PEOPLE IN AID®

Resilience

Building Resilient Managers in Humanitarian Organizations: Strengthening Key Organizational Structures and Personal Skills that Promote Resilience in Challenging Environments

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Foreword

During 2010, the massive catastrophes of the Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods have severely tested the resilience of many humanitarian workers and organizations. Although by no means the only crises that humanitarian organizations responded to, those two disasters in particular have highlighted the importance of qualities such as adaptability, hardiness, and creativity in problem solving, to the humanitarian endeavor, and especially to those working as managers in humanitarian organizations.

For more than a decade People In Aid has been supporting those working in the humanitarian and international development sector around the world through advising, consulting, networking, training, and through its internationally recognised Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel (2003). Over this period we have noticed an increasing interest in the level of stress, trauma, or violence experienced by humanitarian workers, but relatively little attention paid to the other side of the coin – to exploring the qualities that promote resilience and thriving in these challenging environments. Resilience *has* become a fashionable thing to discuss, but it often seems that our understanding of it in relation to humanitarian workers lacks depth and nuance and is disconnected from the organizational context – and too little attention has been given to considering the management practices and organizational policies that might act to strengthen resilience, or crush it.

Through this report we aim to redress this by exploring the concept of resilience on several levels. We begin by proposing a new definition of resilience that extends beyond what may help humanitarian managers *survive* in their roles and focuses us on what may help them *thrive*. Then we take a detailed look at some of the qualities that humanitarian workers and staff care professionals associate with those who consistently demonstrate resilience. Finally, we link these resilience qualities to organizational structures and practices that can help promote resilience in those working as managers in humanitarian organizations.

Our thanks are extended to all those interviewed for this research, and especially for their candor in sharing their experiences. We hope that this report will prompt managers and leaders of organizations to reflect on their own experiences and ask searching questions. Where am I, where are we, strong? Where can I usefully invest energy and time to strengthen my own resilience? What organizational structures and practices are key points of influence when it comes to creating the sort of environment that can equip those I manage to become more resilient?

Our vision at People In Aid is that of organizations working effectively to overcome poverty. This report gives plenty to reflect on and prompts action and we commend it to you. If we can help or guide you in any way as you respond to it, then please contact us.

Ben Emmens

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Executive Summary

Background, and purpose of the research

In the last decade there has been increasing interest in the level of stress, trauma, or violence experienced by humanitarian workers, but relatively little focus on the other side of the coin – qualities that promote resilience and thriving in these challenging environments. People In Aid, through this report, undertakes an initial exploration of the personal skills and strengths, and organizational structures and practices, which can promote resilience in managers working for international humanitarian organizations.

What we did

During October and November 2010, interviews were carried out with fifteen individuals humanitarian workers, staff support specialists, and psychologists who well placed to comment on these issues in relation to middle managers with humanitarian organizations. These discussions, author experience, and published research, informed the content of this thought/research paper and allowed us to:
- Suggest a useful working definition of resilience;
- Identify some key indicators of resilience for managers in humanitarian organizations;
- Identify some key points of influence – organizational structures and practices that can strengthen resilience in managers in humanitarian organizations;
- Offer some practical suggestions for ways that humanitarian organizations can help increase the resilience of their middle managers.

Summary of the discussion topics

There is no universally accepted definition of resilience. The definition we propose here is: ***The ability to successfully navigate high levels of challenge and change, and to bounce back after stressful or traumatic events.***

Key personal skills and strengths of resilient humanitarian workers include:
1. ***Adaptability***. Adaptability is the result of a number of skills and abilities working in tandem to help us deal well with challenge, change, and setbacks. Two related themes particularly pertinent to humanitarian workers are pragmatic idealism and the ability to cope with ambiguity.
2. ***Problem solving ability***. Humanitarian workers who are naturally challenge-oriented, employ problem-focused coping, are able to accept imperfect solutions and partial victories, and independently learn as they go, fare better.
3. ***Sense of meaning and purpose***. A sense that what they are doing is meaningful and purposeful is very important to most international humanitarian workers – and those with strong values and a clear belief system rooted outside themselves fare better. However, the ability to be flexible in adapting these beliefs over time is also very important.

4. *Good relationships/social support.* There is no single factor that will make you resilient, but good relationships may be about as close as we can come to a silver bullet. Supportive relationships that extend well beyond mere acquaintance are vital, yet can be challenging for international humanitarian workers to maintain over time.
5. *Optimism and the regular experience of positive emotions.* Having a generally positive outlook (realistic optimism) and a sense of humor/fun are common attributes of resilient humanitarian workers.
6. *Emotional regulation.* The ability to regulate and manage intense and negative emotions when appropriate is an important part of resilience. Humanitarian workers who are able to strategically use strategies related to attention control, cognitive reappraisal, and emotional expression, are more resilient.
7. *Self-awareness.* Resilient humanitarian workers know themselves well – their strengths and relative weaknesses, their limits, and their needs. This self-awareness underlies their awareness of their limits.
8. *Balance, and the ability to pace oneself and disconnect.* Many resilient humanitarian workers appear to live by the mantra, "this is a marathon, not a sprint." They find ways to pace themselves and disconnect from their work both in the short-term and the long term.
9. *Physical health.* The basic building blocks of physical health – eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising – are often neglected by humanitarian workers, but without some basic level of physical health to draw upon, resilient actions and reactions become less likely.

Some of the most challenging demands that managers in humanitarian organizations face were identified as:
- *Managing others:* Frequently mentioned issues included a lack of management experience to do the job required and having a lot of responsibility without the commensurate authority.
- *Being managed by others:* The stress caused by constant organizational change topped this list, followed by mismatches between headquarter-office expectations and field capabilities and having a poor direct manager.
- *Workload:* Too much work to do and not enough people to do it.
- *The structure of their role*: Many humanitarian workers seem to relish the variety inherent in their jobs but also find it stressful to have to be wear many different hats and be adept in so many different ways.
- *Personal coping and self-care*: Environmental hardships are not unexpected although still stressful, and the "place" and "pace" of the work makes it challenging to achieve a balanced lifestyle.

Some key points of influence in organizational structures and practices that can help strengthen resilience in managers in humanitarian organizations can be found in the following areas:
1. *Management practices:* Frequently mentioned during interviews was the need for this topic to be a strategic priority for upper management, part of the organizational conversation in the context of a culture of affirmation, and basic good-management practices such as regular professional supervision meetings.
2. *Role structure:* More commonly than not, in this field, the scope of the role and the position expectations are such that the job is literally impossible for one person to accomplish. Realistic and clearly defined expectations, and more

assistance identifying strategic priorities when needed, could go a long way to increasing the resilience of humanitarian managers.

3. *Training and skill building:* Most humanitarian workers are hungry for training and skill building opportunities, including coaching, mentoring, and career planning. Of particular importance is the need to assist people who are promoted to management positions with little or no background in management learn how to better manage others.

4. *Support services:* Making psychological support services available – particularly by providers outside the organization or completely removed from a person's line manager – was repeatedly identified as helpful.

5. *Policies and benefits:* Adequate vacation and R&R leave, and the provision of amenities in situations of shared accommodation, were identified as particularly crucial to helping humanitarian workers maintain resilience.

6. *The recruitment and handover periods:* It is hard to over-estimate the importance of good recruitment and information transfer to an organization. An organization that manages to consistently identify and hire people who are already naturally resilient are going to be way ahead of the curve. In addition, good information transfer during an adequate handover period provides new staff with a critical running start in their position.

Critical questions for further discussion

A PhD (or several) could be written about each of the major topics addressed in this report. As such, the paper raises many questions that could benefit from further research and thought. The following a few of the key questions that we hope will catalyze further discussion and exploration:

1. Is there a difference between the qualities that help make humanitarian workers resilient in the short term versus the long term?

2. Do humanitarian workers who are highly resilient actually *perform* better in their role or are they mostly, rather, less stressed and/or damaged by the demands of their work?

3. To what extent can organizational structures and practices *really* help build individual resilience? To what extent is it the organization's responsibility to attempt to do so?

4. When it comes to organizational structures and processes is there a difference between what humanitarian workers themselves *think* is most helpful in building resilience, and what is actually most helpful?

5. How are individual and organizational resilience related in this profession?

6. How can humanitarian organizations better assess for resilience during recruitment?

1. Introduction

International humanitarian and development work has been a part of my life for almost as long as I can remember. As the child of a development worker I grew up in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, the US, and Australia – flipping regularly between worlds of poverty and plenty. As a young forensic psychologist with a background in stress and trauma I left Australia to seek humanitarian jobs of my own in The Philippines and Croatia, and then worked for seven years as the Director of Training for a non-profit that provides psychological support services to humanitarian workers around the world. Recently I married someone who was working with a humanitarian organization in Papua New Guinea when we met. Even more recently we moved to Laos to undertake development work.

During the last twenty-five years I have met many humanitarian workers in many countries. They are, for the most part, an amazing bunch doing fascinating work.

They are people who help provide water, food, shelter, and sanitation after disasters to help reduce the shocking number of people who die during these periods from exposure, starvation, diarrhea, or disease.

They are people who advocate for change in chronic emergency situations, or who document the stories of refugees in camps who are desperate for a chance at another life. Persecution histories, these stories are called, and they are largely tales of horror and fear.

On the development end of the spectrum – they are people who work in remote communities to help develop sanitation infrastructure, or build and equip schools, or establish rice and animal banks or small businesses. All of these initiatives can raise the standard of living in poor communities and help buffer the families within those communities from the impact of unexpected challenges such as illness or drought.

