

# **Reducing Missionary Attrition (ReMAP) - what it said and what it did**

## **Detlef Bloecher**

5 April 05

### **INTRODUCTION**

We all know them, missionaries who departed with great enthusiasm, convinced that the Lord sent them – and then returning after a short time with broken hearts and shattered vision and now facing their disappointed home church and confused supporters. Why has it gone 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 were simply no reliable data available.

### **SURVEY**

This was the reason why WEA Mission Commission launched a comprehensive research project on missionary attrition called "Reducing Missionary Attrition Project" (ReMAP). How many missionaries do actually come 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 Rudy Girón, President of the Latin American mission movement COMIBAM and member of the MC's Executive Committee. Fourteen representative countries were selected 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 as (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 neither of them

is 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.

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 Newer Sending Countries (NSC).<sup>1</sup> 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, although 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* (Taylor, W. D., Ed., 1997, Wm. Carey Library) 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. 455 mission agencies with 23000 long-term missionaries participated in the study and they reported 4400 returnees in the years 1992-94 – this sheer number exemplifies the scope of global missionary attrition and the need to work on this issues. 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 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<sup>2</sup>. In OSC  $7.1 \pm 0.3$  % of the active missionaries<sup>3</sup> (that is 7 out of

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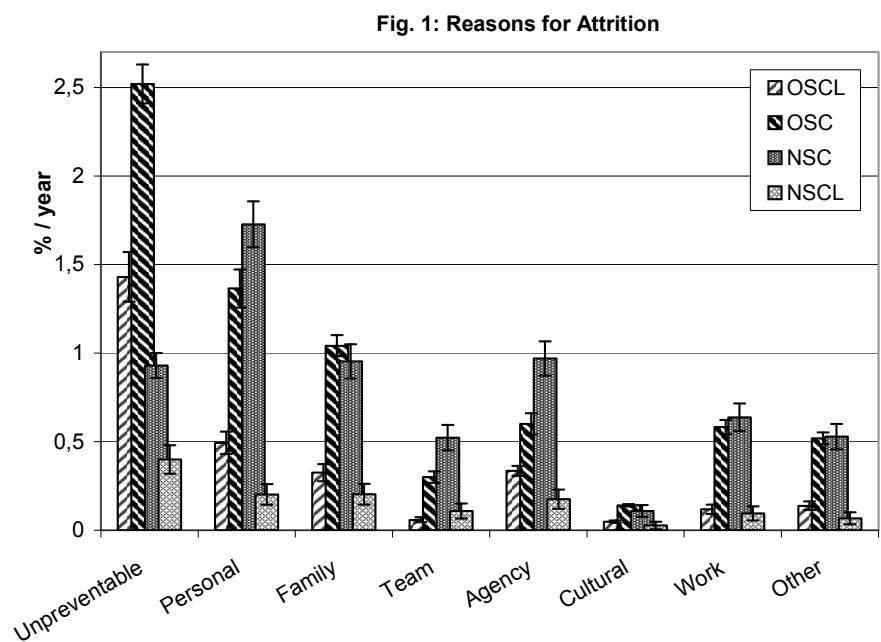
<sup>1</sup> Detlef Bloecher, CONNECTIONS (Oct. 2003), p.48-53: "ReMAP II affirms the Maturation of the younger Mission Movement of the South"

<sup>2</sup> The attrition rate has not been corrected for the number of newly arrived missionaries which should be subtracted from the number of active missionaries. Therefore agencies with dynamic growth or high turn-over rate underestimate their actual attrition rate. D. Bloecher & J. Lewis "Further findings in the research data. Appendix B: Correction for rapidly growing agencies" p122-123 in: *Too valuable to lose* ed. William D. Taylor (William Carey Library, Pasadena: 1997)

<sup>3</sup> The number following the "±" symbol gives the "standard error" of the average due to the stochastic nature of attrition. The average is absolutely precise but the question arises what the average number might be if another year had been considered or another 10 agencies or 100 missionaries had been added to the study. This uncertainty of the "true average"

