Coping and Resilience: People's innovative solutions

Venkat Pulla[1], Charles Sturt University

vpulla@csu.edu.au

Abstract

This Paper introduces the intertwined concepts of coping and resilience, with their varied dimensions. Beginning with brief stories that show how individuals, groups, communities and nations display both coping and resilience every day, the analysis shifts to the meaning of every day stress and adversity that have become inevitable parts of daily jigsaw puzzle of life. The paper also presents a bird's eye view of the meaning of every day stress and adversity that has become inevitable parts of our daily life and brings in strengths perspective into resiliency and finally signals the efficacy of an inner strengths approach.

---

[1] Dr Venkat Pulla, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2678 Australia. vpulla@csu.edu.au; dr.venkat.pulla@gmail.com

Hearing real-life tales of resilience is not only inspiring, it can help us gain perspective as we face our own obstacles and challenges in life. To qualify my statement above, following is a reel of stories from people worldwide who have survived -- and thrived -- through trying times. Some of us would have heard how the 33 miners trapped under the earth in Copiago, Chile, communicated with their families through tiny passages that rescuers were able to drill into the mine. The miners had been trapped for 17 days, living off limited reserves in one of the mine's emergency shelters, the nine-inch holes just big enough to pass messages, food, water and basic supplies. (The Huffington Post, 2011).
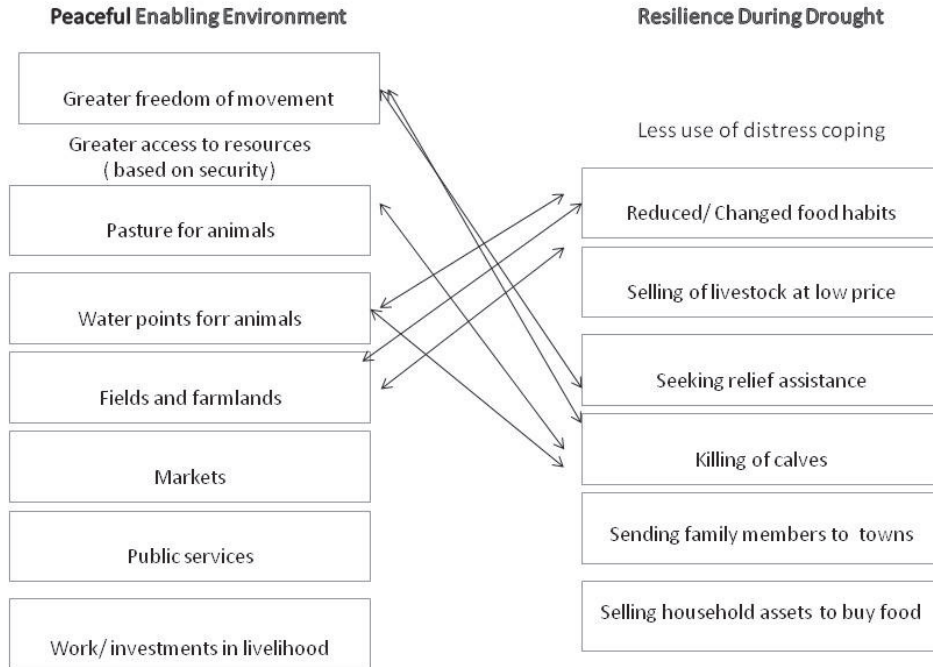
Stories and stories

Hurricane Katrina:

Five years after the levees broke during hurricane Katrina, the effect of the storm was still evident throughout New Orleans: schools are struggling, there is still remnants of trash and debris, houses are abandoned, and many live in poverty. Despite, everything the spirit of New Orleans, one of the most unique and lively cities in America lives on. The residents were applauded for their resilience by the president Obama when he visited them for their five-year anniversary of Katrina (The Huffington Post, 2011).

Ethiopia:

When someone mentions Ethiopia, an image conjures in most minds of famine with graphic images of starving children. Beyond the vivid World Vision documentaries that we see on television shows, there is another side - a pastoral society that suffers, but one which also survives droughts. The Adaptive Strategies employed to minimize risks in times of drought, and are reversible and not thought to be detrimental to their abilities to recover once the drought ends (Alinovi, et al, 2010). These include temporary migration, livelihoods diversification, and use of social support systems. Of course there are also some distressful coping mechanisms that these pastoralists use as a last resort, that are considered irreversible, and from which it is difficult for them to recover from after the drought (Maxwell and Caldwell, 2008). These included: reduced and changed food consumption; slaughtering livestock or selling them at distress prices; and depletion of other productive assets. Certainly we would consider them more resilient if they employed mainly adaptive and few distressful coping mechanisms during drought. In a recent study undertaken by Mercy Corps (2012) a number of associations were found between access and use of distressful coping mechanisms. The following diagram adapted from the Mercy Corps (2012) study clearly illustrates these relationships.