Humanitarian workers do not have easy jobs, nor are they particularly safe. During the last 15 years intentional violence has become the leading cause of death for humanitarian relief and development workers in complex humanitarian emergency situations, and kidnapping is on the rise.[i] Humanitarian workers already confronted with the realities of poverty, conflict, starvation, and disease must also face the reality that their work is dangerous. Being shot at or bombed; being assaulted, kidnapped or carjacked; being threatened at a checkpoint by a child totting a gun – in many parts of the world these are not infrequent occurrences.

Most of the humanitarian workers I know, however, don't pinpoint this sort of danger as the most stressful aspect of their work. Most humanitarian workers who leave the developed world and head for the developing world expect (on some level, anyway) to run certain risks. Fewer expect to find environmental hassle factors such as unreliable communications and shared accommodations, or organizational challenges related to bureaucracy, management, and communication quite so frustrating and wearisome. Perhaps even fewer expect to have their fundamental ideals and beliefs about meaning and purpose challenged, reshaped, and sometimes shattered during the course of their work.

Some of those who decide to pursue humanitarian work don't make it past two years before burning out – spent, disillusioned, or traumatized. Some people survive for much longer than that, but do it at cost to their closest relationships and while flirting (or worse) with alcoholism or other addictions. But some people genuinely seem to thrive in this line of work. They seem able to bounce relatively quickly from traumatic events that come their way, and remain passionate and committed to the work. Some even seem able to do this without sacrificing their relationships, their health, or their sanity in the process.

After years of focusing on the impact of stress and trauma, of seeing people who were not coping, I started to wonder about those who *were*. What, I wondered, were the qualities that helped humanitarian workers thrive? What sets apart the resilient?

For reflection
1. What are some of the key personal qualities (behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes) that help humanitarian workers be resilient? 2. What organizational structures and practices help foster resilience in the staff of humanitarian organizations?

2. About this paper

2.1 Interview subjects

Fifteen people based in ten countries and working for 10 different organizations were interviewed (see the Appendix for the names and affiliations of interviewees, the interview protocol, for more detail regarding data analysis). Seven interviewees were field staff. Eight interviewees were staff support. Many of the staff support specialists had previously worked as field staff.

2.2 Limitations

There are several factors that limit the extent to which we can safely make generalizations about these results. Fifteen is a respectable, but not large, sample size.
All the field staff interviewed were expatriates, and almost everyone interviewed was raised in a western culture. This discussion is therefore primarily relevant to expatriate humanitarian workers raised in western cultures.

2.3 Report structure

What follows is a synthesis of the interview data and existing research. As a combination thought/research paper, this report is intended to spur discussion and to help you reflect upon potential helpful changes at the personal, the managerial, or the organizational level.

The following chapters address findings related to these key questions:
1. How do you define resilience?
2. What are some of the key personal qualities (behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes) that promote resilience in humanitarian managers in challenging environments?
3. What are some of the most challenging demands faced by middle managers in humanitarian organizations?
4. What are some key organizational structures or practices that promote the resilience of humanitarian managers in challenging environments?
5. What are some practical ways that humanitarian organizations can promote the resilience of their managers?

3. About resilience

3.1 What is resilience, anyway?

> ***Key question:*** *How do you define resilience?*

George Vaillant, a Harvard psychiatrist who has written widely on resilience, declares, "we all know perfectly well what resilience means, until we listen to someone else try to define it."[ii]

Yes, well, I knew perfectly well what resilience meant until *I* tried to define it. The definitional waters eddying around this word "resilience" are rather frustratingly muddy.

The Latin root of the word is *resilire* – meaning to spring back, or to return to the original form after being bent back or stretched. When it was first grafted into the psychology domain the word resilience was used in precisely this manner – to denote someone's ability to "bounce back" or recover quickly from traumatic events and other types of adversity. It conveys both the capacity to bend without breaking and the capacity to spring back once bent.

> *Resilience can be defined as the ability to bounce back following stressful or traumatic events.*

Resilience, however, has also been widely used in at least two other ways. One group of thinkers and researchers argue that true resilience extends beyond the ability to bounce back from trauma. Steve Wolin, for example, defines resilience as, "the capacity to rise above adversity—sometimes the terrible adversity of outright violence, molestation or war—and forge lasting strengths in the struggle."[iii] This takes the concept of resilience well beyond merely bouncing back to the status quo and adds on expectations of positive post-traumatic growth.

> *Resilience can be defined as the capacity to rise above adversity and forge personal strengths in the struggle.*

Others have been even more ambitious in broadening the scope of the term. Many have begun to use it almost interchangeably with what Kobasa first referred to as *hardiness.*[iv] Hardy personalities, Kobasa found, were more resistant to stress and better able to cope with it than others. Viewed from this angle, resilience has been defined as a general ability to successfully navigate high levels of challenge and change.

> *Resilience can be defined as the ability to successfully navigate high levels of challenge and change.*

The definition I have crafted takes a relatively wide-angle view of resilience. I'm not only interested in what helps humanitarian workers bounce back after trauma, to merely return to the status quo or survive in their profession. I am primarily interested in what helps them thrive and flourish. The definition below was, I hope, narrow enough to

ensure that we were on the same page in our discussions, but broad enough to allow those I interviewed to interpret "successfully navigate" as they saw fit:

Resilience can be defined as the ability to successfully navigate high levels of challenge and change, and to bounce back after stressful or traumatic events.

3.2 Some important points about resilience

Resilience has been called a personality trait, an attitude, a skill, an approach to life, and many other things. Before we explore the interview data, here are some important points to consider:

- **Most people are to some extent resilient.** Most people in life experience traumas or major life stressors at some stage and do not develop enduring mental health problems or other severe difficulties. It is less a question of whether people are resilient or not then it is a question of how resilient they are.[v]

- **People will never become so resilient that they are stress proof.** No one is stress immune. If you subject people to enough pressure, everyone will eventually react with distress and dysfunction. Think of resilience as a muscle. If you work a muscle too hard or for too long then (no matter how strong you are) you'll eventually get tired, weaker, and/or injured.

- **Resilience is a *process*, not just a personality characteristic or a skill**. Resilience in action is the process of marshalling internal and external resources to respond to challenging demands. Although some people may inherit strengths and temperaments that make them naturally more resilient than others, with awareness and practice anyone can develop many of the qualities that promote resilience. The fact that resilience is a dynamic process, however, also means that those who are generally resilient may not demonstrate resilience in every situation or at any given point in time.

- **The behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that promote resilience are less of a "list" of discrete skills and strengths than they are a "constellation" of inter-related qualities**: Many of the attributes that promote resilience feed into the development of other helpful attributes in positive feedback loops. For example, someone who has regular contact with a good friendship network has

more opportunities to consider different perspectives, self reflect, exercise empathy, and practice communication and conflict resolution skills.

- **The qualities that promote resilience in different contexts can vary.** Much research suggests that there are more than a handful of qualities (such as optimism) that appear to promote resilience in a wide variety of contexts. Research also suggests that there are significant commonalities across many emergency service industries (including police, firefighting, and paramedics) in qualities that help people resile or thrive in these roles. There are, however, some differences in every context, even within industries, and different contexts can demand different strengths and skills to cope effectively with the specifics of the situational challenges.

- With regards to relief and development work, the qualities that best promote resilience may look a somewhat different between acute and chronic emergency situations, and different again in longer-term development postings. Interviewees were informed that the focus of the discussion was middle management in humanitarian (or emergency) contexts – including relief, but also the DRR (disaster risk reduction) space and the longer-term rehabilitation/ reconstruction phases. However, keep in mind that the discussion in the following chapters will necessarily contain some generalizations.

4. Key indicators of resilience for managers in humanitarian organizations

Key questions: What are some of the key personal qualities (behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes) that promote resilience in managers in challenging environments? What are the three most important "resilience skills" for humanitarian managers?

According to those I interviewed, there are a great many behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that help humanitarian workers be resilient. The 15 interviewees managed to generate a list of 70 different items that they mentioned a total of 143 times. Those 70 items were grouped according to the 17 themes listed in the table below (instructions on how to obtain the complete data set can be found in the Appendix).

The second column in the table lists the number of times items related to that theme were mentioned. The third column lists the number of times items related to that theme were mentioned when interviewees were asked to identify the top three most important qualities or skills related to resilience.

Theme	Number of times mentioned	Number of times mentioned as a top three most important quality
Problem solving	18	7
Self and other awareness	16	6
Meaning and purpose	15	2
Adaptability/Flexibility	11	3
Good relationships	10	4
Pacing	10	1
Optimism/Positive emotions	10	2
Ability to disconnect	8	3
Balance	7	1
Emotional management	6	3
General hardiness	6	1
Change management	5	2
Realistic expectations	4	0
Openness/lack of judgment	3	0
Autonomous and self-sufficient	3	3
Good communicator	3	2
Conflict management	2	1
Self-confidence	2	0
Good physical health (diet, exercise, sleep)	1	0
Being outgoing/extraverted	1	0
Making good choices about where to work	1	1
Being aligned with the values of the organization	1	0

Table 1. *Key personal qualities that promote resilience in managers in challenging environments.*

In the following sections, I explore the seven most frequently mentioned themes in more detail.

