



Bridges to Development

Advancing resilient communities on a path towards sustainable development

Annual Report 2022

This report reviews activities and achievements of Bridges to Development (Bridges) over its fourth full year of operations, another year shaped by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights a sampling of our work, describes organizational development and learning, and presents the 2022 year-end financials.

Highlights

- Bridges was **awarded the Secretariat role for the Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030)** partnership and helped grow a *Movement for IA2030* with **local action by thousands of health practitioners**.
- The Pacific Integrated Neglected tropical disease Elimination (PINE) Project **reached over 38,000 people with integrated Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaigns in Vanuatu** and began work in Papua New Guinea with a baseline disease prevalence **survey of over 5,000 people**.
- Bridges managed **governance reform at the RBM Partnership to End Malaria** with broad consultations leading to strategic changes to how the world's diverse malaria partners convene and coordinate their efforts to combat the disease.
- The **twinning of local schools in Uganda and in Ecuador**, Bridges' inaugural project, continued to break new ground, with **17 students receiving internationally recognized certification** from the Rushanje Girls School in western Uganda and dozens of secondary-school students learning robotic skills in Ecuador, **paving the way to university education**.
- Bridges continued to lead on **Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS)** with the **launch of the FGS Integration Group (FIG), a global partnership** and supporting the **creation of the FGS Society of Nigeria**, a society with 345 health care providers tackling FGS.
- The Bridges team **authored or co-authored 14 diverse, peer-reviewed publications and 13 case studies and reports documenting the "Movement for IA2030"**.

Key Projects

Supporting implementation of the Immunization Agenda 2030 – the strategy formally endorsed by over 200 countries

IA2030 Secretariat

In 2022, the Bridges' role was extended as the Secretariat within WHO, providing key project management support and technical assistance to facilitate the world-wide ownership and accountability for [IA2030](#). The Bridges team led the development of the first IA2030 Global Report, published to coincide with the 75th World Health Assembly in May 2022, and assisted WHO, UNICEF and other partners to report on the first data results of the decade to the global immunization advisory body, the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE). Bridges contributed to IA2030 regional strategy development and action planning for the Eastern Mediterranean and Americas and continued to support the roll out of guidance for National Immunization Strategies for country planning and implementation of IA2030. The year closed with Bridges preparing for an in-person stock-taking meeting in early 2023 to assist members of the IA2030 partnership to reflect on how best to work together most effectively to advance immunization globally.

Peer-Learning Platform for Immunization

Bridges began partnering in 2019 with [The Geneva Learning Foundation](#) (TGLF). In 2022, through support from the Wellcome Trust, the partnership continued to demonstrate that digital networks can foster leadership and long-term collaboration between health workers at subnational and national levels in low- and middle-income countries to solve local health problems. 6,185 health practitioners signed up for a 4-month learning cycle, with 1,021 crafting locally-tailored, peer-reviewed action plans for ways they will support each other to strengthen services in their communities. Over 10,000 practitioners from almost 100 countries made individual commitments to improve immunization services in their communities and become part of a “Movement for IA2030.” Critical to such an intrinsically-motivated group, participants are committed to share lessons and insights with each other and international partners through dozens of digital sharing events, including one organized with UNICEF, and 12 first person case-studies and reports which can be found [here](#).

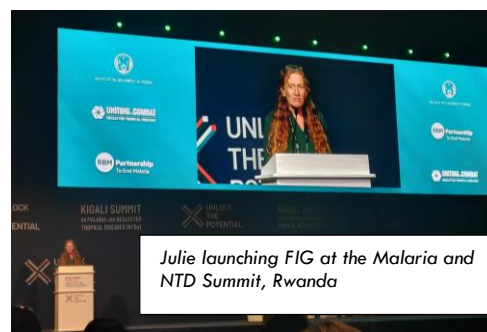
Prioritization of pathogens for vaccine research & development (R&D)

During Q3-Q4 2022, Bridges worked with WHO to identify regional and country priorities for new vaccine R&D. We used multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) surveys to understand how stakeholders value 8 discrete criteria for prioritization and used those values to prioritize among 26 pathogens on a region-by-region basis. Surveys were created using regional data on burden of disease and translated into the major languages for each region: altogether 20 surveys in 7 languages were launched. These results will inform regional R&D strategies and measurement of global progress in vaccine R&D.