Figure 1: Associations found between access to resources and use of distressful coping mechanisms

Peaceful Enabling Environment

- Greater freedom of movement

Greater access to resources
(based on security)

- Pasture for animals
- Water points forr animals
- Fields and farmlands
- Markets
- Public services
- Work/ investments in livelihood

Resilience During Drought

Less use of distress coping

- Reduced/ Changed food habits
- Selling of livestock at low price
- Seeking relief assistance
- Killing of calves
- Sending family members to towns
- Selling household assets to buy food

[The Diagram is adapted from *Conflict to Coping* (Mercy Corps, 2012)]

Bangladesh:

More than a third of the world's people live within 62 miles of a shoreline. A recent study of 136 port cities found that those with the largest threatened populations will be in developing countries, especially those in Asia. Worldwide, the two cities that will have the greatest proportional increase in people exposed to climate extremes by 2070 are both in Bangladesh: Dhaka and Chittagong, with Khulna close behind. Though some parts of the delta region may keep pace with rising sea levels (thanks to river sediment that builds up coastal land), other areas will likely be submerged. But Bangladeshis don't have to wait decades for a preview of a future transformed by rising seas. From their vantage point on the Bay of Bengal, they are already facing what it's like to live in an overpopulated and climate-changed world. They've watched sea levels rise, salinity infect their coastal aquifers, river flooding become more destructive and cyclones batter their coast with increasing intensity—all changes associated with disruptions in the global climate.

"On May 25, 2009, the people of Munshiganj, a village of 35,000 on the southwest coast, got a glimpse of what to expect from a multi-foot rise in sea level. That morning a cyclone, called Aila was lurking offshore, and its 70-mile-an-hour winds sent a storm surge racing silently toward shore, where the villagers, unsuspecting, were busy tending their rice fields and repairing their

nets. Shortly after ten o'clock Nasir Uddin, a 40-year-old fisherman, noticed that the tidal river next to the village was rising "much faster than normal" toward high tide. He looked back just in time to see a wall of brown water start pouring over one of the six-foot earthen dikes that protect the village—its last line of defence against the sea. Within seconds water was surging through his house, sucking away the mud walls and everything else. His three young daughters jumped onto the kitchen table, screaming as cold salt water swirled around their ankles, then up to their knees. "I was sure we were dead," he told me months later, standing in shin-deep mud next to a pond full of stagnant green water the colour of antifreeze. "But God had other plans." As if by a miracle, an empty fishing boat swept past, and Nasir grabbed it and hoisted his daughters inside. A few minutes later the boat capsized, but the family managed to hang on as it was tossed by waves. The water finally subsided, leaving hundreds of people dead along the southwest coast and thousands homeless. Nasir and most of his neighbours in Munshiganj decided to hunker down and rebuild, but thousands of others set out to start a new life in inland cities such as Khulna and Dhaka"(Belt, 2011).

Thousands of people arrive in Dhaka each day, fleeing river flooding in the north and cyclones in the south. Many of them end up living in the densely populated slum of Korail. And with hundreds of thousands of such migrants already, Dhaka is in no shape to take in new residents. It's already struggling to provide the most basic services and infrastructure. The people of Bangladesh have much to teach us about how a crowded planet can best adapt to rising sea levels. For them, that future is now (Belt, 2011).

Uganda:

Bwera, a Ugandan city on the banks of the Rubirihiya River separates the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda, east of the Beni region. Ugandans and Congolese sell from the same stalls. They all discuss products and prices in "Kinande", their shared mother tongue but carry transactions in shillings on the Ugandan side, and in francs on the Congolese one. The same merchants do their market rounds on both sides of the border. Truck drivers with bananas and palm oil from the Congo cross the border and unload their merchandise in Uganda, but on the other side of the border, they show Ugandan ID papers. The same goes for the Ugandan drivers who enter the Congo through Kasindi. When they go through customs loaded with beer, bags of grey cement, corn starch and other products, they pull out Congolese ID, which exempts them from certain taxes. "I can't tell the difference between a Ugandan and a Congolese when I arrive at the barrier," says an embarrassed agent from Kinshasa who works at the border post ((Kokonyange & Syfia International, 2012). My question is: does it matter to differentiate who is Ugandan and who is Congolese in this context? This is a fundamental example of coping and resilience.

The Individual Stories

Over the years I have heard the two terms, coping and resilience, resonate quite clearly through various conversations and brave stories that many people have told me. There was something heroic about some of them, while others were plain and simple. Their strategies for mere survival recognise an essential will to thrive and others recognised a will to flourish and move ahead. Tewodros Fekadu, a friend of mine, an artist, community worker and a writer, now lives on the Gold Coast in Australia. Teddy, as he is fondly called, recounted the challenges and triumphs of surviving a poverty-stricken childhood in the streets of Ethiopia. With the backdrop of the civil war he spent years as an orphan, struggling with his loneliness - his only companion - and the need for love. His life brought him as a refugee to Japan for another ten years until he moved as a more permanent refugee to Australia. His journey spanned five countries and three continents, with sometimes meaningless and sometimes meaningful contact with the Catholic Church, the police, the law and life in Japanese detention centres. His story is oneof family love - unacknowledged by his wealthy father and abandoned by his desperate, poor mother. It is also a story of one man's pride, his defiance and triumph, beautifully presented in a book called, *No One's Son* (Fekadu, 2012).

