

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

Advancing resilient communities on a path
towards sustainable development

www.bridgestodevelopment.org

Message from the Co-Founders

2025 was a year of profound change for the global health community.

The funding landscape shifted dramatically, with major bilateral aid programs facing significant cuts or dissolution. For many of our partners, it was a year of scrambling to protect life-saving programs and rethinking how best to respond to emergencies and outbreaks in a world of even more constrained resources and rapid changes.

The shift has been abrupt and intensely damaging. It has also exposed the fragility of a global health architecture too dependent on bilateral aid. Debates around the future of development have been renewed, reaffirming the importance of diverse, nimble, and locally-driven solutions and innovation as well as the continued need for multilateralism. For Bridges, the shift meant we engaged in conversations with new potential partners and funders and looked in new directions for ways to apply our global health and development experience. It was a year of exploration and adaptation.

Despite these global headwinds, 2025 was also a year of reflection and celebration. Marking our 7th anniversary, we gathered our 'alumni' of interns who have been integral to Bridges since 2018. Seeing these young professionals carve their paths as epidemiologists, researchers, and policy advocates reminded us that while funding cycles may fluctuate, the investment we make in people is permanent. As we look toward 2026, Bridges remains committed to 'bridging' these gaps—between innovation and impact, and between the voices of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Co-Founders

Alan Brooks, Sarah Churchill, Julie Jacobson

Updates and Highlights

Seven Years of Growth: Celebrating our Intern Programme

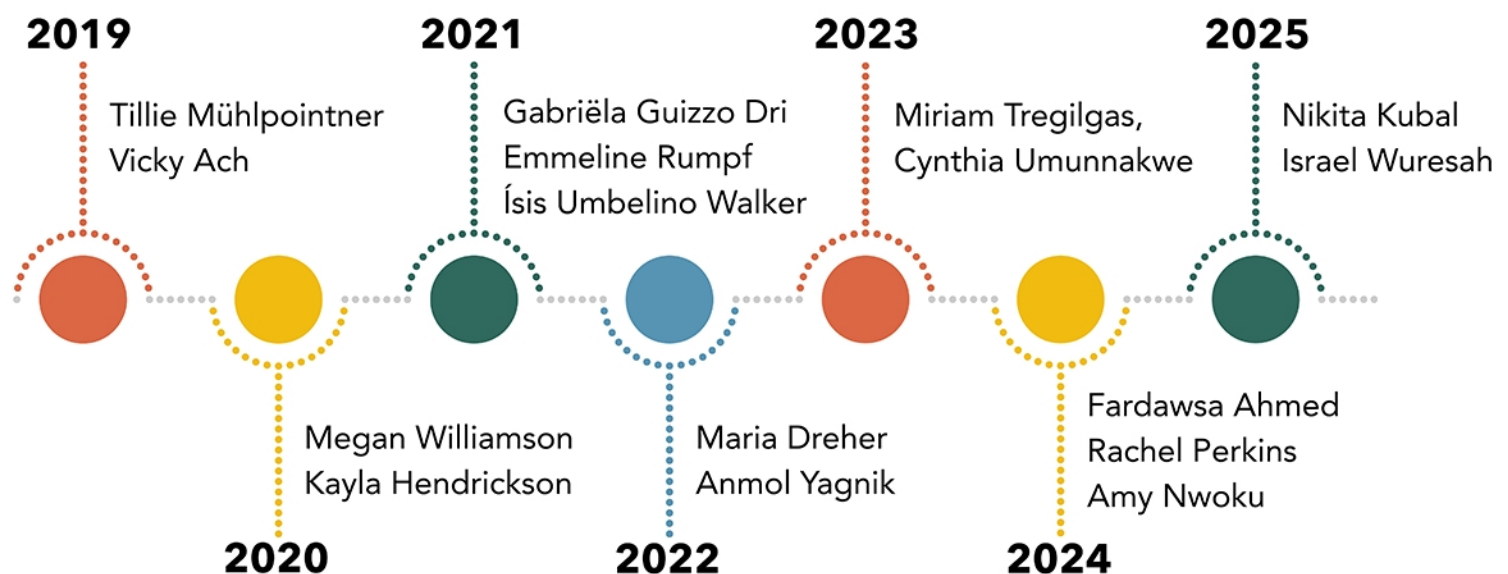
Since 2019, the Bridges internship programme has offered exceptional early-career professionals enrolled in a Master's Degree "an immersive" entry point into global health practice. They have come from Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe. What began as a modest commitment to nurturing the next generation has grown, over seven cohorts, into one of the defining expressions of the Bridges ethos: small, purposeful, and genuinely impactful.

