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Zambia: Barriers to Traditional Media Use and Access

Learning from Those Who are Hardest to Reach

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When crafting a development communication program, it is useful to know the profile of those least likely to be reached - that is, those with little access to media and other information sources - in order to understand the potential barriers communicators may face. Using the results of the 2010 AudienceScapes survey of Zambia, this research brief profiles the hardest-to-reach in that country, who are characterized by their lack of access to "traditional" media (radio, television and print).

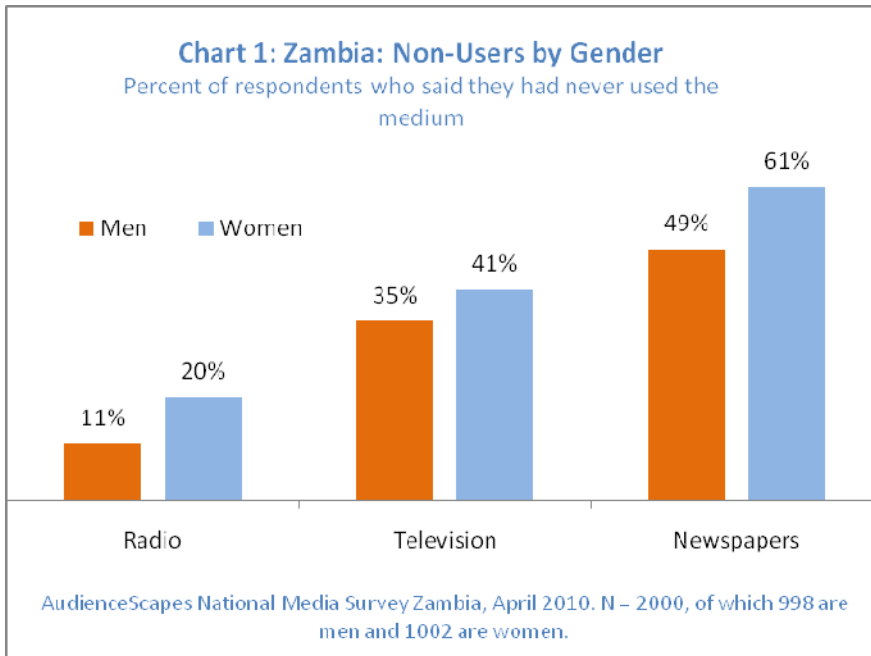
The results underline the fact that radio is far and away the most dominant and widespread medium, while television and newspapers do not yet have significant national reach. They cannot be relied upon by development groups to communicate with the majority of their beneficiaries, and it is not clear when or if they will. Lack of economic resources, poor rural road networks and English illiteracy all form significant barriers to access. Development organizations should be aware of the fact that many segments of the population will not be reachable through these mediums.

Table 1 lists the common reasons cited by the general public as deterrents to their access and regular use of a given medium.

| Table 1: Most Common Reasons for Non-Use of Mediums by General Public | | | | |
|---|---|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Radio non-use: | Don't own radio 77% | Too expensive to buy 33% | Problems with electricity 28% | No available radio signals 24% |
| Television non-use: | Don't own television 89% | Too expensive to buy 43% | Problems with electricity 33% | No available TV signals 14% |
| Newspaper non-use: (general) | Newspapers not available in their area 45% | Too expensive to buy newspapers 28% | Difficult to understand 29% | Can't read newspapers 42% |
| <small>AudienceScapes National Media Survey Zambia, April 2010. Radio: all non users = 291, Television: all non users = 682, Newspapers: all non users = 1031</small> | | | | |

This report defines "non-users" of a given medium as those survey respondents who said they have used that medium, while "regular users" are those who said they use that medium at least weekly.

Radio



Non-use of radio is only cited by a small proportion of the general public, indicating that radio access has reached near-universal penetration in Zambia’s population. However, women are more likely than men to have never listened to radio (chart 1).

Close to 70 percent of those belonging to the lowest three income tiers (tier 1, 2 and 3) said they do not own a radio.¹ Thirty percent of these respondents also cited lack of electricity as an impediment. Non-users from the highest income tier 4, however, do not face any economic or infrastructural barriers- their reasons for non-use are more likely to be *lack of time* (35 percent for tier

4, less than 15 percent from other income tiers cited this as a reason)

When non-listeners are broken down by location, **non-availability of radio signals is a bigger impediment for rural respondents** when compared to their urban counterparts (28 percent rural versus 7 percent urban cited this as a reason).

Television

Lack of television ownership at home, high costs of television sets and problems with electricity are common issues hindering viewership (see table 1).

¹ AudienceScapes analysts define income levels based on a self-assessed, qualitative measure. This builds from a question asking people “Which of these answers reflect your family’s financial situation?”: The available answers are the following: “We don’t have enough money even for food” (Tier 1, N =342); “We have enough money for food, but buying clothes is difficult” (Tier 2, N =656); “We have enough money for food and clothes and can save a bit, but not enough to buy expensive goods such as a TV set or a refrigerator” (Tier 3, N=521); “We can afford to buy certain expensive goods such as a TV set or a refrigerator”, or “We can afford to buy whatever we want” (combined in Tier 4, N=409).