Addressing Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS)

FGS Integration Group (FIG)

In early 2021, Bridges and Frontline AIDS initiated a discussion on the need to integrate FGS within sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), community health policies, programs, and services in African countries. Since then, we have engaged several partners to raise FGS awareness, culminating in the emergence of a multisector group, the [FGS Integration Group \(FIG\)](#). Bridges participation in FIG was funded by personal donation from Wendi Reed. FIG has become an innovative coalition, galvanizing joint action across fragmented sectors of SRHR, HIV, HPV/cervical cancer, NTDs and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) to tackle the neglected issue of FGS, strengthening the public health response and universal access to healthcare for women and girls. In 2022, FIG mobilized five cross-sectoral events to promote the urgency of integration, including its launch at the Rwanda Summit on Malaria and NTDs as well as a UK Parliamentary event. Besides movement and action, FIG also contributed, created and coordinated the evidence base for FGS integration into other health sectors.



Female Genital Schistosomiasis Society of Nigeria

With funding from the Task Force for Global Health, Bridges helped establish and launch the new FGS Society of Nigeria. The society came together organically in October 2021 as an outcome of the FGS Scholars Training implemented by Bridges with TGLF. The original idea was to link the FGS Scholars in Nigeria and those trained by the Scholars to create awareness and build momentum around FGS. Bridges' support included strategic planning for engagement, pilot sensitization activities, and launch activities. From an initial group of 11, membership grew to include 345 physicians and health practitioners. The ability of these highly motivated and dedicated local health care providers to lead change in Nigeria can serve as a catalyst to fuel similar local action on FGS, building a movement across sub-Saharan Africa to address the burden of this important neglected health issue.

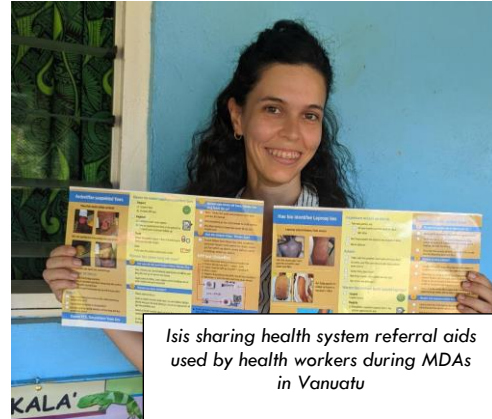
FGS Accelerate Scale Together (FAST) Package

In February 2022, for the first time since the pandemic began, Bridges returned to the field to implement a [FAST](#) workshop in Ghana. Funded by Grand Challenges Canada and the Government of Canada with match funding provided by Merck Global Health Institute, the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative Foundation, and WHO, the in-person workshop for health practitioners in women's health; SRHR; and NTDs delivered training on FGS diagnosis and treatment. This led to publication of an [article](#) in *Think Global Health* about the trip and the need for this training. In July 2022, Bridges hosted and facilitated the FAST Package meeting in Geneva bringing country partners from Ghana and Madagascar together with Bruyère University and WHO to share results, challenges, successes, and lessons learned.

Tackling NTDs in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu



Julie examining a suspected scabies patient in Vanuatu



Isis sharing health system referral aids used by health workers during MDAs in Vanuatu