Christa Brelsford lost her right leg when she was caught under falling debris during the earthquake in Haiti in January. She and her brother were in Port-au-Prince doing volunteer work. Now, with the help of a prosthetic leg, she continues to pursue her passion for rock climbing and has seen the top of steep cliffs all over New Mexico. Unstoppable, Brelsford hopes to run a half-marathon in December, and would like to return to Haiti to continue helping people (Kong, 2010).

John Dommett told me his story of how epilepsy and a misdiagnosis of intellectual disability escalated very quickly into the loss of his social roles and his dreams resulting in the assumption of incompetence, rapid devalued status and an income of 20 dollars a fortnight from a sheltered workshop and many years reclaiming his life (Dommett, 2010) Braj Bhushan, spoke with me about how elderly men and women handle anxiety, depression, somatisation and cognitive competence rather proactively in India. Coralie Graham, in her conversations at a conference spoke about how adaptability and a positive outlook can predict better mental health in elderly men and women in Australia (Bhushan, 2010; Graham, 2010). Anne Riggs, an art therapist spoke about people living on the brink of suicide and how she observed her subjects delve into what hurts, disturbs and stultifies in order to offer something back that reveals, transforms and restores (Riggs, 2010). In all the above narratives resilience as it emerges is best understood as a process and also as an idea more typically referred to as "resilience". (Leadbeater et al., 2005)

The central message from the above stories is that recovery from any calamity does not involve restoration of the status quo but instead requires development of pathways leading forward to possible and preferred futures. In response to both man made and natural disasters, individuals and collectives face the challenge of 'What now and what next?' amidst the damage, loss or

irrevocable changes. We are witness to profound and unanticipated disruptions of different dimensions playing out again and again around the globe. What helps people cope with disaster? What aids in their recovery? What factors support capacity for individuals and communities to build positive futures 'out of the ashes'? These are the compelling questions and concerns that suggest life is not often like 'still waters'. I have always thought there are ripples whose sound and gaze we miss under the still waters. In more simple terms, stress is a load, a burden that one can carry without a disruption, but it can tear a muscle or stretch our emotional abilities as we struggle to withstand its weight. Thus, there are sudden, acute stresses that we can see or describe and there are others that we might not feel in the beginning, but whose symptoms slowly appear (Pulla, 2013). Stress, adversity and challenge have become inevitable parts of our daily *jigsaw puzzle of life* - and are sometimes out of control. However, the way we think about stress appears to me as being very much in our control and could make a big difference in how we can handle ourselves at the cross roads of unseen stresses. Some people feel helpless in the face of stress and adversity and easily give up attempts to change or improve their conditions, while others manage and move on. Research is suggesting that an option exists. People can learn to cope and acquire resilience (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Revich & Shatté, 2002; Schneider, 2001; Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978; Siegel, 1999). Perceived stress occurs when an individual feels an inability to control the present situation or develop an emotional response to mitigate its effects. The types of stress reactions noticed across various stages of life appear to be physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioural and, beginning with childhood, these reactions vary by age, maturity and exposure.

According to Folkman & Lazarus (1984), the central processes in the management of stress include accepting, tolerating, avoiding or minimising the stressor as well as gaining mastery over the environment. Anything that we do to adjust to the challenges and demands of stress in order to reduce the impacts of stress can be defined as coping. Thus, coping can be viewed as constant changes in our cognition and the use of behavioural effort to mitigate both external and internal demands that are appraised as 'taxing' (Cummings, 1991) or 'exceeding the resources of the person' (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Coping is explained as conscious effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems in an effort to master, minimize or tolerate stress or conflict (Snyder, 1999; Weiten, & Lloyd; 2008 Zeidner, & Endler, 1996). In literature on coping there are a number of adaptive or constructive coping strategies, i.e., those strategies that appear to be reactive to stress and that reduce stress levels. This contrasts with proactive coping in which a coping response, aims to head off a future stressor.

Coping Strategies

Coping responses are partly controlled by personality (habitual traits), but also partly by the social context, particularly the nature of the stressful environment (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). While there are a number of ways by which people cope, most of these mechanisms can be classified into *adaptive* coping (or appraisal coping), *problem focused* and *emotion focused coping*.