4.1 Adaptability/Flexibility

> *"You need to be able to adapt – to quickly redefine your plan when things fall apart or you face major setbacks without being completely devastated or getting stuck. What is that Japanese proverb? The bamboo that bends is stronger than the oak that resists."*
>
> (Field staff)

The word adaptability was uttered more times in answer to my questions about qualities that promote resilience than any other word (except, perhaps, the word relationships). Resilient people, the majority said, are by definition adaptable in a variety of different ways. One person gave this example:

> *"I need to make quick decisions and move very fast when I'd responding to an emergency – there's not a lot of time for questions. But I need to slow right down, be much more patient, and ask questions when I'm trying to train my team. They just won't learn if I move fast."*
>
> (Field staff)

Adaptability is less a discrete skill than it is the natural outworking of resilience in action – the result of a number of other skills and abilities working in tandem to help us deal well with challenge, change, and setbacks. Two of these adaptability-related abilities that are particularly pertinent to humanitarian workers showed up repeatedly during interviews.

4.1.a Pragmatic idealism

Al Siepert, one of the pioneers of the resiliency field, claimed that the flexibility and adaptability that is the hallmark of resiliency is derived from counter-balanced traits[vi]. The most resilient people, Siepert argued, "function with pessimistic optimism, extroverted introversion, selfish unselfishness, playful seriousness, and more." These paradoxical qualities allow people to respond in one way or another.

If Siepert had been focusing primarily on humanitarian workers he may have added "pragmatic idealism" to that list. Many of those I interviewed (and that I have talked to over the years) alluded to their need to maintain a sense of idealism and purpose, but also have that idealism tempered with pragmatism. Humanitarian workers who want to last longer than a year or two cannot afford to completely martyr themselves in the service of idealism. They must find some way to adjust their expectations and ideals and, in the process, learn to cope with the ambiguities inherent in most humanitarian contexts.

> *"People who are too idealistic, or perfectionists, often struggle on the field. They want to help, but it's usually so much more complicated than they'd ever expected it to be."*
>
> (Field staff)

4.1.b Ambiguity

This ability to function effectively in the face of ambiguity also surfaced repeatedly as crucial to helping humanitarian managers be adaptable.

The situations that humanitarian managers regularly find themselves in – situations of overwhelming need and insufficient resources, and of cross cultural and other communication difficulties – sometimes don't lend themselves to clearly identifying what's actually going on, much less what the best thing is to do next. As such, an essential skill for humanitarian workers is the ability to tolerate this type of tension and continue to make decisions and move forward as best they can. One person put it this way:

> *"In environments of imperfect information and insufficient resources there will never be a perfect solution. You still need to be able to accept the ambiguity, analyze the situation, come to decisions, and move forward."*
>
> <div align="right">(Field staff)</div>

4.2 Problem solving ability

Similar to adaptability, the ability to problem solve well is less a single skill than the result of a number of personality traits and decision-making and planning skills working together.

In her seminal article for the Harvard Business Review, *How Resilience Works,* Diane Coutu pinpointed something she called ritualized ingenuity as one of three cornerstones of resilience (the other two being a search for meaning, and optimism tempered with reality). Coutu describes ritualized ingenuity this way: "The ability to make do with whatever is at hand… an ability to improvise a solution to a problem without proper or obvious tools or material."[vii]

This type of problem solving was identified by many I spoke to (and proportionally more of the field staff than the staff-care specialists) as the sort of problem solving that humanitarian workers must regularly exercise. In fact, there were more comments made related to problem solving abilities than any other single theme.

We have already touched on one quality that can contribute to effective problem solving – the ability to be proactive in ambiguous environments. Several other key qualities and skills that can help humanitarian managers be effective problem solvers in high challenge, sometimes chaotic, environments were identified as follows.

4.2.a Challenge-oriented

The quality that surfaced most frequently (particularly when people were describing other humanitarian workers they knew who were resilient) was a tendency to love challenge, change, and problem solving. This may be more of a personality trait than a skill. People *can* learn to increase their tolerance for change, and to deal better with it. People may even be able to develop a taste for it, akin to how some people develop a taste for olives in adulthood. But there are certain people and personalities who seem to come naturally hardwired to genuinely love challenge and change – not to merely

tolerate it, not only to *want* to love it, but (most days) to *actually* love it. Those are the people, the field staff said, who make resilient managers.

> *"It helps if you believe in the purpose, but after a while that's not enough. For many people that'll get you a year, maybe two, before you're close to burnout. That's when you need people to genuinely enjoy many aspects of the job on top of believing that it's meaningful. They need to love the challenge of actually doing the work and trying to deliver assistance to people who really need it despite all the hindrances in the way - government, bad security, organizational constraints, budget limitations, broken equipment, cross cultural miscommunications, feeling caught at a perpetual cross-roads between the urgencies of the field and the eternal demands from headquarters. You really have to love being challenged – maybe not every day, but most days. However, this desire for challenge also needs to be tempered with the knowledge how much challenge you can actually stomach and the reality that you are playing with a double-edged sword."*
>
> (Field staff)

4.2.b Problem-focused coping

Research conducted by psychologist Richard Lazarus in the 1960's led him to suggest that people who become very emotional for an extended period of time when hit by an unexpected setback are the least resilient with regards to that setback. In contrast, people who reacted with problem-focused coping and handled their feelings well were the most resilient.[viii] Additional research by psychologist Mary Steinhardt (who designs programs to support individual and organizational resilience) supports this. In general, people who become emotionally upset about difficulties for extended periods of time, blame others for their distress, and continue to dwell on their unhappy feelings are the least resilient.

Those I interviewed pinpointed a number of qualities and skills related to problem-focused coping as particularly helpful in making humanitarian managers more resilient. These include:

- *Solution-driven, not problem-driven*: People who are action-oriented and have a "can do" attitude. Those who shift relatively quickly into solution generating rather than continuing to dwell on the dynamics of the problem indefinitely.
- *Ability to work autonomously, without close supervision or clear guidelines.*
- *Ability to accept imperfect solutions and partial victories*: Humanitarian managers constantly have difficult decisions to make. They must be able to accept feeling as if they have disappointed and let some people down.
- *Ability to learn as they go*: Those who have a knack for picking things up as they go and transferring lessons learned from one context to another.

> *"Problem solving is part making decisions and moving forward, and part the ability to know afterwards why you made that decision, analyze whether it was good, and reflectively learn from your own actions and mistakes. Humanitarian organizations don't do a good job of helping people through this process. They joke about throwing staff in the deep end, but most managers are so busy and overwhelmed themselves that they can't figure out how not to do this."*
>
> (Field staff)

4.3 Sense of meaning and purpose

Coutu identified the ability to make meaning out of terrible times as one of three crucial building blocks of resilience. Others prominent researchers disagree, pointing out that not everyone who is resilient can conceptualize and verbalize what they do to cope and recover, and even fewer can identify and put into words how their stressful or traumatic experiences transformed them in some positive way that feels meaningful.

However, wanting life to make sense and for our work and actions to feel purposeful in ways that extend beyond ourselves are universal human desires. For many (perhaps particularly those raised in Western cultures) personal spiritual beliefs about meaning, purpose and what it means to love and care for others play a big part in their decision to become a humanitarian worker. They also remain a strong driving force and a frequent topic of conversation among colleagues. I wrote about this recently about a night colleagues came into town:

> *"We met at Utopia and drank mango smoothies and cheap Chilean wine and gazed upon the Khan River and talked. We talked of things that humanitarianers often seem to talk about when they cross paths for an evening and drink and look at rivers.*
>
> 1. *How and why did you decide to make this last move/take this last job?*
> 2. *How are you finding this massive uprooting and replanting of your life?*
> 3. *What about the job itself – where are the rewards and the pressure points? What feels meaningful? What seems hopeful, and hopeless?*
> 4. *Is it worth it – this move, this job, this whole field …*
>
> *A friend of mine calls this sort of conversation tumbleweeding, which I think is a delightful word. It brings to mind a tangled ball of wiry stalks all intertwined – dense enough to hang together in a round yet light enough to be moved by the wind. A tumbleweed bounces and spins at the same time as it skips along. A tumbleweed goes places. (Sometimes it just goes in circles, but that too is appropriate.)"*

Many I interviewed cited a person's beliefs related to meaning and purpose as a crucial factor underlying resilience. They also identified certain types of beliefs, and ways of holding your beliefs, that they felt promoted resilience in humanitarian workers.

4.3.a Content of beliefs

Humanitarian workers were seen as more resilient when their belief framework was:
- Rooted in something outside of themselves;
- Had some component of valuing others; and
- Was fundamentally positive – engendering a broader sense of hope in the midst of suffering and disappointment.

Ultimately, humanitarian workers who believed that what they were doing was valuable and worthwhile in a broader cosmic sense – those who were, to a certain extent, idealistic – were judged to be more resilient. This is not, however, the full story on this front.

4.3.b Flexibility of belief structure

What humanitarian workers don't fully anticipate at the start of their career is how, over time, humanitarian work will force them to grapple with their own beliefs and expectations, and questions of meaning and purpose.

As such, how humanitarian workers *hold* and *change* their beliefs also appears to be relevant to resilience, and flexibility in belief structure was cited more than once as an important quality. It is virtually impossible to witness suffering, violence, and great human need without having your beliefs and expectations about how the world "should" work challenged, and you only have a few options in the face of this sort of ambiguity and pressure. You can shore up your beliefs and attitudes to the point where they become rigid. You can become more able to manage ambiguity and nuance. Or you can abandon these beliefs altogether.

Humanitarian workers who were most resilient were described as those who take on the attitude of a learner (even when they are wielding authority) and are not unduly threatened by having some of their important beliefs and ideas challenged. They are the people who find a way to temper their idealism with pragmatism, yet not loose that idealism altogether. They are the people who can acknowledge and recognize what they themselves are getting out of this work – how they are growing and learning – rather than those who claim they are *only* in it to serve others. They are the ones able to see and tolerate shades of grey around issues that may have once appeared a crisp black and white.

