to determine when we [families] have transitioned out of what's normal transition stress and now we are into unhealthy relationship stress.*” As such, adequate preparation, resource provision and country briefings were areas identified as needing strengthening during this time.

“We've done a lot, but we have a little more to go, in giving country briefings and to be able to extend that to families and make sure that it's not just the employee but the family that gets a sense of cultural issues.”
[Key Informant 6]

Having provided comprehensive information and briefings, it was stressed, “*it’s individuals who make the choice*” and they “*have to be responsible for that.*”

7.3.3.4 Deployment or Settling In

Informants noted a variety of examples of how organisational support was provided to accompanying families while settling in. These included help with finding accommodation, providing information packs and maps about their new environment, asking other expatriate staff to mentor them and examples of HR staff enquiring via staff about the wellbeing of their family.

When discussing the issue of support being quite dependent on individuals or cultural practices, informants were asked whether regional or HQ staff monitor how national offices may be supporting the expatriates assigned to them. Most responded that such monitoring should occur to a greater extent than current norms, especially in postings in which there was general distrust or even hostility towards foreigners.

Importance was given to communication being “*a two way thing... there is some responsibility we feel for people in the offices to contact us as well.*” Key areas of improved support needed during the settling in phase included social networking and orientation: “*We don't do any orientation for families. We just dump them.*”

“I've been recently impressed in Myanmar, two international schools; the teachers have such an amazing network between each other. They are given the responsibility to look after each other and it works... In some countries I've seen the National Director's wives take on an amazing role and appropriately look after the other wives. In other countries that just doesn't happen.” [Key Informant 5]

Although six of the eight informants stressed the importance of providing opportunities to learn local languages, no INGOs were reported to provide this benefit to families and several individuals noted “*even the staff don't get language training anymore.*”

“I'm amazed at the lack of emphasis. In fact there is an emphasis on de-emphasising language. Such a comfort that our business language is English; that is fine but we are going into communities and we are about

transformational development and relationships in this region are established through language. There are nuances that you learn when you learn a language, it tells you very much about the culture.” [Key Informant 1]

7.3.3.5 Sustainment or Ongoing Management

When prompted about ongoing family support practices, responses included the availability of external professional counselling for both employees and their families (paid for by the INGO) and a newly developed regional online support group for accompanying partners of one particular INGO (similar to a Facebook group). There was mixed feedback as to the success of the initiative, which also provided avenues for online support from an experienced psychologist. The indirect benefits of staff care services were also mentioned.

“We do have staff care, which is not necessarily family care, but it is the only sort of wellbeing area here at [Christian Relief and Development INGO]. It's more to do with critical incidents and stress... family does come into that, but it comes indirectly through them.” [Key Informant 5]

Less than half of the informants mentioned their respective INGOs provided regular opportunities in which families were invited to share in aspects of work life. Examples included family-inclusive Christmas parties or staff retreats and the practice of allowing (and sometimes partially reimbursing) accompanying family, typically partners, to accompany work-related road or air trips.

“In our office where we travel a lot more, we have a policy that allows us up to a \$1,000 USD per year to take our family with us. Once a year I take my family with me even though it costs me more than the \$1,000 to take them. It's still a thousand dollars less that I would need to spend. That is a benefit. We also have a staff retreat, once a year, to which families are also included.” [Key Informant 2]

It was felt that providing the opportunity to partners or families to accompany staff on work trips would reduce relationship strain and facilitate greater family appreciation of the nature of the work.

“You can probably hear I'm not a fan of travel in terms of the way it plays out for a family. Or an individual for that matter in terms of the health

aspects, but I think it's multiplied when you get into this type of [family] situation... I understand from an expense perspective from the way we are funded that in most cases it would not be appropriate for us to fund spouse travel. But I would advocate for finding ways for spouses to accompanying their partners when and where they could on travel.” [Key Informant 1]

“In Mongolia we took all families including kids to a weekend outing and we had some family topics, just casual talking and we found some very important information. We could do this a lot more in all the countries... At the same time, especially for people at the country office, we could make it more formal and give them an allowance for the family to accompany the employee to the trips in the field. Having the family see what the worker does makes a huge impact on their support they give and it allows the family to spend more time with the employee.” [Key Informant 2]

The previous quote reveals a direct, but rare, approach of actually asking families themselves for feedback about their experiences abroad and within the organisation.

When discussing the responsibility of INGOS in situations in which employee's relationships are under known strain, the complexities inherent in these situations became clear. Included in the discussion was the understanding that *“sometimes people have problems in their relationships and they think running away, going somewhere else will help to solve them.”* Not surprisingly, *“running away to a more difficult place just aggravates the situation”* and the *“hardships”* of working for INGOs *“is more likely to cause things to disintegrate or explode.”* When relationship problems became apparent, some general suggestions were provided.

When affairs happened in some Christian INGOs the *“approach normally is to remove them [all involved parties] because they are not showing Christian values. They'll ask you in a nice way to resign instead of threatening to fire you.”* It was commented that this response seemed to contradict the principle of forgiveness and the possibility that the relationship could be restored. Second, if the employee or spouse informed someone in the organisation about relationship issues, it was also emphasised the matter should be treated *“in confidence”* and referrals to counsellors

or medical professionals should be offered as appropriate. Another principle articulated was that of ensuring that organisational practices and support conveyed the message that family relationships took precedence over work demands. As highlighted by the quotes below, the degree to which organisations conveyed this message varied considerably.

“I don't think I have had anybody say you should stay with [Christian Relief and Development INGO] and that is just tough. What we do is we try to get both. We'll try to resolve it [the marriage issue] and have the employee stay with us. We don't really want to know [about relationship issues], which again puts huge strain and stress [on employees]. We don't give time off. We should give time off to people to resolve things. Leave without pay is incredibly hard to access.” [Key Informant 5]

“We say stop working, we don't care about whatever deadlines you have. Sort out your marriage, here is how we can support you. Let us know if there is anything else, if you need to go home we'll pay you if you need to go back and we'll get somebody else. Forget about your job. Try to work out your marriage.” [Key Informant 2]

7.3.3.6 Transition and Post-deployment

Informants revealed that debriefing or exit interviews were not always mandatory for staff, and were almost never extended to accompanying partners or families. On the other hand the tracking of the reasons people left and their feedback was reported by several individuals as having taken place. Examples were also provided of changes to family benefits as a result of information gained.

Highlighting the value of anonymous feedback, one informant also mentioned the introduction of a newly introduced online exit survey tool. Further suggested improvements to current practices during this deployment stage included extending debriefing opportunities to include accompanying partners and the often overlooked (but crucial) process of helping families prepare for re-entry.

“What we are not doing is re-entry. So reverse culture shock, which I experienced after living only one year in Spain... If it is that way for an individual the dynamics must just be exponential for a partner and children. I

don't know to what extent the employer has responsibility and can intervene, but certainly we should have some resources that we could direct people to.”
[Key Informant 1]

7.3.4 Family Support Barriers and Enablers

Informants were prompted about the barriers and enablers, from an agency perspective, to providing support to families. Not surprisingly, barriers were easier to list and seemed more numerous; they included organisational barriers and individual- or family-level barriers.

7.3.4.1 Barriers

Organisational barriers included issues of size, structure and staffing and closely linked to cost and funding model concerns. Informants spoke of having sizable portfolios and, in some instances, being less qualified for the HR aspects of their work than desired: *“My background, my credentials, are financial and administration.”* The vast size of some of the larger INGOs was linked to delays in the changing of organisational culture and values.

“[Christian Relief and Development INGO] has about 42,000 to 45,000 global staff [national and expatriate]. Across this organisation there are precisely three staff full-time in staff care positions, which is stress management. Our portfolio is quite limited; it has to be if you have such a large group of people.” [Key Informant 8]

Rapid growth within humanitarian INGOs was emphasised, with regards to the challenges of managing such growth and remaining aware of staff and family needs during this process.

“The company grew from 5,000 employees to 45,000 in just over 10 years. That is a nine-fold increase. That is really difficult for any company or the best-run company to manage. Even if that was a single location, but to take that, and spread it across 90 countries: that's a lot of growth and a huge expansion.” [Key Informant 1]

Linked to organisational size and structure (staffing numbers, number of countries operating in etc.) was the reality of the enormous diversity in individual and

culturally influenced factors impacting expatriate expectations, needs and willingness to share problems.

“There are also very different expectations from individuals and also the culture they are coming from... one group is going to value privacy and say, ‘Please leave me alone and let me take care of this.’ The other will want to be hand held. We’ve got people coming from 90-100 countries, going into a different 90-100 countries and each one of those situations creates an interesting dynamic from the start.” [Key Informant 1]

Fiscal barriers mentioned included the actual increased expenses associated with accompanied positions: *“It is more expensive to have someone with expatriate family benefits,”* and how funding restrictions often limited the staffing available to support families and the manner in which money could be spent: *“Sponsorship money is not going to be viewed as appropriately spent to send spouses or families on travel.”* Funds were often not prioritised for issues such as staff care or family-friendly practices given a lack of recognition of the importance of these matters by those in leadership.

“One of the challenges we are facing is that we are not allocating money into that [family supports], because the people that are allocating the money at the top are not seeing the importance of that.” [Key Informant 2]

Furthermore, with regards to fiscal matters, the observation was repeatedly made that unlike for-profit companies that concern themselves with the actual costs of recruitment, training, benefits etc. with regards to turnover, the reality of these costs and their impact on organisational performance was less well-known within aid agencies.

“In the profit companies they really measure the financial impact of turnover, but in INGOs it becomes so normal. If the person leaves, hire another one. If that person leaves, fine, hire another one. But if you sum up all the costs it's very expensive.” [Key Informant 3]

Several underlying beliefs and assumptions were also identified as providing obstacles to promoting greater family support within humanitarian INGOs. These included:

- A sense that for something to have value it must be measurable and outcome orientated: *“It's just not seen as work, because you can't measure it and we are so measurement orientated people... I haven't heard the word family-friendly policy for years. That's terrible isn't it?” [Key Informant 5]*
- The need to maintain professional boundaries and for an organisation not to become *“too paternalistic”* or be seen as interfering with individual's personal lives: *“We employ a person to do a job and do it well, and while we are very happy to support the family and provide benefits, we don't want to get involved in people's personal situations. I'm sure if you started to become more involved you could quite easily get embroiled in people's various situations... That is a general feeling that can be a bit of a barrier to providing more support.” [Key Informant 6]*
- The topic of family support and benefits was very sensitive (being linked to financial matters and distinctions between national and expatriate staff) and thus often avoided, or subject to *“conflict of interest”* debates and tensions (depending on the position of those making decisions): *“It is a sensitive issue because there is financial involvement and locals think that expatriates are well cared for.” [Key Informant 3]*
- Faith-related influences, such as *“guilt,”* sacrificial suffering and traditional missionary thinking impacts family supports provided by Christian agencies: *“I think we have bit of a missionary background here and that includes many assumptions that aren't accurate. If you took a traditional missionary view point, you've got people who maybe are sacrificing their way of life as they know it, and in extreme cases go and get rid all of their things, to move and go into whatever community, with limited thoughts of personal comfort. If somebody comes into this organisation, how much should we include in that type of mind set? ...Corporate worlds are looking at it more as a business decision. Let's see if we look at our HR as an investment and we want that investment to provide the best return.” [Key Informant 1]*

Additional organisational barriers identified affecting the ability of agencies to provide greater support to accompanying families included workplace cultures which discouraged employees from speaking out or voicing concerns, and the lack of

existing research particular to humanitarian organisations concerning what constitutes effective family support³⁰.

“This particular area [family support] is underdeveloped and this particular population is under-served; in preparation, experience while in the role, and then re-entry, each of those areas. There is a general recognition but not a whole lot of appreciation or understanding of what to do about it and how to address it. We could get smart about having some research about what is effective and what is not?” [Key Informant 1]

At the family-or employee-level, an additional barrier identified concerned the reluctance of some employees to express family needs to others.

*“I didn't even know she was sick. I said to her husband why did you not tell me? ‘We wanted to be self-sufficient and not cause any problems.’”
[Key Informant 5]*

7.3.4.2 Enablers

The majority of key informants were clear supporters of improved family support within humanitarian organisations: *“I'm thrilled about it [being involved in this research]; I think it is so necessary. I've just seen so many people hurt and damaged.”* Several expressed their interest in the research findings and as previously mentioned, talked about the irony or disappointment of working for organisations that valued the families of beneficiary aid communities, but not those of their own staff. There was a growing recognition of the need to prioritise the family ahead of work and the importance of staff care: *“I think that staff care is highly regarded within this organisation.”* While leadership was reported to not always model ideal behaviours in this regard, the potential for work-place norms to change in response to those demonstrated by managers and leaders was stressed: *“If you are the boss then the patterns can change.”*

³⁰ Informants also commented on a lack of research and attention towards the needs and experience of single expatriate staff: *“I think there should be a study done on single people as well. They have their problems going out to the field also.” [Key Informant 5]*

An obvious additional organisational motivator for improved family support was interest in staff retention and performance. Linked to this, the matter of value for money or effective financial stewardship was considered important.

“We are not only talking about spending money but also about doing actions that leverage the money already spent on paying for schools and paying for flights and all that.” [Key Informant 7]

A final facilitator of change that was mentioned regarded organisations in which it was reported staff were willing to share their feedback and suggestions for improvement: *“At [Relief and Development INGO] they speak out a lot. People [staff] do complain to managers and to HR about many things.”* In such organisations it was commented that the challenge was to manage such information systematically and develop mechanisms for change and feedback loops.

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter summarised the feedback received from key informants from several large INGOs on the subject of supporting expatriate families within the humanitarian community. It provided a wealth of information, including highlighting a number of driving and restraining factors which impact the support provided to accompanying families (discussed further in section 8.4). Key informants raised many of the same issues as accompanying partners with regards to the needs of partners or families with children, the risks and benefits of expatriation, and advice to be given to future potential accompanying partners. Likewise, informants and partners stressed the organisational benefits (e.g. improved staff retention, worker efficiency and maximising ROI) of prioritising family support. Both groups believed that leadership of family support issues should come from HR personnel, but that the actual provision of supports can be delegated or considered a team effort. The next chapter is the concluding chapter, and provides separate recommendations for accompanying families and INGOs aimed at helping expatriate families to thrive by promoting their resilience.

Chapter Eight: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

“Employees themselves, more often than not, know what needs to be done to improve operations.”

Kanter, Moss (The Change Masters)

8.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter brings together research findings and the literature review in order to support a proposition that strengthening the resilience of expatriate humanitarian families has the potential to enhance the success of many humanitarian programs. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the research design. Concise responses to the research objectives are then provided. The study proposes a context-specific model and recommendations for organisations and accompanying families seeking to promote resilience. Recommendations for future research, the significance of the study, and limitations in this thesis are also discussed.

8.1 Overview of the Research Design

This research utilised a qualitative design featuring multiple data collection methods that included a comprehensive scoping study of published and grey literature, intensive in-depth interviews with accompanying partners and semi-structured interviews with key informants from the humanitarian sector.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, this research sought to move beyond just describing the lived experience of accompanying partners, to exploring the resilience processes used by expatriate humanitarian families and developing an explanatory humanitarian family expatriate adjustment model. The study used an application of grounded theory that differed from traditional grounded theory research in that a model was developed and recommendations proposed. Drawing on Willig (2013), in using constructivist grounded theory, I acknowledged the personal and philosophical background that shaped the research process and the findings.

Interview methods, in particular interview recruitment, sampling, and analysis were influenced by social constructionist grounded theory methodology. Interview

transcripts were analysed in full using an inductive multi-stage coding process similar to that described by Charmaz (2006) and favoured initial and focused coding. Focused coding re-categorised the most useful or relevant initial codes and arose from the constant comparative method of continually enquiring, “what are the similarities and differences between data?” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60) and led to the development of a model described in 8.5. Data collection and analysis processes were influenced by feedback from the reference group familiar with expatriate life and the humanitarian sector.

Accompanying partners represented a diverse group of individuals. The 23 participants embodied 11 different nationalities, represented 17 different INGOs and at the time of the interview were living in 16 different countries. The typical partner participant was:

- Female (83%), aged between 31 and 40 (70%)
- A parent (87%) to two or more children (65%)
- Living together as a married couple (87%), having been married for at least six years (80%)
- Tertiary educated and currently working or volunteering (57%)
- Familiar with expatriate family living, having spent at least four years abroad as a family (78%).

The 8 key informants represented 7 different nationalities, were employed by 5 different INGOs, ranged between 31 and 61 years or age, and at the time of interview had between 18 months to 35 years of experience working in their respective organisation. They were predominately female (75%), single (62%), and most had previous expatriate experience (75%). Feedback from partners and key informants highlighted many of the same issues with regards to challenges faced by expatriate families, advice for accompanying partners and recommended family strengths. Of significance, informants familiar with expatriate living provided more specific feedback and recommendations.

8.2 Challenges Faced by Expatriate Humanitarian Families

(Objective 1)

8.2.1 Dominant Challenges

Objective 1 sought to identify the main challenges experienced by expatriate humanitarian families as perceived by accompanying partners. This study revealed eight specific dominant types of challenges impacting this specific population and a ninth general scenario, that of facing a crisis or multiple crises while abroad. Table 19 provides a condensed summary of the eight types of challenges identified, the key components of each challenge and links to existing literature in which these stressors are discussed among the general expatriate population.

Given the existence of books targeting expatriate audiences with titles such as ‘*A Moveable Marriage: Relocate your Relationship without Breaking It*’ (Pascoe, 2003), and the impact of homesickness and the loss of familiar supports for all family members, it is not surprising relationship concerns were the most frequently reported source of stress. Personal and professional challenges for accompanying partners were the second most common thematic area reported. The use of metaphors emphasising both privilege and constraint: “*Living in this paradise... I was in a cage,*” closely mirrored the paradox identified in Fechter’s research in which expatriate wives described themselves as “living in a golden cage” (2007, p. 41).

Included within the personal struggles partners reported, were ethical and moral tensions as one tried to reconcile differences between the norms of the “*expatriate bubble*” while observing the reality for the poor and vulnerable in the host country. These reflected Fechter and Hindman’s observation of the “dissonance between the ideal of ‘helping work’ that is projected in external descriptions of development and the reality of life as an aid professional” (2011, p. 14). While existential, ethical and moral issues are explored in the literature on humanitarian workers (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2006; Headington Institute, 2007) from the perspective of accompanying expatriate families, the topic has received limited attention (an exception being Hess & Linderman, 2002).

Additional dominant stressors included relocation and transition-related concerns, parenting concerns, health-related concerns, and contextual, environmental and cultural issues (e.g. pollution, climate, corruption). As highlighted in Table 20, each topic depicts issues acknowledged in the broader expatriate literature. While a popular topic with regards to humanitarian workers (Leggat, 2005; People in Aid, 2012; Thomas, 2004), the issue of security and safety concerns is rarely discussed in the literature on expatriate families.

A final sector-specific challenge concerned a host of difficulties directly associated with humanitarian work which partners thought negatively impacted themselves and their families. These included frequent travel by the worker, difficulties with work-family balance, and lack of confidence in making requests or asking for assistance from organisations. Underlying these issues are humanitarian INGO work and cultural norms (e.g. heavy workloads, short-term contracts, dominant personality types employed) that are supported in the humanitarian literature. For example, various authors have discussed the relationship between heavy workloads and management and staffing issues among humanitarian employees (Antares Foundation, 2008; Loquercio, et al., 2006; Saner, 1990).