100 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  $6.4 \pm 0.4\%$  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 (unsuccessful cultural adjustment, language learning deficits)<sup>4</sup>. 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 ( $2.5 \pm 0.14\%$  per year, OSC) compared to NSC ( $0.93 \pm 0.11\%$  per year). Thus one third of the OSC returnees come home for unavoidable reasons, while two thirds ( $4.5 \pm 0.2\%$  per year) leave for potentially preventable reasons. In NSC, 6 out of 7 returnees come home for potentially preventable reasons, which amounts to  $5.5 \pm 0.3\%$  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 missionary attrition, agencies were grouped according to their potentially preventable attrition rate (PAR) into three blocks of equal numbers of missionaries: low (L), middle (M) or high (H) attrition<sup>5</sup>. These subgroups were compared with the full sample to identify pattern 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 organisational 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

is characterised by the standard error (67% percent confidence interval) and it is represented in the diagrams by a vertical “error bar”. Two numbers are different when their error bars do not overlap.

<sup>4</sup> Complete list of reasons (as used in the questionnaire) is given in Fig. 2

<sup>5</sup> 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 14324 missionaries that provided attrition data; NSC (181 agencies with 7183 missionaries); OSCL (41 agencies with 4788 missionaries, PAR < 2.83 % per year); NSCL (29 agencies with 2000 missionaries, PAR < 2.14% per year).

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 fifth 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<sup>6</sup>. 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 7 factors out of the list of 26 all important reasons which they consider most important in the return of their missionary.

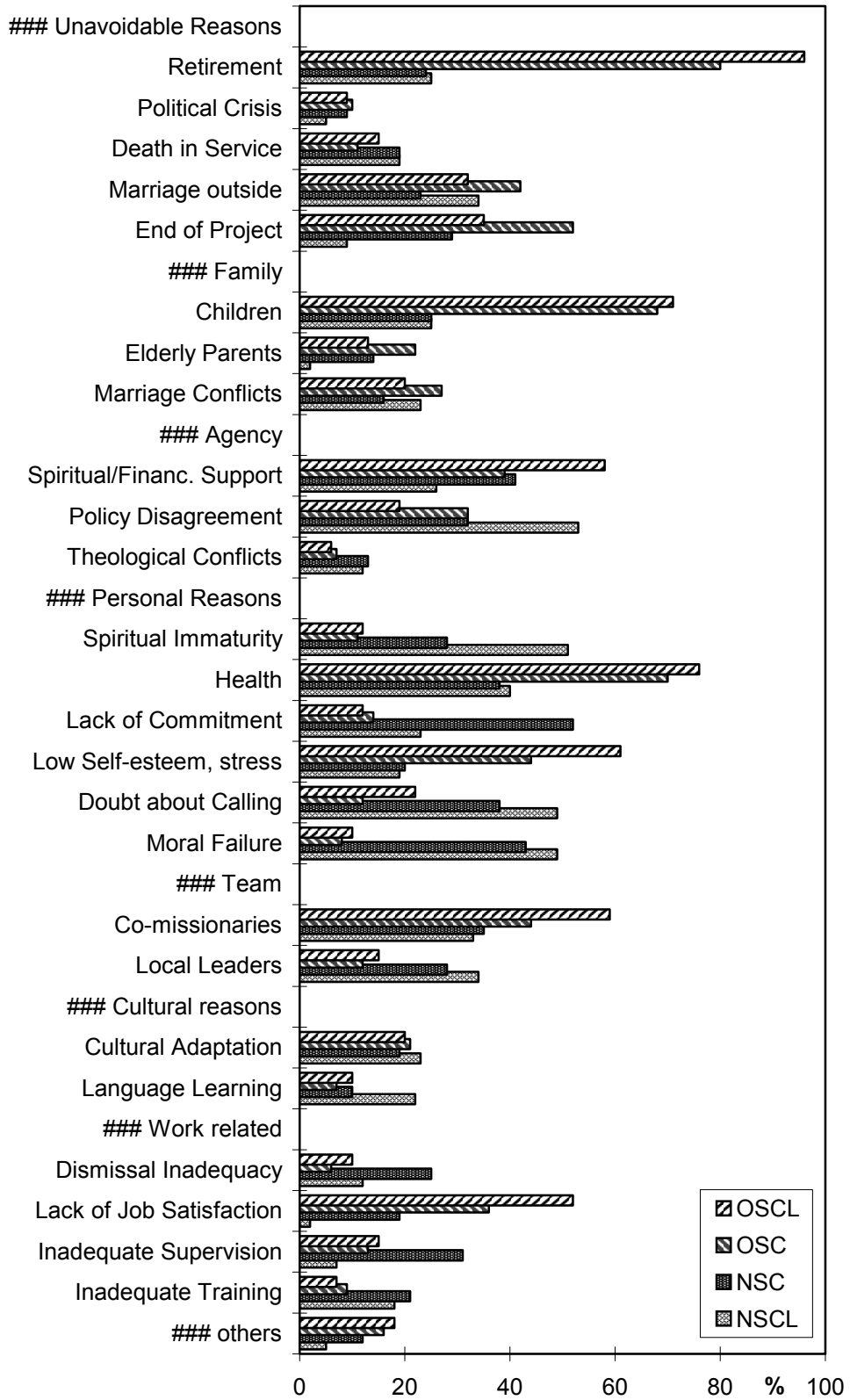
Figure 2 gives the percentage of all missionaries of the samples whose leaders had ticked the stated issue as one of the seven most important reasons. In OSC *Regular retirement* was considered the prime factor, followed by *Health problems*, *Missionary children and their education*, *Project end*, *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 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 have lost in significance.