> *"Being professional is not about being jaded. It's about growing out of naïve idealism and still maintaining integrity of purpose."*
>
> (Staff support)

4.4 Good relationships/social support

Relationships – the ability to form them and having good relationship networks – was one of the top three themes mentioned when I asked people to list the three qualities or skills that they thought were most important to resilience. Relationships with friends, closely followed by family, were also the two most frequently cited things (by a long way) when I asked people what had kept *them* resilient.

Anne Deveson, a writer and social commentator who wrote an entire book on the subject – *Resilience* – says, "of all the levels of resilience I have explored so far, the need for connection is the strongest of all."[ix] Certainly the research that has so far been conducted on the experiences of humanitarian workers supports the centrality of relationships to thriving.

One study of 215 international humanitarian workers reported that trauma symptoms were lower for those with high social support.[x] The effect was stronger for those that had high social support *outside* the organization. Furthermore, when humanitarian workers with low social support were compared to those with medium to high levels of support, the staff with low social support were:
- 4 times more likely to experience traumatization;
- 3 times more likely to experience some form of "unwellness";

- 2.5 times more likely to experience some form of acute anxiety; and
- 2.5 times more likely to experience some form of physical illness.

"If social support is compromised," John Fawcett wrote about the findings of his research, "then front-line aid workers are not only statistically more likely to be symptomatic of stress and trauma, but the differences are huge."

There is no single factor that will make you resilient, but good relationships may be about as close as we can come to a silver bullet. Supportive relationships that extend beyond mere acquaintances – knowing that you are part of a community of people who care for you and think well of you – is crucial.

> *"It's just so clear that resilient people are those who can attach and have strong relationships – both global networks and the ability to create some sort of connection and support wherever you are at the moment."*
>
> (Staff support)

4.5 Optimism and the regular experience of positive emotions

Having a positive outlook/a sense of optimism and a sense of humor/fun were each mentioned by more than a third of those interviewed.

4.5.a Helpful optimism

Diane Coutu was so convinced that optimism was essential to resilience that she named it as one of her three crucial pillars. Feeling optimistic and hopeful, she argued, is primarily what motivates people to try to solve problems and overcome challenges. Coutu was careful to specify the sort of optimism that was most helpful, though – an optimism blended with a, "cool, almost pessimistic sense of reality."[xi] This nuance was also reflected in interviewees comments about the type of optimism most helpful to humanitarian workers – not an unbridled optimism but one tempered by realistic expectations and a keen awareness of possible pitfalls – again akin to the pragmatic idealism touched on earlier.

Author William Arthur Ward described it this way, "Real optimism is aware of problems but recognizes solutions; knows about difficulties but believes they can be overcome; sees the negatives, but accentuates the positives; is exposed to the worst but expects the best; has reason to complain, but chooses to smile."

> *"Woven into this is being hopeful, not only just about whether the work can make a difference but about circumstances and the world."*
>
> (Field staff)

4.5.b Fun and sense of humor

The novelist Herman Hesse once said that "Humor is the third kingdom, where the spirit becomes tough and elastic." Humanitarian workers might not put it quite like that, but they're largely in agreement that a good sense of humor is of great assistance when it comes to being resilient.

"A good sense of humor is important, because that underlies a balanced perspective. And sometimes you laugh because if you weren't laughing you'd be crying."

(Field staff)

Closely related to this issue of humor is the related topic of a sense of fun and other positive emotions. And that, in turn, is related to problem solving abilities in interesting ways.

4.5.c The regular experience of positive emotions

Psychologist Barbara Frederickson, winner of a MacArthur award for her research on resilience, has compelling evidence that resilient people use positive emotions to bounce back from negative experiences. Her work demonstrates that experiencing many positive emotions (such as amusement, playfulness, enjoyment, contentment, satisfaction, warmth and affection) during a day increases planning and decision making abilities by increasing the range of action choices we can conceptualize and motivating us to try and be proactive.

Negative emotions, in contrast, decrease resiliency because feelings such as anxiety, anger, fear, vulnerability, and helplessness narrow a person's range of thoughts and limit action choices. Frederickson also found that the strengths gained during these positive states are durable. They last a long time in the face of adversity and on-going difficulties.

The positivity ratio: People need a certain ratio of positive emotions to negative emotions to flourish - above 2.9. Positive moods, emotions, and sentiments "carry multiple interrelated benefits". They widen scope of attention, encourage us to explore, increases intuition and creativity, increases immune functioning, and calm us by undoing the impact of negative emotions upon our cardiovascular system. However it has to be "genuine positivity, meaningfully grounded in the reality of the current circumstances, rather than feigned, forced, or trivial."[xii]

4.6 Emotional management

The ability to regulate and manage intense and negative emotions when appropriate is an important part of resilience. It is not that resilient people don't experience distress and negative emotions at times, they do. What sets them apart seems to be their ability to recover emotional equilibrium more quickly and efficiently.

Interviewees suggested that humanitarian workers were more resilient when they were able to strategically employ emotional management strategies related to:
- Attention control (what you choose to pay attention to in a situation);
- Cognitive reappraisal (changing the way you think about a situation to make it feel less threatening or more positive); and
- Emotional expression (acknowledging and expressing emotions through talking, writing, art, or other mediums).

The "strategic" part appears to be related to *when* humanitarian workers attend to emotions.

"I cannot afford to fall apart when things are urgent. During those times I get on and do the job and you deal with feelings later. I've tried to get better at making time to pay attention to feelings at some point though, because if I don't they just come back later, or some other way."

(Field staff)

4.7 Self-awareness

There were a wide variety of items mentioned in relation to self-awareness. So many, in fact, that the theme of self-awareness was the most frequently discussed (behind problem solving) and also the second most frequently cited theme when people were asked to identify the top three resilience qualities essential to humanitarian managers (again, behind problem solving). Two sub-themes surfaced repeatedly.

4.7.a Know yourself: Strengths, orientation, and limitations

Fully half of the people I interviewed used the phrase "know yourself" in a way that linked it to the issue of emotional management and the ability to make good decisions. Those who know themselves well, they said, are honest with themselves. They learn from early mistakes. They know when to ask for help when they need it. They make good decisions about which roles to take on as humanitarian workers – what they are naturally suited to.

It seemed that many of the field staff had learned these valuable lessons the hard way – by hitting their limits, pushing past them, and then paying the price. However more than a few I interviewed also spoke about the role of counselors, coaches, and mentors had in guiding them and helping them understand themselves better.

"Self-awareness is what underlies knowing your own limits – emotional, physical, and managerial."

(Field staff)

4.7.b Intentional awareness and cultivation of resilience

Several people were of the opinion that good self-awareness, however, wasn't enough. They claimed that the most resilient humanitarian workers were those who also accepted and prioritized the need for self-care. Giving yourself permission to take care of yourself seemed to be key to this. As one person put it, *"Giving yourself permission to watch out for yourself and having safe strategies to do that doesn't come naturally – especially in this field that's so focused on caring for others. It's not as intuitive as you would think, but it is so important."* (Staff support)

"You need an intentional awareness and cultivation of resilience – not assuming you can do this work without consciously thinking about how you can do this work"

(Staff support)

4.8 Balance, and the ability to pace oneself and disconnect

The word balance and the phrases "pace yourself" and "this is a marathon, not a sprint" were each mentioned to me a remarkable number of times.

4.8.a Pacing and disconnection

For humanitarian workers this issue of pacing appeared to be intimately linked with a person's ability to disconnect at several different levels, including:

- ▪ *In the moment:* A number of people talked about the importance of being able to relax in the midst of pressure – to breathe deeply or use some other method of triggering the body's relaxation response.
- ▪ *In the short-term*: Being able to successfully disconnect from work at the end of the day was identified by 20% of interviewees identified as a top-three skill.
- ▪ *In the long-term*: The ability to pace yourself for the long haul appeared to be intimately linked to the issue of balance. Among other things, this meant having important sources of meaning other than work.

> *"Ability to disconnect and separate yourself from the work becomes very important. I guess in the real world this translates into work-life balance."*
>
> (Field staff)

4.8.b Balance

The word balance was mentioned in numerous contexts. Interviewees spoke of the need to balance work and life, their self-care strategies, their emotions, their ideals, and their expectations.

> *"I've seen so many people burn out because they can't balance work and life, and they can't balance their emotions about this work."*
>
> (Field staff)

4.9 Upon reflection

Colleagues at the Headington Institute who are currently developing and norming the Headington Institute Resilience Inventory for humanitarian workers[xiii] suggest that effectively building resilience requires attention to three key areas:

1. Actual and perceived social support
2. Self-efficacy with regard to:
   - o Problem solving and technical skills
   - o Emotional processing
   - o Physical condition
3. Sense of meaning and purpose

This interview data (and a wealth of other research) largely supports the importance of this trifecta. Interestingly, the importance of good physical health – and the basic building blocks of food, sleep, and exercise that are related to that – was only discussed by one

person that I interviewed. These things are so obvious that many forget to mention them. When people are under pressure a similar process can occur – they are so obvious that humanitarian workers can forget how important they actually are and neglect to attend to them.

The themes we have discussed in this chapter are a mixed bag. Some of them are most closely aligned with personality traits, others are more behaviors, attitudes, or skills. Some of these qualities probably promote resilience primarily through helping humanitarian workers do their work more effectively. Others may primarily come into play by helping humanitarian workers approach that work in ways that don't leave them burnt out and disillusioned within a year or two. So how can this mixed bag be translated into concrete actions that humanitarian workers can take to build resilience?

