

Lindsay Shaw shares how Christian TV is training refugees in basic healthcare

ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST

One in 20 people in the Middle East have been displaced by conflict.¹ This staggering statistic is an indicator of the pressure on health services and the struggle of displaced people to get the help they need. This is why SAT-7, a Christian satellite TV network in the region, is producing programmes that offer medical support and first aid training.

Medicine and Life has been broadcast since May 2016. Its primary audience is the refugee population, people uprooted by the region's civil wars: 'People want to take care of their health but don't necessarily have access to healthcare and don't know whose advice they can trust,' says George Makeen, SAT-7's Arabic Programming Director. 'Medicine and Life features experts from different countries giving good advice that viewers can trust.'

In 2017, Medicine and Life launched a five-minute segment called Your Doctor. 'You are your own doctor' is the message given by Dr Hany Keylada, an Egyptian Christian who has served refugees on the Syrian border. Over three years, he has trained more than 120 refugee community leaders in paramedical, relief, and nursing skills where other medical help is not available.

'The result of this was what motivated me to do this training on film,' Keylada explains. 'The idea of the programme is to train people to a higher level of skills to enable community leaders to be efficient, qualified and courageous Good Samaritans.'

In each episode, Dr Keylada demonstrates the basics of how to identify and treat common medical conditions. He presents information on first aid and dealing with emergency healthcare needs, and advises on disease prevention and protection.

'I go deeply into emergency situations, where I ask myself "Do I have the courage to treat someone injured by fire or explosion?,"' Keylada says, since these are the situations his viewers may confront.

I trusted my life to them

Keylada knows the effectiveness of such training from personal experience: 'On two occasions I got injured in the field and didn't have a physician to help me. I trusted my life to the people I had trained and told them "You can do this; I trust you", and they did a great job in managing the situation.'

Be Your Own Doctor segments address trauma and mental health issues, underlying conditions such as blood pressure and cholesterol, and offers health information on the respiratory and digestive systems.

The five-minute clips are also made available on social media for audiences to watch and share easily on smartphones or other portable devices wherever they are. Meanwhile, Medicine and Life episodes are uploaded to YouTube in their entirety where they can be accessed at any time, following a flood of viewer requests.

Medicine and Life is one example of SAT-7's holistic programming. While some shows provide worship or doctrinal teaching, others apply biblical values to everyday living, from family relationships to work and leisure. Launched in 1996, and broadcasting 24 hours a day in Arabic, Farsi/Persian and Turkish, SAT-7 serves an audience of over 21.5 million viewers across the Middle East and North Africa and has a dedicated children's channel.

Training tomorrow's societies

SAT-7's latest plan is to launch an education channel, SAT-7 ACADEMY. The aim is both to meet the education needs of the 13.4 million Middle Eastern children who have been deprived of schooling and provide educational content for adults that will equip them to build more tolerant, democratic societies. Already 1.3 million children watch two hours a day of school programming on SAT-7's children's channel.

It employs diverse formats for its programmes. In the oral cultures of the Middle East, one popular format is the chat show with live call-ins from viewers. Speak Up, a new Christian counselling series, uses this format alongside dramatised real-life stories and interviews.

A recent episode tackled breast cancer. Nadia Zakhary, Professor of Biochemistry and Tumour Biology at Egypt's National Cancer Institute, advised women on how to do a self check-up and stressed the importance of early diagnosis. A caller to the show stressed how her treatment led her to change her priorities radically. Another said: 'It is very important for women to know their value... Husbands have an important role in supporting their wives, comforting them and expressing their love to them.'

Nancy Faltas, the presenter of Speak Up, says her desire for the series is that viewers should not suffer alone or in silence. 'Speak up reminds us that God is omnipresent and is capable of turning our darkness to light and our difficult times to life-learning opportunities.'

Refugee and asylum-seeker health is a growing concern among CMF members. Last year a CMF Global team visited refugee projects in Iraq and Lebanon. The Fellowship now runs relevant day conferences for CMF members who share this concern. In the UK, some refugees suffer from ailments that are not well known by medics here.

Christians have always had a special concern for the refugee and 'stranger'. This theme is ever-present in the Bible. Abraham and the patriarchs were 'sojourners'. At the core of the Exodus and exile stories is the experience of displacement. Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus fled to Egypt for safety. All this should inform Christian attitudes today.

Lindsay Shaw is UK Press and Communications Officer for SAT-7

reference

1. UNHCR quoted by Pew Research, 5 October 2016