



Para Sport Against Stigma 2.0

Impact Story:

From Airwaves to Athletics, Samuel Gremu's Journey into Para Sport

March 2026

Delivered by



Part of AT2030, led by GDI Hub and funded by UK International Development



Impact Story: From Airwaves to Athletics, Samuel Gremu's Journey into Para Sport

In October 2025, sports journalists from across Malawi gathered in Blantyre to reflect on how disability sport is covered in the country, and the role storytelling can play in shaping both perception and participation. The knowledge exchange workshop brought together journalists and Para athletes to share experiences from both sides of the story — from those telling it, and those living it.

Samuel Gremu's journey offers a powerful example of how these narratives can translate into real-world change.

In Malawi, radio and television continue to shape lives, informing, educating, and inspiring audiences across the country. For sports journalist Wesysylas Chirwa at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, this impact became clear following coverage of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

"We translated and provided commentary in Chichewa. At the time, we did not realise that this work would inspire people who were not even aware that Para sport exists in Malawi," he explains.

One of those inspired was **Samuel Gremu**.

A Journey That Began with Resilience

Sam's story begins at birth. According to his mother, Mrs Lucia Gremu, he was born with a congenital physical disability that required continuous medical care. *"He had to undergo operations and attend regular hospital visits. It was not easy, but we accepted him and took care of him,"* she says.

Despite stigma from the community, she remained resolute: *"People used to mock me, but I ignored them. If I had listened, Sam would not be where he is today."*

From the Screen to the Field

Years later, a defining moment came through television.

"I saw a story on the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation about a Para athlete. That inspired me to take part in Para sport," Sam explains.

That exposure linked to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games sparked a dream that would take years to realise.

The Long Road to Opportunity

When Sam shared his ambition, his parents stepped in. *“We supported him because it is better than staying idle at home. Sport keeps him focused,”* his mother explains. After nearly two years of searching, Sam was eventually connected to the Malawi Paralympic Committee. Mrs Gladys Mangani Alexander recalls: *“Sam showed strong interest and determination. That is how he was discovered and linked to the right support system.”*

Meeting the Coach: Unlocking Potential

Sam’s breakthrough came under the guidance of athletics coach Moses Mkondowe. *“I started working with Sam in 2023 after he was recommended to me,”* Mkondowe explains. From the outset, Sam’s mindset stood out: *“He never looked down on himself. He believed he could compete like anyone else.”* After assessing him across disciplines, the coach identified his strength: *“He fitted well in throwing events—shot put, javelin, and discus.”*

Building Strength and Skill

Since then, Sam has shown consistent improvement. *“He has progressed from throwing six metres to around nine metres,”* says Mkondowe. However, limited resources remain a barrier: *“With access to proper equipment and a gym, he could achieve even more.”* Despite this, Sam’s dedication is evident: *“He sometimes walks over 10 kilometres just to attend training,”* the coach adds.

Discipline Beyond the Field

At home, Sam plays a vital role. *“I make sure the house is clean and prepare meals for my siblings,”* he says. His mother confirms: *“He is responsible and dependable. We rely on him.”*



Neighbourhood Impact: Changing Minds and Inspiring Pride

Sam’s journey is not only transforming his family; it is reshaping attitudes within his community.

According to neighbour and family friend Bertha Muhajiri, Sam has become a role model:

“I came to know Sam through his mother. He is an intelligent young man who is involved in many activities despite his disability. He is an example to others.”

His participation in sport has become a source of pride for the neighbourhood:

“Whenever we hear that he is competing, we feel excited. We are proud of him,” she says.

Bertha also highlights a key shift in mindset around disability:

“Some people think children with disabilities should not do household chores, but that is not true. It depends on the task. We should never look down on them—they are capable.”

This reflects a broader transformation, where ability is now being recognised over limitation.

Rising Through Competition

Sam's performance continues to improve, with gold and silver medals already won at local level.

"Whenever he competes, he brings back medals. That makes me very proud," says his mother. Coach Mkondowe believes his potential is even greater: *"He has performed well locally. With the right support, he can compete internationally."*

The Role of Media in Driving Change

For producer Andrew Mtegha at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Sam's story demonstrates the power of media.

"It is encouraging to see athletes emerging because of what they watched or heard. It shows that our work is making a difference," he says.

Challenges That Remain

Despite the progress, challenges persist.

"Sometimes I miss training because I cannot find transport," Sam explains.

His coach adds: *"Access to equipment and transport remains a major challenge for many Para athletes."*

Looking Ahead

Sam's ambition is clear:

"I want to compete at international level and inspire others."

His mother shares that vision:

"We want him to succeed and become independent."

With support from the Malawi Paralympic Committee, and continued collaboration with the University of Malawi and Loughborough University, Malawi is building a stronger future for Para sport.

As the country looks ahead to the 2028 Paralympic Games, athletes like Sam represent a new generation ready to compete.

Conclusion

Samuel Gremu's journey is a story of transformation:

- A broadcast that sparked a dream
- A family that chose support over stigma
- A coach who nurtured talent
- A community beginning to change its mindset

And now, a neighbourhood that proudly calls him their own.

When stories are shared through powerful platforms, they can spark aspiration and open new possibilities. But as Sam's journey shows, translating that moment into sustained participation depends on the strength of the systems around it — from access to assistive technology and coaching, to transport and local opportunities.



Acknowledgments:

Samuel Gremu
Lucia Gremu
Bertha Muhajiri
Wesysylas Chirwa
Andrew Mtegha
Prof. Mufunanji Magalasi

Collaborating organizations:

Malawi Sport Writers Association

Learn more about Para Sport Against Stigma:

Contact:

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

Delivered by



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

