



CAPI 2018

CRITICAL HOPE & THE POWER OF RESILIENCE

Alanya Dhalla

Critical hope & the power of resilience

CAP1 2018 CAPSTONE PROJECT

From May-November 2018 I had the privilege of completing a QES-funded internship with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women at their international secretariat in Bangkok, Thailand. This opportunity allowed me to see the how important critical hope and resilience are in situations (such as NGO work) where research predominantly surrounds negative topics. It also helped me realize how important resilience is in situations where you find yourself in a new environment which may be completely unlike your normal situation (such as moving across the world by yourself).

Capstone Project

For my capstone project, I wanted to highlight how resilience is found in different communities as well as the tactics people use to overcome adversity in new environments. Innovative, grass-root solutions and strength are evident all around the world and I believe it is necessary to bring attention to the positive in order to transcend feelings of 'doom' and 'helplessness' that are so active in today's society. To accomplish this, I asked my cohort (and myself) two questions:

1. How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?
2. What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

I have gathered their responses and present them in the following pages.



Intern: Clara Harding
Placement: PRIA
Location: India



How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

Something that really amazed me when I was in India was the way that people interacted with each other and worked together. There was so much sharing: of food, time, public space, conversation. When individuals faced problems others stepped in to help solve the problem and support the individual. When someone's scooter got stuck in a flooded street, strangers would join together to help push the scooter out. When I wanted to take an auto somewhere and could only use the map on my phone to explain where I wanted to go, a crowd of people would gather around and help to figure it out. One woman shared with me that for years her and her family did not have access to clean water: so the neighbors shared their water with them. India is a vastly nuanced country. There is a lot of suffering and pain. There is also a level of community that I had never seen or experienced in North America. It was really special to be a part of it for a brief while, and it certainly changed the way I interact with people now that I am home.

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

One way that I managed the lows and the difficult days during my placement was by journaling. Writing helped me organize my thoughts, process my feelings, and rant if I needed to. It also helped me gain some perspective because as I wrote, I knew that the next time I read this specific entry back I would likely be feeling totally differently. This helped me recognize that the ups and downs were normal and ok, and reminded me that sometimes you just have bad days. I'm so glad that I kept a journal because throughout the placement I was able to reread earlier entries and see how far I had come since I'd written them. This helped me to appreciate the placement, appreciate India, and appreciate myself more during those really difficult days.

Intern: Alanya Dhalla
Placement: GAATW
Location: Bangkok,
Thailand



How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

I saw so much resilience when I got to accompany my colleague Ratna on a support trip to Nepal. The returnee migrant women spoke about their experiences with domestic violence and struggles with the migration journey, however, they were all making the most of their lives and proud of who they had become as a result of their experiences.

Most places I had visited during my 7-months in Asia were heavily reliant on plastic use. One really interesting initiative I saw on a visa run to Myanmar, was communal water dispensers on the sidewalks. These had cups that anyone could use and people would pour the water into their mouths without touching their lips. This substantially reduced the single use plastic water bottles that are extremely common in Bangkok. (See picture on front cover)

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

I relied a lot on physical exercise. I would go swimming, do yoga, or go to the gym. This also helped give me structure to my day.

I also did a lot of reading. As a student it can be hard to justify spending time on leisurely books when you know you should be reading textbooks. Having this time away from school allowed me to read stories, which also served as an escape when I needed one.

How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

The 2018 Coastal Regulation Zone Notification in India reduces the area designated as a Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) of tidal influenced water bodies from the 100m distance prescribed in the 2011 notification to 50m. The CRZ notification 1991 that preceded the 2011 notification mandated a 500m buffer. The 2018 CRZ Notification also removes protection from development for mangroves, salt marshes, and intertidal areas, as well as removing the concept of a Hazard line in coastal development, recognizing the likely increase in both frequency and intensity of coastal storms with climate change. These notifications are only released in Hindi and English, making it difficult for those who do not speak either of these languages to comment on the proposals. People at my organization worked hard to ensure that language barriers did not hinder local communities from participating, helping empower communities to make submissions to the government on these proposals.

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

When missing home, I found that a workout at a nearby gym really helped. Since I usually visited at the same time of day, I often saw the same people there each time. It was nice to casually converse and establish friendships with new people. People I met at the gym also shared the location of some of their favourite places to walk or run. In the middle of a bustling city, I learned of some tranquil and shady spots to get some outdoor exercise that I wouldn't have found on my own.



Intern: Courtenay Jacklin
Placement: The Other Media
Location: Chennai, India



Intern: Mikaela Chia
Placement: PRIA
Location: India



How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

Resilience was embedded within every conversation, every story, and every person I had the privilege of meeting- and I am quickly discovering the resilience that each person has, and how different it can look person to person. Strength is never expressed in one uniform way. I see resilience within the vulnerability that women and mothers shared as they resisted and broke down barriers and structures which try to separate and restrict, if even through words or simply being together. I see resilience within the desire for change driven by community leaders. I see resilience within the youth and individuals from all backgrounds and experiences who continue to hope, and continue to try.

