

**EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF CHALLENGES IN  
THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENT IN THE NGO SECTOR IN NAIROBI,  
KENYA**

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# DECLARATION

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

The research project is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a degree to any other University.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

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The project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Supervisor

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved mum, thank you for providing me with a foundation to stand on.

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This study has been accomplished through encouragement and support through various contributions from a number of people whom I am greatly indebted. Special thanks to my supervisor Prof. Ko'bonyo who patiently guided me through this project. He put in extra effort and hours to ensure the project attained the professional academic standard required. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of lecturers from the School of Business University of Nairobi and above all Mr George Omondi for his constant encouragement and assistance to ensure the time table is aligned with our objectives. This further goes to my fellow students in the Msc (HRM) at the University of Nairobi and Loice Abukatsa, Director of Human Resource-Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, may God bless you.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community Based Organization
CCT	Cross-Culture Training
CEFA	Il seme della solidarieta (Italian)
CISP	Comitato Internazionale Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli
GOAL	to Achieve Millennium Development Goals
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PE	Person Environment
SOS	Save Our Soul
VSO	Voluntary Service Organization

## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to find out how expatriate employees' perception of the challenges in their work environment in the NGO sector in Nairobi, Kenya. The study question was how do expatriate employees working in the NGOs sectors in Kenya respond to the challenges in their work environment? The study employed the use of the person-environment fit theory and the culture shock theory of adaptation to explain the strategies employed by expatriates to cope with challenges in their work environment. Therefore the research design that was used for the study was descriptive survey with a target population of the study population of 2394 NGOs based in Nairobi. The study sample was 120 expatriates although only 84 participated in the final study who were drawn from 60 NGOs. The study employed the use of questionnaires to collect the data and used SPSS to analyze and present the findings. It was found that expatriate employees working in the Kenyan NGOs respond to challenges in their work environment by finding a fit between the Kenyan culture and that of their countries. However, sometimes there is a big clash between the two cultures which makes it hard for the expatriates to adjust well. They have come up with strategies to interact with the locals which has improved their communication and ability to work on the assignments they were sent to do. In cases where conversing in the local languages has been a challenge, the expatriates have sought the help of locals as interpreters. Since these expatriates seem to have adjusted well in the Kenyan society, they can be a great source of strength for others who are coming into this and other countries for similar or other assignments. Further, they could be used by Kenyans who are expatriates to coach them in coping with challenges that might affect them in other countries. Further, because the study found that most of the expatriates are people who have a lot of experience on international assignments, they be used as a pillar for young expatriates for they can help them in adjusting to the challenges that might arise in their work environment.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1: Background of the Study

In an increasingly changing business world, NGOs establish foreign-owned subsidiaries and enter into joint ventures and strategic alliances to create a presence in the international market and to take advantageous production resources. Many opportunities and challenges of the globalizations processed are creating the need for expatriates to locate managers and skilled workers in international locations. However, the task of expatriate employment is complicated by profound differences between countries in labor markets, culture, legal and economic systems (Hill, 2007). In this international environment, the quality of expatriate employees and management seems to be even more critical than in domestic operations.

NGOs of all sizes (small, medium, or large) that have subsidiaries in foreign counties are facing the problem of training, selecting, compensating as well as the reintegrating expatriate managers. Despite the problem, these expatriate managers are contributing significantly to the achievement of the NGO's goals and as a result, their importance should not be overlooked (Treven, 2003). Expatriates are citizens of one country who are working and have subsidiaries in foreign countries. Expatriates are also used to identify a subset of expatriates who are citizens of a foreign country working in the home country of their NGO employer (Hill, 2007; Harvey & Fung, 2000). These expatriates are sent to a foreign country by NGOs with the intent to control their operations and to provide technical and administrative services (Jun, et al., 2001).

Besides monitoring and controlling the financial distribution and profit gain of the company, an expatriate is expected to extend their knowledge and skills in technology transfer (Shephard, 1996). The expatriates are expected to offer new knowledge for the locals to adapt thus the latter has high respect towards the former at the workplace. The role of an expatriate is regarded as distinctively significant since the main task is to act upon maintaining the organizational structure and philosophy of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) while following the rules and regulations of work within the public sector, the expatriates mainly hold diplomatic posts in foreign embassies or as consultants for government agencies; while in the private sector, the expatriate managers are mostly positioned in MNCs that run business operations.

### **1.1.1: Challenges Faced by Expatriate Employees in their Work Environment**

An expatriate relocating to another country for an international assignment often faces a variety of difficulties. These difficulties may compromise the international assignment especially if the expatriate feels isolated and alone in the host country (Selmer, 2001). Adjustment to a new country can be difficult especially when familiar things the expatriate have come to know his/her life are no longer the same in the host country. Culture is one of the most important contributing factors to adjustment and the expatriate's feelings of isolation (Hayes, 1996). It is therefore important to be sensitive and aware of cultural differences and how it affects feelings of isolation and ultimately the assignment's success (Moss, 2000).

Culture shock is a phenomenon that involves an emotional disorientation that a person suffers when he/she moves to a foreign land where he/she is unfamiliar with the new environment (Hayes, 1996). Culture shock involves the abrupt loss of the familiar, resulting in a loss of identity and feelings of isolation. When an individual enters a strange culture, most or all of the familiar cues he/she has lived with all his/her lives are removed (Gordon, 2003). The loss of these cues make the individual feel like a 'fish out of water'. Often when a person moves to a foreign country there is a period of excitement when everything seems new and challenging. In the beginning similarities between cultures are more apparent than differences (Selmer, 2001). Everyone seems to have the same routine and lifestyle (Kitsuse, 1992). It is not until this welcoming period ends that the newcomer begins to realize that there are endless subtle differences that leave him/her with problems.

For expatriates, language differences can become a problem during business transactions, where it is important to have clear communication (Dolainski, 1997). Often the expatriate would be provided with an interpreter. However, in a high context culture, an interpreter may inhibit the international assignment (Dolainski, 1997) creating a relationship triangle. That is, the expatriate asks a question, the interpreter interprets the question to the local client or colleague, he/she may then speak to the interpreter for a certain length of time, outlining the issues he/her faces with the expatriate's question. The interpreter then answers back to the expatriate with a couple of words or sentences (Dolainski, 1997). Therefore information that may be important may be lost in the translation that may compromise the assignment. Moreover, business relationships are build upon trust, the expatriate who cannot speak the local language will find it very difficult to

demonstrate his/her credibility to local colleagues and/or clients. If the expatriate's credibility cannot be demonstrated, the locals may never let him/her to become part of the group. It reinforces the 'us and them' concept, which can compromise a joint venture that depends on trust and good faith (Mead, 1990).

Women expatriates face the extra challenge of overcoming the host culture's perception of female roles on top of the differences in culture (Cook, 2000). Therefore it can be quite difficult for a woman expatriate to compete in a position in which have been historically dominated by men. Furthermore companies are often reluctant to send female expatriates expressing concerns about the woman's safety, isolation and the loneliness (Halcrow 1999). Companies also hesitate to send women abroad because they feel that foreigners would be prejudice against women and those female managers could not succeed even if sent (Meckman, 2002). Companies build these assumptions on two myths: what they read or hear about how local women are treated in the workplace, and how women in general are treated by male colleagues in the home country workplaces (Cook, 2000).

### **1.1.2: Perception of Expatriates to Challenges in their Work Environment**

In order for the expatriates to adapt with the current living conditions, several adjustments need to be made. The duration and success of acculturation process, depends on the ability of the individual to adapt in the new culture. Not all expatriates have an active reaction to culture shock. That is, not all expatriates seek out to understand the cultural nuances of the host country and use this information to better business and personal relationships. Gordon (2003) notes that victims of culture shock may behave in many extremes, he/she may give up his/her own identity and try to imitate all customs

and attitudes of the host culture, or solve the problem by regressing into a shell and refusing to learn the local language and befriend people of the local culture. The latter individuals may only seek and befriend other expatriates, or individuals with similar cultures to themselves. They will usually seek out other expatriates to provide them with supportive network while at the same time complaining about some of the strange behaviors locals partake in without any real effort to understand (Crookes and Thomas 1998).

