worthKeeping

Global perspectives on good practice in missionary retention

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Section A

Viewing the site:

Section A sets the scene, explains the layout of the book, the history and background to the project, and introduces the team who undertook the study. It also highlights some key findings and points to a few places in the book to get you started.
“In your hands you hold the secrets to success…”

If this was a self-help book, I would begin as above and go on to espouse some ethereal solution to the pressing problem you may not even be aware that you had! I feel somewhat like a self-help writer, and yet, unlike the myriad of self-help books available, this book is based on facts—and not just facts, but robust statistical results from the largest research study ever undertaken on world mission.

Why read this book?

Here are a few reasons why this study is worth reading:

- Forty percent of the world mission workforce was represented in the study
- It was undertaken by the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance
- It covered 22 countries on 6 continents
- It highlights huge differences between the best and worst mission agencies
- It covered denominational and inter-denominational agencies as well as churches sending direct
- It is aimed at mission practitioners, church leaders and mission agency leaders
- It aims to show you the good practice identified that makes the difference between having mission agency partners who serve effectively long-term or ineffectively short-term
Why read this chapter?

This chapter provides a guide to the whole book. As we began to write, I was struck by the fact that, however well written, it is unlikely that this book will be read from cover to cover by anyone other than the writers and editors; therefore, why write in that style? Instead, we have set out to write a reference book you can dip into; a book in which you can turn to the section pertaining to a specific issue, get a handle on it, and find help on how to tackle it in your organisation. Its layout is structured and clear to help you find your way around...but, to do so effectively you must read this chapter. This chapter is your blueprint.

**blue·print** (blü´ prīnt´)
1. A detailed plan of action.
2. A model or prototype.
3. Something intended as a guide for making something else; “a blueprint for a house.”

A blueprint helps you to know how things fit together and how to begin building what you want to see come into existence. However...a blueprint does not build for you, nor is the end product the plans and drawings of a blueprint, but it is the house, office or cathedral. In the same way, this book is not designed to be an end product, but rather a guide to good materials and building techniques. You need to identify the building blocks of good practice appropriate to your organisation and assemble them in a style appropriate to your context.

How this book is organised

**Section A – Viewing the site**

This section introduces you to the book and how to use it, the previous study (ReMAP)—what it was, what it did and what it achieved—and then gives an overview of the follow up study (ReMAP II) on which this book is based, highlighting some key findings and implications.

**Section B – The building blocks**

This section comprises the bulk of the book, with each chapter covering a key issue that is a building block of good practice. In the case of a particularly large or complicated issue, there are sub-chapters focused on a particular aspect. All these chapters have the same layout marked with
icons (described following) to allow easy navigation. Each chapter takes you through the key facts, the supporting data, key findings from the data, real world application, and examples from around the world.

**Section C - Construction...in the real world**

Putting together a meaningful and workable code of good practice requires care, effort and skill. Richard Tiplady, who oversaw the development of the Code of Best Practice for Short Term Mission in the UK, which has been copied around the world, shares insights and techniques on how to do this. Also, conscious that we live in a fast changing world, we discuss some of the challenges facing global mission in the coming years and how these will challenge our efforts at good practice.

**Getting an overview**

Each of the core chapters start with a summary header section which is explained below:

![Chapter 28: Ministry in Missions](image)
The scoring

As part of the chapter headings and data tables, a simple graphical score indicates health or ill-health in an area, according to survey results. More white dots mean greater health, more black dots mean greater ill-health; or, to put it a different way, many black dots indicate an area requiring improvement.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ten white dots indicate excellent health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A score in between indicates a degree of health of ill-health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ten black dots indicate severe ill health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data

Each of the core chapters display detailed data on responses to the research questionnaire. These are broken down into New Sending Countries (NSC) and Old Sending Countries (OSC) (these categories are defined in chapter 2) as often the answers from these two groups were significantly different. The data also highlights which questions correlated strongly with retaining mission partners—this is shown with a tick.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. No.</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>OSC</th>
<th>NSC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Score</td>
<td>Health Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Clear calling</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Doctor statement</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Agen. principles</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>X-cult. experience</td>
<td>☒</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cope. stress</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Health</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The number on the questionnaire

Does it significantly affect retention?

How did the Old Sending Countries rate on this issue?

How did the New Sending Countries rate on this issue?

The issue that the question asked about and the score relates to. For the full text of the question see Appendix XX
Icons used in this book

**The key facts:** this icon indicates key points from the chapter’s topic.

**The data:** a table showing the statistical results in an easy to read style (see The data—previous page).

**The key findings:** the important highlights of a topic or sub-topic, summarised in bullet form for quick overview.

**What it means:** here the data is discussed—why is the issue important and what effect does it have on retaining missionaries?

**In the real world:** a chart to provide some clear, practical ways to put the research findings into practice for your organisation.

**Case study:** a case study from the real world of missions.

**Conclusion:** here we seek to look at what to do with the issue and where to go further with it.

This section...

This section...

**Web-site indicator:** a mark to help you quickly identify where to get more information.
The questionnaire

A copy of the questionnaire is included in full in Appendix XX and details about its development and methodology can be found in the technical guide at www.worthkeeping.info/technical.

The website

This book has been written for church leaders, mission partners and mission agency leaders as the primary audiences. It has not been written for statisticians who want to analyse the figures, but rather for leaders and practitioners who want to use the findings to improve their own or their organisation’s effectiveness in building the Kingdom of God. So if you think ‘standard deviation’ sounds like something you could be arrested for—look no further, this book gives you everything you need. It seeks to give enough ‘data’ to understand the results, but not so much that you get lost in the detail.

However, the study is based on very robust statistical research and for those that want to delve deeper there is a technical version on-line at the website www.worthkeeping.info. So if means and medians are your thing, please access the site with the code printed in the inside back cover.
Chapter 2

What it said, what it did, and what it achieved

Detlef Bloecher

Introduction

We all know them, missionaries who departed from home with great enthusiasm, convinced that the Lord sent them—then returning after a short time with broken hearts and shattered vision, and now facing their disappointed home church and confused supporters. Why did it go wrong? What could have been done to prevent these tragic events?

At the 1993 National Missions Congress in Caxambu, Brazil, participants were shocked at the report given by a respected Brazilian missionary leader that 75% of that nation’s cross-cultural missionaries quit their posts during their initial five-year term of service or don’t return after the first furlough. Could a 20% per annum attrition figure possibly be true? None of the participants at the congress could confirm or refute the figure. There was simply no reliable data available.

Survey

This was the reason why the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance launched a comprehensive research project on missionary attrition called “Reducing Missionary Attrition Project” (ReMAP). How many missionaries do actually return home and for what reasons? In addition, the new vibrant mission movement of Latin America, Africa and Asia had recently boomed. How do the new missionary sending countries (NSC) differ from the older missionary sending countries of North America, Europe and Australia (OSC)?

The staff of the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission (WEA-MC) designed the study process, and it was led by Rodolfo Girón,
President of the Latin American mission movement COMIBAM and member of the MC’s Executive Committee. Fourteen representative countries were selected, each with a sizeable mission force and an organised evangelical mission movement so that reliable data and a good return rate could be expected. They included countries from North America (USA, Canada), Latin America (Costa Rica, Brazil), Africa (Ghana, Nigeria), Europe (Denmark, Germany, Great Britain), Asia (India, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea) and Australia. A country coordinator from each country was chosen to administrate the survey. These leaders gathered in London (February, 1995) and identified 26 specific reasons that they considered most important in missionary attrition. With these issues in mind, the survey instrument was designed.

For practical and strategic reasons, the survey addressed mission leaders instead of individual missionaries for the following reasons: (1) the decision makers in their organisations are the ones who ultimately implement needed change, (2) mission leaders have a good overview and could present a more comprehensive and “aggregate” perspective, (3) working only with a single mission executive for each agency allowed the survey to be manageable, and (4) a higher return rate could be expected. Organizers understood that such a survey could also stimulate mission leaders’ prayerful reflection on why they were losing valuable people from the field and to fuel their thinking on critical issues and show them practical solutions.

The researchers were aware of the different perspectives on why a missionary chooses to discontinue with his/her ministry. Some reasons are explained in the missionary’s prayer letter (called “stated reasons”), while revealing additional reasons to his/her close friends/family (“personal reasons”), and may even believe in another set of reasons deep in his/her heart (“secret reasons”). The team or field leader may identify “leader’s reasons” but only a subset may go on file (“recorded reasons”), the sending base director may believe in another array of reasons (“believed reasons”) and in the mission’s journal “socially accepted reasons” may be published, and the missionary’s professional counsellor may identify further reasons, while the “true reasons” may be still be a combination of all of these—or even be different again. In fact, in most cases it is not one reason alone but often a whole range of reasons that all contribute to the decision. All of these perspectives are true insights, yet none of them are complete without the others. ReMAP focused on the mission leaders’ “believed reasons” because of the important process outcomes expected by having executive leadership involved. The study organizers urged agency leadership to collect data from members of their own organizations in ways that were both non-threatening and could help prevent unwanted attrition. Further studies are presently underway to listen to the missionaries’ story and hear their voice. (See www.worthkeeping.info for further details.)
ReMAP was designed to help missions leaders to take a “reality check” on their agency’s and their national attrition and to seek for creative solutions to this costly problem. The success of the project would need to be measured by an overall reduction of missionary attrition, particularly among the mission agencies that participated in the study. This called for a follow-up study.

The second ReMAP study (ReMAP II), did indeed confirm a major improvement in attrition, particularly in the mission movements of the New Sending Countries (NSC). As in the first study, data on attrition was collected from all the participating countries and compared, but there were some major differences in the two studies. While the ReMAP study primarily considered personal reasons for the return of missionaries (from the mission executives’ perspective), the follow-up study ReMAP II (“Retaining Missionaries: Agency Practices”) focused (1) on missionary retention and (2) on organisational issues: Which structures and organisational practices keep missionaries in service, what makes their ministry fruitful?

ReMAP II was done 8 years after the first study when the impact of the organisational changes initiated by ReMAP would have been felt. While this encourages us to claim some credit for the overall improvement in attrition, in reality it is impossible to know how significant an influence ReMAP actually had. The second study was not a “replication” study in the classical sense and this blurs our ability to pinpoint any cause-effect correlations. We do know, however, that the publication that stemmed from the ReMAP study: Too Valuable to Lose: Examining the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition was translated into four languages and widely used by agencies in discussing attrition. Anecdotal evidence for the effectiveness of this process driven research is also strong.

The original ReMAP questionnaire asked the leaders of sending agencies for their practices and procedures as well as their number of returnees in the years 1992-94, and they were also asked to identify their predominant “believed reasons” for the return of their missionaries. Four hundred and fifty-five mission agencies with 23,000 long-term missionaries participated in the study and they reported 4,400 returnees in the years 1992-94—this sheer number exemplifies the scope of global missionary attrition and the need to work on this issue. The National break-down of participating agencies was as follows: Australia (44 agencies), Brazil (22), Canada (13), Costa Rica (6), Denmark (10), Germany (20), Ghana (52), Great Britain (37), India (20), Nigeria (14), Philippines (18), Singapore (7), South Korea (54), USA (114). Agencies from the new sending countries

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of Africa, Asia and Latin America (NSC) were analysed separately from those of the old sending countries (OSC) of Europe and North America.

Causes of attrition

The attrition rate was calculated as the annual number of returnees divided by the number of active missionaries on the field of this agency. In OSC 7.1 ± 0.3% of the active missionaries leave their agency each year, which is about one out of 14 missionaries. This percentage is slightly higher than in the new and enthusiastic mission movement of NSC which loses only 6.4 ± 0.4% of its workforce each year (one out of 16 missionaries). As the aim of the study was to reduce missionary attrition, we distinguished between “unpreventable attrition” (i.e., regular retirement, death in service, completion of project) and “potentially preventable” reasons such as personal (i.e., emotional problems, immoral lifestyle), family (i.e., children’s education, marriage problems), team (i.e., conflicts with co-missionaries), agency (i.e., financial problems, disagreement with leadership), work-related (i.e., personal dissatisfaction, lack of performance or training) and cultural reasons (i.e., unsuccessful cultural adjustment, language learning deficits). Obviously there is more normal retirement and end of projects in the older mission agencies OSC. Their unpreventable attrition rate (UAR) is almost three times higher (2.5 ± 0.14% per year, OSC) compared to NSC (0.93 ± 0.11% per year). Thus one third of the OSC returnees come home for unavoidable reasons, while two thirds (4.5 ± 0.2% per year) leave for potentially preventable reasons. In NSC, 6 out of 7 returnees come home for potentially preventable reasons, which amounts to 5.5 ± 0.3% per year. Figure 1 gives the break down of the groups of reasons for OSC and NSC as identified by their mission leaders (the two central columns in each set of bars). According to the executives’ insights, personal reasons dominate among the preventable reasons, followed by agency- and work related reasons. Agency- and team-related reasons are more important in the new mission movement of the South which is assumed to still be maturing its mission structures and policies.

As the aim of the study was to examine missionary attrition, agencies were grouped according to their potentially preventable attrition rate.
Chapter 2: Re\textup{MAP} 1

(PAR) into three blocks of equal numbers of missionaries: low (L), middle (M) or high (H) attrition.\textsuperscript{6} These subgroups were compared with the full sample to identify patterns for excellence. The peripheral bars in Figure 1 (OSCL, NSCL) give the percentage of returnees of agencies with low attrition. Their total attrition rate is $3.0 \pm 0.2\%$ (OSCL) which is only 42\% of that in OSC, respectively $1.3 \pm 0.2\%$ in NSCL, which is only one-fifth of that in NSC. As these attrition rates are based on the actual performance of the sizeable subgroup of low attrition agencies (one third of the missionaries in the total sample) and not on abstract definitions or theoretical circumstances, the numbers demonstrate the huge room for organizational improvement. Indeed, two-thirds of all missionary attrition could have possibly been avoided.

To our great surprise, even the rate for “unpreventable attrition” (UAR) comes down. At first this fact sounds illogical, but we need to keep in mind that the definition of unpreventable attrition includes reasons like: completion of contract, end of project, political unrest and marriage to a person outside the mission family—and these reasons are not absolutely fixed but can possibly be influenced by good member care, effective mission structures and opportunities for re-assignment after the completion of a project. Figure 1 shows that low attrition agencies have indeed reduced their “unpreventable attrition” by 50\%.

The reduction of preventable attrition is even larger. Figure 1 shows that the personal, family, team, agency, and work-related attrition have been reduced to one-fifths in NSCL (compared to the full sample NSC) and to one third in OSCL—yet agency-related attrition is more resistant to reduction in OSC\textsuperscript{7}. These impressive facts prove that the majority of attrition cases could have indeed be prevented. Figure 2 gives the definitions of the various groups of reasons. Mission executives were also asked to identify those seven factors out of the list of 26 all important reasons which they consider most important in the return of their missionary.

Figure 2 gives the percentage of all missionaries of the samples whose leaders had ticked the stated issue as one of the seven most important reasons. In OSC Regular retirement was considered the prime factor, followed by Health problems, Missionary children and their education, Project end, Low self-esteem, Conflicts with co-missionaries, Marriage outside the mission, Lack of spiritual or financial support, Lack of job satisfaction, Disagreements over policies and Marriage problems. These factors need special attention in OSC when agencies work on their policies and practices. In low attrition agencies OSCL, Retirement, Health

\textsuperscript{6} This procedure is only applicable for agencies with more than 25 missionaries. Only they had a sufficient number of returnees in the three years period 1992-94 to calculate a reliable attrition rate. OSC included 233 agencies with 14,324 missionaries that provided attrition data; NSC (181 agencies with 7,183 missionaries); OSCL (41 agencies with 4,788 missionaries, PAR < 2.83 \% per year); NSCL (29 agencies with 2,000 missionaries, PAR < 2.14\% per year).

\textsuperscript{7} For this reason, agency-related and personal reasons have gained in relative weight in OSCL, and personal reasons in NSCL.
problems, Missionary children, Conflicts with co-missionaries, Low self-esteem, Lack of spiritual and financial support and Lack of job-satisfaction have gained in relative importance compared to OSC, while Project end, Marriage outside the mission, Disagreement over policies, Marriage problems and Care for elderly parents have lost in significance. The latter issues have been cared for well so that they are not large factors in attrition.

In NSC agencies, Lack of missionary’s commitment was considered as the prime cause, followed by Moral failure, Lack of spiritual and financial support, Health problems, Doubt about calling, Conflicts with co-missionaries, Disagreements over policies, Lack of supervision, Project end, Spiritual immaturity, Relational problems with local leaders at the place of service, Dismissal by agency, Missionary children, Normal retirement and Marriage outside the mission. These are the greatest challenges to NSC missionaries and the leaders have to wrestle with these issues. This list is completely different from that for OSC and it mainly exposes inefficient candidate selection and lack of personal support. In NSC agencies with low attrition NSCL, Disagreement over policies, Spiritual immaturity, Doubt about calling, Moral failure, and Marriage outside the mission gained in relative weight, while Lack of commitment, Lack of spiritual and financial support, Lack of supervision, Project end, Dismissal by agency had lost significance. Organisational issues have apparently been dealt with well so that personal issues have gained in relevance, which is related to careful candidate selection and personal support during service. These topics direct the road to excellence for NSC agencies.

How to further reduce missionary attrition

As we were particularly interested in how to reduce missionary attrition, mission executives were also given a list of 12 important issues (listed in Figure 3), and asked (a) to select the three factors they believed to be most effective in further reducing their missionary attrition (3Max) and (b) to identify the three factors which they felt to be the least important factors on the list of 12 important factors. Figure 3 gives the percentage of missionaries from the samples whose mission leaders selected the mentioned factor to be one of the 3 top factors (3Max) to further reduce their missionary attrition.

In OSC, A clear sense of God’s calling into mission service is considered as the most important topic, named by the leaders of more than 70% of all OSC missionaries in the survey. It was followed by Supportive family, Good relationships with co-missionaries, Ability to adapt to different culture and learn new language and Maintaining a healthy personal spiritual life. In the low attrition subgroup OSCL, Calling is still the prime factor yet with a smaller percentage (apparently it has been dealt with effectively and thus lost in significance), while Adaptability to a different culture and
learning language and Maintenance of personal spiritual life have gained in significance.

In NSC agencies Clear calling is considered most important, followed by Maintenance of personal spiritual life, Regular financial support and Supervision. Good relationships with missionary colleagues, Supportive family and Adaptability to language and culture come next, yet with a much lower rating than in OSC. In the low attrition subgroup NSCL, Clear calling has received an even higher rating at the expenses of Maintenance of personal spiritual life, Regular financial support and Supervision. The latter have apparently been dealt with well in these agencies. The rating of NSCL appears to lean more towards that in OSC.

In order to further pinpoint the most important issues, we subtracted the percentage of missionaries whose leaders had rated an issue as one of the three less important issues out of the 12 stated issues (3Min) from the percentages of 3Max, resulting in a differential percentage of missionaries (3Max-3Min) which runs from 80% to –80%. Figure 4 gives the results which further highlight the prime role of Clear calling, followed by Supportive family, Relationships with co-missionaries, Adaptability to language and culture and Maintenance of personal spiritual life. These are the five big issues in OSC, and they are also the most important issues in the low attrition agencies OSCL, although in revised order. Adaptability to language and culture and Personal spiritual life had gained in relevance at the expenses of Calling and Supportive family. The latter have apparently been dealt with so well that it will not yield in further reduction of missionary attrition.

In NSC agencies Calling is even more dominant, followed by Maintenance of personal spiritual life, Regular financial support, Good relationships with missionary colleagues and Supervision. In low attrition subgroup NSCL Maintenance of personal spiritual life, Supervision and Regular financial support have apparently been solved so well that additional investment in these areas would not further reduce their missionary attrition. Yet, Supportive family, Adaptability to language and culture, Relationship to superiors, Stress cope ability and Continuous training have gained in relative weight. These issues need careful consideration as agencies work on their organisational development.

In order to further reduce unwanted missionary attrition we explored correlations between various agency characteristics and preventable attrition (PAR).