Over this period, sixteen interns have passed through our virtual doors – each contributing meaningfully to projects, bringing fresh perspectives, and leaving with skills, networks and a sense of purpose that has continued to shape their careers long after their time with us ended.



Our Intern Alumni: Seven Years at a Glance

Each cohort has brought distinct energy and talent. The diagram below shows those who have been part of the Bridges community since the program was launched.



What the Internship Offers – and Why It Matters

Bridges integrates our interns into the full life of the team –learning about how an international organization operates, representing Bridges in multi-stakeholder meetings, conducting surveillance research, engaging directly with country-level partners, and contributing to proposals. Interns are never spectators; they are participants.

Central to the experience is mentorship. Team members invest personal time and attention in each intern's development. The result is a programme that produces not just capable professionals, but more confident ones.

Reunion & Reflection: Bringing the Community Back Together

On 1 July 2025, Bridges convened a virtual reunion of its intern alumni. Past interns, current interns and Bridges team members gathered online to share where life had taken them, what the internship had meant, and what advice they would pass on to those just starting out.

The meeting was remarkable for the warmth, candour and diversity of experience on display.

Voices from the Reunion

Alumni shared reflections that spoke to four recurring themes: Mentorship, Belonging, Practical Learning and Career Impact.

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Looking back on my time at Bridges, what I valued most was being able to put what I was learning in my master's into real-world practice. Being part of multi-stakeholder committees and transnational meetings was a highlight. It helped me build skills that I still use in my work today.



Gabriela Guizzo Dri
Now working in Global Health Strategy

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At Bridges, experts here in this field value your contributions as an intern. It beat the status quo I had come from, where those above you are masters you never question.



Israel Wuresah
Pursuing his PhD in 2026

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Working at Bridges expanded my view on how to truly collaborate and foster partnerships. Before this internship, I knew what global health was all about – but being part of Bridges helped me understand how it actually works. I am extremely grateful for my first real experience in global health. When I am managing people today, I think of [Bridges'] model.



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Now Consulting in Global Health

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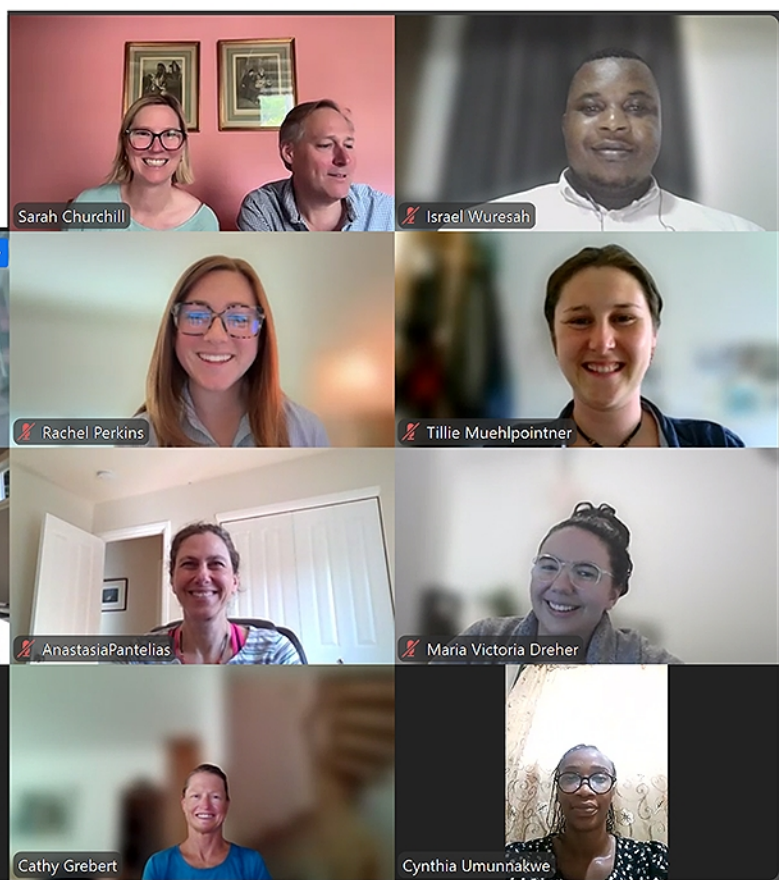
It was during my time at Bridges that I truly came to understand what meaningful collaboration looks like. The team created an environment where I could grow. It was a space where my learning was taken seriously, and where I felt both supported and intellectually challenged. I left more skilled, more confident, and more certain of what I want to do with my career.