A reluctance to make requests or ask for help reflects the opinion of Walkup who claimed “because most [humanitarian] personnel are hired on short-term contracts, their employment vulnerability discourages questioning of authoritative decisions or policies that they know will be problematic in implementation” (1997, p. 55). It is not uncommon for accompanying expatriate contracts to be for just one year. The notion that certain personality types are more attracted to relief and development work is also supported by Stearns (1993) who commented on the idealistic and perfectionist traits prevalent among many who work in the humanitarian industry.

Lastly, while crises (e.g. terminating a pregnancy or relationship separation) were not common to the majority of participants, the experience of enduring such events while abroad should not be underrated. Given the sharing of such personal and stressful experiences was dependent on the openness of individual participants, other participants may have also experienced crises during their expatriate journey (e.g. miscarriages, death of a loved one, acute depressive episodes) but chose not to

disclose these. It is important to note the caution, as even if only 25% of accompanying partners experience a stressful, painful or confusing event that is perceived by them as a crisis, it is still a significant population.

Table 19: Dominant challenges experienced by families within the humanitarian INGO sector as perceived by accompanying partners

Challenge	Key challenge components	Link with existing expatriate literature/research (non-exhaustive list)	
Relationship concerns	With distant family and friends	Homesickness Feeling the loss of supportive networks Difficulties in maintaining long-distant relationships Concerns for aging parents	(Hansson, Clausson, & Janlov, 2012; Suh & Lee, 2006; Yellig, 2010) (Cole, 2011; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Shaffer, et al., 2001) (Hess & Linderman, 2002; Maxson, 2006; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) (Hay, et al., 2007; Jensen, 1998; Lin, Lu, & Lin, 2012)
	Within the expatriate couple/family	Heightened couple relationship strains Resentment if relocation decision making not shared	(Bigler, 2007; Brown, 2008; ExpatExpert.com / AMJ Campbell International, 2008; McNulty, 2012; Pascoe, 2003) (Grosshauser, 2002; Pascoe, 2009; Simonsen, 2008)
	Accompanying partner personal and professional concerns	Loneliness and limited social networks	(Brown, 2008; Kupka & Cathro, 2007; McNulty, 2005; Munton & Forster, 1990; Teshome, 2010; Yellig, 2010)
		Boredom / lack of purpose / loss of identity	(Andreason, 2008; McNulty, 2012; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001)
		Dual-career challenges	(Chung & Chung, 2012; Harvey, 1995; Pascoe, 2010b; Riusala & Suutari, 2000)
	Ethical and moral tensions	(Hess & Linderman, 2002)	
Relocation and transition concerns	Difficulties settling in	(De Verthelyi, 1995; Hess & Linderman, 2002; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)	
	Confusion around the concept of home	(Bikos, Kocheleva, et al., 2009; Cockburn, 2002; Ebbeck & Reus, 2005; Haring, 2006)	
	Grief of frequently saying goodbye	(McLachlan, 2007; Selby, Moulding, et al., 2009)	
	Reintegration and re-entry difficulties	(Hawley, 2004; Schulz, n.d.; Szkudlarek, 2010)	
	Relocation is harder for accompanying partners	(Dowling, et al., 2008; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Rosenbusch, 2010)	

Parenting concerns	Adjusting to parenthood and raising young children	(Bikos, Klemens, et al., 2009; Suh & Lee, 2006; Teshome, 2010)
	Considering age and educational needs of dependants	(Munton & Forster, 1990; Oberholster, et al., 2013)
	Supporting TCK issues (e.g. parental guilt / child struggling with frequent adaption required)	(Ebbeck & Reus, 2005; McLachlan, 2007)
Adverse impacts of humanitarian work upon the family	Family strain associated with frequent travel	(Espino, Sundstrom, Frick, Jacobs, & Peters, 2002; Maxson, 2006)
	Work-life balance difficulties; associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heavy workloads - Dominant personality types employed - Lack of job security in the humanitarian sector 	(Antares Foundation, 2008; Loquercio, et al., 2006; Saner, 1990) (Stearns, 1993) (Walkup, 1997)
Health concerns	Managing physical or mental illnesses / exacerbating existing conditions	(Jones, 2000)
	Low standard of available health care services	(Jones, 2000; McCathy, 2012)
	Exposure to location specific diseases or illnesses	(Jones, 2000; McCathy, 2012)
Safety and security concerns	Stress associated with living amidst civil tensions and violence	(Brown, 2008)
Environmental, contextual and cultural concerns	Cumulative effect of daily hassles described as source of fatigue	(Amat, 2012; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)

8.2.2 Specific Population-related Challenges

In agreement with the general literature on dominant stressors among accompanying male expatriate partners (Cole, 2012; McGill, 2003; Tharenou, 2008), interview analysis revealed accompanying men report greater isolation, loneliness and threats to their career. Partners from developing countries were more likely to report challenges in communicating with family back home, as well as a greater sense of disconnect between themselves and loved ones back home. Such individuals were often appreciative, however, of the opportunity to live as nuclear families with less extended family influence.

Feedback from partners in mixed marriages included the burden of meeting the expectations of extended families in separate counties, and the added relationship strain where individuals differed with regards to their previous expatriate experience. Among partners based in hardship postings, it was not surprising that environmental, contextual and cultural challenges were more common. Social networks were reported as especially limited and, in locations like Kabul, the daily challenge of managing security issues was considerable.

8.2.3 Unique Challenges Affecting Expatriate Families in the Humanitarian INGO Sector

This research hoped to highlight which challenges, if any, were unique to this particular group of globally-mobile families. While no specific challenges were considered unique, based upon analysis of the data and personal reflection, it is proposed that five factors may have greater influence upon humanitarian INGO expatriate families than other expatriate families. These include:

1. **The practice of frequent travel:** The repeated absence of the worker from their family being associated with additional strain for the partner.
2. **The short duration of contracts:** Impacting willingness to voice complaints, disclose medical concerns, financial security and transitional and relocation stresses.
3. **The heightened potential of exposure to safety and security risks:** Probable given the increasing amount of threats upon humanitarian workers (Stoddard, Harmer, & DiDomenico, 2009; Williams, 2008), and the volatility associated with many assignment locations. A possible consequence of this is that

accompanying partners and workers may become blasé about the security issues they and their children face³¹.

4. **The greater likelihood of vicarious trauma:** Associated with the intrinsically stressful nature of humanitarian work (Welch, 2009), and the often limited availability of emotional support for staff.
5. **Heightened difficulties in reconciling ethical and moral issues:** Due to a lack of supportive networks within INGOs (meaning families are less likely to benefit from conversations on this subject) and the fact workers and their families are strongly motivated by altruistic reasons, however the family may have little opportunity to observe or participate in humanitarian work.

8.2.4 It's not all Negative: Benefits and Growth

Exploring the advantageous aspects of partner's international experiences highlighted the value of exposure to different cultures, lifestyle benefits, increased family time, supportive and diverse in-country social networks, and meaningful work and volunteer opportunities. Self-improvements (e.g. gains in confidence, self-awareness or value clarification) and relationship strengthening were also reported among couples and families with children. These categories are supported in the general expatriate literature which include references to the rich and diverse opportunities that living abroad can offer (Bikos, Kocheleva, et al., 2009; Hess & Linderman, 2002), the concept of the expatriate family bubble (Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999) and influential motivators for expatriation (Oberholster, et al., 2013).

The benefits discussed by participants highlighted the paradoxical or contradictory nature of expatriate life. For example, some partners expressed struggling with boredom from a lack of meaningful roles, while others saw this freedom as an opportunity to try new things and pursue valued interests. Similarly, though humanitarian workers frequently travel for work, many partners shared that when not travelling, workers were able to spend more time with their families. Thus some partners reported having stronger relationships, despite travel demands. Being forced to rely more heavily upon one's partner due to a sense of isolation or loss of

³¹ This is subjective. Some might consider partners and their families based in Kabul, Afghanistan to be exposed to significantly high levels of risk. On this subject, however, interviewees who did live in Kabul explained that because of their deep sense of faith and purpose, they felt it was the right place for them to be.

supportive networks was also seen as a contributing factor to both straining and strengthening couple relationships. Though the paradoxes facing expatriate employees have been the focus of several researchers (Brewster, 1995; Osland & Osland, 2006; R. C. Russell & Dickie, 2007), with the exception of Fetcher (2007) and Maxson (2006), little acknowledgement has been made of the existence of similar enigmas for accompanying families. Why some partners choose to view a particular situation favourably while others experience the same situation negatively is closely related to the question of why some individuals or families, in certain areas of their lives, demonstrate more resilience than others. This issue is explored in detail in the following section.

8.3 Resilience-enhancing Processes used by Expatriate Humanitarian Families (Objective 2)

Based on the assumption that expatriate families often demonstrate resilience in the manner in which they maintain wellbeing or adapt to the challenges of life abroad, the second research objective aimed to identify from the perspective of partners, the key resilience processes employed by expatriate humanitarian families. Further evidence to support the belief that these families exhibit resilience was depicted through the reported adversity related growth both at an individual-and family-level, such transformation being a recognised outworking of resilience (F. Walsh, 2006) and thriving (McKay & Hulme, 2009).

As discussed in section 2.4.2, adaptive processes sourced from interview data focused on coping strategies as opposed to resilience or protective processes. This reflected the actual language used by participants when discussing how they or their families managed and adapted to difficulties. Precedence for this decision exists in the literature to date (Jütersonke & Kartas, 2012; Kolar, et al., 2012). Within this research, coping strategies are considered a means of positive adaptation, one of the prevailing agreed upon underpinning constructs in the conceptualisation of resilience. Simply stated, effective coping strategies help build resilience.

This research identified the following three dominant cognitive family coping strategies, in addition to four behavioural focused strategies.

Key beliefs:

1. Positive thinking, perseverance and acceptance;
2. Faith, spirituality and purpose; and
3. Family-first thinking.

Key actions or behaviours:

1. Social, professional, occupational and economic³² supports;
2. Adaptability and consistency;
3. Family connectedness; and
4. Family communication.

Figure 12 compares F. Walsh's (2006) family resilience framework with the family coping strategies revealed during partner interviews, highlighting the many similarities between the two. Walsh's framework was primarily designed to assist professionals to support families in difficult situations, while participant coping strategies related specifically to managing the challenges expatriate families experience within the humanitarian sector. Given the different foci (one extremely broad, the other targeted), it is not surprising small differences exist.

For example, while Walsh's belief systems include the significance of making meaning from adversity, participant feedback stressed the importance of beliefs that focus on putting the family first. Given the enormous impact relocation and expatriation has on every family member, it is not surprising that those who report thriving or managing well consider issues of sacrifice, support and prioritising family welfare. Walsh also separated communication/problem-solving in her framework as distinct from organisational patterns, whereas family communication was included among the behavioural coping strategies generated from interview data.

³² Economic supports were added to the description of dominant coping strategies given the value attributed to the variety of fiscal related family benefits INGOs provided to families (see section 6.3.1.1).

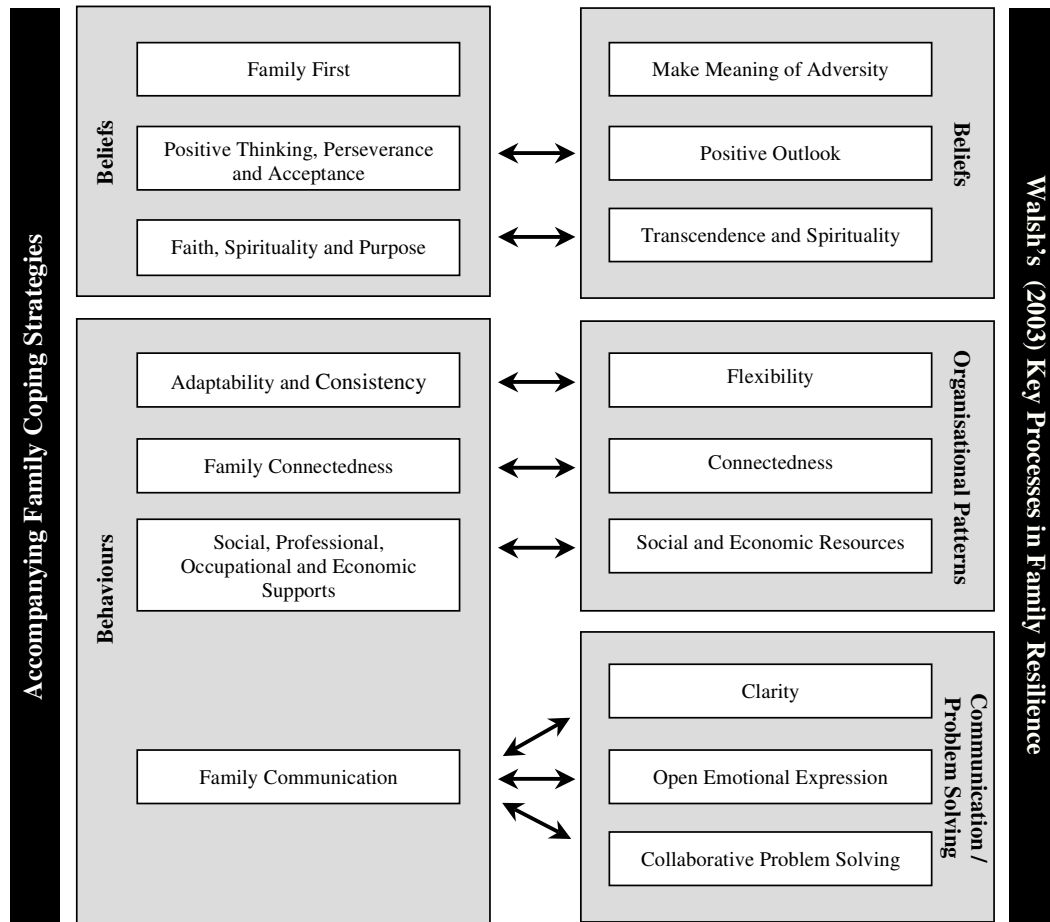


Figure 12: Interview derived dominant family coping strategies as compared with F. Walsh's (2006) key processes in family resilience

Many of the reported responses to the challenges and crises associated with relocation and living abroad are also protective in that they enable individual and families to cope with stressful situations, and at times thrive. For instance, strategies aimed at providing stability within disruption (e.g. home schooling children subject to frequent moves) lead to greater family cohesion and connectedness. As such, these coping strategies are consistent with the protective factor perspective of resilience, whereby a “protective factor interacts with a stressor to reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes” (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008, p. 445).

The reported coping strategies, advice for others and recommendations for organisation support emphasised the impact of family resilience across multiple socio-ecological levels. Thus promoting family resilience involves strengthening the

individual, the family as a unit and the community (or organisation) in which the family is located (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009).

8.4 Organisational Barriers and Enablers Impacting Supports Offered to Expatriate Families (Objective 3)

This research sought to probe the barriers and enablers that impact the support provided to expatriate families by INGOs. Discussed in section 7.3.4, a summary of the main factors reported by key informants is presented in Table 20.

Motivating enablers, such as improving ROI and promoting staff retention and productivity, reflect the feedback provided by accompanying partners with regards to why families matter. Advice given endorses the belief addressing family supports “*under staff care as well as [emphasising] the financial stewardship angle*” is a simple and appropriate business approach to trying to promote greater interest in the needs of expatriate families within the humanitarian sector.

Table 20: Barriers and enablers influencing family support provision within INGOs

Barriers	Enablers
Organisational	
1) Large organisations; multiple, dispersed offices and poorly trained staff	1) Key informants own clear support for greater family support
2) Individual and culturally influenced diversity with respect to employee and family expectations, needs and willingness to ask for assistance	2) Growing recognition of the importance of staff care (family support being seen as an extension of this)
3) Fiscal barriers (e.g. funding restrictions, lack of accurate cost keeping)	3) The power of leadership modelling positive behaviours
4) Lack of leadership interest in family support	4) Support for value for money or effective financial stewardship (associated with leveraging the expenses incurred with accompanied postings)
5) Workplace culture discourages staff from voicing concerns	5) Improved staff retention and performance
6) Underlying beliefs and assumptions (e.g. belief in importance of professional boundaries, sensitive nature of topic, faith-related factors impacting recruitment and support practices)	
7) Lack of existing research on what constitutes effective support	
Family / Employee	
1) Reluctance to share family needs with others	1) Employees and families speak out and share ideas for improvement

8.5 A Model of Humanitarian Expatriate Family Adjustment

(Objective 4)

This research aimed to propose a model of family resilience relevant to expatriate humanitarian families. The purpose of such a model is to highlight the key factors influencing adjustment, thereby providing a framework for humanitarian agencies or expatriate partners seeking to promote wellbeing. Given that the majority of research participants were accompanying partners, it is appropriate that the model (see Figure 13) is based upon partner perceptions.

Based primarily upon the feedback from accompanying partners, the model also reflects F. Walsh's (2006) Key Process of Family Resilience and replicates Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou's (1991) two phases of adjustment (anticipatory and in-country) as depicted in their Framework of International Adjustment. The established body of literature on spillover and crossover with regards to expatriates also underpins the model.

The proposed model was developed through coding processes and the use of the constant comparative analysis central to grounded theory and comparisons with existing expatriate adjustment models mentioned above (as discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.2.1) and the emerging categories and subcategories from coding interview data. Consideration was also given to models used in the humanitarian sector, such as the humanitarian deployment cycle (Antares Foundation, 2006; Williamson, 2010). Following attempts to build a model structured according to the five main deployment stages (staff recruitment and selection / pre-deployment / deployment / sustainment / post-deployment), it was thought to be less complicated to simply distinguish between the anticipatory and in-country adjustment phases.

Consistent with grounded theory tradition, the proposed multi-faceted model of factors influencing expatriate family adjustment within the humanitarian context was developed after reaching theoretical saturation or sufficiency, i.e. the emerging concepts were well developed and no new information was forthcoming. The process of designing draft versions of this model helped validate this process, highlighting

how the concepts under enquiry were related to one another in an cohesive way and any significant categories which were not explained or accounted for in the model.

Figure 13 highlights the influence on humanitarian expatriate family adjustment of the anticipatory period (the hiring and pre-deployment stages), the in-country period, and the actions and decisions of various stakeholders. That is, organisational factors and family factors contribute to adjustment, as does the humanitarian worker and the accompanying partner. Any one of these stakeholders can adversely or favourably impact the adjustment of the expatriate family, thereby affecting wellbeing and resilience, humanitarian worker performance, organisational commitment, and the desire to remain abroad.

As an additional credibility check and as a means of further refining the model, feedback was sought and provided from my supervisor, participating partner interviewees and reference group members about the applicability of this model to expatriate humanitarian families and INGO in general. Feedback indicated that it was accepted by and resonated with these audiences.

