



Elective Project Ideas

We strongly encourage you to do a project during your elective – though this is not compulsory! An elective project will help give you something to do should you have any downtime and also help us do small scale capacity building projects to continue to build the relationships with the hospital locations.

We can help guide you in developing an elective project specifically at your elective location or with us at **Medic to Medic**. We have meetings with the hospital partners regularly and ask them what small scale projects they would like to develop. We hope that your elective project will be in an area that you are interested in which will be beneficial to your future career as well.

Your fundraising can help carry out a specific elective project. Not all elective projects need to cost money. We hope in time as we get a constant cycle of students coming to Malawi, we will be able to perform audit cycles, with one student performing an audit, a future student performing an intervention and the next student performing a re-audit. This helps keep our elective projects responsive and monitored and helps facilitate collegial relationships between elective students.

If you are interested in global health, your elective project can give you something to reflect upon during interviews with international organisations in the future and show you have experience of project management in low-income countries.

Below are some of the examples that you may wish to fundraise for. Wherever possible, material items for projects should be purchased in country to invest in the local economy and infrastructure. If items cannot be purchased locally, donations can be shipped or taken with you when you travel. Be aware some elective projects may require ethics approval both in Malawi and possibly at your university. Therefore, plenty of time is needed for planning!

Period Poverty Projects

Many women and girls in Malawi miss out on going to school during their periods. You could do focus groups with young girls at a nearby secondary school to ask their experiences of learning during menstruation and provide period packs to girls at risk. Some of our partner hospitals are trying to build their adolescent youth services. Such a project is a good way for the hospital to engage the community locally and build up their youth services. We have links with a tailor in Blantyre to create re-useable period pack costing about NZ\$20 / £10. Packs are made locally.

Providing Mosquito Nets to secondary school students

Secondary schools in Malawi are fee paying. There are community day secondary schools (students stay off site) – these are cheaper and more affordable; and a range of private schools where students are selected according to their primary school leaving exam results – these are boarding schools.

Not all schools have access to mosquito nets leaving children vulnerable to malaria - resulting in frequent illness & disruptions to education. A possible project could include distributing mosquito nets to secondary school students (NZ\$5 / £2.50 per net).

To measure impact, perform an audit of the number of students missing school due to fever or confirmed malaria in the 6 months before net distribution. A future student can repeat the audit to see if providing mosquito nets has reduced the incidence of fever and missed school days in the 6 months following distribution of nets.



Elective Project Ideas

Incentivize women giving birth at a health care facility by providing mother & baby packs

Mother and baby boxes help incentivize women to deliver at health facilities. It costs around NZ\$50 to provide a baby box to a woman when she delivers (contains – baby blanket, baby crib & mattress, underwear kits, reuseable pads, baby clothes, mosquito net). We often have baby clothes and blanket donations packed around our textbook shipments that we do 2-3 times per year.

Palliative Care

Palliative care is a hugely neglected area in Malawi with often more acute and competing priorities. Most palliative care in rural areas is provided in outreach clinics in the community. Many of these facilities struggle to provide analgesia due to lack of supplies and funding. A project could be supplying palliative care packages to patients in their community, including purchase of analgesia locally (analgesia purchasing is facilitated by the hospital and paid for via Medic to Medic).

Focus Groups with Malawian trainee health workers

Conduct some focus groups or interviews with trainee health workers in Malawi. Ask about their main challenges, how their course is structured, their future career plans etc. Up to date information is always needed by Medic to Medic to help identify needs amongst students in Malawi.

Perform a community health need assessment

A community health need assessment includes an audit of current health facilities – e.g. what services are available; interviews with health workers to determine their challenges and ideas for their workplaces; & audit of health registers, e.g. what are the main conditions that children are admitted with, what are the main complications for women giving birth? We can provide you with a template to do data collection and then you write a report. This helps identify existing challenges at the health facility so future students can carry out relevant projects.

Perform interviews with health workers

Perform some focus groups with local staff – ask them about their challenges and what can be done to help improve their working environment and what could be done to help their patient population. We can provide you some templates for interviews but you will have to write a report.

Providing care packages for sexual assault survivors

Malawi has a sexual assault service – these are mainly operating in the urban areas. A possible project could involve providing care packages to survivors. Focus groups with staff of the service could take place prior to arrival. Care packages can be put together in country through purchasing items locally.

