



SHARE

SHARE Newsletter

January 2020

Editor's note: The night always seems longer when you are looking forward to dawn. The bombs and gunfire in the warzone, the ruined houses and the perilous escape have been deeply imprinted on the minds of each refugee. Today, the world is experiencing the biggest refugee crisis since the World War II. In Syria alone, over half of the pre-war population has been forced to leave their homes. In this issue of SHARE, we will focus on Syrian refugee children, known as the "lost generation", and how CEDAR's partner utilises satellite television to help them improve their psychological health and advance their personal development. In "Back to the Bible", Professor Ip Hon Ho Alex shared how structural sins can twist our values and what the Apostle Paul's reminder means to us. In "Blessings by Offering", we will call on believers to spread love and hope by helping Syrians to survive the bitter winter.

Refugees Get Schooling through TV – Cries of the Middle Eastern and Northern African Children

Written by: Edward Lai (Senior Communications Officer)

The Syrian War has already been 8 years and it is still far from over. Chronic warfare resulted in uncountable casualties and destruction. More than 11 millions of civilians lost their homes, and were either displaced within the country or have fled to countries in the Middle East and North Africa to seek asylum, such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan. When their homelands are still devastated by conflicts, rebuilding their country seems impossible. How do these refugees live in neighbouring countries? Why are their children and other Middle Eastern and North African children described as the "lost generation"? While facing multifaceted challenges, how does this younger generation bear hope for the future? Kurt Johansen, executive director of SAT-7 Europe, Asia and Pacific, a partner of CEDAR, answered our questions one by one.

"Refugee children have no schools to go, but there is a 'school' on their TVs."

- Kurt Johansen, executive director of SAT-7 Europe, Asia and Pacific



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More than a Humanitarian Crisis

According to the United Nations, 40% of schools in Syria were damaged or used for military purpose. With millions of Syrian children having fled to neighboring countries, over 800 thousand of them do not have a chance to go to school. They are vulnerable to being recruited as child labourers, or deceived to be child soldiers, or used as sex slaves. SAT-7 perceived that the Syrian Crisis had already been transited from a humanitarian crisis to a development issue. This involved development opportunity of children and youths, and is relevant to the long-term peace development in the area.

SAT-7 is a 24/7 Christian satellite television network broadcasting in Arabic, Turkish and Persian across the Middle East and North Africa. SAT-7 had seen the above development needs of children and youths, and hence, launched “SAT-7 Academy” in September 2017, providing educational programmes in various aspects, namely subject learning, personal health, community development, and social affairs. At present, residents in the Middle East and North Africa still mainly rely on satellite TV to receive information.

Johansen said, “They (refugee children) have no schools to go, but there is a ‘school’ on their TVs. I once visited a refugee camp in Lebanon, and I could not find one tent without a satellite dish. They can spend a whole day in front of the TV and therefore they can obtain schooling somewhat similar to school.” SAT-7 believes that if children are not educated and do not learn values like inclusion and love, others will teach them opposite values, which can be seen from the prevailing propaganda on extremism in the Middle East and North Africa nowadays.

Against the Hatred Messages

“Many local propaganda and media are spreading messages of hatred and revenge for honour. Thus, we believe that we do not only talk about hard facts (on our educational programmes), but also teach them how to live their lives, think critically and be an open-minded person.” Johansen added, “Many young people do not have access to education, nor they have jobs opportunities and social welfare entitlement. If ISIS promises to give them US\$50 a month to fight for them, they will probably go with them.”

These children lost in neighbouring countries have their normal childhood seized. The UN describes them as the “lost generation”. Collaborative assistance from different sectors are desperately needed. Otherwise, they would easily be radicalised and become tools of extremists. SAT-7 understands this logic very well, and thus, they actively spread messages of forgiveness, care, and grace.

