

Press Release

Breaking the Silence: Launch of WINGS-4-FGS to Transform Women's Health Through Science, Action, and Collaboration

London, Ho, St. Ingbert, Abidjan [27 October 2025] — For millions of women and girls across sub-Saharan Africa, living with pain, stigma, and silence has been an unspoken reality. Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS), a neglected disease caused by parasitic infection, affects an estimated 50 million women and girls, with another 150 million at risk. Despite its devastating impact including infertility, pregnancy complications, increased HIV risk, and social exclusion, FGS remains largely invisible in medical curricula, public health programmes, and global health priorities.

Today marks a turning point. With funding from the [Global Health EDCTP3](#) programme of the European Union, 10 leading African and European institutions have come together to launch WINGS-4-FGS. An ambitious project dedicated to reducing the burden of FGS, optimising treatment, and transforming care for women and girls in Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Madagascar, and Malawi.

The Mission of WINGS-4-FGS

WINGS-4-FGS is built on a simple but powerful idea: that in addition to improving treatment, tackling FGS requires awareness, innovation, research, and policy change working hand in hand. The project will:

- **Raise awareness and reduce stigma** through community campaigns and healthcare worker training.
- **Innovate diagnosis** with new community-based, accessible tools that bring screening closer to women.
- **Develop new treatment options**, testing the potential of repurposed anti-inflammatory medicines to address the disease manifestations of FGS.
- **Integrate FGS care into health systems**, ensuring sustainability through evidence-based guidelines, policy engagement, and partnerships with ministries of health.

As WINGS-4-FGS Project Coordinator [Prof. Dr Amaya Bustinduy](#) from [The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine](#) explains: *"For too long FGS, a parasitic disease resulting after fresh water contact, has remained largely invisible to doctors, policymakers, and most importantly to the women who suffer from it in silence. This is a disease wrongly confused with sexually transmitted infections and stigmatised as a consequence. WINGS-4-FGS is about more than research. It is about giving women a voice, restoring dignity, and making sure that science and action go hand in hand to create lasting change."*

From Research to Real Change

At the heart of WINGS-4-FGS is the conviction that scientific progress and community empowerment must move together. The project's clinical trials will test new approaches to treatment, while its awareness campaigns and training will strengthen local healthcare systems and reduce stigma.

"By combining clinical research, community engagement, and policy advocacy, we have a unique opportunity to change the future of FGS care," says WINGS-4-FGS Project Scientific Lead [Prof. Margaret Gyapong](#) from the [Institute of Health Research, University of Health and Allied Sciences](#) in Ghana. She

continued, *“The impact will extend beyond women’s health alone. Healthier women mean healthier families, stronger communities, and stronger societies.”*

A Vision for the Future

WINGS-4-FGS embodies a bold vision: to transform women’s health through science and action, and to ensure that women and girls across Africa can live with dignity, health, and opportunity. The project’s guiding principle is clear: helping women benefits everyone.

By addressing FGS, WINGS-4-FGS will improve not only the lives of women and girls, but also the strength and resilience of entire communities. With *Strong Women, Strong Futures, Strong Communities* as its driving spirit, WINGS-4-FGS is setting a new standard for what is possible when global science, local expertise, and community voices unite.

Key Facts

Full Name

(W)Initiative for Woman and Girls affected by Female Genital Schistosomiasis

Start

01.07.2025

Duration

48 months

Budget

EUR 5,036,364.69

Coordinator

Prof Dr Amaya Bustinduy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

Website: www.wings4fgs.eu

Social Media: [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#)

Project Partners

Côte d'Ivoire

- Université Felix Houphouet Boigny
 - PI: Dr Mamadou Ouattara

Democratic Republic of Congo

- Institut National de Recherche Biomédicale du Zaïre
 - PI: Prof. Mumba Dieudonné N’Goyi

Germany

- Bernhard-Nocht-Institut für Tropenmedizin
 - PI: Dr Daniela Fusco
- EURICE – European Research and Project Office
 - Project Management: Kyle Lee

Ghana

- Institute of Health Research, University of Health and Allied Sciences
 - Project Scientific Lead: Prof. Margaret Gyapong

Malawi

- Kamuzu University of Health Sciences
 - PI: Prof. Janelisa Musaya

United Kingdom

- The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
 - Project Coordinator: Prof Amaya Bustinduy

Associated Partners

Madagascar

- Association pour la Promotion de la Santé, de l'Intelligence Artificielle et du Numérique
 - PI: Dr Rivonirina Andry Rakotoarivelo

Switzerland

- Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative Foundation
 - PI: Dr Stephane Hugonett
- Schweizerisches Tropen- und Public Health-Institut
 - PI: Prof. Jennifer Keisser

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