



PROFILE: ARAB VISION

INTRODUCTION

There are millions of Christians in the Arab World; they are a minority amongst the 300 million Arab Muslims. Many of these Arab Christians experience discrimination – even persecution – by the Muslims in their homelands. These brothers and sisters in Christ need our encouragement to hold on to the faith, and also in their efforts to witness to our Lord and Savior in their hostile environment.

Across the Arab world, many Muslims are more open to the Gospel of Christ than ever before. Today, more Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord than at any other time in history. One major cause for this is that educational levels in the Arab World have increased at a rapid pace over the past 50 years. Also, through satellite television and the Internet, Muslims are now able to learn about the Christian faith without being hampered by the censorship of their mosques and governments.

This document is an introduction to Arab Vision and its evangelistic work in the Arab World. Our Mission Statement and our Vision Statement explain our work most succinctly; in this Profile document, we unpack those statements.

Vision Statement

We envision an Arab World with, in each People Group, an increasing number of vibrant Churches that play a strategic public role in shaping their societies in accordance with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement

Arab Vision is a community of Christians committed to changing individuals and societies through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by producing and distributing effective Christian television programs in the languages of the peoples of the Arab World.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY

Almost every Arab family has a television, even though many are extremely poor. In many countries, the skyline is mushrooming with satellite dishes; over half of all Arabs have a satellite dish on their roof, in order to enjoy entertainment and educational programming that is uncensored by their governments. At least half of all people in the Arab World are functionally illiterate. In cultures where literacy is low and reading is not common, television is an excellent tool for communication.

Christian Arab satellite broadcasts enable millions of people throughout the whole Arab World to watch Christian programs whenever they want to.

However, while presently much airtime is available for these broadcasts, there is a tremendous lack of effective Christian programs in the languages of the Arab World.

A HISTORY OF IMPACT

Arab Vision's strategic mandate is to produce and to distribute these urgently needed Christian television programs, and to help those who respond to these broadcasts to become Christians and to grow in the Christian faith.

Arab Vision was founded in 1997, and has produced an almost annually increasing number of TV programs. In the past years, our staff of over 50 people has produced an average of 300 programs per year.

These programs are made available to Christian television and Internet broadcasters for the Arab World. Because many channels broadcast them repeatedly, the programs of Arab Vision fill at least 10 hours of airtime each day. They are also watched in North America, Europe and Asia, and are available as streaming video on many websites – including as a 24/7 broadcast on one of our web TV channels. We aim to maximize the distribution of our programs. We are vitally concerned that people respond to our productions and choose to follow Christ as Savior and Lord – both in their beliefs and their behavior. We therefore invite people to respond to our programs, and ensure that followup specialists are readily available to properly respond to viewer questions and comments. And Arabs are responding to our programs. More than 40,000 people from across the Middle East and North Africa responded by telephone and email in 2009.

- Tens of thousands of Arab Christians have throughout the years communicated to us how our programs have positively impacted their lives.
- Thousands of Muslims have throughout the years testified to the lifechanging impact of these programs. They became Christians. They were baptized. And they joined other Christians in churches in the Arab World.
- Through our programs with a focus on societal change, we have seen some real changes in the Arab World.

Secular and Islamic media every now and then discuss programs of Arab Vision that aim to change society. In one instance, one of our programs, distributed to political leaders, effected a change in legislation for more protection of women and children against violence in the home.

The Christian broadcasters who broadcast the programs of Arab Vision all testify to the high technical quality and the depth of the Christian content. These programs are among the most popular Christian programs in the Arab World.

Arab Vision has also been a catalyst for the beginning of other Christian television production companies in the Arab World, as we have shown that it is possible to produce these

programs and have them broadcast, without suffering forced closure by the censorship authorities, the police or other governmental agencies. Moreover, many programs of Arab Vision have been exemplary for other producers.

Arab Vision has been a leader in producing programs with female Christian speakers, Christian music programs, programs against female circumcision, programs for parents and teachers of handicapped children, Christian programs about family problems, and other critically important topics.

BUILDING ON A COST-EFFECTIVE APPROACH

Presently, the total budget for Arab Vision is approximately \$1.4 million. This means that each 30-minute program is produced at an average cost of \$4,500. It also means that one hour of airtime in the Arab World is filled with Christian programs for about \$380 per hour. Because of this cost-effective approach, support for Arab Vision is very strategic, given the sizable audiences for (Christian) satellite broadcasts. Many major Christian foundations, churches, denominations and individuals have decided, therefore, to support Arab Vision since we began our work.

