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## **InterMedia Launches African Research Program and Online Resource To Support Development Communications**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – InterMedia, a nonprofit research, evaluation and consulting organization, today announced a new program, aimed at improving development project success rates through more effective communication to the general public, as well as to policymakers, in the developing world.

The program, supported initially by a \$1.29 million two-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is made up of a pair of closely-linked initiatives:

- InterMedia will launch a quantitative and qualitative research program in Africa to fill knowledge gaps in how people gather, share and shape news and information, particularly as they relate to development.
- InterMedia will launch an interactive website “AudienceScapes” to disseminate data and analysis from the Africa research program as well as research on communication, media use and information sharing covering several other developing regions.

“InterMedia is unusually well positioned to produce and disseminate high-quality media use and communication behavior data and analysis. This will go a long way toward supporting smarter, more cost-effective development policy, programs and outcomes,” said the Chair of InterMedia’s Board of Directors, Ambassador Richard Carlson. “While development organizations worldwide will be the beneficiaries, the winners, ultimately, will be the people in the world’s poorest countries who are desperate for reliable public interest information.”

Currently, many development practitioners—particularly those working for locally-based agencies and NGOs—have limited access to empirical research that could help them better target their communication, information and education efforts in a range of activities, such as HIV-AIDS prevention campaigns, gender equality programs and support for dissemination of more efficient agricultural techniques. This lack of research often leads to project inefficiencies and suboptimal development outcomes. Ultimately, millions of people in the developing world pay the price when they don’t receive critical public interest information that could improve the quality of their lives. InterMedia’s program will help development practitioners bridge this unwelcome information gap.

The research program will begin in Ghana, Kenya and Zambia. The quantitative component will look at how the general population gathers, uses, shares and interprets public information; the qualitative segment will analyze how African “influentials” (public officials and others who influence government policy) acquire public information that impacts their development

decisions. Development practitioners identified these three countries as priority locations for getting better information on media and communication to support programmatic and policy work. Relatively strong local research capacities, and InterMedia's past experience in these countries, also make them good candidates for launching the research program.

In conjunction with the research program, InterMedia will also support the development of a website to serve as a comprehensive resource for development communication, featuring "Country Communication Profiles" of dozens of developing countries around the world.

AudienceScapes will provide development practitioners worldwide with online access to critical and actionable information on people's communication habits and media use, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa, which has historically been neglected in development communications research. In this region, more than 70 percent of the population resides outside of major media markets, with close to half living on less than a dollar per day. The beta AudienceScapes was tested in 2008 by development practitioners in 70-plus countries, with feedback indicating brisk demand for both the information and the method of delivery/access.

"There is a great need for evidence-based research that supports and informs development communications," said InterMedia President Dr. Mark Rhodes. "It's an important base, a launching pad for an expanded research program and information resource for development organizations, starting in Africa but in other regions as well."

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### **About InterMedia**

InterMedia ([www.intermedia.org](http://www.intermedia.org)) is a leading international media and communications research, public opinion, evaluation and consulting organization creatively equipping clients to understand their audiences, gauge their effectiveness and target their communications in 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. Since 2001, InterMedia has carried out more than 150 projects in 22 sub-Saharan African countries.

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