There are basic distinctions made between various contrasting strategies, for example: problem-focused versus emotion-focused; engagement versus disengagement; cognitive versus behavioural. Weiten (2008) provides a useful summary of three broad types of coping strategies:

- appraisal-focused (adaptive cognitive),

- problem-focused: any coping behaviour that is directed at reducing or eliminating a stressor, adaptive behavioural

- emotion-focused: directed towards changing one's own emotional reaction to stressor

Appraisal-focused strategies assist with personal modifications of the way we think occur when the person modifies the way they think, for example: employing denial, or distancing oneself from the problem. People may alter the way they think about a problem by altering their goals and values, such as seeing the humour in a situation. Laughter Yoga is being taught around the world today as a simple and profound exercise routine. It is a complete wellbeing workout that is sweeping the world. The brainchild of Indian Physician, Dr. Madan Kataria, has put forward that laughter is the best medicine. Clinical research on Laughter Yoga methods, conducted at the University of Graz in Austria; Bangalore, India and in the United States has proved that laughter lowers the level of stress hormones (epinephrine, cortisol, etc) in the blood. It fosters a positive and hopeful attitude and it is less likely for a person to succumb to stress and feel helpless, by laughing away their troubles (Kataria, M, 2012).

Meditation and the practice of mindfulness for example, is being seen as not only a technique to calm one's emotions, but with the ability to bring humanity 'together' as it assists with the acquisition of inner quietness, peace and a sense of balance. Depending upon individual perceptions and the nature of stress, it is possible to combine the above coping strategies. While both seem to have their own advantages, counsellors and social workers tend to work with and encourage problem-focused coping mechanisms as it allows a greater perception of individual control over one's own problem, while emotion-focused coping may lead to a reduction in perceived control.

Folkman and Lazarus (1984) identified five emotion-focused coping strategies:

- disclaiming

- escape-avoidance

- accepting responsibility or blame

- exercising self-control

- positive reappraisal

They also highlight problem-focused coping strategies. Seeking social support attends to the problem. "…taking action to try to get rid of the problem is a problem-focused strategy, but so is making a list of the steps to take". Lazarus notes, "… the connection between his idea of 'defensive reappraisals' or cognitive coping and Freud's concept of 'ego-defenses' coping strategies thus overlapping with a person's defense mechanisms. Anticipatory Coping is also known as proactive coping. Society makes great efforts in this direction. City councils remind us to prepare for summers as well as monsoons, but there is a limited amount that individuals can do to reduce the stress of some difficult challenge just by anticipation. Stoeber & Janssen (2011) examine the benefits of positive reframing as an adaptive strategy. Their research focussed on the issue of perfectionism and the benefits of cognitively reframing negative attitudes by questioning the perfectionist expectation and criticism. This is another pathway into opening up new ways of thinking that solve problems by erasing the thoughts that are creating the problem. Religious coping has been found to be the most common coping response, with one study reporting that 17% use religion as a coping response.

Maladaptive coping

Due to work and life stresses people also tend to adopt negative or maladaptive coping. While adaptive coping methods improve functioning, a maladaptive coping mechanism may assist in immediate symptomatic reduction, but maintains and even contributes to the growth of the disorder. Maladaptive techniques can seem to be effective in the short term, which can give the false impression of being a successful technique, however maladaptive processes will fail as a long term coping process.

Examples of maladaptive behaviour strategies include dissociation, desensitization, reckless behaviour; anxious avoidance and escape behaviour including an over consumption of alcohol, self-medication and doping. Unfortunately, such maladaptive coping mechanisms interfere with the person's ability to unlearn or break away from, the existing relationship between the presenting problem and the associated symptoms and only exacerbate to serve and to maintain the disorder. Dissociation is the ability of the mind to separate and compartmentalize thoughts, memories and emotions and is often associated with Post Traumatic Stress. Further examples of maladaptive coping strategies include: self-distraction, denial, substance use and self-blame.

What is resilience all about?

In simple terms, "resilience" refers to the notion of an individual's predisposition to cope with stress and adversity. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress -- such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences. Resilience is a common activity, not an extraordinary activity, however being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain

and sadness are common to all of us and more so to people who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. In fact, the road to resilience is a process, a long drive that involves considerable emotional distress. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone and involves coping. This coping may result in the individual "bouncing back" to a previous state of normal function or, simply not showing negative effects (Masten, 2009). Resilience crops up in situations of adversity and risk and negative life circumstances that are known to lead to poor outcomes (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). There are several theories and approaches that seek to address and promote resilience. Current research suggests that interventions need to address both individual and environmental factors to allow for a holistic multi-systemic approach that supports all ages and all situations (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Ungar, 2011; Walsh, 2006).

While individualised interventions seek to strengthen a person in resisting and persisting through adversity sometimes individuals may also require suitability of behavioural changes in combination with interventions to affect the immediate social environment of the person (Jaffee et al., 2007). A similar view is expressed by Walsh (2006) who supports multisystem, strengths-based understanding of family resilience and interventions, that reign in the frontier of social and social cultural ecology. Most writings on resilience refer to the result of individuals being able to interact with their environments and the processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors.