The controversial topic of expatriate clubs or ghettos, has been argued that they provide a supportive network for the expatriate who is uprooted from the home country and thrust into unfamiliar surroundings (Moss, 2000). However it is also argued that clubs may inhibit integration into the host culture by reinforcing unhappy expatriate's stereotypes of his/her local counterparts (Melles, 2000). This will have negative implications for business relationships as individual expatriates believe the stereotypes and behave in such a way that creates self-fulfilling prophecies of the stereotypes.

Expatriates often feel uncomfortable in the initial transition process. Missing familiar things and familiar people will drive the expatriate to seek out certain things in the host country to replace these losses. This may encourage expatriates to only socialize with certain groups of people, for example other Australians, or people who share the similar cultural values and attitudes as the expatriate themselves (Moss, 2000). This often results in a conglomeration of expatriates who gather in expatriate's clubs or other social places.



Studies on the success of expatriates in international assignments showed that social support was one of the contributing factors other than the personal characteristics such as attitudes and self-orientation (Foster, 2000). This also supported the study, which proved that organizational support from the parent company is positively related to general adjustments (Hutchings and Ratnasari, 2006). Therefore the support from peers, spouse and the organization, which the expatriates work in, had shown to offer positive results towards their adjustments. Besides through friends, other sources can also be of help. Acquiring information about the host country prior to and after arrival helps to create expectations about new country in general. It will lessen the cultural shock and at the same time will give a better understanding on locals' behavior when interaction takes place between expatriates and the locals. According to Tung (1998), it is required for expatriates to be attracted to and knowledgeable about the host country in order to adapt oneself in a new culture. This is the form of anticipatory adjustment as mentioned by Black et al.(1999), whereby it includes having an accurate expectation about the country. Using the knowledge of previous experiences of foreign assignments, according to Tahir and Ismail, 2007), helps in adjustment for expatriates. They have encountered cultural differences in terms of religion, language, and mode of livelihood in other societies. These experiences to a certain extent have facilitated their adjustments. Since it has shown in the findings that previous experiences of expatriates in other countries had lead them to a better adjustment process. Bell and Harrison (1996) relate this method to “contact theory” which suggested that interpersonal interaction among people from various cultures may lead to understanding and adjustment because this acknowledges the expatriate to behave in a given situation

### **1.1.3: Non-Governmental Organizations in Nairobi, Kenya**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are legally constituted organizations created by natural and legal people that operate independently from any form of government. The term originated from the United Nations and normally refers to organizations that are not part of a government and are not conventional for profit businesses. In the cases in which NGOs are funded by totally or partially by the government, the NGO maintains its non-governmental status by excluding government representatives from membership in the organization. The term is usually applied only to organizations that pursue wider social aims that have political aspects but are not openly political organizations such as political parties, (Mbote, 2002).

The quantitative and qualitative growth of NGOs in Kenya over the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been enormous. For instance, NGOs registered accumulative growth of over 100% between 1977 and 1987. By 1995 there were at least 23,000 women organizations in the country. Most of these organizations are registered under the ministry of culture and social services. Those NGOs that are registered by the NGO Coordination Bureau 2014, the registered NGOs are 5607 local and 2394 international as compared to 1441 in 2000-2002 and only 250 in 1993. This vibrant growth has played an important role in society through development of various activities. It is not surprise therefore that the move to have expatriates narrow the existing gap in the leadership of these organization is not considered important. They have encouraged various development activities within the country despite the numerous challenges they

encounter in their new work environment, (The National Council of NGOs Report, 2014).

NGOs in Kenya gather its membership from international, regional and national NGOs operating in Kenya and working with a host of CBOs and groups. These NGOs are active in cross-section sectors including agriculture, water, education, environment, health, human rights, poverty alleviation, peace, population, training, counseling, small scale enterprises, disability and many others. The current social, economic and political issues Kenya is grappling with, justifies the need of a strong vibrant NGO sector to supplement and complement government effort in development. Todaro (2003), define development as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty.

The National Council of NGOs, Kenya provides the overall leadership to the NGO sector .It champions the key values of transparency, accountability, justice and governance. It enhance the self- regulation of its members , and assists them to realize their potential in improving services that improve the socio-economic status of Kenya society in the pursuit of sustainable development. Unfortunately, however, the NGO sector in Kenya is weak. The National Council of NGO Chief Executive Officer said that “running these organizations include challenges such as lack of funds to attract and retain high quality professional staff that can offer credible and effective leadership to Non-governmental Organization in Kenya, (The National Council of NGOs Report, 2014).

## **1.2: Research Problem**

In the recent years many new NGOs have been set up, some by individuals, some by organization and others are existing NGOs which have expanded their activities in Kenya. With access to the internet and daily TV coverage of crisis in the country, supporters of these NGOs expect instant visible results without considering that the individuals sent as expatriates to oversee these activities may be incapacitated in various ways. More often the people sent to set up programmes often have little training and minimal knowledge of the country, coupled by the sudden shake up on cultural interaction. With only money and good intentions on their side, they must also recruit highly qualified English-speaking nationals to run the programmes along side, (Barber and Bowie, 2008).

In order to mitigate on the damages of the good intentions of the organizations, the expatriates have devised various survival tactics to cope with these challenges. For them the most effective way to deal with isolation and culture shock is to develop a good working relationship with the national government and the local staff at the organization. They can also use the NGO coordinating bodies to set up committees and working groups for sectors of activity and key issues, (2010).

An assessment on previous studies in this area are quite limited and the few that exist shows that Marcuello (2006) sought to identify organizational problems of non-governmental organization and the solutions in order to assist in the development of a new strategy for the NGO. He found that the problems facing NGOs were decision-

making processes, tensions that often occurred between staff and senior managers and the governance of the organizations and the relations between board members and staff. Muriuki (2012) determined factors influencing expatriate cultural adaptation at Aga Khan University Hospital in Kenya. The study established that expatriates are satisfied with the cultural training provided by the organization, expatriates are satisfied with participation in many local community events and that expatriates are satisfied with the duties of the job during the assignment. While Kangethe (2002) investigated on the use of expatriates by Barclays bank of Kenya to transfer managerial skills as an entry strategy. He found enhanced organization performance through expatriates' sharing best practices with the local staff led to improvement of the quality of service through transfer of global skills. In the current study, the researcher evaluated the response strategies adopted by expatriates in coping with challenges in their work environment in the Kenyan NGO sector. The study question was "how do expatriates working in the Kenyan NGOs perceive the challenges in their work environment?"

### **1.3: Research Objective**

The objective of this study was to establish the strategies employed by expatriates working in the NGOs sector in Kenya in responding to challenges in their work environment.

### **1.4: Value of the Study**

The author acknowledged the importance of international experience in both personal and professional development and was interested in seeking international experience of foreign staff working in Kenya. Therefore by carrying out this study, the researcher

intended to inject a new impetus on the area of expatriate experience in Kenya and particularly the NGO sector. This would assist the NGOs in understanding the difficulties expatriates undergo while executing assignments in their host and hence develop a support system for the foreigners.

The NGO Council would be enlightened on the areas to focus while reviewing its policies in harmonizing NGO operations in the country and its relationship with the government. The Council would also be put in a strategic position to ensure that the welfare of foreign staff within its sector is addressed from a policy framework with the stakeholders in the area. For the academicians, this study forms a basis under which future studies could be done to improve more literature on the field of expatriates and the NGOs sector in particular. It would also form a platform upon which future reference could be made on the challenges expatriates face and how they perceive them.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the relevant literature on expatriates was reviewed. The literature was reviewed on the person-environment fit theory, the culture shock theory of adaptation, the challenges faced by expatriates in work environment and how they perceive them.

### **2.2 Theoretical Foundation**

The study used the person environment-fit theory and the culture shock theory of adaptation to explain how expatriates perceive the challenges they encounter in their work environment.

#### **2.2.1 The Person-Environment Fit Theory**

The framework, person-environment (PE) fit theory, is a theory for understanding the process of adjustment to organizational members to their work environments. The theory proposed by French, Rodgers, and Cobb (1974) defines that, person-environment fit as a specific type of person–situation interaction that involves the match between corresponding person and environment dimensions or the compatibility between people and organizations that occur when at least one entity provides what the other needs, they share similar fundamental characteristics, or both. In general person–environment fit (P–E fit) is defined as the degree to which individual and environmental characteristics match (Zimmerman and Johnson, 2005).

