CHOPS Inventory
Supporting International and Humanitarian Workers

This exercise explores ten "wolves"—which we refer to as stressors—that international and humanitarian workers frequently encounter. The acronym "CHOPS" helps to identify and deal with these stress-producing "wolves". Note that each stressor can be both a source of stress and/or a symptom of stress. The items in *green italics* can be especially relevant for Majority World workers.

Directions

1. Using a separate piece of paper, write down some of the stressors that you have experienced over the past several months. Refer to the 10 stressors and some of the examples mentioned below. Put these under a column labelled **"Struggles."**

2. In a second column, **"Successes"**, list some of the helpful ways you have dealt with stress during the last several months.

3. Next, under a **"Strategies"** column, list ideas for better managing stress in the future.

4. You may also want to do the same with or for some important people in your life, such as individuals and groups found at the bottom of this page. Discuss your responses with a close friend

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Struggles _____ Successes _____ Strategies

Cultural (getting needs met in unfamiliar ways: language learning, culture shock, reentry) *feeling rejected, overlooked, or undervalued by the dominant international/humanitarian work culture; gender bias, prejudice, lack of opportunity/freedom*

Crises (potentially traumatic events: natural disasters, wars, accidents, political instability) *protracted armed conflicts and physical threats, one's own community and country affected*

Historical (unresolved past areas of personal and social struggle: family of origin issues, personal weaknesses) *lack of educational, health, economic opportunities (i.e. social determinants of health*

Human (relationships: with family members, colleagues, nationals: raising children, couple conflict, struggles with team members, social opposition) *caring for ageing parents, few school options, human rights violations, persecution, discrimination, stigma*

Occupational (job-specific challenges and pressures: work load, travel schedule, exposure to people with problems, job satisfaction, more training, government "red tape") *job insecurity, short-term contracts, international/humanitarian work not understood or respected*

Organisational (governance and management: incongruence between one's background and the organisational ethos, policies, work style, expectations; incompetence, corruption, abusive leadership, dysfunction, disability practices) *legal protection, training*

Physical (overall health and factors that affect it: nutrition, climate, illness, ageing, environment) no *medical resources/insurance and inadequate nutritional options, injuries/road traffic accidents*

Psychological (overall emotional stability and self-esteem: loneliness, frustration, depression, unwanted habits, developmental issues/stage of life issues) *cumulative impact of "adverse life events"*

Support (resources to sustain one's work: finances, housing, clerical/technical help, donor contact) minimum *pay and financial support, finances used for survival and not just for one's work*

Spiritual (God and/or transcendent values: meaning, evil, inner growth, practices/disciplines) *lack of trust/respect for spiritual leaders*

Answers apply to (circle): self, spouse, child, friend, department, team, company, other
(an earlier version is available in Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, German, Spanish, and Portuguese; ©2012 Dr. Kelly O'Donnell and Dr. Michèle Lewis O'Donnell)