Amy Nwoku
MD, MPH

Intern Reunion

1 July 2025



Where Alumni Are Today

The emerging career paths of Bridges interns are varied. The role played by Bridges was a common thread: the opportunities it opened, the confidence it nurtured, and the professional relationships it seeded. One previous intern is now an epidemiologist analyzing big datasets on medication data and impacts. Another is an epidemiologist for HIV surveillance in Canada. A third previous intern completed her PhD and is now a university lecturer. One progressed to USAID and then into life sciences and market access for new medicines. And another moved into Accident and Emergency nursing, humanitarian work with migrants, and now pursues project management in the humanitarian sector. Several alumni are in the process of doctoral studies; others are building careers in global health consulting.

What we heard was reassuring and hopeful- that Bridges equips its interns with transferable skills in communication, stakeholder engagement, critical analysis and independent thinking - valuable across disciplines.

Looking Ahead: An Alumni Community in the Making

One of the most meaningful outcomes of the reunion was the appetite expressed by alumni for ongoing connection. Several participants offered to join a mentorship group to support our future interns. A new communication channel has been created so alumni can stay in touch and reach out when navigating challenges. This sense of community is a natural extension of everything the programme has stood for.

Dedicated to ensuring our internship programme remains meaningful, we have explored ways to strengthen it further, such as with weekly “learning sessions” run by the Bridges team, guests and the interns themselves, and stronger direct connections between interns and with interns in other organizations. Recognising that we had consistently received applications from mid-career professionals who didn't fit the intern profile, we also decided at the end of 2025 to expand our offering to include a fellowship programme in 2026.

Say yes to meetings and opportunities whenever you can. I learned so much just by joining and observing various stakeholder meetings. Even when I wasn't actively contributing, being in the (virtual) room helped me understand the dynamics of collaboration, decision-making, and how different sectors interact.

Gabriela Guizzo Dri
Advice to Future Bridges Interns

2025 Internship Highlights

Nikita Kubal (US) and Israel Wuresah (Ghana), our 2025 interns learned from and with each other throughout their internships. They shared strategies about applying to PhD programs and worked with interns in other organizations. Towards the end of their internships, both had their master's theses accepted for presentation at the American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) Annual Meeting in Toronto.

Nikita presented, "Intersecting Epidemics: The Co-occurrence of Diabetes and Lymphatic Filariasis in South India," at the Young Investigator

Awards and also as a poster.

She stepped in to support Israel, by delivering on his behalf while he connected virtually:

"Adolescent Boys' Attitudes Towards Menstruation in Selected High Schools in Ghana." Bridges also supported Nikita as she moved into a PhD program and Israel as he accepted a research position in female genital schistosomiasis, and began applying to PhD programs.

At the ASTMH, the team also took the opportunity to connect with previous interns Anmol and Maria in person. These opportunities to maintain contact and even meet in person reinforce the community we've built.



Bridges' team at the ASTMH 2025 Annual Meeting. Top: Nikita Kubal (intern) presenting on behalf of Israel Wuresah (intern). Bottom, L-R: Nikita Kubal (intern), Alan Brooks (Managing Partner, Switzerland), Julie Jacobson (Managing Partner, US), Nicole Vecchio (Programme Coordinator, US).

