

**Timeline**

June - December 2020

**Study Type**

Randomized Evaluation

**Research Implemented by IPA**

Yes

# Peer Messaging to Reduce COVID-19 Transmission in Zambia

## Researchers

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## Abstract

Wearing masks and regularly washing hands with soap and clean water are strategies recommended by the CDC and the WHO to reduce the spread of the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. These actions may be feasible in settings where social distancing measures are difficult to implement. However, it is challenging for health authorities in low-income countries (LICs) to share accurate, up-to-date information with local communities, and misinformation and mistrust can undermine compliance. We will partner with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Zambia to deploy accurate and locally-appropriate text messages about how the coronavirus spreads and actions individuals can take to mitigate the spread, and about reducing the stigma associated with infection or preventative actions. We will leverage individuals' own networks to spread messages. Recent evidence indicates that peers may have an advantage in communicating health information, but financial incentives may be necessary. Thus we will test the effect of SMS message dissemination by peers compared to from a central authority, with and without financial incentives, on behavioral change by the social contacts of cellphone users.

## Project Outcomes of Interest

Behavioral outcomes will be measured by SMS. These will include social distancing (exposure to individuals from outside the household); handwashing; and mask-wearing. Additionally, we will measure the dissemination of messages by subjects tasked to spread them and receipt of messages by the targeted individuals.

## Partners

Ministry of Health, Zambia; Global Poverty Research Lab (GPRL)

## Impact Goals

- Reduce COVID-19 transmission rates

## Project Data Collection Mode

- CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing)

## Link to Pre-Registration

<https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/trials/5940>

## Results Status

No Results Yet