Another form of resilience, referred to as post traumatic growth, is emerging in the resilience discourse. The traumatic affects that impact the foundation of safety and security of an individual, leaving the sufferer floundering in an unfamiliar and unsafe psychosocial environment, has been studied at length (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2006; Hill, 2013). Adversity dealt with in this positive, strength-based way can lead to better functioning, making it possible for us to relate to resilience as more of a process exhibited by an individual in *reaction* to a situation rather than just an *innate trait* of an individual (Rutter, 2008). Recently there has also been interesting evidence that resilience can indicate a capacity to resist a sharp decline in functioning even though a person temporarily appears to get worse (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Castro & Murray, 2010). Sometimes, what we see in surface behaviour may not be a true reflection of the inner workings of resilience.

Constructing Resilience

For the purposes of this paper we will view resilience as a two-dimensional construct that concerns itself with exposure to adversity and resultant positive adjustment (Ungar, 2004). This two-dimensional construct implies two judgments: one about a "positive adaptation" and the other about the significance of risk (or adversity). One point of view about adversity could define it as any risks associated with negative life conditions that are statistically related to adjustment difficulties, such as poverty, children of mothers with conditions of mental illness or families and communities that have experienced disasters. Positive adaptation, on the other hand, must demonstrate behaviours that suggest social competency after witnessing distressing events. Once again such competencies differ from society to society and suggest vast differences across
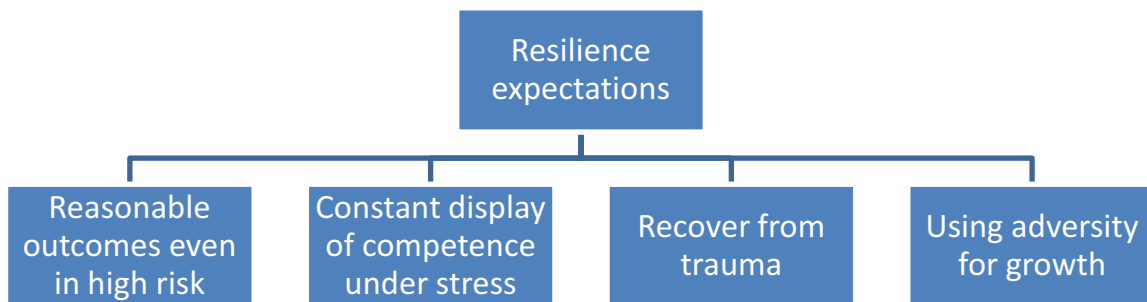
cultures as well. In a previous study Pulla and Bharadwaj looked at the 'love thy neighbour' community resilience demonstrated by Mumbai residents in India on three occasions in their city: the dreadful bomb explosions in Mumbai suburban trains in 2006 that claimed 188 lives; the devastating floods of 2007 when the city was halted for 6 days; and the 26/11 terror attacks of 2008 that shook global humanity. These events raised three questions: *Is resilience* an expression of mutual generosity; is it remarkable acts of heroism in the face of adversity and crisis; and finally, *is resilience* historically a public resource for solace? (Pulla & Bharadwaj, 2010).

Ungar and his colleagues at the Resilience Research Centre (2012) argue that this standard definition of resilience could be problematic because it does not adequately account for cultural and contextual differences in how people in other systems express resilience. They have shown that cultural and contextual factors exert a great deal of influence on the factors that affect resilience amongst population. Resilience has been shown to be more than just the capacity of individuals to cope well under adversity, often localised to those societies where adversity occurred. Resilience, as 'public resource of solace', does not appear to be an indefinitely renewable when crisis hits the world today and links Mumbai, Kashmir, Madrid, London, Karachi, Wall Street and Washington, together (Pulla & Bharadwaj, 2010). Thus resilience is better understood as the opportunity and capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that may pull together during crisis. Most crisises provide opportunities to capacitate individually and collectively to negotiate for life following adversity in appropriate and culturally meaningful ways.

Andrew Zolli and Ann Marie Healy in their latest book, *Resilience: Why things bounce back* (2012), bring in a radically new definition of resilience in rather simple words: 'if we cannot control the volatile tides of change, we can learn to build better boats. We can design- and redesign-organisations, institutions and systems to better absorb disruption, operate under a wider variety of conditions, and shift more fluidly from one circumstance to the next'.

The following illustration summarises to me that resilience expectations in all human endeavours has considerably changed and there is not a reservoir of resilience from which we can draw upon in all adversities.