STOP2030: Pioneering more effective and efficient treatment for intestinal worms

Bridges continued its leadership as part of the STOP2030 consortium, working through 2027 to advance the first new treatment for soil-transmitted helminths in over 40 years, a new fixed dose combination of the medicines albendazole and ivermectin (FDC). Bridges' role focuses on the policy and access planning in parallel with clinical trials critical to shorten timelines between availability of medicines and public health impact in low- and middle-income countries. This work is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme through the Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking as well as the Swiss government's State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation.

In January 2025 the European Union's European Medicine's Agency (EMA), working in consultation with WHO, provided its positive scientific opinion noting the safety and efficacy of FDC for treatment of intestinal worms and lymphatic filariasis. This facilitates wider regulatory approval and in due course, WHO pre-qualification allowing procurement by UN agencies. Strikingly the EMA issued a press release emphasizing the importance of this new medicine tailored for the needs of low-

and middle-income countries.

This was followed by the first endemic country approval when



the Ghana Food and Drug Administration licensed the use and sale of fixed-dose combination.

2025 marked a critical turning point for the consortium in Africa as well with the successful launch of the REALISE clinical trials in Kenya and Ghana.

In parallel with this progress, Bridges continued supporting dialogue with the World Health Organization, countries, and partners associated with policy and access planning. Bridges co-authored with consortium partners a pivotal publication⁴ including data from over 700,000 individual patients, looking at the use of a fixed dose of ivermectin versus traditional and more complicated dosing according to height or weight of individuals.

Bridges' interns also worked closely with Consortium investigators and interns at the Kenya Medical and Research Institute. The intern-to-intern collaboration led to a unique growth opportunity, and advanced publications into the modeling of costs and cost effectiveness of the FDC. Their work will begin to be published in 2026.

The development of Ivermectin/Albendazole holds a high public health value as it will bring concrete advantages to the effectiveness of mass administration programmes in countries where these diseases are endemic. It will help reduce the risk of incorrect dosage, improve adherence, and reduce manufacturing and transport costs. Ultimately, this will allow more people to be treated.

Source: <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/new-combination-medicines-treat-parasitic-worm-infections>

Strategic Policy Guidance: Engaging Gates' Design, Analyse and Communicate (DAC) Team

Bridges Managing Partners joined the Gates' Design, Analyse and Communicate (DAC) team in 2023 as policy experts providing review and guidance for Gates' funded projects through their DAC program. The DAC Team was created to maximize the informativeness and impact of global health clinical research. In 2025, Bridges reviewed and advised on a wide variety of global health projects. The team also supported the DAC team to refine and update the policy review process to provide better input across the diverse projects and improve publicly available tools, such as the [Target Policy Profile \(TPoP\)](#) tool, for the broader global health clinical research community. This work helps projects understand the policy pathway and reduce the time from innovation to impact, which is well aligned to Bridges strategy.

Developing a Minimum Service Package for Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS) Integration

In mid-2025, we closed out our contributions to a 2-year Children's Investment Fund Foundation funded FGS integration project in Kenya. Working in partnership with the government of Kenya, Frontline AIDS, and LVCT Health, Bridges helped develop and pilot a minimum service package which included health literacy, screening, diagnosis, and treatment, and reached over 55,000 women across 3 counties in Kenya. As part of this project, we conducted and published implementation research⁷ to assess the feasibility and acceptability of integration for patients as well as providers. We found significant gaps in knowledge and awareness, stigma-related barriers, and the absence of standardised indicators in digital health information system which hampers effective data collection, reporting, and resource planning, including procurement of praziquantel. The project found that both patients and health workers were highly receptive to integration of FGS within SRH, with an acceptability rate of 98.8% and 97% respectively. Integration also enabled diagnosis and highlighted a hidden burden of FGS. 8,856 women were screened for FGS, with an overall estimated positivity rate of 27.7%.

These findings are important to our work in FGS as they confirm a significant burden in endemic regions and the acceptability, to both patients and health workers, of integrating FGS interventions into existing SRH services. Bridges will continue to look for opportunities to integrate FGS interventions in order to support women and girls at risk of and suffering from FGS.