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8 Negative numbers are obtained when more mission leaders considered it as one of the three less important factors (3Min) than as one of the three most important factors (3Max).
Agency size

Figure 5 gives the preventable attrition rate (PAR) as a function of agency size, demonstrating that small agencies lose a huge percentage of their workers. PAR falls with agency size, reaching the baseline at an agency size of 50+ active missionaries. This correlation is observed in OSC and NSC. Further studies have shown that small agencies have less structures and expertise, but not to the extent to explain this huge difference in attrition rates. It appears that a “critical mass” of missionaries for survival on the field, a balanced mix of gifting and experience in a ministry team, and specialisation in services in the home office are required to be effective. We believe that impressive fact directs to the biblical concept of cooperation and fellowship in ministry that the Lord has commanded us (John 17:21, 1Cor. 12:4-6, Eph. 4:1-6, 1 Peter 4:10).

Agency age

Figure 6 gives the preventable attrition rate (PAR) as a function of the age of the agency. It is evident that young agencies have an increased attrition rate as they lack experience and have not yet developed their way of operation. PAR comes down as the agency matures, yet old agencies (>100 years) have again an increased attrition rate as they may lose their original vision, dynamic and enthusiasm.

Candidate selection

Agencies were asked for details of their candidate selection procedure and in particular whether or not they consider 13 specific areas of life (listed in Figure 7). This diagram gives the percentages of the missionaries of the samples that had been checked on this issue during their application procedure. The chart proves that the basics like Calling, Doctrinal position, Physical health examination, Acceptance of present family status (marriage/singleness), Previous experience in church work and Communication and relational skills are considered by most agencies, yet some agencies have deficits regarding Character references, Psychological and personality testing and Communication skills. OSC agencies have somewhat more rigorous procedures than NSC, and low attrition agencies (OSCL, NSCL) invest significantly more in their candidate selection than the total samples.

Careful candidate selection also proved to be one of the decisive areas for reducing missionary attrition. Figure 8 gives the average preventative attrition rate (PAR) of agencies that had (or not) considered the mentioned area of life as part of their application procedure. The diagram proves that

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9 The unpreventable attrition rate of small agencies was also three times higher than in large agencies in OSC (6.8 ± 0.9 % vs. 2.4 ± 0.1 %) and NSC (2.0 ± 0.5 % vs. 0.8 ± 0.1 %), so that agencies with less than 10 missionaries lose a fifth of their work force each year.
Missionary’s calling, Acceptance of the present family status (marriage/singleness), Character references, Firm financial support of the home church/supporters or applied Psychological or personality testing are critical areas and agencies that did not check them suffered an increased attrition rate.

This fact is also demonstrated in Figure 9, giving the average preventable attrition rate (PAR) depending on the number of areas covered in the agency’s selection procedure. Again it proves the significance of careful candidate selection: agencies with little or careless candidate selection suffer greatly increased preventable attrition.

Pre-field training

Another critical area is pre-field training. Figure 10 gives the percentage of all missionaries of the samples whose agencies expect the mentioned pre-field training for acceptance of new missionaries. Most agencies provide their Own missiological course as well as an Orientation program, yet missiological training is not always required. It is obvious that agencies with low attrition have higher requirements regarding missiological training. This evidence is further emphasised in Figure 11, which gives the average preventable attrition rate (PAR) of agencies that do or do not expect this type of training from their new missionaries. The results show that missiological training and cross-cultural experience are of great value for mission longevity. Figure 12 shows PAR in dependence on the total number of training units (mentioned in Figure 11) expected by the agency from their new missionaries and again proving the correlation between high training standards and low attrition (consider overlap in the training modules of Figure 10).

Care for missionaries on the field

Figure 13 shows the percentage of field missionaries of the sample that are provided with a certain service on the field. Most of the missionaries (9 out of 10) get Supervision on the field, yet not all are supplied with the other provisions. Annual leave, Effective missionary team, MK-schooling and Member care by a person other than field leader is more important to OSC agencies, while NSC agencies put stronger emphasis on Regular communication with home churches, Field conferences and Annual visit from the home office.

In general NSC agencies provide the same amount of services to their missionaries as OSC, and low attrition agencies do not provide more than the total group. It appears that services on the field in itself do not keep missionaries in ministry, unless they are predated by careful candidate selection and pre-field training.

10 It remains a mystery to me why Theological training and Professional training had been put into one group.
The effect of member care is shown in Figure 14, giving the preventable attrition rate (PAR) in dependence on the amount of total staff time invested in member care for NSC. It is obvious that agencies with little member care suffer very high preventable attrition. PAR declines with the investment in member care up to a time—8% of the total organisational time (at home and on the field). Beyond this value, PAR increased again. Can there be a ‘too much’ of member care? Indeed, if mission teams are too much concerned about their internal relationships at the expense of their ministry and looking out for unusual emotional feelings they may even cause what they expect. Agencies known for their intensive member care may also be approached by unsuitable candidates and their home office may be inclined to accept them trusting on the good care on the field, but in most cases such graciousness will not pay off. In addition we need to keep in mind that we just estimate the amount of member care, but not her quality.

Summary
The ReMAP study has been one of the first global studies on missionary attrition, particularly in comparing the old and new mission movements. It has identified a number of critical areas in candidate selection, pre-field training, leadership, organisational structure, and member care that have a tremendous impact on missionary attrition.

The characteristics of agencies with very low return rates can serve as models. Their example will direct the way for reducing unwanted loss of missionaries. Member care is not a department added on to the administration, but a characteristic feature that determines the overall operations: a shepherd’s heart.

Yet missionary attrition is just the “tip of an iceberg.” Many more missionaries are worn out by personal concerns, frustrations and disappointment that deplete their energy and joy and reduce their effectiveness—but they may not have the courage to face reality and go home. Therefore, the issues mentioned above have a much wider scope than just missionary attrition. They relate to the effectiveness of all missionaries.

Therefore, we do not consider reduction of missionary attrition as an end in itself, unless the missionary is really productive in a vital ministry. Missionaries can be ill-placed or be unsuitable for a given task and in need of reassignment or to be brought home with grace and dignity. Wounded and tired missionaries need restoration and our full compassion. Missionaries can also stay for too long and thus hinder the development of local leadership instead of moving on to a new ministry. Mission agencies need specific criteria for completion of a project and a clear exit-strategy before even starting a project.
Chapter 2: ReMAP

What ReMAP did

Statistics are of limited value. They serve to provide information to decision makers so that they can make organisational changes and improvements. In the example given in the introduction statistical information was desperately needed to clarify what turned out to be disinformation that was very discouraging. To their relief, ReMAP showed Brazilian mission leaders that their national annual attrition rate was actually $8.5 \pm 0.9\%$ and not the 20% as claimed by that speaker (some agencies have indeed lost 20% per year but these are individual agencies and/or exceptional years). Still, the national attrition rate was of great concern as their preventable attrition rate PAR was 50% higher than the global average. Follow-up on the study encouraged mission agency, Bible school, and church leadership to prayerfully discuss their procedures and practices, and to implement needed change. The result of putting the spotlight on attrition is found in the follow-up study ReMAP II, where the Brazilian national preventable attrition rate was down to 2.6%, one-third of what it was eight years before. This statistic points to the massive improvements—improvements that are saving the mission careers of at least 250 Brazilian missionaries each year. ReMAP claims modest credit for these marvellous results.

The ReMAP study developed a survey tool for in-house attrition studies used by various agencies to analyse where and when they lost their valuable missionaries and to take appropriate action.

Without a doubt, the ReMAP study drew great attention on the key issue of missionary agency member care and has given a tremendous boost to those concerned about these issues around the world. A Mission Commission Member Care Network (MemCa) was spawned with the development of various national and international member networks and the publication of numerous member care resources. Their internet site offers (www.membercare.org) a number of resources. Only by the mutual sharing of the expertise has this been possible.

Likewise, the agencies’ minimal requirements in missiological training have grown in the past eight years as ReMAP has highlighted the importance of missionary training. In 1994 only 6% of the OSC missionaries were expected to hold an academic degree in missiology. In 2002 it had increased to 23%. And the percentage of missionaries expected to have formal missiological training increased from 29% to 35%.

Attrition issues have spotlighted the need for whole person or “integral” missionary training. Integral training concepts of including substantial informal and practical missionary training have been developed, especially in the newer sending countries. Increased international attention has been focused on this through another Mission Commission affiliate, the International Missionary Training Network (www.missionarytraining.org).
ReMAP has also promoted the continuous training of missionaries. Many leading missionary institutions have developed long-distance programs for academic and practical missionary training and flexible units adaptable to the needs and time frames of missionaries. Missionaries are not trained once for life, but are growing into a lifestyle of life-long learning.

ReMAP II shows that candidate selection procedures have grown tremendously in the past eight years, especially in NSC. The percentage of missionaries asked for character references has grown from 54% to 99% in the past 8 years. 92% (instead of formerly 77%) have physical examinations and 64% (instead of 37%) received psychological testing. Similar evidence is found in the areas of calling, ministry experience in their home church and acceptance of the present marital status—and also for OSC. Statistical information helps agencies understand the critical areas that need to be clarified before the acceptance of a new missionary.

One real benefit of international studies such as ReMAP is the level of cooperation that must be evoked to carry it out both internationally and on a national scale. These relationships don’t end when the study is finished. Thus, national alliances are strengthened as agencies work together. The German evangelical mission alliance (AEM), for example, has recently set up payroll services for smaller mission agencies to provide the extensive expertise to cope with the constant changes in labour laws and social security. Without a doubt, both ReMAP studies have brought significant cohesion to participating national mission movements.

It is difficult to tell which of these improvements have been the direct result of the ReMAP process, yet the bottom line is that over the past eight years, the missionary attrition rate in NSC has dropped by 50% and also remained low in OSC in spite of the global trend towards shorter appointments and frequent career changes. This is an example of how process focused mission research can draw attention to critical issues, stimulate organisational development, and ultimately foster change leading to greater effectiveness in extending the Kingdom of God. ReMAP has certainly helped keep many more missionaries in service and make their ministry even more fruitful, releasing blessing to the nations of the world and honour to God.
Chapter 3

What We All Do Well & What Sets the Best Apart from the Rest
Chapter 4

ReMap Project Methodology

An example of collaborative international research and teamwork

Valerie Lim,\textsuperscript{1} Singapore

This chapter describes the methodology for the ReMAP II project, which was a multi-national collaborative effort by a team of researchers who conducted a mission survey simultaneously in 22 countries on six continents. The continued interest and positive impact of the ReMAP II findings around the world has been partly due to its robust project methodology,\textsuperscript{2} which has been openly commended by other researchers.\textsuperscript{3}

ReMAP and ReMAP II

In 2002, the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA-MC) commissioned the ReMAP II project. As the name implies, ReMAP II was the second of two projects.

The first project was simply known as ReMAP, an acronym for “Reducing Missionary Attrition Project,” and its main objectives were to:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[1] Valerie Lim is a Research Associate of Global Mapping International and an Associate of the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance. She was the Singapore coordinator for the ReMAP II project. Trained as a scientist, Valerie worked for many years in multi-disciplinary research, project management, staff development and training in the manufacturing industry and a local university. Over the years, she has participated in several collaborative projects with researchers from different countries.
  \item[2] A paper on ReMAP II methodology was presented by the author during the Fourth International Lausanne Researchers’ Conference in Cyprus in April 2005. The session on “ReMAP II Research Process and Key Findings” stimulated lively discussion among the researchers. Many commended the ReMAP II project’s careful planning and the cooperation of its multi-national research team.
  \item[3] Dr. Todd M. Johnson, Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, was at the conference. He has described the ReMAP II survey as “one of the most comprehensive and careful surveys of missionaries ever done.” He suggested “Frontier missions advocates should look forward to more research results from the WEA ReMAP II study.” \textit{International Journal of Frontier Missions}, Vol. 22:4,(Oct. – Dec. 2005), p.151.
\end{itemize}
identify the core causes of missionary attrition,
determine the extent and nature of the problem,
explore solutions to the problem, and
deliver products and services to mission agencies and churches worldwide that would help reduce undesirable attrition.

ReMAP involved a survey conducted in 14 missionary-sending countries between 1994 and 1996. A common survey form had been developed, and it was used in each participating country. In April 1996, an international workshop on missionary attrition was held at All Nations Christian College, U.K., and key findings from ReMAP were presented. Subsequently, a book was published in 1997 with many articles about missionary attrition and helpful suggestions on how to prevent avoidable loss of mission personnel.

The ReMAP survey was designed as a qualitative study, which limited its potential for in-depth analysis of some issues. Some questions remained unanswered, such as:

- What helps missionaries to grow into fruitful ministry?
- What helps missionaries to stay in service for the long term, in spite of changing circumstances and needs?
- Which organisational structures and practices provide effective support to missionaries and provide the best environment for productive ministry?
- What constitutes effectiveness in ministry?

These and other questions were on many minds when leaders in the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance prepared for ReMAP II. While the previous study ReMAP had focused mainly on missionary attrition and personal reasons for the early return of missionaries from the field, the new study ReMAP II would centre on missionary retention and agency practices.

Hence, ReMAP II or “Retaining Missionaries, Agency Practices.” In ReMAP II, the main objectives would be to:

- identify the “best agency practices” that contribute to missionary retention,
- promote these “good practices” in the global missions community, and
- provide tools for mission agencies to strengthen missionary retention.

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But why study “missionary retention”? Jim Van Meter explains the reasons as follows: “The retention of personnel is all about stewardship. It is about retaining people for good reasons. It is about the blessing of making appropriate changes to practices for the sake of the kingdom of God. It is about minimizing turnover due to inappropriate reasons. All for the purpose of fulfilling the call of God upon the individuals as well as the organisation. The (ReMAP II) project highlights those practices and services of mission agencies that contribute most to the retention of good people, while minimizing avoidable turnover.”

Preliminary planning for ReMAP II

Long before the ReMAP II project began, much preliminary planning occurred between January 2001 and May 2002.

In January 2001, the leadership team of the WEA-MC (Dr. William Taylor, Dr. Jonathan Lewis and Dr. Bertil Ekström) met together with Dr. Jim Van Meter, and they outlined the direction of a follow-up study on ReMAP. They set up a steering committee comprising Dr. Seth Anyomi (Ghana), Dr. Detlef Bloecher (Germany), Dr. Jonathan Lewis (Argentina), and Dr. Steve Moon (Korea), and Dr. Jim Van Meter (USA), thus representing five continents.

The committee members corresponded by e-mail for several months. Then, they met face-to-face for two days during the WEA-MC meeting at Port Dickson, Malaysia, from 2 to 3 May 2001 to develop the survey strategy and focus. After that meeting, Dr. Barbara Griffin (Australia) joined the team, which now represented six continents.

The steering committee developed the following strategy and focus for ReMAP II:

- The ReMAP II project would be a quantitative study that would survey mission agencies (not individual missionaries).
- The survey would be facilitated through evangelical national mission movements (NMM) in order to achieve maximum impact. Thus, only those countries with an active and functional NMM could be considered as potential participating countries.
- By collaborating with the NMM in a participating country, the WEA-MC sought credibility to the study as well as high response to the survey. The NMM would assist in the entire survey process: distributing the questionnaire, providing clarification about questions, arranging for translation of the questionnaire (if necessary), doing follow up on non-respondents, checking for the completeness of responses, as well as assisting in the data entry.
In each participating country, the survey would be conducted by individuals (country coordinators) who know the mission agencies including their organisational structure. The national country coordinator would conduct interviews with the executives of missionary-sending agencies. A survey tool (ReMAP II questionnaire) would guide the information gathering on the existing organisational practices.

The intention of ReMAP II was not simply to conduct a survey. The ReMAP II project also sought to initiate change within missionary-sending agencies. Hence, the outcomes of the survey would be reported to each participating agency, so that the findings could stimulate its organisational development.

In ReMAP II, we would work from a perspective of the “Kingdom of God.” We would not glorify an agency or a country for its excellent performance, nor would we shame one with poor performance, but we would identify what values or practices contribute to missionary retention. The results of ReMAP II would highlight the best practices in a significant group of high retaining agencies from all the participating countries.

Having agreed on the survey strategy and focus, the steering committee approached the national mission movements in both Old Sending Countries (OSC) and New Sending Countries (NSC) to invite them to participate in the ReMAP II project.

For the selection of participating countries, the steering committee decided that:

- The ReMAP II survey would deliberately be designed as a truly international study. The participating countries would come from six continents, with invitations sent to both the older NMM and the newly emerging NMM.
- We would seek to keep a global balance. Instead of accepting a maximum number of participating countries in each continent, we would select representative countries.

The steering committee eventually selected 22 representative countries from six continents. The OSC selected were Australia, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, USA, and South Africa. The NSC selected were Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, and Singapore. Each participating country was requested to appoint a country coordinator, someone who could be

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7 Old Sending Countries (OSC) are mostly from Europe, North America and Australia. They have an average of 60 years experience. South Africa was included in this group due to its long experience in missionary sending.

8 New Sending Countries (NSC) are mostly from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They have less than 30 years experience.
responsible for coordinating the ReMAP II project in the country. In most cases, this country coordinator was appointed in consultation with the local NMM.

The actual ReMAP II project involved three main phases:

- **Phase I** was Survey Preparation, from June 2002 to October 2002.
- **Phase II** was Research and Data analysis, from November 2002 to May 2003.
- **Phase III** was Reporting and Training, from June 2003 onwards.

**Phase I: Survey preparation**

The steering committee continued working prior to the gathering of the ReMAP II project team. They designed a programme for an intensive week of discussions as well as an orientation of our team to the project’s administrative procedures.

In October 2002, the newly appointed country coordinators from 20 of the 22 nations, together with five of the six-member steering committee, gathered for one week in London, United Kingdom. During the week (6 to 10 October 2002), the steering committee facilitated a series of sessions during which the country coordinators discussed Survey Preparation as well as the subsequent phases of the ReMAP II project.

This gathering of country coordinators was significant, because it marked the beginning of collaborative efforts by the ReMAP II team. Unlike other projects, this project began with a strong commitment towards international collaboration.

The servant leadership of the steering committee was effective in promoting teamwork. The committee encouraged open communication and a free flow of ideas, so that each individual could learn from the others. Coming from different cultures, we had to take time to listen to other views. We needed to understand our respective expectations, priorities, natural work patterns, decision-making processes, and communication styles. As we got to know one another, mutual trust and respect was built between individuals in the newly formed ReMAP II team. Everyone soon realised that we could harness our individual strengths by working collectively and by consensus.

Our sessions on survey preparation began with a presentation of the research strategy for ReMAP II, which was thoroughly discussed. Having understood the objectives for the project, the team was ready to jointly develop the survey tool (ReMAP II questionnaire). We examined a draft questionnaire prepared by prior empirical and theoretical work of the steering committee (Dr. Detlef Bloecher and Dr. Barbara Griffin). A high
priority had been placed on construct validity\textsuperscript{9} and content validity.\textsuperscript{10} Items in the draft were based on ReMAP and other research findings on attrition. The draft comprised ten sections (from A to J) with questions on:

A. The agency and the ministry priorities of missionaries on the field
B. Pre-field screening of candidates
C. Education level of missionaries
D. Pre-field training and other training
E. Pastoral member care
F. Agency operation (with subsections on communication, orientation and continuous training, ministry, ministry outcome, personal care and family support, finances and home office)
G. Factors that contribute to on-field effectiveness
H. Factors that hinder on-field effectiveness
I. Length of service record\textsuperscript{11}
J. Retention record\textsuperscript{12}

We would ask mission executives about their organisational ethos, leadership practices, and personnel procedures, as well as for personnel data on missionary sending over a twenty-year period. We also ask them to identify what they considered were factors that contribute most to their missionaries’ present effectiveness, and the factors that most hinder missionaries from attaining their on-field objectives. These open-ended questions would look beyond the assessment of present agency practices, and they sought the mission executives’ insights and wisdom on how to improve the local mission movement and their own organisational development.

The draft questionnaire provided the framework for our consultations on the face validity and cross-cultural implications of the questions. For example, prior work had not identified “family approval and/or blessing” as a key factor during the selection of missionaries. The Asian and African country coordinators explained that “family approval and/or blessing” was a potentially important factor in missionary retention, especially where filial piety and respect of elders are strong cultural values. Thus, we included a question on this factor under pre-field screening of mission applicants. With further input from the country coordinators, the draft ReMAP

\textsuperscript{9} Construct validity is the extent to which a measure corresponds to the underlying theoretical rationale.
\textsuperscript{10} Content validity is the appropriateness of a given measure as subjectively assessed by an expert.
\textsuperscript{11} The Length of service record section would obtain data on the average length of service for a specific group of missionaries who left the agency. (We later agreed to use the two-year period between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2002).
\textsuperscript{12} The Retention record was a request for personnel data. Each agency was asked to provide data for missionary sending over the past 20 years. (We later agreed to use the years from 1981 to 2000).
II questionnaire grew to 148 questions. The majority felt that this was far too long to secure a good response.

