

WELCOME

Welcome to the 5th volume of the GSA newsletter. We are very excited to present to you the Schistosomiasis Action Plan, a framework of actions needed to speed up the progress of schistosomiasis control and elimination. We will also cover some of the excellent advocacy work on Female Genital schistosomiasis done by Uniting to Combat NTDs as well as update you on schistosomiasis related news from the WHO and our alliance partners. We thank all our alliance partners and members for their contributions to the newsletter and hope you enjoy it.

The GSA team

GSA LONDON MEETING ON THE SCHISTOSOMIASIS ACTION PLAN

On 19 April the GSA convened a high-level GSA partners and stakeholders two-day meeting to refine and adopt a Strategic Action Plan for schistosomiasis control and elimination and discuss the identification of key next steps in putting the plan into practice. The meeting was attended by representatives from organizations such as the USA Center for Disease Control (CDC), CouNTDown (Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine), UK Department for International Development, End Fund, ESPEN (as an observer), Evidence Action, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Helen Keller International, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Merck, RTI, Schistosomiasis Control Initiative, Sightsavers, University of Georgia (SCORE), Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, The Fred Hollows Foundation, USAID, WHO Water (observer), World Vision, and Water Aid, and country representatives from Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique and Uganda.

Meeting participants discussed and agreed that the GSA, in its role as the leading, enabling and coordinating body of the schistosomiasis community, should take on the role of housing the Schistosomiasis Action Plan. Consideration was given as to how GSA could be strengthened to house the Action Plan and to oversee its implementation by GSA partners and schistosomiasis control and elimination stakeholders. This will include working with partners to develop the Action Plan's tangible next steps, set up processes to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and, identify new actions to be included that could speed up the progress of schistosomiasis control and elimination.

Together with its partners the GSA has aligned its working groups and activities to the Schistosomiasis Action Plan.

We welcome feedback on this action plan and encourage you to get in touch via info@eliminateschisto.com

Action Plan for Schistosomiasis

The Action Plan was supported by the meeting participants and can be found on the GSA Downloadable Resources webpage along with an executive summary of the meeting:

<http://eliminateschisto.org/resources.php>

GSA WORKING GROUPS:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Working Group:** a new working group has been created to work on monitoring and evaluation needs identified in the Schistosomiasis Action Plan. The first priority will look at refined precision or micro mapping of schistosomiasis in order to “shrink the map” and identify who needs treatment and what are the areas that require intensified or additional interventions to bring down infections.
- **Behaviour Change (BC) Working Group:** the group is working on a schistosomiasis BC gap analysis to identify where a set of BC implementation and monitoring recommendations can be made and where further operational research, e.g. on BC indicators, is still needed. The group is also running a BC workshop at the upcoming NNN meeting in Addis Abba, Ethiopia.
- **Implementation Working Group:** the latest meeting of this group looked at prioritising actions and developing next steps for the coordination of PZQ donation and distribution.
- **Research Working Group:** the group is developing its programme for the coming year and is providing input into the research-based agenda of the upcoming GSA meeting in New Orleans on the 28 October.

Working group details will be viewable on the GSA's new website. Watch this space.

FEMALE GENITAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS (FGS)

FGS is a dangerous consequence of urogenital schistosome infections. It can lead to pelvic inflammation, pelvic and genital pain & bleeding, infertility and can increase the likelihood of contracting other dangerous diseases particularly HIV.

The WHO estimate that approximately 56 million women suffer from FGS. Potential complications from FGS include miscarriages, ectopic pregnancy and infertility. These not only carry huge risks to women's physical health but their impact on mental health and social status cannot be underestimated.

The WHO and UNAIDS are in discussion over combined screening process for HIV, STIs, cervical cancer and FGS and are calling for uptake of large-scale coverage of schistosomiasis treatment.

Uniting to Combat NTDs, the advocacy group for all 10 NTDs targeted by the London Declaration recently produced a policy document on FGS and how NTD control programmes can prevent this disease from developing. Read the brief here: <http://unitingtocombatntds.org/women-and-gender-equity>

Their excellent advocacy work on FGS at the European Development Days conference in Brussels and at the International AIDS conference in Amsterdam helped raise awareness of FGS as an important women's health issue. They also released a great video highlighting the link between FGS and HIV which can be viewed on their YouTube channel.