For reflection

1. What is missing from this discussion? What other skills and qualities are important to resilience?
2. Are there differences between the qualities that can foster resilience for people working in emergency relief versus those doing development postings? If so, what?
3. Using the themes listed above, and anything else you consider important, list ten practical ways that humanitarian workers can build their resilience.

5. Ten great ways humanitarian workers can build resilience

1. Regularly invest in **good relationships** (those that involve give and take and provide safety, encouragement, intimacy, and support) with friends, family members, and others (see 4.4)

2. Practice skills related to **problem-focused coping** such as (see 4.2):
   a. View change and stress as challenge rather than a threat;
   b. Challenge your own thinking about a problem – look for positives in the situation, seek additional solutions; and
   c. Develop realistic goals and take concrete steps to move towards them, even in ambiguous situations.

3. Learn new facts and skills related to your field to **increase your technical competence** in your work. Ask yourself regularly what you are learning from your experiences at work (see 4.2).

4. Practice your ability to **disconnect** (see 4.8):
   a. *In a moment:* Cultivate relaxation skills such as deep breathing that can trigger a relaxation response; and
   b. *At the end of the day:* Engage in activities that are enjoyable, relaxing, and removed from what you do at work.
   c. *Over time:* Take leave regularly. Take significant (1-3 months) breaks between intense assignments.

5. Work to **understand yourself** – your likes and dislikes, relative strengths and weaknesses, and your priorities and values (see 4.7).

6. Grapple with issues of **meaning and purpose**: Regularly ask and answer questions such as (see 4.3):
   a. Why did I get into this work in the first place? Why do I stay in it, and how am I changing?
   b. What do I believe matters most? What do I value?
   c. Where and how do I feel connected to something beyond myself?

7. Build in **additional sources of meaning** (things other than work that you care about or enjoy) into your life (see 4.3 and 4.8).

8. Make time for **emotional processing**: Practicing problem-focused coping doesn't mean emotions will disappear. Those who appear to be most resilient focus first on challenges, then make time to attend to emotions, before focusing outward again. Therefore find ways (by talking to others, writing, reflecting, counseling, etc) to attend to emotions even in the midst of a constant stream of challenges (see 4.6).

9. Seek out and attend to **positive emotions**: Pay attention to things that make you feel hopeful, happy, or amused (see 4.5).

10. Take care of your **physical health** by eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly (see 4.9).

For reflection
1. On a scale of 1 (very weak) to 10 (very strong) how strong are you in each of the areas listed above (and any other areas that you have listed)? 2. Pick two areas that you are not as strong in and write down two specific actions you could take to grow in each of those areas. 3. In light of these, what are ways that humanitarian organizations could help or encourage their staff to build resilience?

6. Challenges to resilience faced by middle managers in humanitarian organizations

Key question: *What are three to five of the most challenging demands faced by middle managers in humanitarian organizations?*

In comparison to the risk of being shot at or caught up in political violence, and the stress of living far away from home, witnessing extreme poverty, and grappling with tough moral dilemmas, it can be tempting to discount the impact of more "normal" work-related stressors upon humanitarian managers. This would be a mistake. John Fawcett puts it this way:

> *"The most stressful events in humanitarian work have to do with the organizational culture, management style, or operational objectives of an NGO or agency rather than external security risks or poor environmental factors. Aid workers, basically, have a pretty shrewd idea of what they are getting into when they enter this career, and dirty clothes, gun shots at night and lack of electricity do not surprise them. Inter- and intra-agency politics, inconsistent management styles, lack of team work and unclear or conflicting organizational objectives, however, combine to create a background of chronic stress and pressure that over time wears people down and can lead to burnout or even physical collapse"[xiv]*

The published research that has so far been conducted supports this assertion. Humanitarian workers tend to assign many causes of stress to organizational factors such as team relationships, management style, clarity of mission objectives, and agency structure.[xv] The table below sketches out the things that the humanitarian workers surveyed in these studies identified as their most enduring and significant sources of stress.

Job- and agency-structure	Relationship difficulties
Poor preparation and briefing.	Stressed and traumatized co-workers
Role ambiguity and accelerated responsibility	Difficulties with management and team functioning
Excessive workloads and long hours	Personality and cultural differences in communication
Tight deadlines and insufficient resources	Relationships with the local population
Short term contracts	
Bureaucracy	
Travel and communication difficulties	

Table 2. Common work-environment stressors associated with humanitarian work

Research also suggests that the cumulative effects of more minor chronic stressors (such as those related to social dislocation and the work environment) are better predictors of high stress levels than the occurrence of the occasional highly traumatic event.

6.1 Most frequently mentioned

Interviewees named 29 different significant challenges that they mentioned a total of 55 times. Those 29 items were grouped according to the 5 themes listed in the table below. (Instructions on how to obtain the complete data set can be found in the Appendix).

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Management of others	14
Being managed by others	12
Workload	10
Personal coping and self-care	10
Structure of job	9

Table 3: Challenging demands faced by middle managers in humanitarian organizations

Below are the two most frequently mentioned items associated with each of these themes. The number of different interviewees referencing them is included afterwards in brackets.

6.1.a Management of others

- **Lack of management experience** to do the job required (4).
- Having a **lot of responsibility without the commensurate authority** (3).

"Many organizations struggle with where to put power and how to have autonomy and accountability. However, many humanitarian organizations give middle managers a lot of responsibility, but not a great deal of authority. I oversee more than 100 people, but I cannot even recruit volunteers without filling in 15 pages of paperwork and having them vetted by our HR dept in the capital city."

(Field staff)

6.1.b Being managed by others

- Having to cope with **constant organization change and new demands** such as new systems of monitoring and reporting, new guidelines, and new organizational requirements (4).
- **Mismatch between headquarter office expectations and field realities and capabilities** (3). Examples of this included: requiring staff who cannot speak English well to use 15 page monitoring log-frames and lodge 40 page monitoring reports; demanding data that is impossible to get; and unrealistic time frames.
- Having a **poor, unskilled, unsupportive, direct manager** (3).

"Head office demands are often unrealistic. Sometimes managers spend more time dealing with HQ requests than they do thinking about delivering services."

(Field staff)

6.1.c Workload

- **Workload** (3).
- **Lack of necessary staff** to get the job done, thereby creating more work (3).

"Workload is undoubtedly the biggest threat to personal and organizational resilience. When your goal is reducing poverty you're never going to get through your to-do list."

(Staff support)

6.1.d Personal coping and self-care

- **Hardships of environment** such as excessive heat, sharing accommodation with coworkers, political corruption, slow or non-existent internet access (4).
- **Achieving a balanced lifestyle** (2).

"It's the hassle factor that gets to me. My computer won't start up properly, I can't get my work email, there's constant noise in the office, and things like that. That's what makes it hard to stay upbeat."

(Field staff)

6.1.e Structure of the job

- **Having to be adept in so many areas** (e.g., communications, security, HR, program quality, problem solving, etc) (3).
- **Wearing multiple hats** – holding two or three portfolios that are really two or three different jobs, without clarity about their roles and what is most important (2).

"If you're a field coordinator you are responsible for a lot of things – projects, security, risk levels, team communication, etc. It's a huge, multi-faceted skill set. In the normal world you need to be an expert in one or two areas, but not ten."

(Field staff)

For reflection

1. If you are a humanitarian worker, what are three of the most significant challenges *you* face in your role? How do resilience strengths help you meet these challenges?
2. How much control and influence do the CEO's and senior executives of humanitarian organizations have? If they wished to, could they ameliorate all of these challenges or are some of them simply inherent to humanitarian work?
3. What is the low-hanging fruit for change – are there strategic points of influence in terms of organizational structures and/or practices that would significantly reduce the stress of this work and that would be relatively easy to implement?

7. Organizational structures and practices that can strengthen resilience in managers in humanitarian organizations

Key questions: *What are some key organizational structures or practices that promote resilience in challenging environments?*

Interviewees named 41 organizational structures or practices that they believed could help build more resilient managers, and mentioned them a total of 93 times. These 41 items were grouped according to the 5 themes listed in the table below. (Instructions on how to obtain the complete data set can be found in the Appendix).

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Management practices	26
Training and support	24
Policies and benefits	19
Job/role structure	13
Recruitment and handover	10

Table 4: Organizational structures and practices that can strengthen resilience in managers of humanitarian organizations

Below are the most frequently mentioned items associated with each of these themes. The number of different interviewees referencing them is included afterwards in brackets.

7.1 Management practices

More suggestions were made regarding helpful management practices than any other category – 15 different items were mentioned a total of 27 times. Within this category a number of sub-themes were visible. The most frequently discussed were the following.

7.1.a The responsibilities of senior management

- Make the topic of resilience and wellbeing a **strategic priority** for senior management and part of the **organizational conversation** (5).
- Senior people need to be **role models** (3).

As in many organizations, the senior management team in a humanitarian organization receive a lot of the blame when things go wrong and they have (or, at least are perceived to have) the power to make things go right. Senior managers are ultimately responsible for things such as:

- How the organization's mission, vision, and values are operationalized (strategic priorities);
- The overall level of staffing;

- How roles further down the chain are structured;
- The rate at which the organization embraces new or expanded challenges and institutes change;
- The expectations placed upon field staff; and
- The tone of the operational culture – particularly with regards to how openly information is communicated from above, whether the work is acknowledged to be stressful, and whether wellbeing and resilience (and staff, for that matter) are openly valued.

Senior managers set the tone and direction of the entire organization. They are the people with the most power to make resilience a part of the organizational conversation and a strategic priority. On this front, two important points in relation to senior management practices are briefly discussed below.

