



An assessment of SAT-7 effectiveness conducted by Global Scripture Impact, an independent research organization

SAT-7 PARS: New TV Show, 'Shabakeh,' Features Christian Values

Drama addresses the problems facing Farsi-speakers from a biblical perspective



The main characters of "Shabakeh" shoot a segment of the show, which is set in a television studio. The show targets Farsi-speaking adults.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

CONTEXT: Farsi is the spoken and written language of 70 million Iranians, 20 million Afghans and about 10 million Tajiks. Around 60 percent of them are younger than 25. Those living in this society lack safe and easy access to the Word of God. Although satellite television is banned by the Iranian government, the number of users is growing. The content of national television is often weak and fails to speak to young people, making new satellite programming appealing. In this culture, the family unit is becoming more dysfunctional and the divorce rate is rising, especially in Iran. People are also extremely superstitious and rely on religious folk practices to overcome challenges.

NEED: People living in this region need locally created Scripture-based programs that fit the context and culture. The message of Christ needs to be presented in a non-threatening and engaging way that is sensitive to viewers' culture and values. Sharing the heart of Christianity through drama fits the rich oral culture.

SOLUTION: Satellite television allows delivery of uncensored material into homes. "Shabakeh," meaning "network," will promote Christian living and principles through drama without threatening the culture. "Shabakeh" will show viewers ways to overcome life's problems in a Christ-like manner and direct them to the Word of God. The program will help believers deepen their faith and ease their isolation. Viewers will receive accurate information about Christianity.

LIFE IMPACT

POTENTIAL VIEWERS: 1.3 million adult viewers
ESTIMATED VIEWERS: 650,000 adults will regularly view "Shabakeh" over one year
IMMEDIATE INTERACTION: SAT-7 PARS will receive a total of 360 text messages, e-mails or phone calls following 52 broadcasts of the show over one year
ESTIMATED APPLICATION: an estimated 195,000 viewers (30 percent of estimated viewers) will engage with the individual program over one year - based on a 2006 KMR Group survey of Middle East Satellite TV viewers

PROJECT PROFILE

Implementer
SAT-7 PARS



ID: SAT-7-0809-PARS

Program Name	"SHABAKEH" (NETWORK)
Lives Impacted	650,000
Project Cost	\$277,729
Cost Per Episode	\$5,341
Cost Per Beneficiary	\$0.42
Episodes	52 30-MINUTE SHOWS
Timeline	6 MONTHS

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I came to Christ a year ago through your Christian channel. I have stopped many sinful habits and my life has changed completely. I am no longer in darkness and I feel peace, joy and blessings in my life. Because I cannot speak to my parents about Jesus, I put on SAT-7 PARS while my parents are watching TV."

— an Iranian man

WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW

"Farsi, also known as [the] Persian language, is the most widely spoken member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages. ... Farsi is spoken today primarily in Iran and Afghanistan. ... Significant populations of speakers can be found in other Persian Gulf countries. ... as well as large communities in the U.S."

— "Farsi language history" *Today Translations*, www.todaytranslations.com/language-history/farsi-language-history

"In terms of audience across age segments, TGI Arabia reveals that TV viewing is heaviest in the 30- to 50-year-old age group. Half of all viewers in the region rate TV as their favourite pastime. ... A quarter of the respondents are interested in [interactive television] a promising signal that [television commerce] could flourish in the region. General programming, constituting mainly of factual and reality infotainment, ranks as the most watched genre, with 86 percent audience engagement."

— *KMR Group Update Issue 17 Summer 2006*, www.kmr-group.com/pdf

"The state retains control of terrestrial radio and television broadcasts, but the illicit use of satellite television receivers in urban areas continues to be widespread."

— "Iran: Country Briefing," Oct. 22, 2008, www.economist.com/countries/iran/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story

"Although Iran is not found on current lists of countries with high divorce rates, it seems the country may possibly have the highest divorce rate in the world today. A study released by a research group at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran earlier this month reports that the divorce rate in Iran could be as high as 90 percent among couples who marry by choice as opposed to more traditional arranged marriages."

— "Iranian Divorce Rate May Hit 100%," May 2009, www.divorce.com/blog/iranian-divorce-rate-may-hit-100

PROJECT DESIGN

This project funds 52 episodes of "Shabakeh," with one 30-minute episode airing weekly for one year on SAT-7 PARS. The show targets 20- to 34-years-olds in the Farsi-speaking countries of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Based on demographic and social trends, SAT-7 PARS estimates that at least 2 million people in the Farsi-speaking world watch PARS. Of those, about 1.3 million viewers are adults – based on the fact that 65 percent of the programming is geared toward adults. Conservative estimates suggest 650,000 adults – 50 percent of 1.3 million adult viewers – will regularly watch "Shabakeh."