Through our five-year strategic plan (2010-2014), we want to reach substantially more Arabs with our television programs – impacting more people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ – both directly through the programs on satellite TV and on the internet, and also through the relationships that develop from the audience response. In order to do this effectively, we will increase our productivity as well as the distribution of our programs. This can be accomplished by a relatively minor increase of our income over five years, as can be seen in the following chart:

	2009	2014	Increase
Hours of programs produced	150	300	100%
Audience response	40,000	100,000	150%
Daily broadcasts	10 hours	24 hours	140%
Viewers per week	1 million	5 million	400%
Annual budget	\$1.4 million	\$2 million	43%

ARAB CHRISTIANS PRESENTING THE GOSPEL

Arab Vision consists mainly of Arab Christians at every level. Arab Christians know best how to produce programs that present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their fellow Arabs. We affirm our commitment to partnership and servanthood, both in relating to the Church of the Arab World and also in our approach to our mission.

Arab Vision recruits its personnel from amongst Arab Christians who already work in the media industry in the Middle East and North Africa. Arab Vision has adopted a 'no-poaching' policy; in other words, we will not hire anyone who works in another Christian organization, without the explicit endorsement of that organization's leadership. This is one of the ways in which we strive to develop and maintain full cooperation with other Christian organizations.

An important aspect of our partnership with the Churches of the Arab World is to stand beside them in creating alternative venues for communication. Mass media in the Arab World are, for the most part, tools used by governments and religious leaders to keep people and their thinking subject to the Islamic and political authorities. Arab Vision's programs help Arabs think for themselves and take action needed to improve their own lives. This result can only be achieved through participatory communication, especially when media is used in the context of the local community.

PROGRAM FOCUS

Arab Vision is committed to supporting Christians in the Arab World, both in their spiritual journey and in their efforts to transform society. Our programs are strategically designed to help develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ. We do so by bearing witness to the one body of Christ and not to any specific denomination.

Our programs present the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church; they do so in a non-confrontational manner, with an ethos of love and friendliness. This approach is the most suitable for supporting MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) and for creating an interest in the Gospel among Muslims, and it is considerate of the sensitive situation of the Church in the Arab World.

We believe that the method of our communication cannot be separated from the content of our message. We cannot com-

THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS

How do we define effective Christian TV programs? The witness to Jesus Christ entails the kerygmatic ('preaching') witness, the diakonal ('service') witness, and the koinonial ('community') witness. We only witness fully to Jesus Christ when these three elements are all part of our witness.

Kerygma

Our Christian message, the 'full counsel of God', centers on God, the Creator of the World, who sent his son to the world to reconcile the world to him by his life, death and resurrection. We understand the Gospel as expressed in the historic Christian councils of the first centuries AD.

Diakonia

There is a need for programs that portray the present life of servanthood of the Arab churches in regard to their own members and to society, and to show how Arab Christians throughout history and today have played an important role in the development of Arab society as well as in caring for individuals

Koinonia

As Christ has chosen to reveal himself in the unity and in the community of the Church, it is important to show the fellowship of believers in the media; how they worship, how they meet, how they work together, how they solve problems, how they live etc.

municate the crucified Lord in a 'crusading' manner. We also recognize the distressing social and political forces that have often shaped the region, its people, and their perceptions. We know that the Gospel can be seen as 'offensive' to Muslims when it speaks of the need for changing one's heart, but we do not want to create offense by using unwise methods.

Our productions stress God's transforming power in all areas of human life. Leading people to Jesus Christ is basic to our programs, so that people learn to serve the Triune God in their personal life, in Church, and in society. An integral part of discipleship to Jesus Christ is a vision for a just society. This involves a commitment to human rights, to the poor, to minorities, to women, to refugees, to the powerless, and to those with special needs. Arab Vision productions support the struggle of these people for a dignified life.

One of the essential rights people have is that their mother tongue is reflected in their media. Arab Vision is committed to reaching people with the Gospel in the language of their heart and with respect for their native cultures.

In the Arab World, there are 17 different Arabic languages with over a million native speakers. Additionally, there are seven other non-Arabic languages with more than a million native speakers. The term Arab World is mostly a geographic designation; our focus is on the People Groups that are defined by their vernaculars.

Presently, we produce programs in Moroccan Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, Algerian Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, Iraqi Arabic, in the Sourani (Kurdish) and Kabyle languages, and in the Arabic sign language for the deaf.

APPROACH IN OUR PROGRAMS

In communion with the Church, our aim is to use our programs for proclaiming the Christian Gospel. This Gospel is related to real life; it is not something ethereal. Therefore, the true witness to this Gospel can only be contextual and concrete. In this context, there are presently some themes that need extra attention in the Arab World:

Diversity and Conformity

The Arab World suffers from the conflicting trends towards pluriformity and conformity. There is a great diversity in the Arab World, of lifestyles, languages, cultures etc. Yet for many Arabs, diversity is unacceptable as they consider it a weakness. There is great diversity in the Churches. In spite of this, the Churches are united in Jesus Christ. This unity-in-diversity is a helpful concept for Arab society as a whole, and testifies to the power of Jesus Christ to unite people – even when they are very different.