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 in significance. Organisational issues have apparently been dealt with well so that personal issues have gained in relevance which are related to careful candidate selection and personal support during service. These topics direct the road to excellence for NSC agencies.

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<sup>6</sup> For this reason agency-related and personal reasons have gained in relative weight in OSCL, and personal reasons in NSCL.

**Fig. 2: 7 Most Important Believed Reasons for Attrition**



## 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

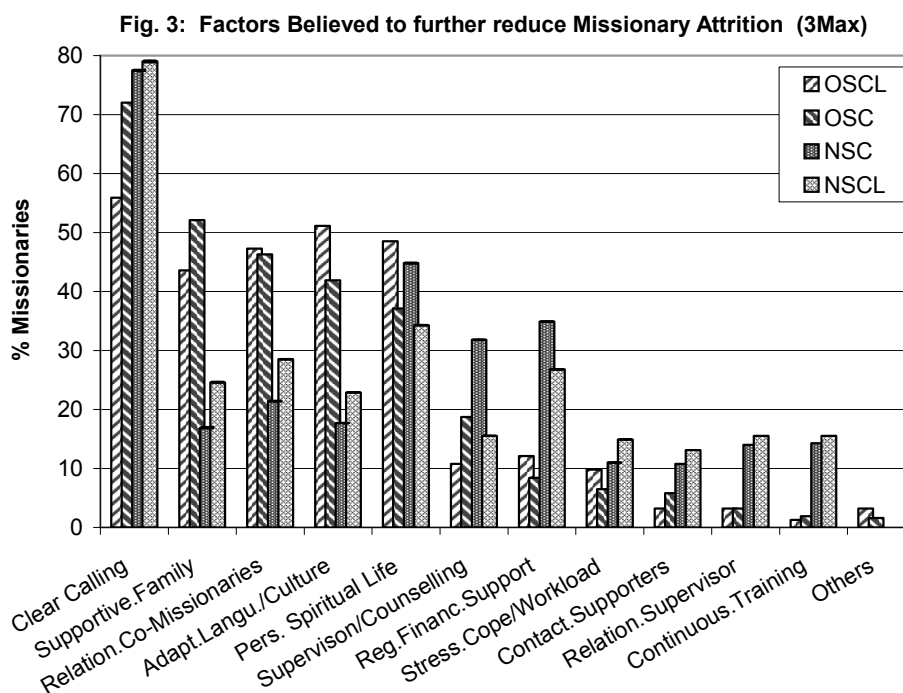
prime factor yet with a smaller percentage (apparently it has been dealt with effectively and thus lost in significance), while *Adaptability to a different culture and learning language* and *Maintenance of personal spiritual life* have gained in significance.

