



ENCOURAGING OUR YOUNGEST VIEWERS

A vital part of SAT-7’s work in the Middle East and North Africa is to support the growing church by directly engaging with viewers. This includes the youngest audience watching SAT’s dedicated children’s channel, SAT-7 KIDS.

Deputy CEO of SAT-7 and presenter of Bed-time Stories, Rita Elmounayer, has a passion to reach out to the children of the Middle East. She believes that some children, shaped by watching SAT-7 Christian television and engaging with our teams, will grow up to be leaders, bringing change to their countries because of their strong values and relationship with God.

As one adult Iraqi viewer shared, SAT-7 KIDS programmes can have a lasting effect on a child’s life. “We grew up in war. There is no other reality for people under 35. It has become the norm for how people live.” Martin and his siblings used to escape the darkness surrounding them in Iraq by watching SAT-7 KIDS. Early episodes of the show *As-Sanabel* seemed to transport them to a different place. “We fell in love with the characters,” Martin says. “Rita [the presenter] once replied to my letter. I cannot express the joy I felt.” After all these years, he still holds onto the card that Rita mailed him. “I don’t think SAT-7 could have known they would impact so many kids in rural northern Iraq. I’ve lived the blessing of your programs.”

Today, social media plays an important role in communicating with young people. Children and their parents contact SAT-7 KIDS by email, website, SMS, Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter to express their gratitude and enjoyment of the programmes. It is the role of the viewer support team to listen and respond to children who contact SAT-7. There are many messages from viewers from non-Christian backgrounds in the Middle East who have begun to follow Jesus or want to know more about Him.

“I DON’T JUST HAVE FUN”

The team seek to communicate God’s love and acceptance, and reinforce the main gospel message of Jesus’ death and resurrection for our salvation and the need of a personal relationship with Him. Team members post daily Bible verses and encouraging news on the SAT-7 KIDS Facebook pages. They also respond individually to personal messages and requests. Some 700,000 fans follow the SAT-7 Facebook pages. And thousands watch programmes and clips that are uploaded on the SAT-7 KIDS YouTube Channel. In 2016 there were over 3.5 million views of SAT-7 KIDS programmes

on YouTube and nearly 11,000 videos shared by viewers with their families and friends.

One viewer commented on Facebook, “May Our God bless you abundantly. My kids and I don’t just have fun while watching you, they also learn and know more about Jesus Christ and the Bible. A thank you won’t be enough. God bless you!” ■



**I really love watching all the programs with my daughter, even though she is very young. She loves *Why Is That* and *Let’s Sing Together*. May God bless you and use you for His glory.
- Viewer from Egypt**

THE INVISIBLE FRONT LINE

There is more than one way of being on the front line of ministry in SAT-7. While scores of the TV network's presenters have become trusted and familiar friends through their regular appearance on screen, there is a front line that is less visible but equally important. It involves sitting beside a phone and a computer monitor.

Members of SAT-7 Audience Relation (AR) teams are the first people viewers contact when – sometimes at considerable risk – they contact the studios to seek their direct support.

Since SAT-7's Farsi language channel (SAT-7 PARS) began using the secure online app *Telegram* for private communications, viewers in Iran typically use this the first time they contact SAT-7. AR team members monitor and engage with viewers over *Telegram* but follow up with a phone call if viewers need personal help – prayer, a Bible, or contact with a house church, for example.

Panayiotis Keenan, Senior Manager of SAT-7 PARS, says members of the team see answering these calls as the mission God has called them to. "When I ask them would they like to go to another department or maybe even have their own show, they say no, being on the frontline is our mission: it's the reason we are here to support in any way we can our fellow people who are in Iran."

Mitra, a female member of the team, explained how she feels about serving viewers in this way: "I find it so encouraging and spiritually enlightening!" she explained, "Every time I see people from Iran getting to know Jesus and their eyes are opened to the truth, I feel very joyful. Coming from a similar background, I know what an amazing thing it is when our viewers come to Christ."

Another member of the team, Bhezad, also stressed the link he feels with viewers from having had the same experiences: "I can relate to viewers that do not have access to Bibles and churches: I understand what that is like. It is my passion to share about my

faith with others. This is at the core of my heart."

FIRST CONTACT

He gave an example of the privilege he feels in being probably the first Christian contact a viewer had ever had: "Two weeks ago, I called a viewer who didn't have any connections with anyone in the Christian community and who wanted prayer. After speaking with him and praying for his needs, he was glad knowing that someone is praying for him and that he is not alone."

In a different culture and on a different channel, Ruth Irsany is AR Supervisor for SAT-7 ARABIC in the network's Cairo office. The majority of Arabic-speaking viewers have greater freedom than Iranians to meet with other believers or obtain a Bible. Most are free to contact SAT-7 using all kinds of channels, from Whatsapp to Skype. The needs are often different but viewers may also be facing life-changing or life-threatening situations.

"What thrills me is to see and be part of what God wants to do in peoples' lives through SAT-7's ministry," Ruth said. "I get excited when we receive a testimony of how God changed their lives whether through our programmes or through answered prayer, and mostly when they send us saying "they are accepting Jesus as their personal Saviour".

Ruth is equally delighted when viewers send in smaller requests: "I always get two impressions: first is how people trust us with even the small things in their lives and the second thing is God cares very much for even the small details in their lives."

SAT-7 has team members serving all of its channels, including its Turkish language and Arabic children's channels, and partner counselling centres in a number of countries which provide more locally based support. Every time they answer the cries of a viewer, they know they are supporting another existing or potential member of the Body of Christ.

It's a mission that not only touches viewers but the team members themselves. Mitra in the PARS team explains how it affects her own life with Christ: "My work is feeding me spiritually. When I leave work, I feel uplifted and fed in my spirit. It gives me an opportunity to help people in Iran and use my gift of teaching and letting God use me." ■

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I am so glad you found me. I came to Christ two years ago and am glad you are here to help. Pray for me to learn more about how to follow Jesus. - Viewer from Iran

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