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**Public Health Information Gaps in Zambia Persist:  
New Research Findings from InterMedia's *AudienceScapes* Project**

**Washington, D.C.** —Zambian women lack basic information about family planning and maternal and child health (FP-MCH), a [new AudienceScapes report from InterMedia report](#) finds. And despite Zambia's high teen pregnancy rates, youth (15-24) in the country don't seek out FP-MCH information as much as those in older age groups. The report suggests using customized messaging and mobile phones as information channels to help close the information gap.

How people in different social and demographic groups gather, share and access information about health care in Zambia is the focus of the 40-page "Health Information Gaps in Zambia – Evidence from the AudienceScapes National Survey," one of several [AudienceScapes](#) reports that InterMedia is releasing in the wake of extensive research conducted in the African country earlier this year. The research and report, funded in part by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlights key differences among various socioeconomic groups in terms of access to health care services and critical health care information. Development organizations, governments and NGOs can use these insights to target hard-to-reach populations more effectively.

"Communication is critical to health intervention programs, and the AudienceScapes research can help," said Dr. Yingying Zhou, InterMedia author of the report. "This report is based on extensive baseline data that can underpin health communication strategies in Zambia."

Some findings from the health care report:

- Overall, radio is the most widely accessed source of health information, especially among rural and low-income Zambians. Despite more than half of Zambians having access to mobile phones, new media outlets were not cited extensively as important sources for health information, suggesting potential for SMS and eventually mobile internet campaigns.
- The data indicate a link between access to health information and health outcomes; specifically, people who said they had received information on HIV/AIDS, malaria or family planning were more likely to be in better health.
- Doctors are the most trusted source of health information, but Zambians' access to them is limited, especially in rural communities. Friends and family are the most frequent word-of-mouth sources of health information; traditional healers and community elders are significantly less popular, especially among the young.
- There are significant gender differences in health care information access: women are far less likely to use mass media resources, and more likely to use word-of-mouth, than are men.
- Respondents were asked to judge Zambia's level of progress in achieving selected millennium development goals (MDGs), which member countries of the United Nations have agreed to reach by 2015. These included two health-related MDGs: "Pregnant women can see a doctor at least once before and once after they give birth"; and, "All adults have access to birth control methods." Seventy-one per cent of Zambian respondents report "some" or "a lot" of recent progress towards the first, and 66% report some or a lot of recent progress made in the second MDG.
- Rural, low-income and poorly educated Zambians are the most disadvantaged groups in terms of health care and access to health care information, as is the case in most developing countries.

The report is based on InterMedia's AudienceScapes nationally-representative survey of 2,000 Zambians aged 15 and older, conducted in April-May, 2010. It offers a general overview of the general health care landscape in Zambia, including access to and trust in various information sources and networks used to keep abreast of news on health care issues. Access to health information and services about HIV/AIDS, malaria, family planning and maternal and child health are covered in detail. Further, the report includes a profile of health "opinion leaders" and their roles in disseminating health care information among the most vulnerable groups.

Other InterMedia AudienceScapes reports look at:

- Mobile phone use in Zambia
- A national mass media overview (Radio, television and print), including in-depth analysis of the reach and popularity of community and religious radio stations.
- A study of the "policy information environment" in Zambia, based on in-depth interviews with senior Zambian officials about their habits of gathering, sharing and disseminating information.

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**InterMedia** ([www.intermedia.org](http://www.intermedia.org)) is a research-based consultancy providing strategic guidance and insight into the behaviors and views of people globally, especially among hard-to-reach populations. We provide counsel on effective engagement strategies in an increasingly complex media and

communication environment, helping a diverse clientele map and measure how people gather, share and shape information. Based in London, UK and Washington, DC, InterMedia also works with partners across the developing world to strengthen local research capacity. On the ground in 60 countries annually, its 40 research experts use innovative techniques to understand how information, communication and media resources can deliver impact. InterMedia created [AudienceScapes \(www.audiencescapes.org\)](http://www.audiencescapes.org) an integrated research program and online resource center that improves development outcomes through knowledge sharing and dissemination of research and analysis in a user-friendly format. Clients include the World Bank, USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNESCO, the BBC World Service, the Department of State, Deutsche Welle, Sesame Workshop, AED and major U.S. public international broadcasters.

The AudienceScapes project, launched in 2009 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, applied InterMedia's core research competencies to the needs of development practitioners worldwide. A dedicated research program and an online resource center ([www.audiencescapes.org](http://www.audiencescapes.org)) provide in-depth, user-friendly data and analysis on media use, information flows and communication habits in Africa and other regions.

**Access report here:**

**[Health Information Gaps in Zambia](http://www.audiencescapes.org/zambia-health-information-gaps-urban-rural-HIV-AIDS-malaria-family-planning-maternal-child-data-services-media-development)**

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