



Para Sport Against Stigma 2.0

Case Study:

Zimachitika Para sport Radio Drama – Leveraging Edutainment for Disability Inclusion

April 2025

Delivered by



Part of AT2030, funded by UK Aid and led by GDI Hub



Case Study: Zimachitika Parasport Radio Drama – Leveraging Edutainment for Disability Inclusion

Introduction

The Problem

In Malawi, individuals with disabilities face systemic stigma and social exclusion, often resulting in barriers to education, employment, and community participation. Cultural norms tend to associate disability with misfortune, reinforcing negative stereotypes and limiting opportunities for those affected. The lack of awareness about the potential of para sports further exacerbates these challenges, as many do not recognize the role of sports in fostering inclusion and empowerment. Traditional media coverage of disability issues has historically been limited, focusing on stories of pity rather than capability.

The Opportunity

Media, particularly radio, presents a powerful avenue for shifting narratives around disability. The Zimachitika Para sport Radio Drama Series was designed to tackle stigma by bringing experiences of individuals with disabilities through fictional storytelling. By leveraging Para sports as a central theme, the drama sought to highlight the capabilities of people with disabilities, foster community discussions, and promote inclusive attitudes. Radio's extensive reach made it an effective tool for engaging diverse audiences, including those in rural areas where stigma remains deeply entrenched.

About Para sport Zimachitika

Ahead of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, the Malawi Paralympic Committee and the University of Malawi partnered with Story Workshop Educational Trust (SWET) to produce six special episodes of the popular Malawian radio drama *Zimachitika* (These Things Happen). Using the "Making Noise" methodology, this initiative aimed to build interest in Para sport and challenge stigma around disability through the power of storytelling.

Recognizing radio's wide reach in Malawi—where over 70% of the population relies on it for trusted information—the team leveraged *Zimachitika*'s long-standing reputation for addressing social issues through 'edutainment'. To ensure authentic and impactful narratives, Para athletes participated in a dedicated workshop to share their lived experiences, which directly shaped the storylines.

The episodes aired in the month leading up to the Games, contributing to a broader movement to promote inclusion, celebrate the achievements of persons with disabilities, and strengthen public engagement with Para sport.



Goal

To use edutainment radio as an educational and advocacy tool for reducing stigma against people with disabilities, promoting para sports, and fostering a more inclusive society.

Key Insight

Listeners responded positively to the series' portrayal of people with disabilities, with 85% of audience feedback expressing support for the drama's messages of inclusion and empowerment. The engagement demonstrated that storytelling can be an effective medium for challenging stereotypes and shifting public perceptions.

Execution Highlights

- **Production and Broadcast:** A six-episode series aired on four major radio stations, reaching approximately 7M Malawians across 4 popular radio stations (MBC Radio 1, Timveni Radio, Mazati Radio and Mzimba Community Radio).
- **Inclusive Storytelling:** The drama featured diverse characters representing various disability experiences, including albinism, visual impairment, and physical disabilities.
- **Community Engagement:** Over 122 listener responses were collected through SMS and WhatsApp, demonstrating significant audience interaction.

Key Learnings

1. **The Power of Authentic Voices** – Featuring individuals with disabilities in the production process added credibility and depth to the storytelling, making the drama more relatable to listeners.
2. **Radio's Impact on Public Perception** – By portraying people with disabilities as active participants in sports and community life, the series successfully challenged common stereotypes.
3. **Engagement Beyond Entertainment** – The drama served as a conversation starter, prompting discussions around inclusion, family support, and accessibility in education and employment.
4. **Sustaining the Narrative** – While the series had strong initial impact, continued engagement is necessary to maintain momentum and drive policy changes.

Recommendations for Future Campaigns

1. **Expand Production and Broadcasting** – Additional episodes could further explore themes of education, employment, and healthcare access.
2. **Strengthen Media Training** – Journalists and broadcasters should receive guidance on how to report on disability issues with sensitivity and accuracy.
3. **Integrate Community-Led Storytelling** – Future initiatives should involve more firsthand narratives from people with disabilities to enhance authenticity.
4. **Enhance Advocacy Efforts** – Collaboration with policymakers and advocacy groups can help translate media-driven awareness into tangible societal and policy changes.

Conclusion

The Zimachitika Parasport Radio Drama Series demonstrated that media can be a powerful catalyst for social change when used strategically. By centering stories of inclusion and resilience, the series successfully engaged diverse audiences and contributed to a growing movement toward disability rights and recognition in Malawi. Future campaigns can build on this success by expanding the reach of such programs and ensuring continuous dialogue on disability inclusion in media and society.

Read more:

How Radio Drama Amplified Para Athlete Voices and Challenged Disability Stigma in Malawi.

www.storyworkshopmw.org/articles/impact-story-amplifying-para-athlete-voices-through-radio-drama

Acknowledgments:

Dr. Jessica Noske-Turner
Prof. Mufuanji Magalasi
Innocent Katsache
Gladys Chiwinja

Collaborating organizations:

StoryWorkshop Malawi

Learn more about Para Sport Against Stigma:

Contact:

Jennifer Wong (Project Manager) | Loughborough University | j.wong@lboro.ac.uk

www.lborolondon.ac.uk/research-innovation/para-sport-against-stigma

Delivered by



Part of AT2030, funded by UK Aid and led by GDI Hub

