

Annual Report 2021

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Vision, Mission & Approach

The GSA is an all-inclusive coalition to mobilise the growing momentum to control and eliminate schistosomiasis. It is constituted as a diverse partnership of public health programmes, academic and research institutions, international development agencies and foundations, non-governmental organizations, private sector companies and advocacy and resource-mobilisations partners. Our alliance is not limited to partner organizations but also includes individuals, research groups and different networks, collaborating together as a community to control and eliminate schistosomiasis.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of who we are and what we do. Our commitment to these values is unwavering – across all of our network’s activity, around the world. They are central to our mission of eliminating schistosomiasis as a public health problem and to our impact as an alliance.

Vision - Elimination of schistosomiasis.

Mission - To be the leading advocate for schistosomiasis elimination.

Approach - To lead and coordinate a multi-stakeholder platform consisting of public and private sector partners across the globe, contributing to schistosomiasis elimination as a public health problem and the ultimate goal of sustained interruption of transmission.



In this annual report we highlight some of the key outputs from our activities in 2021 and operational strategy for 2022. These outputs and plans are organised using the 5 interconnected themes. We would like to acknowledge the dedicated work and commitment the GSA members and partners have contributed to driving forward these outputs. Our members are the GSA and it is their work that is presented in this annual report.

Key Outputs

Strategy & Policy

GSA 4-year strategy 2022-2025

- Following the launch of the new WHO roadmap for NTDs, we developed a draft 4-year strategy, referring to the WHO schistosomiasis annex and the GSA Schistosomiasis Action plan, to align with the new WHO roadmap and companion documents. This is now under-review and feedback being collected.

NNN SCH-STH Disease specific group side meeting

- GSA co-sponsored and organised a meeting with the NNN SCH-STH DSG and the STH Coalition, creating opportunities for NGOs and programme managers to hear updates on SCH & STH from WHO, GSA and STH Coalition/CWW. The [recording is available here](#). Anouk Gouvras has taken on the chair role of the NNN SCH-STH DSG to strengthen its role as an information and knowledge exchange platform for both SCH and STH communities.

Implementation & Impact

GSA Ambassador Programme

- This is now an established group with 16 Ambassadors from 13 countries. The Ambassador programme met in January and May 2021 and discussed implications of the pandemic and changes to funding, development of national plans and the need for monitoring and evaluation guidance, tools and framework. The GSA Ambassador communication channel is actively used with information and feedback shared between the GSA Exec Team and ambassadors and between ambassadors themselves. Translation of items into French has been positively received from francophone ambassadors.

Putting Schistosomiasis Precision Mapping into Practice

- Precision mapping, or sub-district mapping, is recommended by the WHO, and rolled out by national programmes in collaboration with partners as a method for refining a targeted treatment strategy, to ensure optimum treatment and improved efficiencies in resource utilization. Multiple countries have implemented revised SCH mapping protocols in the past five years and more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic, incorporating mitigating measures to ensure the safety of all involved. Some of these countries, as well as those who implemented precision mapping surveys prior to the pandemic presented their experience on the selection of sub-districts, the development of sampling protocols, and the challenges faced in the implementation of the revised protocols in the Research Links Session on the 22nd of September 2021. We identified 5 research priorities in the COR NTD Research Links session that took place on the 22nd of September:
 - Diagnostics for precision mapping.
 - Cost-Benefit Analysis
 - Data criteria, analysis & visualization
 - Sampling Frameworks and
 - Integration with other NTDS

These were listed in the draft COR NTD report and shared with COR NTD participants ahead of the session at the COR NTD annual meeting (9th November). At the COR NTD annual meeting we reviewed and refined these priorities. The [report](#) is available on the GSA website and has been submitted to COR NTD to inform future research priorities for schistosomiasis mapping.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The GSA M&E working group met monthly in 2021. Meetings included a Toolkit Forum to share experiences and learnings on approaches, use of tools, and training. In 2021 the Toolkit Forum looked at: COVID-19 Adaptions, ESPEN subdistrict analysis tool, WHO Coverage Evaluation Tools, Impact Surveys, ESPEN Collect, Quality Standards Assessment Tool.