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%<sup>7</sup>. 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*,



<sup>7</sup> 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).

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).

### 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<sup>8</sup>. 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 it requires 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 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).

Fig. 4: Factors Believed to further reduce Missionary Attrition (3Max - 3Min)

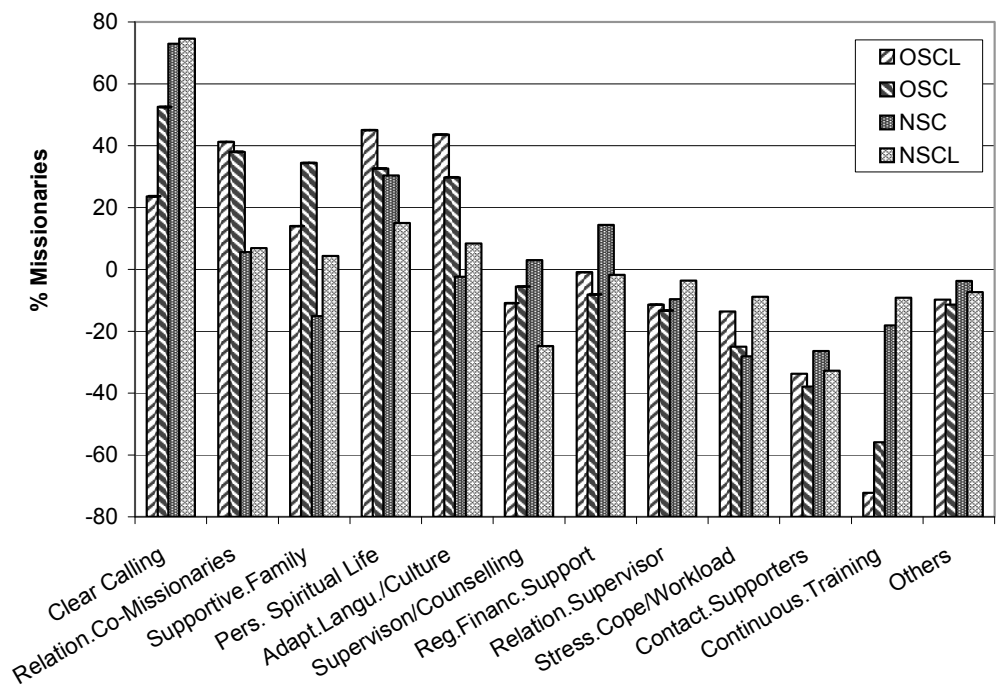
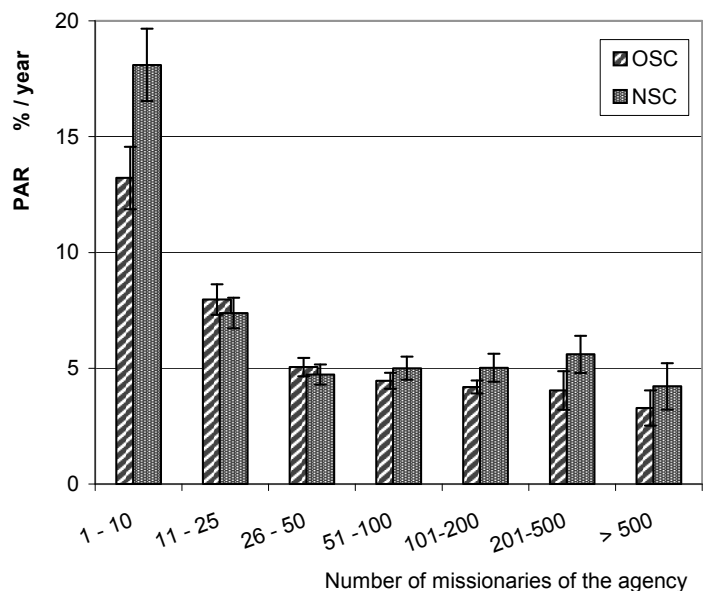