Bridges completed the second year of this \$6M collaboration with the goal of controlling or eliminating a set of NTDs through integrated mass drug administration (MDA) campaigns, skin screening and referrals, and health systems strengthening in Vanuatu and a province of Papua New Guinea (PNG). This work is supported by a grant from Takeda Pharmaceuticals LTD Corporate Social Responsibility Program. Working in partnership with WHO and through the Ministry of Health (MoH), the project team continued to roll out MDA in Vanuatu, conducting two campaigns in two provinces in 2022 reaching over 38,000 people with medicines to prevent and treat yaws, scabies, and soil-transmitted helminths (STH). In addition, the project team developed and launched a novel, participatory and peer-learning focused Integrated Skin Disease Training workshop for health workers. After a successful pilot in Vanuatu, the MoH used its own funds to scale-up across three provinces, training 97 health workers. These trainings also facilitated the creation of an active peer-to-peer network of health workers to support each other in addressing skin diseases in their communities and pushing for better availability of treatment in the health system. In PNG, the project team conducted an integrated survey to understand the prevalence of lymphatic filariasis, yaws, scabies, and STH in West New Britain Province. This is a critical first step to set up for the first integrated MDA campaign slated for 2023. Although the project is still dealing with COVID-related setbacks, including supply chain issues and travel restrictions, the Bridges team was able to conduct field visits to both countries in 2022, meeting with teams in person, observing operations, and hearing directly from community members impacted by the project.

Strengthening Governance for the RBM Partnership to End Malaria

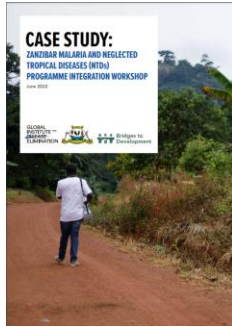
In view of critical transitions taking place in both the Secretariat and Board, the [RBM](#) Partnership Board requested support from Bridges to design and prepare for a new governance system for the RBM Partnership. Based on an analysis of lessons learned from past and current governance approaches and following extensive consultations across the partnership, Bridges assessed options and delivered solutions for Board deliberations at a 2-day retreat in May. Once the Board agreed in principle to a preferred model, Bridges set out to prepare the governance documents, policies and procedures needed to formalize the new approach and help plan the transition. By the end of October, Bridges facilitated a special consultation meeting that resulted in the RBM Board taking key decisions approving a new Board composition and transitional steps to effect that change. This set in motion the organization of representational constituencies and unaffiliated seats for a new Board to be operational by mid-2023. Throughout this progressive work, the Bridges team has received high praise and recognition for its way of working and the quality of deliverables.

Accelerating progress towards disease elimination

In 2022, Bridges, in partnership with the [Global Institute for Disease Elimination](#) (GLIDE), presented our findings from The Global Elimination and Eradication Acceleration Review (GEAR) pilot on onchocerciasis. The work began in 2020 with an extensive review of disease elimination and eradication (E&E) efforts that identified predictable areas of risk to a program which is presented in a [white paper](#). Based on this work, an evaluation framework was developed to help identify

opportunities for program strengthening and improvement. The team piloted the framework with the onchocerciasis elimination program in collaboration with a diverse set of stakeholders and partners. Bridges worked closely with the new WHO Oncho focal point to ensure that the findings from GEAR informed the development of the WHO's new initiative for oncho elimination, the Global Onchocerciasis Network for Elimination (GONE). The team has documented the experience from this project in a [case study](#) and a [GEAR guide with supporting materials](#), which have been widely disseminated. Feedback from the project's expert advisory groups was that this tool could and should be used in other disease areas. The team hopes to secure additional funding to further apply and refine this tool in support of disease E&E in NTDs and beyond.

Facilitating closer collaboration between NTD and Malaria Programs



As part of Bridges' collaboration with GLIDE, the team developed and tested a novel approach to facilitate deeper coordination and collaboration between NTD and Malaria programs. Building on the landscaping completed in 2020 and documented in a [white paper](#), the team designed an approach for an 'Integration Workshop' with the goal of building cross-program relationships and identifying feasible and sustainable win-win opportunities for integration. Following a successful virtual workshop in November 2021 with the Ghana Health Service's NTD and Malaria Programs, the Bridges and GLIDE teams supported the Zanzibar Ministry

of Health to develop ways to improve program integration. Work is ongoing by the countries to break long-standing silos. Bridges was featured in a packed [seminar on integration](#) organized by GLIDE at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) Annual Meeting. Case studies from both [Ghana](#) and [Zanzibar](#)'s workshops as well as a "[Quick Guide to Implementing an Integration Workshop](#)" are available on our website.