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To find out more about FGS and current activities and research read the GSA's latest [blog post](#) which summarises:

- The pathology and consequences of genital schistosomiasis in women and men
- The growing evidence of the strong association between FGS & HIV, impact on retroviral treatment outcomes, and ongoing research into the complex impact on AIDS progression
- The difficulties in diagnosis and the ongoing research to overcome these difficulties including molecular test to detect the DNA of schistosomes and point-of-care, hand-held colposcopy devices
- What can be done through preventative chemotherapy to halt FGS and what needs to be done to treat women already affected by FGS
- Needed research and next steps for genital schistosomiasis control in the context of reproductive and sexual health, including the need to:
 - 1 Strengthen the delivery of PZQ to those at risk of urogenital schistosomiasis
 - 2 Develop better practical diagnostics for female and male genital schistosomiasis
 - 3 Engage and advocate for the inclusion of schistosomiasis in already established HIV/AIDS and reproductive health programmes and clinics
 - 4 Develop an effective treatment for the millions of women already suffering from established FGS
 - 5 Undertake and support research to better understand the impact of male genital schistosomiasis



PARTNERS PAGE

CouNTDown

CouNTDown is 5-year DFID-funded implementation research programme which is made up of a consortium of researchers, programme managers, policy makers and academics from Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia, Nigeria, the UK and the USA. Its main objective is to conduct research which will support the cost-effective scale-up of preventive chemotherapy approaches through health systems strengthening.

Cameroon and Ghana are the two partner countries exploring expanded access to treatment for SCH & STH, especially in areas where endemicity persists following several rounds of mass drug administration.

News from Ghana

In Ghana, CouNTDown parnters and the Global Polio Laboratory Network looked at feasibility of using faecal samples collected for Polio screening to also look for *Schistosoma* and Soil-transmitted helminth eggs. This integrated approach could be a cost-effective surveillance platform for polio and NTDs such as schistosomiasis and STH. [To find out more read their interview of Dr Lucas Cunningham.](#)

<http://www.countdownonntds.org/news/publications/expanding-molecular-diagnostics-of-helminthiasis-piloting-use-of-the-gpln-platform-for-surveillance-of-soil-transmitted-helminthiasis-and-schistosomiasis-in-ghana/>

News from Cameroon

In Cameroon CouNTDown researchers from the Centre of Schistosomiasis & Parasitology and Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine undertook a pilot study using wearable GPS data loggers to measure and compare the water contact activities of mothers and their preschool aged children. This study showed the preschool aged children's water contact mirrored their mothers and were likely to be exposed to infections with schistosomes.

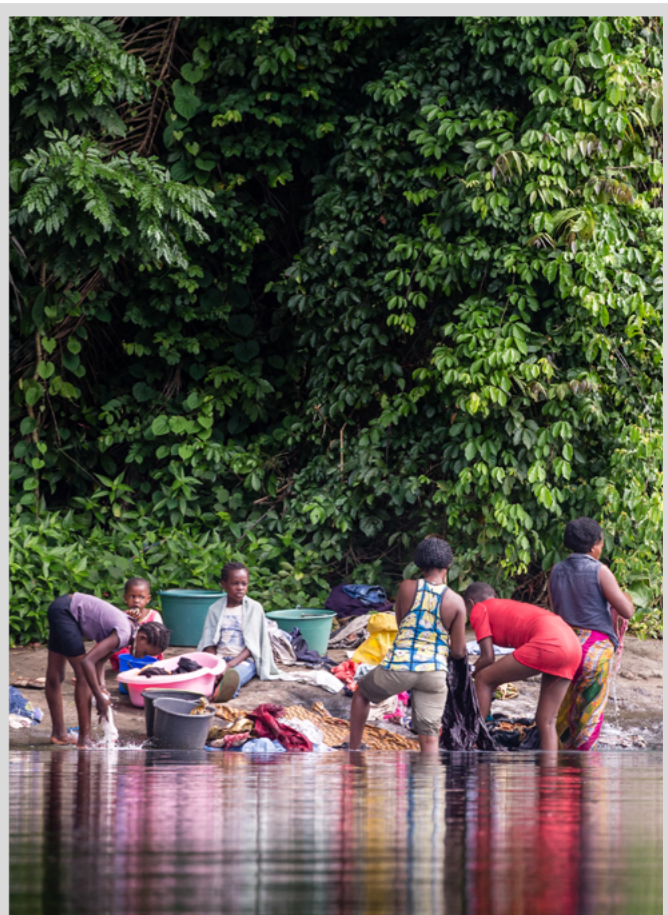
[You can read more about the study and other work from CouNTDown here:](#)