Mission, vision, values, and purpose. Ensure senior managers are very clear on the organization's mission, vision, values, and purpose, that they use these to help guide decision making regarding priorities, and that they can communicate them to staff and donors.

Do not underestimate the power of clearly articulated values and a compelling purpose to generate passion and meaning among staff, nor how important this is to most humanitarian workers. For many expatriate humanitarian workers meaning and purpose functions as the "heart" of their resilience – the answer to the question "resilient to what end?"

Resilient humanitarian workers who lose touch with their sense of meaning and purpose in the work will either leave or begin to exhibit undesirable (from the organization's point of view) behaviors such as under-performing, espousing an unhealthy and destructive cynicism, or worse. A clearly articulated mission, vision, values, and purpose on a personal *and* an organizational level helps provide meaningful reasons to exercise resilience.

Understanding of field realities. Two ways senior managers can get a better understanding of field realities include:
- Spending time in the field during periods when their presence won't unduly inconvenience the field staff; and/or
- Holding round-table discussions with middle managers (ideally facilitated by someone who is external to the organization) regarding ways in which the organization is already good at helping build resilience managers, and ways in which they could improve.

7.1.b The importance of a culture of affirmation

- Institute a **performance management** that is encouragement and strengths-based instead of just focused on criticism and identifying mistakes (3).
- Have a well-thought-out **process for valuing and affirming staff** (3).

Given the importance of positive experiences and emotions in fostering resilience (see 4.5) it is not terribly surprising that humanitarian workers point to organizational cultures and performance management systems that openly value and affirm staff as key to building resilient managers. Encouraging, affirming, strength-focused interactions help individuals feel safe and positive. These, in turn, help encourage people to feel

motivated to meet challenges and to think more broadly and creatively in their problem-solving efforts.

7.1.c The need for regular, clear, communication with your manager

- ▪ Ensure that staff are able to have regular **professional supervision meetings** with their managers (3).

The need for staff to communicate regularly with their own manager about work priories, progress, and problems, is so basic it almost doesn't warrant mentioning – except that it's clearly not happening for at least some humanitarian workers. There are many things good managers do with and for their staff – but communicating with them regularly is perhaps the cornerstone practice and a necessary pre-requisite to any more sophisticated practices. It is a crucial component of clarifying expectations in both directions and relationship building.

Case study of good practice: Messages from above
"You can't assume that people are thinking about this or know what to do. Management must send a strong corporate message that the work is stressful and that wellbeing is important. One of the things that has been crucial to my own resilience in the last five years is that I have a great boss. We always try to meet (even if just by phone) at least once a week and we explicit, regular, conversations about my wellbeing. This is so important to me." (Staff support)

Additional resources
- ▪ Brucke, H. & Menges, J. (2010). The Acceleration Trap. *Harvard Business Review.* - ▪ www.peopleinaid.org for guidelines on: People Management for line managers, Performance management, Successful distance management

7.2 Training and support

7.2.a Training and skill building

- ▪ Provide **training and skill building** opportunities (7);
- ▪ **Train technical people** who are promoted to management with little or no management experience or education behind them **how to be better managers** (5).

"There are a whole lot of managers in this field that couldn't even tell you what it means to be a manager and what they should be doing for their direct reports."
(Staff support)

Training was the item mentioned more frequently than anything else when people were asked about organizational structures and practices that could help managers be more resilient. Specific ideas advanced related to training and skill building were:

- Provide leadership training
- Provide mentoring and coaching opportunities
- Provide intentional career planning

> *Field staff: "Fundamentally humanitarian organizations don't want longevity of staff – they talk like they do, but they don't. We middle managers are on one to two year contracts, sometimes less. We're commodities. I think they should hire people on longer-term contracts and then fire people when the organization needs to be downsized. The way the system is set up at the moment gives us little incentive to capacity build other staff and work ourselves out of a job. Why would we want to do that when the organization has no loyalty towards us?"*
>
> *Me: "What would demonstrating loyalty towards you look like?"*
>
> *Field staff: "Saying, 'We would like for you to be around for 5 to 10 years. We're going to hire you on a longer-term contract and invest in building some specific skills in a pre-planned and not a haphazard manner.' You know, I've been doing this work eight years now, with four different organizations, and I've had one training opportunity. Skill building does happen, but not in a systematic manner."*
> (Field staff)

There is a clear perceived need by field staff and staff support professionals to provide middle managers with basic management and leadership training – particularly those who were promoted to their roles with little or no background in management. Beyond this, a good understanding of the key qualities that promote resilience may help suggest topics of strategic importance for training.

Given the importance of good problem solving skills to resilience, for example, organizations may want to provide training on effective problem solving. Topics should include logical "left brain" methods, creative "right brain" methods, and helpful processes including: group brainstorming, perspective widening, and thought challenges. Interestingly, Steinhardt found that problem-solving resiliency training at work helped people handle problems in their personal lives as well, feeding into a positive upward spiral of resilience.

Case study of good practice: How training is helping

"Stress management and resilience training is helping more than I thought it would. We've all been drilled as to the key elements to resiliency and we remind each other now – even harass each other – to remember to take care of ourselves. The fact that that we have a common language and a common understanding that has started to infuse across the organization is helping create a more enabling environment when it comes to self-care."

(Field staff)

7.2.b Support services

- Provide *psychological support* (6).

Right behind training, the second-most frequently cited item was the suggestion that humanitarian organizations provide psychological support for their staff. It was particularly interesting that four of the six people who mentioned this were field staff, not staff-care professionals.

> *"People who I respect who have stayed in this industry have usually made use of the psychologist on staff and will actually tell you they have. So one differentiating factor with regards to resilience is this recognition that mental health is important."*

(Field staff)

Organizations who are interested in exploring the possibility of providing psychological support services have a number of models to consider. Some of the larger organizations hire full-time staff care professionals who focus mainly on counseling and post-trauma care. Others hire staff-support professionals whose role is to focus more broadly and proactively on staff wellbeing rather than primarily responding to critical incidents. Still others outsource staff care completely – hiring external consultants to provide training and counseling.

There are pros and cons to all of these models. However a model that provides internal staff care professionals who focus on general staff wellbeing and uses external staff care specialists to provide confidential counseling and acute trauma care has several important advantages, including:

- Having in-house resources focused primarily on critical incidents prioritizes those who are acutely impacted by traumatic events at the expense of the broader staff population; and
- Managers are often more willing to attend counseling (and much more open) when they are convinced that there's no chance of specific information they share during sessions filtering back to the upper management of their organization.

Additional resources

- The case for coaching: Investing in leadership www.peopleinaid.org/coaching
- Humanitarian Capacity Building Program (2010). *Objective 1: Final report.* Available from **www.thecbha.org** See sections on Leadership in humanitarian response.
- Antares Foundation (2006). *Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers Guidelines for Good Practice.*
- The Headington Institute website www.headington-institute.org.
- Building Trust in Diverse Teams
  www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/downloads/building_trust_in_diverse_teams.pdf
- The Good Enough Guide http://www.ecbproject.org/geg
- Mentoring – developing effective organizational schemes
  www.peopleinaid.org/publications/MentoringDownload.aspx

7.3 Policies and benefits

More than one person discussed the role of benefits and wellbeing policies in promoting resilience – people mentioned everything from medical insurance, to pay, to calling allowances. Two types of benefits, however, were mentioned more frequently than others. These were:

- **R&R and vacation policies** (and managers that enabled – sometimes forced – staff to take breaks) (5); and
- Providing **amenities** such as cable TV, air conditioning, and exercise equipment **at the team houses** in situations of shared accommodation (3).

"When you're stressed you don't always know when you need to take a break. This is the first time I've gone without R&R and now I wish I hadn't. Resilience is slipping as I get more tired and stressed."

(Field staff)

Case studies of good practice: The importance of time away

"Something that's really helped me has been taking significant breaks – particularly between assignments. It happened by accident, really. For the first decade of my career I tried to do one or two years primarily in the field, and then rotating back to a home office for a little while. Almost every time I made this transition I ended up taking a one to three month break and in retrospect this was really good for me as it gave me time to rest and process before the next new stage. Most of those I know that have burned out and left didn't do this."

(Field staff)

"Between missions I always take two to three months off. I go home and I spend three months remembering what it's like to be a Canadian. That has all sorts of spillover benefits. It means that I still define North America as the real world and the NGO world as the NGO world, and it also lets me stay in touch with friends. I have good friend networks back home in Canada and I have made good efforts to stay connected with them."

(Field staff)

Additional resources

- www.peopleinaid.org for policy guidelines on R&R, reward benchmarking and leave.

7.4 Job and Role Structure

Mentioned more frequently than anything else in this category was:

- Jobs need to be structured in ways that mean they are **realistic** for someone to accomplish them (4);
- **Hire enough staff** to do the work (3);
- Make roles **accompanied postings** (2); and
- Offer **longer-term contracts** (2).

> *"You have to structure jobs in ways that are doable – the objective of the role has to be obtainable. This connects to both the outcome expectations and the resources that are applied to that."*
>
> (Support staff)

Structuring jobs in ways that are doable is one of those things that sounds both completely obvious and rather impossible when it comes to humanitarian work.