Twin Schools Project in Uganda and Ecuador

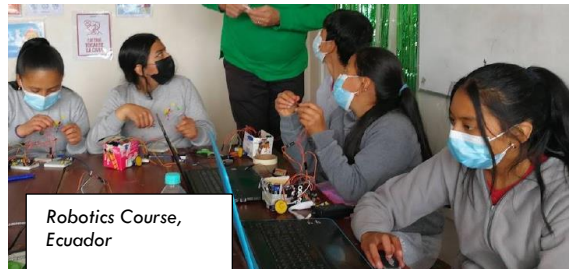
Bridges' longest-running project supports communities to advance the educational development of teachers and students across twinned "resource" and nearby "partner" schools. Schools in both countries reopened after more than a year of closure due to COVID (21 months in Uganda) and 2022 saw the culmination of successful activities under the grant which started 2018. As a final reflection of success, community members managing the projects will now receive grants directly from the Red Brook Foundation in Switzerland for at least a further two years.

In **Uganda**, the twinning is between two all-girls secondary schools, with the resource school helping to add curricula around occupational skills at the partner school (e.g., farming, baking, sewing, hairdressing, beekeeping), increasing enrollment by more than 1/3 and improving the education of hundreds of girls each year. Unfortunately, in June, a devastating fire destroyed one of two dormitories, but instruction largely continued and by the end of the year, it was rebuilt with school, community and project funds. The school has since registered for Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) national certification process, reinforcing the sustainability of the school's curricula to give learners greater ability to secure employment and continue post-secondary education. 17 passed these DIT exams in 2022. The local project team reports that Rushanje Girls School is now "known as the lead school in offering vocational skills in the whole of western Uganda".



Baking courses, Rushanje Girls School

In **Ecuador**, the focus is on increasing the likelihood that students attend university through twinning between 3 schools in a largely indigenous area and a resource school in Quito. Since 2020, 35 teachers have been supported to complete university diplomas in math, languages and digital education. During the school closures, they developed local interventions and scaled-up training to start in 2022, including enhanced learning infrastructure, especially IT. Bridges assisted with the installation of 2 computer labs and a digital enabled library in these schools as well as the provision of virtual robotics courses with students from all 4 schools. This initiative equips students and teachers with engineering, coding/ programming, advanced mathematics, mentorship and English skills. Approximately two-thirds of the robotics students are female, one of them winning a competition against students from Columbia, France, and Spain. Two schools have since added robotics to their curricula with local teachers and previous year students increasingly doing the teaching. Plans are underway to establish a similar program for virtual courses in physics.



Robotics Course, Ecuador

Organizational development and learning

- **Welcoming new Board Members:** During 2022, three new members joined the Bridges Board to oversee and support the work of the organization. We are pleased to have [Harriet Stanley](#) join us as Chair of the Swiss Board, and Vice-Chair of the US Board, along with [Catharine Taylor](#) and [Amelie Baudot](#) as Board members. We also wish to thank John Marshall, Gretchen Meller and Rita Trigo Trindade for their dedicated time and service.
- **Building and helping global partnerships realize their ambitions:** Bridges continues to play a trusted and critical role in several world-wide partnerships which have been described in the previous section, including IA2030, RBM Partnership to End Malaria, the FGS Integration Group as well as chairing the WHO NTD Strategic and Technical Advisory Group Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Working Group.
- **Deepening our engagement in peer learning:** As described above, Bridges continues to explore the impact of peer learning through several projects including our approach to training health staff in PINE and teacher trainings in Twin Schools. Our partnership with TGLF is also demonstrating the value of this approach in reaching grassroots level; creating networks and catalyzing action by hundreds or thousands of practitioners at the local level.
- **Advancing the Bridges internship program:** Bridges continued its investments in graduate student interns, supporting their launch of global health careers. Many qualified candidates applied in 2022, and Maria and Anmol were selected for 6-9 month internships. Bridges benefited greatly from their engagement and both Maria and Anmol decided to focus their theses on FGS having worked in this area with Bridges. Following the internship, Anmol secured a role with AMREF Canada, and Maria returned to her Master's program at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
- **Creating a new role, the Bridges' Global Health Fellow:** Isis joined Bridges in 2021 as an intern and then continued her work as a consultant. Isis has made exceptional contributions to many areas of Bridges' work, including FGS, the integrated skin disease training in Vanuatu, the vaccine prioritization surveys and more. The Global Health Fellow is a two-year commitment, allowing Isis to further her development within Bridges while supporting her to complete a diploma or similar short-course, continuing her emergence as a global health practitioner and leader.
- **Engaging with ASTMH:**
 - **ASTMH Leadership:** Julie completed her Presidential term and was invited to remain on the leadership team to review the ASTMH strategy and operating model in light of new ways of working post-COVID.
 - **ASTMH Meeting (November 17-21):** Bridges met with many partners in person for the first time in 2 years and contributed to sessions including Women in Global Health, FGS, and NTD / Malaria Integration.
- **Publications –** Our most published year to date, Bridges authored 14 peer-reviewed articles including spearheading a journal supplement (see Annex 2). Other publications disseminate emerging insights from our work with partners, for example, 12 case studies and reports documenting the “Movement for IA2030” with TGLF (found [here](#)) and case studies and guides produced with GLIDE (on our [website](#)).