The show encourages viewers to apply Christian values and principles to their lives, without directly referring to the Bible. The storyline surrounds a couple that owns a television channel. Their marriage is falling apart and the television station is suffering. A Christian who comes to work at the station tells the couple how to strengthen their relationship and build it on truth, hope and love. Basically, the Christian employee epitomizes Christian values and lifestyle without referring to the Bible. Producing culturally sensitive and non-political television programs that do not demean other faiths is more acceptable in this context. Episodes deal with relevant topics such as relationships, extramarital affairs, raising children, love, faith, religious folk practices and family life through a biblical perspective. In a region where believers have few formal opportunities to learn or develop Christian values and principles, "Shabakeh" provides an opportunity to show a Christ-like life. During each show, the audience is told how to get in touch with the producer with questions, comments or to suggest content.

Measuring impact. SAT-7 PARS will record the number of calls, text messages and e-mails for each episode. It is illegal to have a satellite dish in Iran, so in this context, it will be difficult to track the actual number

of people viewing SAT-7 PARS. People fear questionnaires, phone researchers and personal interviews.

The only metric that can be measured is immediate interaction. The other metrics are estimates based on research from the region. It is not possible in this context to quantify these on a project-by-project basis.

TRACK RECORD

SAT-7 International was founded by Terence Ascott in 1995. SAT-7 PARS launched on Dec. 18, 2006, but the Farsi broadcasts started far earlier, Sept. 12, 2002, on SAT-7 ARABIC. SAT-7 PARS is a round-the-clock channel providing a vital platform for Farsi-speaking Christians who live in Iran and the wider Persian world. "PARS" is a Farsi word that indicates the Persian culture, and the channel is operated by Farsi-speaking Christians who are passionate about supporting the work and witness of Iranian churches. SAT-7 PARS reaches viewers who seek basic knowledge about Christianity and those who need encouragement in their Christian faith. Each day the channel airs specific blocks of original programming for children, youth and women – as well as teaching programs for a general audience.

In 2007 SAT-7 PARS received 6,000 responses from the audience; in 2008 that number jumped to 12,878. People are able to connect with SAT-7 PARS via telephone, text messages, e-mail and its Web site. Text messaging only started in August 2007, but its use has increased almost 115 percent.

The feedback and questions received from viewers guide programming. For example, many viewers asked for a Bible. As one way to meet this challenging need, SAT-7 PARS created a short program in 2008 with readings from the gospels. Viewers can record these and use them as their personal Bible resource.

ANALYSIS



CONCEPT: 1

This television program tackles real life issues and regional social mores through a weekly drama that entertains people while encouraging them to replicate the morals depicted. In a region where misconceptions about the Christian faith are rampant, it may be more effective to share the message of Christ indirectly than through direct evangelism. Storytelling is part of the oral tradition of the Persian culture.

PROGRAM DESIGN & EXPERIENCE: 3

This is a new program for SAT-7 PARS. It will be difficult to estimate viewership and the number of people engaging with the program. To minimize this risk, SAT-7 PARS provides multiple tools for viewers to engage with the show. Direct interaction with SAT-7 will be limited due to the political and social context.

LEADERSHIP: 2

SAT-7 benefits from strong leaders. The organization should be encouraged to continue to empower and develop its second tier of staff and streamline information flow between departments so that current projects inform future program design.

FINANCIAL CONTROL: 1

SAT-7 PARS has stable management, independent governance and secure fund transfer methods. Its financial statements are externally audited.

SUSTAINABILITY: 3

SAT-7 does not raise funds on the air, relying instead on financial gifts. Programs are not necessarily viewer supported. Continuous funding from external sources will be necessary to sustain and expand programming.

EXTERNAL: 3

SAT-7 is broadcasting into the Middle East where not everyone will embrace its message and persecution of Christians have taken place. To mitigate risks, SAT-7 has been careful in its ministry approach to present the truth of the gospel in a manner that is respectful of the culture and society where it operates.

BREADTH:

An estimated 650,000 viewers throughout the Farsi-speaking nations of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan will view displays of Christian values, principles and lifestyles at a cost of \$0.42 per beneficiary.