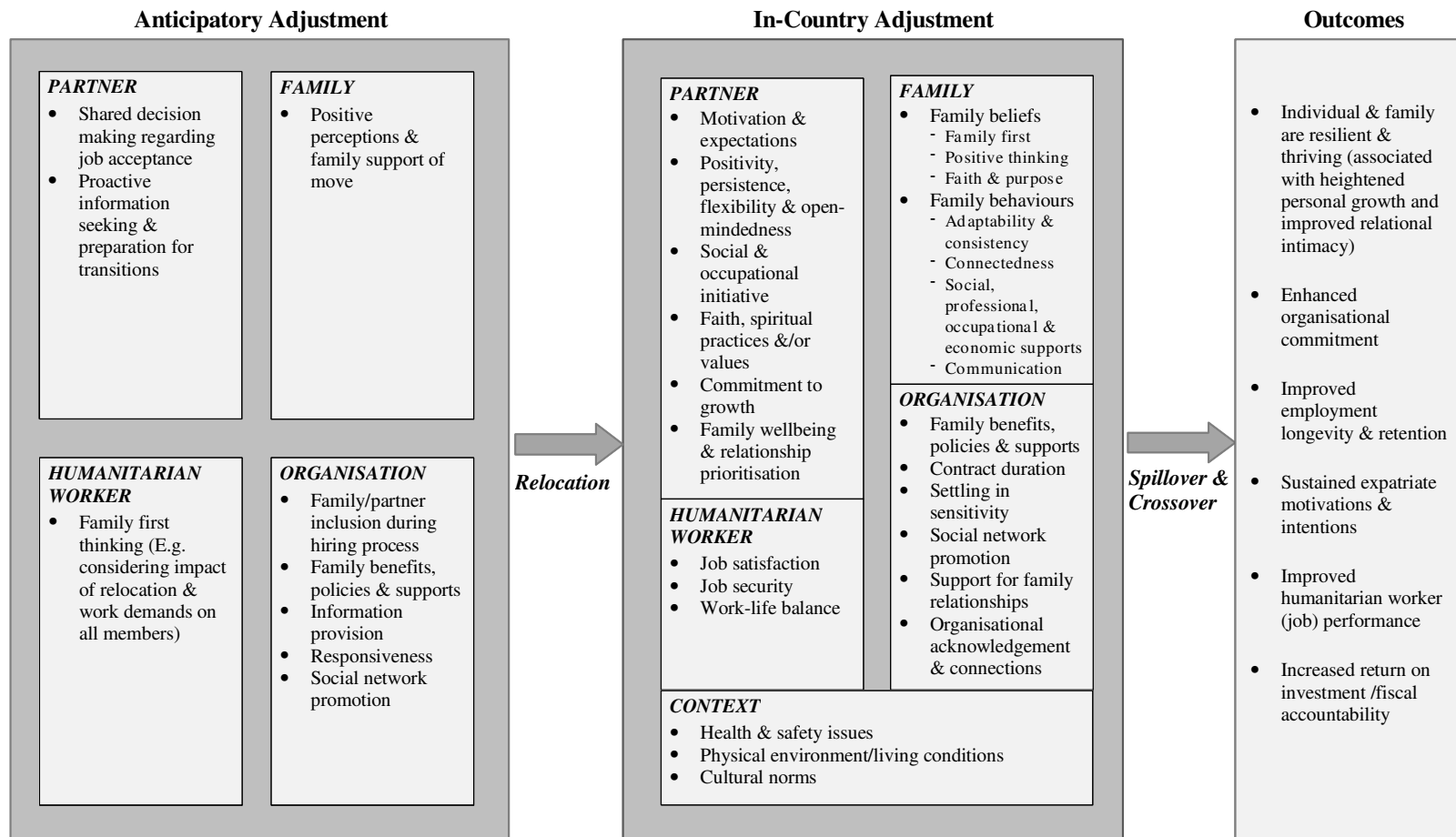


Figure 13: Partner perceptions of factors influencing humanitarian expatriate family adjustment

8.6 Recommendations from the Study (Objectives 5 and 6)

The findings from this present investigation point to an array of efforts that can be made to promote expatriate family resilience within the humanitarian community. This section proposes key recommendations in this regard for a range of relevant stakeholders. Some suggestions may seem ambitious given funding limitations and entrenched norms, however, it is in this context that expatriate families continue to feel ignored and may choose to return home prematurely. In my opinion, this only serves to reinforce the value of these recommendations. The information is augmented in Appendix 8, which presents recommendations for organisations and accompanying families specific to each stage of the deployment cycle.

8.6.1 Recommendations for Humanitarian Organisations

It is advised that humanitarian agencies develop coordinated, resourced and comprehensive family support policies and practices, replacing the existing approach which often depends on sympathetic individuals and assumes families will adequately navigate themselves in a new country. These policies and practices should be subject to regular review and evaluation, thereby enabling the standard of family support to improve over time.

In doing so, it is recommended that humanitarian organisations:

- **Embed family support into organisational culture and supervise the support provided.**

Discussion in sections 6.3 and 7.3.3 of this thesis highlighted the varying and inconsistent family support received across different country offices and different times, depending on cultural norms and specific individuals. Organisations should stop depending on sympathetic persons and customs, and rather pursue a consistent approach to family support that is embedded into organisations across multiple levels.

While leadership of family support issues must come from HR personnel (2.1.2 and 7.3.2), the actual provision of supports throughout the deployment cycle needs to be delegated across multiple offices (i.e. the hiring office, host office, regional or HQ office) and considered a team effort. Higher-level oversight of support is particularly crucial in situations where families are

assigned to locations where there are few other expatriate families or distrust exists between national and expatriate staff (7.3.2 and 7.3.3.1).

- **Identify and prioritise assistance for families with greater support needs.**

This thesis highlighted the particular vulnerabilities of families on their very first international posting (5.2.3 and 7.3.3.1), those with young children (5.2.4), and families residing in hardship locations, both isolated postings and those facing heightened security risks (5.2.7). Other families whose support needs are often overlooked include those accompanying long-term employees who are relocating to very different contexts, and those posted to developed locations (e.g. regional or head offices in Europe or the USA) or countries where they may not be recognised as being foreigners (7.3.3.1). Agencies should be quick to identify such families and provide suitable additional resources (reference materials, mentors etc.).

- **Lengthen accompanying contracts to at least 2 years and improve information provision, pre-deployment screening, orientation and cross-cultural training.**

This thesis suggests that for most individuals, at least six months is required to adjust to a new location (5.2.3). The consequence of short contracts includes lack of job security (5.2.5), lack of organisational commitment, and reduced ROI with regards to the fiscal expenses incurred with relocation costs. Work-related achievements or outputs are also compromised. In light of these factors, it is strongly advised that accompanying contracts should be for a minimum of 24 months, preferably longer.

Organisations should ensure “*due diligence*” in the recruitment period with regards to fostering realistic expectations concerning job demands, cultural and environmental norms, common relationship strains, and family supports provided by the agency (4.4.2, 6.3.1.2, 6.3.1.3, and 7.3.3.2). It is critical that thorough screening, orientation and cross-cultural training are provided for both workers and their families during the pre-deployment and initial settling in stages. Screening may include assessing staff and families using tools to predict cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. the CSAI or CCAI), the results of

which can assist organisations and families to be more alert to weaknesses or strengths which may influence adjustment processes and the types of supports required (2.1.2 and 7.3.3.2). Serial multi-stage orientation assistance (2.1.2 and 6.3.1) should include reference materials, an organisational ‘go-to’ contact person, and access to language training for all family members (2.1.2 and 7.3.3.4).

- **Appreciate that family benefits and policies are key to attracting and retaining staff and thereby ensure such policies are regularly reviewed, updated and communicated to families.**

Sections 6.3.1.1 and 7.3.3.1 emphasised the importance of family benefits for accompanying partners. It is crucial that information about family-related benefits, policies and practices is provided when offering a contract to a potential employee, thereby enabling both the individual and their family to consider the match between organisational supports and their family needs. Family benefit allowances should also be regularly reviewed upon feedback provided by staff and their dependants and sector comparative reviews.

- **Maintain awareness of, and support the health and safety, professional, emotional, relational and social needs of families.**

Humanitarian organisations must prioritise the wellbeing of accompanying family members when considering posting locations, and then continue to assess and monitor security concerns wherever staff are assigned. This is particularly crucial given the subjective nature of risk assessment as discussed in section 8.2.4.

Given the difficulty accessing skilled health professionals, the potential for additional stress and lack of familiar supports to exacerbate pre-existing conditions (5.2.6), and the reluctance of some humanitarian employees to disclose mental illnesses or their need for greater support (5.2.5), pre-departure screening should include assessing staff and families for physical and mental illnesses and risk factors.

A recommended (but often overlooked) aspect of providing family support concerns the practice of directly enquiring with accompanying families about their adjustment and coping (6.3.1.1 and 7.3.3.5). Likewise, organisations should be responsive to requests from families or employees for assistance (6.3.1.2 and 6.3.1.5). Promoting social networks is also vital, commencing this process during the pre-deployment phase and continuing once abroad (6.3.1.4 and 7.2.1). Long-term sustainment of families abroad highlighted the need for a variety of supports for staff and their families, including free confidential counselling/debriefing (6.3.1.5 and 7.3.3.5) as well as career assistance for accompanying partners (5.2.2 and 7.2.1). Finally, humanitarian agencies should consider creating an online forum to provide accompanying families with useful information, including resilience related resources, as well as mechanisms for social connections.

- **Advocate for the relationship between employees and their families.**

Leadership should periodically remind managers and employees of the importance of prioritising family concerns above work demands (7.3.3.1). Organisations should promote work-life balance and family-friendly working conditions (e.g. flexible hours, work from home provisions, and exceptional leave for events such as births and funerals) (6.3.1.1 and 7.3.3.1). Providing leave for the worker to assist settling their family into a new country or home (6.3.1.4) is a practical example of how organisations can support the employee-family relationship.

- **Include families in organisational life and validate the support they provide.**

Partners and informants agreed on the need for improved “*appreciation*” of accompanying partners (6.3.1.1 and 7.2.1). This includes ensuring organisations have direct communication with accompanying partners (6.3.1.1 and 7.3.3.1), as well as providing regular opportunities for family members to attend work-related events (retreats, celebrations, field trips etc.) (4.4.2, 5.3.1, and 7.3.3.5). Finally, organisations should ensure accompanying partners feel included in the hiring process (6.3.1.2 and 7.3.3.2) and are offered debriefing at the completion of an assignment (6.3.1.6).

8.6.2 Recommendations for Accompanying Families

Family wellbeing is not the responsibility of humanitarian organisations alone. Accompanying families must take responsibility for their decisions, priorities and communication with one another and with the hiring organisation. To this end, it is recommended that accompanying families:

- **Proactively seek information and prepare during the hiring process and before relocating.**

Sections 6.1.1.3 and 6.2 emphasised the importance of asking questions (from both the recruiting organisation and from others familiar with the location) in order to make an informed decision about accepting a position. Crucial information includes available medical and educational facilities, security and health risks, job demands and family benefits provided.

Upon accepting an offer, families need to prepare and plan for transition. This includes: considering occupations for the accompanying partner (6.1.1.2 and 7.2.3); establishing social and information networks (6.1.1.1 and 6.1.2.1); preparing emotionally; considering health and safety prevention and promotion strategies (6.1.2.3); and setting initial boundaries or targets for working norms (7.2.3).

- **Share decision making with regards to accepting the position and prioritise family wellbeing and relationships.**

To avoid later resentment and relationship strain, it is imperative that the worker and the accompanying partner fully support the decision to move (4.4.2, 5.2.1.2, and 6.1.2.7). Depending on age, children should also be involved in the decision making process (6.1.2.9). Families should be wary of accepting accompanied relief postings, for while organisations may support the presence of the family, the reality of job demands often make it difficult for the employee to balance work and family needs (5.2.4 and 7.2.3).

Beyond considering family wellbeing during the acceptance process, family relationships should be prioritised throughout the expatriate journey. This involves: taking time to assess the impact of relocation and work on family

relations (6.1.2.9); encouraging family rituals and routines (including time together) (5.3.3 and 6.1.2.4); ensuring regular breaks and holidays (6.1.2.5); promoting open, honest and frequent communication between all family members (6.1.2.7); and being willing to bring family needs or concerns to the attention of humanitarian organisations (7.3.3.4 and 7.3.4).

- **Develop and maintain supportive networks, including distant family and friends, in-country friendships and professional supports as required.**

Sections 5.3.4, 6.1.1.1, 6.1.2.1 and 6.2 highlighted the importance of social networks for all family members. Maintaining connections with distant family and friends is essential to helping children identify with home countries and eases some of the difficulties associated with re-entry (6.1.2.1). Friendships with others who are familiar with expatriate life are particularly beneficial, while in-country networks are imperative to helping feel settled and positive about living in a new location (6.1.1.1). Seeking professional counselling as needed is also advised (6.1.1.1 and 6.1.2.1).

- **Foster positivity, patience, persistence and acceptance at both individual and family levels.**

Accompanying families are encouraged to enjoy the good things on offer, seize opportunities, accept the realities of specific locations, adopt a self-reliant perspective, and appreciate the need for flexible thinking and patience (5.3, 6.1.1.4, 6.1.2.10 and 7.2.3). While positivity is encouraged, it is important that this is tempered with realism, especially concerning what is achievable in terms of “*wanting to make a difference*” (6.2).

- **Seek comfort, strength, meaning and purpose through faith, spiritual practices and/or belief in the value and importance of humanitarian work.**

Accompanying partners emphasised the importance of faith, spiritual practices or significant values personally and within their family (5.3.5, 6.1.1.5 and 6.1.2.11). Reflecting on such beliefs or being in community with others who share similar beliefs is advised as a source of strength and

comfort during difficult times and helps provide meaning and purpose throughout the expatriate experience.

- **Engage with the host environment and people.**

Pursuing connections with the local community and culture is important to maximising the benefits and the learning potential of expatriate living (5.3.4, 6.1.1.1 and 6.1.2.1). Linked to this is making an effort to learn the language. While security restrictions should be respected, exploring the location can also be a potential source of greater cultural appreciation (6.1.1.1).

- **Appreciate re-entry or transition is not easy.**

Families often assume returning home or relocating after living abroad will be much easier than the reality often is (5.2.3). Consequently, the need to prepare emotionally, to plan and to adopt a positive attitude (similar strategies as those required during the pre-deployment and settling in stages) is underscored. Families are encouraged to request debriefing services and organisational assistance during times of transition.

This research has also identified several specific recommendations for accompanying partners and humanitarian workers.

Specifically, accompanying partners need to:

- **Keep busy and pursue meaningful roles and interests** (5.3.5, 6.1.1.2, 6.1.2.2 and 6.2).
- **See their role in the initial weeks to support the humanitarian worker and children in their transition processes, including being willing to temporarily sacrifice one's own career** (6.1.2.8).
- **Establish the home as a place of refuge** (6.1.2.8 and 6.1.2.9).

Humanitarian workers need to:

- **Ensure whole family wellbeing takes precedence over pursuing career opportunities** (6.1.2.9).

- **Appreciate the additional challenges faced by accompanying partners in terms of establishing routine, purpose and identities while abroad (2.1.1 and 5.2.2).**
- **Ensure family needs take precedence over work demands (E.g. when planning travel, managing working hours) (5.2.5).**

8.6.3 Future Research

This thesis acknowledges exhortations by Haslberger and Brewster (2008) and McLachlan (2007) that expatriate families should be depicted in a more positive light than is frequently the case. Specifically interested in the construct of resilience, the present investigation focuses on a very specific expatriate population, despite the limited extant research that exists on the broader topics of expatriate resilience and families within the humanitarian community.

As such, recommendations for subsequent expatriate-related research include:

- Greater exploration of the lived experiences of expatriate employees and accompanying families, specifically looking at the coping strategies or resilience processes employed.
- Qualitative, longitudinal studies tracking expatriate families over several years, thereby providing an avenue to explore how resilience processes adapt or change over time.

Specific recommendations for research related to expatriate families within the humanitarian sector include:

- Pilot test and further refine the model of factors influencing expatriate family adjustment as proposed in the present thesis for veracity within the humanitarian sector.
- Cost-benefit analyses of the actual costs associated with accompanied postings within humanitarian organisations, thereby providing data against which to compare the costs of failed assignments or family supports aimed at leveraging the fiscal investment already made.
- Research into the factors influencing humanitarian employees' decisions to prematurely terminate or not renew an accompanied contract. Particular

consideration should be given to the perception and nature of family supports received during the assignment.

- Family resilience research that draws upon multiple perspectives: i.e. data collection involves not only accompanying partners but also humanitarian workers and older children.
- Family resilience research that explores the impact of culture upon expatriate adaptation and resilience; particularly prudent given the diversity of nationalities engaged in relief and development work.
- Peer-reviewed research that explores HR issues affecting humanitarian organisations, recognising humanitarian and religious NGOs have been described as “something of an un-researched ‘black box’ which does not appear in the international human resource management literature” (Brewster, 2001, p. 129). For example, studies could consider the impact family issues have on retention and employee effectiveness.

8.7 Influence of the Research Experience

Living abroad as an accompanying spouse and conducting this research involved a personal journey of learning and reflection. For example, at times interview responses would strongly resonate with my experiences, confirming a value or belief (such as the importance of ritual making) that I hold dear. Alternatively, during other interviews I would find myself making a mental note to learn from someone else’s advice: behaviours to avoid or resilience practices to pursue within my family. Thus, beyond providing me with a meaningful role and occupation for the past four years, undertaking the research has been significant in that it has afforded me the opportunity to consider how to strengthen the resilience processes in my family and the many other expatriate families I interact with.

Qualitative research, particularly the process of analysis, involves continuous reflexivity and self-scrutiny. Wanting to ensure that the final model and recommendations generated reflected not only my interpretation of the data, seeking feedback on the emerging categories and findings was a critical part of the research process. In addition to the reference group and interviewee feedback, I delivered several presentations on the subject of resilience in expatriate humanitarian families

both in Cambodia and internationally (see page xx). I was encouraged by the discussions this research generated within other humanitarian families and missionary families (who, though not my target population, were very interested in the research findings).

Humanitarian agency personnel (particularly those in senior roles) appeared less interested in the subject, such as at the 2013 UK Red Cross Resilience Conference where few attended a presentation I delivered. Concurrent presentations and the fact most delegates were locals (i.e. not employed in expatriate roles) partially explained this. Partner interview feedback throughout the research, however, suggests the subject of expatriate humanitarian families is consistently undervalued and given less attention than it deserves. Engaging those holding influential leadership positions within humanitarian agencies (either through advocacy, presentations, or alternate mediums) has been an ongoing challenge throughout this research journey.

Personal reflections: Journal Memo

In these final weeks of thesis editing I am struggling with feelings of frustration towards our employing INGO, as once again we face contract uncertainty. While my husband has been given verbal assurance of a renewed contract, nothing exists in writing. Meanwhile I need to enrol our children into a new school and pay application fees etc. The irony that I am struggling to cope with this uncertainty as I work on a thesis looking at resilience in expatriate families is not lost on me! Basic HR and management processes such as timely discussions and renewals of contracts, as well as longer contracts, really are not rocket science. But they make such a difference. How much less stressed we would be if these matters were prioritised!

8.8 Significance of the Study

The present study is the first of its kind to examine the challenges and coping strategies of expatriate families accompanying humanitarian workers. Additionally, though several studies have acknowledged resilience within expatriate families, this investigation is the first to specifically focus on understanding the resilience

processes employed within an expatriate population. As such, it contributes to the emergent field of family resilience. The findings themselves and the development of a context-specific model also provide material upon which to compare and guide future research.

The findings are noteworthy for multiple stakeholders: humanitarian workers, accompanying partners, and those in HR, staff care or other senior roles within humanitarian organisations.

For humanitarian workers, the findings are significant on the grounds that they:

1. Present the challenges, benefits, and support needs of expatriate families from the perspective of accompanying partners, thus providing an alternative perspective to their own.
2. Recognise the work and family-related stressors faced by humanitarian workers, and the purposeful initiatives adopted by many to manage these.
3. Provide advice on how to pursue and maintain a humanitarian career without this being at the expense of significant relationships.

For accompanying partners, this study is important on the basis that:

4. As an understudied population, this research provides a unique opportunity for the thoughts and opinions of accompanying partners to be expressed.
5. Recommendations exist for accompanying partners seeking to foster personal and family resilience. Regardless of organisational supports provided, these suggestions provide direction for partners seeking to enhance individual and family wellbeing.