Person characteristics may include an individual’s biological or psychological needs, values, goals, abilities, or personality, while environmental characteristics could include

intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, demands of a job or role, cultural values, or characteristics of other individuals and collectives in the person's social environment (French et al., 1982). The current study refers to expatriates response to the challenges (person-environment) which describe adjustment to work environment (fit) in terms of three components: 'factors', 'mechanisms', and 'outcomes'.

Factors are the determinants of adjustment, such as individual and organizational characteristics. Mechanisms are the means by which particular adjustment outcomes are achieved. Adjustment mechanisms have been conceptualized in terms of learning and coping strategies and, on a more general level, by adjustment 'modes'. 'Outcomes' of adjustment refer to the state of being adjusted, (Aycan, 1997). Therefore the person-environment fit theory applies here as the means by which particular adjustment outcomes are achieved and are predominantly understood to be the behaviors that expatriates use to increase the 'fit' and reduce conflicts between environmental demands and personal inclinations in their work environment.

From this perspective, the adjustment mechanism is concerned with the coping process, the strategies and behaviors that are used to cope with the foreign environment to achieve psychological well-being (Stahl, 2000). Coping strategies can therefore be seen as those adjustment behaviors by the expatriates who serve to achieve a fit between self and the work environment. The expatriate has to acquire new information and behavior repertoires in order to function in the foreign environment. Again, these can be seen as specific kinds of adjustment behaviors serving to reduce the gap between self and



environment. Expatriates are therefore seen to adjust through a process of becoming aware of behaviors of locals in certain situations, developing a cognitive map of behaviors that seem appropriate in the new environment, enacting the new behaviors and accommodating them according to positive or negative experiences in their work environment.

### **2.2.2 The Culture Shock Theory of Adaptation**

The culture shock theory of adaptation is a theory that is anchored on reflections of cultural adaptations, culture shock and the “curves of adjustment”. One of the most powerful, practical, and productive concepts in the field of international educational exchange is that of “culture shock,” described as the physical, psychological, and behavioral reactions that often occur when individuals are attempting to live, work, or study in unfamiliar cultural contexts. Culture shock remains a core concept within the fields of anthropology, psychology, and intercultural communication, and is almost universally referenced in orientation and reentry training in both education abroad (Church 1982) and corporate contexts (Black and Mendenhall 1991).

The “U” and “W” curves of adjustment models emerged and evolved alongside the “culture shock” concept, usually accompanied by visual illustrations that purported to describe and even predict a “typical” trajectory that such stressful encounters would produce. While culture shock remains a viable and useful theoretical and explanatory tool, the parallel “curves” have not held up nearly as well, in spite of their almost iconic status among trainers and the general public. In short, “curves” have not withstood critical empirical testing and research.

As a theoretical category, culture shock is a relatively recent theoretical construct even if the behaviors associated with the discomfort of crossing cultural boundaries can be found as far back as classical Greek literature. In 1951, anthropologist Cora DuBois first publicly used the term “culture shock” to describe the disorienting experience that many anthropologists face when entering different cultures (Paige 1993), although fellow Columbia University anthropologist Ruth Benedict may have been the original source. In 1954, Oberg (1954) used and expanded DuBois’ term to be applicable to all people who travel abroad into new cultures in his *classic article on Culture Shock*. He postulated a generalized “honeymoon-crisis-recovery-adjustment model” and termed culture shock an “occupational disease” that international travelers face, complete with symptoms (e.g., feeling of helplessness, home-sickness, irritability, etc.). Development of “stages” models states that within a few years, these rather vague stages became more codified and rigid.

Adaptation development models linked to discrete stages began with the concept of a “U-curve” by Lysgaard, who in 1955, described moving from a “honeymoon” period into culture shock and on to recovery and adjustment. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) expanded the U-curve, proposing the “W” in which they conceptualized the model as having two connected U-periods (or a “W” shape) that linked the phenomenon of initial entry culture shock with reverse culture shock. For years, general assumptions about the models held that they reflected the most common patterns of adjustment, could be applied to most sojourners, generally occurred over fixed time periods (e.g., crisis at 3-6 months), and were backed by research. But there were always skeptics.

Subsequently, many trainers and theoreticians developed elaborations or variations on the models to deal with what they considered simplistic, reductionistic, or overly deterministic aspects of the original conceptions. A few early critics suggested alternative models: Adler (1975) proposed a model of “contact-disintegration-reintegration-autonomy-independence” in his article *The Transitional Experience*; Bennett’s (1977) article, *Transition Shock*, proposed that culture shock is but a variation and subset of reactions caused by significant change across a broad spectrum of circumstances. Whatever reservations and concerns academics and trainers might have had with the “curves” were completely offset by its clear, easy-to-understand stages, and they became the dominant models for training related to culture shock for almost all expatriates across the globe.

## **2.3 Challenges Facing Expatriates in the Work Environment**

### **2.3.1 Orientation**

The changes encountered during cross-cultural transitions may appear to be stressful. This is because adjustments consume time, effort and money. Moreover, it requires patience and interest of the expatriates to make the adjustments a success. There are expatriates who find that the challenges have an influence towards their decision to reconsider staying in the host country (Aycan, 1997). For instance the initial stage of an expatriate’s interaction with the new work environment lasts from several days to several weeks and is characterized by the positive attitude of the expatriates about the host

country, its culture and everything new they are meeting. In this stage the employees feel more like tourists than expatriates (Pedersen, 1995).

They are excited by the new and are really enthusiastic about their job (Marx, 1999). The assignees are intrigued and curious about everything that is different from what they are used to and at the same time amazed by cultural similarities (Pedersen, 1995). They are busy with being shown the sights of the town, finding an accommodation, school for the children if they are accompanied by their families, and depending on the significance of the international assignment they can even be giving press interviews (Oberger, 1960).

### **2.3.2 Socialization**

An expatriate relocating to another country may compromise the international assignment especially if the expatriate feels isolated and alone in the host country and ends up on expatriate clubs or ghettos (Selmer, 2002). It has been argued that such clubs inhibit integration into the host culture by reinforcing unhappy expatriate's stereotypes of his/her local counterparts (Melles, 2000). This will have negative implications for business relationships as individual expatriates believe the stereotypes and behave in such a way that creates self-fulfilling prophecies of the stereotypes.

Expatriates often feel uncomfortable in the initial transition process. Missing familiar things and familiar people will drive the expatriate to seek out certain things in the host country to replace these losses. This often results in a conglomeration of expatriates who gather in expatriate's clubs or other social places. It can become a problem for the expatriate and the international assignment if the expatriate does not move on from the

expatriate club or make any effort to integrate him/herself to the host culture after the initial transition period is over (Black and Gregersen, 2001).

According to Moss 2000, a psychiatrist notes the existence of “fairly sad expatriates who tend to remain within ghettos of expatriates, and never get or never give themselves a chance to mingle with the locals, whom they in turn may call unfriendly.” The expatriate makes no effort to understand the local culture and customs which may undermine the business relationships. That is, expatriates may enforce his/her cultural values in the host country which may have conflicting cultural values (Black and Gregersen, 1999). This may result in friction between the expatriate and the locals, and ultimately lead to the failure of the international assignment (Hayes, 1996).

### **2.3.3 Management Style**

The expatriates may have a very different way of conducting business to that of the organization in the host country (Tan, 2002). For instance the Chinese teachings of confucianism - the desire to maintain a harmonious atmosphere in society, stabilize society (or organization) by keeping order of ‘loyal-protection’ in human relationships” (Yamaguchi 1999). The primary teachings focus on social relations, proper conduct, and social harmony. Superiority is also emphasized; the obedience and loyalty of the inferior to the superior and the benevolence of the superior to the inferior. Such beliefs are deeply held by Chinese locals and would have implications of how they would conduct business and perform in organizations (Rodrigues, 1997).

Some management styles may focus highly on centralized decision making, paternalistic leadership styles, and a strong emphasize in collectivism and group behavior and respect

for seniority. Senior persons are also given the quality of the 'old and wise owl'. Their opinions are considered not just a source of information, but the source of information. For expatriates and local who do not understand the principle of harmony may develop negative perceptions of their counterparts. They may view their co-workers as being over dependent on authority figures and unable to behave as individuals. They may interpret such behaviors as excessive preoccupation with bureaucracy and hierarchy. In many cases also, expatriates may be frustrated when they have realized that they themselves are seen as the ultimate authority on a particular issue (O'Keefe and O'Keefe, 1997).