A few years ago, SAT-7 produced a video clip that went viral and gained hundreds

of thousands of views. The video was about a 9-year-old Iraqi girl, Myriam, who chose to forgive ISIS that made her and her family displaced from home. She said, “I will not kill them. Why should I kill them? I am just very sad. They drove us out from our home. Why did they do this?” She continued, “I will not do anything to them. I will only ask God to forgive them.”

By the end of video shooting, SAT-7’s team thanked her for teaching them many things. But she said, ‘I want to thank you for giving me a voice. I have nothing else to give.’ After that, SAT-7 invited her to sing them a song. She sang about Christ’s salvation on her with her silvery voice. Myriam’s story was exactly the message SAT-7 yearned to spread.

The programmes of “SAT-7 Academy” not only respond to refugee children’s learning needs, but also help parents understand more about their children’s situation. Johansen said, “In some areas of the Middle East and North Africa, parents do not want to invest in their daughters’ education, but to hope their daughters to get married the soonest the possible, to avoid them from being raped. In view of this, “SAT-7 Academy” motivates the parents in our programmes that they should send their children to schools and understand the world.” Moreover, experiences of flight and persecution left a permanent mark in children’s hearts. “SAT-7 Academy” explained about trauma in their programmes to teach parents how to understand their children. At the same time, they let children know how to express their inner feelings through drawing and singing.

According to the most recent survey, over 650 thousand people are watching “SAT-7 Academy” programmes every day, of which 500 thousand watchers are children. “SAT-7 Academy” utilises various platforms of social media, such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, to spread their messages. CEDAR invites Hong Kong Christians to pray for children in the Middle East and North Africa, so that they would remain hopeful and resilient despite challenges everywhere.

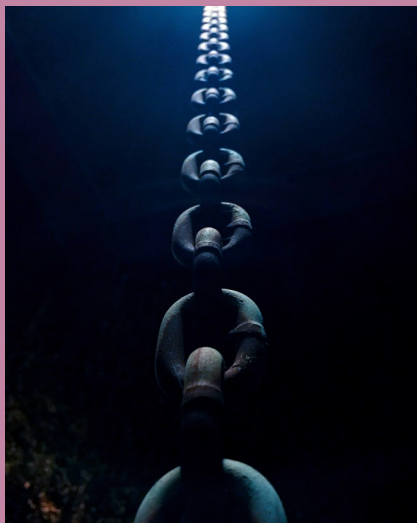
(Photos of cover page and feature story are provided by “SAT-7 Academy”)

A spiritual response to structural oppression: Paul's reminder

*Written by: Professor Ip Hon Ho Alex
(Assistant Professor, Divinity School of
Chung Chi College, The Chinese
University of Hong Kong)*

The economy of the Roman Empire was founded upon oppression and exploitation. In the early period, one third of the Empire's population were slaves; while another third were freed slaves. There were also many people who owned no land and served no masters. These people were often employed as casual workers or day labourers. To put it simply, the relatively high economic growth during the early period of the Roman Empire was a result of exploiting manual labourers who did not have much power to fight for their own interests.

However, structural evil did not arise from the existence of low-income labourers alone. It was a result of the ruling class taking advantage of the poor to continually misuse and exploit them. The rich and powerful also deliberately suppressed opportunities for any upward mobility in society, forcing the poor to be forever at their mercy, while they were able to remain at the top of the social hierarchy through constant oppression. This created a selfish and competitive social atmosphere.



May the warmth last till dawn - Winter Assistance to Syrians

What kind of person would you like to be?

The howling cold wind seems to be reminding the Syrian refugees who have been drifting from one place to another that it has been 9 years since they were forced to leave their homes.

Syria is now bitterly cold and the nights are freezing. We still remember giving out the supplies last year and the joy of a Syrian man when he held the winter clothes in his arms. We also remember the children who couldn't wait to wrap themselves up in the new blankets and the mother who covered her child with a duvet by the bedside and gave him a loving kiss.



We wish that the warmth will stay with these people through every wintry night.