Through a lengthy process of negotiations, we agreed on a common survey tool comprising 98 questions in an eight-paged document. Our final document (ReMAP II questionnaire\textsuperscript{13}) reflected a consensus among all parties. It was a satisfying experience to see how the entire ReMAP II team had reached this through give and take. We were patient to consider different opinions and issues, and to evaluate our options. In the end, everyone believed our common survey tool would be equally meaningful in our different countries and cultures, within our mission movements of different states of development and respective needs.

Following this, the team spent time discussing various details for the research process and data analysis phase, including strategies for translation, administration and increasing response rate. In addition, we considered some material for the reporting and training phase, which had been prepared by the steering committee (Dr. Jonathan Lewis and Dr. Jim Van Meter).

After the meeting in London, each country coordinator returned to their home country to produce the ReMAP II questionnaire, to arrange for questions to be translated into a local language (where necessary), and to enlist local volunteers to assist in conducting the survey. In countries where translation was necessary, a “back translation” strategy was used, whereby each translated questionnaire was translated back into English and checked for clarity and meaning. In some cases, the translated draft was field-tested and further improvements were made.

The ReMAP II project team of country coordinators and steering committee continued to keep in touch with one another. A key means of communication was a special e-mail forum called ‘remapii’ on Yahoo Groups. Each coordinator was encouraged to report on the progress of the ReMAP II project in his/her country. From time to time, different individuals exchanged tips on how to manage any problems associated with the research process. The ReMAP II team continued praying for each other’s work for many months, as they were informed by the regular news and reports posted on the forum.

**Phase II: Research and data analysis**

Phase II began in early 2003 with research projects being launched simultaneously in 22 countries around the world. OSC that participated were Australia, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, USA, and South Africa. NSC that participated was Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, and Singapore.

\textsuperscript{13} A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix XX.
The study was confined to missionary-sending agencies\textsuperscript{14} that send long-term\textsuperscript{15} cross-cultural\textsuperscript{16} missionaries. A ReMAP II questionnaire was sent to all known evangelical mission agencies (or “missionary sending bases”) in each participating country. It was accompanied by a recommendation letter from a well-known evangelical leader and contact details (such as a hotline telephone number) of the country coordinator who was available to answer further questions.

The entire ReMAP II study was conducted with utmost confidentiality to protect the identity and responses from individual “missionary sending bases.”\textsuperscript{17} To ensure confidentiality, we used a research code comprising two alpha characters\textsuperscript{18} and four numerals\textsuperscript{19} on the cover of each questionnaire. The research code enabled us to keep a record of questionnaires as they were mailed, and to determine those that were returned and those that were not. In a few countries, the survey was administered by the mission alliance office, which assigned the research codes, distributed the questionnaires and followed up on non-respondents. All completed questionnaires were sent to the country coordinator, who received the results and research codes without knowing the identities of sending agencies. Our emphasis on confidentiality encouraged truthful answers to the questions.

Returned questionnaires were checked for completeness and obvious mistakes or unlikely results. Data from each questionnaire yielded a dataset (corresponding to a particular agency and identified by its unique research code), which was carefully transcribed to a Microsoft Excel worksheet.\textsuperscript{20}

Datasets from the 22 countries were eventually merged together into an international database.\textsuperscript{21} This pooling together of data was possible due to our common survey methodology. The extensive ReMAP II database, built from the responses from 22 countries, consisted of datasets for

\textsuperscript{14} “Agency” refers to a sending base that is an independent mission, a denominational mission department, or a church that sends out missionaries without the assistance of another organisation.

\textsuperscript{15} Long-term or career missionaries are expected to serve for at least 3 years.

\textsuperscript{16} Cross-cultural missionaries serve in a culture other than their own. Normally they learn a different language and/or make significant cultural adjustment. They may serve within their country or abroad.

\textsuperscript{17} Confidentiality meant that no name of church or mission agency appeared on the research questionnaire.

\textsuperscript{18} The two alpha characters used were the ISO country code for the country.

\textsuperscript{19} The first digit of the four numerals coded for the type of sending base: whether a denominational mission agency (‘1’), an inter-denominational mission agency (‘2’), a local church sending their missionaries independently of mission agencies (‘3’), or some other type of sending base in the country. The other three numerals were issued at random from 001 onwards, so that every sending base had a unique code.

\textsuperscript{20} Data entry involved transcribing the answers for each agency to an Excel worksheet. A template (sample Excel file) had been prepared and distributed to the country coordinators by Dr. Detlef Bloecher.

\textsuperscript{21} Datasets from each country were forwarded to Dr. Detlef Bloecher in Germany, who later merged them to form the international ReMAP II database.
some 600 mission agencies with almost 40,000 long-term cross-cultural missionaries.\textsuperscript{22}

Data analysis of the ReMAP II database was facilitated by the statistical tools available to worksheets in the Microsoft Excel software. Below are two essential calculations in this study: retention rates, and weighted averages.

\textit{Retention rates}

The main concept for ReMAP II is the term “Retention,” which refers to the percentage of missionaries still in active ministry after a period of time ‘t’ (that is years of service).

From the personnel data in the retention record,\textsuperscript{23} the Annual Retention Rate (RR) for each agency could be calculated as follows: First, we calculated RR\textsubscript{t}, which was the percentage of missionaries retained in each year of missionary sending:

$$RR_t = 10^{((\log R_t) / t)}$$

assuming a uniform probability of coming home,\textsuperscript{24} where R\textsubscript{t} measures the percentage of missionaries retained on the field after t year(s) of service. Then, RR\textsubscript{t} values were averaged for all years of sending,\textsuperscript{25} thereby resulting in the averaged Annual Retention Rate RR, the independent variable to which all organisational factors and agency practices were related.

These calculations for “Retention Rate” allowed us to compare missionaries commissioned in different years as well as different mission agencies over the long term. For example, agency X has an annual retention rate RR of 0.97 (that is 97 out of 100 missionaries were still in service at the end of the year, while 3 had gone home, that is 3% attrition) which may look impressive, while agency Y has an RR of 0.90 (that is 90% retention and 10% attrition) which may not seem too bad. However, if we were to project the trends over 10 years, we will notice a dramatic difference. If 100 missionaries were sent out by agency X in a given year and its average retention rate had remained at about 0.97 for the next decade, then only 74 missionaries would still be in active service after 10 years.\textsuperscript{26}

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\textsuperscript{22} The response rate was between 50 to 90% of the total national mission force.
\textsuperscript{23} Each agency provided data on their missionary sending during the past 20 years. A table with six columns (from A to F) was provided, with each row representing a year’s data. The six columns were: A = year of first departure, B = number of new missionaries in that year, C = number of these still in active service with agency on 31 Dec. 2002, D = number of these transferred to another agency but are still working on the field as on 31 Dec. 2002, E = number of these who left the agency for unavoidable reasons, F = number of these who left for potentially preventable reasons or were dismissed.
\textsuperscript{24} Extensive studies by Detlef Bloecher have proved that this is a reasonable assumption.
\textsuperscript{25} Not all agencies had missionary-sending data for 20 years.
\textsuperscript{26} The calculation for Agency X is as follows: 100 multiplied by 0.97\textsuperscript{10} = 74.
agency Y, only 35 missionaries of its original 100 missionaries would still be serving after 10 years.27

In the retention record, each missionary returning was assigned into one of three different categories:

1. Return for potentially preventable reasons (any reasons due to personal, cultural, family-related, team-related, work-related, agency-related issues),
2. Return for unpreventable reasons (normal retirement, death in service, project end, completion of assignment), and
3. Harmonious transfer to another organisation while continuing with service in the same people group. Harmonious transfers were not considered as negative events in this study because we worked from a kingdom of God perspective. Harmonious transfer meant that the missionary had remained on the field, but was serving with a different agency.

Special emphasis was put on the first category in the ReMAP II project because attrition for potentially preventable reasons could possibly be reduced by organisational development.

From these three categories, we could calculate the following retention rates:

- RRT (or Total annual retention rate) was derived from the Annual Retention Rate RR where R considers all the missionaries still serving on the field (whether with the agency or with another agency due to harmonious transfer),
- RRP (or Annual retention rate for the incremental risk of potentially preventable attrition) is similarly obtained from RR, but where R considers the retention of potentially preventable attrition, and
- RRU (or Annual retention rate for the risk of unpreventable attrition) is likewise calculated from RR, but where R considers the retention of unpreventable attrition.

Having calculated the RRT and RRP for each agency that participated in ReMAP II, we grouped the agencies into three equal subgroups according to their Retention Rate: high (H), medium (M) and low (L). Due to significant differences in their mission movements, two separate analyses were run for Old Sending Countries and New Sending Countries. Standard errors were calculated for each average to indicate the uncertainty of the number due to statistical fluctuation. For these calculations, we also used the statistical tools available to worksheets in the Microsoft Excel software.

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27 The calculation for Agency Y is as follows: 100 multiplied by 0.90^{10} = 35.
Weighted averages

In ReMAP II, we wanted to establish the relationship between “Retaining Missionaries” and “Agency Practices.” Therefore, we designed some 48 questions on agency operation, and we requested mission leaders to do a self-evaluation of their own agency’s practices. However, mission agencies differ considerably in size: some sending bases were small agencies with less than ten missionaries, while others were large organisations with thousands of missionaries. Therefore, when analyzing the data collected, we had to use weighted responses. This is the only way of obtaining a meaningful average for the demographic data, attrition data and retention data. Weighted averages were also used for the other questions. This meant that each response from an agency was multiplied by that agency’s number of active missionaries. Hence, we took into account the number of missionaries actually serving within the agency’s working conditions, under its leadership of specific values or convictions.

Phase III: Reporting and training

Phase III began in June 2003 with initial data analysis and discussion of our early findings. The country coordinators met in Vancouver at “Canada 2003” conference, an international gathering of the various taskforces under the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, where preliminary results were presented and discussed. Further data continued to be submitted and collected until December 2003. The final analysis was conducted at the end of 2003.

Country coordinators received the analysed results by e-mail. This included the retention rates for each participating agency (identified by their research code), analyses for each country, region or continent, and the global findings.

28 As evidenced by their time, effort and effectiveness rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (not well done) to 6 (very well done). The 7-point scale includes “0” (not applicable).
29 Demographic data was gathered from questions 1 to 10, 26 to 39 in the ReMAP II questionnaire.
30 Attrition data of the years 2001 to 2002 was gathered from questions 97 and 98 in the ReMAP II questionnaire.
31 Retention Record was gathered in Section J of the ReMAP II questionnaire. This was a table of personnel data about missionary sending, retention over a 20 year period (from 1981 to 2000).
Here is a brief overview of our key findings:

- There was a strong positive correlation between missionary retention and agency practices. Some 40 specific factors were identified from our analysis of the ReMAP II international database. These factors were in the areas of candidate selection, vision and purpose, leadership, communication, personal support, member care, ministry priorities, ministry outcomes, continuous training, finances, and home office operations.

- Missionary retention involves a complex web of factors, not one factor or a few factors. Agency practices and procedures are generally determined by a composite of an organisation’s ethos, values, and purposes. The character and worldview of an agency permeates all aspects of its operations. Indeed, certain factors observed in OSC and NSC expressed their history, culture, church traditions, and expectations of supporting churches.

- Although missionary retention has gradually dropped over the past twenty years, it has not decreased in the subgroup of high retaining agencies. These agencies have been flexible enough to change with the times, and to maintain their missionaries’ commitment, loyalty, and vision. Thus, high retaining agencies continue to be blessed with experienced staff.

- Our results suggest that adopting the best practices of the high retaining subgroup could reduce the “potentially preventable attrition” in both OSC and NSC. When the performance of the high retaining subgroup (about one-third of all agencies) is taken as our standard, then it may be possible to reduce “potentially preventable attrition” by 45% in OSC and 65% in NSC.

- In addition, adopting the best practices of the high retaining subgroup could possibly reduce what is often considered as “unpreventable attrition” by a larger percentage. The reduction was calculated to be 55% in OSC and 75% in NSC, from the actual inspiring performance of the best one-third of their mission agencies.

Since early 2004, the country coordinators have reported these ReMAP II findings at one or more workshops to mission executives and church leaders in almost all of the participating countries. During these workshops, the local mission leaders are given the opportunity to reflect on the key findings and to discuss specific efforts to strengthen their organizational practices, especially those relating to missionary sending and member care. ReMAP II results have also been presented at a few regional conferences. Numerous short reports from participating countries have also been published in national and international missiological journals.

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32 One important collection of reports was the “ReMAP II—Long-term retention of mission personnel,” Connections: the Journal of the WEA Missions Commission, Vol. 3 No. 2, (June 2004). This issue of Connections contained 21 articles on ReMAP II: 2 editorials, 6 foundational studies.
Several correlation analyses on specific issues were performed. These included: the trends observed among the younger mission movements, the correlation between member care and mission retention, and the trends in evangelical missionary deployment among unreached peoples.

**Concluding thoughts**

Collaborative work across international borders requires mutual trust and good communication as well as a willingness to learn from one another. In the ReMAP II project, our face-to-face meetings in London and Vancouver enabled the country coordinators and the steering committee to get to know each other and to understand how we could work together on a significant research project.

Collaboration could be a powerful approach to strengthening our international mission partnerships between the national mission movements in different countries. The collective ability of a team far exceeds that of individual members. In ReMAP II, our combined findings from the 22 participating countries resulted in an international database, which was far larger than what we expected.

The small nations that participated experienced great benefits through our collaborative research. They had been constrained by their limited resources and expertise. However, as a part of an international team, each nation had the opportunity to participate in a research project and to learn from other nations.

Through their participation in the ReMAP II project, some country coordinators have initiated regular communication between their respective national mission movements. Such links are welcomed because they will bring mutual encouragement and development within the global mission community.

**Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Dr. Detlef Bloecher (Germany), Dr. Jonathan Lewis (USA), Dr Jim Van Meter (USA), and Dr. Barbara Griffin (Australia) of the ReMAP II steering committee for their encouraging support and valuable comments in their review of this article.
Old Sending Countries (OSC) and New Sending Countries (NSC) in the ReMAP II project by the Mission Commission of the WEA.
The building blocks:

Section B is the core of the book but it is also a reference section. These chapters are designed to be referred to selectively, depending on the issue you need to address. You may have opened the book already wrestling with an issue and know what you want help with, or you may want to access the facilitators guide (www.worthkeeping.info) and take the online assessment to identify the areas you need to review. Whichever approach you take, once you decide on the chapters, accessing them should be easy as each one is laid out in a common format.

There are 11 foundational areas which cover broad areas of organisational practice. Within these chapters you will discover building blocks of organisational practice. Where an area is multifaceted you will find sub-chapters that explore in depth one building block. You can use these chapters individually or link a number of them together into an organisational development programme—see Chapter 20 for an outline of how to do this.
Agency Size & Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Size</th>
<th>82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSC</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The facts

Big is better... at least up to a certain size: 50, in fact. ReMAP II has demonstrated that very small mission agencies across NSC and OSC lose people at an alarming rate of 33% per year. Larger agencies do much better with the loss of just 6% in OSC and 1.3% in NSC. Size appears to give an agency scope to redeploy people more effectively, thereby avoiding losing them. It also gives them a better cross-section of support services and offers significant cost effectiveness savings (just one home office staff per ten active missionaries in large agencies, compared to two home office staff per active missionary for the smallest agencies). Leaders of small agencies rated their performance much lower than did leaders of large agencies, and this was across a whole raft of key areas, including missiological pre-field training, orientation, team support, member care and home office operating.

ReMAP II findings call for partnership—a buzzword in missions for some time, but now quite clearly a vital need, both specifically for the health and well-being of the individual missionaries and generally for the effectiveness of building the Kingdom.
The data

Percentage of Missionaries Serving in Agencies of this Size

The key findings

- Small agencies have very low retention rates and high attrition rates
- Small agencies have a much higher ratio of home office staff to active missionary
- Small agencies have significantly less structure and lower care facilities, but these limitations do not explain the high attrition rates
- The low retention of small agencies is primarily due to their small size (limited synergies, cooperation, under critical-mass)

What it means

Figure 1 gives the annual percentage

\[ \text{Average and Standard Error (σ/√n, due to the limited number of returnees).} \]

...with considerable national differences which will be discussed elsewhere.

Detlef Bloecher and Jonathan Lewis, “Further Findings in Research Data,” Too Valuable to
the new mission movement of the Global South. OSC agencies are more affected by issues such as end of contract, completion of projects, retirement of missionaries, etc., so that their return rate is 6.3% per year, a value similar to that found in ReMAP I. It is evident that the smallest possible agency for minimising the return rate is an organisation with 50 field missionaries. It appears that this allows sufficient size for meaningful specialisation in the home office as well as mutual care and sufficient diversity of gifting in the ministry teams in the country of service.

The retention rate (RRT) shows a similar dependency on agency size (Figure 2), increasing from 90.8% to 98.0% in NSC. All of these retention rates look impressive and the differences between them appear small, yet after 10 years of service the agency with a retention rate of 90.8% would only have 38% of its missionaries still in service compared to 82% in large NSC agencies with 98.0%, so 62% of missionaries in small agencies left the field compared to just 18% in large agencies: a factor of 3.5. In OSC, a retention rate of 87.5% was found for small agencies and 94.8% for large ones. This means that after ten years of service only

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5 ReMAP II did not look into team size on the field, but smaller agencies generally have several smaller ministry teams.

6 Agencies reported on the number of new missionaries of the years 1981–2001 and their fate since then, whether they were (a) still in active service with their agency on 31 Dec 2002, (b) have in meantime transferred to another organisation (i.e., harmonious move to another agency or a Nt. church, merger of agencies or outsourcing of projects. etc..) but are still in active service in the same country/people group, (c) returned to home country for unpreventable reasons (i.e., completion of predetermined contract, end of project, retirement, illness, visa withdrawal, appointment to leadership position in home office or agency's International Office, death in service) or (d) returned for Potentially Preventable Reasons (i.e., all personal, family, work, agency related reasons or dismissal by agency). The annual Retention Rate RRT was calculated from the percentage R of still active missionaries (a and b) after t years of service: RRT = 10^((log R) / t) (assuming a uniform risk of return irrespective of the length of service—extensive studies by the author showed that this is a reasonable assumption).

7 The numerical differences between Fig. 1 and 2 stem from the different concepts of attrition (returnees of a given year irrespective of their length of service) and Retention (Percentage of missionaries still in service after 5 or 10 years of service) as well as the different time period considered (returnees of 2001/2002 versus Retention of new missionaries of the years 1981-2001).
26.4% of missionaries in small OSC agencies are still in active service compared to 58.9% for large OSC agencies.

Figure 3 gives the retention rate for unpreventable attrition (RRU). For NSC it increases from 95.7% (very small agencies) to 98.6% so that after ten years of service 35% and 12.5% respectively have left for unpreventable causes, again a factor of three! In OSC, RRU increased with agency size from 92.0% to 97.4% so that after ten years of service 56% and 23% respectively had left the field for unpreventable reasons. This steep increase of RRU with agency size is even more surprising as small agencies are considerably younger (average age—NSC 11 years, OSC 27 years) than larger agencies (average age—NSC 31 years; OSC 96 years), so issues such as missionary retirement and phase-out of projects have less significance. Apparently many small agencies are focused on one project and/or country; they cannot (or do not want to) offer new opportunities for service after the completion of a project. This indicates the conceptual and structural limitations of small agencies in personnel deployment and long-term retention.

The retention rate for potentially preventable attrition (RRP) (Figure 4) also increases with agency size from 95.2% to an impressive 99.3%

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8 Definition in footnote 6 (c).
9 Definition in footnote 6 (d).
Chapter 5: Agency Size and Partnerships

(NSC), so that after ten years of service 38.5% of the missionaries of small agencies and 5.9% of the missionaries of large agencies had left the field for potentially preventable reasons, resulting in a factor of almost seven! (In OSC, RRT was less dependent on agency size, hovering around 97.7% so that the difference between NSC and OSC is most pronounced in large agencies). Thus, preventable as well as unpreventable causes decrease with agency size.