#### **2.3.4 Language**

For expatriates, language differences can become a problem during business transactions, where it is important to have clear communication (Dolainski, 1997). The local language may very difficult to learn. Often the expatriate would be provided with an interpreter. However, in a high context culture, an interpreter may inhibit the international assignment (Dolainski, 1997). There is basically a relationship triangle. That is, the expatriate asks a question, the interpreter interprets the question to the local client or colleague, he/she may then speak to the interpreter for a certain length of time, outlining the issues he/her faces with the expatriate's question.

The interpreter however answers back to the expatriate with a couple of words or sentences (Dolainski, 1997). Information that may be important is lost in the translation that may compromise the assignment. Moreover, as business relationships are build upon trust, the expatriate who cannot speak the local language will find it very difficult to demonstrate his/her credibility to local colleagues and/or clients. If the expatriate's

credibility cannot be demonstrated, the locals may never let him/her to become part of the group. It reinforces the 'us and them' concept, which can compromise a joint venture that depends on trust and good faith (Mead, 1990).

Language also becomes important outside of the business relationships. Expatriates have to deal with other people apart from business associates, for example local vendors in supermarket. If he/she is not able to speak the language to certain proficiency he/she will not be able to integrate him/herself into the community. Integration may be important to international success. The expatriate's happiness in the host country and his/her acceptance of the country's cultures and customs may determine how willing he/she is to stay until the completion of the international assignment (Hailey 1996).

### **2.3.5 Differences in Gender**

Another issue to be taken into consideration is gender in expatriation. According to Caliguiri and Cascio (1998), besides understanding the cultural differences, women should be aware of the differences in gender as well. In male-dominated society women expatriates may face cultural differences, which could affect their performance in international assignments. Fish and Wood (1996) companies are often reluctant to send female expatriates. Companies often express concerns about the woman's safety, isolation and the loneliness (Halcrow, 1999). Companies also hesitate to send women abroad because they felt that foreigners would be prejudice against women and those female managers could not succeed even if sent (Meckman, 2002). Companies build these assumptions on two myths, what they read or hear about how local women are treated in

the workplace, and how women in general are treated by male colleagues in the home country workplaces (Cook, 2000).

However, women can and do function successfully in cross-border managerial success (Grove & Halowell, 1997). In a company survey of expatriate success, almost all of the expatriate managers (97%) reported that their international assignments were successful. The success rate was considerably higher than that reported for their North American male counterparts (Adler, 1995). Women and men differ in their abilities and therefore are capable of making difference but equally valuable contributions to the organization. Women should be considered for expatriate assignment as they possess a diversity of skills that can add to the venture (McGee Calvert and Ramsey, 1992).

### **2.3.6 Culture Shock**

All expatriates can be affected by culture shock, but the degree to which they suffer depends of the culture of the host country and its specific cultural characteristics, personality of the employee and how effective they are in doing their jobs. The expatriates are also affected by their attitude towards the people from the host country and vice versa and the significance of the international assignment, (Alder, 2007). After the orientation period is over, the expatriates get hit by the new culture and everything they have found amusing until now starts being irritating which results in *culture shock* (Oberg 1960). Oberg (1960) defines this phenomenon as the “occupational disease” the sojourners experience because of the constant interaction with the new environment and the different situations the host country offers.



Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all their familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which they are oriented to the situations of daily life. These includes when to shake hands and what to say when one meets people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Depending on these factors, culture shock can result into confusion about one's actions, anxiety, frustration, exhilaration, actions that do not suit the norms of behavior, inability to do one's job and thus not being able to sign an important deal, isolation and depression (Marx 1999).

### **2.3.7 Training**

An increasing number of MNCs are acknowledging the importance of providing training for all categories of expatriate employees. In order to have access to qualified staff at the time and place required, more MNCs are becoming aware of a need to develop international experience across a wider range of employees, from host locations as well as from the home country (McPherson and Roche, 1997). Expatriate employees need to be selected not on technical expertise alone, but also on cross-cultural fluency in order to maximize the expatriate's effectiveness and efficiency working in a different culture (Hill, 2007). Therefore, it becomes necessary to train the new expatriates to perform the goals and objectives set by the MNCs.

In addition to good technical skills, expatriate employees who will be working overseas need to be adaptable and have skills in languages and an understanding of social customs, cultural values, codes of conduct, and motivation and reward systems in the host country

(Kemper, 1998). For Middle Eastern assignments for example, Bechtel places great emphasis on the importance of religion in the culture. Expatriates also need assistance in the practical aspects of international assignments (housing, schools, currency, and health issues).

#### **2.4 How Expatriate Employees Perceive Challenges in the Host Countries**

Culture shock is difficult to avoid when meeting the culture of the host country. However, the cross-cultural training can help the expatriates to deal with the phenomenon. Knowing their own culture makes it easier to understand the new culture and thereby they can try to find the best way to adapt to the new culture. An alternative to which these expatriates can prepare themselves with these adjustments is through cross-culture training (CCT). Caliguiri (2000) add that the goal of CCT is to minimize “cultural shock” when on foreign deployment and enhance the managers’ cross cultural experience. In terms of behavior, the ultimate objective is to improve the functional skills of managers on overseas’ assignments. CCT is important in order to improve functional skills and to minimize cultural shock among expatriates during their international assignments. Richardson and McKenna (2002) further confirm that support in the form of CCT is important for overseas appointment otherwise the expatriate managers would repatriate prematurely.

Fish and Wood (1996) stated that understanding the differences in cross-cultural settings and applying it within the role of an expatriate and the organizational structure may assist in better adjustments for the expatriates and gain better acceptance by the local employees. With reference to a study done by Tan (2002) towards 409 expatriates on

assignments to 51 countries around the world, majority of the expatriates took six to twelve months to feel comfortable living in a new cultural setting.

There are a few recommendations companies can do to alleviate the above difficulties. First, do not assume that foreigners will treat expatriates females the same way they treat their women (Grove and Hallowell, 1997). Question assumptions about how female assignees might fare in certain other cultures. A culture might seem very different from that of the home country but these are not safe indicators of a woman expatriate's success there (Adler, 1995). Include competent women in the short lists for expatriate assignments everywhere in the world; some indeed may possess a competitive edge (Grove and Hallowell 1997).

Women must be given every opportunity to succeed. Accord her full status at the outset – not that of a temporary or experimental expatriate, with the appropriate title to communicate the home office's commitment to her (Hodge, 1999). Women expatriate should assume naïveté, not malice (Adler, 1995). Sending women abroad is new and is perceived as risky, it is still poorly understood. Foreign managers and companies are operating on the basis of untested assumptions, many are faulty but they may not be on the basis of prejudice (Meckman, 2002).

Adjustments to a new country can be difficult especially when familiar things the expatriate have come to know his/her life are no longer the same in the host country. Not all expatriates have an active reaction to culture shock. That is, not all expatriates seek

out to understand the cultural nuances of the host country and use this information to better business and personal relationships. Gordon (2003) notes that victims of culture shock may behave in many extremes, he/she may give up his/her own identity and try to imitate all customs and attitudes of the host culture, or solve the problem by regressing into a shell and refusing to learn the local language and befriend people of the local culture. The latter individuals may only seek and befriend other expatriates, or individuals with similar cultures to themselves. They will usually seek out other expatriates to provide them with supportive network while at the same time complaining about some of the strange behaviors locals partake in without any real effort to understand (Hayes, 1996).

Establish authority at the beginning. Problems can be created in cultures where women are not generally viewed as authority figures (Hodge, 1999). Like China. Authority needs to be established officially and unofficially as quickly as possible. Communicate credentials up front, for example by way of a written letter of introduction or by way of support from male colleagues from the home country. In a status orientated culture also like China, titles and credentials are important and may iron out gender inequalities. The woman expatriate must follow these credentials by demonstrating her competence (Hodge, 1999).

