

Public Engagement Case Studies



Raquel Medialdea Carrera Institute of Infection and Global Health

I am a 2nd Year PhD Student funded by the Health Protection Research Unit in Emergent and Zoonotic Infections. I graduated in Biotechnology from the University of Oviedo (Spain) and have an MSc in Translational Medicine from Glasgow University. My research is focused on improving the diagnosis of emergent infections such as Zika Virus and for the last few months, I have been doing research in Rio de Janeiro.

What did you do?

I have been involved in quite a few public engagement projects:

Meet the Scientist: We organised a stand with a small exhibition and experiments for children and adults. Hundreds of families came to discover the amazingness of science, and explore for themselves how to study bacteria and extract DNA from fruit. It was fantastic to see so many people excited and fascinated by science.

British Science Week: As part of the British Science week, we organised some workshops for high school students to learn about infectious diseases, viruses, bacteria and their relation to health. They became a scientist for the day and investigated mosquitos that carry infections, looked at cells from their own body under the microscope and extracted DNA and RNA from various fruits.



Infectious Science in the Pub: We organised a fun science night in The Vines. A total of 6 speakers, a mix of PhDs, Post-Docs and Professors gave inspiring and fascinating talks about their area of expertise aimed at the general public.

Science Workshops in Sierra Leone: We organised some science workshops in the SoS orphanage of Makeni and in St Joseph's School for the deaf in Makeni, Sierra Leone. We ran interactive and exciting experiments.



Why did you get involved?

I have gained enormously from being involved with public engagement. I think it is a **fantastic opportunity to learn**, share knowledge, contribute to improving the **dissemination of science** and to **inspire others**.

I have always loved teaching and communicating, so public engagement is something I have always been interested in. For me, public engagement means dissemination of science, **motivating others to unravel mysteries**, encouraging them to keep discovering and most of all, helping **creating a better world**.

What were the outcomes?

It was fantastic to see how fascinated the children and the public were and how much they **enjoyed learning** about science and **doing new experiments**. It was **really rewarding** to observe the great impact that the science and the experiments had on people.

We were really happy with the outcomes as we felt the public were pleased with the events. It is fascinating to see how much small activities can interest and **inspire young children** and adults.

Of course there were many challenges (as with everything in life!), but it was fantastic to overcome them. For example, we had an unexpectedly larger number of students in one of the sessions of British Science week and we had to **improvise a better way** to use the resources so all the students could have a chance to do the experiments themselves.

What are your top tips?

- Public engagement activities will fulfil you and motivate you in your area of research even more!
- Enjoy the amazingness of seeing how your work and experience can motivate others
- It will be a fantastic experience, so do not hesitate
- Everyone should try joining or organising a public engagement activity because it is fantastic!
- Take into consideration the audience that will attend your event and plan your speech and experiments accordingly
- Enjoy the happiness of inspiring others!