Fig. 5: Preventable Attrition Rate (PAR) and Agency Size

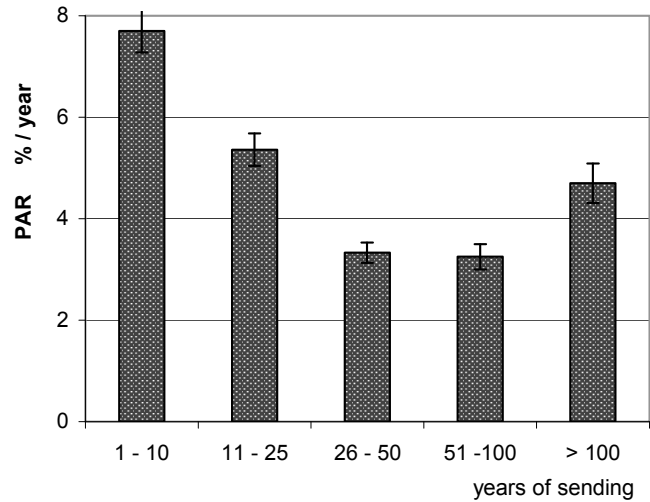


<sup>8</sup> The unpreventable attrition rate of small agencies was also three times higher than in large agencies in OSC ( $6.8 \pm 0.9$  % vs.  $2.4 \pm 0.1$  %) and NSC ( $2.0 \pm 0.5$  % vs.  $0.8 \pm 0.1$  %), so that agencies with less than 10 missionaries lose a fifth of their work force each year.

## AGENCY AGE

Figure 6 gives the preventable attrition rate (PAR) as 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.

Fig. 6: Preventable Attrition Rate (PAR) and Agency Age



## 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 fig. 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.

Fig. 7: Candidate Selection

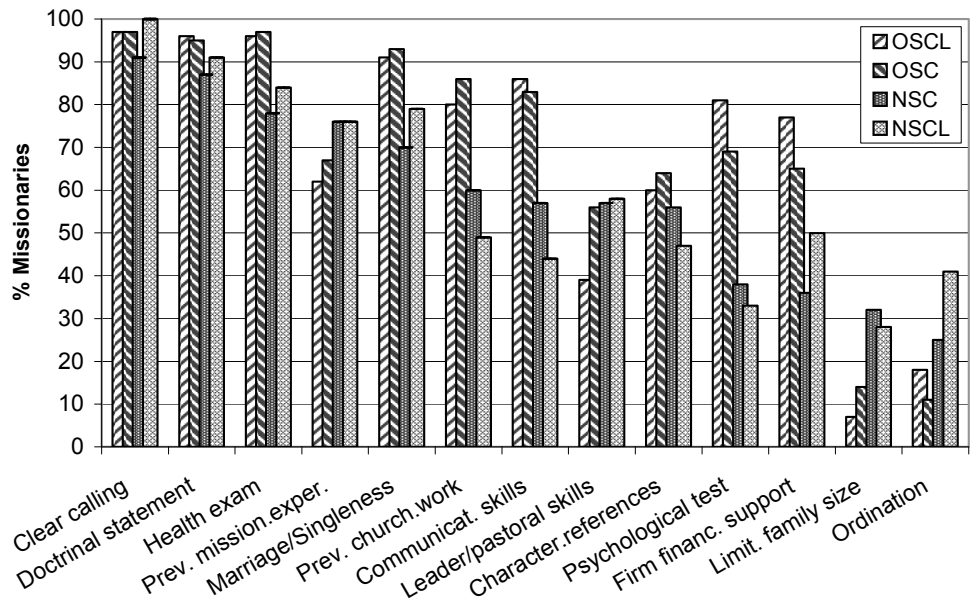
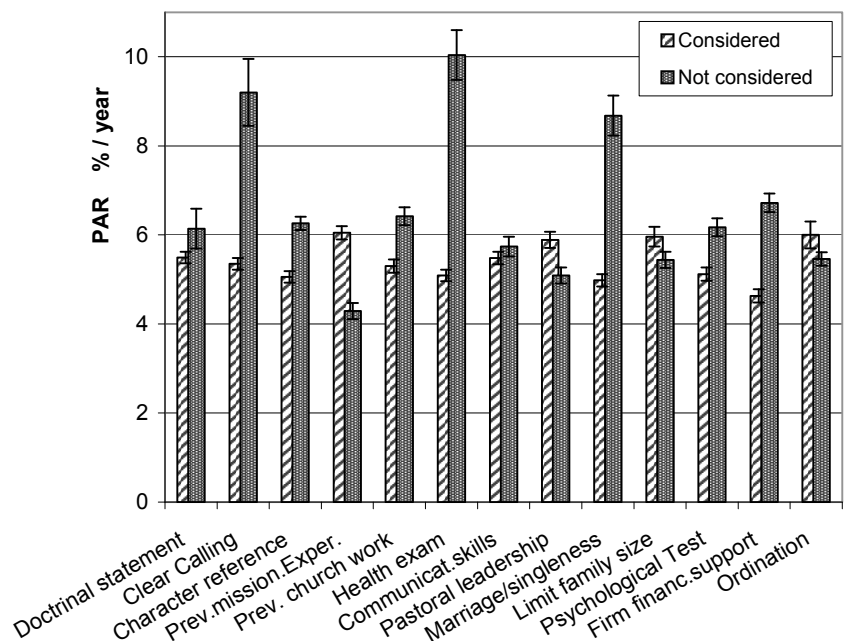