After massive disasters and in situations of widespread suffering the assistance needed can seem endless, precisely because it *is* endless. This does not relieve humanitarian organizations from their responsibilities to set achievable objectives and structure roles in ways that make them sustainable if they want to promote resilience among their staff. Along these lines, some basic considerations regarding role structure are:

- Research suggests that the ability to control or influence what you do is crucial to resilience.[xvi] Balance the level of responsibility by granting staff commensurate authority. It is counterproductive to hire and train good problem solvers, and to value responsivity and adaptability in the face of disaster, without empowering staff to make meaningful and independent decisions.
- Make it as clear as possible, however, where those lines of authority lie. Research suggests that organizations who succeed in building resilience often imbue their staff with freedom within a very clear framework of rules.
- Ensure staff do not directly supervise more than ten direct reports. If this means a slower growth rate for the organization, so be it. This will also help check the rate of organizational change.

> *"The scope of the role should be structured so that it's realistic for someone to accomplish. It's hard, because all of these jobs have impossible elements, but if you're going to have one-year contracts you should recalibrate your expectations according to what people can accomplish in one year… Right now I have 22 direct reports. If a general rule of thumb is that each direct report should take around 5% of your time, that means I'm supposed to be spending 110% of my time just managing my direct reports and managing direct reports is 1/5th of my job description."*
>
> (Field staff)

> **Food for thought: Serious questions about recruitment and role design**
>
> "I have this strong view that organizations select people who by nature are not resilient. The type of people who are attracted to humanitarian response generally fall into one of two categories. They are either between 20-30, single and unaccompanied, and relatively inexperienced (this is often their first serious professional job), or they are older people (above 50) whose relationships are non-existent or floundering or who've been surfing their whole life and don't know how to settle down and stand still at all.
>
> The vast majority of people fall into those two categories, but when you look at the commercial work force the best experienced and the strongest performers are those we're not targeting – the 30-50 year olds. Organizations typically don't make the effort to offer things that may make the job attractive to these more experienced high-performers in the 30-50 range. I think this calls into question the way this entire field functions in terms of posting design and recruitment.
>
> Often the roles are not accompanied, which doesn't always make sense, and short-term contracts such as those that are typically offered for emergency work are not attractive to people with the best skill sets. Agencies always say that this is to do with funding, but then you look at a response like Haiti and Pakistan you *know* they're going to go for longer than a year. Three-month contracts demonstrate no commitment at all from the agency to the staff member when the staffer is expected to give up a huge amount to sign that contract.
>
> There is also a tendency to see the humanitarian sector as totally separate from the rest of the professional world and create jobs and pay scales accordingly. In this industry you can have project managers for health, education, and infrastructure and pay them all the same. But in the commercial world there are very different pay-scales for nurses, teachers, and engineers. This means humanitarian organizations can attract more good teachers than doctors and engineers."
>
> (Field staff)

> **Additional resources**
>
> ▪ www.peopleinaid.org for guidance on recruitment and selection, and also www.peoplinaid.net for the managing people wiki

7.5 Recruitment, briefing and handover

▪ **Improve recruitment** (more clearly identify skills needed, write clear job descriptions, correctly match people and jobs, discuss resilience and wellbeing during the hiring process) (5); and

▪ Provide thorough **briefing** before assignments and good **transition handover** (4).

There was broad consensus on the important role that recruitment makes in fostering resilience in managers (both from the point of view of keeping existing managers well resourced with additional staff, and recruiting new managers who are well suited to the work). A number of people specifically mentioned the important role that information

transfer in pre-assignment briefings and handover sessions has in helping staff thrive in their roles.

Recruitment is an unusual point of influence in the employee life cycle. Spending time and effort ensuring job person-job fit, clear communication and thorough briefings during this period will not be wasted. Organizations who hire those who are a good fit for the job and are naturally resilient are way ahead of the curve when it comes to building resilient managers. A few resilience-building recruitment practices to consider include:

- Have a clear, focused, job description;
- Look for ways to clarify the employees and organization's expectations;
- Include discussions and assessment of personal wellbeing, resilience, and stress management at some point during the hiring/orientation process in addition to technical competencies;
- Offer longer-term contracts; and
- Offer accompanied positions, and demonstrate that you value an employee's family.

"A higher manager should help people lower down by giving them a landscape. Managers should help their direct reports by going through the seasonal calendar with them, saying, "here's what's about to hit you in different months, here's how I set up my inbox, and manage my calendar, etc. You don't have to do it this way, but here's one option." In an emergency, managers should brief incoming staff on key players on the ground and key things they should be aware of internally. Upper managers are relatively good at explaining to their subordinates the challenges they [the managers] are facing, but there's very little, if any, attention focused on what challenges those on the levels below them can expect to face."

(Field staff)

Case study of good practice

"I have a 5 year contract. That's almost unheard of in this industry, but I negotiated for it when I accepted the position. I really think longer-term contracts are necessary even for emergency work. I think of firefighters as a model – they're not out fighting fires all the time, but in between they're doing a lot of public education. Humanitarian workers could be the same. Those on longer-term contracts can do emergency work sometimes and disaster and risk reduction work in between. I think it would help them stay more resilient as well as build loyalty to the organization and help improve program quality. In my own office the people on one-year contracts tend to show the least loyalty to the organization. There's one person here on a permanent contract and his loyalty and the quality of his work is outstanding."

(Field staff)

Additional resources

- www.peopleinaid.org Induction, briefing, and handover guidelines (PIA publication)

Food for thought: If you could make one recommendation to upper management in your organization to increase thriving in your role, what would it be?

The responses of the field staff (and the staff support professionals who had worked in the field) to the question above serve to underline some of the key points we've discussed in this chapter.

Focus the organization's mission and goals: "Try to plan better and not be quite so reactive as an organization. I would recommend to upper management to seek more ways to say no to external expectations upon the agency from various funding bodies – to accept that we won't go meet every need and evaluate every indicator – and to focus on the organization's mission and core strengths."

Listen to me, understand me: "Spend time in the field to understand what we are facing, that way you can be my partner in changing what needs to be changed."

Quit changing systems all the time: "Stop changing the system every year! Everything is changing faster and faster – new reports and systems are constantly coming into play and it's impossible to keep up. So send all your strategy people to get a PhD for three years and give us a bit of a break!"

Let me know you want to keep me around: "Make this position a more permanent staffing position and give me a longer term contract."

Meet with me: "I want regular, formalized, progress reviews and meetings with my manager. Good communication is so important to understanding and clarifying expectations in both directions."

Help me manage my workload and prioritize: "Please do something about workload. Take some stuff off my plates. Help me by saying no to something."

Hire me some more help: "Hire more staff. We need a better, stronger, larger management structure and team. This would reduce the workload and allow us not to burn out."

Have good, clear, communication protocols: "Better manage the organizational interference and limit upper management tourism to the field during emergencies. There is too much uncontrolled communication that breeds confusion and wastes huge amounts of time. This is linked to a lack of trust in the team to do their job."

For reflection

1. To what extent can organizational structures and practices *really* help build individual resilience? To what extent is it the organization's responsibility to attempt to do so?
2. Think about the strategic points of influence for change that you identified at the end of the last chapter. What other structures or practices to promote resilience in managers could you add to that list?
3. What three things do you think it is most important that your own organization focus on in terms of building resilient managers?

8. Ten great ways organizations can help build resilient managers

Faced with such a complex system as an entire organization it can be difficult to know where to start in terms of building resilience. What does this data, and other research, suggest are key points of influence?

1. Make staff resilience and wellbeing a **strategic priority for senior management** and a regular **part of the organizational discourse** and culture (see 6.1.b and 7.1.a).

2. **Identify your organization's mission, vision, core values, strengths, and resources** (see 7.1.a). Use this clarity and:
   a. Communicate the organizations mission, vision, and values clearly and repeatedly to staff.
   b. Plan further ahead.
   c. Say no to opportunities too far afield from your core mission or organizational strengths, or when taking on those opportunities would unduly burden staff.

3. **Structure jobs** so that the scope is realistic and the position objectives are (at least largely) achievable. When this is impossible – such as in some emergency situations – send a strong corporate message to staff that you expect them to limit their working hours and consciously prioritize pacing and self-care, then ensure they take time off after the first urgency of the response has passed (see 7.4). Also:
   a. Hire enough staff to ease unnecessary burdens on existing staff.
   b. Ensure that staff are not be supervising more people than they can meet with regularly (at least once every two weeks).
   c. Ensure that staff meet (even if remotely) with their own managers at least once every two weeks (see 7.1.c).

4. **View change with caution.** This may sound counter-intuitive given that adaptability is one of the hallmarks of resilience, but constant organizational change is stressful (see 6.1.b and 7.6). Remember that:
   a. New is not always better.
   b. More is not always good.
   c. People will cope better if they are told *why* things are happening.
   d. If you are adding requirements (such as new indicators to monitor or reports to complete) something else probably needs to go.

5. **Prioritize good recruitment procedures:** Recruitment is an unusual point of influence in the employee life cycle. Spending time and effort ensuring job person-job fit, clear communication and thorough briefings during this period will not be wasted (see 7.5).

6. Invest in developing the skills and capabilities of your existing managers by providing **training and skill building** opportunities. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including workshops, mentoring, coaching, etc (see 7.2.a). Topics that may be particularly useful to focus on include:

a. Management and leadership skills, particularly for those with little experience or education in management (see 6.1.a)
b. Effective problem solving – structures processes to challenge thinking regarding challenges, solicit input, and identify solutions and resources (see 4.2)
c. Job-related technical skills (4.2)
d. Confrontation and conflict management (see 4.4)
e. Topics that foster self-awareness – including personality, emotional competence, values, purpose, motivations, and self-care (see 4.7).
f. Career planning (see 7.2.a)

7. **Make clear communication and good information transfer a priority** (see 7.5). This includes:
   a. Offer orientations and pre-assignment briefings.
   b. Arrange for adequate handover time.
   c. Articulate clear communication channels for information flow to reduce confusion and time wastage.
   d. Those in headquarters seeking to understand the challenges of those on the field in an ongoing and proactive manner so that they can direct them to existing resources

8. Seek ways to send **positive messages** to staff (see 4.5 and 7.1.b) including:
   a. Institute a performance management that is encouragement and strengths-based instead of just focused on criticism and identifying mistakes.
   b. Have a well thought-out process for valuing and affirming staff.