The woman expatriate also need the appropriate attitude. Remember that women have certain advantages over their male colleagues. Foreign executives are often curious about the Australian professional woman, and one can turn this visibility factor to one's

advantage. Women are also better at building interpersonal relationships compared to their male colleagues that may greatly benefit them in the business venture (Grove and Hallowell, 1997). In a culture like China which views personal relationships as a predictor and requirement of business relationships (Chung 1991), women's interpersonal skills will put them greatly at an advantage over their male colleagues (Hodge, 1999).

Women need to be sensitive to cultural differences, but do not need to be intimidated by it (Hardman and Heidelberg, 1996). The host will recognize the woman is from a foreign country and allow small mistakes in courtesy pass by. Hodge (1999) notes that after asking how to say “excuse me” in Chinese, her Chinese counterpart commented, “Because you are a foreigner doing business in China, you are automatically excused.” It will be good however to watch for those social customs which if ignored may cause negative emotional reactions. Establishing local relationships and contacts may provide insights to these subtle forms of culture that will help the woman expatriate form more successful business relationships rank or status (Moss, 2000).

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study, or the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge (Creswell, 2008). As such this chapter describes the methodology that was used in conducting the study to its successful end. It presents the research design, target population, sampling design and size, data collection tools and the methods of data analysis.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem. The design of a study defines the study type (descriptive, correlation, semi-experimental, experimental, review, meta-analytic) and sub-type (descriptive-longitudinal case study), research question, hypotheses, independent and dependent variables, experimental design, and, if applicable, data collection methods and a statistical analysis plan, (Muaz, 2013). Creswell (2012) defines it as the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data.

Therefore the research design that was used for the study was descriptive survey. Descriptive survey design is a research design that describes the characteristics or behaviors of a particular population in a systematic and accurate fashion (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). This study was a descriptive survey which is concerned with explaining the who, what, when and how of a phenomenon. The design was adopted here due to the fact that the study attempted to explore the experiences in terms of challenges and perceptions of the expatriates in the context of cross-cultural work environment.

According to Merriam (1998) the focus of descriptive survey is upon the “essence or structure of an experience (phenomenon). Thus, it required the researcher to interpret the experiences that the informants have encountered and how they have responded in order to draw conclusions and recommendations. However, personal biases or beliefs should be put aside while doing this type of research, so that it will not interfere with the structure of the phenomenon, (Merriam, 1998). Berg (1998) further supports that descriptive study enables a researcher to share in the understandings and perceptions of other individuals and to explore how they structure and give meaning to their daily lives. It requires the researcher to interpret the experiences in form of challenges which the informants encounter together with their perceptions.

### **3.3 Population of Study**

Best and Kahn (1998) defines the target population as any group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. A study population is therefore known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics from the target population. All individuals or

objects within a certain population usually have a common, binding characteristic or trait. Usually, the description of the population and the common binding characteristic of its members are the same, (Mohammad, 2013).

For the purpose of this research, the study population comprised of 2394 NGOs based in Nairobi. This is the number registered by the NGO coordination Bureau as at August 2014. From the NGOs, the participants of the research were men and women expatriates currently working in these NGOs. They are professionals overseeing implementation of various projects for the NGOs and are currently working for a specific period of time. The NGOs to be studied were presented in appendix 1.

### **3.4 Sample Design**

A sample is a subset of the target population to which the researcher intends to generalize the results (Wiersma, 1986). This is the primary concern in statistical sampling. The sample obtained from the population must be representative of the same population. This can be accomplished by using randomized statistical sampling techniques or probability sampling like cluster sampling and stratified sampling, (Berinsky, 2008). Sampling technique is the strategy applied by researchers during the statistical sampling process. This process is done when the researcher's aim to draw conclusions for the entire population after conducting a study on a sample taken from the same population, has been established, (Explorable.com, 2009).

A rule of thumb recommends a minimum of 30 response units. However, 60 organizations were included in the study to enhance representativeness of the sample.



Since units of analysis were the expatriate employees, data was collected from two expatriates in each organization. This ensured that the data was collected from at least one expatriate in case the second was not available. The expatriates were chosen through purposive sampling, which is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore select a sample where most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998). The respondents’ first selection criterion required men and women expatriates who are currently working in the NGOs mentioned in appendix 1. Secondly, those expatriates who have served in this country for more than six months. The duration of stay assisted in giving more meaningful perceptions with regard to expatriates’ personal experiences on the challenges they have faced working in Kenya and how they perceive the challenges.

Thirdly, each informant was expected to have some knowledge of management, well-exposed to interactions among the locals either at their workplace or otherwise. Moreover, the expatriate must have been professionals in business, academic, medicine, sociology, communications or engineering, since these are mainly the common areas where skills and knowledge of the expatriates are most needed in this country. Their names and addresses were obtained through personal contact of the researcher with the organizations where the expatriates work and the use of the ‘snowballing sampling technique’.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

The study used primary data sources collected using semi-structured questionnaires which were quantitative in nature. The questionnaires were addressed to the Human

Resources Manager in each of the identified organization. The HRM then administered the questionnaires to two expatriate respondents who were selected randomly. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section one covered the biographical data while section two addressed the response by the expatriates to the challenges they face in their work environment. The response were rated using likert scale where the response options were strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree.

### **3.6 Research Procedures**

Before the actual data collection, a pre-test exercise of the research questionnaire was carried in two different phases. The first phase involved development of the instruments by the researcher and seeking expert advice from the supervisor in order to ensure validity and reliability of the research instruments. Validity in data collection means that the findings truly represent the phenomenon the study claims to measure. (Prescott and Soeken, 2009). Polit et al, (2001) advises that assess whether each question gives an adequate range of responses, establish that replies can be interpreted in terms of the information that is required, check that all questions are answered, re-word or re- scale any questions that are not answered as expected, shorten and revise (Prescott and Soeken, 2009).After that the proposal was approved for defense where the areas highlighted by the defense team were corrected accordingly and checked by the supervisor.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data Analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. After collecting the data, the researcher cross-checked the questionnaires for completeness,

validity, consistency and accuracy in preparation for analysis. The data was then entered into a computer system using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Thereafter the data was analyzed using descriptive statistic such as frequency clusters and percentages and the findings presented in tables.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4. I Introduction**

This chapter presents the research findings on the expatriate employees' response to challenges in their work environment among the NGOs in Nairobi, Kenya. The study question was "how do expatriates working in the NGO sector in Nairobi Kenya perceive of the challenges in their work environment? The study sampled 60 NGOs and two expatriates from each of the NGOs were expected to participate as respondents. Therefore, the actual sample size was 120 expatriates. Out of this, 84 participated in the study giving a response rate of 70% which is acceptable according to Creswell, (2012).The findings are presented below.

### **4.2 Profile of the respondents and their Organizations**

This section contains information on the organizations where the respondents were drawn from, the positions held by the respondents in their respective organizations, the gender distribution of the respondents, the number of years they have worked with the organizations, their level of education, professional qualifications and age distribution.

#### **4.2.1 Profile of the Organizations**

The first item on this study sought to establish the organizations where the respondents were drawn from. From the 46 organizations that participated in the study, all the

sampled respondents participated in the study except in two organizations where there was only one respondent each. The overall response rate was 70%. Refer to appendix II.

#### 4.2.2 Current Position

The respondents were asked to indicate their current positions within the organizations.

The responses are given on table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Composition of the Sample by Respondents’ Current Positions**

Position	Number of respondents	Percent
Senior manager	31	36
Middle level Manager	29	35
Junior manager	24	29
Total	84	100

**Author: (2014)**

From Table 4.1, it was observed that majority of the expatriates were senior managers in their organizations at a response rate of 31%, they were followed by those who held departmental managerial positions at 35% while the junior managers were 29%.

#### 4.2.3 Composition of the Respondents by Gender

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. It was observed that majority of the respondents were female at a response rate of 64.3 % while the male expatriates were rated at 35.7%. The responses are presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Distribution of the respondents by gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	30	35.7
Female	54	64.3
Total	84	100.0

**Author: (2014)**

#### **4.2.4 Number of years with the Organization**

The researcher sought to establish the number of years the expatriates have worked with their various organizations. The responses are presented in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Composition of the respondents by the Number of Years within the Organization**

<b>Number of years</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 1 year	48	57.1
1-5 years	23	28.6
6-10 years	6	7.1
over10 years	6	7.1
Total	84	100.0

**Author: (2014)**

As shown in Table 4.4, 57.1% had worked with the organizations for less than year. They were followed by those who have worked for 1-5 years at a response rate of 28.6% while

those who have been working with these organizations for 6-10 years and over 10 years were rated at 7.1 % each.