The high return rates for small agencies are even more unexpected as small agencies have up to 30 times(!) more staff per active missionary (Figure 5) serving in their home office than do large agencies (0.1 staff per active missionary) and thus provide very personal care for the sent missionaries.

The ReMAP II data also proved that small agencies have very high annual recruitment rates: in the years 1999/2000 it amounted to 40% (NSC) new missionaries per year and 21% (OSC)—however, every second one of these new missionaries left the agency within three years! Large agencies (250+ missionaries), on the other hand, had much smaller recruitment rates: merely 7.1% per year (NSC) and 6.5% (OSC), of which only every seventh missionary left the agency again within three years. Small agencies appear to operate like a “revolving door” with many new missionaries coming in and then leaving again. This would appear to be a tremendous waste of human and financial resources. For the missionary, there is the high financial investment of training and the personal cost of leaving career and home, and for the project there is the experi-
ence of personnel resignation before the worker has become effective not to mention the disappointment of the home church and supporters who become confused about God’s calling.

What are the reasons for this high attrition rate in spite of the very personal family character of small agencies? The ReMAP II data shows that mission leaders from small agencies gave significantly lower ratings to their agency’s performance (as compared to ratings given by leaders of large agencies) regarding a number of vital functions (Figures 6-9 are examples for NSC). These included: organisation, \(^\text{10}\) leadership, \(^\text{11}\) minimal pre-field training requirements, \(^\text{12}\) field orientation.

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\(^\text{10}\) NSC –8%; OSC – 10%. Individual factors were: Vision & purpose (NSC –12%; OSC –8%), Plans & job description (NSC –13%; OSC –6%), Documented policies (NSC –15%; OSC –8%), Annual performance review (NSC –1%; OSC –20%), Handling complaints (NSC –26%; OSC –30%), Continuous training of missionaries (NSC –10%; OSC –14%), Appropriate amount of work (NSC –9%; OSC –6%), Ministry opportunity for spouse (NSC –13%; OSC –13%), Mutual support in missionary team (NSC –15%; OSC –23%).

\(^\text{11}\) NSC –9%; OSC –11%. In particular: Example of leaders (NSC –3%; OSC –10%), Leaders identify problems and take actions (NSC –12%; OSC –5%), On-field Supervision of missionaries (NSC –20%; OSC –25%), Risk assessment (NSC –29%; OSC –33%), but Communication with leadership (NSC +6%; OSC +2%) and Missionaries included in major decisions on the field (NSC +11%; OSC +5%) as they are small agencies.

\(^\text{12}\) NSC –16%; OSC –16%; in particular: Length of theological training (NSC -10%; OSC –30%), Missiological training (NSC –41%; OSC –71%), Practical Pre-field Missionary training (NSC +20%; OSC +56%), Agency’s own orientation program (NSC-19%; OSC 300%).
personal care on the field, educational standards, staff development, finances and running the home office. Candidate selection and missionaries’ ministry showed little difference, however. Major variations with agency size were found in the areas of missiological pre-field training, orientation, team support, member care and home office operations. This draws our attention to the structural limitations of small agencies. These lower ratings are the more compelling as they were not assessments from outside by critical researchers applying idealistic criteria, but assessments by the mission leaders themselves.

The structural limitations of small agencies are significant, but they are not so critical as to explain the relatively huge size of their attrition rates:

13 NSC -21%; OSC –32%; in particular: On-field orientation (NSC -25%; OSC –20%), Language learning of new missionaries (NSC -15%; OSC –41%), and Ongoing culture and language training (NSC –15%; OSC –30%).

14 NSC –18%; OSC –14%. Especially: Member care (NSC –38%; OSC –21%) and Preventive member care (NSC –52%; OSC –73%), Administrative and practical support on the field (NSC –19%; OSC –16%), Mutual support in the missionary team (NSC –15%; OSC –23%), Pastoral care on the field level (NSC –19%; OSC –9%), Interpersonal conflicts resolution (NSC –15%; OSC –9%), Growth of missionary’s spiritual life (NSC –21%; OSC –16%), MK education (NSC –45%; OSC –28%), Health care provided (NSC –23%; OSC –0%), Annual vacation (NSC-19%; OSC –8%), Risk assessment & Contingency Planning (NSC –29%; OSC –33%), Missionaries’ continuous training (NSC –10%; OSC -14%), Re-entry program (NSC –20%; OSC –30%).

15 Maximum educational standard: BA (NSC +25%; OSC +160%); MA (NSC –42%; OSC –50%); Doctorate (NSC +100%; OSC -50%).

16 NSC –9%; OSC –11%. Especially: Ongoing language & cultural studies (NSC –15%; OSC –31%), Development of new gifts & skills (NSC –10%; OSC –14%).

17 NSC –5%; OSC –10%; Sustained financial support (NSC –4%; OSC –9%), Back-up system for missionaries with low financial support (NSC –10%; OSC –44%), Project finances used effectively (NSC –13%; OSC –9%) and Transparency of agency finances (NSC –14%; OSC +3%).

18 NSC –14%; OSC –17%. In particular: Pre-field screening (NSC-14%; OSC –20%), Pre-field training (NSC –22%; OSC –34%), Staff prays for missionaries (NSC –17%; OSC –22%), Re-entry arrangements (NSC –21%; OSC –30%), Debriefing during home assignment (NSC –22%; OSC –10%).

19 (-2%) with the following significant factors: Character references (NSC +5%; OSC –10%), Family blessing (NSC –10%; OSC +12%), Ministry experience in local church (NSC +25%; OSC –15%), Physical examination (NSC –12%; OSC –10%), Psychological assessment (NSC –11%; OSC –11%); Contentment with present marital status (NSC –5%; OSC –11%), but Previous cross-cultural experience (NSC +27%; OSC +12%), Potential for financial support (NSC 3%; OSC +45%) and Potential for prayer support (NSC +11%; OSC +15%).

20 NSC –5%; OSC –4%. With significant changes in: Missionary not overworked (NSC –9%; OSC –6%), Ministry role for spouse (-21%) and Administrative and practical support on the field (NSC –19%; OSC –16%) having significant effects.
so we need to look for other explanations. It appears that mission agencies resemble a wood fire where burning pieces mutually heat each other and thus keep the fire burning. Set aside, a burning log will soon die out as it now loses more heat than is produced and received. In a similar way mission agencies need a “critical mass” of workers to secure a mix of gifts and experience, generate a stimulating and inspiring atmosphere, cover the various ministries and roles, provide mutual support and overcome situations of crisis.

This minimal size appears to be critical for the care and spiritual survival of the missionary. Therefore, we recommend that small agencies enter into partnerships with others in the country of service. Cooperation with national churches or organisations and/or other mission agencies already on the ground would appear to be essential, particularly in the early phase of a project when a new agency is still small numbers-wise and is gaining experience of the work and the situation. By contrast, existing organisations would by now have gained experience, set up effective leadership and support structures and built trusted relationships with individuals in authority. Likewise, small agencies need a balanced team in their home office/sending base with a variety of complementary personalities, gifting and experience. This will enable them to cover all aspects of candidate selection and preparation, as well as to provide better leadership, public relations, donor relationships, care for the workers on the field, etc..

Cross-cultural mission has become highly complex in our modern world. It includes labour laws, legal regulations, international bank transfers, public relations, professional standards and missiological issues, all of which require a high level of expertise. For this reason, a certain number of workers are needed to cover the various tasks in a competent and efficient way and to create synergies. In many cases this is beyond the reach of small agencies, as it would require very high financial and personnel investment to keep up-to-date professionally and cover the various tasks
Chapter 5: Agency Size and Partnerships

with competence and efficiency. We therefore encourage small agencies to share office facilities and expertise, (e.g. sharing accountancy and personal services, counselling and other specialist staff), or indeed, outsourcing these services. In mission as in business there is a global trend towards merger of organisations—not just of small mission agencies but also of large agencies with hundreds of missionaries—in order to work effectively and efficiently and to utilise synergies. Together we can achieve much more than alone.

In addition, there is a global trend towards cooperation in the country of service, the formation of large consortiums, sometimes even hundreds of churches and agencies with common specific goals.\(^{21}\) This process has been pioneered by the international agency, INTERDEV, which has been instrumental in building and facilitating many regional partnerships. It is also the aim of the WEA Mission Commission (WEA-MC), with its various task forces and working groups, who work to pool global insights and share resources. Cooperation and partnership is the key concept of the day. This involves the sacrifice of own aims, plans and pet ideas, and the willingness to submit and be accountable to each other, though without loss of identity. This is good stewardship and faithful service—anything else is likely to be a waste of precious human and financial resources, a duplication of existing projects and carelessness towards sent missionaries. It is HIS Kingdom, not ours!

## In the real world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who? → When?</th>
<th>Home Church</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agencies</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>- Culture of practicing partnership by the leaders</td>
<td>- Stimulate partnership of missionary partners</td>
<td>- Enter into partnerships with (external) partners</td>
<td>- Serve needs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teach partnership in education program for young and old</td>
<td>- Be inclusive and informative</td>
<td>- Share needs and answers with other agencies</td>
<td>- Facilitate partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Deliberate choice for involvement in missionary process</td>
<td>- Have team-approach</td>
<td>- Seek involvement of home church</td>
<td>- Teach partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Encourage and facilitate missionaries to partner on field</td>
<td>- Partner (inter)nationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Crisis)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Furlough</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-entry</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
DMG - A model for partnerships in missions

Detlef Bloecher, DMG, Germany

Research has shown that small and young agencies have a very high risk of losing their workers. Their attrition rate is up to ten times higher than that of large agencies (with 50+ workers) due to the lack in personal support, professional administration, and opportunities for service. At the same time, small agencies need up to ten times more administrative staff in their home office (per active field missionary). This is because they need to employ staff for accountancy, administration, employment, legal issues, writing and layout of the mission journal. It is almost the same amount of work, whether you do each of these tasks for five or 50 missionaries.

Agency size is therefore a matter of effectiveness and efficiency, or to express it in biblical terminology “good stewardship”. But every new agency starts small. Therefore, the question is “How can an agency survive its first ten years without losing its first generation of missionaries?”

A mission executive in a neighbouring country recently called me on the telephone. He explained that they had accepted a new mission candidate from my country (Germany) who will be sent out by their agency. They are seeking a way to channel her financial support. Is there a way other than to set up an office of their organisation in my country with all the legal work, office expenses, demands on information, public relations, etc., implied? Is there a way of partnering in missions in order to bring about her calling and sending in an efficient and effective way? His request caught my attention, because his dilemma was the reason for the existence of DMG, our mission agency.

DMG (Deutsche Missionsgemeinschaft, or German Missionary Fellowship) came into existence for the purpose of assisting German churches to send out and support their missionaries in a cross-cultural ministry by partnering with mission agencies (and churches) in the country of service. Each DMG missionary is seconded to a receiving mission organisation in the country of service, in many cases an international mission organisation that does not have its own sending office in Germany.

DMG was founded after World War II, during a time of great economic shortage and social needs: immense death tolls, towns in ruins, huge unemployment, extreme poverty, influx of 20 million refugees into Western Germany. It was a time of national grief over the atrocities of the Nazis and the horrors of war, when there were other priorities than cross-cultural
missions. A number of mission agencies (mainly American) began coming to Continental Europe to proclaim the Gospel. They included Greater Europe Mission, Janz Team, and Youth for Christ.

At that time, Beatenberg Bible School in Switzerland was the leading missionary training centre in Continental Europe. It was also the venue for a series of mission conferences. The speakers spoke about the unprecedented opportunities for mission in Eastern Asia and Europe. They even invited Germans, their former enemies of war, to join their mission teams in order to seize the opportunities of the day.

After one of these challenging talks, Dr. Gertrud Wasserzug, the energetic Beatenberg Bible School Director, took the initiative and urged the German attendees to respond to this call in faith by forming a German sending agency. This led to the founding of DMG (German Missionary Fellowship) on the following day in 1951 at the conference centre, following the model of SMG (Swiss Missionary Fellowship) which was initiated by the same lady in the previous year.

Partnership in missions is the basis of operation for sending agencies like DMG (German Missionary Fellowship), SMG (Swiss Missionary Fellowship), and VDM (United German Mission Assistance). These agencies were founded to bridge the gap between sending churches (in the home country) and opportunities for ministry (in the countries of service). It takes a lot of effort to establish a new sending agency, to build up an administrative system in the home country, to gain the trust of sending churches, to establish a good reputation, and to develop effective structures and policies. It requires lots of experience and resources to build effective ministry teams in the country of service, to establish relationships with local government officials and/or national churches, to learn the culture and local way of doing business, to establish a relevant and appropriate project, to secure project continuity, to develop a strategy for culturally relevant church planting (to avoid merely importing our own ecclesiastic traditions) and so on.

Newly emerging sending agencies (especially those in new sending countries) can follow the example of DMG and SMG and place their own missionaries into ministry teams of existing mission agencies. Their missionaries can then focus on ministry, while enjoying the fellowship and support of colleagues of the partner agency, serving under their leadership, and receiving their supervision, advice and care.

Likewise, international agencies which want to receive missionaries from a certain sending country (where they do not have an office) may choose to partner with a national sending agency in the country (for example DMG, if the sending country is Germany). The local sending agency (such as DMG) will serve as their home-based mission link to the sending churches in the home country (in our case Germany). It will provide infor-
mation on mission opportunities, conduct pre-field training, build up prayer and financial support, help the sending churches grow in competence and understanding, help to select suitable mission candidates, and choose suitable assignments. It receives the financial support and maintains donor relationships, provides employment and social security for the missionary, keeps in touch with relatives etc. The receiving organisation will provide field orientation, language acquisition, member care, work assignment, leadership, accountability, periods of rest and refreshment, etc.

The respective expectations are laid out in a written cooperation agreement (an example is given on the webpage: www.DMGint.de/dam). In other words, DMG is considered the German sending office for those international mission agencies without an office in Germany.

In the home country, only the local sending agency is visible, and the churches and the general public will know this agency. Meanwhile, several different international mission agencies can use this agency as their sending base for personnel recruitment and fundraising. This results in an efficient and lean mission sending structure.

DMG presently cooperates in this way with some 400 local churches in Germany, which currently have sent out some 330 long-term missionaries (plus 70 short-termers per year and a growing number of finishers) who serve in 70 countries under the umbrella of 102 international partner agencies. These 102 agencies have reported some 4,000 vacancies for missionary service. DMG will match a prospective mission candidate with a certain vision for ministry with an opportunity for ministry (place, ministry, team structure, organisational ethos, theological stance, etc.).

After some years, when such a newly emerging sending agency has grown in experience and size, it could decide to establish its own teams and ministries in a country of service, and it may do so. By that time, the sending agency would have already gone through a steep learning curve, possibly saving the first generation of its workers, and it would have built up its own team leadership.

Yet DMG, SMG, and other similar sending agencies have learned to appreciate such mission partnerships and chosen not to establish their “own” mission teams or projects. They have consciously decided to continue to work in partnership with other mission agencies in the countries of service. This is because they view this manner of operation as the most effective and efficient way to exercise good stewardship in doing missions. They believe that partnership in missions is commanded by the Lord for their work in global missions.
Discussion questions:

1. What are the strengths of the DMG model for synergy in missions? What are the weaknesses?
2. Could this be a suitable model for partnerships of the emerging mission agencies in Eastern Europe and countries of the South? What do you think?
3. What models of mission partnerships exist in your country or region?
4. If there are no such partnerships, what can be done to establish one or more mission partnerships in your country or region?

Sending workers by teams

Bob Lopez\(^2\) and Bibien Limlingan,\(^3\) Philippine Mission Association,\(^4\) Philippines

In the Philippines, church congregations are small, with an average of 58 members in each congregation. Our mission agencies are also small, with only about 26 members in each agency. In fact, more than two-thirds of our missionary sending bases have fewer than 20 missionaries.

In recent years, we have observed that when small mission agencies work in partnership to send teams of missionaries to reach people groups, they accomplish much for God. Such partnerships thrive and they are able to mobilise more people for missions.

Partnership is not just a very good practice in the Philippines but also an appropriate one. It reflects a very important cultural value, “bayanihan”, which speaks of community cooperation to accomplish a certain project.

What happened in the past

The earliest missions efforts in the Philippines were individualistic in nature because of territorial divisions and also, historically, the country

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\(^2\) Bob Lopez is the current National Director of the Philippine Missions Association. He also serves as a board member of the Tentmakers International Exchange, the global tentmaking “arm” of the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation and the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission. He is a member of the Global Leadership Team of the Filipino International Network. Bob has been involved in missions mobilisation, training and deployment since 1995 when he began serving with the Asian Center for Missions, eventually becoming its Chief Operating Officer. He is married to Cristina. Together, they have three adult children and three grandchildren.

\(^3\) Bibien Limlingan currently serves as the Research Officer of the Philippine Missions Association. Bibien has a Masters degree in Theology from the Asian Theological Seminary. She has just recently finished putting together an extensive study on all the people groups in the Philippines. She is married to Pastor Jong Limlingan and they have three daughters.

\(^4\) Philippine Missions Association is a 23 year-old organisation that serves as the missions commission of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches.
was subdivided by the first North American Protestant and Evangelical denominations after the country was liberated from the Spaniards at the very start of the 1900s.

People groups won to the gospel were generally from the lowland people and the highland tribes of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. They were the most ready for religious change, and their receptivity to the gospel was high. Furthermore, there was a romantic notion of mission going to the most economically depressed and backward areas. Much effort was directed at the most receptive areas and at animistic tribes.

Meanwhile, some people groups in the Philippines resisted almost all efforts to bring the gospel to them. They despised the spiritual legacy of the colonial powers. They are ‘the neglected ethno-linguistic groups’ in the most difficult places for church planting. Although there has been a very long history of individual mission efforts and zealous ministry to bring the gospel to these peoples, such efforts have had very little success, only marginally affecting the people. Many workers who laboured eventually died without seeing the fruits of their labour.

How partnerships began
It was the disappointing lack of fruit that led mission groups reaching “the neglected ethno-linguistic groups” to begin exploring the option of partnering with other agencies with a similar field focus. Talks about forming a “consortium” began as far back as 1984. The breakthrough came in 1998 during the Centennial Missions Congress where the Body of Christ celebrated the first 100 years of Protestant and Evangelical missionary activity in the Philippines. During that historic gathering, the nuclei of the first few partnerships targeting the most gospel-resistant peoples were formed. We have made significant progress since then.

Over the years, frontline workers in the most difficult places began to organise programs to encourage one another. They began planning a unified evangelistic thrust. The concept of church planting movements was espoused and embraced. They started pooling their resources together for specific resistant people groups. In the many partnerships that have formed, a church planting program may include some or all of the following components:

- Evangelism and discipleship
- Continuing education and literacy program
- Bible translation
- Primary health care program
- Livelihood & skills development program
- Community organising and empowerment
How partnerships are developing in the Philippines and beyond

Today, we have seven mission partnerships working among seven of the 14 “neglected ethno-linguistic groups.” During the last ten years, we have seen significant breakthroughs in ministry, and house fellowships of new believers have been formed and are increasing in number.

One of these seven mission partnerships comprises over 20 participating churches and organisations. Together, they are involved in intercession, mobilisation or fund assistance, with eight of them being directly involved in operations to reach a specific “neglected ethno-linguistic group.” Their combined missionary team is closely knit and very effective in providing mutual support and encouragement. There is a strong family atmosphere within this partnership. They have won a significant number of souls in the past seven years. Other partnerships have also experienced encouraging developments. One of the most positive indicators of the church planting partnership is that we are seeing previously neglected people groups now helping to reach their own people.

One of the important factors in providing the impetus for partnership formation and other collaborative ventures is the biennial gathering of field workers based in the region where there is the concentration of the said resistant people groups. Over the past two decades, this event has provided a forum for fellowship, intercession, sharing of good practices and new initiatives. Even ministry to those who have been hurting and/or neglected can be provided during this time.

In recent years, missionary teams working within the same religious block have begun to convene nationally on a regular basis, in order to encourage, empower, and sustain one another. Highly committed frontline workers have emerged as Religious Block Advocates for the major religious blocks in the Philippines as well as champions for many of the unreached groups in Asia.