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    Resilience   │
                    │   expectations  │
                    └─────────────────┘
```

Reasonable outcomes even in high risk	Constant display of competence under stress	Recover from trauma	Using adversity for growth

Thus, in these days of turbulence, the ability of people, communities and the systems to maintain their 'core purpose integrity' (Zolli, & Healy, 2012) amid unforseen shocks and surprises expects of us to adapt successfully in spite of experiencing risk factors. There are always challenges in this fragile world of ours, we have persistent poverty, increased susceptibilities to human disease and pestilence, climate changes and an increasing lack of paid employment that could possibly prevent poverty Leskošek (2005), reflecting on what were supposedly true cornerstones of the post –war welfare states namely equality, solidarity and social justice laments that they are being replaced by:

"inequality, exposing differences between 'us' and 'them', between natives and foreigners, rich and poor, those on top and those at the bottom, these differences are likely to grow further asking for more creative ways of ensuring a purpose life and a life" Leskošek 2005: 247)

In my experience as a social worker in floods and community recovery in Queensland, Australia, I often found it was useful to work and facilitate competency development to cope with stress effectively and in a healthy manner. Locating the strengths in clients we work, their problem-solving skills, their ability to seek help in addition to their capacity to offer help to others, were very important. In Latur, Maharashtra, India, a devastating earthquake occurred several years ago and this in a country where there are no social security measures, except for some immediate relief it was amazing to see how people returned to their normal routines. One of the lessons that I brought back to Australia from India was that most people in that earthquake developed an identity of a survivor rather than a victim.

The stories I heard following such a traumatic experience, the miraculous escapes and the inner spirituality that enabled them to reach others, built stronger bonds. Certain aspects of religions/spirituality may, hypothetically, promote or hinder certain psychological virtues that increase resilience. Research has established a connection between spirituality and resilience. Indeed, there is a suggestion that modern western cultures have become neglectful of family thereby reducing opportunities for children to acquire spirituality and resilience. Further, Benson & Thistlethwaite (2008), argue that Western culture and thus its communities, have become

focused on perfection and fail to view "pain, suffering, mistakes and failure" as normal components of life. Financial and personal successes are now valued and failure is not viewed as a learning experience that improves problem solving skills.

The Strengths Perspective and Resiliency

That the world has adversity and it produces challenges which are associated with diverse negative consequences is accepted. Nevertheless, despite negative outcomes predicted and making our lives functional ensuring that there is a purpose, a sense of well-being and meaning in life, communities and organisations are the whole purpose of utilising the strengths approach to developing resilience in people. It starts with the primordial recognition that everybody has the capacity for resilience and that everybody can bounce back.

 "The strengths perspective does not require one to discount the grip and thrall of addictions or the humiliating, frightening anguish of child abuse, or the unbidden disorganization and confusion of psychosis. But from the vantage point of a strengths perspective, *it is as wrong to deny the possible just as it is to deny the problem*. And the strengths perspective does decry the intemperate reign of psychopathology and illness as the central civic, moral, and medical categorical imperative. Adherents of the strengths perspective *do not* believe, with good reason, that most people who are the victims of abuse or their own rampant appetites, or that all people who have been traumatized inevitably become damaged goods" (Saleebey, 2000).

As a strengths practitioner I believe that all human processes have the intrinsic capacity to direct people toward a healthy development and to bring their full potential. By utilising a strengths perspective, it allows them to assess attainable goals, mobilize resources to promote change and self-esteem, and finally, become resilient. Common to resiliency theory and the Strengths Perspective is the faith in the capacity of human beings to cope and design their future. Social workers and counsellors interested in this perspective and committed to the core values of their profession, challenge to explore their attitudes, beliefs, biases and their own selves in order to generate a shift in the way they perceive themselves, their clients and their relationship with them.

Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities (Masten, 2001). This view point represents the shift from a pathological preoccupation with risk. Most of us manage to have positive lives and to develop successfully; including the most challenged ones from troubled families and disadvantaged communities.

Approaching Inner strengths

Be it coping or resiliency development, the core business in our societies today, seeks to empower alternatives to traditional methods. Our attention is to facilitate change by helping to look at what has worked, what does not work and what might work presently. It is important for those who facilitate and those desiring change to be integral to this process of change. As helping professionals, we pride ourselves with the skill set to deal with our existence and manifestations of the state of unsatisfactory suffering; stress; anxieties and tensions (Pulla, 2010).