Fig. 8: Preventable Attrition and Candidate Selection



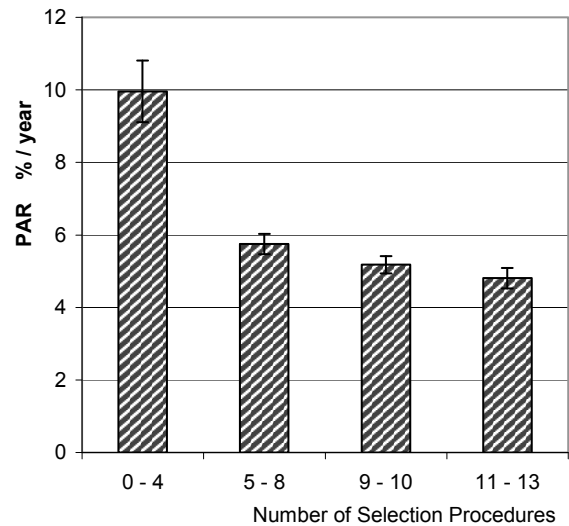
Careful candidate selection also



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 *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 preventative 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

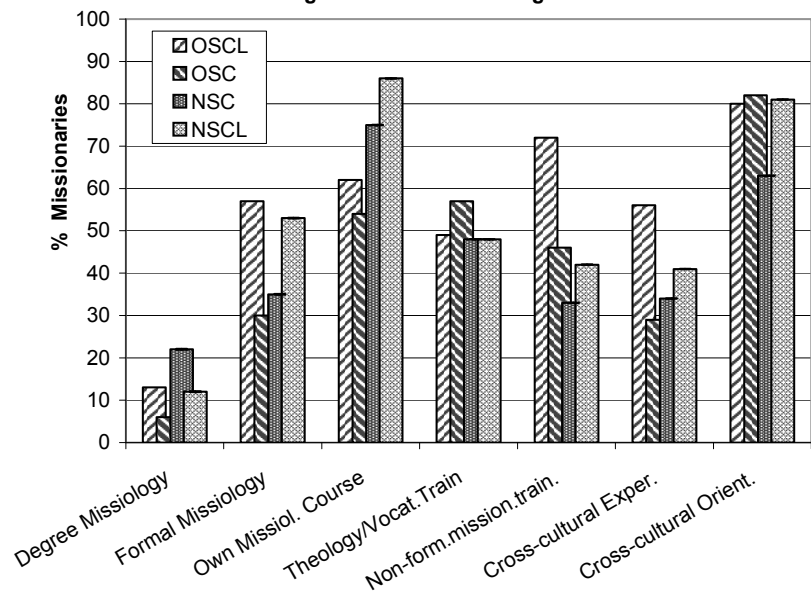
Fig. 9: Preventable Attrition and Candidate Selection