Sarah Churchill (Bridges' Partner) and Zabeen Moser-Mawji (Bridges' Board Member) attend an FGS Integration Group (FIG) advocacy event during World Health Assembly 78

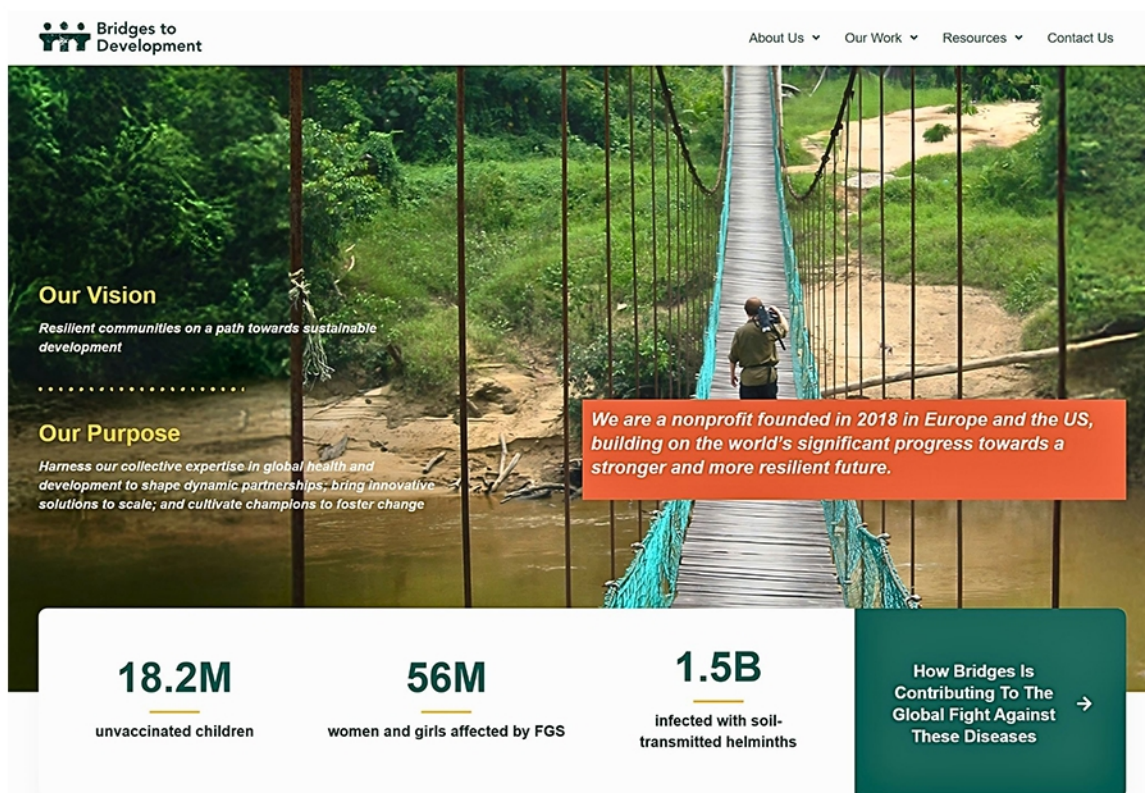
Strengthening Partnerships and Amplifying Endemic Voices in our FGS Advocacy Work

In 2025, Bridges continued to support the work of the FGS Integration Group (FIG) on the Steering Committee and on the Communications Working Group. With FIG and the Canadian Network on NTDs, we also led the coordination of an FGS partners meeting to align on priorities for FGS interventions and research. The group's meaningful discussions concluded with the identification of key research priorities for FGS diagnosis and treatment. Partners shared significant progress and experience from recent FGS integration work and agreed that countries cannot wait for perfect evidence to implement FGS integration- there is an imperative to start putting this into practice in programs now. Bridges also convened a session on FGS Integration at the American Society of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine (ASTMH) and helped support the travel of two endemic country speakers to join the panel and share the perspectives on integration from Kenya and Malawi. These experts also played a key role in the broader FGS Strategy meeting mentioned above.

Organisational Updates

Digital Evolution: A New Virtual Home for Bridges

In 2025, we launched our new and improved website, designed on a more user-friendly platform to share our story and work. This platform reflects our growth and our ongoing commitment to transparency and knowledge sharing.