Missionary sending agencies are also mobilising missionary teams for overseas mission work, in particular for church planting in the most difficult places. Agencies will often recruit a team of six missionary families from as many churches and send them together as a team. When they are on the field, the team members in a group will provide the necessary member-care to one another. The sending agencies regularly arrange for regional conferences as part of their organisational missionary care while
the sending churches back in the Philippines provide prayer, financial support, and other forms of member care.

Realising that Filipinos seeking overseas jobs were being strategically deployed in the most of the least evangelised countries in the world, dozens of missions organisations began consulting with one another to explore ways to leverage this divinely engineered opportunity. As a result, these agencies organised themselves to embark on an unprecedented 6-year project to raise hundreds of thousands of equipped tentmakers and career missionaries.

New networks aimed at missionary training, youth mobilisation, and missions intercession were organised to augment the other existing networks of member care and ministry in Muslim areas in order to serve the Body of Christ. Consultations with denominations, ministerial fellowships and mega local churches have been underway to bring ownership of the Movement to as many as possible. Many Filipino churches in the National Capital Regions, Central Luzon, Central Visayas and Eastern Mindanao are now part of this growing grassroots movement.

Meanwhile, Filipinos in Diaspora churches (outside of the Philippines) have also formed networks among themselves. We know of Filipino international networks in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East. We are now trying to collaborate to bring our networks closer together. If these networks can be harnessed properly, they can bring about a synergy never before realised on a global scale.

Working together in partnership is highly valued by Filipinos. We have found that this arrests the unhealthy practice of competition among churches and agencies. Partnership is essential to have a significant and sustained impact in the most difficult fields. Furthermore, it affirms the value of using gifts that the Lord of the Harvest has entrusted to every believer, church and mission organisation in a spirit of unity. May God bless our partnerships and networks for His glory.
**Discussion questions:**

1. Does your organisation or church work in partnership with other organisations or churches in your country when mobilising or sending your missionaries to the mission field? What factors have hindered you from pursuing such cooperation?

2. Do your missionaries on the field collaborate with missionaries from other organisations or churches? What is the nature of their partnership, if any?

3. What can be done to encourage or strengthen mission partnerships in your country or region?

4. How could strong partnerships and effective networks contribute to missionary retention?

**The conclusion**

The need for cooperation not only results from the convincing statistical evidence presented, but also from the financial limitations and pragmatic concepts of mission strategists. The need for cooperation also flows from a fundamental theological and missiological principle: Jesus sent his disciples always in pairs (Mark 6:7), the Apostle Paul usually worked on his mission journeys in a team (Acts 13:13) and more than 50 of his co-workers are mentioned in the New Testament by name. In addition, Paul cooperated with churches in Antioch, Philippi, Jerusalem, and Rome. Jesus promised much blessing for common prayer (Mt 18:18) and unity among believers (Mt 18:19), in fact this was Jesus' prayer focus (Jo 17:11-23).

The New Testament is filled with words like: “together”, “each other”, “one with another”, “for each other”, etc. (John 13:14,34f; Rom 12:5,10; Rom 15:5-14; 1 Cor 1:10; Col 3:13; 1 Thess 3:12; 1Thess 5:11; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5). This is the Lord's calling for the church and for missions. This is our calling and it is especially relevant in the complexity of the 21st century with its rapid political changes and diverse network of relationships between various churches and agencies. This fundamental concept of cooperation in missions finds its mandate in clear statistical and theological evidence. It is a call for real partnership to the honour of God.
Chapter 6

Education

“The facts

In simple terms, education is very helpful in retaining missionaries. High retaining agencies have almost twice as many missionaries with MA degrees and doctorates. They also have, on average, expected 2-3 times as much formal missiological training plus 50% more practical pre-field missionary training (this is discussed in detail in Chapter 10). Highly educated personnel can be more easily retained, since they have more potential to be offered and successfully fulfil different assignments within the same agency.

Agencies with highly educated missionaries also do better in the areas of professional organization, personal care and co-operative leadership style, which (as discussed in other chapters) is good for their retention rate and their ability to attract high quality professionals to work with them. The leaders of high retaining OSC agencies underline the significance of continuous training for missionary longevity by rating their performance in that area 12 to 20% higher than low retaining agencies.

“Highly qualified people stay longer”
The data

OSC - Highest Level of Education Reached by Mission Partner

- Doctorate or equivalent: 5.45% (OSC H), 7.96% (OSC L)
- Master's degree or equivalent: 20.79% (OSC H), 39.80% (OSC L)
- Bachelor degree, diploma, or equivalent: 32.25% (OSC H), 51.86% (OSC L)
- Trade school/apprenticeship: 13.42% (OSC H)
- High school diploma (12th grade or equivalent): 17.28% (OSC H), 7.70% (OSC L)
- 6-10 years of schooling: 0.77% (OSC H), 0.61% (OSC L)

NSC - Highest Level of Education Reached by Mission Partner

- Doctorate or equivalent: 1.21% (NSC H), 1.33% (NSC L)
- Master's degree or equivalent: 8.99% (NSC H), 15.80% (NSC L)
- Bachelor degree, diploma, or equivalent: 35.63% (NSC H), 42.96% (NSC L)
- Trade school/apprenticeship: 9.77% (NSC H), 9.32% (NSC L)
- High school diploma (12th grade or equivalent): 26.62% (NSC H), 28.86% (NSC L)
- 6-10 years of schooling: 10.45% (NSC H), 9.06% (NSC L)
Chapter 6: Education

The key findings

✓ High retention is correlated with high educational standard (MA, PhD, Q31-32)
✓ In India and Nigeria we find a subgroup of agencies with high retention and very low educational standard (effective "barefoot missionaries" with only elementary or high school training)

What it means

Recognition?

In an article in the WEA Missions Commission magazine Connections (Vol.4, No.2, Summer 2005), K. Rajendran, Director of IMA, has focused our attention on the importance of training for modern missionaries. Mission is changing across the world and this impacts how missionaries are being trained. He sees the following macro-changes in world mission:

1. **The concept of a missionary is changing across the world.**
   The concept of a missionary has changed from the Western missionaries we now see locals reaching across their own cultures, castes, ethnicities and families. From the 'long' concept of cross-cultural, meaning the distance to travel, to the 'short' cross-cultural, limiting the distance so as to relate to people who are very near, yet different. From sharing the message in one specific way to sharing it to meet different needs. From full-time missionaries to tent-makers. From overt preaching intending to 'convert' people, to a more holistic approach.

2. **The lessons learned from past missionaries are important for good or for worse.**
   It is important to relate God's good news in a fresh manner, learning lessons from the past.

3. **The challenges of missions today are different from the past.**
   Think of accelerated population growth and the use of mass media communication (visual, print, audio, internet).

4. **The demands on missionaries are higher today than ever.**
   We are no longer in an information-closed, colonized world where we can coo people to accept Christianity. It is more important to bring people to Christ as "communities" and to disciple a "whole nation", instead of sporadic individual Christians in the mission compound. Pastoral care needs for missionaries are great and mission-
aries must try to relate to the society at large and not live a monastic style of life.

5. **The number of missions, the diverse visions, and the sheer number of missionaries are mind-boggling.**
We need multiple visions of missionary service for the myriad of challenges across the world.

Has this need for continuous updated training been seen and sensed before? The context of increasing numbers of major changes in the world suggest it is important, and the data from ReMAP II has now clearly shown that it is not just important but a vital need. Looking from the perspective of retention of missionaries, the answer is stark and simple—a highly educated missionary has a stronger chance to survive and thrive in the work of God’s Kingdom!

But what to think of this? Is mission something only for the elite who have both talent and the opportunity to study? This raises several questions:

- What of the “barefoot missionaries” in India and Nigeria (see the *Key Findings and In the Real World*)?
- How does this relate to the findings of Christian Schwarz in his Natural Church Development Survey (1996), where he found that a theological education negatively correlates to church growth in quantity and quality?
- What about the Lord Jesus calling fishermen (Matt.4:19) and Paul reminding the Corinthians of the state they were in when they were called (“not many of you were wise by human standards,” 1 Cor 1:26). Did Jesus make a mistake?

The danger in focusing on this is that we lose sight of the balance that is needed. The Bible shows the importance of knowledge and education (“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge,” Hos 4:6), but God clearly uses “unschooled, ordinary men” (Acts 4:13). God used Peter and John, both unschooled fishermen, but this did not mean they did not teach the believers (Acts 2:42). It looks like God glorifies himself through each and every believer and yet there is a responsibility for everyone to grow in knowledge and be trained and equipped for use in God’s service (“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”, 2 Tim 2:2 NIV.) Every believer has received some talents from the Lord (Matt.25:15) and is responsible to give her “utmost for His Highest.”1 Looking at it from this perspective, we see the potential of every Christian and encourage everyone to be a good steward and further develop the gifts and abilities that God has given them (1 Peter 4:10).

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Issues to deal with

How then, should this training take place?

Jonathan Lewis, leader of the International Missionary Training Network, uses a metaphor to describe the philosophy and character of ministry training: the metaphor of service.

“A Christian philosophy of training sees its foremost purpose as developing God’s servants—enabling and equipping God’s people to engage fully in their 'reasonable spiritual service' (Romans 12:1). The means is a transformational process that requires resisting conformity to the world’s standards and attitudes, the infilling of God’s Spirit, and the generation of right thinking/attitudes. It produces a lifestyle that is kingdom-centred and purposeful in service. The outcome is a 'living sacrifice' that is holy, pleasing, and acceptable to God for His service.”

Lewis identifies ten principles of training imbedded in this metaphor:

1. The goal of the curricular process is to grow believers in the likeness of Christ and increase their usefulness in serving Him and His purposes.
2. The curriculum is an integrated process that addresses the need for growth in every area of life.
3. The curricular process understands and employs a broad range of different methods, means, and contexts to achieve its ends.
4. Training intentionally develops specific skills, right attitudes, and essential understanding for ministry competence.
5. Trainers are fellow servant/learners that are competent to guide the training process, and committed to mentoring the trainee.
6. God has a unique design for each individual that trainers perceive and help develop.
7. Learning happens in community and depends as much on interaction with fellow trainees as on the input of mentor-guides.
8. Knowledge is not a goal in itself, but when combined with obedience and practice, it contributes to understanding, maturity and competence.

9. The trainee is responsible for his own growth through obedience to God’s will and diligence in practice and service.

10. The training program and skill of the mentor-trainers is evaluated by their trainees’ success as persons and in their ministry.

These principles underscore the position that training is not theoretical alone, but that the whole person should be transformed. Character-building is an essential element to the success of training and is the basis for life-long-learning that is so needed on the mission-field.

In his integrated model of missions Rodolfo Giron – President of COMIBAM is of the same vision and develops a building of training that has three levels. The whole process he calls the process of Spiritual Formation and in fact it starts with a person’s birth:

1. **Foundational** Level 1 starts with the Life Foundation. Every person has a unique cultural, social and family background. God took life development into account when He chose Paul and Peter for their specific callings. Then follows the Secular Foundation. Here we are talking about High School, College, and Graduate School, where the basis for a professional role is laid. This can provide opportunities for working as a professional in restricted areas. Out of this comes the Professional Foundation—the professional experience in the secular world which gives a person greater awareness of the realities of life.

2. Level 2 is the Ecclesiastical level. This begins with discipleship at the local church and is called informal training or informal education. Following comes biblical training that can also start in the local church, a solid base for life and work. Theological or missiological training only comes after this. The need for a well-rounded development throughout the earlier stages of life seems obvious, but the results of ReMAP II show that if this is lacking it is a major hindrance to retention. Leadership and ministerial experience complete this level. The best missionaries are those who have proven in their home culture that they can minister in a relevant way to other people.

3. On top we find Level 3: the Missionary Level. A person is not ready after Level 2. A good cross-cultural training program helps to know if someone is able to adapt to another culture or community before going to the field. How good it would be if this program could be taken either in another country another culture or in a training environment that has a strong multicultural community life, to really experience

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the challenges before going. A pre-field training program can be the next step. Such programs (language school, outreach training, etc.) would ideally be held close to the host culture where the missionary will work for three to six months.

Finally, the missionary is ready to go to the Field. This preparation may take a long time; however, we should not focus on short-term success, but aim at quality and fruit for the long-term.

**Mutual learning**

- Training institutes in both Old Sending Countries and New Sending Countries could develop programs together, including an exchange program in their curriculum.
- Older generations could offer themselves as mentors and coaches for younger generations.
- Umbrella organizations (national, regional and global) could function as catalysts to bring all the partners together. Each partner should display an attitude which focuses on:
  - a spirit of partnership
  - a clear picture of the different roles
  - communication
## In the real world

### Who? → When?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous</th>
<th>Home Church</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agency</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Appreciate and stimulate general education</td>
<td>➢ Commitment to life-long-learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Appreciate and stimulate missiological education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Provide Bible and discipleship training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Offer place for learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Assessment of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Prioritizing education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agency</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Possibility of apprenticeship ‘at home’</td>
<td>➢ Commitment to training</td>
<td>➢ Create possibilities for pre-field, cross-cultural training</td>
<td>➢ Develop training modules and tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Financially support training possibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Offer character/competence training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Partner with foreign training institutes</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On field</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agency</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Support ongoing training</td>
<td>➢ Prioritize ongoing training</td>
<td>➢ Offer training on the job</td>
<td>➢ Assessment of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Be responsible for own growth</td>
<td>➢ Stimulate on-going education</td>
<td>➢ Prioritizing education</td>
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<table>
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<th>Crisis</th>
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<table>
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<th>Furlough</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agency</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Refresh and update personal and ministerial training</td>
<td>➢ Give opportunity to do extra training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Be involved in training candidates</td>
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<tr>
<th>Re-entry</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agency</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Support in new job training</td>
<td>➢ Be involved in training candidates</td>
<td>➢ Train missionaries for new job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Is higher education required for effective mission work?

Nathaniel Y. Abimbola, Ethnos Christian Missions, Nigeria

Note: Some names used in this case study have been changed to protect the identity of individuals working on the field.

In the early 1980s, some Christians from Shield of Faith Ministries International (SFMI) in Oregon, USA, came to Nigeria. They conducted discipleship training among the young people, many of whom had only received a basic primary education.

Some of those first generation students are still being used by the Lord now at Ethnos Christian Missions (ECM). We are involved in researching new tribes, training new workers, as well as establishing local churches in rural areas. Therefore, we are teaching what we have been taught as well as working on new fields.

By God’s grace, I was one of the students who went through the discipleship training. Please allow me to briefly share my life story. I was born in the 1950s, but I met my Saviour and Lord only on February 14, 1974. Prior to that, my life had been a spectacular manifestation of God’s saving grace. I am one of three surviving children in a family of 14 children. That in itself tells a story. I received basic primary education followed by trade school, which eventually qualified me as a technical supervisor working with a top brewery. When I was called into full-time work, I resigned. I have not looked back since.

After completing the discipleship training conducted by SFMI, I have continued in full-time missions for about 20 years. Presently, I work with my family in a village called Baaki that has hamlets of more than four different tribes of people from Nigeria’s neighbours. The tribal people have come here to work in farming. They are the Ditamamaris, Ajah, Fongbe and Ewe from Benin republic and Ghana, and they work for the Egbas, who are the land owners. In such a modern day Babel, conflicts frequently occur. At times, the conflicts are simply due to lack of proper understanding and cooperation, coupled with an abysmally low literacy level. But God is good. We know that He will perfect the good work He has started among them.

1 Nathaniel Abimbola was previously Field Secretary and is currently the Mission Director at Ethnos Christian Missions. Nathaniel travels frequently to oversee the ministry on various fields “because the work cannot be done from afar, and missionaries do need encouragement and visitation.”
2 Ethnos Christian Missions is an indigenous missionary training and sending agency, primarily based in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.
3 Please visit the website www.sfmiusa.org for more information about SFMI.
It is my joy to serve at ECM. The leadership team includes Moses Bola Osho (Executive Director) and Samuel Ola Deji (who leads Christian Leadership and Missionary Training Institute (CLAMTI), the training arm of ECM). Alongside other very dedicated people, we work together to fly the banner of Jesus. From time to time, trainers from SFMI come back to conduct refresher courses, and these courses are open to brethren from different local churches and other agencies.

“What are you holding in your hands? Just come with that, and the Lord will work through you, because it is neither by power nor by might but by the Spirit.” This statement actually reflects the way the Lord has been working in the lives of missionaries trained by Ethnos Christian Missions (ECM). All the missionaries sent out by Ethnos are full-time workers sent out in faith, and there are no salary earners among us. But, the Lord has always been faithful to meet our many needs.

Many of the very effective missionaries sent by Ethnos Christian Missions have had little education, apart from basic primary and/or secondary education. Some of the missionaries have eventually undergone leadership training at CLAMTI, the missionary training institute arm of our organisation. Thus far, we have not seen any adverse results in ministry outcomes on the field as a result of low education. Instead, a preoccupation with higher education has at times been a setback to the field work. I will illustrate by sharing about some missionaries who served at one time or the other at ECM.

Bamidele was a young single missionary sent overseas to work among the local tribe in a rural area. He worked hard because he knew that God had called him to serve this people. Then one day, he felt that in order to do more on the field, he needed to get his Grade II teacher’s certificate as well as the N.C.E (Normal Certificate of Education). So he left the field and returned to Nigeria. For some years, Bamidele pursued his studies, and finally he obtained these educational qualifications.

When Bamidele eventually returned to the field, he returned as a married man, and his wife had just delivered a baby. He soon discovered that the work which he had begun years ago had to be started afresh. As a family, the challenges they faced were much greater than what Bamidele had endured when serving as a single person. His ministry circumstances had changed. The problems of acclimatisation had to be overcome again. This was worsened by the fact that where the rural tribes lived, the amenities he and his family had taken for granted were virtually non-existent.

Adaobi was a student waiting for admission to college. She saw the need for a resident teacher and missionary on a field close by her home, and so she volunteered to serve for a year. During the day, she worked at the adult literacy and children education classes. In the evenings, Adaobi went to different villages on the field. She visited each village once a
week for Bible studies and prayers. When Adaobi completed the one year, she left the field. Meanwhile, three children who had participated in Adaobi’s teaching were brought to the town by their parents. The children were put in the Primary Three class, which was two years ahead of where they should have been for their age. Adaobi had obtained no formal teacher training certificate, but she had nevertheless been effective in her ministry.

Soon after Adaobi left, Okon took over as teacher and missionary. Being an N.C.E certificate holder, everyone had expected a lot from Okon, but expectations were not met. The villagers started to complain that their children were no longer speaking English very well, unlike when the other teacher (Adaobi) was around. The Bible study classes in the villages, which had been started earlier, stopped abruptly. This was because the new missionary would not stay long enough on the field to lead them. Within a year, Okon left to serve elsewhere.

Wole was content with the basic primary education that he had. When he came to ECM, he received some training at CLAMTI, our missionary training institute. Then Wole immediately directed his energies towards learning the language of the rural tribe. Language learning took several years. Eventually, Wole planted some local churches. Today, we rejoice that these new local churches are sending their own leaders to attend missionary training at CLAMTI. So far, two missionaries from this tribal people have successfully completed their training.

In summary, at ECM we have discovered that the barest minimum of education (the acquisition of literacy) is often sufficient for our field missionaries. In fact, we have observed that higher education in Nigeria (except in the technical schools) often does not train people to be problem solvers, but merely to be consumers. In many cases, someone with practical experience in agro-industry, furniture-making or mechanical workshop, who is able to read and write, can undergo language training as well as a university graduate.

The person with practical experience may even function better on the field. This is because he would be able to use his hands or skills proficiently on the field, thereby providing a means to support himself. In addition, our mission students who undergo short training under agencies such as the Red Cross (to acquire knowledge about first aid and basic health practices) are frequently more useful to the villagers on health matters than visiting social workers. The latter may not easily diagnose the health problems caused by conditions peculiar to the field.

Formal education, however, is not being thrown to the dust. Linguistic graduates have been of tremendous use in the translation of the Bible and other gospel materials into different languages. Language translation is often a long-term investment. Material that has been translated
into local languages will ensure the steady growth and maturity of the local believers. Otherwise, the local believers have to depend on local interpreters.