Within humanitarian organisations, this study is significant as it:

6. Identifies the challenges and coping strategies of accompanying families of humanitarian INGO workers. In doing so, the research highlights potential antecedents of work-family interaction, as any stressor or resource in the family or work domain may cause work-family conflict or work-family enrichment.
7. Reveals the resemblance between F. Walsh's (2006) key resilience processes and the coping strategies adopted by expatriate humanitarian families, the

implications of which mean it is unnecessary for humanitarian organisations to “re-create the wheel” when seeking to understand family resilience among accompanying families.

8. Acknowledges the driving and restraining forces influencing the provision of family supports within INGOs, thereby recognising the factors that require consideration when advocating for greater consideration of family needs.
9. Provides suggestions for leaders, HR and staff care professionals on how to promote resilience within accompanying families, a topic having previously received little or no attention. Enhanced expatriate family wellbeing is associated with improved financial accountability and employee performance, favourably influencing retention, productivity and efficiency.

Ultimately, long-term adoption of the organisational-and family-level recommendations outlined in this thesis may result in improved fiscal and humanitarian outcomes for relief and development agencies. These benefit not only organisations, but also the communities they exist to serve.

8.9 Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations were inherent in the methodological approach taken. These are acknowledged below.

Data collection and analysis issues: Variable Internet quality affected the quality of interview recording and the flow of conversations. While most participants did their best to ensure interviews took place with minimal distractions, for some partners with young children, this was not always easy. In such situations, participants were offered the opportunity to suspend the interview and resume it at a more convenient time.

Possible lack of theory development: Using a constructivist grounded theory approach this study has produced recommendations and a model of adjustment relevant to accompanying humanitarian families. While some theoretical purists might object to the lack of theory generation in this study, I believe this research was pragmatic and produced useful findings. Willig (2013) also argued that when using grounded theory to investigate the nature of experience, as opposed to social

processes, it can be used as a technique for systematic categorisation, resulting in a “map of concepts and categories used by the respondents to make sense of their experience” (p.79).

Scope: In terms of scope, I interviewed only accompanying partners who were living abroad or had recently returned from a posting of at least one year in duration. This study did not therefore capture the experiences of families who relocate but then decide within the first year to return home, nor did it look at coping strategies from the perspective of other family members. This meant gathering data at the individual level (including asking partners to report on the perceptions or coping strategies of other family members) and extrapolating this to the family level. This decision was based on resource constraints, and reflected a common dilemma reported in the family resilience literature: “Resilience can logically be construed as a family-level construct... however, researchers may encounter difficulties exist in operationalising those portions of the construct that rely on shared perceptions of reality” (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996, p. 6).

Another common criticism of resilience research concerns the lack of longitudinal studies (De Haan, et al., 2002; Kalil, 2003). While recognising that family resilience concerns how a family deals with stress over time (F. Walsh, 1996), it was outside the scope of this study to track families over a period of time. Within the humanitarian sector, a longitudinal design would also be difficult given the short assignment lengths and lack of job security commonly reported.

8.10 Conclusion

The present study examined the experiences of accompanying families of humanitarian workers; an under-researched population typically overlooked within the aid sector. In particular, this study endeavoured to identify the challenges, resilience-enhancing processes and desired organisation family supports based on the perspective of accompanying partners. The research has provided important new data from this perspective, and has also explored the barriers and enabling factors influencing family supports from the perspective of senior INGO staff care and HR professionals.

A systematic review of the extant literature, most notably using scoping review methodology, and the use of a reference group added depth and rigour to the research process. Synthesis of information from these multiple sources on the construct of resilience within accompanying humanitarian families highlighted the fact that family resilience was a decisive factor dependent on and influenced by a complex web of factors at the levels of individual, family and community.

Currently, there exists very little guidance for aid organisations or expatriate humanitarian families concerning how to promote family resilience or thriving. Thus, the final chapter of this thesis proposed a context-specific model of expatriate humanitarian family adjustment and clearly elucidated recommendations for agencies and families seeking to enhance family wellbeing. Rather than simply maintaining status quo or being concerned about the financial cost of implementing these recommendations, this research provides a compelling case for the alternate argument: What is the cost to humanitarian organisations to not provide such supports? High levels of stress, burnout and staff turnover continue to impact project outcomes and workplace moral within the humanitarian sector. Expectations regarding stewardship and accountability are growing among donors. While organisations invest “time and money in taking people overseas, families (often) seem to be the breaking point” (McKay, as cited in Welch, 2009, p. 11).

This thesis defends the position that it makes sound business sense from a human resource and sustainability perspective to ensure organisational policies, practices and workplace environments support maximum employee performance, retention and ROI. While accompanying families often demonstrate considerable resilience in their ability to adjust to the challenges and stressors they experience, there is arguably much more that can be done to promote growth and thriving among this population. There should be no doubt as to whether aid organisations commit to the wellbeing of their own staff and their families as much as they commit to the beneficiaries whom they serve. The recommendations and model proposed will be shared amongst INGOs and it is hoped that these will be incorporated to advocate for policy change to support international humanitarian workers and their families as they undertake global assignments.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Curtin University of Technology Ethics Approval

MINUTE



To	Elisa Pepall
From	Dr Mohammed Ali
Subject	Protocol Approval CIH-11-2010
Date	24 August 2010
cc	A/Prof Jaya Earnest

Office of Research and Development

Human Research Ethics Committee**TELEPHONE** 9266 2784**FACSIMILE** 9266 3793**EMAIL:** l.teasdale@curtin.edu.au

Dear Elisa,

Thank you for your Form C Application for Approval of Research with Minimal Risk (Ethical Requirements) for the project titled: **Strengthening Family Resilience during Accompanied Humanitarian Assignments.**

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I am pleased to inform you that the project is approved.

Approval of this project is for a period of three years, from 24 August 2010 to 24 August 2013.

If at any time during the period changes/amendments occur, or if a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs, please advise me immediately. The approval number for your project is **HR CIH-11-2010**. Please quote this number in any future correspondence.

Kind regards

Dr Mohammed Ali
Human Research Ethics Committee
Centre for International Health
Curtin University of Technology
Western Australia
Telephone: 9266 3974
Fax: 9266 2608
email: m.ali@curtin.edu.au

Please Note: The following standard statement must be included in the information sheet to participants: *This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth, 6845 or by telephoning 9266 2784*

Appendix 2: What Are Scoping Studies? A Brief Review of the Literature

A2.0 Introduction

The emergence of scoping studies or scoping literature reviews as an alternative to traditional literature review methods is relatively recent, with most scoping studies being published since 2000 (Grant & Booth, 2009). Scoping studies have been published in journals from a variety of disciplines including business (Deakins, Ishaq, Smallbone, Whittam, & Wyper, 2007), education (Roberts, Irvine, Tranter, & Spencer, 2010), health care (Brien, et al., 2010) and alternative medicine (L. C. Weeks & Strudsholm, 2008). In order to best understand the suitability and methodology involved in such a review, an informal literature search on scoping study methodology was conducted in February 2011. Databases searched included CINAHL, PubMed, PsycINFO, ScienceDirect and Web of Science using the search terms ‘scoping,’ ‘scoping study,’ ‘scoping review,’ and ‘scoping methodology’ for papers published in English between January 2000 and January 2011. Reference lists of key papers were also searched. Seven citations that discussed scoping study methodologies in detail were identified through this process (Table A1).

Table A1: Definitions and purposes of scoping studies (Revised table adopted from Levac, et al., 2010, p. 2)

Authors	Definition	Purpose(s)
Ehrich et al. (2002)	None provided	“The purpose of a scoping exercise is both to map a wide range of literature, and to envisage where gaps and innovative approaches may lie” (Ehrich, Freeman, Richards, Robinson, & Shepperd, 2002, p.28)
Arksey and O’Malley (2005)	“Aim to map rapidly the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available” (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005, p. 21)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To examine the extent, range, and nature of research activity 2. To determine the value for undertaking a full systematic review 3. To summarise and disseminate research findings 4. To identify research gaps in the existing literature (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005, p. 21)
Anderson et al. (2008)	Scoping studies are “concerned with contextualising knowledge in terms of identifying the current state of understanding; identifying the sorts of things we know and do not know; and then setting this within policy and practice contexts” (S. Anderson, Allen, Peckham, & Goodwin, 2008, p.10)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literature mapping: “Is a map of the relevant literature. These vary in scope from general accounts of the literature to studies that are just short of systematic reviews. Literature scoping studies often also involve the syntheses of findings from different types of study” 2. Conceptual mapping: “A scoping study designed to establish how a particular term is used in what literature, by whom and for what purpose” 3. Policy mapping: “A scoping study designed to identify the main documents and statements from government agencies and professional bodies that have a bearing on the nature of practice in that area” 4. Stakeholder consultation: “Do[es] not constitute scoping studies in their own right, but they do have an important part to play in scoping studies concerned with the identification of research priorities, in helping to target research questions, and in validating the outcomes of scoping studies through peer-review” (S. Anderson, et al., 2008)
Grant et al. (2009)	“Preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of research literature” (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 101)	“Aims to identify the nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)” (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 101)
Davis et al. (2009)	“Scoping involves the synthesis and analysis of a wide range of research and non-research material to provide greater conceptual clarity about a specific topic or field of evidence” (Davis, Drey, & Gould, 2009, p. 1386)	“We propose that a common synthesising construct emerges to explain the purpose of scoping, namely that of ‘reconnaissance.’ It is generally synonymous with a preliminarily investigation in which information is systematically gathered and examined in order to establish strengths and weakness and guide in which ever context, future decision-making” (Davis, et al., 2009, p. 1396)
Levac et al. (2010)	None provided; summary table given of main definitions in use (Levac, et al., 2010, p. 2)	Reiterate purposes provided by Arksey and O’Malley (2005)
Rumrill et al. (2010)	“Scoping represents a viable methodological approach that can be used to examine the breadth of research on a particular topic” (Rumrill, et al., 2010, p. 401)	<p>To examine the range and nature of a particular research area or determine if a full systematic review is needed. This is typically achieved through three types of mapping exercises: literature, conceptual or policy mapping</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To summarise and disseminate findings from different types of research studies and to identify gaps in the research literature. This is typically achieved through a systematic scoping process (Rumrill, et al., 2010, p. 401)

A2.1 What is a Scoping Study?

Despite being an increasingly popular approach to reviewing research evidence (Levac, et al., 2010), clear consensus does not exist regarding the definition and purpose of this approach (see Table A2). In addition, debate exists concerning the distinction between scoping as an integral preliminary process in the development of a research proposal or a formative, methodologically rigorous activity in its own right (Davis, et al., 2009).

Despite the lack of accord between researchers, scoping reviews or studies generally appraise both research and non-research data sources and focus on providing an overview of the breadth rather than the depth of literature (S. Anderson, et al., 2008; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Davis, et al., 2009; Rumrill, et al., 2010). Whereas a systematic review will typically focus on a well-defined question, a scoping review or study tends to address broader topics where multiple different study designs might be applicable (Lorenzetti, 2007). Additionally, unlike systematic reviews, scoping studies usually do not formally assess the quality of studies reviewed (Grant & Booth, 2009; Levac, et al., 2010; Rumrill, et al., 2010). Table A2 provides a comparison of the key differences between scoping and systematic reviews.

Table A2: A comparison of the characteristics of scoping and systematic reviews (Brien, et al., 2010, p. 2)

Systematic Review	Scoping Review
Focused research question with narrow parameters	Research question(s) often broad
Inclusion/exclusion usually defined at outset	Inclusion/exclusion can be developed post hoc
Quality filters often applied	Quality not an initial priority
Detailed data extraction	May or may not involve data extraction
Quantitative synthesis often performed	Synthesis more qualitative, and typically not quantitative
Formally assesses the quality of studies and generates a conclusion relating to the focused research question	Used to identify parameters and gaps in a body of literature

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) identified four common reasons why a scoping study might be undertaken: (1) to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity in a particular area; (2) to determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review; (3) to summarise and disseminate research findings; and (4) to identify research gaps in the literature. Davis et al. (2009) also conceptualised a hierarchy of levels of scoping inquiry, ranging from elementary fact finding through to more systematic substantive levels of scoping. A discussion of a systematic methodology for conducting scoping studies is provided below.

A2.2 Methodology of Scoping Studies

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) from the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at the University of York published a pivotal paper providing the first methodological framework for conducting scoping studies. Rather than being guided by a highly focused research question that lends itself to searching for a particular study design, the methodology is guided by a requirement to identify all relevant literature regardless of study design (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The process of searching is not linear, but iterative as familiarity with the literature is increased (Davis, et al., 2009).

The 'Arksey and O'Malley framework' is underpinned by the perspective held by supporters of systematic reviews that each stage throughout the process should be conducted in rigorous and transparent ways (2005). The process should be documented in such a way to enable the study to be replicated by others, thereby increasing the reliability of the findings and addressing any suggestion that the scoping study lacks methodological rigour (Mays, Pope, & Popay, 2005). In brief, the six stage method involves: (1) identifying the initial research question; (2) identifying criteria for selecting studies; (3) searching for studies using various research databases; (4) charting the data whereby studies located can be grouped into themes; and (5) summarising the findings using a systematic approach. A final optional step involves consultation with key stakeholders, for example, via focus groups or key informants. Table A3 provides a brief summary of each of these steps. In 2010, Levac et al. published recommendations to clarify and enhance each stage of Arksey and O'Malley's framework based on their experience of conducting several scoping studies. Key recommendations included: "Clarifying and linking the

purpose and research question; balancing feasibility with breadth and comprehensiveness of the scoping process; using a team approach to selecting studies and extracting data; incorporating a numerical summary and qualitative thematic analysis; identifying the implications of the study findings for policy, practice or research; and adopting consultation with stakeholders as a required component” (Levac, et al., 2010, p. 8).

Table A3: Overview of the Arksey and O’Malley methodological framework for conducting a scoping study (Levac, et al., 2010, p. 3)

Arksey and O’Malley Framework Stage	Description
1. Identifying the research question	Identifying the research question provides the roadmap for subsequent stages. Relevant aspects of the question must be clearly defined as they have ramifications for search strategies. Research questions are broad in nature as they seek to provide breadth of coverage.
2. Identifying relevant studies	This stage involves identifying the relevant studies and developing a decision plan for where to search, which terms to use, which sources are to be searched, time span, and language. Comprehensiveness and breadth are important in the search. Sources include electronic databases, reference lists, hand searching of key journals, organisations and conferences. Breadth is important; however, practicalities of the search are as well. Time, budget and personnel resources are potential limiting factors and decisions need to be made upfront about how these will impact the search.
3. Study selection	Study selection involves post hoc inclusion and exclusion criteria. These criteria are based on the specifics of the research question and on new familiarity with the subject matter through reading the studies.
4. Charting the data	A data charting form is developed and used to extract data from each study. A ‘narrative review’ or ‘descriptive analytical’ method is used to extract contextual or process oriented information from each study.
5. Collating, summarising, and reporting results	An analytic framework or thematic construction is used to provide an overview of the breadth of the literature but not a synthesis. A numerical analysis of the extent and nature of studies using tables and charts is presented. A thematic analysis is then presented. Clarity and consistency are required when reporting results.
6. Consultation (optional)	Provides opportunities for consumer and stakeholder involvement to suggest additional references and provide insights beyond those in the literature.

A2.3 Limitations and Strengths of Scoping Studies

Like any research methodology, scoping studies are subject to a number of potential limitations. One of the most obvious of these concerns is the fact that scoping studies don’t usually formally appraise the quality of evidence. As such one needs to avoid relying on the mere existence of studies as a basis for conclusions, rather than their intrinsic quality (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Grant & Booth, 2009; Griffiths,

Bennett, & Smith, 2009). Ideally scoping studies should also be conducted by a multidisciplinary team, thereby avoiding potential bias caused by a primary researcher's own interests and helping ensure the necessary breadth of knowledge and expertise (S. Anderson, et al., 2008).

Although scoping studies are often linked to 'rapid' appraisals, it is misleading to assume that this method represents either a 'quick' or 'cheap' option (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). In reality scoping studies often require "sense-making across fields of enquiry that are complex and which lend themselves to interpretation through many different academic and theoretical disciplines" (S. Anderson, Allen, Peckham, & Goodwin, 2008, p. 6). Conducting a scoping study requires considerable analytic skill and time in order to develop frameworks through which a wide range of study designs and methodologies can be summarised (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Despite these limitations, scoping studies have been described as "an essential element in the portfolio of approaches to research" (S. Anderson, et al., 2008, p. 1). They are particularly relevant to disciplines with emerging evidence in which the lack of randomized controlled trials make it difficult for researchers to undertake systematic reviews (Levac, et al., 2010). Scoping studies offer an alternative where researchers can incorporate a range of study designs in both published and grey literature, and provide a rigorous and transparent method for mapping diverse areas of research (Grant & Booth, 2009). The search methods and purposes of scoping reviews vary depending upon the topic under study, however the flexibility and creativity inherent when summarising the literature using this approach enables reviewers to make valuable contributions to the field in ways that are personally and professionally relevant (Davis, et al., 2009; Rumrill, et al., 2010).

Scoping reviews also have the distinct advantage of exposing readers to a large volume of literature in an efficient and cost-effective format. By presenting the results in an accessible and summarised format, or to "extract the essence of a diverse body of evidence" (Davis, et al., 2009, p. 1398), interested persons and organisations are better placed to make effective use of the findings (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Rumrill, et al., 2010).

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Appendix 3: Information for Accompanying Partners

- A3.0 Information Flyer
- A3.1 Information Sheet
- A3.2 Consent Form
- A3.3 Demographics Form

A3.0 Information Flyer

Strengthening Family Resilience during Accompanied Humanitarian Assignments: VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

We are looking for volunteers to interview as part of a study exploring the challenges and stresses faced by partners and children who accompany humanitarian workers overseas.

Who is eligible: English speaking adults (18+ years) who have accompanied their partner or spouse abroad whilst their partner is employed with a humanitarian Non Government Organisation (NGO). The NGO may focus on humanitarian emergency relief, early recovery or development programs.

Participants will need to be able to reflect on and be willing to share detailed information about their own or their families' experiences in accompanying a humanitarian worker.

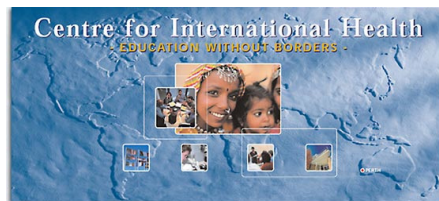
Exclusion Criteria:

- Persons who do not **accompany** their partner abroad (i.e. unaccompanied positions).
- Persons whose partners have not been employed with an NGO in a **paid position for at least one year**.
- Persons whose partners do not work for an **NGO** (i.e. the Red Cross or the United Nations).
- Persons who also obtained **full-time employment prior to arriving in the new country of residence** on the basis that discussions about 'accompanying experiences' may no longer be relevant.

What is involved: Volunteers will be interviewed, either in person, via phone or skype. The interview should take approximately 1- 1.5 hours and will be audio recorded.

Risks and benefits: Your assistance with this survey is completely voluntary. No money or gift is offered to those who take part. There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study. The study may benefit others in the future by improving strategies for supporting expatriate families in the humanitarian sector.

Contact: To learn more about this research please contact Elisa Pepall at epepall@gmail.com



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This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee

A3.2 Consent Form

RESEARCH PROJECT:

Strengthening Family Resilience during Accompanied Humanitarian Assignments

Please read the consent form below and fill in the marked grey boxes. Once completed please press the submit button in order to automatically email the form back to Elisa Pepall. Thank you for your time.

