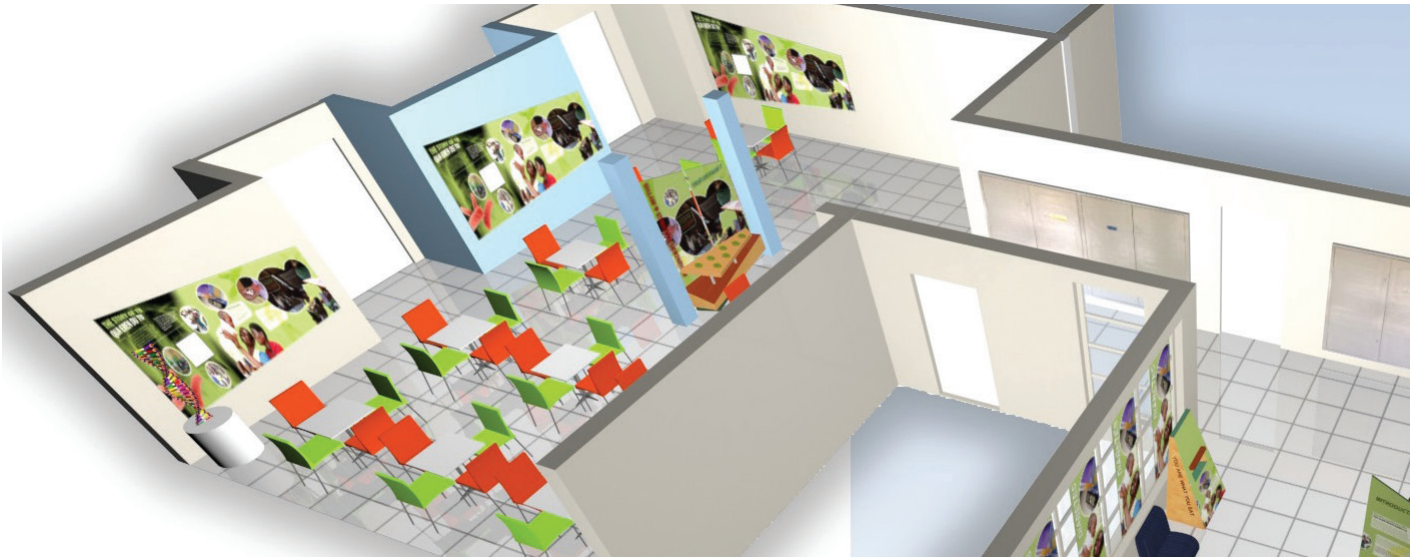


Samala Moyo



Samala Moyo is an interactive exhibition with an outreach component designed to open the [Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Programme](#) (MLW) to the local community and creatively explore crucial topics in medical research. The project was developed from a small International Engagement Award-funded pilot project and subsequently received £188,000.

The project

Samala Moyo aims to promote health education, public engagement and high-quality research through vibrant public-researcher interactions. It engages visitors with their health and the medical research in their country, and builds stronger relationships between science and citizenry.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in Africa, with a heavy disease burden and limited access to healthcare and health information. There are limited facilities for interactive learning, and no other such projects that focus on school-age children.

This context highlights the importance of a permanent interactive exhibition that can showcase local medical research, act as a source of reliable knowledge and create a platform for dialogue between researchers, schools and community groups. The exhibition builds on and informs the research centre's science communication activities such as science cafés, a national radio programme, debates and community meetings.

A series of outreach programmes are also offered in rural communities, particularly in schools, where health-related behaviours and beliefs are developed. Crucially, the topics explored (TB, diabetes, vaccinations, malaria and DNA) were identified as important and relevant by the community.

The partnerships

The research stage allowed valuable partnerships to develop. The Museums of Malawi provide training on conducting outreach programmes, and collaboration with the Ministry of Education and teachers ensures the project complements the curriculum.

Partnerships with these government organisations add to the advice and support from community members, students, community educators, support groups, and community health committees.

The strengths

The research and development stage built a solid foundation for the project's validity and relevance. As the first science/health museum or exhibition in Malawi careful research and formative evaluation were essential to ensure it met needs. Topics are relevant to the community's perceptions and the information has been made accessible despite language and literacy challenges.

The project strengthens capacity for future projects by including museum management and outreach training for staff, having an in-house exhibition that allows researchers to engage with visitors and strengthen their communication skills, and training teachers to use creative engagement when teaching science.

The programme also includes an internship scheme for secondary-school students interested in pursuing health science careers. In a country where there are an estimated 300 doctors for 16 million people, the need to promote science careers through engagement and mentorship is clear.