9. Address environmental hardships by **improving living and working conditions** when possible (see 6.1.d and 7.3). This can include:
   a. Provide decent computers for staff.
   b. Air condition offices.
   c. If staff are staying in teamhouses, ensure everyone has their own bedroom.
   d. Provide amenities such as high speed internet, mosquito nets, cable TV, exercise equipment, and someone to cook and clean in teamhouses.
   e. If staff are working and living remotely from family, provide a calling allowance and a "go-home" travel allowance that will facilitate them staying well connected with those closest to them.

10. Make **psychological support** available – preferably by qualified professional external to the organization and therefore disconnected from an employee's managers (see 7.2.b).

For reflection

1. On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good), rate how well your organization does in each of the areas listed above (and any other areas that you consider important).
2. Pick two areas that the organization is strong in and identify specific ways that they help managers build resilience. During the next month, look for ways to express appreciation about these things to your manager, HR, or senior executives in your organization.
3. Pick two areas that the organization is not as strong in and identify specific ways that the organization could change to help build resilient managers. How could you advocate for change?

9. Ten resilience-building basics when managing others

Given how frequently the need for improved management skills surfaced during the interviews, here are a look at ten ways managers can help build the resilience of those that they are supervising and help them thrive in their roles.

1. **Listen to staff** and **seek to understand the challenges** they are facing. This will help you calibrate your expectations and demands.
2. **Meet regularly** with your direct reports
3. Using **questions**, assist your direct reports in **problem solving** regarding some of their challenges.
4. Help your direct reports identify their **strategic priorities**.
5. Look for ways to **praise and encourage** staff.
6. Articulate that resilience and staff **wellbeing as a priority**. Be able to describe how you are investing in your own resilience and point to ways that you are **modeling** resilience skills. **Ask** staff about ways that they are taking care of themselves and investing in their own resilience.
7. Enable and encourage staff to take their **leave and R&R**.
8. Send a clear message that you **value your staff's relationships** with family and friends. Look for ways to include family members in work-related social events. Try hard to enable staff to take leave for events such as such as weddings, funerals, births, graduations, etc.
9. Encourage your direct reports to **limit their working hours** to reasonable limits (preferably fewer than 50 a week). In emergency situations where this is not possible, ensure that staff take some time off after the first phase of the emergency has passed.
10. **Communicate clearly with your own managers** about the challenges that you and those you are supervising are facing. This will help calibrate *their* expectations and demands.

For reflection

1. Think of the best manager you've ever had. What are three things they did that made them such an effective manager? How do you emulate them in your own management style?
2. What would you add to this list?
3. As a manger, which of the list above do you find relatively easy? Which do you find most challenging?

10. Further reading and other resources

10.1 Recommended reading

10.1.a Staff care codes and standards

Antares Foundation (2006). *Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers Guidelines for Good Practice* [Available at: www.antaresfoundation.org]

Headington Institute (2006). *Minimum Operating Standards for the psychosocial support of relief and development personnel* [Available at: www.headington-insitute.org].

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2007) *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.* Geneva: IASC [Available at: www.who.int/hac/network/interagency/news/mental_health_guidelines/en]

People In Aid (2003) *Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel.* People In Aid, London, UK [Available at: www.peopleinaid.org]

Porter, B. & Emmens, B. (2009). *Approaches to staff care in international NGOs.* People in Aid [Available at: www.peopleinaid.org]

10.1.b Building personal and organizational resilience

Inter-Agency Working Group on Emergency Capacity Building (2007). *Building Trust in Diverse Teams: Scoping Study Report.* Castleton Partners/TCO International Diversity Management

Fawcett, J. (Ed) (2003) *Stress and Trauma Handbook: Strategies for flourishing in demanding environments.* World Vision**.**

McKay, L. (2010). *Spirituality and humanitarian work: Maintaining your vitality.* Headington Institute. [Available at: www.headington-insitute.org]. Additional online training modules include:
- Understanding and coping with traumatic stress
- Coping with travel and re-entry stress
- Family matters: Self-care for family members of humanitarian workers
- Trauma and critical incident care
- Understanding and addressing vicarious trauma

Swords, S. & Emmens, B. (Ed.) 2007. *Behaviours which lead to effective performance in Humanitarian Response: A review of the use and effectiveness of competency frameworks within the Humanitarian Sector.* People In Aid.

10.2 Organizations that offer resilience training, coaching, or counseling to humanitarian workers:

1. Antares: www.antaresfoundation.org (Holland)

2. Centre for Humanitarian Psychology: http://humanitarian-psy.org (Switzerland)
3. Headington Institute: www.headington-institute.org (USA)
4. Humanitrain: www.humanitrain.com (France).
5. Integration Training: The Achilles Initiative
http://integrationtraining.co.uk/achilles.html (UK)
6. InterHealth: www.interhealth.org.uk (UK)
7. Konterra Group: www.konterragroup.net (USA)
8. People In Aid: www.peopleinaid.org
9. Satori Worldwide: www.satoriworldwide.com (Indonesia)
10. The Management Center: www.managementcentre.co.uk (UK)
11. The Mandala Foundation: www.mandalafoundation.org.au (Australia)

Appendices

1. Interview Questions

1. What are some key personal qualities (behaviors, beliefs, or attitudes) that promote resilience in managers in challenging environments?
   a. What characteristics have you seen in humanitarian workers you would consider resilient?
   b. In your opinion, what are the *three most important* "resilience skills" for humanitarian managers?
2. What are some key organizational structures or practices that promote resilience in challenging environments?
   a. What are some ways that organizations could help increase the resilience of their managers?
3. Do you think there are differences between the qualities that can help make someone resilient in the short term versus resilient across time?
   a. When you look at people who've stayed in the industry long term (20 years) what characteristics do they have?
4. What are 3-5 of the most challenging demands faced by middle managers in humanitarian organizations? (Please think broadly. Consider the following: job responsibilities; management; organizational constraints; environmental context; communication challenges; relationships; and physical and psychological health.)
5. What things or resources have helped you maintain resilience?
6. If you could make one recommendation to upper management in your organization to increase thriving in your role, what would it be?
7. The International Consortium of Organizational Resilience defines organizational resilience as: *The ability to achieve an organization's core objectives in the face of adversity.*
   a. What are your thoughts on "organizational resilience"? Does this concept have any value?
   b. If so, what makes a humanitarian organization resilient?
8. Most of the work on the field is done by national staff. In the situations you've worked in, how could the organization have best increased *their* resilience?

2. Interviewees

Name	Title	Organization	Country of residence
Tanya Arroba	Occupational Psychologist	Independent consultant	UK
Rick Augsburger	Managing Director	The KonTerra Group	USA
Murray Burt	Programme Manager (WASH Emergencies)	Tearfund	Kenya
Lynne Cripe	Director, Employee Engagement, Support and Communications	CARE	USA
John Fawcett	Well Being Consultant	Independent consultant	New Zealand
Sarah Karimbhoy	Country Director	Intermon OXFAM	Southern Sudan
Sian Kelly	Well being consultant	Save the Children	UK
Kevin Mackey	HEA Program Design Unit Manager	World Vision International	Kenya
Renee Martyna	Co-Creator	Satori Worldwide	Indonesia
Judy Mitchell	Special Representative International NGO Governance	OXFAM Australia	Australia
Teresa Murray	Country Director	MSF	Central African Republic
Laurie Pearlman	Senior Psychologist	Headington Institute	USA
Aleema Shivji	Rapid Response Team Head of Mission	Handicap International	Pakistan
Chris Webster	Global Rapid Response Team	World Vision International	UK
Michael Wolfe	Operations Team Leader	World Vision International	Laos

3. Data Analysis

The interview data was systematically analyzed by:

- Transcribing all the different comments that were made in response to each question, and then counted the number of times an individual *item* was mentioned by different people. For example, if three people talked about being solution-driven and action-oriented as essential to resilience, that item was coded 3.
- Grouping items into broader *themes* (e.g., I judged that being solution driven and action oriented was primarily related to the broader theme of problem solving) and summed the total number of times that items related to each theme were mentioned.

This process was less scientific than intuitive. Another author may well have grouped some of these items differently. Its purpose was simply to provide a couple of different windows through which to examine the great wealth of interview data (more than 25,000 words) that was generated during this process.

4. Interview Data

If you would like to review the full data set you can email a request for the data file to info@peopleinaid.org.

5. References

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[xi] Ibid vi, p.48.

[xii] Frederickson, B., Loasada, M. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist, 678-686.*

[xiii] See the Headington Institute website: www.headington-institute.org

[xiv] Fawcett, J. (2003). *Stress and trauma handbook: Strategies for flourishing in demanding environments*, Monrovia, CA: World Vision International, p.6.

[xv] Eriksson, C. B., Bjorck, J., & Abernethy, A. (2003). Occupational stress, trauma and adjustment in expatriate humanitarian aid workers. In John Fawcett (Ed.), *Stress and trauma handbook: Strategies for flourishing in demanding environments* (pp. 68-100). Monrovia, CA: World Vision International; Fawcett, J. (2003). *Stress and trauma handbook: Strategies for flourishing in demanding environments.* Monrovia, CA: World Vision International.

[xvi] Ibid, iv.