### 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<sup>9</sup>. 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 preventative attrition rate

Fig. 10: Pre-field Training



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 gives 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 fig. 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

<sup>9</sup> It remains a mystery to me why Theological training and Professional training had been put into one group.

agencies put stronger emphasis on *Regular communication with home churches, Field conferences* and *Annual visit from the home office*.

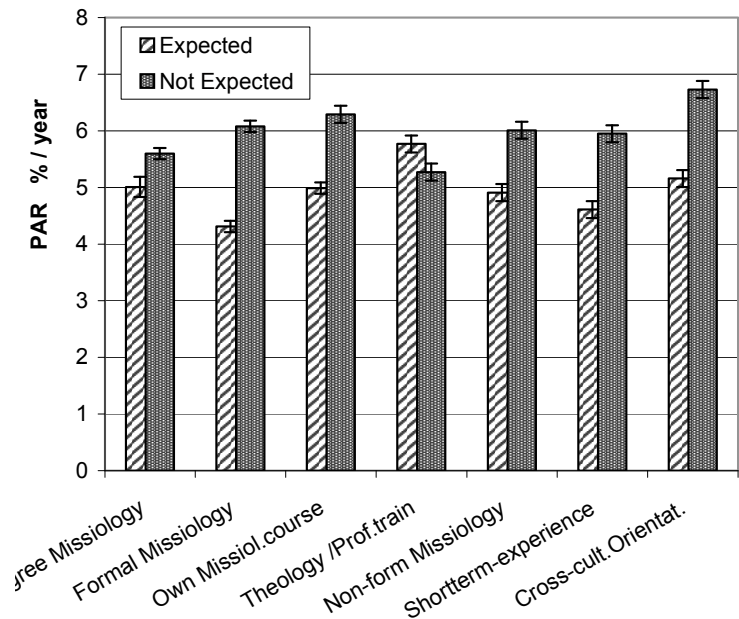
In general NSC agencies provide the same amount of services to their missionaries as OSC, and low attrition agencies do not provide more than the total group. It appears that services on the field in itself do not keep missionaries in ministry, unless they are predated by careful candidate selection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

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 in addition 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 could just estimate the amount of member care but not her quality.

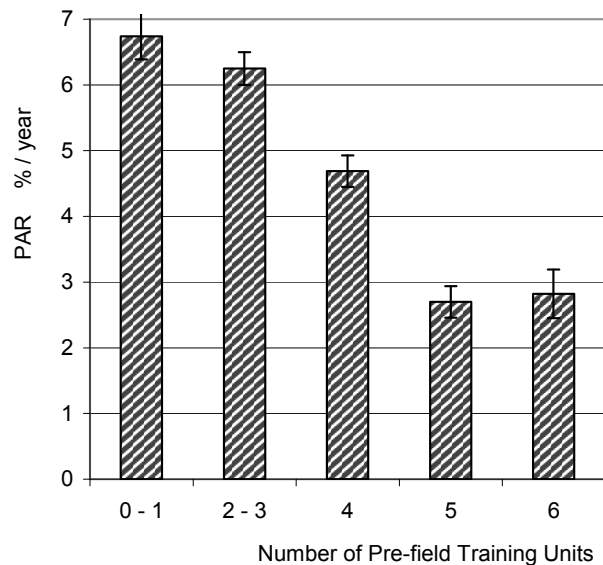
**SUMMARY**

The ReMAP study has been one of the first global studies on missionary attrition, in particular 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