The educational qualification of a potential missionary need not be a big question as to his/her suitability. Instead, the firm spiritual standing of a person is more important. Whatever educational qualifications a person holds, effectiveness on the field is guaranteed only if other enabling conditions are met. These conditions would include commitment, total surrender to the Lord, and adaptation to the host community, among others. The Pharisees had marvelled at the Jesus’ disciples because they were not learned individuals. In like manner, God continues to use those who are totally attuned to Him, even if they are relatively uneducated.

**Discussion questions:**

1. What are the educational requirements for new missionaries in your organisation (agency or church)?
2. What opportunities are provided for on-going education of your missionaries?
3. What life experiences or skills could be recognised as being equivalent to (if not more important than) a graduate level of formal education?
### The facts

Selection procedures are vitally important if you want to get people that will remain. ReMAP I confronted the missions world with the inadequacy of their selection procedures BUT the missions world was listening and across almost all areas of selection, new and old sending countries are rigorous in their screening procedures. There are still some lessons to be learned: particularly [Q22 Meets health criteria determined through a psychological assessment] and [Q18 Has ministry experience in a local church].

### The data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. No.</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>OSC Health Indicator</th>
<th>NSC Health Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Expresses a clear calling to missionary service</td>
<td>☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒ ☐</td>
<td>☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Agrees with the agency’s doctrinal statement</td>
<td>☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒ ☐</td>
<td>☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ ■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Indication</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Has good character references</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Has committed endorsement from his/her pastor/local church for missionary service</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Has the blessing of their family</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Has ministry experience in a local church</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Has had previous cross-cultural experience</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Has demonstrated ability to cope well with stress &amp; negative events</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Meets health criteria determined by a physical examination</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Meets health criteria determined through a psychological assessment</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Exhibits contentment with present marital status (single, married)</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Has good potential for financial support</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Has firm/stable prayer support</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Pre-field screening prevents unsuitable persons proceeding to the field</td>
<td>⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫⚫</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
The key findings

- Retention is highly correlated with Candidate Selection in general.
- The first 6 Selection criteria (Calling, Q11; Doctrinal statement, Q12; Agency principles, Q13; Mature Christian character, Q14; Character references, Q15; Endorsement by pastor, Q16) were rated very highly in OSC and NSC.
- Calling, Q11; Doctrinal statement, Q12; Agency principles, Q13; Mature Christian character, Q14; Character references Committed endorsement by home church, Q16 were correlated with retention in OSC (also mature Christian character in NSC, but not the other factors as they received very high rating in low retaining NSC agencies, too).
- Ministry experience in the home church (Q18) was correlated with retention in OSC, but not in NSC (few opportunities for ministry of young people?).
- Family blessing (Q17) received high rating in NSC and was correlated with retention in NSC, but not in OSC.
- Physical health examination (Q21) and Contentment with present family status (Q23) were correlated with retention in OSC and NSC; Psychological testing (Q22) also in NSC (an unexpected result) and Firm prayer support of candidates (Q25) in OSC.
- The low rating of Cross-cultural experience (Q19) and stress cope capabilities (Q20) and the absence of significant correlation with retention are unexpected.

What it means

Before we look more closely at some of these results, it is worth reiterating what is well known about selection but what many chose to ignore in the rush to find someone, just anyone, to fill a vacancy. That is: good selection results in a happy, effective individual, in a happy, successful team which furthers God’s kingdom, acts as a good ambassador for the mission agency and encourages church members to continue to support mission. Poor selection results in a sad/angry/depressed/disillusioned/ineffective* (*delete as appropriate!) individual in a dysfunctional, failing team which proves a negative marketing force for the mission agency and turns church members off from supporting mission in the future. Am I labouring the point?

Possibly, but, if we are honest, we have probably all worked with individuals who are not in the right post or the right place and the effects can be devastating. We have a duty to do selection properly to ensure, as much
as is possible with such a subjective process, that the right person is chosen: for them as an individual, for the agency, for the team on the ground and the church both at home and on the field.

In the area of selection we see clearly the inestimable contribution of ReMAP I and the book on its findings, *Too Valuable to Lose*.¹ There we see that ReMAP I extensively explored the selection process as a cause of attrition and showed that the more evaluation undertaken during the selection stage, the lower the Preventable Attrition Rate (PAR), as is seen in the adjacent graph. [IMAGE PLACEHOLDER Chp7_1] Almost all of the different areas suggested for screening evaluation (see Taylor 1997 p114) demonstrated the consistent message that attention to them resulted in lower attrition. In ReMAP II we were able to further explore these areas and a number of similar themes came through: agreement with the doctrinal statement; clear call; mature Christian character; good references; and endorsement from the local church. Both OSC and NSC put a high emphasis on them and especially for OSC; this was significant in retaining mission partners. The case study from Henkie Maritz highlights some of these areas of best practice in selection – See In the Real World).

The case study on *Filial Piety and Missionary Calling* by Vanessa Hung highlights the strong relationship between a NSC missionary having the blessing of their family [Q17 Has the blessing of their family] and their likelihood of staying on the field. In cultures where filial piety (or a similar concept) is important, it will have a significant impact on whether a missionary candidate can fulfil their call. Selection processes will, therefore, need to identify such problems and help the candidate to find a suitable resolution, such as those suggested in the case study. Indeed some mission agencies in NSC require the support raised to be sufficient to provide care for the parents of the mission partners as well as the mission partners own living costs! OSC did not rate family blessing highly and there was no correlation with retention. This is perhaps because the western world sadly places less emphasis on family ties and in this global village whilst communication is much easier and brings people together across the distance, many individuals increasingly make decisions with little regard to the wishes of their wider family. That said, it will be necessary during selection in OSC to discuss family issues because some families remain close and responsibilities back home are a factor in people returning home. In OSC the equivalent factor to looking after our elders may be children’s schooling. For many parents wishing to become mission partners, their main concern is schooling, whether it is in the same location, boarding, international etc. It is also often a factor in a family returning home. In fact the whole issue of bringing up a child overseas as a Third Culture Kid can be a huge concern to parents and a cause for attrition (see Pollock, D, What about the missionary kids and attrition?, Chapter 23

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in Taylor 1997). This should also be a factor to consider during selection. Some agencies now advise families with teenage children to delay their departure until all children have left home/started higher education and so it is worth investigating thoroughly.

A high correlation was found for both NSC and OSC in selecting people who had a chance to ‘practice’ ministry in their local church \([Q18 \text{ Has ministry experience in a local church}]\). This enables people to have experience, possibly identifying their own strengths and weaknesses and thus the area of ministry in which they would best be suited. Prior to selection then, the candidate is already aware of where they would best be placed and the selection process can aid the agency in identifying that right place. NSC had a lower rating and this could possibly be because fewer opportunities exist for young people to be involved and churches may need encouragement to let these future church leaders loose. Certainly, if a candidate is accepted and has little or no ministry experience with their church (whether in NSC or OSC), they should be encouraged to become involved as part of their preparation process.

Two surprising results here were in the area of previous cross-cultural experience \([Q19 \text{ Has had previous cross-cultural experience}]\) and an ability to cope well with stress and negative events \([Q20 \text{ Has demonstrated ability to cope well with stress \& negative events}]\). These did not bear a statistically significant correlation with retention? Anyone who has worked overseas knows that a different culture and workplace brings many challenges and can be extremely stressful. An ability to cope with this must surely be necessary. However, in an increasingly cosmopolitan, globalised world we find ourselves living daily in a cross-cultural community and perhaps agencies have reflected this by giving a low rating. Whilst people may not have a specific cross-cultural experience, they may live side by side with other cultures. Also it is also very difficult to measure. Similarly, evaluating whether someone has coped well (what is well?) with stress and negative events is difficult and may have caused agencies to answer this question in the way that they did, not relating it to retention because it is hard to evaluate. Was the term “stress cope” misunderstood? Or the term “demonstrated ability” too high a hurdle? Was “stress cope” associated with psychological testing and therefore played down? Is there a neglect of this area in the selection procedure? How can you assess this issue in an interview of 1-2 hours? Do you need to live in community with the person to assess it – or do you rely on character references? Also, agencies may not have focused on this issue or feel that they do it well. If there is ever a ReMAP III it would be good to investigate these issues further. What we do know is that many missionaries are severely affected by stress on the mission field? Marjory Foyle, in \textit{Honourably Wounded}\footnote{M. Foyle, \textit{Honourably Wounded : Stress Among Christian Workers}, (London: Monarch Books, 2001).} explores this issue thoroughly.
Whilst debating stress, it’s important to note that meeting health criteria by physical [Q21 Meets health criteria determined by a physical examination] and psychological assessment [Q22 Meets health criteria determined through a psychological assessment] were correlated with retention, although neither received a very high rating. Selection needs to include health assessment although improvements need to be made in doing this more effectively (see chapter 8 for further discussion).

It is not surprising that question 23 [Q23 Exhibits contentment with present marital status (single, married)] received a fairly high rating in both NSC and OSC and showed correlation with retention. It is important that mission partners are content with their own personal status and situation if they are to relate well with others and be effective in ministry. In an age, certainly in Europe, where the law constantly tightens around areas of discrimination, it can feel awkward questioning a candidate about their singleness, for example. However, as long as consistency is shown between candidates and questioning, this area of probing must continue. It is often said that a person’s major weakness becomes amplified when they begin a role in a cross-cultural environment away from the safety net of home. If that weakness is their singleness for example, it could lead to depression or even, sadly not uncommon, an affair or other inappropriate behaviour. Likewise a couple with a weak marriage may find the tensions of living cross-culturally enough to break the marriage apart. It is essential to use this area as a tool in your selection process and it will be important not only to question the candidate/s but also ask specific questions of the referees, church and also at psychological assessment. Often when we think of a reference we think purely of a work setting, but many organisations now require a reference from a male friend, a female friend, the church pastor and a work manager/colleague. This gives a much broader picture of the candidate and makes the references more meaningful.

Finances are often an area of concern when thinking of mission service. Perhaps it is not, therefore, surprising that both OSC and NSC gave a poor rating for question 24 [Q24 Has good potential for financial support]. What is interesting is that for OSC, this did not show a correlation with retention but it did in NSC (although the continuing existence of denominational mission agencies where there is little responsibility on the individual missionary to raise their own support and the growth of new church movements that see themselves as senders and funders, with again, little responsibility left on the individual mission partner to support raise, may explain the lack of correlation in OSC. For many NSC agencies do not have the luxury of fully funded denominational agencies and many of the churches are starting from scratch, trying to raise mission profile and encourage a generally poorer church membership to give. It may also be that agencies in OSC are able to advise and help candidates to seek funding whilst NSC do not have such experience and candidates must ‘fend for themselves’. This may be why for NSC this is correlated with
retention – if you cannot find the money, it will not come from anywhere else and thus you do not go.

Conversely, with the issue of prayer support, [Q25 Has firm/stable prayer support] correlation with retention was seen for OSC but not for NSC. Perhaps again this reflects historical influences. Have OSC agencies been cushioned by the wealth of the church population in general and therefore made prayer (and ‘praying the money in’) more important for selection, whilst NSC do not have that cushion and therefore the harsh reality of no money (thus no service) overrides the need for a firm prayer base at home? Or perhaps given that there is not only the absence of a correlation with retention in NSC but also a low rating of this issue, do they start support raising only AFTER acceptance as new missionaries, so that it is not a matter of candidate selection? Is prayer support so important and self-evident to NSC that they do not put high priority to it in their selection procedure? Do OSC also, again through historical and bureaucratic reasons, have need for organised prayer groups and promises of prayer whilst NSC are free from such past baggage and simply assume that people will pray for them anyway? I speculate, but it is an interesting difference. What is without doubt is that, however the prayer may be organised, prayer is absolutely vital in preparing for and carrying out God’s work.

In conclusion then, pre-field selection procedures are vital in recruiting suitable people who will stay on the field. As Henkie’s case study shows, the selection process often takes a minimum of six months and candidates may balk at this. But it is in their best interest as well as the agency’s to follow this thoroughly in order to answer as many doubts and issues as possible, form realistic and shared expectations, prepare and then succeed by enabling a suitable, effective mission partner to stay on the field.
Filial piety and missionary calling

Vanessa Hung, Hong Kong Association of Christian Missions, Hong Kong

In the Chinese Culture, filial piety is a very important virtue. Adult sons and daughters have obligations to stay at home to take care of their parents. One of the Confucius sayings was: “As long as one’s parents are alive, one should not leave home”. Thus, aging parents can be a roadblock to those who have received a missionary calling from God. Is there anything the local church can do to solve such a dilemma?

Mandy received her calling from God, but she has an aged mother. She is the only daughter in the family. She had taken care of her mother all her life, after her father died many years ago. Nevertheless, she must respond to her calling. What could she do? She shared her burden with her local church. Their solution was to form a support group comprising some church members who would look after her mother. Mandy was relieved and left for the mission field. Since she left, members of the group took turns to visit her mother. They continued Mandy’s routines such as taking her mother out for “dim sum” (Chinese meal) once a week. Even though her only daughter Mandy was overseas, her mother lived happily because she acquired so many surrogate sons and daughters who looked after her. Meanwhile, Mandy did not have to worry for her mother because she knew her church members were taking good care of her mother.

Tommy was the only son of his family. His father died when he was very young. His mother had worked very hard to bring him up. He had lived with his mother all his life, even after he got married. When he received his missionary call, his mother was very old, her health was not very good, and she could not live by herself. It was very difficult for Tommy to leave her alone. What could he do? Tommy shared his burden with his church. Grace, one of the church members, had a heart for missions. The Lord did not call her to mission, but she was determined to help Tommy pursue his mission dream. She decided to move to Tommy’s home and to care for his mother while he proceeded for the mission field. That solved the problem, and Tommy set out for the mission field.

Chan was an eye doctor, and his wife Kwan was a physiotherapist. God put missions on their heart. They planned to go to Afghanistan. At that time, Afghanistan was ruled by the Taliban Government. The leaders were Islamic fundamentalists and nationalists. They had banned all kinds

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Vanessa Hung graduated from Columbia International School in 1993 when she received her Master of Arts in Mission. Since then, she has served in the Hong Kong Association of Christian Missions as mission researcher. She has conducted several missionary research projects in Hong Kong, and she has a good understanding of Hong Kong mission churches and their missionaries.
of television, music and sports from the time they came into power. When Chan and Kwan’s parents heard that they wanted to be missionaries and were headed for Afghanistan, they were shocked. After much prayer and solicitation, their parents finally agreed to let them go. Both sets of parents knew what kind of country Afghanistan was, so they were very worried for their children’s safety. Because Afghanistan was an under-developed country at that time, and the Government tended to shut off the country from the outside world, it was difficult for the outside world to communicate with people living or working in the country. What could the church do to help? In this case, the missionaries’ church arranged for a satellite phone service for their parents. The parents could talk to their children over the phone once a month. That helped a lot, and it greatly alleviated the burden of both the missionaries and their parents.

Discussion questions:

1. Filial piety is important in most East Asian cultures as well as in many non-Western nations especially in Africa and Asia, it is important for a potential missionary to seek the blessing of their family before leaving for the mission field.

2. Does your agency or church consider such issues during the selection of missionary candidates for overseas assignments? If so, what policies or practices have been established to assist missionary candidates to resolve problems related to filial piety and/or family blessing? If not, should such issues be considered in the future?

3. Should the financial cost of caring for elderly parents be built into the support budget of the missionaries?

Selection of mission applicants

Henkie Maritz⁴, World Mission Centre⁵, South Africa

Note: the names used in this case study are fictitious, to protect the identities of persons involved in these real-life events.

Josh was shocked when his application to Serving in Mission South Africa (SIMSA) was not accepted. Josh felt called to serve as a missionary in Africa. He had a heart for the children who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS and war. He dreamt of building an orphanage in a specific country. However, SIMSA was clear on the outcome: “We agree that Josh has a

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⁴ Henkie Maritz is a Software Engineer. Since 2000, he has worked part time at the World Mission Centre in South Africa. Besides assisting in organizing certain events, he was Country Coordinator for the ReMAP II study in South Africa. The study gave him a deep appreciation for missionary sending organisations and the challenges they face.

⁵ World Mission Centre is a missions mobilization organisation that mobilizes the local church in South Africa for missions.
worthy cause, but building an orphanage is not within SIMSA’s vision for that country at this time. We have recommended Josh to another country where SIMSA has a vision for orphans or to join another organisation.”

Susan is an exemplary Christian with a sincere heart for the nations. She felt God’s calling on her life and she sent an application to the SIMSA office. In her application from she revealed that she had received counselling in the past. During her lifestyle interview, Dr. Louw asked deeper questions about traumatic past experiences, her family life and childhood. For the first time in her life, Susan broke down and admitted that she had been raped as a teenager. SIMSA guided Susan on a road to healing before any further steps were taken with regard to her entering the mission field.

These two examples emphasize the importance of an effective selection process. One can only imagine the conflicts and issues that could have occurred, had either Josh or Susan been sent to the field without these issues being picked up during selection.

SIMSA regards the careful selection for mission applicants as their primary reason for being so effective in the field. The process is very long but thorough. The time taken from application to acceptance may be a minimum of 6 months. This indicates the thorough and deep selection process that SIMSA is committed to.

Selection is an area of good practice in many effective mission agencies in South Africa. The following are common features of the selection process by such agencies:

1. **Validating missionary’s calling and vision**
   The mission agency’s leadership will validate that the mission applicant has a clear calling from God and that his/her vision and goals fall within the vision of the organisation and the vision of the respective field. Validation is not easy to achieve, and it frequently requires a process of intense interviewing and mentoring to help the applicant discover their dreams and visions. The local church should have input to highlight how they have been involved in determining the applicants calling and vision. In some cases, applicants have been redirected to other organisations due to a vision that conflicts with that of the original organisation.

2. **Education and training pre-requisites**
   A lack of the pre-requisite education (e.g. 2 years of bible school and missions training) does not necessarily lead to an unsuccessful application. In most cases the mission organisation will walk the road of equipping and training with the applicants.
Mission organisations have found that requiring further education and training will effectively test the commitment and determination of mission applicants.

3. **Local church support**
   Part of the selection process involves establishing a partnership with the applicant's local church. Operation Mobilization South Africa (OMSA) is a mission organisation that is totally committed to the local church, and it involves them from day one. For OMSA, sending a missionary involves a partnership between the person, his local church and the mission organisation. Should an applicant not belong to a local church, the applicant will be turned down.

4. **Doctrinal assessment**
   SIMSA's selection process makes provision for a basic assessment early on as well as a more thorough assessment later. Some applicants have been turned down after the basic doctrinal assessment. In one case, the applicant was unsure about her own salvation. In another instance, the applicant's doctrine of salvation was totally contradictory to the doctrine being proclaimed on the field.

   Why conduct doctrinal assessments? The reason is to achieve unity of truth being lived and proclaimed by the organisation's missionaries. This assessment brings the applicant's theology to light. It is used to highlight doctrinal issues that must be addressed and resolved before the applicant can be accepted.

5. **Psychological assessment**
   The example of Susan mentioned earlier highlights the importance of a proper psychological assessment as part of selection. Some areas typically covered in such an assessment are:
   - Issues of sexuality in the applicant’s past
   - Involvements in drugs
   - Previous involvement in non-Christian spiritual activities
   - Police records

   The purpose of psychological assessment is to discover personal issues that must be addressed before the applicant can continue with the selection process. (See Chapter 8)

6. **Medical assessment**
   A positive medical assessment result is of utmost importance in preventing known health problems arising when the missionary is on the field.

7. **Character references**
   Checking an applicant’s character references serves to confirm and reinforce the reasons for an applicant being accepted or turned down. If an applicant is accepted, it also helps to identify strengths,
weaknesses, their motives and how they are perceived in work and social settings.

Ultimately, the selection process is about getting to know the applicant in all areas of his/her life, so that the right people are sent to the right places (mission organisation and field) at the right time (when the person is ready and when God releases them to go).

In closing, here is a statement of this good practice as defined by some South African mission leaders: “We set high selection standards, but remain flexible enough to allow the guidance of the Holy Spirit”.