PROJECT BUDGET

SOURCES OF FUNDS

ITEM	REQUESTED	COST/EPISODE
Producer, director and co-director	\$56,472	\$1,086
Actors ¹	\$44,096	\$848
Project management ²	\$30,568	\$588
Administration of SAT-7 USA	\$27,773	\$534
Equipment ³	\$26,468	\$509
Editor and writer	\$22,048	\$424
Broadcast ⁴	\$15,600	\$300
Location rentals ⁵	\$13,208	\$254
Transportation, food ⁶	\$13,208	\$254
Cameraman and assistant cameraman	\$12,376	\$238
Designer and makeup artist	\$7,072	\$136
Set design	\$4,420	\$85
Miscellaneous	\$4,420	\$85
TOTAL	\$277,729	\$5,341

NOTES:

- ¹ remuneration for the four main characters and others who join throughout the season
- ² includes rent, utilities, salaries and staff expenses for all administrative staff
- ³ includes camera, studio, light and editing equipment
- ⁴ the fee for using the satellite and equipment at the SAT-7 Studio in Cyprus and staff involved in broadcasting 52 episodes
- ⁵ covers rent for location shoots, such as restaurants and coffee shops
- ⁶ for crew and actors during shoots

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

“SAT-7 is a brilliant effort to beam the gospel of Jesus directly into homes in a region where traditional religious identity and high levels of social control have made access difficult. I commend SAT-7 for its creative gospel programming by Middle Easterners for Middle Easterners. SAT-7 has avoided presenting a Westernized message that could be either distorted or incomprehensible to its intended audience. SAT-7’s combination of up-to-date technology and indigenous voices should be the goal of every mission organization.”

— David Neff, CT Media Group editor in chief, Carol Stream, Ill.

PRODUCER'S TESTIMONY

"I was always interested to work in cinema and TV since [I was] a child. I have a degree in industrial design, but I was always interested in theater. Therefore, throughout my school career, I was always doing theater whenever I got a chance. I then moved on to work as a technical manager in a factory. Even then, my spare time was devoted to working with productions and creative endeavors. Then after a few years I was transferred to the Theater Office in Tehran. I was working there as a director and an actor. Afterward, I opened my own company and I started producing TV programs. Thereafter I went to [the] United States and I worked as a technical director for four years at a local television station. I went to Dubai to launch the Dubai branch of the TV [station] which I was working for (in the USA). This is when I came to know the Lord and gave my life to Christ.

"Afterward I came to [the] U.K. and ... I got acquainted with SAT-7 and Sara Ashfari (SAT-7 PARS executive director). I believe that this was all God's plan to prepare me to serve Jesus. Before I knew the Lord, I was always stressed. When I found Jesus, all my worries and tensions ... faded away. It was like all

my stresses were washed away and I was free again. Now I feel that I need to share this freedom with others. I know just one way to do this mission and that's through my 30 years of experience in media."

— *Daryoush Rezvani, producer*

BEST PRACTICES

Fund television broadcast projects that:

- are culturally appropriate
- broadcast the message in the local language
- promote local productions
- present contemporary messages that will make the program more effective in the lives of viewers
- address the needs of youth and young people from a biblical perspective
- encourage openness, dialogue, friendship and one-to-one interaction with the majority population by Christians who are trained and willing to share their faith

Researcher's Statement



Siyumi Yanthrawaduge
Research Analyst
August 2009

Since the most ordinary way to experience the Christian faith in the Western world — attending a church service — is restricted for most people in Farsi-speaking nations, the safest avenue for people to hear the Christian message may be through mass media, such as television and radio. The growing popularity of satellite television in the Middle East presents a non-threatening medium for individuals and families to explore Christianity. SAT-7 is encouraged to develop and utilize tools and processes that will enable leaders to better track the impact on its viewers.



Global Scripture Impact serves the American Bible Society and the greater American Christian philanthropic market by providing independent research and evaluation of Scripture ministry projects around the world, and supplying this information to interested supporters.

Global Scripture Impact
1550 Liberty Ridge Drive
Suite 330
Wayne, PA 19087
484.654.3490
www.gsimpact.org

INSPIRATION

How can young people keep their lives pure? By obeying your commands.

— *Psalms 119.9, GNT*

HOW TO FUND THIS PROJECT

PROJECT RECAP

ID	- SAT-7-0809-PARS
Implementer	- SAT-7
Timeline	- 12 months
Budget	- \$227,729



Contact Dr. Rex Rogers
President, SAT-7 USA
P.O. Box 2770
Easton, Md. 21601
410.770.9804
E-mail: rexrogers@sat7.org