For Adventist radio arm, Armenian stations are inroad to mission

Posted: 05 May 2012 09:00 PM PDT

Adventist media officials say two new Adventist World Radio FM stations in Armenia will connect with residents of the world’s oldest official Christian country.
Adventist media officials say two new Adventist World Radio FM stations in Armenia will connect with residents of the world's oldest official Christian country.

AWR recently began broadcasting programs in Armenian, the latest in a line-up of more than 80 languages offered by the radio arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A radio station in the capital city of Yerevan and another in Vanadzor will carry programming on spirituality, health and family.

"Many young people are moving to the capital for jobs and education, and the nation is facing hard economic times, especially in the villages and small towns," says Vigen Khachatryan, Media Center director for the church's Trans-Caucasus Union Mission, based in Tbilisi, Georgia.

"Radio programs can help the church's outreach efforts in Armenia," Khachatryan says, adding that the historically Christian nation is more open to spiritual issues than many secular European countries.

Knarik Petrosyan, a student at Yerevan State University, is heading up a production from a studio built by AWR. The team includes businessman Tigran Stepanyan, who serves as presenter and programmer, and the entire Mkhitaryan family. Hovik is a journalist and his wife, Gegecik, is a teacher. Their son, Joseph, is 10 years old. The family has broadcast experience from their involvement with earlier radio work in Vanadzor.

"The most challenging problems in Armenia are smoking, alcohol, decrease of family values, atheism and poverty," Khachatryan says. "Our programs will offer hope, help in overcoming secularism, more complete family principles, assistance with stopping smoking and drinking, and more."

Within the next few months, Armenian programming will also be available online - on demand at awr.org and as podcasts through awr.org and iTunes. AWR officials say online access is particularly valuable, as there are more than 4 million Armenians living outside of their home country.

Armenia is home a population of some 2.5 million people, about 800 of whom are Adventist church members.