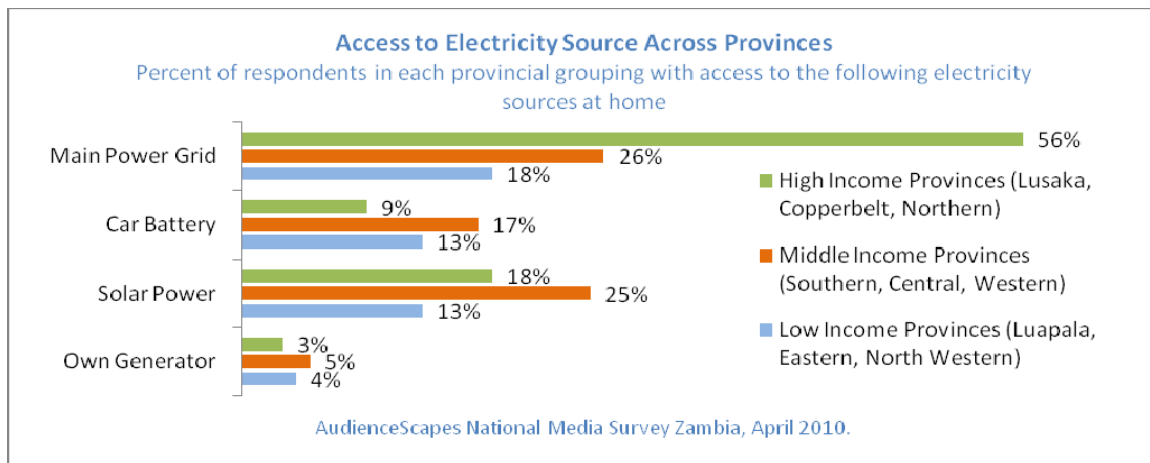
Less important, is the **non-availability of television signals** in some parts, especially rural (15 percent versus 10 percent in urban areas).

Non-users from the low-income tier 1 category are more likely to cite expense as an obstacle to viewing television, whereas for those with high incomes, reasons for non-use are more likely to be **lack of interest and lack of time**.

Lack of Electricity Sources Pose an Obstacle to Access to Broadcast Mediums

Close to one third of Zambians who had never watched television or never listened to radio cited “problems with electricity” as one of the reasons for non-use.

Lack of a stable source of electricity at home has an impact on the ability to access media and communication devices, and is particularly a problem in poorer and more rural provinces. Those in low income provinces have much lower access to main power grids than those living in more developed provinces (see chart below).



For low income provinces, solar power and car batteries (in addition to the main power grid) are equally important sources of energy to power their media devices. On the other hand, high income provinces have consistent access to the main power grid, and therefore more likely to rely on it as the singularly to power their media and communication devices. Those with high income (and in turn more stable electricity sources) are more likely to have access to media.

Notes:

Development levels of provinces were sourced from the Human Development Report- 2007. According to this, the HDI for the nine provinces of Zambia are: Central (0.458), Copperbelt (0.552), Eastern (0.406), Luapula (0.385), Lusaka (0.513), Northern (0.384), Northwestern (0.453), Southern (0.469), and Western (0.386). Available here:

Newspapers

Only three newspapers publish **daily** in Zambia. These are the two daily state-run newspapers - the Times of Zambia (which includes the Sunday Times of Zambia) and the Zambia Daily Mail, and the privately run Post, which publishes daily. Since all three of the daily national newspapers are available in Zambia publish in

The inability to read in English is not the only barrier between readers and non-readers. Non-availability of newspapers in rural areas is one the biggest reasons for lack of readership

English, it would be apparent that ability to read English would be a crucial obstacle to newspaper readership. **Forty two percent of the non-readers cited “cannot understand” as a reason for not reading newspapers.** Women, compared with men are more likely to say can't read, or find it too difficult to understand.

But the inability to read in English is not the only barrier between users and non-users. Only a third of those who said they could read English are regular newspaper readers. Apart from the literacy barrier, 45 percent of non-readers said that “newspapers are not available in my area”.

The three daily newspapers are delivered to all nine provinces in the country but poor rural road networks prevent papers or magazines from getting to numerous parts of Zambia.² *The Daily Mail* and *The Post* are printed in the capital Lusaka. *The Times of Zambia* is printed in Ndola, Copperbelt Province, which is Zambia's second-largest city. All

three try to circulate nationwide, but they reach only main cities within each province with a few copies daily, and sometimes quite late in the day.

In fact, this is substantiated by our survey as well - **non-availability of newspapers is the biggest reason for lack of readership among rural residents** (53 percent of non-readers cite this as reason versus 10 percent of urban non-readers). **Urban non-readers are more likely to cite lack of time** (20 percent versus 8 percent rural) **and say they are not interested in reading newspapers** (28 percent urban versus 13 percent rural).

Readership is also limited by high costs. Newspapers are expensive at a typical price of K3, 000 (60 US cents) a copy in a country where a loaf of bread costs K4, 000 (80 US cents).³ Thus, newspaper readership increases with income (see chart 4B) and most newspaper readers reside in more developed provinces such as Lusaka, Copperbelt and Southern Provinces.

² Zambia 2009, African Media Barometer Zambia 2009. African Media Barometer. Published by the Media Institute of South Africa and FES Media Africa. Available here: http://fesmedia.org/uploads/media/AMB_Zambia_2009_English.pdf and The Irex Media Sustainability Index Zambia 2008 . Available here:

http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_Africa/2008/zambia.asp.

³ Zambia 2009. African Media Barometer.

The AudienceScapes project (www.audiencescapes.org) is aimed at bridging knowledge gaps about media preferences, personal communication habits and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa and in other developing regions. It is also a tool for identifying needs in media, communication technologies, development information and development policy.

The project's name refers to the benefits for development organizations of understanding the changing communication preferences and needs of their 'audiences'—the target populations and policymakers whom they are trying to support. Launched in April 2009 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, AudienceScapes comprises four main elements:

InterMedia (www.intermedia.org) is a nonprofit research, evaluation and consulting company with expertise in media, communications and development. We creatively equip clients to understand audiences, design projects, target communications and gauge project impact in developing and transitional societies worldwide.

**The 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.*