CONSENT FORM

My name is

My home address is

I have read the information sheet about this project and I am willing to be interviewed.

I am helping voluntarily and I understand that I will not be paid or given gifts or any sort for my help.

I understand that I can stop answering questions and withdraw from the research at any time and I can ask questions about the project.

I am helping with the project on the understanding that my answers will be kept confidential and my name will not be associated with my answers.

I am happy for the researcher to use my answers to the interview questions in reports and publications as long as my name or any other information that identifies me is not used.

I agree to the interview being recorded.

Signature

Date

ONCE COMPLETED PLEASE PRESS THE SUBMIT BUTTON BELOW

Submit

THANK YOU

A3.3 Demographics Form

RESEARCH PROJECT:

Strengthening Family Resilience during Accompanied Humanitarian Assignments

Please read the brief survey below and fill in the marked grey boxes. Once completed please press the submit button in order to automatically email the form back to Elisa Pepall. Thank you for your time.

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Gender: M F

4. Present nationality: Country of birth:

5. Is English your first language? Y N
 If No, what is your first language?

6. Are you married to your current partner? Y N
 If Yes, number of years married:
 If Yes, nationality of spouse:

7. Do you have children? Y N
 If Yes, please share their age, gender and if they are living with you:

8. Current place of residence: Country City / Town
 Expected length of total stay in this location (years)
 Length of stay to date in this location (years)

9. Is this your first accompanied overseas posting? Y N
 If No, please share the location and length of time you lived in previous locations

10. Partner's employer / organisation:

Number of years your partner has worked with this organisation

Your partners job / role in the organisation (please provide 1-2 sentences of detail):

11. Are you currently working or volunteering? Y N

If Yes, please tick one of the following:

Volunteer	<input type="radio"/>
Part-time	<input type="radio"/>
Full-time	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

What is the nature of your job / role?

If working fulltime, was this organised before arriving in your current location? Y N

12. Please briefly describe your previous employment history before moving to your current location (please provide 1-2 sentences of detail):

INTERVIEW PREFERENCES

Preferred interview days (Tick all preferences):

Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>

Preferred interview times (List all preferred times):

Preferred Contact Methods

Skype name (please only provide if you have fast reliable internet):

Mobile number (including country code):

Landline number (including country code):

PLEASE CHECK ALL QUESTIONS ARE COMPLETED BEFORE PRESSING THE SUBMIT BUTTON BELOW

Submit

Appendix 4: Interview Guides for Partners

- A4.0 Generic Interview Guide for Accompanying Partners
- A4.1 Interview Guide for Separated Partners
- A4.2 Interview Guide for Repatriated Partners

A4.0 Generic Interview Guide for Accompanying Partners

Introduction

- Thank participant for their willingness to be interviewed
- Introduce self
- Review interview purpose, confidentiality, audio-recording, value of honesty
- Confirm time necessary (1 – 1.5 hours) and minimisation of any distractions
- Check preferred name/preference for being called spouse or partner

Clarification/Expansion of demographic information

- Expand upon the type of work/professional background of partner before in-country X?
- Does their partner need to travel much in their work role? Approximately how frequently? Approximately for how long?
- If working - for how long, motivations for?

Setting the Scene

Current Scenario

- 1a Tell me how you came to live in _____?
- 1b Can you tell me how this decision was made? (Probe: Did you have a voice in the decision making process, was it rushed, did you have all the information you needed to choose, did you feel 'on board'?)

First Impressions

- 2a What were your first impressions of _____?
- 2b As a couple/family how did you settle in? How long did this process take?*
- 2c As a couple/family* how do you feel now about living in _____?

Problems, Challenges and Coping Strategies

Good and Bad Days

- 3a Living in _____, on a day-to-day basis, what are some things that make for a good day for you and your partner/family?
- 3b What are some things that can make for a bad day?
(Probing: How much are good and bad days influenced by the context in which you are living? E.g. climate, interactions with local people, traffic, education and employment, domestic activities, recreation and leisure, communication)

Main Challenges

- 4a In your time abroad as a family/couple, what have been the main challenges you have experienced living away from home?

Crisis Times and Coping

- 5a As you look back on your journey as a couple/family from your home country to the present day are there any 'crisis' periods or particularly difficult experiences that stand out in your mind? Could you describe these?
- 5b As a couple/family what did you do to manage these situations? (Probe internal resources, especially communication processes, problem-solving, faith)
- 5c What other things helped you to get through? (Probe external resources, e.g. information, people, organisations)

* If traveling with accompanying children enquire specifically about how they adjusted/settled

Strengthening and Growing through Adversity

- 6a Do you feel your experience with any of your past struggles has made you stronger as a couple/family or individual?
- 6b Can you describe how you were able to change the experience of suffering into a life lesson in favour of growth? (Probe: How important is the way you view a challenge or crisis with regards to how you handle or react to it?)

Main Supports

- 7a What are the primary sources of support for your family? (These may include people as well as organisations such as churches, schools or sporting groups?)
- 7b How much of your support is locally resourced and how much do you depend on people from home?
- 7c Do certain situations tend to favour local or distant support?
- 7d How important is religion, faith or a sense of spirituality in your life/family?
- 7e Do you practice any hobbies or are you linked into any social or sporting groups in _____?

Family Routines

- 8a Does your family/your partner and yourself have any routines or what we might call 'family rituals' that you practice? These might be daily interactions (E.g. eating a meal together, bedtime stories), a weekly practice (something you do almost every weekend) or a way of celebrating special occasions?
- 8b How have your family routines changes from your previous home to your current home? How do you feel about these changes?

Unique features of Humanitarian Expatriate Families

- 9a As you would be aware, there are other expatriate families in places such as _____ outside those in the humanitarian community. Families who accompany teachers, business persons or missionary families are a few examples to name just a few. Do you feel you or your family experience any unique situations or challenges due to the nature of your partners work?
- 9b Is the nature of your partner's work an important source of meaning for both you/and your children?

Premature Return

- 10a Previous research on expatriate families within the profit sector indicates an early return rate as high as 40% (that is 40% of families, including the employee, leave the posting before the project or assignment is complete). Have you ever thought about leaving your current posting early? If so, why?
- 10b As a couple/family, how have you managed to deal with the challenges of life abroad instead of deciding to come home?
- 10c What scenarios or events might cause you to leave early?

Strengths

- 11a Tell me about the strengths you have discovered or developed as an individual while living overseas.
- 11b Now tell me about strengths you have discovered or developed as a couple/family while living overseas.

Organisational Support

Support from Agency

- 12a Has _____ been helpful to you and your partner/family?
- 12b What are one or two things that _____ did well to support you as a family that you have most valued?

12c What are one or two things that _____ did poorly, or areas where they could have done better?

12d Probe for support offered at different times in the relocation journey - deciding to leave, pre-departure debriefing, relocating, settling in (house, school, networking, employee assistance], deciding to return, relocation, reintegration)

Agency Responsibility

13a Do you believe that INGOs like _____ have a responsibility to provide support to accompanying partners/families as well as to the worker?

Suggestions for Improvement

14a What suggestions, if any, would you make to organisations like _____ to improve the support given to families like yourselves?

Stigmatisation

15a Do you and your partner feel comfortable asking _____ for specific things? (Probe: reluctance due to stigmatisation, fear how it may affect future work opportunities, needs seem irrelevant compared to those serving)

Future Expatriate Intentions

16a At present, how much longer do you and your partner/family intend to remain living overseas?

16b Would you anticipate that your partner or possibly yourself would continue working within the humanitarian sector during this time? Why / why not?

Support for Humanitarian Worker

17a Research on the topic of stress and the humanitarian worker suggests that partners/families often provide workers with a large amount of support to enable them to do the work they do. Do you feel this is true in your family?

17b If so, how do you provide support?

17c Do you ever feel the support expected of you is unreasonable? E.g. dinner host, willing to put up with lots of time away by your partner or long hours?

Closure

Greatest Value

18a What has been the greatest benefit or value provided from your experience as a couple/family living overseas?

Advice for Others

19a Based on the experiences you have had, what advice would you give to someone considering moving overseas as the partner of a humanitarian worker?

Key Family Attributes for Expatriate Success

20a In your opinion, what are the most important relationship/family qualities, characteristics or strengths needed to successfully manage the challenges of life overseas?

New Thoughts

21a Is there anything that your might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

Additional Questions

22a Do you have any additional questions you would like to ask me?

Thank partner and enquire of any other possible contacts to interview

A4.1 Interview Guide for Separated Partners

Introduction

- Thank participant for their willingness to be interviewed
- Introduce self
- Review interview purpose, confidentiality, audio-recording, value of honesty
- Confirm time necessary (1 – 1.5 hours) and minimisation of any distractions
- Check preferred name

Clarification/Expansion of Demographic Information

- Expand upon the type of work/professional background of partner before in-country X?

Setting the Scene

Current / Most Recent Overseas Scenario

- 1a Tell me how you came to live in _____?
- 1b Can you tell me how this decision was made? (Probe: Did you have a voice in the decision making process, was it rushed, did you have all the information you needed to choose, did you feel 'on board'?)

First Impressions

- 2a What were your first impressions of _____?
- 2b As a couple/family how did you settle in? How long did this process take?*
- 2c How much did your partner travel in their work? Approximately how frequently? Approximately for how long?
- 2d What kind of working hours did your partner keep on average?

Problems, Challenges and Coping Strategies

Good and Bad Days

- 3a Living in _____, on a day-to-day basis, what were some things that make for a good day for you and your partner / family?
- 3b What were some things that could make for a bad day?
(Probing: How much were good and bad days influenced by the context in which you were living? E.g. climate, interactions with local people, traffic, education and employment, domestic activities, recreation, communication)

Main Challenges

- 4a In your time abroad as a family/couple, what were the main challenges you have experienced living away from home?

Crisis Times and Coping

- 5a As you look back on your journey as a couple/family from your home country to the present day are there any 'crisis' periods or particularly difficult experiences that stand out in your mind related to your time overseas? Could you describe these?
- 5b As a couple/family what did you do to try and manage these situations? (Probe internal resources, especially communication processes, problem-solving, faith).
- 5c I am aware that you and your partner are no longer together. Can you tell me a little about the separation process and how it fit in the timeline of your overseas humanitarian INGO experience?

* If traveling with accompanying children enquire specifically about how they adjusted/settled

5d What impact, if any, do you feel living overseas as the accompanying partner within a humanitarian context had on your relationship with your previous partner? (Probe: Was the relationship better or worse while overseas, does the individual feel that the humanitarian work was somehow responsible for the relationship breakdown?)

5e In your opinion, why do you think some relationships suffer while others thrive while living overseas?

Main Supports

6a During your time overseas, what were the primary sources of support for your family? (These may include people as well as organisations such as churches, schools or sporting groups)

6b How much of your support was locally resourced and how did you depend on people from home?

6c Did certain situations tend to favour local or distant support?

6d How important is religion, faith or a sense of spirituality in your life / family?

6e Did you practice any hobbies or were you linked into any social or sporting groups in _____?

Family Routines While Overseas

7a Did your family/your partner and yourself have any routines or what we might call 'family rituals' that you practiced? These might have been daily interactions (E.g. eating a meal together), a weekly practice (something you do almost every weekend) or a way of celebrating special occasions?

Unique features of Humanitarian Expatriate Families

8a As you would be aware, there are other expatriate families in places such as _____ outside those in the humanitarian community. Families who accompany teachers, business persons or missionary families are a few examples to name just a few. Do you feel you or your family experience any unique situations or challenges due to the nature of your partners work?

8b Is the nature of your partner's work an important source of meaning for both you/and your children?

Premature Return

9a Previous research on expatriate families within the profit sector indicates an early return rate as high as 40% (that is 40% of families, including the employee, leave the posting before the project or assignment is complete). Have you ever thought about leaving your current posting early? If so, why?

9b As a couple/family, how did you manage to deal with the challenges of life abroad instead of deciding to come home?

9c What scenarios or events might have caused you to leave early?

Strengths

10a Tell me about the strengths you discovered or developed as an individual while living overseas.

10b Now tell me about strengths you discovered or developed as a couple/family while living overseas.

Repatriation

11a Can you share how you found the experience of settling back into your home country after ___ years away?

11b How do you feel now about being back?

Organisational Support

Support from Agency

- 12a Was _____ helpful to you and your partner/family?
- 12b What are one or two things that _____ did well to support you as a family that you have most valued?
- 12c What are one or two things that _____ did poorly, or areas where they could have done better?
- 12d Probe for support offered at different times in the relocation journey - deciding to leave, pre-departure debriefing, relocating, settling in (house, school, networking, employee assistance), deciding to return, relocation, reintegration)

Agency Responsibility

- 13a Do you believe that INGOs like _____ have a responsibility to provide support to accompanying partners/families as well as to the worker?

Suggestions for Improvement

- 14a What suggestions, if any, would you make to organisations like _____ to improve the support given to families like yourselves?

Stigmatisation

- 15a Did you and your partner feel comfortable asking _____ for specific things? (Probe: reluctance due to stigmatisation, fear how it may affect future work opportunities, needs seem irrelevant compared to those serving)

Future Expatriate Intentions

- 16a At present, are you or your ex-partner engaged within the humanitarian sector?

Support for Humanitarian Worker

- 17a Research on the topic of stress and the humanitarian worker suggests that partners/families often provide workers with a large amount of support to enable them to do the work they do. Did you feel this was true in your circumstance?
- 17b If so, how did you provide support?
- 17c Did you ever feel the support expected of you is unreasonable? I.e. dinner host, willing to put up with lots of time away by your partner or long hours?

Closure

Greatest Value

- 18a What was the greatest benefit or value provided from your experience as a couple/family living overseas?

Advice for Others

- 19a Based on the experiences you have had, what advice would you give to someone considering moving overseas as the partner of a humanitarian worker?

Key Family Attributes for Expatriate Success

- 20a In your opinion, what are the most important relationship/family qualities, characteristics or strengths needed to successfully manage the challenges of life overseas?

New Thoughts

- 21a Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

Additional Questions

- 22a Do you have any additional questions you would like to ask me?

Thank partner and enquire of any other possible contacts to interview

A4.2 Interview Guide for Repatriated Partners

Introduction

- Thank participant for their willingness to be interviewed
- Introduce self
- Review interview purpose, confidentiality, audio-recording, value of honesty
- Confirm time necessary (1 – 1.5 hours) and minimisation of any distractions
- Check preferred name

Clarification/Expansion of demographic information

- E.g. Total number of years overseas and location of posting
- Current role of partner – are they still within humanitarian sector?
- Expand upon the type of work/professional background of partner

Setting the Scene

Current Scenario

- 1a You have been back in _____ for _____, can you tell me why you decided to leave the field?
- 1b Can you tell me how this decision was made? (Probe: Did you have a voice in the decision making process, was it rushed, did you have all the information you needed to choose, did you feel ‘on board’?)
- 1c How long do you intend to remain in _____? Do you anticipate accepting another international posting in the future within the humanitarian community?

First Impressions

- 2a As a couple/family how did you settle in back home? How long did this process take?*
- 2b As a couple/family* how do you feel now about living in _____?

Problems, Challenges and Coping Strategies

Good and Bad Days

- 3a Living in _____, on a day-to-day basis, what are some things that make for a good day for you and your partner / family?
- 3b What are some things that can make for a bad day?

Main Challenges

- 4a During the period of re-entry or transition, what have been the main challenges you have experienced? (Probe: did you anticipate these challenges? Did you do anything to try and prepare for them?)
- 4b During your time overseas, were you able to visit home regularly? How often? Do you think this affected your transition experiences?
- 4c During your time overseas, did you maintain regular contact with friends or family back at home? How do you think this has affected your transition experiences?
- 4d In your time abroad as a family/couple, what were the main challenges you have experienced living away from home?

* If repatriating with accompanying children enquire specifically about how they adjusted/settled

Crisis Times and Coping

- 5a As you look back on your journey as a couple/family* from your home country to the present day are there any 'crisis' periods or particularly difficult experiences that stand out in your mind? Could you describe these?
- 5b As a couple/family what did you do to manage these situations? (Probe internal resources - esp. communication processes, problem-solving, faith)
- 5c What other things helped you to get through? (Probe external resources, e.g. information, people, organisations)

Strengthening and Growing through Adversity

- 6a Do you feel your experience with any of your past struggles has made you even stronger as a couple/family or individual?
- 6b Can you describe how you were able to change the experience of suffering into a life lesson in favour of growth?

Main Supports

- 7a What are the primary sources of support for your family? (These may include people as well as organisations such as churches, schools or sporting groups)
- 7b How important is religion, faith or a sense of spirituality in your life / family?
- 7c Do you practice any hobbies or are you linked into any social or sporting groups in _____?

Family Routines

- 8a Does your family/your partner and yourself have any routines or what we might call 'family rituals' that you practice? These might be daily interactions (E.g. eating a meal together, bedtime stories), a weekly practice (something you do almost every weekend) or a way of celebrating special occasions?
- 8b How have your family routines changed from your life overseas to your current home? How do you feel about these changes?

Organisational Support

Support from Agency

- 9a Has _____ been helpful to you and your partner/family during the transition period from preparing to leave till being settled? (Probe: What, if any, support was offered once arriving in your home country?)
- 9b During your entire time with INGO _____ what are one or two things that _____ did well to support you as a family that you have most valued?
- 9c What are one or two things that _____ did poorly, or areas where they could have done better?
- 9d Probe for support offered at different times in the relocation journey (house, school, networking, employee assistance), deciding to return, relocation, reintegration)

Agency Responsibility

- 10a Do you believe that INGOs like _____ have a responsibility to provide support to accompanying partners/families as well as to the worker?

Suggestions for Improvement

- 11a What suggestions, if any, would you make to organisations like _____ to improve the support given to families like yourselves?

Stigmatisation

- 12a Do you and your partner feel comfortable asking _____ for specific things?
(Probe: reluctance due to stigmatisation, fear how it may affect future work opportunities, needs seem irrelevant compared to those serving)

Closure

Greatest Value

- 13a What has been the greatest benefit or value provided from your experience as a couple/family living overseas?

Advice for Others

- 14a Based on the experiences you have had; what advice would you give to someone considering returning home after a number of years abroad as the partner of a humanitarian worker?

- 14b Based on the experiences you have had; what advice would you give to someone considering moving overseas as the partner of a humanitarian worker?

Key Family Attributes for Expatriate Success

- 15a In your opinion, what are the most important relationship/family qualities, characteristics or strengths needed to successfully manage the challenges of re-entry?

New Thoughts

- 16a Is there anything that your might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

Additional Questions

- 17a Do you have any additional questions you would like to ask me?

Thank partner and enquire of any other possible contacts to interview

Appendix 5: Information for Key Informants

- A5.0 Information Sheet
- A5.1 Consent Form
- A5.2 Demographics Form

A5.0 Information Sheet

A5.1 Consent Form

A5.2 Demographics Form

Appendix 6: Interview Guide for Key Informants

Introduction

- Thank participant for their willingness to be interviewed
- Introduce self
- Review interview purpose, confidentiality, audio-recording
- Value of honesty
- Confirm time necessary (1 – 1.5 hours)

Warm-up – Setting the Scene

Clarification / Expansion of demographic information

What has been your experience living as an expat? Were you accompanied by family?

Clarify that for the purpose of this interview, family refers to both couples (that is the employee and their accompanying partner) and also couples with dependant children.