The chairs of the M&E WG, discussed and coordinated with the ESPEN team to ensure the group is adding value to WHO & ESPEN's resources and to programme managers. The ask from ESPEN to the GSA M&E WG was to collate, review, input on and identify gaps in the training materials, protocols and field tools that exist for SCH M&E activities. The M&E working group set up two task teams to collate epidemiological and programmatic training tools and protocols from across countries and organizations. These task teams will meet regularly in 2022 and review these materials.

Implementation Working Group

- We held a meeting on Praziquantel Coordination in May 2021 to discuss the need and challenges around PZQ supply, delivery and tacking to the subdistrict and “last mile” level as well as integration into health systems. The Elimination work stream collated experiences and lessons learnt into an opinion table to feed into an opinion piece on elimination.

Engineering Working Group

- This group created an online questionnaire in English and French, to collect information on current practices in the design, development and installation of infrastructure and water treatment with regards to the prevention of schistosomiasis transmission (human exposure or contamination of water). The survey received 15 responses. Considerations to schistosomiasis varied but tended to be minimal. The responses are described [in this slide deck](#). The group used this to identify actions to take forward.

Research

GSA Schistosomiasis Research Innovation Meeting

- The [GSA Schistosomiasis Research Innovation Meeting 2021](#) brought together scientists, healthcare professionals, researchers and delivery partners from the world of schistosomiasis, highlighting exciting research findings and research-in-progress from scientists across the globe. On the first day participants heard brief updates from the GSA working groups and work streams, and from innovative schistosomiasis research on tools for morbidity assessment, vaccine development in endemic countries, geostatistical models for informing survey designs, biocontrol tools, genomics and more. The second day focused on early-career researchers and exciting research-in-progress with interactive networking opportunities for participants. Talks included chlorination methods for schistosomiasis prevention, the impact of schistosomiasis treatment on vaccine responses, identifying UHC gaps, schistosome diagnostic developments and more.

Diagnostics work stream

- The diagnostic work stream updated the communication piece on [commercially available diagnostics](#) and the draft document on inclusion criteria for a samples biobank. The group submitted feedback on the WHO Target Product Profiles for schistosomiasis diagnostics and discussed implications to diagnostic researchers and developers. FIND presented the [DxConnevt virtual biobank & portal](#) to the group and discussed collections of samples and the development of diagnostics.

Genital Schistosomiasis Community of Practice

- The community of practice was first set up with FGS & MGS operational and clinical researchers, this was opened to health professionals working on FGS & MGS and there are now over 100 members, representing over 20 countries. The members of the CoP frequently exchange information, publications, events, questions using the groups shared email address.



Snail and Malacology work streams

- Two linked work streams were set up, one focused on the molecular biology and genomics of snail intermediate host of schistosomes (Snail work stream) and the other on ecological and epidemiological aspects of malacology and snail control/management (Malacology work stream). The work streams had talks from the WHO on snail & snail control and talks on snail genomic advances. Ongoing work is to collate protocols and standard operating procedures to feed these into the [Snails Resource Collection](#).

Advocacy

GSA used key NTD, global health and development days, publication launches and events to raise the profile of schistosomiasis.

These events include:

- Launch of the [WHO Road map for NTDs 2021-2030](#) – our GSA Ambassador Dr Obiageli Nebe shared a message of support on behalf of the GSA during the launch. We promoted the launch and the important paradigm shifts of the roadmap through our communications channels and through a popular biomedical community blog: [Ending Neglected Tropical Diseases](#). The launch of the World Health Organization new road map to 2030.
- World NTD Day – GSA contributed and promoted to World NTD Day, creating a special page on the GSA website highlighting [World NTD Day Events](#), messaging and communications.
- Access to Praziquantel – Anouk Gouvras moderated the [launch of the ADOPT program](#) on access to pediatric praziquantel. GSA promoted the ADOPT program and other events on access to treatment, including writing two blogs on leaving no one behind when it comes to access to schistosomiasis treatment:
- [Zero Discrimination in MDA](#) - reaching all children with disabilities to beat NTDs
- [Universal Health Coverage & NTD programmes](#) – who are we missing and how do we reach them?