This year, we will continue to partner with the local churches for the winter assistance in Syria and distribute blankets and heaters to the displaced Syrian refugees [1]. We estimated that 1,111 individuals from 202 families will benefit from the programme. These people are from As-Sweida, Homs, Tartous, Latakia and Syria's capital, Damascus.

War has destroyed the homes of many Syrians. Their economy has been badly devastated and their heating facilities are not enough to keep the people warm. Many of them are living in very decrepit housing and are unable to afford any protection against the cold. They can only shiver and bear the icy wind.

We sincerely invite you to support the Syrian refugees and help them survive the winter, so that they do not have to endure anymore suffering on their bodies and minds.

When you make a donation, please select "Specific Donation Campaign" and enter "Winter Assistance to Syrian families 2019-2020". Our target fundraising amount for this project is HKD117,000. If the donation exceeds the target, the excess amount will be transferred to CEDAR's 'Emergency Relief and Disaster Preparedness Fund'. The fund will enable us to respond to immediate needs, and support disaster mitigation in poor nations always being hit by disasters to reduce the amount of devastation.



[Donate now](#)

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" (Mathew 25:34-36)

[1] Through the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches, CEDAR and Middle East Revive and Thrive (MERATH) will distribute cold protection supplies to the displaced individuals in Syria. The programme is expected to be completed in March 2020.

The existence of structural evil was also perpetuated through a set of social values that rationalised systematic oppression. For instance, the ruling class used Aristotle's account of natural slavery to rationalise slavery. They inculcated in the poor that slavery was very humane – because they could have killed the slaves like the defeated soldiers in battles. Therefore, in their eyes, slavery was a form of salvation. At the same time, in order to persuade the slaves and the non-Roman citizens to remain loyal to the Roman Empire, they used the privileges of Roman citizens as bait to coax them into abiding by the rules established by the ruling class.

In Philippians 1:9-10, Paul said "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,".

Why did Paul say that our love should abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight? It must be because there were a lot of lies in society! We know what knowledge means, but what is depth of insight? In the English version of the Holy Bible, one of the interpretations of 'depth of insight' is 'deepest perception'. It refers to the deep-rooted values that we are used to. For example, living in a capitalist society, we have internalised the ideas of competitiveness and consumerism without knowing it.

The Roman Empire and the modern capitalist society have demonstrated the same conviction – mankind not only lives under the oppression of economic inequality, but living with a set of false values that have been created to rationalise the injustice in the system. If we are to have 'our citizenship in heaven' (Philippians 3:20), we must respond to economic system and listen to Paul's reminder and improve our knowledge. More importantly, we must in our daily lives seek to increase our depth of insight, such as carrying out actions that show our love for our neighbours. In this way can we truly live a life of love.



紅封包行動

募捐計劃

捐出利是錢
從所收到的利是中，選擇捐出一封或多封的利是，在利是上貼上「大吉」貼紙，交給我們，我們會轉交給遠方的貧困社群。

紅封包
填寫「紅封包」內的回應表格，作一次過或定期奉獻；亦可考慮將紅封包轉贈給親友，互相祝賀之餘，亦能與親友一起將祝福化成行動，支持各地更多貧困家庭。

歡迎邀約分享
我們願意為參與的教會及學校作短講，分享貧窮國家的情況及真實人物的故事，讓小朋友及年輕人對我們的扶貧工作有更深入的認識。

施達基金會於每年的農曆新年會舉辦「紅封包行動」，鼓勵香港的兒童、青少年及弟兄姊妹，歡度新年之餘，同時記念亞洲、中東及非洲的貧困家庭的需要，向他們送上新年祝福。

報名查詢 負責同工：趙小姐 / 鄧先生
電話：2381 9627
WhatsApp: 6383 6861
電郵：event@cedarfund.org

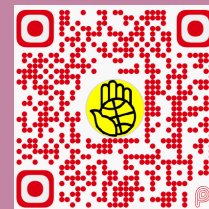


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