Main Questions

Family Orientation and Perceptions

- 1a Does your organisation consider that it hires an individual or a family? (Prompt: during the recruitment phase, to what extent is the spouse or family included in the assessment process? Does this include any psychometric testing?)
- 2a As an organisation, what do you perceive as the value of role of the family? (Prompt: Do partners or families add value, if so how? E.g. promote better work/life balance, provide support)
- 2b* Does organisation _____ formally acknowledge the positive support or value that partners provide to humanitarian workers or the organisation as a whole?
- 3a In your opinion, what do you see as the risks and benefits for families relocating abroad accompanying a humanitarian worker?
- 4a How does organisation _____ view their responsibility towards the family? (Prompt: Is there any distinction between expatriate families and families in support offices/home countries?)
- 4b** As a faith-based agency, does this change the way you approach supporting families as opposed to a secular perspective?

Family Supports

- 5a What are the main family-friendly supports or policies and practices provided by organisation?
- 5b Are you aware if these are provided across offices or countries (or is their variation)?

* Ask question depending on previous answer

** Ask question only to staff employed within faith-based organisations.

- 5c In terms of standard benefits (E.g. health insurance, airfares, accommodation) do partners need to be married or do benefits extend to long-term couples or de-facto marriages?
- 6a Are expatriate staff and their accompanying families ever brought together by the organisation? (E.g. conferences, worship, annual get-togethers)
- 7a Have you observed benefits from providing families with support?
How? (I.e. Are family-friendly practices and policies associated with improved staff retention?)
- 8a How frequently are policies around family benefits reviewed?
- 9a Who in the organisation should be responsible for taking an interest in the family? (E.g. direct line manager/HR)
- 10a What do you think are the greatest needs of accompanying partners?
- 10b How best could an agency support spouses at each stage of the deployment cycle? E.g. pre-deployment, settling in, living abroad, leaving, transitioning home or to new assignment?
- 10c Does organisation _____ provide any particular supports for dual-career couples? (Prompt: E.g. opportunities for employment within the organisation, help finding work elsewhere)
- 11a For expatriate families with children, what do you think are the main issues they face?
- 12a Do you think distinctions should be made between families on their first accompanying postings and families who have previously completed expatriate postings? (Prompt: What do you imagine are the different needs?)
- 12b Does the support offered by your organisation differ for newly expatriated families and long-term expatriate families?
- 13a From an agency perspective, what are the barriers and enablers to providing support to families?
- 14a Are you aware of any innovative or creative family support strategies adopted by any other humanitarian organisation? (E.g. buddy system, point person)
- 14b What about strategies used in alternative industries, e.g. missionaries or the corporate sector?

Relationship strain and assignment completion

- 15a Are you aware of any expatriate staff relationships that have been under strain or ended while abroad?
- 15b What do you see is the role of the humanitarian organisation in these situations?
- 16a Are you aware of what a failed family assignment costs? (E.g. \$\$, time)

- 17a What percentage of staff who leave the organisation complete an exit interview?
- 17b Is any tracking done of reasons for terminating an assignment or not renewing? (E.g. spouse not happy, quality of education available for children, concerns about aging parents)
- 17c Are accompanying spouses offered an exit interview or debriefing opportunity?

Work-life balance

- 18a In general, how are staff actively assisted or equipped within organisation _____ to manage work-life balance?
- 19a For an accompanied posting, is there a cap or limit on the percentage of travel expected in that role?

Closure

Advice for Others

- 20a Based on the experiences you have had, what advice would you give to someone considering moving overseas as the partner of a humanitarian worker?

Key Family Attributes for Expatriate Success

- 21a In your opinion, what are the most important relationship/family qualities, characteristics or strengths needed to successfully manage the challenges of life overseas?

New Thoughts

- 22a Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

Additional Questions

- 23a Do you have any additional questions you would like to ask?

Thank individual and enquire of any other possible contacts to interview

Appendix 7: Scoping Review Data Charting Summaries

A7.0 Humanitarian Work and Families

A7.1 Resilience and Expatriate Families

Abbreviations:

WP = Worker perspective

AP = Agency perspective

PP = Partner (or family) perspective

AS = Accompanying Spouse

C = Child

F = Family

U = Updated review (April 2013)

L = Link (Identified via reference or web content checking)

A7.0 Humanitarian Work and Families Data Charting Summary									
	Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal/ Publication	Source	Nature of Reference	Accompanying or Non- accompanying / Perspective	Family-related Content	Discipline and Location of Author(s)
1	Paton, D., & Kelso, B.	1991	Disaster rescue work: The consequences for the family	<i>Counselling Psychology Quarterly</i>	PsycINFO database	Journal article – primary research	Non-accompanying PP	A pilot study on the impact of disaster relief on the family members of relief workers, using interviews with the wives of five volunteers who provided earthquake relief. Wives reported that they experienced stress, although the nature of the problems identified changed with each phase of disaster involvement. Children were also affected, dependent on age. Outlines interventions that could be adopted.	Location: UK Discipline: Management
2	Tam, P.	2004	Family gives up suburbs for third world		Proquest database	News story	Accompanying PP	Story of family choosing to relocate from UK to Africa for voluntary VSO posting. Guided by desire to expose children to another culture and to serve.	Location: Canada Discipline: Unknown
3	Bikos, L. H., Klemens, M. J., Randa, L. A., Barry, A., Bore, T., Gibbs, R., et al.	2009	First-year adaptation of female, expatriate religious and humanitarian aid workers: A mixed methods analysis	<i>Mental Health, Religion & Culture</i>	Google Scholar	Journal article – primary research	Accompanying PP	A sample of 32 spouses, of whom two are spouses of humanitarian workers. The findings from these women and spouses of missionaries (N=5) are compared to other spouses and norms. Results indicated that marital satisfaction and global psychological functioning means were lower at most time-in-country intervals. Workers valued marital, parental, occupational, and homemaker life roles more than other expats. The workers gave particular credence to the stability of their roles as parents and spouse.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology, Industrial / Organisational Psychology

Families and Humanitarian Work Data Charting Summary

4	Ehrenreich, J. H., & Elliott, T.	2004	Managing stress in humanitarian aid workers: A survey of humanitarian aid agencies' psychosocial training and support of staff	<i>Peace and Conflict</i>	Google Scholar	Journal article – primary research	Non-accompanying AP	Survey included family through questions which explored what services agencies offered to humanitarian workers and their families when preparing/supporting staff re-entry.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology, Disaster Psychology
5	Palmer, I.	2005	ABC of conflict and disaster. Psychological aspects of providing medical humanitarian aid	<i>British Medical Journal</i>	Google Scholar	Journal article - general information	Non-accompanying WP	Family acknowledged as being impacted by every deployment and the need to consider repatriation from both individual and family perspectives.	Location: UK Discipline: Psychiatry
6	Thomas, R.	2011	Managing transitions between 'field' and 'home': Facing the psychological impact of humanitarian crises		Google Scholar	Paper presented at the <i>Webster University 9th Annual International Humanitarian Conference</i> , Switzerland	Non-accompanying WP&PP	Discusses challenges faced by aid workers with regards to maintaining relationships while engaged in the industry; the difficulties of fitting back into the family after a posting, (including the partners perspective of these); and the practice of 'fictive families' being common in humanitarian settings.	Location: Switzerland Discipline: Psychology and Counselling
7	Antares Foundation	2006	Managing stress in humanitarian workers: Guidelines for good practice (2nd ed.)		Mental Health and Psycho-social Support Network	Report - model and guidelines	Non-accompanying WP	Family mentioned only with regards to stress of separation and interpersonal conflict associated with humanitarian worker stress.	Location: Netherlands Discipline: Unknown
8	Ehrenreich, J. H	2002	A guide for humanitarian, health care, and human rights workers		Mental Health and Psycho-social Support Network	Article – general information	Non-accompanying WP	Presents the challenges of re-entry for both employees and their families; including reduced interest in each another's experiences.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology
9	McKay, L., & Hulme, B.	2009	Family matters: Self care for family members of humanitarian		Headington Institute	Self-study Module 8	Non-accompanying & accompanying PP	Whole resource dedicated to helping families of humanitarian workers understand some of the stressors associated with humanitarian work,	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology

Families and Humanitarian Work Data Charting Summary

			workers					how those pressures may impact their lives, and how to better care for themselves.	
10	McKay, L.	2007	On the road again: Coping with travel and re-entry stress		Headington Institute	Self-study Module 3	Non-accompanying WP	Explores the dynamics of the transitions that humanitarian work demands. It includes specific issues for couples, parents and resilience as it relates to travel issues.	Location of author: USA Discipline: Psychology
11	Headington Institute	2011	Support for personnel, staff and families		Headington Institute	Handout (educational)	Unclear if non-accompanying & accompanying AP	Looks at support strategies by organisations for staff (field and headquarter) and their families. Family support includes spouse support networks, education sessions, networking opportunities and regular newsletters.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology
12	Quick, T.	2009	Low cost, high impact strategies for supporting internationally mobile families		Expat Women (website)	Article – general information	Accompanying AP	Suggests many strategies that can help meet the psychosocial needs of relocating families with little or no organisational expenditure. Non-profit and humanitarian aid organisations are identified as needing to support globally-mobile families better.	Location: Unknown Discipline: Nursing
13	American Red Cross	n.d.	Emotional health issues for families of disaster workers		David Baldwin's Trauma Information Pages	Website content – general information	Non-accompanying PP	Looks at the stresses facing the non-accompanying families of disaster workers, including communication difficulties, worker specific stressors, and re-entry challenge. Main emphasis is on the family supporting the worker.	Location: Unknown Discipline: Unknown
14	Loquercio, D. Hammersley, M. Emmens, B.	2006	Understanding and addressing staff turnover in humanitarian agencies	<i>Humanitarian Practice Network (OPI)</i>	People in Aid	Network Paper (commissioned) – primary research and general information	Not clear – mainly non-accompanying WP&AP	Family-related issues (e.g. desire to start a family, poor family-friendly policies, lack of accompanied posts) presented as significant factors affecting staff turnover in humanitarian agencies. States that for “expatriates, family responsibilities are generally incompatible with being a humanitarian worker” (p.8)	Location: UK Discipline: Management, Human Resource Management
15L	Henry, J.	2004b	Understanding HR in the		People in Aid (Link)	Handbook – Primary research	National and Expatriate (Non-	Discusses national staff family needs and the different categories of	Location: UK Discipline:

Families and Humanitarian Work Data Charting Summary

			humanitarian sector – A baseline for enhancing quality in management, Handbook 1			and general information	accompanying & accompanying) WP & AP	expatriate staff. One category is career aid workers who tend to become senior representatives. It is these people agencies most need to retain, but also those who are increasingly subject to the financial burdens associated with families, both in the long-term as well as immediate needs (e.g. education).	Human Resource Management
16L	Henry, J.	2004a	Enhancing quality in HR management in the humanitarian sector – A practical guide, Handbook 2		People in Aid (Link)	Handbook – General information and recommendations	National and Expatriate (Non-accompanying & accompanying) WP&AP	Talks about national staff. Echoes importance of benefits including family supports (e.g. education, insurance, airfares) for attracting senior managers (salary not priority). Discusses how debriefing and martial/family counselling can be of benefit to partners and children. Discusses how re-entry syndrome also affects the family (for non accompanying posts).	Location: UK Discipline: Human Resource Management
17L	Loquercio, D.	2006	Turnover and retention: General summary: People in Aid		People in Aid (Link)	Report – General information and recommendations	Unclear if non-accompanying or accompanying AP	Describes one of the main HR headaches as follows: whereas aid workers usually enter the sector when they are young and mobile, after a few years they are often faced with choices, mostly related to family issues that can force them to leave the sector or at least make them a lot less mobile. As a result, agencies are confronted with difficulties in filling middle management positions with adequately skilled and experienced staff.	Location: UK Discipline: Management
18L	People in Aid	2003	Code of good practice in the management and support of aid personnel		People in Aid (Link)	Code of Practice / recommendations & examples	Unclear if non-accompanying or accompanying AP	An example of good practice includes Care Canada’s psychosocial counselling program that extends to families.	Location: UK Discipline: Unknown
19	International Health Exchange, &	1997	The human face of aid: A study of recruitment by		People in Aid	Report – primary research and recommendations	Unclear if non-accompanying or accompanying	Comments on the challenges of recruitment, saying many professionals have family or financial commitments	Location: UK Discipline: Management

Families and Humanitarian Work Data Charting Summary

	People in Aid		international relief and development organisations in the UK, London				AP	that make postings difficult.	
20	McKay, L.	2011	Resilience. Building resilient managers in humanitarian organisations: Strengthening key organizational structures and personal skills that promote resilience in challenging environments: People in Aid		People in Aid	Report – primary research and general information	Non-accompanying & accompanying WP&AP	Whole resource looks at the individual resilience of the humanitarian worker (manager). In context of discussing the resilience of a worker a number of references to the family are made. Namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centrality of relationships (family and friends) to resilience and thriving - When seeking resilient staff recruiting should offer accompanied positions and demonstrate support of an employee’s family - If staff are unaccompanied- should provide a calling and ‘go-home’ travel allowance to stay connected with family - Look for ways to include family members in work-related social events and try to ensure staff take leave for events, e.g. weddings 	Location: Laos Discipline: Psychology
21L	McKay, L.	2010	Spirituality and humanitarian work: Maintaining your vitality		People in Aid (Link)	Self-Study Module 9	Not clear – could be non-accompanying or accompanying WP	“Connections with family” considered one possible form of spirituality. Conflicts in values affect spirituality, i.e. excellence at work vs time with family. Possible spiritual rituals including family-related tasks; e.g. sharing a meal.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology
22	Porter, B., & Emmens, B.	2009	Approaches to staff care in international		Inter health	Report – primary research and recommendations	Non-accompanying WP	Discusses re-entry challenges in which friends and family struggle to identify with the experiences of a worker.	Location of author: UK Discipline:

Families and Humanitarian Work Data Charting Summary

			NGOs						Psychotherapy and HRM
23L	Augsburger, R. Sage, W. McKay, L. Pearlman, L. Guy, J. Hulme, B. Jones, A.	2007	NGO staff well-being in the Darfur region of Sudan & Eastern Chad		Interhealth (Link)	Article – primary research	Non-accompanying WP	Major issues reported affecting staff wellbeing included separation from family and difficulties with communicating with family. Discussed how staff, exposed to considerable stress often transfer this onto families. R&R policies should allow time to see families.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology
24L	UNDP	2007	UNDP staff wellbeing guide		Interhealth (Link)	Guide – general information and recommendations	Non-accompanying & accompanying WP	Developed to address the growing concerns of health-related problems in the workplace and to support staff in the pursuit of better family/work balance. Looks at topics like flexible working arrangements, etc.	Location: USA Discipline: Unknown
25	UNLESA Rome	2011			United Nations Local Expatriate Spouse Association Rome	Website – general information	Accompanying PP	Focus limited to UN families in Rome – though backed by mandates in the UN to support families. The organisation is staffed and managed by spouses. Support given includes family buddies, orientation and help finding work.	Location: Italy Discipline: Unknown
26	United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team	2011	Putting your house in order: A brief guide to preparing for the unexpected		United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team	Guide and recommendations	Non-accompanying & accompanying AP&WP	About workers preparing for the unexpected, e.g. having a will, ensuring family understand entitled benefits.	Location: USA Discipline: Unknown
27	United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team	2012	Handbook for action in cases of death in service		United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Team	Guide and recommendations	Non-accompanying & accompanying AP	How the organisation should respond in a comprehensive and caring way to the families of staff who perish while in service to the UN.	Location: USA Discipline: Unknown
28	Dodds, L.A. Gardner, L.M	2011	12 factors in effectiveness and longevity of cross-cultural			Online handbook for purchase (volume 2) - general	Accompanying WP, PP & AP	Discusses how expatriate families with accompanying children generally have concerns for their child's wellbeing. Most children however (unless they	Location: USA Disciplines: Pastoral care /

Families and Humanitarian Work Data Charting Summary

			humanitarian heroes			information and recommendations		have special needs which can't be met abroad) benefit greatly from this opportunity. Expatriate families in the humanitarian context also demonstrate considerable resilience in their daily life; many normal tasks in one's own country being much more difficult abroad. Some situations are also more extreme, e.g. exposure to violence. Family members also face different challenges, the accompanying spouse usually bearing greater responsibility. When selecting a person to an agency, fit is crucial to effectiveness. Though the fit of the individual is in focus, the wellbeing of the marriage organism and the parent-child relationship is also important. During the recruitment process families also need to understand family benefit policies and expectations of the partner.	Psychology, Public Health
29L	Salama, P.	1999	The psychological health of relief workers: Some practical suggestions	Humanitarian Exchange Magazine	Thomas, R. (Link)	Article – general information and recommendations	Non-accompanying and recommends accompanying AP	Outlining the causes of stress on international relief workers and agency recommendations for managing these. Highlights the trend towards a new type of professional: the career relief worker. Argues organisations should be more willing to accommodate couples on the field. Advocates the need for a more “stable and experienced workforce whose energies are effectively harnessed through more enlightened organisational policies.”	Location: Ireland Discipline: Medicine
30L	McFarlane, C.	2004	Risks associated with the psychological adjustment of humanitarian aid	Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies	Thomas, R. (Link)	Journal article – general information and recommendations	Non-accompanying and national staff WP	Among the risk factors associated with psychological distress are interpersonal relations. For national workers family dislocation for work is prevalent. For expatriate staff, anxiety is often	Location: Australia Discipline: Psychological Medicine

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			workers					experienced in leaving loved ones at 'home' and those at home can struggle to understand what the worker experiences. Recommends adequate compassionate leave for travel and involvement of family members in training programs.	
31L	Barron, R.A.	1999	Psychological trauma and relief workers	Humanitarian Crises: The Medical and Public Health Responses	Thomas, R. / Ehrenreich, J. H., & Elliott, T. (Links)	Chapter in Book	Non-accompanying WP	Factors linked to increased stress among relief workers include isolation due to separation from personal and family supports. The author stresses the need for home follow-up of aid workers returning from crisis settings, including education of family members in how to assist in the transition process, typical stress responses, what to be concerned about and where to access help.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychiatry
32L	Danielli, Y. (Ed)	2002	Sharing the front line and the back hills: International protectors and providers: Peacekeepers, humanitarian aid workers and the media in the midst of crisis		Thomas, R/ McKay, L., & Hulme, B/ Ehrenreich, J. H., & Elliott, T. (Links)	Edited book – primary research, general information and personal stories	Non-accompanying, accompanying, national (& peacekeepers / military and media) WP&PP	Non-accompanying: Importance of social support provided by families (and thus the need to ensure regular communication); challenges for worker and family during re-entry; rejection by child or spouse of worker during or after absence; psychosocial programs should extend to the family; challenges of being absent during sickness or death of family members or parents; challenges of meeting one's needs and other's expectations during home leave; Accompanying: Stress of managing security needs of family (worker perspective); stress felt by spouse when partner hijacked (spouse perspective).	Location: Global Disciplines: Mixed
33L	Ehrenreich, J.	2005	The humanitarian companion: A guide for international aid, development, and human rights		Mental Health and Psychosocial Network (Link)	Edited book – general information and recommendations	Non-accompanying & accompanying WP&PP	All family members are affected by deployments. Maintaining communication with family at home is vital. Re-entry can be particularly hard for accompanying and non-accompanying children..	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology

