

Case
Study
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 **OC INTERNATIONAL**
Research Department

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Survey of the Singapore

Missionary Force

One of a series of practical missions research case studies

Key Words: institutional research, church survey, missions research

Abstract: This study describes a research project designed to take a closer look at who is sending Singapore's missionaries, where they are going and what they are doing.

Background: Over the last decade or so, many Christian leaders have compared Singapore to the biblical city of Antioch. The hallmark of the Antioch church was its strength as a missionary sending church (Acts 13:1-4). In our day, Singapore is a missionary sending country and leads Asia in missionaries sent in proportion to evangelical believers.

In the mid 1980's, Rev Chan Fong of the Grace (S.C.C) Church researched the status of the Singaporean missionary force. By 1988, he concluded that there were 140 Singaporeans serving outside of Singapore as career missionaries. Of this total, 68% of the missionaries were serving in Asia, 16% in Africa, 7% in Europe, 4% in Oceania, and 5% in North America.

At the end of 1989, OC Asia began their research on the Singaporean missionary force, to verify statistics published in the book, *From Every People* by Dr. Larry Pate. All the data contained in Dr. Pate's book was checked through personal interview or phone interview. In addition, new data was secured during the project. In June 1990, the Singaporean missionary force concluded that 177 people were missionaries according to the established definitions. By 1992, the number of missionaries had grown to 321 with indications of significant increase in the years ahead.

Purpose: In May 1991, the participants of the Singapore National Missions Consultation set a goal of sending out at least 500 missionaries from Singapore by AD 2000. OC Asia agreed to conduct follow up research on their 1990 report to better understand what progress was being made toward reaching that goal. Similar research will need to be conducted through the remainder of the decade to monitor progress and reestablish new goals as necessary.

Procedure: The research was accomplished in three steps.

1. Beginning in August 1991, OC Asia conducted a general survey of all English-speaking Protestant churches. Part of this survey was for churches to provide a listing of their missionary personnel. The total number of Singaporean career missionaries reported at that time was 138.
2. During July, August, and September 1992, any ambiguous data was verified with churches. Eventually, all known missionary sending churches were contacted, and new sending churches were identified. Moreover, each locally based mission agency provided their listing of Singaporean missionaries. This allowed for cross-checking data since, some missionaries are supported by more than one church and duplication of individuals is possible. Churches clearly identified as the sending church were so designated. When multiple church support existed, the church providing the largest amount of support was considered the sending church.

3. The data was entered into a dBase program with fields that would provide analysis for the following: name, sex, marital status, spouse's nationality, sending church, field of service, continent, and mission agency. Lists and charts were generated at the end of September and the report was written and printed in October.

Definitions: Many churches and mission agencies consider personnel serving within Singapore to be missionaries. Some churches and mission agencies only consider those serving outside of Singapore as a missionary. This research project did not attempt to identify non-Singaporean (nationals) missionaries supported by Singaporean churches nor does it identify individuals serving in a short term capacity.

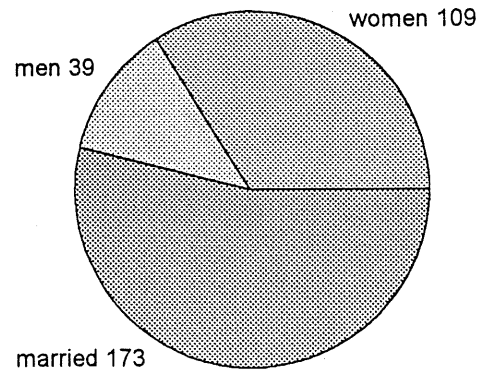
For the purpose of standardizing our research, we considered people meeting the following criteria to be classified as Singaporean missionaries in this report.

- ◆ Singaporean citizen/Permanent resident
- ◆ Sent by a recognized church or mission agency
- ◆ Serving outside of Singapore
- ◆ Serving as a career missionary (initial term of at least two years)

Analysis: The results of the analyses were presented in tabular and graphic form. Several of these are reproduced below.