- Female Genital Schistosomiasis – GSA increased its work on advocating for greater action on female genital schistosomiasis, particularly on integrating FGS into women’s health services and NTD programmes, on raising awareness and knowledge for the public and in the health sectors and on research to develop better diagnostics and morbidity management. Many of these events and news items are listed on the [Genital Schistosomiasis Resource Collection](#) page.
- Other items the GSA contributed to and advocated for:
 - Building back better from COVID-19
 - Effective & efficient integration of SCH and STH

Communication

Webinars

- International Women’s Day [#ChooseToChallenge inequity in NTD research](#).
- [Schistosomiasis in Malawi](#): future control isn’t quite like it used to be.
- [The role of vaccines](#) in the elimination of schistosomiasis.
- [Biological control of schistosomiasis](#): potential, evidence and the way forward.
- [Schistosomiasis in the Philippines](#). The Struggle Never Stops.
- [Citizen science and snail-borne diseases in Uganda](#): boosting data collection and empowering communities.

Social Media

- LinkedIn: Started 02.04.2021. Total followers 347, 48% of visitors from Research & Healthcare background
- Twitter: January 2021 followers: 1827; Dec 2021 followers: 2897 (now in April 2022 it's 3186) = over 50% increase of follower numbers within a year.
- Mailchimp subscriber numbers up from 468 in Jan 2021 to 582 in Dec 2021. 69% of subscribers consumes our newsletter content on desktop computer, so we should continue to optimise for this over mobile view. Open and click through rates remained consistently high at 44.4% average and 16.9% average respectively, throughout the year. This is considerably higher than the industry average of 39.2% and 5.1 % respectively.



Information sharing

- GSA has promoted and supported [WHO communications](#), disseminating WHO events, documents and calls to the schistosomiasis community.
- GSA has integrated French and English translation and interpretation into its communications and will continue to strengthen this as an important inclusion step.

Website

- Google analytics shows that in 2020 the website received 27,819 Page views, of which unique views were 23,874 (the number of individuals visiting our page). In comparison, in 2021 we see a significant increase in both page views at 46,330 and unique views at 38,913. This shows that while overall and repeat visitors increased, we are also reaching new, previously not engaged visitors.
- The GSA bounce and exit rate remained consistent at around 60% from 2020. While this is a significant number, it tells us that those interested in GSA content know to seek it on our website and use key search terms that provide them with the right content without having to search further on the website. This shows that content ranks high on google search results with specific keywords.
- In 2020 the highest page view for individual content plateaued at 400, in 2021 we have seen a number of significant highs, including the reach on World NTD Day / NTD Road Map launch content at 2105 page views.

Operational Strategy for 2022

Strategy & Policy

- Finalize and publish GSA 4-year strategy 2022 to 2025.
- Strengthen the NNN SCH-STH DSG platform to support coordination and integration between SCH and STH.
- Work closely with the WHO SCH and STH Technical Advisory Group and subgroups to ensure the GSA and GSA groups are supporting and adding value to the work identified by the WHO SCH-STH TAG subgroups. The chairs of the relevant GSA groups and GSA Exec Team will join the WHO subgroup meetings as observers where possible.

Implementation & Impact

GSA Ambassador Programme

- This group will meet 3 times in 2022 to discuss the WHO SCH recommendations, approaches to monitoring and evaluation and other items identified by the ambassadors as priorities for 2022.

Implementation Working Group

- The group will organise a meeting to discuss the WHO SCH recommendations. The PZQ coordination and Elimination work streams will meet to discuss ongoing and new priorities following the publication of the WHO SCH recommendations.

Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group

- The group will meet every two-three months to share updates on M&E developments, best practices and lessons learnt, continuing the Toolbox Forum. The two task teams will work on reviewing existing training materials and tools for epidemiological (Task Team 1) and programmatic (Task Team 2) purposes.

Behaviour Change and Health Education Working Group

- The group has submitted a proposal a panel session at the International Social and Behavior Change Communication Summit to be held in December 2022. The panel will look at 'Multisector action to enable social and behaviour change for the elimination of schistosomiasis, a water-borne Neglected Tropical Disease'.