I am aware that the Buddhist perspective presents a couple of themes that appear to be useful in influencing human behaviour. They are internalised verbalisations and visualisations. Internal verbalisations are the talk and chatter that constantly invade the human consciousness while internal visualisations are mental pictures that are produced in the human mind. Therapists believe both need taming. One method of taming internal verbalisation is to overwhelm them and replace them with diversions including mindfulness, meditative practices, engaging in good companionships and suitable conversations (Pulla, 2010). The taming of internal visualisations is to constantly hold in one's mind a higher image of him or her, even an imaginary higher image for the moment that one is comfortable with. With the taming of the 'swinging monkey' there is a possibility to draw into the present instead of living in the past. We do need a paradigm shift: seeking solutions from inside to seeking solutions from outside. Would this be through a silent inquiry? Philosopher Arka Srinivas (2013) suggests a refreshingly new approach of taking the route of conscious awareness.

Conscious awareness takes one to an even deeper level. According to Arka:

"It is not just a matter of raising awareness intellectually through knowledge. Here you raise your awareness emotionally and with full involvement of your deeper mind prevailing in the heart region. In this process you gain positive energy, intuitive wisdom and a sense of direction" Arka, 2013: 39)

My recent visits and conversations in Tuzla and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina with mental health professionals, confirms that a great number of people are withdrawing into the past. I also saw a growing number of people attempting to reduce their stresses and anxieties through acceptance of events as they are, rather than what they would like them to be. It appears to me that we need to work on our capabilities as helping professionals to engage in conversations that allow us to go into the cause that leads us to the rot that is currently manifested in the world. Perhaps we need to ask this question in a different way: Are we actually perpetuating and indulging in coping and resilience skills to deal with effects and neglecting a discourse on returning to the causes of the effects in the first place? For the last five years I have been working on these themes and pondering over the roots of our business in human services and I started feeling that we are losing the plot.

Problems appear to be more fundamental: *The gradual erosion of human values, few people's greed over many people's need, anomie and the growth of human alienation in our civil societies are some of the main issues that we are* not *dealing with.*

These are problems we need to confront. How do people live with economic and social inequality? The short answer is that they don't, not if they can help it. They walk miles, dragging their bodies and meagre possessions including children in the hope of finding food, water and safety. They have done that for many years in many parts of Africa. Or brave the seas in dinghies to far off shores, miles away from their countries of birth. While being compassionate may be virtuous, practice of obligatory compassion in the face of illegitimate suffering, appears to me as a cop out that converts societal guilt into a false responsibility.

As helping professionals with an obligatory humanitarian and social justice response to human suffering, we also need to wake up to our professional responsibilities to see the truth, i.e. *the ultimate cause of suffering in the world today.* The task is in front of us and I am sure we are capable of moving centre stage, not only to show how people organise themselves in the face of suffering and global inequality today, but how this might be made more just. This involves a fundamental critique of current practices and use of the opportunity to ponder over the roots of our crisis and make decisions about 'where to from here'.

References:

Abramson, L.Y., Seligman, M.E.P., & Teasdale, J.D. (1978). Learned Helplessness in humans: A critique and reformulation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 97* (1).49-74.

Alinovia, L., D'Erricoa, M., Manea, E., and Romanob, D., (2010) Livelihoods Strategies and Household Resilience to Food Insecurity: An Empirical Analysis to Kenya SOCIETA' ITALIANA DI ECONOMIA AGRARIA XLVII Convegno di Studi "L'agricoltura oltre le crisi" Campobasso, 22-25 settembre 2010

Arka, Srinivas. (2013). *Arka Dhyana: Intuitive Meditation.* United Kingdom, London, Coppersun Books, www.arkadhyana.org

Belt, D. *The Coming Storm* Retrieved from http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2011/05/bangladesh/belt-text

Benson, J. & Thistlewaite, J. (2008). *Mental health across cultures: A practical guide for primary care.*

Sydney: Radcliffe Publishing

Boyden, J. & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations. In M. Ungar (Ed.), Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts (pp. 3-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bhushan, B. (2010) Psychiatric profiling of the Indian geriatric population: Implications for possible interventions, (p 8) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

Castro, F.G. & Murray, K.E. (2010). Cultural adaptation and resilience: Controversies, issues, and emerging models. In J.W. Reich, A.J. Zautra & J.S. Hall (Eds.), Handbook of adult resilience (pp. 375-403). New York: Guilford Press.

Calhoun, L. G. & Tedeschi, R.G. (2006). *Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth: Research and Practice.*New York: Erlbaum.

Carver, C. S.; Connor-Smith, J. (2010). Personality and coping. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 61, 679 - 704.

Cummings, E. M., Greene, A. L. & Karraker, A. H. (1991). *Life-span Developmental Psychology: Perspectives of stress and coping.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dommett, J. (2010). From being devalued and powerless to coping and resilience: a personal story of recovery (p.37) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