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

Though there is no place like home, I was lucky enough to find what I would consider new "homes" within the communities I had the privilege of living in (though I still wrestle with what it means to call a place home and the implications this comes with). By trying to be fully present, connect, and talk to (if even only through google translate or shared frantic motions and laughter when neither of the two work), I was able to find a little bit more of connection and reconstruct what it meant to be "home" or homesick. That said, in living in a community deeply rooted in constant connection, I also was thankful to find a way to connect with myself and my reflections (and in that be able to better place myself contextually by thinking about the broader picture) through creative means which allowed a space for myself (and others, if willing) to find a reflective voice which spoke when words failed.

Mikaela Chia

How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

Although black communities in South Africa have been subject to segregation, violence, and discrimination all while living in extreme poverty, people wake up each day and continue to fight for their freedom. This group of children honoured the lives of students who were killed in a peaceful protest on June 16 1976 by marching around the community singing about their right to freedom.

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

There were many moments, days, even weeks where I felt overwhelmed at my placement. For me, getting outside, finding a place where I could be absorbed by nature and write in my journal brought me back to state where I could continue on.



Intern: Ainslee Arthurs
Placement: Ukulapha Community Outreach
Location: Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

Intern: Chris Tse
Placement: MSRI
Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

I saw resilience embodied daily by the refugees and asylum-seekers who were clients at our organization. Creating, laughing, supporting, building community, sharing, dreaming, breathing, struggling, resisting, continuing - resilience occurs in the minutiae, the everyday. The realities of displacement and forced migration are highly precarious, and bearing witness to these folks' strength and persistence in the face of hardship was a gift I did not, do not, deserve.

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

I do best when I can get lost... usually outside somewhere, but Malaysia is so fricking hot and KL was a bit of a concrete jungle, so more indoor-friendly pursuits were sought like guitar-jamming, playing pick-up ball in the evenings, or cutting vegetables (the most therapeutic activity of them all!)



Intern: Emily Clare

Placement: Ukulapha
Community Outreach

Location: Pietermaritzburg,
South Africa

How did you see resilience through local people or local initiatives in your placement location?

When I think about the kids I got to know in the township in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, one of the first words that comes to mind is resiliency. These kids were living in one-room mud-huts, with no running water or electricity. They rarely got breakfast and ate lollipops and 10 cent bags of chips for lunch. Their socks had holes in the toes, and their textbooks were falling apart at the seams. Despite the immense lack of resources, they were the most generous, positive and happy kids I have ever worked with. It was amazing to see how resilient even the youngest kindergarten kids were. They would walk themselves through the dangerous township community with backpacks that were bigger than they were! These kids overcome every obstacle they encounter without uttering a single complaint. It's amazing what people can survive and overcome when they have no other choice.

What methods did you use to overcome hardships when the placement may have been overwhelming or you were missing home?

Working with this population was the most emotionally challenging thing I have ever experienced. My heart felt like it could have burst; I care so much for the kids and it really broke me to think about how unfair life is. They were so smart and driven and deserved so much more than what they were given. I felt helpless and guilty. What helped me was to have a journal that I didn't intend to let anyone else read. I wrote all of my thoughts and feelings in there without any filter, which helped in getting it all out. I also watched a crazy amount of romantic comedies on Netflix!! I felt like they really helped me to completely shut off "work mode" and transported me back to my Canadian reality. Another thing I did for self care was try to stick to my exercise/ gym routine as much as I could. Here in Canada I make sure I go to the gym at least 4 times a week as I really depend on it for my mental well-being more than physical. I knew this about myself, and so even though it made my days a lot longer and I almost never felt like going, I forced myself to get to the gym whenever I could. What was most beneficial for my emotional well-being was being there with my best friend Ainslee. She was the only other person who really understood how I was feeling because she was experiencing the same things. There were so many times we came home and just cried to each other! Having someone you can debrief with, who really understands what you're going through is so important.

Blog

[HTTPS://CAPICAPSTONE.TUMBLR.COM/](https://capicapstone.tumblr.com/)

In order to prevent myself from drowning in negative news during my placement, I would collect positive news stories, quotes, pictures, videos, etc. Upon returning to Canada, I complied the different media into a blog so that I would be able to easily access positive stories if I was feeling down about world events.

Feel free to visit my site!

[HTTPS://CAPICAPSTONE.TUMBLR.COM/](https://capicapstone.tumblr.com/)

Thank you!

#QESCHOLARS #UVICCAPI

The 7-months I spent in Asia were absolutely amazing and life changing. I am forever grateful to the GAATW-IS, QES scholars, UVic CAPI, & Robyn Fila for making this incredible opportunity a reality. The experience taught me so much about migrant rights, policy and research, and the FPAR methodology. I also learned tremendous amounts about myself and who I want to be in this world.

I am so incredibly thankful for everyone at the GAATW-IS and how welcoming and supportive they all are. They are all such incredible people and I was so fortunate that they were so open to sharing their knowledge with me.

WWW.UVIC.CA/RESEARCH/CENTRES/CAPI/

WWW.GAATW.ORG