Engineering

- The group have identified priority outputs to work on and feed into the WHO SCH-STH TAG subgroup on WASH. These include:
 - Developing a draft white paper on SCH and Water infrastructure and treatment, from WASH to agriculture.
 - Collect Case studies on water infrastructure and schistosomiasis (Mali, Senegal, Zanzibar, China)
 - Create a draft information piece on water development and schistosomiasis to share with policy makers, implementers and stakeholders involved in water development including for agriculture and energy sectors

Research

Research

- The group has submitted a proposal for the ICOPA conference on: 'Morbidity and spillover impact associated with Schistosoma infections: an updated appraisal'. The group plans to set up an Early Career Researchers journal club to strengthen networking opportunities for early career researchers.

Diagnostics

- The diagnostic group will collate protocols for sample collection and storage and diagnostic tests. These will be uploaded to the GSA Diagnostic resource collection.
- The GSA will host a symposium on the use of CCA and CAA for schistosomiasis diagnosis in different settings looking at themes such as quality, data, access and development.



Genital Schistosomiasis Community of Practice

- This group will continue to share news, updates, publications, training materials and opportunities for FGS and MGS research and integration. The group will meet 3 times to share experiences and potential opportunities for collaboration.

Snails and Malacology

- The two work streams will collate information on existing datasets of snails and protocols for sampling, storage, snail control and laboratory processing. In addition to their separate meetings the two work streams will come together to present and share knowledge on ongoing field and laboratory research.

Advocacy

GSA will use the following opportunities to raise the profile of schistosomiasis and call for:

- Increased funding for schistosomiasis interventions, research and development and capacity-building.
- Focus on access to treatment & diagnostic tools, and integration of schistosomiasis, including female genital schistosomiasis into health services.
- Multisector engagement and coordination to include schistosomiasis prevention measures in projects for water and agriculture development.

Events and items the GSA will leverage:

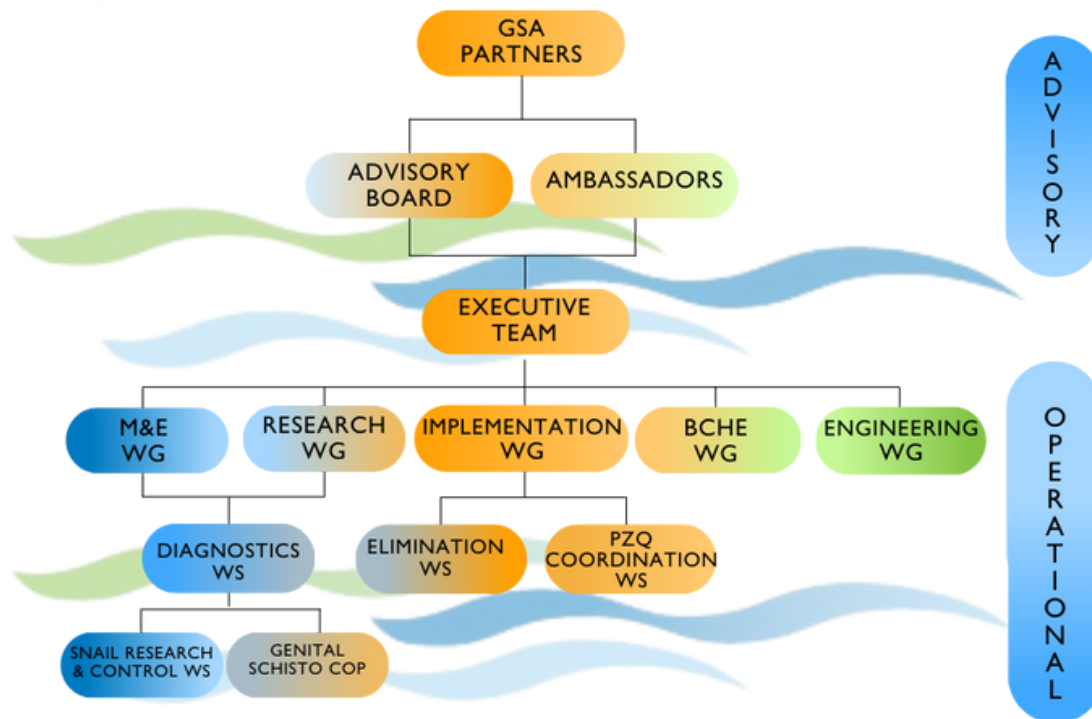
- Launch of the first UN recognised World NTD Day
- New Guidelines for the control and elimination of human schistosomiasis
- Deworming women of reproductive age
- International Women's Day
- Kigali Summit on malaria and NTDs
- International AIDs conference
- World Water Week conference