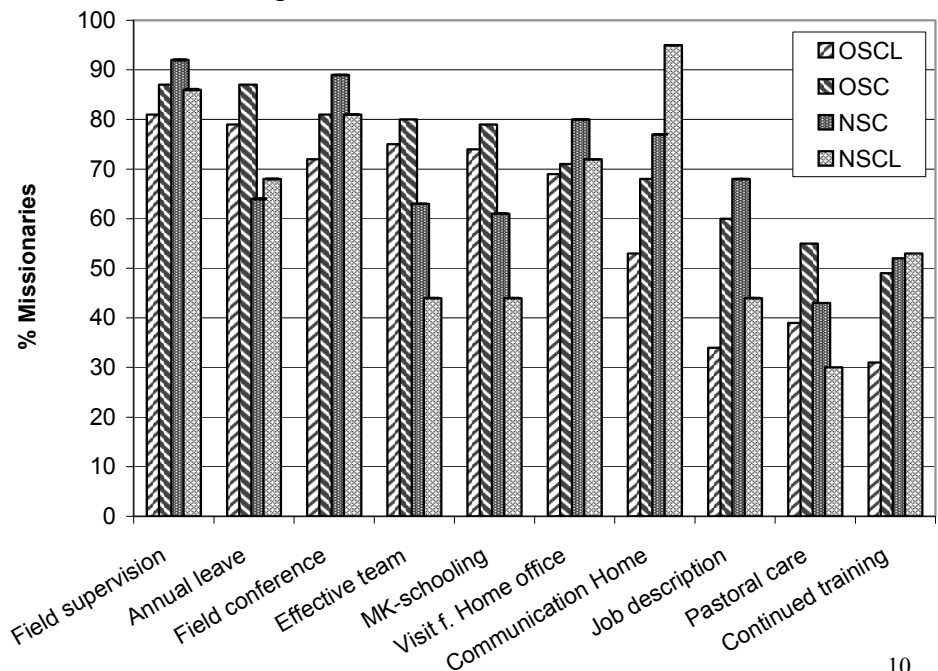
**Fig. 11: Preventable Attrition and Pre-field Training**



**Fig. 12: Preventable Attrition and Pre-field Training**



**Fig. 13: Services for missionaries on the field**



impact on missionary attrition.

The characteristics of agencies with very low return rates have been presented that 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 an 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.

Yet 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 need reassignment or 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 then 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.

## WHAT ReMAP DID

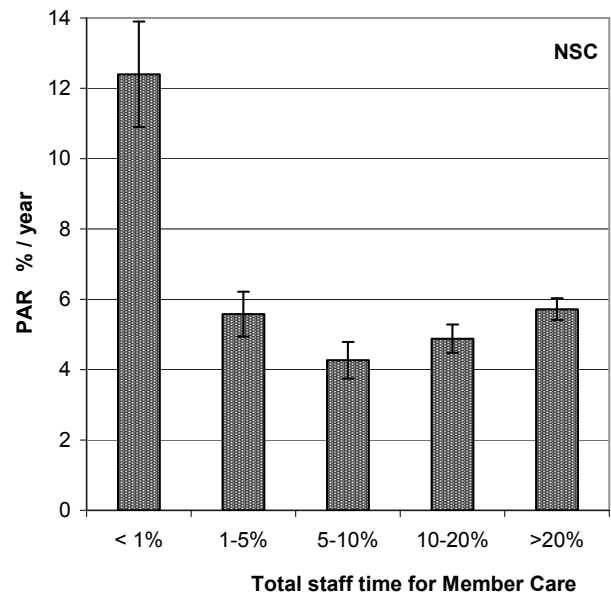
Statistics are of limited value. They serve to provide information to decision makers so that they can make organisational changes and improvements. In the example given in the introduction statistical information was desperately needed to clarify what turned out to be disinformation that was very discouraging. 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%, a 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 Missions 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](http://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%.

Fig 14: Member Care



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 Missions Commission affiliate, the International Missionary Training Network ([www.missionarytraining.org](http://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 help agencies understand the critical areas that need to be clarified before 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.