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			workers						
34L	Stearns, S.	1993	Psychological distress and relief work: Who helps the helpers?	Refugee Participation Network	Ehrenreich, J.H. (Link)	Journal article – general information	Non-accompanying WP	Talk of ‘survivor guilt’; relief that such tragedy hasn’t fallen upon one’s own families.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychiatry
35L	Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action World Health Organisation	1998	Consultative meeting on management and support of relief workers		Ehrenreich, J.H. (Link)	Meeting outcomes	Non-accompanying & national WP & AP	International field staff with family may not have the possibility of communicating with dependants at home for long periods of time, and local staff may have families in threatening situations.	Location: Switzerland Discipline: Medicine
36L	Macnair, R.	1995	Room for improvement: The management and support of relief and development workers	ODI network paper	Ehrenreich, J.H. (Link)	Network paper – primary research, general information and recommendations	Non-accompanying & national WP & AP	National staff and their families under huge stress. Insurance cover related to death and disability insufficient for those with families. Problems during re-entry including lack of understanding from family. Difficulties in recruiting managers linked to family responsibilities. Lack of job security makes it difficult for staff to stay field based once they begin to acquire personal and family responsibilities.	Location: UK Discipline: Nursing/Community Health
37 U	Oberholster, B. Clarke, R. Bendixen, M. Dastoor, B.	2013	Expatriate motivation in religious and humanitarian non-profit-organizations	Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research	Google Scholar	Article – primary research	Non-accompanying & accompanying WP	Family life (e.g. broadening of experiences, work-family life balance or opportunities for children’s education) can be an important motivator for expatriate religious and humanitarian workers. From a sample of 158 workers it was shown to be the third most common motivator from a total of eight identified motivators (behind altruism and international experience).	Location: USA Discipline: Mixed (Missionary/HRM/Academia/Organisational Behaviour)
38 U	McCormack, L. Joseph, S.	2012	Postmission Altruistic Identity Disruption Questionnaire	Traumatology	PsycINFO database	Article – primary research	Non-accompanying WP & AP	Reviews the development of the Post Mission Altruistic Identity Disruption Questionnaire (PostAID/Q). Families only discussed in the light of common	Location: Australia / UK Discipline: Psychology

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			(PostAID/Q): Preliminary development of a measure of responses following adverse humanitarian aid work					difficulties experiences by aid workers with AID regarding reintegration with family and friends.	
39 U,L	McCormack, L. Joseph, S. Hagger, M. S.	2009	Sustaining a positive altruistic identity in humanitarian aid work: A qualitative case study	Traumatology	McCormack, L. Joseph, S.	Article – primary research	Non-accompanying WP	A case study exploring the experiences of a single individual who worked more than 35 years in the humanitarian sector. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, one dominant theme, altruistic identity emerged. Difficulties with family reintegration are highlighted (with relationship breakdown cited as common). Recommends organisations should extend post mission reintegration protocols to include intimate others to promote better outcomes for the employee and their family as well assisting with staff retention. Programs should include elements of debriefing, psychosocial and psycho-educational support.	Location: UK Discipline: Psychology
40 U	Pepall, E.	2012	The expat family: Recommendations for thriving abroad as an expatriate family in the humanitarian community	Monthly Developments	InterAction	Magazine Article – primary research	Accompanying PP	Findings from a PhD study on understanding strengthening resilience in the accompanying families of humanitarian workers. Article focused on the common challenges identified by accompanying partners and recommendations for thriving abroad.	Location: Cambodia Discipline: International Health
41 U	McKay, L.	2012	Love at the speed of email	Monthly Developments	InterAction	Opinion piece and book excerpt	WP	“Humanitarian workers, especially those who work abroad, often struggle to reconcile the disparate demands inherent in having their career and having a family.” (p.12) Beyond	Location: Laos Discipline: Psychology

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								practical challenges combining careers and families, many workers doubt they are “capable of the sort of commitment demanded by marriage and children and a place called home” (p.13).	
42 U	Steinberg, D.	2012	Virtual families: The challenges of gay and lesbian families working overseas	Monthly Developments	InterAction	Opinion piece	Accompanying WP, AP	Discusses some of the additional complications faced by gay and lesbians with regards to maintaining and seeking ‘family’ relationships while abroad.	Location: West Africa Discipline: NGO Leadership
43 U	Burnore, P.	2012	Keeping it personal: Taking stock from 20 years of living abroad	Monthly Developments	InterAction	Opinion piece	Non-accompanying & accompanying WP	Based on 20 years of living abroad, advice is given about how to best stay connected with nuclear and extended family while overseas. Stresses the importance of obtaining “buy in,” personal visits, utilising technology and recognising sacrifices are unavoidable.	Location: USA Discipline: Leadership/ Business Management
44 U	InterHealth	2013	Training to foster a healthy and resilient workplace http://www.interhealth.org.uk/home/training/		Website	Training advertisement	Non-accompanying & accompanying AP	Two day training programs offered on (1) family liaison in a crisis (aimed at senior organisational staff) and (2) care for families on the move (aimed at parents). Topics featured in the later include practical illness and injury prevention and management, child development, and family adjustment.	Location: UK Discipline: Psychology
45 U	People in Aid	2012	What duties? Who care? Integrate your approach to health, safety and security		Humanitarian HR Conference Europe 2012	Conference Summary Notes	Non-accompanying, AP	In a discussion about where does ‘duty of care’ stop for humanitarian organisations, stressed the need for family liaison officers.	Location: The Netherlands Disciplines: Mixed

A7.1 Resilience and Expatriate Families Data Charting Summary									
	Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal/ Publication	Source	Nature of Reference	Focus	Resilience and Expatriate Family-related Content	Discipline and Location of Author(s)
1	De Verthelyi, R.F.	1995	International students' spouses: Invisible sojourners in the culture shock literature	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	Science Direct database	Journal article – primary research (N=49 / USA / female / home 26 countries)	AS	Advocated personality attributes (openness, resilience and flexibility) and preparedness for change are more defining than cultural/racial background for influencing adjustment of international students' spouses. Gender role orientation, especially the degree of acceptance, or rejection of the more traditional role as a homemaker was the most important variable affecting the psychological wellbeing of spouses. Despite difficulties, the majority of spouses showed great resilience in overcoming initial feelings of unhappiness with a positive change of mood usually within the first 3-6 months of arrival.	Location: USA Discipline: Family and Child Development
2	Ebbeck, M. Reus, V.	2005	Transitions: Third culture children	Australian Journal of Early Childhood	Proquest database	Journal article – primary research (N=11, Singapore, international school, children)	C	Reminds readers that research highlights that children's resilience can be nurtured through secure attachments. The resilience third culture children need to help accept the changes they face can assist them to be more confident in facing future transitions, therefore investing in the resilience process helps not only the child in the present but also offers future benefits.	Location: Australia Discipline: Education
3	Lazarova, M. Westman, M. Shaffer, M. A.	2010	Elucidating the positive side of the work-family interface on international assignments: A model of expatriate work and family performance	The Academy of Management Review	Psyc INFO database	Journal article – conceptual (general expatriates)	F	Emotional resilience is listed as one of many personal resources of the expatriate which influences both their own and their partners cultural adjustment, which in turn affects the expatriate family's adjustment, engagement and performance. As a personal resource, emotional resilience is positively related to adjustment and helps mitigate the negative relationship between demands (e.g. demand for frequent work travel) and adjustment	Location: USA / Canada / Israel Discipline: Business / Management
4	Summers, D.	2011	Six ways to build your resiliency skills abroad	Expat Women: Motivational	Web	Article – general information	F	The need for resiliency in expatriate communities is increasingly a subject of attention. E.g. HR Managers are specifying 'resilience' as a new criterion for overseas selection and schools are	Location: USA Discipline: Psychotherapy

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								educating parents how to enhance their children's resilience. The article looks at six main strategies for building resiliency while abroad; 1) clarify your values; 2) build and maintain a network of caring people; 3) practice mindfulness; 4) develop your sense of humour; 5) give other people some slack and 6) make a plan.	
5	McLachlan, D. A.	2007	Global nomads in an international school: Families in transition	Journal of Research in International Education	Proquest database	Journal article – primary research (N=45, UK, parents and students, home - 17 countries)	F	Research study findings highlight that internationally mobile (IM) families are not 'passive' agents moved about the globe by their employer. Instead, these families demonstrate resilience and awareness of the dilemmas, which can occur as a consequence of transience. Such families use a range of strategies to ameliorate difficulties while ensuring that the family not only survives, but thrives during relocation. These findings offer a less deficit view of expatriate families, previous research often failing to reflect the resilience of IM families.	Location: USA Discipline: Nursing
6	Grayson, E.	2011	Adjustment, acculturation and the cultural voice: Experiences of international families		Proquest database	Masters Thesis (N=22, USA, students and parents, home – 7 countries)	F	Despite the perceived difficulties that were illuminated through the literature review and data, the student participants were observed to be resilient, with reports of academic and social success in adjusting to life in the USA. Only one parent expressed significant concern for her child's adjustment. Efforts to organise social activities for international students are extremely important.	Location: USA Discipline: Arts
7	McKay, L. Hulme, B.	2009	Family matters: Self care for family members of humanitarian workers	Headington Institute	Website	Self-study Module 8	F	Explains the notion of thriving (flourishing and growing in the face of challenge) as having three related aspects: resilience, hardiness and vitality. Thriving involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be nurtured and developed in anyone. The model looks at how the individual, couple, family with kids (including expatriates) can thrive. Lots of recommendations, strategies for parents, and advice for organisations on how to help families thrive.	Location: USA Discipline: Psychology
8	ExpatExpert.com / AMJ Campbell	2008	"Family Matters!" Survey	ExpatExpert	Website	Survey report (N=656, mixed)	F	The survey highlights that some expatriate families are highly resilient and adopt a self-sufficient approach to adapting to life abroad, despite at times	Location: Canada Discipline:

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	International					expat, home-44 countries, located 62 countries)		limited organisational support. Narrative quotes provided highlight the ability of families to ‘bounce back’ from challenges and examples provided as to ‘what a successful movable family looks like.’	Journalism
9	Rosenbusch, K.	2010	Cross-cultural Adjustment Process of Expatriate Families in a Multinational Organization: A Family System Theory Perspective		Psyc INFO database	PhD Thesis (N=112, worker, spouse and teenage children, 1 MNC, home-25 countries, located 27 countries)	F	The study examined whether the characteristics (i.e. flexibility and cohesion) of expatriate families in a MNC as measured by the FACE Scale can predict cross-cultural adjustment of the expatriate and his/her family as measured by the CernySmith Assessment (CSA). The CSA looks at 5 domains, one of which is psychological. Resiliency, optimism, stress management and decision making are the four factors that comprise the psychological domain. The results indicate that the family flexibility does predict the resiliency scale, the decision making scale and optimism scale of cross-cultural adjustment. These findings were supported by Creed’s (2006) study of expatriate families that found that balanced flexibility was a significant variable in predicting the ability to adjust. This study discovered that resiliency proves to be the greatest indicator within the psychological domain. This shows how vital the coping mechanism is in cross-cultural transitions. More research should be considered around this domain specifically paying close attention to the family stress literature that covers the resiliency component.	Location: USA Discipline: Education
10	Simonsen, S.H.	2008	Turning strain into strength: Developing intercultural resilience in times of cultural adversity		Google Scholar	Master’s Thesis (N=20, general expats, unspecified location)	F	Resilience thinking is applicable at both an individual and family level and ‘is what intercultural adaptation is all about.’ Challenges experienced by the relocating family differ between family members – with accompanying spouses and children often having less support and more challenges than the worker. Offers examples from interviews and texts of children and wives who struggled with the move but the family remained abroad and they grew through the process.	Location: Switzerland Discipline: Intercultural Communication

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								“Family resilience requires determination, creative initiatives and perseverance when meeting challenges that surface during expatriation”(p.24).	
11	Teshome, Y.	2010	Social and institutional factors affecting the daily experiences of the spouses of international students: Voices from the Midwest and implications to academic institutions		Proquest database	PhD Thesis (N=12 females, USA, home – 11 countries)	AS	Research findings on accompanying wives of international students noted that the women described their own survival in terms of “resilience” and “growth”; paradoxically, they also reported never feeling entirely part of the new culture. Thus resilience was core to a sense of survival and adaptation, despite not feeling like one ever ‘fit in.’	Location: USA Discipline: Education
12	Haslberger, A. Brewster, C.	2008	The expatriate family: An international perspective	Journal of Managerial Psychology	Psyc INFO database	Journal article – model and concept development (Primarily corporate)	F	In the context of model development for expatriate families, the authors highlight the usefulness of the FAAR model. One reason for this is, rather than focusing on deficits in dealing with challenges, it emphasises capabilities that make families more resilient. The authors link this to various researchers who have called for a similar orientation in expatriate studies.	Location: UK. Vienna Disciplines: Management
13	Bowers, J. M (Ed.)	1998	Raising resilient MKs: Resources for caregivers, parents, and teachers	Missionary Care Resources	Website	Ebook (Missionary)	C	Stresses that the resilience of children has limits but that it can be enhanced and supported through caregivers. The analogy is given that just as one can’t hope for strong muscles without exercising, one should not hope for strength of character and resiliency in MKs while protecting them from challenges. Teachers do have opportunities to incorporate resilience-building activities into the lives of students, but it happens much more easily if it begins at home. Distinguishes between health and resilience in those working in cross-cultural ministries, the former can equate with adjustment, where the later is needed to “remain stable, effective, and productive” (p.188). For the past two years, the annual MK Educators and Caregivers Consultation, made up of	Location: Global Disciplines: Mixed

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								representatives of sixteen mission organisations, has concentrated on the importance of strengthening the missionary family, recognising that resilient MKs come from resilient missionary families. The book summarises characteristics of healthy, resilient Christian families.	
14	Simens, J.	2011	Emotional resilience and the expat child: Practical storytelling techniques that will strengthen the global family	Website link – Expat Focus	Book	(General expatriates)	C	Outlines strategies to assist children deal with transition (especially losing the consistent connections of extended family): 1) ensuring open lines of communication; 2) prioritising family before work; 3) practicing family rituals. Also a helpful section of things grandparents can do to keep connections with their distant grandchildren.	Location: USA Discipline: Education
15	Pascoe, R.	2010	How resilient are children who are relocated abroad http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIPp_pq2yh3I	ExpertExpat	Website	Online video (General expatriates)	C	Asks the question, how resilient are children who are relocated abroad? Claims the answer is not as resilience as we often think they are.... or at least they can be resilient providing a parent is very aware of what is going on for them. Stresses that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children live in the here and now... they are aware of losing friends and do not appreciate they will make new ones - Children need their parents more during and after a relocation, not less - Children are silent partners in the move... they usually have little or no say in the decision. Though a teenager may express his or her reluctance, younger dependants have difficulty articulating their thoughts and feelings. As such parents need to be very sensitive to their children’s needs. 	Location: Canada Discipline: Journalism
16	United States Department of State Family Liaison Office	2012	Training resilience in the foreign service child http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining/c48191.htm		Website	Training advertisement	C	An evening seminar for parents in the foreign affairs community. Topics addressed include the characteristics of an internationally mobile childhood; influences on cultural identity; characteristics of families living overseas, and strategies for raising resilient children.	Location: USA Disciplines: Unknown
17	Expat Focus http://www.ex		[1] http://www.expafoc		Website content	Various individual	F	Various references to resilience – for example: [1] A mother stressing one of the gifts her children	Location: Global

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	patfocus.com/		us.com/c/mode=prnt/id=526/columnists/levelyn-simpson/five-things-my-children-have-gained-from-living-overseas/ [2] http://www.expatsfocus.com/c/aid=431/expat-experiences/netherlands-holland/linda-a-janssen/			postings (General expatriates)		have received as a result of living abroad is that of building resilience; “They have learned ways of accommodating change, disruption and adversity that they can apply throughout their lives in a world that is constantly changing.” [2] A piece on Expat Experiences: Living in a different culture is not always easy. Pushing yourself to become more involved through friends, work and activities, even if you don't always feel like it, really helps get you over the cross-cultural hurdles. Emotional resilience is critical.	Discipline: Unknown
18	Dodds, L.A. Gardner, L.M	2011	12 factors in effectiveness and longevity of cross-cultural humanitarian heroes		Website	Online book for purchase (volume 2) (Humanitarian workers – Christian)	F	Wise parents consider all aspects of their children's needs and assess their resilience before relocating to a new culture. Typically, children benefit greatly from living in countries different from their own. Parents often cannot help their children because they may be preoccupied with their own challenges. Almost everything is done or experienced differently in a new culture. Even normal activities of living, like shopping, finding a doctor, and social interactions can be stressful. Extreme situations especially call for hardiness. Sometimes life abroad must be carried on in the midst of crisis, disaster or war. Such challenges and threats require resilience and hardiness – traits that can be learned.	Location: USA Disciplines: Pastoral Care / Psychology, Public Health
19 U	Hervey, E.G.	2012	Supporting healthy international family transition: A family workbook		Proquest database	PhD Thesis (N=6 families / 4 experts)	F	Study to review the workbook ‘Setting Sail’ aimed at equipping Christian missionary families on emotional, relational and spiritual levels for upcoming cross-cultural transitions. The workbook is based on the premise that while family resilience is always important, it is particularly so when “the added stress and uncertainty found in international transitions emphasises the value of healthy relationships to facilitate growth in the midst of challenges” (p.114). Argues training and resources to help parents create family processes that promote	Location: Kenya Discipline: Clinical Psychology

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								resilience have often been lacking. The reviewed and piloted workbook seeks to address this need. The thesis includes a discussion and review of the concept of family resilience, including the work of F. Walsh, H. I. McCubbin & McCubbin, Patterson and Hawley.	
20U .L	Hervey, E.G.	2012	Setting sail! The family workbook		Hervey, E.G (Thesis)	Book	F	A workbook designed to help prepare whole families for cross-cultural transition. Aimed at fostering growth in the family unit, the mode promotes interaction between parents and children (aged 6-12) through a variety of activities and discussions. Underpinned by a belief in the importance of family resilience.	Location: Kenya Discipline: Clinical Psychology
21 U	Pepall, E.	2012	The expat family: Recommendations for thriving abroad as an expatriate family in the humanitarian community	Monthly Developments	InterAction	Magazine Article – primary research	AS/F	Findings from a PhD study on understanding strengthening resilience in the accompanying families of humanitarian workers. Article focused on the common challenges identified by accompanying partners and recommendations for thriving abroad.	Location: Cambodia Discipline: International Health

Appendix 8: Recommendations for Humanitarian Organisations and Accompanying Families

The following resource was designed as a handout for sharing with presentation attendees. Specifically, approximately 25 persons attended a one hour presentation titled ‘Don’t Forget the Families! Equipping Accompanying Families of International Humanitarian Staff to Thrive’ in Phnom Penh Cambodia on March 20, 2013. The handout was also part of a presentation delivered at the British Red Cross Resilience Conference held at Suffox House, London on April 11, 2013.

Promoting Resilience and Thriving Among Accompanying Humanitarian Families

WHY?

Promoting an organisational culture that seeks to strengthen family resilience has wide reaching benefits; for the expatriate family, the humanitarian worker, and the organisation as a whole. Benefits include improved return on investment, staff performance, morale and retention, and heightened relational intimacy between couples, parents and children.

HOW?

This page highlights eight key factors that organisations should consider when seeking to promote resilience and thriving.

The following pages identify specific recommendations for both families (who need to be made aware such advice exists) and organisations during each of the main stages in the deployment cycle.

WHO?

Within organisations, responsibility for supporting families must be shared. Whilst those in senior HR roles should lead and advocate for the strategies detailed, line managers, country directors, other expatriate families and relocating families themselves must all take some ownership. For organisations using a member care person, such individuals must be suitably trained, supervised and supporting a manageable number of families.

SOURCE

This information was derived from PhD research by **Elisa Pepall**. Study methods included an exhaustive literature review, interviews with accompanying partners of humanitarian NGO workers, and interviews with key informants working in senior HR or staff care roles within humanitarian NGOs.

