



A SPECIAL KIND OF ENGINEER

by Becky De Oliveira

WHEN YOU THINK MISSIONARY, MOST likely you picture a pastor, teacher, doctor or nurse. Not many people would envision an audio engineer—certainly not an individual described at one point as a “guerrilla geek” and “self-styled Robin Hood of the mobile industry” by the BBC for his successful hack of the U.S. version of the iPhone in 2007. Daryl Gungadoo (BS '95) has a graduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and 96 patents to his name—two of them sold last year. He could probably do just about anything, and certainly has the skills and drive to avoid the modest and unassuming label of missionary. But Daryl has long had a passion for service, determining as a young man that he would go ahead and be an engineer—but he was going to be a special kind of engineer. A missionary engineer. It is this passion that drives him to seek opportunities to serve others in ways that are highly unconventional and always surprising. When the refugee crisis hit Europe in the wake of Syrian Civil War, many people looked away. Daryl Gungadoo almost immediately started to figure out how he could help.

Reaching the hardest-to-reach

Daryl has worked for Adventist World Radio (AWR) for more than 20 years. His current job is global resource engineer and director of the global distribution and research department based in Bracknell, England, near Newbold College. AWR's mission is to reach the hardest-to-reach people groups on earth with the good news of the Gospel, but most people envision the work of radio as somewhat removed from everyday life and perhaps even rarefied. If ADRA is the “gospel in work boots,” AWR is “the gospel through sound waves”—perhaps perceived as ephemeral and distant from the ugly reality of human suffering and need. Those who create radio programs

send their messages into the ether, often having no idea of who might be listening or what the result of their programming might be.

AWR, which started broadcasting out of Portugal in 1971, is always looking for potential projects in places like the Middle East and North Africa—locations that have a high concentration of hard-to-reach groups. This can be very difficult. The Arab Spring and the onset of the war in Syria in 2011 brought an unusual opportunity for outreach in the form of an extreme crisis; refugees began showing up in huge numbers on European shores, desperate to reach Germany, Scandinavia or the United Kingdom. Daryl wanted to reach out to them—not only spiritually but holistically as well, meeting their physical needs for food, shelter and medical attention, as well as their social needs for purpose, meaning, friendship and belonging. “It seemed likely that if they were escaping tyranny, they would be naturally more open-minded to new world views and possibly more receptive of the gospel,” Daryl says.

But AWR initially had little interest in working with refugees, seeing this as more of a job for ADRA. In 2015, Daryl recruited a couple of colleagues, including EUD communication director Corrado Cozzi, for an unofficial trip to Lesbos—an island just a few miles off the coast of Turkey—to do potential audience research. Lesbos was a particular hot spot for refugees from across the Middle East at this time. Many would travel first to Turkey and then take a Zodiak [inflatable rubber boat] the four or five miles across the sea to the island. At the peak of activity, as many as 1,000 people arrived each night.

During this initial reconnaissance, Daryl also visited the refugee camps outside Dunkirk, France, and Frankfurt, Germany. “I came back from my exploration quite shocked at how little meaningful

work our church was doing for refugees,” Daryl recounts. ADRA was running a few camps, but the real needs were not being met—mostly because of logistical challenges in organizing resources. ADRA receives most of its funding from governments, not from the church, and not many governments were interested in putting money toward helping refugees. The most significant operation taking place at the Dunkirk camp was done by one woman, Claudette Hannebicque—a member of a tiny local Adventist church (30 members). She single-handedly fed the refugees once a week—at first one or two hundred people and later peaking at about 3,000.

Changing lives in Dunkirk

Daryl's mens' prayer group at Newbold Church had initially discouraged him from visiting Lesbos over fears for his safety. When he returned with incredible photos and video footage to share with the group, they decided they could make a difference in Dunkirk, which is only a two-hour drive (and ferry ride) from Bracknell. The group began making weekly convoy trips—usually on Sundays—to the camp at Dunkirk, bringing truckloads of fruit, rice and other food and supplies that could be purchased more inexpensively in England. The women's group got involved too, making a special Valentine's Day trip to deliver roses to the women of the camp.

Meanwhile, the refugee camp at Dunkirk had developed a very poor reputation similar to that of the infamous “Jungle” of Calais. Conditions in the camp were dangerous, unhealthy and overcrowded; people lacked proper sanitation, there were rats. The camp was buried under a meter of mud. “I've visited 22 refugee camps,” Daryl says. “Dunkirk was the worst.” The French government found the situation shameful and embarrassing, but felt it had to

LEFT: Refugees wet from a recent sea crossing getting warmth from a fire on the beach.

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Giving an AWR GodPod to a Kurdish refugee from Syria



In Lesbos, welcoming refugees to Greece

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determine how to provide for people in a humane manner without attracting more refugees. All over Europe, the refugee crisis was political dynamite. The town of Grand-Synthe, population 22,000, located between Dunkirk and Calais, joined with Doctors Without Borders to build a model camp, one that met United Nations (UN) standards. Daryl spent three days helping to build this camp, and ending up getting to know many of the leaders and administrators of Doctors Without Borders. He used one of his “pet engineering projects,” a 360-degree video capture technology (image stitching software) that he developed—selling a portion of it to GoPro—to document the camp building project. Doctors Without Borders subsequently contracted him to film in 360 degrees at refugee camps all over Europe. His videos are available on YouTube.

Broadcast to baptism

Still looking for ways that AWR might connect with the refugee population across Europe through broadcasting—the thing it does best—Daryl realized that the organization really could help in a meaningful way. “The refugees are very bored. They can’t work and there’s nothing much for them to do.” That’s where the God Pod digital MP3 solar-powered

“talking Bible” came into the picture. AWR allowed Daryl to try a few of these at a camp in Europe (the location cannot be disclosed to protect the individuals), loading content in Farsi and Kurdish.

This idea proved effective. Just recently, two families have been baptized and another 10 are attending a local church. AWR is also gearing up to provide content to Radio Rozana FM, a station created to “bring objective and independent reporting to Syrian listeners” that began broadcasting from Paris in 2013. The AWR programs will not be heavily “Bible-bashing” or theological, but focus on practical issues that refugees face. Doctors from Loma Linda University School of Medicine, for instance, write scripts about the trauma of going through war, etc. “Even more than food or shelter, addressing these issues is key in helping these people,” Daryl says. “We’re able to provide meaningful content to a station that already has a following among the groups we’re trying to reach.”

It started at Andrews University...

While Daryl received his master’s degree from MIT, he credits Andrews University with making him who he is today, primarily through its student missions program. “My sophomore year, I hit a kind of crisis point,” Daryl recounts. “I

didn’t know what my purpose was. Why was I studying engineering? Why was I studying at Andrews when I could be somewhere with better weather, like California? My grades were slipping and my motivation was gone. I ended up going to Guam for a year to work for AWR, and at the end of that year, I knew exactly what I was going to do. I hope that Andrews continues to bathe every student—especially undergrads—with a sense of mission. Everyone can be a missionary in their own field. It doesn’t have to be theology.”

Daryl is always thinking ahead, planning and dreaming about new possibilities. One thing he’d really like to do is create a series of “incubation centers” throughout the world—possibly connected to universities. These would provide Adventist inventors with the space and resources to build and patent their inventions and receive royalties for their work. You can’t help but feel that if Daryl really wants this to happen, it’s only a matter of time.

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