<https://academic.oup.com/trstmh/article/112/7/361/5051085>

RTI

In Uganda the Ministry of Health and RTI working with other ENVISION partners (USAID's flagship programme to control and eliminate NTDs) have made great strides in reducing schistosome infections, giving people the chance to live healthier lives. The impact of schistosomiasis in fishing villages in Uganda can be terrible, even life threatening. To highlight this RTI documented a young man's real-life experience of schistosomiasis. You can read the blog post called 'Surviving the Snails of Uganda' and find out more about what RTI are doing to control schistosomiasis in Uganda by [following this link:](#)

<https://medium.com/usaaid-2030/surviving-the-snails-of-uganda-558020d7fe1c>



USAID and FHI360

USAID have announced their new five-year award, Control and Elimination Program for Neglected Tropical Diseases (CEP-NTD) Element One (CEP-ONE) which will be coordinated by FHI360 though a consortium of partners including Helen Keller International, Health Development International, Deloitte, World Vision, AmeriCares and the AIM Initiative. CEP-One will focus on the following countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. [Read more here:](#)

<https://www.neglecteddiseases.gov/resources/newsroom/news-detail/notice-of-award-control-and-elimination-program-for-neglected-tropical-diseases-element-one>

China

The Fourth Symposium on Surveillance-Response Systems leading to Tropical Diseases Elimination took place in Shanghai , P.R. China on 25-26th June 2018 and this included the 18th Annual Workshop of the Regional Network for Asian Schistosomiasis and other Helminthic Zoonoses (RNAS+). Sessions updated on the current disease burden and control of *Schistosoma japonicum* in China, Indonesia and the Philippines focusing on new tools and international collaborations. David Rollinson, Director of GSA, gave an overview of recent GSA activities and highlighted that GSA was working with partners to establish an Action Plan to identify actions needed to move more swiftly towards elimination of schistosomiasis.

EXPANDED SPECIAL PROJECT ON ELIMINATION OF NTDS (ESPEN)

On 19 – 20 of July WHO AFRO hosted their first Expanded Special Project on Elimination of NTDs (ESPEN) NTD programme managers meeting. The meeting covered scaling up treatment coverage, supporting countries to eliminate NTDs, strengthening information systems and data sharing and the management of donated medicines.



The meeting included:

- Updates on the new ESPEN website where prevalence and treatment maps can be found at <http://espen.afro.who.int/>
- An introduction to NTDeliver www.ntdeliver.com, a tool for tracking NTD medicine supply.

The GSA together with ESPEN/WHO AFRO hosted a side-meeting entitled “When, where and how can Schistosomiasis be eliminated?”.

Objectives of the meeting were:

- To determine the important programmatic issues that need to be addressed.
- To gain insights from a national programme perspective and share experiences and challenges regarding schistosomiasis elimination.
- To establish how ESPEN and GSA can assist programme managers in developing their national agenda for schistosomiasis elimination.

You can read a summary of this side meeting on the Downloadable Resources page of our website.



WATCH THIS SPACE

We will be hosting a GSA standalone meeting on Sunday the 28th of October in New Orleans, between the COR NTD and ASTMH conferences. The title and topic of this GSA meeting is:



The Schistosomiasis Action Plan; next generation research on the road towards elimination



We look forward to an exciting meeting on innovative research helping to progress the schistosomiasis control & elimination agenda!

UPCOMING EVENTS



24-26 SEPTEMBER

NNN 2018, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

26-27 OCTOBER

COR NTDs, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

28 OCTOBER

GSA standalone meeting “The Schistosomiasis Action Plan; next generation research on the road towards elimination”, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

28 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER

67th Annual ASTMH Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