For further information please contact: epall@gmail.com

Family related benefits and policies are key to attracting and retaining staff

[These must be regularly reviewed, updated and communicated from the outset to potential employees and their families]

Advocate for the relationship between employees and their families

[Family wellbeing should take precedence, and organisations should promote work-life balance and family friendly working conditions]

Maintain awareness of, and support the health and safety, professional, emotional, relational and social needs of families

[Screen for health concerns and risk factors; update security risk assessments; seek direct feedback; be responsive to requests; provide career and counselling supports; socially network families]

Include families in organisational life and validate the support they provide

[Identify work-family intersection points, including travel; directly communicate with accompanying partners and include during the hiring process]

Lengthen accompanying contracts to at least two years (ideally longer)

[Recognise it takes an average of six months to settle in somewhere]

Identify and prioritise assistance for families with greater support needs

[First time expatriates; with young children; hardship locations; relocating from very different contexts; unlikely to be recognised as expatriates]

Embod family support into organisational culture

[Stop depending on specific individuals or cultural norms]

Supervise the family support provided within the organisation

[Higher-level oversight is crucial, especially in locations where there are few expatriate staff or hostility or distrust exists between national and expatriate staff]

Recommendations for Humanitarian Organisations

During Recruitment & Selection

Prioritise family safety and wellbeing when determining accompanied status of positions and specific assignment locations.

Help families to feel included during the hiring process. Provide an in-organisational contact for accompanying partners to communicate with.

Where possible, assess the suitability of the family as part of the recruitment process, especially for senior or hardship-located positions. Ensure the whole family is supportive of the decision to relocate.

Provide comprehensive information to potential employees and their families to ensure due diligence, enabling them to make informed decisions. This includes information on:

- Organisational policies, especially family related benefits and policies [i.e. education, health, R&R, accommodation benefits etc].
- Country context [i.e. health and security risks, education options, typical living conditions].
- Working expectations and conditions for the potential employee.

Before Deployment

Assess employees and families for physical and mental illnesses and risk factors.

Continue to provide comprehensive information and resources to both the employee and their accompanying partner, including

- Practical details [i.e. what to bring, initial accommodation options].
- Common relational stressors associated with expatriation and humanitarian work, especially for those going to post disaster settings.

Be responsive to requests for information or assistance from employees and their families (ideally through one contact person who will continue to provide focused support upon arrival).

Link families with other families based in or familiar with the deployment location [i.e. family mentors / peer supports].

Provide practical assistance with health checks, flights, visas, shipping of goods etc (again preferably through one contact person).

During Settling In*

Provide thorough employee and family focused orientation and cross cultural training, including:

- Resource information packs [i.e. maps, useful contact numbers].
- An initial contact go-to person for all logistical and practical matters.
- Language learning opportunities and cultural orientation.
- Assistance with finding accommodation.

Promote social networks between employees and families, including:

- Mentors/peer supports: Settled families who help orientate and offer hospitality with newly arrived accompanying families.

Demonstrate organisational sensitivity, including:

- Provide the employee with time off to help settle family into new location.
- Reduce travel demands and providing a staggered work plan for employees during the first few months.
- HR or management staff enquire directly with accompanying partners as to how they are adjusting.

**It is crucial that regional or headquarter staff monitor the orientation and support provided to newly arrived employees and families. This is especially in settings where there are few senior expatriate staff or resentment is common towards expatriates.*

Ongoing Support Whilst Abroad

Support the relationship between employees and their families, including:

- Ensure family wellbeing is considered more important than work outcomes and regularly reminding staff of this.
- Ensure the organisational culture promotes healthy work-life balance, therefore assisting employees to invest in their personal and/or family lives.
- Promote family friendly working conditions [i.e. Flexi hours, ability to work from home, leave to attend significant events].
- Provide regular information sessions for employees and families on topics such as burnout, vicarious trauma and self care (especially for families of disaster workers).
- Support career development coaching or mentoring for employees that acknowledges the challenges involved in juggling family demands and careers.
- Know where to refer staff for confidential relationship counselling (paid by the organisation) if the employee or partner discloses relationship problems.

Help accompanying families feel connected to organisations and appreciated for the support they provide, including:

- Look for regular opportunities to include families in work related events.
- Where appropriate, support partners and/or children to accompany the worker on work related travel.
- Remain responsive to requests made for information or assistance by families.
- Seek feedback from families about their experiences abroad and within the organisation.
- Provide assistance for partners seeking to pursue work [i.e. network, volunteer roles].
- Ensure families are aware of the availability of professional confidential counselling at no expense to themselves.

Remain attentive to changes in the security context of countries; recognising that with time employees and their families may become blasé or accept risks that previously they would have not.

When Repatriating or Relocating

Extend debriefing opportunities to include accompanying partners and children (depending on age).

Provide information and resources on reverse culture shock and the challenges of re-entry for those returning home.

Provide practical assistance with health checks, extending health insurance for a period upon departure, flights, shipping of goods etc.

Recommendations for Accompanying Families

During Recruitment & Selection

Seek information

- Ask questions and enquire [i.e. about the location and available medical and education facilities; humanitarian organisation job demands; family supports provided; work or volunteer opportunities for the accompanying partner].
- Source this information from individuals within and outside the humanitarian organisation.

Share decision making

- Ensure whole family wellbeing takes precedence over pursuing career opportunities.
- Ensure both the worker and partner are supportive and committed to the job and living in the specific location
- Dependent on age, include children in the decision making process as much as possible.

Take into account

- Appreciate the heightened work demands and inherent family pressures associated with accepting positions in emergency or post emergency settings.

Whilst Settling In

Prioritise support networks, including both distant family and friends (especially those who can relate to expatriate life) and in-country friendships.

Foster positivity, patience, persistence, acceptance [i.e. enjoy the good things on offer; seize opportunities as they present; accept the realities of a location; adopt a 'can do' self-reliant attitude].

Seek comfort, strength, meaning and purpose through faith, spiritual practices and/or belief in the value and importance of humanitarian work.

Prioritise family wellbeing and relationships though

- Open, honest, frequent, problem solving focused communication between all family members
- Family rituals and routines
- Time together
- Fun and relaxation
- Recognising and respecting each partner's different adjustment challenges and responsibilities.

Accompanying partners need to:

- Keep busy and pursue their own meaningful roles and interests.
- See their role in the initial weeks to support the humanitarian worker and children in their transition processes; including being willing to temporarily sacrifice one's own career.
- Establish the home as a place of refuge.

Humanitarian workers should appreciate the additional challenges faced by accompanying partners in terms of establishing routine, purpose and identities whilst abroad.

When Returning Home or Relocating

Appreciate transition is not easy, thus the need to prepare emotionally, plan and adopt a positive attitude (similar strategies being needed to those identified in the pre-deployment and settling in stages). People often assume after living abroad that returning home or relocating will be much easier than the reality often is.

Before Relocating

Continue to seek information and prepare

- Practical information [Country culture and climate; security and health risks; what to bring/shipping/arrival logistics].
- Occupational roles and organisational supports [Nature of the humanitarian role; potential future occupations for the accompanying partner; orientation and ongoing supports provided by the hiring organisation].
- Networks [With people living or knowledgeable about the location].
- Emotionally [Appreciate relocation is hard; acknowledge feelings, especially children's; avoid having too many expectations; allow sufficient time to say farewell to family and friends; practice self-care strategies e.g. exercise, adequate sleep, healthy diet].

Plan

- As much as possible, determine own preferred time to arrive.
- Health and safety prevention and promotion strategies [i.e. vaccinations, medical supplies to bring].
- For the unexpected [i.e. prepare wills, power of attorney].
- Boundaries or targets for working norms - to revise again after several weeks or months in country [i.e. maximum hours to work each week, usual time to leave the office].

Sustaining Living Abroad

Continue to prioritise support networks, including seeking professional individual or relationship counselling as needed (either in-country or distant). Maintaining contact with distant friends and family is also important.

Continue to foster positivity etc. Balance this with realism, especially concerning what is achievable in terms of 'wanting to make a difference'.

Continue to seek comfort, strength, meaning and purpose through faith, spiritual practices and/or belief in the value and importance of humanitarian work.

Continue to prioritise family wellbeing and relationships.

- In addition to the previously mentioned strategies:
- Take time to assess the impact of relocation and work on family relations [i.e. 6-12 months after arrival].
 - Ensure regular breaks and holidays.
 - Ensure family needs take precedence over work demands [i.e. when planning travel, managing working hours].
 - Communicate family needs or concerns to hiring organisation.

Engage with the host environment and people, including

- Seek connections / friendships with local people.
- Learn the language.
- Within safety parameters, explore the location.

Accompanying partners should continue to pursue own meaningful roles and interests.

Appendix 9: Additional Publications

- A8.0 Published magazine article:
Pepall, E. (October 2012). The expat family: Recommendations for thriving abroad as an expatriate family in the humanitarian community. *Monthly Developments*, 30, 8-10, 22.

A8.0 Monthly Developments Magazine Article



► Recommendations for thriving abroad as an expatriate family in the humanitarian community.

The Expat Family

By **Elisa Pepall**, Ph.D. Candidate, Centre for International Health, Curtin University of Technology

WHILE THE CHALLENGES and rewards of international humanitarian relief and development work are often discussed, the experiences of families of aid workers receive little attention. Unlike law enforcement, emergency services and medicine, the humanitarian industry has largely overlooked the impact of work on family life. The need for research is especially clear given the potential impact of vicarious trauma and chronic stress upon the family, and the association between family concerns and recruitment and retention.

This is a topic of particular interest to me, both professionally and as a former aid worker who is now also an accompanying spouse. As part of my Ph.D. study on understanding and strengthening resilience in families of aid workers while living abroad, I conducted 23 in-depth interviews with partners of international NGO workers (involved in development and/or humanitarian relief). The interviews revealed some common challenges and recommendations for handling them.

To obtain a broad picture, I reached out to interviewees in Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe, and included expatriates in remote postings and hardship high-risk conflict settings (e.g., Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan). Most were living as expatriates, while three had

recently returned to their home countries. Participants ranged in age from 29 to 50 years and had been married or in their relationship for between two and 30 years. Most participants had children. The families had lived abroad from one to 22 years. NGOs represented included Catholic Relief Services, Christian Blind Mission, Food for the Hungry, Malteser International, Oxfam, Population Services International, Tearfund and World Vision.

Common challenges

The interviews revealed a number of common challenges that, while not dissimilar to those in the broader expatriate community, are also influenced by the particular characteristics of humanitarian aid work. These challenges fell into several categories: relationship and personal, parenting, and transitional and situational.

Challenges arose in relationships near and far. Issues with distant friends and family ranged from homesickness to loss of support networks to difficulties with long-distance communication. Within the accompanying family, issues faced included preexisting problems between the couple becoming magnified while abroad, and resentment by partners who felt the decision to relocate had not been mutual. Accompanying spouses also experi-

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COVER STORY



enced loneliness, isolation, boredom and/or concerns about the affect of relocation on their careers.

Parenting challenges included supporting identity struggles for children growing up with “globally mobile” lifestyles (i.e., where do I fit in?), concerns about children’s educational opportunities as they grew older, and general struggles associated with parenting young children with limited family support.

Relocation and the accompanying transitions also raised significant concerns such as constantly having to say goodbye, the steep learning curve of the very first posting, general difficulties in settling in, and confusion around the concept of home (i.e., not fitting in in one’s home country or lacking a sense of having a home base).

Norms in the humanitarian community’s work environment also raised challenges. For example, frequent travel by the humanitarian worker placed additional responsibilities on accompanying partners, making some feel like single parents. Related challenges included worker dissatisfaction or stress affecting the family, and workers struggling to maintain a healthy work/family balance.

Finally, the interviews revealed a host of situational challenges from health matters to security to environmental and cultural concerns. Concerning health, people cited issues related to being sick or caring for sick family members while abroad, and managing preexisting or new health issues despite low standards of available health care. Security

and safety challenges also emerged as themes: managing daily tasks while living amid civil tensions and violence; the burden of raising children in insecure environments; and violence-related stress, loss and grief. Commonly cited environmental and cultural challenges included lack of reliable services (e.g., Internet, transport, goods), limited recreation opportunities, pollution, traffic, corruption and dealing with distrust or hostility towards foreigners.

Advice

But the picture was not all gloom. Participants were asked what advice would they give to someone considering moving overseas as the partner of a humanitarian worker. Here are the top 10 recommendations:

1. Be patient, open-minded and flexible. It is crucial to be adaptable, comfortable with uncertainty and aware that you are going to have ups and downs while settling in. Patience and flexibility are essential while moving and while living abroad. These traits are invaluable in maintaining your own well-being and coping with annoying environmental and cultural norms. One interviewee counseled, “Be open to new cultures, [and] don’t try and speak to what you know is normal where you come from, because that makes you frustrated.” Another advised, “Be prepared to be out of your depth and [for] things not to go as planned.”

2. Prioritize social networking opportunities. It is important to fight isolation and, especially for new arrivals, make significant

efforts to meet people. As one person noted, “Don’t turn down any invitations for the first month at least. ... If you try to accept as many of those opportunities in the beginning, it will pave your way much faster.” Accompanying partners should also seek out local groups (e.g., women’s clubs, church groups, playgroups, sporting clubs). Although feeling weary right after a move is common, this is the critical time to network and identify professional and social opportunities.

3. Stay busy and pursue your own meaningful occupations and interests. Having your own activities and interests can help prevent boredom, loneliness and doubting your value and identity. This is especially true for accompanying partners who are not employed. As one person explained, “Seeking out something that will be meaningful and enjoyable in your own life is really important; not just centering your life around your partner’s.” Failure to do so places partners at a “huge risk of feeling stuck and resentful and confused” as another warned.

4. Prioritize relationship issues within your family. Strong family relationships (both for a couple and between parents and children) are essential to adjusting and thriving abroad. “I have the feeling that the kids feel like it’s a castle in our family and they know that it is stable,” explained one woman. Honest, open and frequent communication is very important. And given the travel demands typical of many jobs, long-distance communication skills and tools—such as those acquired through marriage counseling—can be useful. Also vital is acknowledging children’s feelings and opinions, particularly in decisions about moving. All family members should also be confident that the family, not work, is the first priority. Finally, make a conscious effort to understand and support each family member’s unique transition process and do things to keep the family together and strong.

5. Decide together and appreciate each other’s challenges. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized the importance of making the decision to move abroad together: “The main thing is that you both agree where you’re going. The couples that have really struggled are the ones who haven’t made the decision together.” Thriving as a couple also involves recognizing the different challenges and responsibilities each partner faces. Accompanying partners should appreciate that the

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DIVERSIFICATION

Even with social media's comparatively niche audiences, Whitmore says MEDA views social media as a way to target younger audiences as well. In fact, one of its major media initiatives is a video contest. Last year's winning piece, entitled "Milk from Cow to Consumer," draws comparisons between food distribution systems in the U.S. and those in the countries where MEDA operates to improve food security. Production cost? The price of a MacBook Air for the video contest winner.

Video: the window to the soul


Video has played a more prominent role for WorldStove. Aside from the odd cinematic homage, Founder and Director Nathaniel Mulcahy has maintained a YouTube channel since February 2008. His goal is not necessarily to attract a younger demographic, but to increase WorldStove's ability to collaborate with others around the globe. As a pyrolytic cookstove organization, WorldStove does indeed manufacture carbon-negative stoves that can be calibrated to run on everything from peanut shells to cornhusks, but the primary objective is to offer self-sustaining solutions to organizations with which they collaborate. And YouTube is a big part of helping the organization, which has worked in 14 different countries and currently operates eight active projects.

"We average 400 emails per day. On the days we post a YouTube video we receive 4,000 contact requests of some sort. No other multimedia or modern networking tool is even as close as powerful as YouTube is," said Mulcahy.

"Some research projects that we've done, I've found them by YouTubing other stoves or vice versa. In a video it's easy to see what people are actually doing and what their characters are like and what they focus on as a priority."

While YouTube is an excellent way to demonstrate the geekier research-oriented side of his organization, Facebook and Twitter are also essential collaboration tools. And though the amount of time it takes to update WorldStove's social media feeds is more than Mulcahy would like, "Twitter and Facebook pages are the EKG of NGO humanitarian work," he says. Philanthropic organizations trawl the Internet for organizations such as his for potential funding opportunities. "Frankly if you've been at it long enough it gives you street cred; people pay attention to how long you've been tweeting."

The social media mantra of "update, update, update" is time-consuming to be sure, but for Mulcahy it also offers a creative outlet. "We've grown up with television, radio, video games and cartoons. We pay a lot more attention to stuff like that. And besides it's fun to feel creative. It makes the job more exciting even if it is more work."

Did someone say fun? Time to hit the replay button on that CO₂-negative egg video again. 

The Expat Family

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steep learning curve and work volume for their employee spouse will probably seem extreme for the first four to six months as they get up to speed. It does not need to remain this way for the entire posting, however. Equally important is for the humanitarian worker to appreciate that, as one partner described, "It is harder to be the other one. The worker is set up with a natural place to go and [to] have people to meet, whereas the other person is starting a whole new life." This view is consistent with the general literature on expatriate families, which indicates that relocation is much harder for accompanying partners than employees.

6. Prepare practically and mentally. To minimize adjustment problems, make sure you are well informed before you go. Useful information sources include talking to people who have lived there, books, websites and blogs. Where possible, a country visit can also provide valuable information. A proactive approach to finding out as much as possible about potentially viable occupations, leisure activities and social interests for yourself (and your children), and about the nature of the humanitarian role are key. Partners should also be prepared for the transition to be tough and appreciate that it takes about six months to start becoming comfortable. Interviewees also stressed the importance of being realistic, particularly in hardship postings. As one explained, "Don't have great expectations of yourself or changing the world." Recognizing the limits of what you can achieve in terms of development or poverty relief is important.


7. Keep a positive outlook. Gaining the most from the expatriate experience involves ensuring you favorably frame the available opportunities and experiences. For example, rather than focusing on the risk of boredom if you will not be working, it was suggested to look at it as a way to build your own skills

and have your own experience. With planning, various opportunities present themselves, such as distance study, photography or online business development. Learning to be content with what is available is also critical. One partner advised, "You can't constantly long for something else, you have to bloom where you are planted." Lastly, while it is easy to fixate on things lacking in a host country, it is important to take advantage of where you are. "There will always be something really wonderful about being where you are in some country, even the crazy ones," as one interviewee noted.

8. Seek connections with the local culture. While we often instinctively seek out people like ourselves, pursuing connections with the local community and culture is key to maximizing the learning potential of expatriate living. Central to this is making an effort to learn the language. A partner explained her own experience: "It is a very unique opportunity. When will I get this kind of opportunity to know a country like Malawi? So it is better for us to open ourselves up a little bit. Adapt to local culture a little bit ..."

9. Maintain connections with distant loved ones. For many people, time can pass too easily without communicating with family and friends back home, creating distance with loved ones that can be hard to overcome later. Partners stressed that to help accompanying children maintain connections with extended family and for your own support and ease of transition when returning home, it is important to be "really intentional about how and who you want to stay connected with back home."

10. Have fun and laugh. Finally, thriving as expatriate families depends on keeping a sense of humor or playfulness. Seek out ways to have fun and enjoyment together. Though humanitarian workloads are typically high, regular relaxation is critical to maintaining strong family relationships and preventing chronic stress and burnout.

Promoting family well-being within the humanitarian community doesn't just improve family life. It also directly impacts worker performance and retention; and ultimately, it improves the quality of the aid provided. 

Questions and comments can be sent to the author at epepall@gmail.com. She wishes to acknowledge the support of an Australian Postgraduate Award and a Curtin University Postgraduate Scholarship.