Financials

Bridges to Development operates in Switzerland as a Swiss Association, established as a not-for-profit legal entity in 2018, and in the United States, established in 2018 and registered as a section 501(c)(3) organization. As a not-for-profit Swiss Association, Bridges is exempt from Swiss cantonal and federal taxes and the US entity is also an exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code.

Funding for Bridges in 2022 was received from diverse international organizations, foundations, and corporations in Europe, US, Asia and the Middle East. Income and grants received in 2022 totaled USD 1,661,995 in Switzerland and USD 1,610,661 in the US with expenses totaling USD 1,420,792 in Switzerland and USD 1,433,446 in the US. The total unrestricted funds of the organization as of 31 December 2022 amounted to USD 571,611 in Switzerland and USD 335,293 in the US. The restricted funds as of the same date were USD 0 in Switzerland and US 3,204,356 in the US. The restricted funds in the US are comprised of a three-year grant for the PINE project which commenced in 2021. Bridges financial statements underwent a Voluntary Audit in Switzerland by Gestoval Société Fiduciaire SA according to Swiss Auditing Standards and a full audit in the US by Aiken & Sanders, Inc., PS. according to Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS).

Acknowledgements

The shaping of Bridges continues to depend on a myriad of support from individuals whose contributions are key to Bridges' success, including our dedicated Board members, our external collaborators, graduate student interns, bookkeepers, and accountants. We are indebted to you all. Our gratitude extends to our families, near and far, whose love and encouragement continues to nurture all of us at Bridges.



Bridges' Team Retreat July 2022, Geneva

Alan Brooks

Managing Partner and Co-founder; Switzerland

Julie Jacobson

Managing Partner and Co-founder; US

Sarah Churchill

Partner and Co-founder; Switzerland

Anastasia Pantelias

Associate Partner; US

Isis Umbelino,

Global Health Fellow, Netherlands

Cathy Grebert

Finance and Operations Manager, Switzerland

Edda Magnus

Contractor, Switzerland

Nicole Vecchio

Contractor, US

Bridges Interns

Anmol Yagnik,

The Graduate Institute, Switzerland

Maria Dreher Wentz ,

London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine, UK

Annex 1: Bridges' Strategy Overview (2021 – 2023)

Our Purpose

Advance economic and social well-being by supporting opportunities for communities to overcome health and education barriers

towards our Vision

Resilient communities on a path towards sustainable development

through these Goals

- 1. Champion and deliver on innovative international development ideas**
- 2. Advance novel solutions to global health and development needs of marginalized communities**
- 3. Scale-up transformative technologies**

Aspirational Goal: Launch a fund to independently pursue big ideas for global change

building upon Enabling Strategies

- Inspire increased commitments
- Bring in new partners
- Strengthen partnerships to achieve ambitious goals that meet the needs of marginalized communities

and our Organizational Approach

- Obtain diverse and reliable funding to sustain a dynamic and creative team of dedicated experts
- Commit to learning, improvement, and continuous growth
- Honour diversity in thought and talents
- Invest in the next generation
- Be courageous and collaborative

