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**New International Development Resource to Bridge Communication Knowledge Gaps**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Global media and communications research company InterMedia today launched “AudienceScapes” ([www.audiencescapes.org](http://www.audiencescapes.org)), a multi-platform communication resource intended to support and improve international development efforts and outcomes.

AudienceScapes fills a need in the development community to better understand how people gather, share and use information at both the grassroots and the policy levels—essential knowledge for those using communication, public interest education or media-based initiatives to improve lives in the world’s poorest countries.

AudienceScapes is based on a unique research program that can be put to immediate practical use by development practitioners in areas such as mobile money, financial services, public health and agriculture. AudienceScapes research also is a handy resource for identifying local needs in media, communication technologies, development information and development policy.

“Currently, development organizations seeking to target audiences and policymakers have limited access to comprehensive baseline information they can use to guide their communication and advocacy efforts,” said Mark Rhodes, President of InterMedia. “As a result, the many millions spent each year on development-related communication activities often produce disappointing results. The losers in this equation are people in the developing world who don’t receive critical public interest information that could improve their quality of life.”

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, AudienceScapes comprises several integrated elements:

- **Innovative research**, disseminated as data through a user-friendly data query tool, and as custom downloadable analytical reports. The research is based on:
  - *National quantitative surveys* looking at (1) the general population’s access to and use of media, access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and

word-of-mouth communication habits; and (2) how these factors affect people's acquisition of knowledge about key development topics. The surveys have been piloted in Ghana, Kenya (completed) and Zambia, with plans to roll them out in other countries.

- ***In-Depth Interviews with policymakers*** to find out how they gather, assess, share and disseminate critical information related to development topics, and find out how global development partners can play a constructive role in this process. The interviews were launched in the same three African countries.
- **The AudienceScapes website** ([www.audiencescapes.org](http://www.audiencescapes.org)). An easy-to-use, rich knowledge center of data and analysis for development practitioners. The site features detailed "Country Communication Profiles," plus other resources for development practitioners working in communication, media development, technology development and policy dialogue. The site is being launched with a core group of 10 complete profiles of countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, but many more profiles will be added over the coming months.

"There's a clear need to better supply the development community with essential research on developing country audiences, media use and communication habits to improve development outcomes," Rhodes continued. "This need is greatest in the places where development organizations focus much of their work: in poorer countries, among at-risk populations, and in rural areas—many of which are under-researched."

To allow the development community to become acquainted with the site's features, through April 2010, AudienceScapes users will not have to register to access its resources. After April, registration will be required. Aside from the Communication Profiles, features include a unique "Practitioners' Field Blog," aimed at providing real-time, ground-level insights related to the media, communication and development topics covered in the research. In addition, users will find important country statistics on communication, economics and demographics, as well as convenient links to country-specific development information on many other websites.

"This is just the beginning of AudienceScapes," said Project Director Peter Goldstein. "We're encouraging people to use the various resources we're launching today, and to provide feedback on how it helps the planning, implementation and outcomes of programs with a communication or media element, or those seeking to fill local media and communication technology needs. Our next step will be to expand the AudienceScapes research program to 10-15 more countries and, in parallel, significantly expand the offerings on the website."

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**InterMedia** ([www.intermedia.org](http://www.intermedia.org)) is a leading international communications and media research, 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., London, UK, 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 experience implementing more than 700 media and opinion surveys over the past 15 years.

*The AudienceScapes program is supported initially by a \$1.29 million two-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Findings and conclusions of the AudienceScapes research project are those of InterMedia and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.*