1992 Marital Status

| Marital Status | 1992 | 1990 |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Couples (both Singaporean) | 77 | 35 |
| Couples (one foreigner) | 19 | |
| Single men | 39 | 37 |
| Single women | 109 | 70 |
| Total Singaporean Missionaries | 321 | 177 |



Male and Female: there were 200 (62%) women serving as missionaries compared to 121 (38%) men. In other words, there are almost two women for each man being sent from Singapore.

Marital Status: there were 148 single people compared to 173 married people serving as missionaries.

Singaporean Sending Agencies

| Sending Agencies | 1992 | 1990 |
|---|------------|------------|
| Number of churches sending missionaries directly | 38 | 16 |
| <i>Missionaries sent direct from churches</i> | <i>187</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Number of churches partnering with agencies | 46 | 35 |
| <i>Missionaries sent through mission agencies</i> | <i>134</i> | <i>77</i> |
| Total sending churches | 76 | 48 |
| Total sending agencies with local representatives | 13 | 9 |

Mission Agencies through which churches sent missionaries Number of missionaries

| Agency | 1992 | 1990 |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Campus Crusade for Christ | 18 | 13 |
| CNEC/Partners | 1 | 5 |
| Interserve | 1 | 1 |
| Operation Mobilization | 10 | 16 |
| Overseas Missionary Fellowship | 22 | 13 |
| OC Asia | 1 | 0 |
| Parusia Mission | 1 | 0 |
| SIM East Asia | 7 | 4 |
| The Navigators | 8 | 8 |
| WEC | 11 | 7 |
| World Vision | 2 | 0 |
| Wycliffe Bible Translators | 14 | 10 |
| Youth With A Mission | 18 | - |
| Other (having no local Representative) | 20 | - |
| Total | 134 | 77 |

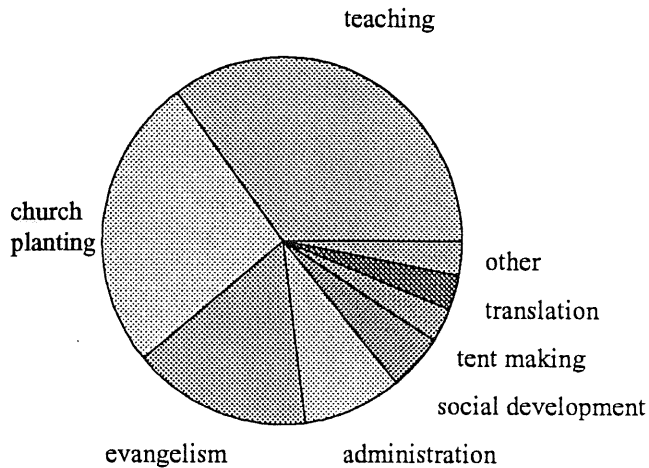
A list of all the sending churches and the number of missionaries sent from the church was presented (not included in this case study). It was observed that most churches are sending one, two, or three missionaries.

Fourteen churches accounted for 53% of all Singaporean career missionaries. One church alone sent out 82 missionaries, 26% of the total.

Sending Agencies: the number of missionaries sent directly from churches compared to those sent through a mission agency remained at almost exactly the same ration as in 1990. Thus there was no significant variation in how missionaries were being sent. However, the number of churches sending missionaries directly increased from 16 in 1990 to 38 in 1992. The number of churches utilizing mission agencies also increased from 35 in 1990 to 46 in 1992. A sizable increase occurred in the total number of sending churches. In 1990, 48 churches were sponsoring missionaries, in 1992 there were 76. Thus, more churches are recognizing their global responsibility. Of the 76 sending churches, 14 churches accounted for 53% of all missionaries. In other words, most churches are new to the ministry of sending missionaries.

| Ministry Focus | 1992 | 1992% | 1990 |
|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| Church nurture/teaching | 114 | 35 | 47 |
| Church planting | 83 | 26 | 77 |
| Evangelism | 50 | 16 | 35 |
| Administration | 29 | 9 | 1 |
| Social Development | 15 | 5 | 6 |
| Tent Making | 11 | 3 | - |
| Translation | 9 | 3 | 40 |
| Other | 10 | 3 | 1 |

