

# THE HIDDEN EPIDEMIC:

## BREAKING THE SILENCE ON FEMALE GENITAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS

Female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) is a disease caused by parasitic worms that live in fresh water where people bathe, wash clothes and fetch water. where people bathe, wash clothes and fetch water. The worms burrow into the skin and migrate to various organs in and around the pelvis, including the uterus, fallopian tubes, and vagina, where they can cause inflammation, discharge and bleeding. The disease is currently estimated to affect more than 50 million women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa.

### THE COST OF FEMALE GENITAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS TO WOMEN & GIRLS

#### [WOMEN'S HEALTH]

Women and girls with female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) are 3X MORE LIKELY to get HIV than other women. The disease has been linked to an increased risk of cervical cancer, can cause infertility, and increase the risk of life-threatening ectopic pregnancies.

#### [STIGMA & GENDER BASED VIOLENCE]

The symptoms of FGS are often misdiagnosed as sexually-transmitted infections. Many women and girls with FGS are being given the wrong treatment for their condition and can also be stigmatised for their assumed sexual activity. This exposes them to the risk of isolation, and gender-based violence.



# [FIGHTING FGS TOGETHER]

## PREVENTING AND TREATING FGS

FGS is treatable - a short course of medication (praziquantel) kills the worms. It is also preventable - the cycle of transmission is broken when people can access safe water, adequate sanitation and good hygiene. BUT - women, girls, and even the local health workers are often unaware that a parasite is causing their symptoms. We need to bridge the gap and share this knowledge so that women and girls are appropriately treated and protected.

## FIG – THE FEMALE GENITAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS INTEGRATION GROUP

The FGS Integration Group (FIG) is an innovative coalition of organisations galvanising joint action across the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), HIV, HPV/cervical cancer, neglected tropical disease (NTD) and WASH sectors to address the neglected issue of FGS.

**BUT to really tackle Female Genital Schistosomiasis, we need joint action across other sectors too. We need YOU!**

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Follow #FGSchisto on Twitter
- Sign up to the FIG newsletter for social toolkits & the latest news on FGS
- Learn more about how FGS affects women & girls - <https://bit.ly/FIG-schisto>

SIGN UP