Annex 2: Bridges' Journal Publications in 2022

1. Jacobson J. **Compressing the Timelines for Development and Delivery: Accelerating Access to Triple-Drug Therapy to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022;106(5_Suppl):4-12. Published 2022 Mar 15. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.21-1174
2. King JD, Jacobson J, Krentel A. **Accelerating the Uptake of WHO Recommendations for Mass Drug Administration Using Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine, and Albendazole.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022;106(5_Suppl):26-28. Published 2022 Mar 15. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.21-0972
3. Ghosh RS, Halder P, Jacobson J. **Lessons Learned from the Japanese Encephalitis Vaccine Introduction in India That Supported the Introduction of Ivermectin-Diethylcarbamazine-Albendazole for Lymphatic Filariasis Elimination.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022;106(5_Suppl):48-55. Published 2022 Mar 15. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.21-1168
4. Pantelias A, King JD, Lammie P, Weil GJ. **Development and Introduction of the Filariasis Test Strip: A New Diagnostic Test for the Global Program to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022 Mar 15;106(5_Suppl):56-60. doi: 10.4269/ajtmh.21-0990. PMID: 35292584; PMCID: PMC9154646.
5. Jacobson J, Brooks A. **Reflections on "Orchestrating for Impact": Harmonizing across Stakeholders to Accelerate Global Health Gains.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022;106(5_Suppl):67-69. Published 2022 Mar 15. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.21-1101
6. Saxenian H, Alkenbrack S, Freitas Attaran M, et al. **Sustainable financing for Immunization Agenda 2030** [published online ahead of print, 2022 Dec 1]. *Vaccine.* 2022; S0264-410X(22)01450-5.
7. Lindstrand A, Mast E, Churchill S, et al. **Implementing the immunization agenda 2030: A framework for action through coordinated planning, monitoring & evaluation, ownership & accountability, and communications & advocacy** [published online ahead of print, 2023 Jan 11]. *Vaccine.* 2023; S0264-410X(21)01236-6.
8. Blanc DC, Grundy J, Sodha SV, et al. **Immunization programs to support primary health care and achieve universal health coverage** [published online ahead of print, 2022 Dec 8]. *Vaccine.* 2022; S0264-410X(22)01218-X.
9. Jacobson J, Pantelias A, Williamson M, et al. **Addressing a silent and neglected scourge in sexual and reproductive health in Sub-Saharan Africa by development of training competencies to improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) for health workers.** *Reprod Health.* 2022;19(1):20. Published 2022 Jan 24. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-021-01252-2>
10. Aribodor OB, Mogaji HO, Surakat OA, et al. **Profiling the knowledge of female medical/para-medical students, and expertise of health care professionals on female genital schistosomiasis in Anambra, South Eastern Nigeria.** *PLoS Negl Trop Dis.* 2023;17(2):e0011132. Published 2023 Feb 16. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0011132
11. Vlassoff C, Arogundade K, Patel K, Jacobson J, Gyapong M, Krentel A. **Improving the Response of Health Systems to Female Genital Schistosomiasis in Endemic Countries through a Gender-Sensitive Human Rights-Based Framework.** *Diseases.* 2022;10(4):125. Published 2022 Dec 14. doi:10.3390/diseases10040125
12. Jacobson J. **Wisdom on the 3 Cs-Compassion, Culture, and Courage-from One of My Heroes, President Jimmy Carter.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022;106(1):10-11. Published 2022 Jan 5. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.21-1147>
13. Jacobson J. **Brave New World[†]** [published online ahead of print, 2022 Aug 22]. *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2022;107(4):733-739. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.22-0447
14. Ward P, Broadfield LA, Dahlberg P, Gemechu L, Mekonnen Z, Nabatte B, Kabatereine N, Brooks A, Orrling KM, Gomes M, Van Hoecke S, Levecke B, and Stuyver L. **The development of an artificial intelligence-based digital pathology for neglected tropical diseases: A platform specific analysis of the WHO diagnostic target product profile for soil-transmitted helminthiasis** *Front. Trop. Dis.* 2022. Sec. Neglected Tropical Diseases Volume 3 - 2022