**Discussion questions:**

1. How does your organisation conduct selection of its missionary applicants?
2. What areas are normally covered during selection? What other areas would you include in future?
3. Does your organisation have mission field problems that could have been prevented during selection? If so, how?
4. If problems were discovered during selection, what would be some good practices to resolve them?
5. What is the role of the local sending church during the time a person resolves his/her problems (prior to acceptance into missionary service or to subsequent return to the ministry either at home or on the field)?
## In the real world

<table>
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<th>Home Church</th>
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<th>Mission Agencies</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
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<tr>
<td>→ When?</td>
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<td>Continuous</td>
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<td>Recruitment</td>
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<td>✓ Have a culture of looking for and selection of candidates</td>
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<td>✓ Serve as clear reference for agencies</td>
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<td>✓ Provides opportunities for pre-field orientation at home and on a field</td>
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<td>✓ Special support in prayer, finances, mental or family issues?</td>
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<td>✓ Be open for feedback and (negative?) advice</td>
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<td>✓ Be honest and transparent</td>
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<td>✓ Be willing to take time for tested calling</td>
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<td>✓ Be clear about expectations of profile and ministry</td>
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<td>✓ Be clear and honest towards yourself and candidates</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Get local church involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Provide tools for assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Be available for assessments</td>
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| Preparation |
| On field |
| (Crisis) |
| Furlough |
| ✓ Get missionaries involved in mobilising and selecting candidates |
| ✓ Be available for sharing experience |
| ✓ Be available for advice |
| ✓ Give opportunities for missionaries to help in selection |

| Re-entry |
The facts

As seen in the previous chapter, the selection of suitable mission partners is a complex area including several components and is highly correlated with retention. Part of that selection process is the use of physical and psychological assessments to determine a candidate’s suitability in terms of physical and mental health. As seen in the key findings, these two types of assessments were highly correlated with retention both for OSC and NSC.

The data

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<th>NSC Health Indicator</th>
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The key findings

✓ Rating of Physical Health exams (Q21) was highly correlated with high retention in NSC and OSC.
✓ Psychological testing (Q22) was rated significantly lower than health exams (Q21) and proved to be correlated with retention, especially in NSC.

What it means

The medical examination has been part of candidate selection for a long time and this is reflected by fairly high ratings in both OSC and NSC. Dr Stroma Beattie outlines a very clear ‘best practice’ example of how such medical examinations can be carried out and the type of problems and complex issues that may need to be dealt with. As she states ‘no-one is immune from ill-health’ and the purpose of these examinations is not to eliminate everyone who may be at risk of ill health (because potentially no-one could go). However, identifying the level of risk is important. Dr Beattie states that ‘it is a difficult matter to place someone with known health problems in a situation which will aggravate their health’. The purpose is therefore to identify potential problems, examine solutions and enable a new mission partner to serve as effectively as possible, as long as the risk to their health is not too great.

Whilst the ratings were quite high, there was certainly room for improvement. NSC may have a problem with finding a medical expert aware of the medical issues faced on the field. For both OSC and NSC it may also be that ‘lay’ people have difficulty interpreting the ‘medical opinion’. When given medical advice, it may be tempting for agency personnel to interpret it themselves and possibly even disregard it. Stroma mentions that where a decision is made to proceed despite a negative medical recommendation, it is then the role of the Medical Advisory team (in OMF) to help provide the appropriate care for the new worker. It may be that the rating reflects situations where medical advice was overruled, or that health issues were not highlighted at examination stage. Part of the key to the success of OMF International’s medical procedure is that there is communication between home and field. It is important that the medical advisor’s have experience of missionary health and can be in contact with relevant medical personnel on the field to establish further information such as the country’s health capacities, specific drug availability and so on. It may be that a particular health issue cannot be accommodated in one country but could be in another and it is only with informed knowledge and communication that this can be established. As for best practice in this issue, it is essential that medical advice is listened to and carefully, confidentially
considered as part of the whole selection procedure. It helps no-one to send someone on to the field if their health is going to put them at risk and be a drain on the resources, especially human, of the team. In my own experience, you ignore medical advice at your own peril!

The issue of psychological assessments is somewhat more recent in the realm of missionary selection (though not in selection in the secular world, being around for over 50 years). The poor rating given by NSC may be a reflection of the relatively recent introduction of psychological assessments in some agencies and others may not yet use them at all. The ‘medium’ rating given by OSC may reflect the fact that some organisations still do not use psychological assessments or do not feel that they provide the necessary information to determine whether the candidate actually meets the requirements. There is still, in some quarters, a suspicion about these assessments. In other quarters perhaps, ambivalence. Some organisations feel that having a person live with them in community for a period of time during pre-field orientation is sufficient for them to form their own opinion of that person’s coping mechanisms and psychological well-being. However, such an experience, though different from normal life perhaps, will not have the same huge stresses of moving, living and working on the field. It is important that a professional experienced in dealing with psychological issues and aware of overseas placement stresses is involved in the assessment. From my own anecdotal evidence, a number of people suffering stress, burn-out or other psychological problems were people for whom no psychological assessment had been received because their agency did not, or would not, use them.

In order to alleviate some of the suspicion and help those of us who are ‘lay’ rather than professional psychologists/counsellors, I want to outline a little about psychological assessments. Psychological testing is often called occupational or psychometric testing and they are terms used to describe specifically designed tools which measure areas such as intelligence, personality and ability. Tests can be used for different situations, such as team building, as well as selection. The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) in UK describes them as follows: ‘Psychological tests are tests which can be systematically scored and administered, which are used to measure individual differences (for example in personality, aptitude, ability, attainment or intelligence). They are supported by a body of evidence and statistical data which demonstrates their validity and are used in an occupational setting’. They are something that an organisation must use a trained professional or outside organisation to administer (see Elizabeth Jones’ case study from Care for Mission based at the Edinburgh International Health Centre) and score.

It is recommended that an organisation should establish a policy on test use which takes into account issues such as: at which stage tests should be incorporated into the selection process; who will carry out which tests; what weight will be given to the results in terms of decision-making; con-
fidentiality and record-keeping; and who will give what feedback. One of the important reasons for carrying out tests is to help a candidate identify their own issues for development or training (see Dr Barbara Griffin’s case study) and so how feedback is given is important. As already mentioned these tests must only be administered, scored and advised upon by trained people and so, when deciding what tests to use, an agency should seek advice from the trained individual or organisation. It is advised certainly by CIPD to use more than one test (see examples of tests in case study..) It must also be stressed (as Barbara highlights in case study..) that a selection decision must not be made solely on the basis of a psychological assessment. There is no right answer to such a test – indeed people often worry that they will fail the test because they did not have time to answer all of the questions, but tests are often designed not to be finished. Tests are meant to help inform the decision of selection when used alongside other parts of the selection process e.g. interview and references. A reference and interview may allude to an individual preferring to work alone and a psychological assessment could be used to illustrate this. It could then be useful in identifying a suitable placement where the individual will not be required to work in a large team.

A brief word should be mentioned about a relatively recent development in psychological testing which is that of on-line testing. Currently in UK, only 5% of companies are using this method but it is likely to increase (CIPD). It would obviously be an attractive option for organisations that have no access to a trained professional or organisation which could do the tests on their behalf. However, there are a number of concerns, not least who is actually doing the test on-line and have they done it in test conditions in test time? The British Psychological Society have identified three main conditions under which tests take place: uncontrolled and unsupervised (the test taker registers and does the test on the open internet); controlled but unsupervised (the organisation registers the candidate ensuring their identity but does not supervise the tests in terms of environment or time); and controlled and supervised (a qualified test user logs in the candidate and ensures that timing and test requirements are met). The International Test Commission is producing International Guidelines on Computer-based and Internet Delivered Testing. In the meantime it is advised to only use such tests if there is no other alternative and then control and supervise where possible.

It should be mentioned that a number of agencies also require their mission partners to undergo a physical examination and psychological assessment during home assignment and on final re-entry. This is partly to ensure that the individual is still medically and psychologically fit to return. It also helps to identify areas which may need medical treatment. However, it also helps an individual identify further training or development needs they may have and also whether they need further de-briefing.
or counselling to help them assimilate their mission experiences and be ready to return to the field or home.

Elizabeth Jones’ case study, on the difficult issues faced by a family, highlights a very important factor which most agencies do not deal with: when selecting a parent, you are also selecting their spouse and children. Organisations need to take moral and ethical responsibility for sending out a whole family because it is not sufficient for just the postholder to be fit! William Carey may have been the father of the modern missionary movement but the health of his family and the psychological state of his first wife Dorothy were a secondary issue and his family suffered terribly. If a candidate’s spouse or child is at risk either physically or psychologically, that needs to be taken into account (see Chapter 7 and David Pollock’s chapter in Too Valuable to Lose). A number of organisations now carry out assessments for the whole family (certainly for children over 7 years old) and this is a big step forward.

I am conscious that some people may be reading this chapter because they want an answer to a specific medical or psychological dilemma. ‘I have a candidate who is 55 years old and has high blood pressure – should they be accepted?’ ‘What about a candidate with a history of anorexia, or a family history of depression?’ It is impossible to come up with a tick list of who to send or refuse because each candidate will have different factors affecting their health not only from their own background but from the type of role and place that they may be sent to. It is only by considering all of the factors that an informed decision can be made.1

The excellent case studies provided by our three professionals are proof of the importance of health and psychological assessments. If mission agencies are to improve on their selection and retention record, this is an area which needs improvement. Trained testers must be used and their results and recommendations used as part of the selection decision-making and also identification of placement and role.

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1 For an approachable and yet thorough, overview of such issues, see Honourably Wounded by Marjory Foyle.
Candidate selection and medical matters

Dr Stroma Beattie¹, OMF International, Singapore

OMF International, formerly the China Inland Mission, has been sending missionaries to East Asian countries for 140 years. In the early days, candidate selection was a fairly straightforward affair, often relying on personal interactions between potential new recruits and agency leaders such as the visionary founder, Hudson Taylor.

The story is told of Taylor turning down one Scottish gentleman on two occasions, although he tried to convince Taylor of his call to serve in China. On a third occasion, when the persistent Scot caught him at the end of a meeting, the man again tried to impress Taylor with his sense of call. The Scot quoted Jeremiah - ‘The lame shall take the prey’. Taylor acknowledged that there was plenty of ‘prey’ in China at that time (using this vivid metaphor for evangelism) and that the man, with his wooden leg, was certainly lame enough. Therefore, Taylor relented and accepted him for service. The story ends with a comment ‘in those days, candidate councils and selection processes were yet to be developed’².

Nowadays, candidate councils and selection processes are well established. As a missionary-sending agency, OMF International has set policies and practices for the health screening of all new workers and their families. In a typical year, OMF handles more than 150 applications for missionary service. (This does not include those who apply for service of less than one year.)

Missionary applicants complete a detailed medical questionnaire as part of their candidature. They and their families then undergo a full physical medical examination, some baseline medical investigations, and a psychological assessment. Depending upon the sending country, these assessments are done by OMF International’s own Medical Advisers or in partnership with groups which specialize in missionary health such as Edinburgh International Health Centre (UK) or International Health Management in Toronto (Canada). With all these assessments, the results are not seen as ‘pass/fail’ examinations but rather one part of what a former OMF International Director for Personnel has described as “the Holy-Spirit directed art of candidate selection.”

Reports from the medical assessments and recommendations of the home side Medical Adviser are sent to OMF’s International Headquarters

¹ Stroma Beattie is a doctor with post-graduate qualifications in family and travel medicine. After a further year in psychiatry, she moved to South Korea with her husband in 1991 as OMF missionaries. Full-time language study was followed by medical and missions work. She moved to Singapore in 1998 to become OMF’s International Medical Adviser.

in Singapore, where the International Medical Adviser (IMA), an experienced missionary and full-time doctor, makes a formal medical recommendation to the agency leaders regarding the health and suitability of each candidate to serve in the receiving country.

For some, the medical histories are straightforward and the assessments simply lead to basic advice such as pre-field immunizations. For others, new problems are detected or complex issues come to light:

- A candidate takes regular medication. Is this medicine available in the country of service or can it be legally and reliably sent into the country?
- A routine investigation has revealed an abnormality but the underlying cause is unknown. Should the person proceed or wait until it is fully diagnosed in the home country? Will the new condition impact the candidate’s medical insurance? Could the medical problem mean that the person’s much-needed emergency medical evacuation insurance will be restricted?
- What about a person with insulin-dependent diabetes who wants to work in a remote area where there are no facilities for effectively storing insulin?
- A family has a young child who has just been diagnosed to have learning difficulties. Should they be placed in a bilingual situation during the child’s critical language learning years?

In such situations, besides interacting with the Medical Adviser in the home country to obtain further details, the IMA consults with the relevant Field Medical Adviser (FMA), another medical missionary usually living and working in the specific country where the candidate hopes to serve. This FMA usually has a much greater knowledge and awareness of the country’s health capacities, the local health risks and the everyday pressures which new workers face.

The IMA then gives advice to OMF’s leadership regarding the individual’s fitness to serve. This is a professional medical judgment based on several factors. These include an awareness of the specific medical conditions the candidate may have; an understanding of the cross-cultural pressures they will face; a knowledge of the specific field situation and the likely ministries which will be involved; an appreciation of the support infrastructure, if any, which colleagues might be able to offer; the nature of the local medical facilities; an assessment of the possible need for medical evacuation or particular insurance considerations; the dynamic of the couple or family offering for service as well an assessment of what level of risk it seems wise to take.

Usually, the medical recommendation is positive. Sometimes, the recommendation is to reconsider designation, possibly moving a potential new
worker from a remote area which has very limited medical resources to one which has some basic emergency medical care and will provide the kind of back-up that the new worker with their specific medical problem needs. On rarer occasions, it is felt that the condition precludes field service and the individual or family unit would be best to focus on ministry in their home country.

Whatever the advice, the agency leaders (in both the receiving and sending countries) along with the individuals will pray through the recommendation to discern the Lord’s guidance and make a final decision regarding acceptance of each candidate. Usually the medical advice is followed. However, at times, the leaders and a candidate decide to proceed despite a negative medical recommendation. At such times, it is then the role of the Medical Advisory team to help provide appropriate care for the new worker.

For some, this idea of involving medical expertise and professional advice (it might be termed pragmatism or common sense) in the process of discernment of a spiritual issue such as missionary call is sometimes seen as potentially meddling with God’s sovereignty. For many, it is seen as prudent stewardship. At OMF International, we see called and willing Christians as our very best resource for the task of world mission. No task-force would place unfit team members on the front-lines where they would be personally subject to immense stress and potentially preventable premature repatriation.

The aim of the whole process of medical and psychological candidate screening is to provide sound professional medical advice which will serve the best interests of the candidate and in turn the agency. As a side benefit, the screening provides baseline information on medical and psychological matters which can be used to help the new worker when fresh health problems arise.

No one is immune from ill-health. Everyone on the field is willing to care for sick colleagues when the need arises. However, it is a different matter to place someone with known health problems in a situation which will potentially aggravate their health. As well as placing them at significant personal risk, it may also absorb the time and energy of colleagues, diverting everyone from their ministries, as they seek to deal with a health crisis, which was to some extent predictable.

The screening process is designed to enable the new worker to better serve effectively in the area to which they have been called. This enhances the local ministry, protects the work of the team in the area and enables the agency to maintain an effective taskforce.
Missionary selection and psychological assessment

Barbara Griffin3, Australia

During the early 1990s, “Agency A”, an organisation in Australia with a church planting focus, was thrilled with the rapid increase in applications for overseas service. At that time their selection process did not include psychological assessment. However, the following two incidents motivated the Director to implement its use.

David was accepted as a new worker with Agency A for a position with a church planting team in a country whose people were known for their outgoing, loud, “collectivist” nature. In this culture high importance was placed on spending time with family and friends, often in animated conversation, and emotions were freely expressed. David, a computer programmer, was a highly intelligent young man with a gift in teaching/preaching. 18 months into his initial 3-year term, the Australian Director of Agency A received a letter from David’s field leader documenting David’s poor performance including an apparent lack of ability to relate to nationals, an aloof attitude to co-workers, and overall poor adjustment. He eventually returned to Australia and resigned from the agency. A subsequent personality profile indicated that David was:

- strongly reserved with a preference for solitary work
- serious, prudent and restrained
- highly self-reliant and individualistic with a low preference for group-oriented activities and decision-making.

Discussion question:
1. Had David’s profile been known before his acceptance, which of the following do you think are valid options when considering his application? Why/why not?

- Not accept David
- Redirect him to a different ministry

3 Dr Barbara Griffin is an organisational psychologist based in Sydney, Australia. Previously, Barbara and her husband were full time workers for WEC International for 22 years. She is currently on the academic staff at the University of Sydney and also works in private consulting. Barbara lectures in psychometric testing and selection for the senior undergraduate psychology program and for the coaching psychology unit at the University of Sydney, and offers training in stress management, personality and generational differences to several mission agencies. Barbara also conducts the psychological assessments of candidates for a number of different mission agencies and denominational groups in Australia.
✓ Give David feedback on his results, highlighting the strengths, challenges, and differences with the “typical” national personality
✓ Further question his referees and pastor about his ability to overcome his natural preferences and interact well with others
✓ Ask him to spend a period of time in a home church situation to develop his interpersonal skills
✓ Organise for a formal mentoring relationship to be available on the field
✓ Accept David and trust that his personality would change once he was on the field
✓ Accept David but warn the Field Leader about his personality

A second example
Miriam, a bright, vivacious, and outgoing young woman applied for cross-cultural work with a team ministering to urban poor. Miriam wanted to work in the day care centre for children, many of whom had been the victims of physical or sexual abuse. Her pastor spoke highly of her Sunday School teaching ministry and other referees were generally positive, although one mentioned that Miriam could be moody at times. Several months after arriving on the field, Miriam became significantly depressed, cried frequently, withdrew from her colleagues, often missed work, and according to her house mate, spent much of the day in her room sleeping. The Field Leader discovered that Miriam had begun self-harming behaviours and arranged for her immediate return to Australia. On arrival, she was referred to a psychologist who found that Miriam had experienced several episodes of depression in the past and had self-harmed on a number of occasions during her teenage years. Miriam disclosed that she had been sexually abused as a young child. She had never received professional help for her problems.

Discussion questions:
1. What effect could Miriam’s experience have on the missionary team? On the local believers? On her supporting church? On the sending agency?
2. Had Miriam been assessed before her initial acceptance by Agency A, what do you think would be the best practice in handling her application?

The use of psychological assessment for missionary selection has three main objectives: (1) screening for evidence of clinical syndromes/emotional vulnerability, (2) helping the agency to maximise the fit between missionary and his/her overseas placement, and (3) providing a
Chapter 8: Selection—Health and Psychological Assessment

development/training opportunity for the individual. These objectives are achieved by use of standardised psychometric tests together with interviews.

The stories of Miriam and David illustrate how achieving the first two objectives of psychological assessment can reduce missionary attrition. See Schubert and Richardson for a discussion on how the presence of untreated or inadequately controlled psychopathology might be exacerbated under conditions of stressful cross-cultural adjustment. Just as importantly, the linking of personality characteristics with required job behaviours aids in the assessment of how well a person will ‘fit’ a field situation (see Allworth & Griffin, Griffin & Hesketh).

However, it needs to be impressed that it is inappropriate to make decisions regarding a missionary applicant solely on the basis of the psychological assessment. Agency personnel should consider information provided by a trained psychologist in the context of the whole selection process which can include assessment of training, doctrine, past experience, references, call etc.

When using psychological assessment, it is also important that good ethical practice is adhered to. For example, the agency needs to clarify issues regarding confidentiality of reports, competency of the psychologist, and feedback of results to the candidate. Assessments conducted under conditions of best practice can be a powerful learning experience for the candidate, increasing their self awareness and providing goals for future growth and development.

### In the real world

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who? →</th>
<th>Home Church</th>
<th>Missionary</th>
<th>Mission Agencies</th>
<th>External Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
<td><strong>When?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
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<td>✓ Be open for feedback and (negative?) advice</td>
<td>✓ Use physical and psychological assessments</td>
<td>✓ Provide tools for assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Be available for information about the bigger picture</td>
<td>✓ Be honest and transparent</td>
<td>✓ Have professionals yourself or seek them as partners</td>
<td>✓ Be available for assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓ Be willing to take time for tested calling</td>
<td>✓ Be honest and transparent</td>
<td>✓ Have an eye for the bigger picture</td>
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<td>Preparation</td>
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<td>On field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furlough</td>
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Chapter 9

Selection
Calling and Tested Call in Previous Ministry

The facts

Calling to missionary service: that historical foundation upon which so much pioneer mission work in the past seems to have been built, is just as important today to keep missionaries on the field as it ever was. In OSC the mission agencies explore it as a priority area in selection and this rating has a strong correlation with retention. In NSC it is again given very high priority in all NSC agencies (see Key findings for an encouraging explanatory note). In addition, testing the call in the local church through endorsement of the leadership received also high rating and experience in ministry somewhat less. Both factors were correlated with retention in OSC and NSC alike.