#### 4.2.5 Level of Education

The researcher sought to establish the academic qualifications of the respondents. The findings are shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Level of Education**

Level of Education	Number of Respondents	Percent
O level	12	14.3
Tertiary	18	21.4
Under graduate	42	50.0
Post Graduate	12	14.3
Total	84	100.0

**Author: (2014)**

Most of the respondents have acquired their first degrees in various fields such as engineering design, aid worker, nutritionist, sociology, community development officers, global international studies, gender and development studies at a response rate of 50%. They were followed by the tertiary level expatriates at 21.4% while those who have masters' degrees and PHD in various fields were rated at 14.3% as well as the ones with O levels who were also rated at a similar response rate of 14.3%.

#### 4.2.6 Professional Qualifications

With these qualifications the expatriates serve as finance directors, country project coordinators, project managers, architects, volunteers and general directors of various projects for their organizations as shown in table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Distribution of the respondents by Profession**

Age of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percent
Finance directors	8	9.5
Project coordinators	8	9.5
Project managers	13	15.5
Architects	22	26.2
Volunteers	23	27.4
General directors	10	11.9
Total	84	100

**Author: (2014)**

From Table 4.6, it was observed that 27.4% of the respondents were volunteers, 26.2% were architects, 15.5% were project managers, 9.5 were working as finance directors and another 9.5% were project coordinators while the general directors were 11.9%.

#### 4.2.7 Age Distribution of the Respondents

To conclude this first section of the chapter the respondents were asked to indicate their ages. The response was presented in table 4.6.



**Table 4.6: Age Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Age of the respondents</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
36 - 45 years	18	21.4
46-55 years	66	78.6
Total	84	100.0

Author: (2014)

The study found that most of the expatriates are people who have acquired a lot of experience in the corporate world with over 45 years age bracket at 78% while those who were slightly younger were rated at 21.4% for being above 36 years. It also came across that these expatriates are people who have been working on international assignments much of the time and therefore have acquired a lot of experience in coping with challenges in the international organizations.

#### **4.3 Expatriate Employees' Response to Challenges in their Work Environment**

This section of the study sought to determine the response strategies adopted by expatriates in their work environment. The responses were presented in table 4.7. Key: 1- Strongly disagrees, 2- disagree, 3 – neither disagree nor agree, 4 – agree, 5- strongly agree.

**Table 4.7: Expatriate Employees' Response to Challenges in their Work Environment**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Expatriate Employees' Response to Challenges in their Work Environment</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
8	I have responded well to the challenge posed by the host country culture	6	12	30	30	6	84	100
9	I have less problems interacting with my colleagues at work because they see my views differently.	24	42	12	6	0	84	100
10	I feel insecure and lonely because I have no one who understands my language and culture	0	30	30	12	12	84	100
11	My management style is in contradiction with what the staff are used to.	0	0	6	18	60	84	100
12	I have difficulties understanding the cultural believes of the locals	0	7.1	7.1	50	35.7	84	100
13	My work environment does not offer me a chance to promote diversity due to their attitudes towards my culture	54	6	0	0	24	84	100
14	My gender makes it hard for me to get my instructions followed by my juniors	0	12	0	18	54	84	100

15	Most of the time I find myself socializing with fellow expatriates because they understand me better	0	18	6	21	36	84	100
16	I was not adequately prepared to deal with the cultural difference I have found myself in and therefore my work has been very challenging	6	6	24	36	12	84	100
17	I have brought my family to stay with me to provide emotional support	0	6	12	12	54	84	100
18	The orientation I received at the beginning or I continue to receive have helped me to deal with the clash in the organizational culture	0	6	12	30	36	84	100
19	I try to reach out to my colleagues at work so that they can understand me before they make conclusions about my views	0	24	24	24	12	84	100
20	I take time to guide my staff on any new style of management	42	24	18	0	0	84	100
21	My experience working in other countries have enabled me to cope with the work environment	18	30	18	6	12	84	100
22	My colleagues are very supportive to me and the help me in understanding the	12	24	30	12	6	84	100

	cultural believes in my organization							
23	I have established strategies to train my staff in appreciating diversity because we work very closely	12	60	0	6	6	84	100
24	I have no problem leading staff here because they appreciate my gender	12	18	30	6	18	84	100

When the respondents were asked whether they have responded well to the challenges posed by then Kenyan culture, 30 (35.7%) disagree and another 30 (35.7%) non-committal, 12 (14.3%) agreed while 6 (7.1%) strongly agreed. Then the researcher sought to establish how the expatriates have been dealing with divergence of views in their work place. 42 (50%) agreed that they have less problems interacting with their colleagues at work because their views match with those of their colleagues. Then 24(28.6%) strongly agreed while 12 (14.3%) non-committal and another 6 (7.1%) disagreeing. Then the respondents were asked whether they feel insecure and lonely because they have no one to understand their languages and culture. From the findings, 30 (35.7%) agreed and another 30 (35.7%) non-committal. At the same time 12 (14.3%) strongly disagreed while another 12 (14.3%) disagreed.

Respondents were asked whether their management style is in contradiction with what the staff are used to. 60 (71.4%) strongly disagreed and another 18 (21.4%) disagreed while 6(7.1%) non-committal. When the researcher asked the expatriates whether they have difficulties in understanding the cultural believes of the locals. 42 (50 %) disagreed

with the argument that they have difficulties in understanding the cultural believes of the locals, 30 (35.7%) strongly disagreed while 6 (7.1%)non-committal and another 6 (7.1%) agreed. The respondents were then asked whether their work environment offers them a chance to promote diversity due to their attitudes towards expatriates' culture, 54 (64.3%) strongly agreed, 24 (28.6%) strongly disagreed while 6 (7.1%) agreed.

The respondents were asked whether their gender makes it hard for them to get their instructions followed by their juniors. The study found that 54 (64.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that their gender makes it hard for them to get their instructions followed by their juniors. They were followed by 18(21.4%) who disagreed while 12(14.3%) agreed. When asked whether most of the time they find themselves socializing with fellow expatriates because they understand one another better, 36(42.9%) strongly disagreed and another 24(28.6%) disagreed. They were followed by 18 (21.4%) who agreed while 6(7.1%) non-committal.

The respondents were asked whether they were adequately prepared to deal with the cultural difference they have found themselves in which has made their work very challenging. Most of the respondents at a response rate of 36 (42.9%) disagreed. They were followed by 24 (28.6%) who were non-committal while 12(14.3%) strongly disagreed, whereas those who agreed and strongly agreed were rated at 6 (7.1%) in each case. The researcher the asked the respondents if they have brought their families to stay with them to provide them with emotional support. The study findings show that 54

(64.3%) strongly disagreed, 12 (14.3%) disagreed and another 12(14.3%)non- committal while those who agreed were rated at a response rate of 6 (7.1%).

The study sought to establish whether the orientation given to the expatriates at the beginning of the assignment or they continue to receive have helped them in dealing with the clash in the organizational culture. From the table 36 (42.9%) strongly disagreed with the argument. They were further backed up by 30 (35.7%) of the respondents who disagreed. 12(14.3%) neither disagreed nor agreed while 6 (7.1%) agreed.

The researcher sought to establish if the expatriates reach out to their colleagues at work so that they could understand them before making conclusions about their views 24(28.6%)did not reach out, another 24(28.6%) were non-committal and another 28.6% did not ranking it at 12(14.2%). The respondents were then asked if their colleagues are very supportive and help them in understanding the cultural beliefs in the organization. The study found that42 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, they were followed by those who agreed at 24(28.6%) while 18(21.4%) were non-committal.

As for the strategies employed by the respondents in appreciating diversity in the organization, 35.7% agreed that they are working very closely as a team. 21.4% were non-committal and another 21.4% strongly agreed with those who strongly disagreed ranking at 14.3% while the least ranked were those who disagreed at 7.1%. When the respondents were asked if they have problems in leading staff because of their gender. Most of the respondents were non-committal that they have problems in leading staff due

to their gender. At the same time, 28.6% agreed and another 14.3% disagreed while a similar number of respondents strongly agreed with those who strongly disagreed being ranked at 7.1%.