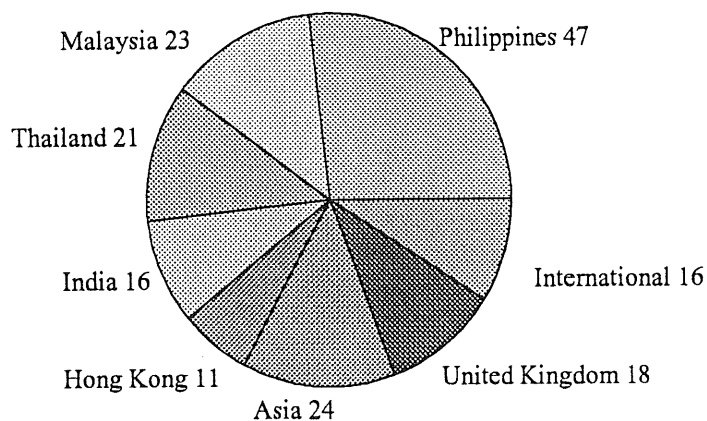
Ministry Focus



Ministry focus: the three main types of ministries which Singaporean missionaries are doing remained the same as in 1990: church nurture/teaching, church planting, and evangelism. In our survey, the difference between evangelism and church planting is that evangelism is conducted without the intent to plant a church. In 1992, however, there was a bit of diversity where Singaporeans began to assume more administrative responsibility and several have become tent makers. Of those serving in administration, most were women. In church nurture/teaching and church planting, the greatest percentage of missionaries were couples followed by single men. In evangelism the greatest percentage of missionaries were single women followed by single men.

| Mission Field | 1992 | 1992% | 1990 |
|-----------------------|------|-------|------|
| Asia | 181 | 56 | 100 |
| Europe | 35 | 11 | 20 |
| Africa | 34 | 10 | 14 |
| Oceania | 21 | 7 | 6 |
| North America | 20 | 6 | 10 |
| South/Central America | 9 | 3 | 8 |
| Middle East | 7 | 3 | 11 |
| International | 14 | 4 | 8 |

Field Concentration



Field of service: the continental distribution of missionaries was almost identical between the 1990 data and the 1992 data. Slight increase occurred in Africa and Oceania in 1992. A future survey will be needed to discern which of the missionaries were actually serving among unreached or unevangelised peoples.

Another table was produced (not reproduced in this case study) which showed the location of Singaporean missionaries by country. Singaporean missionaries were present in seventeen new countries in 1992 when compared to 1990. Fields of service in 1990 which no longer had Singaporean missionaries in 1992 included: Brazil, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Niger. Of the 43 countries or regions where Singaporean missionaries serve, 55% or 176 missionaries are found in one of eight places. Other than the United Kingdom and those serving internationally, all serve within the region of Asia.

Evaluation: Obtaining accurate information on the number of career missionaries from a church can be complicated by the fact that most churches want to be known as having missionaries. Although definitions can be carefully explained, people often hear what they want to hear. Therefore, care must be taken to review data received and confirm that people identified as missionaries really fit the definition.

Particular care must be given to distinguish short term from career missionaries, and to eliminate duplication which occurs when more than one church claims the same person as their missionary (because each provides partial support). Another factor to note is the possibility of missionary couples who are not both of the same nationality.

To promote accuracy, we requested the names of missionaries. For several reasons, some churches preferred not to provide the names. Perhaps security is the concern for the missionary working in a restricted access country. Perhaps concern results from the thought that once a name is given direct contact apart from the sponsoring church could occur. When churches prefer not to provide names, it is helpful to at least obtain initials so if the same initials show up for the same country the researcher can double check to make sure an individual is not being counted twice.

Impact: The report has not been in circulation long enough to assess the full impact. The previous report of 1990 became the authoritative source on the status of Singaporean missionaries. It was used by educators, pastors, and missions committee personnel to motivate students and church members toward missionary service. The report identified trends in fields of service which allowed goal setting for neglected areas.

A complementary copy of this report was sent to the 76 churches and 13 missions agencies represented in the survey, with a cover letter requesting their continued assistance for future reports.

*Copies of the original report may be obtained from the
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