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**Education and media key to improving HIV/AIDS awareness and knowledge levels in Afghanistan, new InterMedia report says**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – InterMedia, a Washington, D.C.-based research, evaluation and consulting organization, today released findings from a nationwide survey of Afghanistan that finds low awareness and knowledge levels about HIV/AIDS, but also shows that education and access to media are important predictors for heightened awareness.

Some key findings from *HIV and AIDS Awareness in Afghanistan* include:

- Only 1 percent of respondents were able to correctly answer all of seven true/false statements about how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and treated.
- The single most important factor linked to HIV/AIDS awareness is level of formal education. Other factors, such as sex, age, urban/rural residence, region and income, also play a role.
- Of survey respondents who are aware of HIV and/or AIDS, media is named as a major source of information by the majority (64 percent). No other information factor (health workers, family, Afghan government, etc.) was named by more than 12 percent.

InterMedia released the findings as part of a report that looks at HIV/AIDS awareness and knowledge levels across Afghanistan (the report is available by contacting InterMedia; details below). The data come from an InterMedia nationally representative survey of 2,057 respondents.

“Any improvement in knowledge may be important in preventing the spread of this disease, which Afghan society is ill-equipped to combat,” said Dr. Haleh Vaziri, InterMedia’s Regional Research Manager for the Middle East and North Africa, including Afghanistan. “However, especially in light of Afghanistan’s limited human and economic resources, the effort to spread the word and improve knowledge must be cost effective. Although a multi-pronged approach to

increasing awareness is most desirable, investment in HIV/AIDS education through media, particularly radio and television, may make the most sense in the short- to medium-term.”

Low literacy rates, especially among women, pose a challenge to public health information and education campaigns.

“InterMedia’s data show a correlation between gender and HIV/AIDS awareness,” said report analyst Sonja Gloeckle. “Our data further suggest that education is one factor bridging the gender divide: the gap narrows with increasing education—the best-educated women have awareness and knowledge levels similar to those of men.”

Being nationally representative, the report fills a gap in a research environment which is often local or urban-only. The survey explored not only awareness and knowledge, but links to other behaviors and attitudes, including media use and patterns of information sharing.

Pointing to refusal rates of less than 2 percent on the HIV/AIDS questions, Gloeckle noted: “An encouraging sign is that the general population is more willing than one might assume to answer sensitive questions, even questions covering sexual behavior, provided the items are phrased in an impersonal way.”

InterMedia has conducted research and evaluation projects in Afghanistan since 1998, including six annual face-to-face national surveys and some 50 qualitative research projects (in-depth interviews, focus groups and media content evaluation).

InterMedia’s next national survey of Afghanistan will take place summer 2008.

**InterMedia** is a leading international media research, public opinion, evaluation and consulting organization creatively equipping clients to understand their audiences, gauge their effectiveness and target their communications in transitional and developing societies worldwide. Based in Washington, D.C., and active year-round in more than 60 countries, InterMedia helps clients understand complex issues in challenging research environments. The company’s strengths include its people—area experts skilled in scientifically-based research and focused on client solutions—its vast global network of local research partners and contacts and its rich data archive of more than 670 media and opinion surveys carried out over the past 15 years.

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***HIV and AIDS Awareness in Afghanistan is available by contacting InterMedia’s Alex Wooley at 202-434-9332, [wooleya@intermedia.org](mailto:wooleya@intermedia.org)***

*Survey details: the InterMedia national survey covered seven geographical regions consisting of 34 provinces; 2,057 Afghan respondents 15 or older were surveyed in 60-minute face-to-face interviews conducted in respondents’ homes. Range of error with a 95 percent confidence interval is +/-2.2 percent.*