Communication

- GSA will continue to strengthen communication and discussion within the schistosomiasis community, ensuring technical information, best practices and lessons learned are shared between stakeholders. We will build communication opportunities and pieces to engage stakeholders in different sectors that influence schistosomiasis.
- GSA will continue to integrate French and other languages where possible into its communications.
- A key item in 2022 will be to review the GSA website to ensure it meets its purpose as a one-stop-shop for schistosomiasis, through the following process:
 - GSA website review with action plan for improved visibility & traffic: In seeking improvement to the GSA website platform and network collaboration for the elimination of schistosomiasis, we have engaged Manta Ray Media in a project to improve the GSA members area, including the taxonomy linked to individual accounts to enable better search experience for members. This work is currently underway.
 - To better monitor the improvements this will bring, it is recommended by Kat Gulyas, communications consultant to enable heatmapping on the website. This process enables us to record visitor sessions on various pages of the website, including visitor behaviour, like eye tracking and click through tracking to help make data-based decisions and evaluations on bettering user experience. The recommendation is to use a paid-for service provided by the software company Crazy Egg, with a 30 days free trial and a monthly cost of \$24 (billed annually) for a year. This service will also support decisions-making regarding the overall web content and support the website review planned for later in 2022.

Organization and governance



GSA SCHISTOSOMIASIS NETWORK & COMMUNITY

The GSA is managed by an Executive Team and oversees and supports the GSA Working Groups (WG) and Work Streams (WS). WG & WS bring together relevant experts and stakeholders, drawn from the partner and other organizations, research groups and programmes, to produce tangible outputs addressing specific challenges or barriers to schistosomiasis control and elimination as identified in the GSA Schistosomiasis Action Plan. The WG outputs are aimed at accelerating progress towards the WHO roadmap goals and beyond. The GSA Executive Team works with the WG Chairs to develop an annual operational strategy and plan.

The network of GSA Ambassadors are points of contact in endemic countries to advise on progress made and challenges faced in-country regarding the control and elimination of schistosomiasis. They contribute to discussions to determine actions required by the schistosomiasis community and feedback on their experience and concerns to the community via the GSA and fellow Ambassadors. The annual operational strategy and progress report is reviewed by the GSA Advisory Board.

Glossary



- ASTMH – American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
- BCHE – Behaviour Change Health Education
- BC – Behaviour Change
- CIFF – Children’s Investment Fund Foundation
- CDC – USA Center of Disease Control
- CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
- COR NTD – Coalition for Operational Research for NTDs
- CoP - Community of Practice
- DFID – UK Department For International Development
- ECTMIH – European Congress Tropical Medicines and International Health
- EMOP – European Multicolloquium of Parasitology
- ESPEN – Expanded Special Project for Elimination of NTDs
- FGS – Female Genital Schistosomiasis
- GSA - Global Schistosomiasis Alliance
- Kenya BTS – Kenya Breaking Transmission Strategy
- MDA – Mass Drug Administration
- M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation
- NIPD – China National Institute for Parasitic Diseases
- NTDs – Neglected Tropical Diseases
- NNN – NTD NGO Network
- OR – Operational Research
- PC – Preventative Chemotherapy
- SCI – Schistosomiasis Control Initiative Foundation
- SCH – Schistosomiasis
- Shanghai SRS – Shanghai Surveillance and Response Systems
- STAG – Strategic and Technical Advisory Group
- Swiss TPH – Swiss Tropical Medicine and Public Health Institute
- USAID – U.S. Agency for International Development
- WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- WISER – Water Infrastructure for Schistosomiasis Endemic Regions
- WG – Working Group
- WHA – World Health Assembly
- WHO – World Health Organization
- WHO HQ – WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland
- WHO AFRO – WHO Regional Office for Africa
- WHO EMRO – WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean
- WHO SEARO – WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia
- WHO WPRO – WHO Regional Office for Western Pacific



GLOBAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS ALLIANCE