The data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. No.</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>OSC Health Indicator</th>
<th>NSC Health Indicator</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Expresses a clear calling to missionary service</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Has good character references</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Has committed endorsement from his/her pastor/local church for missionary service</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Has ministry experience in a local church</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key findings

- Calling (Q11) received extremely high rating in OSC and NSC.
- High retaining agencies gave even higher rating of calling (Q11) in OSC and NSC (NSC not significant because three Indian agencies with very high retention gave extremely low rating of calling which dragged the average down and increased the standard error of the sample – otherwise we would have found a positive correlation in NSC, too).
- Ministry experience in a local church (Q18) was rated significantly lower than calling (Q11).
- NSC agencies gave much lower rating of ministry experience in a local church than OSC (young people not given so much opportunity to exercise their gifting in NSC churches with strong leadership?).
- Rating of church experience was correlated with retention in OSC and moderately in NSC.

What it means

“Calling is outdated now.”

“Calling is not important like it used to be is it?”

These are the type of comments I get as I travel around, spend time with, and listen to missionaries, personnel directors, mission leaders and others. I reply “Was a sense of call important to you?” “Yes” they reply. “It was and is vital. Without it, I would have left long ago”. I have yet to meet a long term missionary who has not felt, that call and a personal sense of call was utterly vital to their own missionary journey. Everyone thinks that call as a concept is no longer widespread and yet everyone believes it is vital for them personally. I have added it to my growing collection of missionary myths alongside ‘No one serves long term anymore’. ReMAP II totally blew away the idea that call is an outdated, irrelevant concept. Vital to retention and prioritised in most mission agencies selection processes, is much nearer to the truth.

However knowing what “a call” is proves a much harder question to answer. In ReMAP II we only asked if a call was important, we did not ask for a definition. In another study, as yet unpublished, the question was
Chapter 9: Selection–Calling and Tested Call

asked “Describe what motivated you to go into mission (if you use the word “call” please explain what this means to you)”. Just as in ReMAP II, everyone interviewed subsequent to completing the online survey, said how important a clear understanding, of God having led them to the field, was to them remaining – especially through the hard times. In answering that question they also gave a very clear insight into what constitutes a call. In short the answers are wide and varied, often practical as well as spiritual: e.g. “God spoke to me through my bible readings … and my church confirmed the call and affirmed my gifts, skills and suitability”. A call is often a mixture of different things – different ways God has been speaking, different focuses: calling to geographic location region or country is relatively rare today. Today calling is more to a people group, . It is also increasingly to use the skill of vocation gifting and experience in God’s service - like the parable of the entrusted talents (Mt 25:14ff). . It appears to matter little (as far as retention is concerned) what the call is to and what it is made up of: the important thing for retention is to have spent time (individually and with others) being certain of God’s desire for you to do something and/or go somewhere, to the extent that you can look back to that and hold on to it during the hard times.

During selection, asking a candidate to articulate their call or explain their motivation for ministry is important but so is verifying and testing that call. In OSC it is common to seek character references and most agencies so. This correlates to retention. In NSC it does not. Some colleagues from NSC have suggested that references hold little value for them as people often write what the candidate would want written rather than an accurate assessment of their character. An additional factor might be that in NSC, the sending church often has a more direct role in the selection and sending of a missionary, so that a “written endorsement” may not have such relevance.

The endorsement of the missionary’s home church and pastor [Q16 Has committed endorsement from his/her pastor/local church for missionary service] seems of more value in NSC affecting retention in both NSC and OSC as does the candidate actually having ministry experience in their local church at home [Q18 Has ministry experience in a local church]. The committed endorsement of the pastor and local church may have an added contribution for retention beyond confirming the call of the candidate. If the church and pastor confirm the call to the mission agency it seems likely that they would feel a greater obligation or responsibility to support in prayer and finance. Certainly our very interesting two-part case study highlights how straightforward it was to raise finance when the missionary service was seen as a natural development on from previous ministry in the local church and through the regular updates and having the status of staff members of the local church in the UK.
Training program challenges potential missionaries

Rebecca Barnhart,1 Operation Mobilisation International2

Note: This case was adapted from feature material entitled ‘Moldovan training program challenges potential missionaries’ from the Operation Mobilisation International website. Used by permission.

Nine people cram into the old, rickety bus for the journey into the small, bleak villages. Designed to hold about 40 people “comfortably” in a Western society, the bus carries at least double that amount in Eastern Europe. While the foreigners seem a bit uneasy and wary, older Moldovan women stand unfazed, carrying on conversations as the bus bounces along the road, jolting its occupants back and forth. Thirty minutes later, the Operation Mobilisation team squeezes out of the bus.

The team begin their two-week outreach, part of OM Moldova’s “Challenge into Missions” (CIM) training program. The young Moldavians, Ukrainians and one American are ready to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Ustea and Ocrita rarâ, villages inhabited primarily by elderly Moldavians who have lived through the ravages of communism and are not so open to Christianity.

In groups of two and three, the team journeys on from house to house, undaunted by the physical and spiritual barriers, to share Jesus with strangers, not knowing what reaction or response they’ll receive. One illiterate Moldovan woman wept as Scripture was read to her about God’s love. She didn’t experience that from her own children, who are physically and verbally abusive, she explained. Down the road, three elderly men and women were quite hostile to the “hypocrisy” of Christians that they had witnessed during and after Communism. However, for 30 minutes, they listened to Tania, a 21-year-old Moldovan believer, tell them about the reality of Christ’s offer for salvation, despite what they have seen and experienced before.

Since 2000, OM Moldova has been training young Moldovan and foreign Christians for world missions through its CIM program. Now held twice yearly (Spring and Autumn), participants, ranging in ages from 18 to 30 years, memorize Scripture, receive relevant evangelistic and Biblical teaching, as well as practical, hands-on outreach opportunities within and outside Moldova. During the outreach weeks, which are real, pioneering, hands-on missions experiences, the teams work with local churches.

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1 Since 2001, Rebecca Barnhart has served as a missionary writer with Operation Mobilisation in Central/Eastern Europe and the Balkans. She has travelled throughout this area, working with OM teams and writing stories about what the Lord is doing in this part of the world.
2 Operation Mobilisation is a global missions organization with teams in over 100 countries.
doing physical work, sketch board and drama, hospital ministry, door-to-door evangelism and work with children and youth.

CIM is an intensive missions training program. It is divided into two levels: Level 1 participants are those coming for the first time; Level 2 students are returning because they are interested in pursuing full-time Christian service work, either in missions or with their church. Second level students also take on more responsibilities during CIM, serving as group leaders on the outreaches and teaching during the in-class training. They also receive additional, more advanced training.

Matthew Skirton, field leader for OM Moldova, said the three-month CIM program is part of the language and cultural adaptation and missions training for its two-year Global Action members. Among the participants of the spring 2003 CIM program were two new recruits who recently joined the OM Moldova team through the Global Action program.

Nicole, a 20-year-old American, first worked with the International Coordinating Team, Carlisle for nine months with SportsLink before joining the Moldova team. She arrived one week before the team left on the outreach, but was already picking up some Romanian language and had been welcomed by her Moldovan team members. Other CIM participants are on their own personal journey to discover the Lord’s plan for their lives.

Vlad, a Moldovan native, is a Level 2 student, who has matured deeply in his walk with the Lord after his first CIM experience. In fact, his home church was so impressed with the noticeable change in Vlad that they hosted the outreach team in Orhei, about 40km north of Chisinau. “After Vlad returned from CIM, I could see the change in him and was so excited,” said Lillia, one of the church members. “I wanted us to get involved then.” Being one of the leaders in CIM has challenged Vlad even further with the increased responsibility. It is also preparing him for his ministry this summer working at a children’s camp. “I have no experience with children, but after CIM, I will be ready,” said the 21-year-old. Vlad is hoping to use this experience in preparing for further mission opportunities, possibly to Africa. “I would like to go into full-time missions, but I don’t know if it is God’s will.”

Matthew said CIM also helps develop and bridge relationships between OM and Moldovan churches. Pastors of some of the Moldovan students are invited to share during the morning devotion times and during the in-class training. In addition, the outreach teams are sent into villages where a supporting church is located. “This way, the church sees how their young person is involved and the impact it’s making in their life,” said Matthew. “It encourages the pastor, the church and other young people to want to participate in CIM in the future and helps their vision for mission to grow.”
While the majority of the CIM participants since 2000 have been Moldavians, Matthew said CIM is open to anyone who can speak English, Russian, or Romanian (Moldova’s official language). All training sessions are translated into the necessary languages, depending on the makeup of the students, but if more foreigners were to join, Matthew said the CIM course could be modified to include classes in the specific languages. “Language should not stop anyone from coming.”

Total cost for each participant to attend CIM includes food; travel to and from the different outreaches, and housing. OM Moldova raises about 75% of what is required and each participant raises the remainder. For some students, this is quite a hardship because their families may come from poor villages and have no jobs. (The unemployment rate in Moldova is probably this highest in Europe.)

Vlad’s experience through CIM has also shown him what hands-on missionary work is like. During a different outreach, this time in Romania, Vlad and his team worked with missionaries involved in gypsy ministry. “I learned a lot about the value of missionaries conforming to the culture where they work,” Vlad said. “Being willing to accept another culture’s way of life can open so many doors to share the Gospel.”

Discussion questions:

1. What did you learn about call and tested call from the above case study?
2. How is the call of a potential missionary generally tested by your organization?
3. How could the leaders in the local sending church evaluate the call of a person to long-term missions?
4. What could mission agencies do to help churches to evaluate the call of potential missionaries?
Sending a Missionary Couple to Spain

Dr. Paul Adams

Terry and Christine are missionaries in Spain, and doing well too! But how did they get there? The obvious answer is - “God led them”. But that is not the whole story.

Although the Millers are missionaries with ECM and living 973 miles away from Surrey (near London, UK) as the crow flies, they also Assistant Ministers at Banstead Baptist Church (in Surrey). Every Thursday they e-mail 490 words (or less if they include pictures) about the trials and triumphs of Spanish (church) life which is printed for publication in the Church News each Sunday. The whole church feels involved, as do all the other Mission Partners, who also contribute and then they all look forward to reading about one another via e-mail delivery.

This e-correspondence is not intended to be a way to ‘keep missionaries accountable’; it is a part of the mentality of this home church – that mission is integral to the life and purpose of our local congregation. It is just another stage in a process that started a long time before Terry and Christine even considered bringing up their family in Spain.

Let me explain how this church sees our responsibilities in training and sending missionaries.

Take the example of Esther and Mordicai who actively cooperated with the sovereign will of God in the saving of Persian Jews from annihilation. In the same way I believe that church leaders have a responsibility to lead in the mission process, and not simply to accept passively what a few keen minded mission-enthusiasts believe they ought to be doing.

It was like that in Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were launched on their world changing mission: the leaders discerned and understood God’s purpose for these two men, and they actively sent them out. On their return they were still a part of the Antioch church who doubtless received messages along the way – although not by e-mail!

This church in Banstead has the privilege of having a legal covenant on the land on which it is built - that it shall be used for an ‘undenominational gospel mission work’. The intention was that the church should work in the mission of the Gospel without regard to denominational constraints. That process starts in the local church in the UK and can reach anywhere!

We see this church as a ‘mission training church’. However I remember one Christian with many years experience tell me, “We don’t want to be in a mission training church, we want a loving fellowship!” Now, of course,
those objectives should not necessarily be mutually exclusive, but, if they conflict we believe that mission/training has to take priority. 2 Timothy 2:2 has become our training-purpose statement: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (NIV)”

In other words, we have a clear view about the purpose of being church together. We are here to share the Gospel, make disciples and train them to do the same – anywhere. We are not interested in building a mega-church for our own satisfaction but we do want to work with the Lord in the building of a world-wide church for His glory, by training others and sending them out. We keep watching every serving member, providing opportunities for discipleship instruction and ministry training, encouraging them not to stand still but to keep growing in faith and service. This is an intentional approach and one that is maintained by the leadership with vigour and enthusiasm.

So how did this work with Terry and Christine Miller?

They came to us as Assistant Ministers. It was clear that both of them had a heart for the lost, and were experienced in leading individuals, couples and small groups to understand the Gospel. We are not always so competent in selecting our staff but with the Millers, their mission heartedness was as obvious as if there had been flashing neon signs above their heads. Our fellowship grew from a shared conviction about the importance of Bible based evangelism, biblical discipleship and the need to equip a fresh wave of Gospel ministers.

Interestingly, they were very different in temperament from all the rest of us on the team and we would have been foolish to try to clone them to fit a mould. We understood that they were the people God was making them and that their temperament and personality were uniquely special in the work they would eventually do. Like all our Assistant Staff, they come on a limited period contract – in other words we expect them to move on. However we want them to move on to the next ministry opportunity better equipped to do the job and better able to train others.

Certainly this happened with Terry and Christine.

They have freely acknowledged that their time with us was very important in shaping their ability to minister and giving them the ability to deal with many of the hassles that stress new missionaries. Understanding the pastoral issues in church life was as important as leading worship, preaching and establishing a pattern of growth groups. Many people in the church grew in Christ during that period, but so did they.

Our experience of them and another couple, now in Madagascar, is that the best way to train a missionary is to have them on the staff of the home church. In fact we now think that if we are not willing to have them as...
a part of the home staff we probably should not send them! They just learn so much about how ministry operates, something that can never be gained in a Bible College, also the church gets to love them as ministers and to appreciate them … this later shows up in their support.

Terry and Christine were with us for six years. During that time it became clear that their gift/skill set would probably not be best suited to a traditional UK church environment, but more to a pioneering environment where people had time to make relationships. They also believed in including their children in a family ministry lifestyle which is not common in UK churches. They loved working with small groups of people, one to one and young families.

There were many short term ministry opportunities in this country; but the question for us as leaders was, “Do long term opportunities exist for the Millers in the UK or is God calling them abroad?”

Now, they had already served short term in Albania and in Nepal – both places leaving Christine with health problems, and I think that coloured their view of overseas service. But the only place abroad they had travelled to which had not made Christine ill was Spain. Her father had even worked there as a seasonal minister in Barcelona while Christine was in her teens. They loved the way of life there and the laid-back local street culture that really suited their relationship style. But still, the mission field had not really become a possibility.

After six years, the church leaders felt the need to focus on the Miller’s future. It seemed to us that the Lord was saying that it was time for them to move on. Not so much that they were not doing an excellent job, because they were, but more the sense of not wanting to miss the bus!

The leadership prayed and sought the Lord about their next step in ministry. The Millers prayed. One Sunday a Visiting Mission Staff member preached a sermon that stirred the couple. Christine looked on the internet and was impressed by the approach of European Christian Mission (ECM) to a modern style of church planting strategy; and Spain seemed attractive. I too thought about Spain - it just seemed to be the natural culture where they might feel at home; and the relationship style of church planting shown on the ECM website seemed just right for them. By the time I met with Terry and Christine for a “serious chat”, the conclusion was obvious and subsequently the leadership encouraged them to pursue this opportunity.

But as their Senior Pastor, I had responsibilities too. I had separate discussions with the mission in the UK and with the field leader. I wanted to ensure, as far as I could, that this would be right for them and not a blind alley. At each turn there seemed to be confirmation of a match. I was invited to attend the selection board and subsequently I visited the field before they finally set sail (old-speak – they actually flew out with Easy Jet). My
trip to the field assured me that they were equipped to do the work, but they needed to learn the language from scratch. Could they do it? So we contacted a Spanish phonetics expert who spent a week with them at home here and she assured us that she thought they did have an aptitude for the language, which was also most encouraging for them. The whole leadership team was reassured that they were on the right track.

The time came to depart. The church was then presented the challenge of supporting them. We might have simply transferred their salary from ‘home staff’ to ‘mission staff’ budgets but we needed to replace them. So, to cut a long story short, in six weeks there was sufficient money in cash and pledges to keep them on the mission field for 3 years!

You see, they were known, loved and respected. Their ministry had made a difference to people in the local church here in Banstead; it really encouraged people to want to give and pray and communicate with them … and some have even out to visit.

By the time of my next visit, they had completed their language training and were becoming fluent in conversational, and rather fast, Spanish. Even their body language said that they were Spanish instead of the rather stilted ‘stick out like a sore thumb’ traditional Englishman and woman. The Spanish church loved them. As for the Millers, they were very glad to submit to the local church mission and church leadership, to ‘learn their trade’ … and they were growing as a man and woman of God.

We in Banstead have been privileged to be a part of Terry and Christine’s pathway to the mission field and they continue to be a part of our church life here. But there was one thing we had not prepared them for – cockroaches! That required fresh supplies of divine grace directly to Spain.

**The Call to Spain**

*Terry Miller*

Unlike many overseas missionaries, we didn’t have an initial “call to Spain.” Neither was there a specific time when we received a bible verse or other means of direction which suddenly changed our thinking about our future ministry.

Our sense of “call to Spain” grew out of theological convictions and desires combined with experiences of God’s grace in our lives. As we
pushed forward and sought God’s wisdom, Spain became an increasingly open door.

If all that sounds very spiritual it may be helpful to flesh it out a bit…

Shortly after we met as a couple it was clear that we shared an important conviction: that God is glorified most when people put their trust in Jesus. This conviction grew as we experienced God’s grace with us—working in secondary schools in Kingston-upon-Thames and in the church work in Cranleigh where we saw many teenagers and adults transformed by the gospel and the Holy Spirit’s power.

The “Church planting and Evangelism” course at Spurgeon’s College added the desire to establish churches where there was no effective witness. However during our time at Cranleigh and Banstead a door wasn’t open for such a ministry, and we were left with the question, “When would God use us in church-planting.”

During ten years of Christian ministry we sensed that God was preparing us for something different in the long term. We suspected that it would involve some sort of pioneering ministry: we were increasingly aware of our ability to start things well on a small scale and then to hand over to others as the ministry develops.

However, we had all but written off overseas mission, even though our two short term trips had seen good fruit. Where was God leading us? We didn’t know. Strangely we weren’t concerned because we knew that whatever it was it would be just right for us, and also right for those people we would be serving. We had enough experience of God’s perfect timing and provision to know that we were safe in His hands.

So how did we arrive in Spain?

Paul Adams recounts many of the details, but for us the idea of Spain first arose from a humorous comment in a casual conversation about where we could go if we ever went abroad as missionaries. That comment remained with us and Spain became ever larger on our horizon. Then God unsettled us about the idea of staying in England and by filling our hearts and minds with Spain and He did it, as usual, in a creative way.

First, the Overseas Mission Directory (listing opportunities for mission service abroad) shouted to us of the need for church planters in every area of mission work in Spain. Then, independently, we looked at the websites for the different mission organizations mentioned and were both drawn to the European Christian Mission (ECM). We liked their team centred approach to ministry in Spain, and it seemed as if the job description was written just for us!

Having never heard of ECM before, we then discovered that family and friends knew missionaries in Spain. Then we were able to visit a couple
who just “happened” to be on home assignment in England at the time (now our team leaders!). We arranged to take a family holiday in Spain in order to visit a missionary in the Córdoba province (in the village where we now live); and a year later returned to visit each of the five mission points in the province.

Each step of the way we received the support and wisdom of our fellow church leaders in Banstead and continually asked God to close the door if we were on the wrong track. But instead, the door opened wider and wider! We remember driving through the mountains between two of the mission points with butterflies in our stomachs – we knew that God really did want us in Spain. It was no surprise when God also provided the financial support we needed in a short space of time.

When we arrived in Spain to tackle the language and cultural adaptation a year later, we knew that God had been preparing us for a long time through the faithful input of Christian mentors and leaders in England. We knew that He only expected of us what He had expected in every stage of our journey up to that point: to be available to be the people He calls us to be - in the place He has prepared for us, meeting the needs He lays before us and making disciples of Jesus.

So here we are…