Financial Report

Established in 2018, Bridges to Development operates in Switzerland as a non-profit Swiss Association, and in the United States as a Section 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

As with many organizations working in international development, Bridges has experienced a significant drop in funding in 2025 particularly from United Nations organizations, which was directly related to the reduction in funding for global health. Funding gaps resulted in a net deficit for the financial year that aligned with our budgetary expectations.

Bridges used this period to focus our grant proposal

pipeline and forge relationships with a diverse new network of potential funding partners.

2025 highlighted our organization's resilience, foundational strength, and long-term financial sustainability.

Audited financial statements are available on request from finance@bridgestodevelopment.org. Bridges' financial statements underwent an audit in Switzerland by Gestoval Société Fiduciaire SA according to Swiss Auditing Standards and in the US by Aiken & Sanders, Inc., PS. according to Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS).

Team Publications in 2025

1. Watt, N. , Yousef, D., Brooks, A., Juma, E., Saarlal, K., Sanikullah, K., Al-Gunaid, M., Byrne, M., Renshaw, M., Bland, S., and Erundu, N. A. "Replenishing Hope: The Time for Country-Led Integration Is Now", *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 14, 1, 2025, 1-3. doi: 10.34172/ijhpm.9284

2. Fleming FM, Preston A, Bettee AK, et al. Now, more than ever, it's time to address the neglect of female genital schistosomiasis. *Parasitology*. Published online 2025:1-8. doi:10.1017/S0031182025101297

3. Eller K, Nwoku KA, Sadki R, Vecchio N, Pensotti C, Mbuh CN, Jacobson, J. (2025) Decolonizing infectious disease programs: A mixed methods analysis of a novel multi-country virtual training for Female Genital Schistosomiasis. *PLOS Glob Public Health* 5(12): e0004235. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0004235>

4. Echazu A, Bonanno D, Fleitas PE, Jacobson J, Matamoros G, Mwandawiro C, Enbiale W, de Jesus Á, Brooks A, Krolewiecki AJ. Fixed-dose ivermectin for Mass Drug Administration: Is it time to leave the dose pole behind? Insights from an Individual Participant Data Meta-Analysis. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis*. 2025 Sep 15;19(9):e0013059. doi: 10.1371/journal.pntd.0013059. PMID: 40953116; PMCID: PMC12449026.

5. Mitjà O, Gass K, Marks M, Cooper PJ, Diggle PJ, Waller L, Agana-Nsiire P, Dofitas BL, Dyson L, Jacobson J, Kaldor J, Kim SH, Vaz Nery S, Revankar C, Sopoh G, Solomon AW, Dagne DA, Pathak P, Yajima A, Lin Z, Barogui MYT, Scholte RC, Sanikullah KH, Drakeley C, Stresman G, Gyapong J, Asiedu KB. Guidance for conducting and evaluating serological surveys to assess interruption of yaws transmission in the context of an eradication target. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis*. 2025 Apr 23;19(4):e0012899. doi: 10.1371/journal.pntd.0012899. PMID: 40267048; PMCID: PMC12017476.

6. Mberu M, Zongo K, Leaning E, Makau-Barasa L, Kamara K, Jacobson J. Female genital schistosomiasis: Addressing diagnostic and programmatic gaps to advance elimination efforts. *Int J Infect Dis*. 2025 Mar;152:107798. doi: 10.1016/j.ijid.2025.107798. Epub 2025 Jan 25. PMID: 39870160.

7. Karuga R, Ouma M, Mulupi S, Pillay L, Pensotti C, Gamba V, Kalume C, Schlosser D, Umbelino-Walker I, Tibiita R, Wakesho F, Nawiri P, Jeckonia P, Owiti T, Njaanake K, Ndupha H, Muinde J, Mugoha N, Mafimbo N, Leli H, Ndenge A, Otiso L, Jacobson J. Acceptability and feasibility of integrating female genital schistosomiasis and sexual and reproductive health interventions in Kenya: A demonstration study. *PLOS Glob Public Health*. 2025 Sep 17;5(9):e0004938. doi: 10.1371/journal.pgph.0004938. PMID: 40961107; PMCID: PMC12443286.



Bridges to Development

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