Asked whether they have trained themselves on various ways to deal with cultural difference through experience interacting with various cultures across the world, 60 (71.4%) agreed, 12(14.3%) strongly agreed while 6 (7.1%) strongly agreed and disagreed in each case. Finally the researcher sought to find out if the respondents had brought their families alongside so that they could balance their work with family duties. Most of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they have brought their families along side in order to be able to balance work with family life at a response rate of 30 (35.7%). Then 18 (21.4%) strongly disagreed and another 18 (21.4%) agreed. Finally those who strongly agreed were ranked at 12 (14.3%) while 6 (7.1%) disagreed.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

The study has shown that the expatriates have not been able to respond well to challenges posed by the Kenyan culture. This could be due to clash in cultural believes and the fact that they are used to their normal culture. Regardless of their failure to adjust to the Kenyan culture, they have less problems interacting with Kenyans because they have devised strategies for selling their ideas across. This is supported by Moss when he says that establishing local relationships and contacts may provide insights to these subtle forms of culture that will help the expatriate form more successful business relationships rank or status (Moss, 2000).

The expatriate in the study also pointed out that they have feelings of insecurity and loneliness because they are not able to converse in the local languages. The latter individuals may only seek and befriend other expatriates, or individuals with similar cultures to themselves. They will usually seek out other expatriates to provide them with supportive network while at the same time complaining about some of the strange behaviors locals partake in without any real effort to understand (Hayes, 1996). The study found that the expatriates had to seek the help of an interpreter when they had difficulty in communication at the beginning but now, they have grasped a bit of Kiswahili and English. According to (Dolainski, 1997) for expatriates, language differences can become a problem during business transactions, where it is important to have clear communication. The local language may be very difficult to learn. Often the expatriate would be provided with an interpreter. However, in a high context culture, an interpreter may inhibit the international assignment. Therefore they have better coping ideas. With such strategies in place they have been able to ensure that the locals fully understand them and therefore their management styles are not in conflict with the local styles.

The study further showed that the expatriates have adapted very well with the cultural beliefs of the locals and therefore are finding the locals very accommodative and can sell their ways through. They have been able to survive the cultural differences by getting training prior to their coming to Kenya and on the job. Caliguiri (2000) add that the goal of CCT is to minimize “cultural shock” when on foreign deployment and enhance the managers’ cross cultural experience. In terms of behavior, the ultimate objective is to improve the functional skills of managers on overseas’ assignments. This has made their



work very easy and they are able to meet the goals of the assignments for which they were sent. The work environment was also found to promote diversity among the employees that work with the expatriates. They expatriated indicated that they have the chance to bring in new ideas from their experience in other countries and the locals are very cooperative to such processes.

Because most of the expatriates are women, the study has found that not even their gender could deter them from executing their duties. They can easily send instructions across the organization and the job gets done even if all the people they work with are men. This is contradiction with the common notion as argued out by Fish and Wood (1996) that companies are often reluctant to send female expatriates. Companies often express concerns about the woman's safety, isolation and the loneliness (Halcrow, 1999). Companies also hesitate to send women abroad because they felt that foreigners would be prejudice against women and those female managers could not succeed even if sent (Meckman, 2002).

Because of the conducive work environment in the NGOs sectors in Kenya, the expatriates find it easy to make friends and socialize with Kenyans and the local staff in general and this has enabled them to easily adjust to survive in the Kenyan society. One of the tools the expatriates are banking on for enabling them to cope easily in the Kenyan society is the adequate and effective orientation programmes they were given prior to their coming into Kenya. The study found that most of the expatriates were adequately prepared and made several trips to Kenya before they settled on the actual assignment.

At the same time they continue to receive some of these services while here which has added onto their confidence.

In order to prevent loneliness and balance family life with work, the expatriates have come along with their families to keep them company. The expatriates have gone this far because they say adjusting to a new lifestyle where they have to do certain things for themselves is not easy and therefore coming with their families has been a very strong pillar. Fellow staffs at the organizations have not been left out either in assisting these expatriates to cope with the culture shock they have found themselves in. Majority have used their colleagues at work to understand their new culture and find a fitting ground. The colleagues have also been very supportive to the expatriates and are always at their call whenever they need their help. The expatriates also pointed out on their experiences working in other countries as the greatest source of strength, something that has seen them adjust quickly to the Kenyan culture.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter finalizes the study on the expatriates' response to challenges in their work environment in the NGO sector in Nairobi, Kenya. The study was carried out using descriptive survey of the NGOs within Nairobi's Central Business District. The target population was 60 organizations where two expatriates were sampled to participate in the study from each organization. This gave a sample size of 120. The findings were presented in the following order.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The data was gathered from 46 organizations in which majority produced the expected sample size except for two organizations where they were only one respondent each. Most of the expatriates are very senior managers in their organizations and have been send to oversee implementation of various projects that are carried out by the organizations in various regions in Kenya. They have also served for less than year in Kenya because they have been send purposely for the purpose of running the various projects.

Surprisingly the study has shown that majority of the expatriates in the Kenyan NGOs are women which contradicts the traditional notion that women expatriates are less compared to men in normal circumstances. This is an indication that gender diversity has been

embraced world over and women are finding even more opportunities in the expatriate world than men.

Since majority of the respondents have worked in the country for less than one year, but mostly above the pre-determined study period of six months, it is believed that they have adequate experience on the challenges in their work environment and have come up with strategies to cope with these challenges. The ones who have been in the country for more than one year seems to have adopted well and are effectively carrying out their assignments.

Most of the respondents have acquired their first degrees in various fields such as engineering design, aid worker, nutritionist, sociology, community development officers, global international studies, gender and development studies. With these qualifications the expatriates serve as finance directors, country project coordinators, project managers, architects, volunteers and general directors of various projects for their organizations among others. At the same time they have acquired a lot of experience in the corporate world with over 45 years age bracket. It also came across that these expatriates are people who have been working on international assignments much of the time and therefore have acquired a lot of experience in coping with challenges in the international organizations

The study found that the expatriates have not been able to respond well to challenges posed by the Kenyan culture. This could be due to clash in cultural believes and the fact

that they are used to their normal culture. Regardless of their failure to adjust to the Kenyan culture, they have less problems interacting with Kenyans because they have devised strategies for selling their ideas across. They also pointed out that they have feelings of insecurity and loneliness because they are not able to converse in the local languages. The study found that the expatriates had to seek help of an interpreter when they had difficulty in communication at the beginning but now, they have grasped a bit of Kiswahili and English. Therefore they have better coping ideas. With such strategies in place they have been able to ensure that the locals fully understand them and therefore their management styles are not in conflict with the local styles.

The study further showed that the expatriates have adapted very well with the cultural believes of the locals and therefore are finding the locals very accommodative and can sell their ways through. This has made their work very easy and they are able to meet the goals of the assignments for which they were sent. The work environment was also found to promote diversity among the employees that work with the expatriates. The expatriate indicated that they have the chance to bring in new ideas from their experience in other countries and the locals are very cooperative to such processes. Because most of the expatriates are women, the study has found that not even their gender could deter them from executing their duties. They can easily send instructions across the organization and the job gets done even if all the people they work with are men.

Because of the conducive work environment in the Kenyan NGOs, the expatriates find it easy to make friends and socialize with Kenyans and the local staff in general and this

has enabled them to easily adjust to survive in the Kenyan society. One of the tools the expatriates are banking on for enabling them to cope easily in the Kenyan society is the adequate and effective orientation programmes they were given prior to their coming into Kenya. The study found that most of the expatriates were adequately prepared and made several trips to Kenyan before they settled on the actual assignment. At the same time they continue to receive some of this services while here which has added onto their confidence.