Human Rights Focus

As Christians, we believe in a Gospel that has transformational and prophetic power. Arab Christians are very visible in the world of NGOs for development and human rights in the Arab World.

Rights issues in the Arab World revolve around matters like: women, access to clean water resources, environment, health, urbanization, freedoms, FGM, socio-economic development, language rights, UN millennial goals, support of persecuted Christians, migration, and more.

Other contextual issues

We use a shortlist of themes on which we focus our work. In all of our programs, as well as in our organizational life and relations with others, we make sure that the themes mentioned in this document have a prominent place. In addition we always consider whether we, among other things:

- Portray gender-equality
- Show an interest in young people
- Are understandable for the intended audience
- Reflect a prayerful life
- Produce unique programs
- Train people on the job

Utilizing New Media

Many young people use video media on mobile phones or other cheap cameras; this is good in itself, and it forces us to look for cheaper methods and forms of production and distribution. There is a need to empower young Christians in media usage, in order to encourage constructive criticism, and in order to use the media as a platform for sharing their Christian views.

Participation in the market place

Beside our Christian programs, we are also involved to some extent in commercial activities, as part of our vocation to impact society with the Gospel, and in order to diversify our income sources. This income serves our expressed goals only.

UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY

Our theology and our sense of community are two key aspects that shape us organizationally:

Theology of Community

'Arab Vision is a community of Christians' according to our mission statement. We are a Christian community of people in the Arab World (and elsewhere) gathered around our productions, distribution and audience follow up. We have a theological understanding of community that does not replicate Church and is not descriptive of a commercial company either.

Contextual Theology

In the context of community, we maintain a contextual theology that is both biblically orthodox, and suitable for a vibrant and increasing Christian presence in the Arab World. We participate in www.stfrancismagazine.info for educating non-Arab Christians in matters related to Church, the Arab World and Missions.

ARAB CHRISTIANS SERVING THE REST OF THE WORLD

We no longer live in a world where Western Christians tell people elsewhere what to think and believe. In addition, the centers of spiritual vitality have moved away from the Western World. Christian mission nowadays is therefore multi-directional.

This means, among other things, that the Churches in the Arab World have a message for Christians worldwide. Arab Churches do mission in their own lands, and they have a message for the world. Therefore, they should not only be the recipients of Christian broadcasts, but they should also be communicating to the rest of the world.

There is a need for education in the Western World about matters such as: Churches in the Arab World, the Arab World and Islam in general, and how to reach Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

ORGANIZATION

The international board of Arab Vision is composed of ten members from different Arab and Western countries. All Board members have full voting rights and sit on the Board for three-year terms. Members are entitled to sit on the Board for two consecutive terms but must then step back for at least one year. The International Director attends the Board meetings ex-officio and has no right to vote. The Board meets twice a year for three days.

The International Office of Arab Vision is based in the Arab World. That is also where it does most of its media productions, through three production companies. Arab Vision has support offices in the USA (where it is recognized as a 501(c)3 organization) and in The Netherlands.

The international office, the production companies and the support offices are spiritually and contractually linked together under the board, for the sole purpose of achieving the stated goals and objectives of Arab Vision.

FUNDING

As most Christians in the Middle East, the Arab Gulf and North Africa do not have the financial means to fund TV productions, Arab Vision depends on partnership with organizations in the USA, Europe and Asia for its funding and production revenues.

Our productions are usually funded as one-off projects. Our day-to-day operating expenses are principally funded from the various productions we undertake through direct charges, but we also seek undesignated funds towards our work. Sometimes we raise money for equipment as well.

Every now and then, Arab Christian broadcasters commission us to produce programs for their broadcasts. In such cases, they usually pay all, or a significant portion of the costs for those programs. Arab Vision also accepts contributions for such productions where a broadcaster's payment does not cover the total cost of the production.

While Arab Vision raises most of its funds, it sometimes also enters into commercial TV production in order to subsidize its Christian productions and in order to expose our personnel to commercial standards for production. But such activity is not our primary aim and does not take priority over our ministry's stated objectives.

FULFILLING YOUR DREAM TO LEAD ARABS TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

If you have an interest in reaching the Arab World with the Christian Gospel, you may want to do this through our ministry. We aim to continually increase our impact on the Arab World by making more programs available for broadcasting.

We are looking for partners who want to join our community and help us fulfill our shared goals. As a Christian community Arab Vision likes to think of partnership in terms of cooperation in prayer, advice, friendship, financial support, and other forms of personal involvement.