Research – Comparative study of medical students PHQ9 between Malawi and NZ/UK

Perform the PHQ9 in Malawian medical students and compare findings to NZ/UK students (ethics approval will be needed)

Medic to Medic

NZ registered charity CC58085 / UK CIO 1149904 /
CONGOMA registered C1609/2022
www.medicmedic.org.uk



Elective Project Ideas

Chichewa Lessons

During 2023 Medic to Medic produced a Chichewa medical translation leaflet with an audio file of pronunciation to help elective students visiting Malawi with Chichewa. We have also done Chichewa lessons with our students being tutors to visitors coming to Malawi wanting to learn Chichewa. Feedback from both tutors and learners would be useful for monitoring and evaluation purposes of this initiative.

Improving road safety for cyclists

Malawi's roads are full of bicycles! They are common as they do not rely on petrol which is expensive. Malawi is often frequented by a shortage of petrol supplies meaning that bicycles are one of the most reliable forms of transport.

Very few users have access to bicycle helmets, reflective gear or bike lights.

Road traffic accidents are common – lack of reflective gear at night time, lack of road lights and helmets make accidents more serious when they occur.

You could undertake an education campaign to improve road proficiency and safety for cyclists in the local community of your elective hospital.

Research – Comparative study of medical students PHQ9 between Malawi and NZ/UK

Perform the PHQ9 in Malawi students compared to NZ/UK students (ethics approval will be needed)

Audit of patient registers

Each health facility collects information about patients. Possible audits could be:

Is PPH more common in HIV positive women compared to HIV negative women delivering at a specific health facility?

What are the common obstetric emergencies experienced by women during labour and delivery?

What is the most common diagnosis in children <5 years old admitted to the paediatric ward?

Sexual Harassment Survey

Students in Malawi are vulnerable to sexual harassment due to poverty. Anecdotally Medic to Medic are aware that this is a large problem. However, we have no objective evidence of the scale of the problem. A project involving experiences and extent of sexual harassment amongst students would be welcomed. We expect that students in financial hardship have higher rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

Asthma Management Box

Asthma is an increasing problem in Malawi. Waste is burnt by the side of the road resulting in poor air quality. Inhalers are extremely expensive to buy (NZ\$20 / £10) meaning many patients rely on salbutamol tablets which are not as effective. A suitable project could be; produce an asthma management box at the hospital / health facility to supply nebulisers, spacers and inhalers; produce guidelines and complete staff training for the box. Create an audit book for asthma patients to be recorded. A staff questionnaire before and after training to measure knowledge may be useful.

Medic to Medic

NZ registered charity CC58085 / UK CIO 1149904 / CONGOMA
registered C1609/2022
www.medictomedic.org.uk



Elective Project Ideas

Assessing mental well being in trainee health workers who have scholarships, compared to those that do not

In March 2022, the PHQ9 survey was conducted to the Medic to Medic student community. We found that 60% of students had mild – moderately severe depression based on these findings.

We wish to conduct a survey of the PHQ9 survey of Medic to Medic students, compared with a control sample of non Medic to Medic students. We hypothesize that Medic to Medic students have reduced levels of depression and anxiety given they have less degree of financial pressures than students without scholarships.

Walani Student Helpline

Walani student helpline will be launched in second half of 2024. This helpline is a toll free psychosocial support line open daily from 5pm to 10pm in Malawi. The aim is to provide trainee health workers with supports to improve their resilience and mental well being.

As part of our audit processes and monitoring and evaluation of this initiative, we would like to conduct PHQ9 survey at repeated intervals to assess its impact. In addition there will be a feedback survey that students of the helpline are asked to fill in, in order for Medic to Medic to respond to the needs of the student community. A report in relation to this feedback would be helpful.

Educational packages to top performing primary school students

There is a high drop out rate of school students from primary to secondary schools. This is mostly due to being unable to afford the school fees of secondary school. A stand alone project could be to provide school fees to the top 5 male and female secondary school students in two year groups. This will motivate learners to study hard and increase the likelihood that students staying at school reducing drop out rates. Medic to Medic have contacts with various schools in Malawi through our *School Talks* initiative.

Provide an ECG machine / Spirometry / CTG machine

Many smaller facilities do not have access to working ECG, spirometry or CTG machines or dopplers. You can fundraise to purchase equipment for your facility and then work with the health workers to create guidelines and training for the health facility.

Medic to Medic Mentoring Programme

In July 2024 we initiated our mentoring programme. This involves matching every Medic to Medic student on scholarship with a M2M graduate as a mentor. We will be undertaking regular surveys and feedback of both students, mentors to measure impact and audit the initiative.

Provide orthopaedic equipment to your elective hospital. Organise a recycling programme locally for darco shoes, moonboots, wrist splints, knee braces. Take these out to Malawi with you, or alternatively organize shipment beforehand.

Medic to Medic

NZ registered charity CC58085 / UK CIO 1149904 / CONGOMA
registered C1609/2022
www.medictomedic.org.uk