Graham,C (2010). Psychological strengths and health of people over 65 years living in the community, (p. 27) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

Fekadu, T. (2012). *No One's Son.* Falmouth, UK: Leapfrog Press.

Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R. S. (1990). Coping and Emotion. In Nancy Stein, N. L., Leventhal, B. & Trabasso, T. (eds.), *Psychological and Biological Approaches to Emotion.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hill, R. (2013). Trauma – Creating Beneficial Change. In Pulla, V., Shatté, A., Warren, S. (Eds.), *Perspectives on Coping and Resilience*, Authors Press, New Delhi

The Huffington Post (2011) 'Chilean Miners', First Posted: 09/02/10 12:54 PM ET   Updated: 11/17/11   http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/09/02/stories-of-resilience fro_n_703418.html#s133802&title=Chilean_Miners

The Huffington Post (2011). 'New Orleans Residents' retrieved from

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/09/02/stories-of-resilience-fro_n_703418.html#s133780&title=New_Orleans_Residents

Kong, V, (2010) 'beating the odds' *Albuquerque Journal,*

http://www.abqjournal.com/north/22231725north08-22-10.htm#ixzz2O8QLi4FJ

Jaffee, S. R., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T. E., Polo-Tomás, M., & Taylor, A. (2007). Individual, family, and neighborhood factors distinguish resilient from non-resilient maltreated children: A cumulative stressors model. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31*(3), 231-253. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.03.011.

Kataria, M, Laughter Yoga International. (2012). What is laughter yoga? Retrieved from: http://laughteryoga.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180:what-is-laughter-yoga&catid=85:about-laughter-yoga&Itemid=265

Kokonyange, Jacques Kikuni , & SYFIA INTERNATIONAL. (2012). Straddling the Congo-Uganda border with two nationalities - best of both lives. Worldcrunch : all the news is global, 2012(28 August). http://www.worldcrunch.com/culture-society/straddling-the-congo-uganda-border-with-two-nationalities-best-of-both-lives/drc-uganda-border-identification-african-economy/c3s9431/#.UI2yx2flbj1

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping.* New York, NY: Springer Publishing.

Leadbeater, B., Dodgen, D. & Solarz, A. (2005). The resilience revolution: A paradigm shift for research and policy. In R.D. Peters, B. Leadbeater & R.J. McMahon (Eds.), *Resilience in children, families, and communities: Linking context to practice and policy*, (pp. 47-63). New York: Kluwer.

Leskošek, V. (2005). Globalne neenakosti. *Socialno delo*, letnik 44 (2005), št. 4-5. [*Global inequalities. Social Work, year 44 (2005), number 4-5*].

Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work. [Article]. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543.

Masten, A.S., & Coatsworth, J.D. (1998). The development of competence in favourable and unfavourable environments: lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist, 53* (2). 205-220.

Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.

Masten, A. S. (2009). Ordinary Magic: Lessons from research on resilience in human development. *Education Canada* 49 (3): 28–32. Retrieved from: http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/default/files/EdCan-2009-v49-n3-Masten.pdf.

Maxwell, d., Caldwell, R (2008) The coping strategies index field methods manual 2nd edition, CARE, USA

Mercy Corps, (2012), from conflict to coping: evidence from southern Ethiopia on the contributions of peace building to drought and resilience among pastoralist groups, Retrieved from

http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/from_conflict_to_coping_-_final.pdf

Murray, K., (2010). Resilience among Sudanese in Australia (p.33) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

Pulla, V., Bhardwaj, S,(2010). Is resilience a renewable resource? Case of Mumbaites and mendicants of Varanasi, (p.44) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

Pulla, V., (2010) Presidential Speech at the International Conference (p.IV-V) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

(2012) 'What are strengths-based practices all about? In Pulla, V., Chenoweth, L., Francis, A., Bakaj, S. (Eds). Papers in Strengths-based Practice, New Delhi: Allied Publishers

-(2013), Contours of Coping and Resilience: the front story, In V., Pulla, A. Shatté, A., Warren, S. (Eds.), Perspectives on Coping and Resilience, Authors Press, New Delhi

Revich, K. & Shatté, A. (2002). *The Resilience factor*. New York: Broadway Books

Riggs, A. (2010) In the shadows Art that reveals, transforms and restores(p.13) Coping Resilience and Hope Building, Asia Pacific Regional Conference, 9-11 July 2010 Abstracts (ISBN 978-09802994-2-7)

Rutter, M. (2008). Developing concepts in developmental psychopathology. In J.J. Hudziak (ed.), *Developmental psychopathology and wellness: Genetic and environmental influences* (pp.3-22). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Saleebey, D. (2000) Power in the people: strengths and hope. Advances in Social Work, 1(2), 129-130

Schneider, S. (2001), In search of realistic optimism. *American Psychologist, 56* (3). 250-261.

Siegel, D.(1999). *The Developing Mind.* New York: Guilford Press

Snyder, C.R. (ed.) (1999) *Coping: The Psychology of What Works.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Stoeber J. & Janssen D.P. (2011). Perfectionism and coping with daily failures: positive reframing helps achieve satisfaction at the end of the day. *Anxiety Stress Coping.* 24(5):477-97.

Ungar, M. (2012). Resilience Research Centre Retrieved 18 May 2012, 2012, from http://resilience.socialwork.dal.ca/

Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience.* New York: Guilford Press.

Weiten, W. & Lloyd, M.A. (2008) *Psychology Applied to Modern Life (9th ed.).* Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Zolli, A. and Healy, A,M. (2012) resilience : why things bounce back, Free Press

Zeidner, M. & Endler, N.S. (editors) (1996) *Handbook of Coping: Theory, Research, Applications.* New York: John Wiley.