In order to prevent loneliness and balance family life with work, the expatriates have come along with their families to keep them company. The expatriates have gone this far because they say adjusting to a new lifestyle where they have to do certain things for themselves is not easy and therefore coming with their families has been a very strong pillar. Fellow staffs at the organizations have not been left out either in assisting these expatriates to cope with the culture shock they have found themselves in. Majority have used their colleagues at work to understand their new culture and find a fitting ground. The colleagues have also been very supportive to the expatriates and are always at their call whenever they need their help. The expatriates also pointed out on their experiences working in other countries as the greatest source of strength, something that has seen them adjust quickly to the Kenyan culture.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study therefore concludes that expatriates employees working in the Kenyan NGOs respond to challenges in their work environment by finding a fit between the Kenyan culture and that of their countries, although sometimes there is a very big clash between

the two cultures which makes it hard for them to adjust well. They have come up with strategies to interact with the locals who have improved on their communication and ability to work on the assignments they were sent to do. In cases where conversing in the local languages has been a challenge, the expatriates have sought the help of locals as interpreters.

Through improved communication between them and locals they can easily sell their ideas to the locals and therefore they find that their management styles are not in contradiction with what the locals are used to. Their experiences working in other countries have also helped them cope well in Kenya because they are not new to cultural deviations. This also gives them the opportunity to bring in new ideas to the locals who are also very cooperative. They have also management to create a work environment that promotes diversity and therefore the locals are motivated to work with the expatriates. Not even the women expatriates are finding it hard to work in Kenya, as they have been able to develop an atmosphere where everyone is considered equal in the organization. Another strategy used in coping with the challenges is by making friends with locals and even going out with both expatriates and locals in order to balance their understanding of the new culture and blend with what they are used to. To back up these, they have come along with their families to prevent loneliness and balance their family life with work.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings the study recommends that:

Since these expatriates seem to have adjusted well in the Kenyan society, they can be a great source of strength for others who are coming into this country and other countries for similar or other assignments. Further, because the study found that most of the expatriates are people who have a lot of experience on international assignment, they can be a good pillar for young expatriates either way for they can be used to help them in adjusting to the challenges that might arise in their work environment. The government should also document a policy framework targeting expatriate employees in the NGOs and multination corporations.

### **5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies**

The fact that most of the expatriates are women is a change in the normal trend that needs to be researched on in order to find out why more and more women are participating in international assignments compared to men. A similar study should be done to find out how Kenyan expatriates cope with challenges in other countries. Further, because most of the expatriates are women, it is important to carry out a study to establish the strategies they employ in order to survive on multinational assignments. A similar study should also be carried out targeting expatriate employees in the multinational corporations.



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**APPENDIX I**  
**TARGET NGOs**

<b>Name of the Organization</b>	<b>Senior Managers</b>	<b>Middle Level Managers</b>
GOAL Kenya		
Save the Children		
Kenya Amnesty International		
International Children Trust		
Plan International		
World Vision International		
Compassion International		
Children Trust International		
Heifer International		
Child Fund		
CEFA		
CISP		
International Alert - ALNAP		
VSO		
Action Aid		
Child Welfare Society		
Sainta Magarita Development Centre		
African Harnest Biotech Foundation International		
African Population and Health Research Center		
Al-manaar Islamic She Red		
American Friends Service Committee		



Arise Child Development Kenya		
Centre for Development of ENTERPRS (CDE)		
Future Kids Projects		
International Rescue Committee		
Kenya Voluntary Development Association		
Kenya Red Cross Society		
Olive Leaf Foundation		
Pangea Network		
Pathfinder International		
Separations International		
Undugu Society of Kenya		
Techno Serve		
Worldview Kenya		
UFadhili Trust		
SOS		
Richard Leaky and Associations		
Poverty be History		
Nesi Network		
Cliton Health Access Initiative		
Future Kinds Projects		
Hijra Somali		
Gibb Africa Ltd		
Equality Now		
Swiss Contact		

Aga Khan Development Network		
Aid the Children Network		
Animus Association Foundation		
Anti Sex Trafficking Action		
Association for Community Development		
Association for Social Rehabilitation		
SIDA		
CARE International		
Caritas Internationals		
Catholic Relief Services		
Cectar Foundation		
Child Fund International		
Environment Liason Centre		
Concern Kenya		
ILRI		
<b>Total</b>		

## APPENDIX II

### DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY ORGANIZATION

Name of the Organization	Number of respondents	Percent
CISP		
GOAL Kenya		
CEFA		
Human Needs Project		
Save the Children		
Kenya Amnesty International		
International Children Trust		
Plan International		
World Vision International		
Compassion International		
Children Trust International		
Heifer International		
Child Fund		
CARE International Kenya		
Caritas Internationals		
International Alert - ALNAP		
VSO		
Action Aid		
Child Welfare Society		
Sainta Magarita Development Centre		
African Harnest Biotech Foundation International		
African Population and Health Research Center		
Al-manaar Islamic She red		
American Friends Service Committee		

Arise Child Development Kenya		
Centre for Development of ENTERPRS (CDE)		
Future Kids Projects		
International Rescue Committee		
Kenya Voluntary Development Association		
Kenya Red Cross Society		
Olive Leaf Foundation		
Pangea Network		
Pathfinder International		
Separations International		
Undugu Society of Kenya		
Techno Serve		
Worldview Kenya		
Ufadhili Trust		
SOS		
Richard Leaky and Associations		
Poverty be History		
Animus Association Foundation		
Aid the Children Network		
<b>Total</b>		

**APPENDIX III**  
**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

Abur Hilder Atieno  
P.O Box 18591-00500  
Nairobi

To Public Relations Officer  
Comitato Internazionale Per Lo  
Sviluppo Dei Popoli (CISP)  
P.O Box 39433-00623  
Nairobi-Kenya.

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: expatriate employees' response to challenges in their work environment in the  
NGO sector in Nairobi, Kenya**

My name is Abur Hilder Atieno, a continuing student of the University of Nairobi, school of Business. Currently I am undertaking a study on the subject stated above. This is to fulfill the requirements for the award of a Master of Science degree in human resource management. I have identified your organization as one of the target organizations where study respondents will be all the expatriates working under the organization. Through this letter, I am kindly requesting for an appointment to discuss the purpose of my study prior to the actual data collection. The information sought for this study is purely for academic purpose and will remain confidential. A copy of the final research report will be availed to you up on request. Your cooperation and positive response will be highly appreciated and useful for the completion of my masters' programme.

Yours Faithfully,

Hilder A. Abur

## APPENDIX IV

### RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Part 1: Bio-data

1. Which organization do you work for? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which of the following describes your current position in the organization?  
Senior manager ( ) middle level manager ( )
3. Gender?  
Male ( ) Female ( )
4. Number of years you have worked with the organization?  
Less than one year ( ) 1 – 5 years ( ), 5 – 10 years ( ), over 10 years ( ), any others, .....
5. Level of education?  
“O” level ( ), Tertiary ( ), under graduate ( ), post graduate ( ), any other, .....
6. Professional qualification.....
7. Which is your age bracket?  
18 – 25 years ( ), 26- 35 years ( ), 36 – 45 years ( ), 45- 55 years, over 55 years ( )

#### Part 2: Expatriate Employees’ Response to Challenges in their Work Environment

This section deals with the challenges that face expatriates in their work environment and their response strategies. To what extent do you agree with this statements. 1- Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3 – neither disagree nor agree, 4 – agree, 5- strongly agree.

No.	Challenges	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have responded well to the challenge posed by the host country culture					

9	I have less problems interacting with my colleagues at work because they see my views differently.					
10	I feel insecure and lonely because I have no one who understands my language and culture					
11	My management style is in contradiction with what the staff are used to.					
12	I have difficulties understanding the cultural believes of the locals					
13	My work environment does not offer me a chance to promote diversity due to their attitudes towards my culture					
14	My gender makes it hard for me to get my instructions followed by my juniors					
15	Most of the time I find myself socializing with fellow expatriates because they understand me better					
16	I was not adequately prepared to deal with the cultural difference I have found may self in and therefore my work has been very challenging					
17	I have brought my family to stay with me to provide emotional support					
18	The orientation I received at the beginning or I continue to receive have helped me to deal with the clash in the organizational culture					
19	I try to reach out to my colleagues at work so that they can understand me before they make conclusions about my views					
20	I take time to guide my staff on any new style of management					
21	My experience working in other countries have enabled me to cope with the work environment					
22	My colleagues are very supportive to me and the help me in understanding the cultural believes in my organization					
23	I have established strategies to train my staff in appreciating					

	diversity because we work very closely					
24	I have no problem leading staff here because they appreciate my gender					
25	I balance my socialization with fellow expatriates and locals who have helped to adjust to the new environment					