Adventist television ministry increasing Africa outreach

A new satellite television channel for speakers of major indigenous African languages is in the works and will likely launch next year as part of Hope Channel, the global television network of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Church leaders in Africa are committing to increased Hope Channel programming for a new indigenous language channel in Africa. From left: Gilbert Wari, president of the West-Central Africa Division; Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division; and Michael Elrington, general secretary of the Inter-American Division.

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Image by ANN file photo by Larry Becker

The move is a combined initiative of Hope Channel and the three denominational divisions in Africa in an effort to take the gospel to millions of more viewers, many of whom only speak their native language.

The new indigenous African language channel will offer programming in languages such as Afrikaans, Bemba, French, Swahili, Xhosa and Zulu. It would be the network's third channel in sub-Saharan Africa in addition to its channels offering programming in English and Portuguese.

While the exact launch date for programming is unknown, Hope Channel officials on July 10 secured contracts with Intelsat to acquire the new channel. In September, the East-Central Africa Division [ECD], based in Nairobi, Kenya, will use the channel to hold a division-wide satellite evangelism series from Uganda.

All three divisions are expected to increase production of programming, and each language will receive its own time slot on the new channel. Hope Channel executives said the development demonstrates the commitment of the African divisions to increasing culturally-relevant television ministry in their regions.

"This will empower various major constituencies to have their own regular programming on the Hope Channel network, and it gives them a powerful new evangelistic instrument to use with friends and neighbors," said Brad Thorp, Hope Channel president, in a statement.

Thorp thanked top church officials in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), based in Pretoria, South Africa, for leading the expansion of channels in Africa.

"They see the great need and have given it full support," Thorp said in the statement. "The [division] has generously supported Hope Channel initiatives for seven years."

SID operates a media center with about 10 staff on the campus of church-run Helderberg College, near Cape Town, South Africa.

Both divisions farther north are increasing their financial contributions for Hope Channel broadcasts in their regions.

ECD operates a TV studio on its division campus and several low-power TV stations throughout its regional territory.

Officials in the West-Central Africa division, based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, are examining if a division media center will be built at either Valley View University in Ghana or Babcock University in Nigeria.

Africa has a recorded membership of more than 6 million Adventist Church members. Hope Channel in Africa broadcasts Hope Channel International in English and Hope Channel Novo Tempo in Portuguese for Angola and Mozambique.

The new channel will require Hope Channel International viewers in Africa to change settings in their satellite receivers. The change will not affect viewers of the Novo Tempo Hope Channel.

Hope Channel currently has 13 satellite broadcast channels worldwide.

Further announcements about the development will appear on Hope Channel's website at HopeTV.org.