

## Melissa Nkeng Asongha

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Melissa Nkeng studied medicine at the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Buea, Cameroon. She is currently pursuing a PhD degree in infectious diseases and public health at the Centre for Infection Biology and Tropical Health (CIBITH), University of Buea. As a physician-scientist with an interest in the intersection of neglected tropical diseases and reproductive health, her research focuses on understanding the biology, pathophysiology, and impact of schistosomiasis in the genital tract of sexually active women with the goal of contributing towards designing community-level interventions to control and prevent the disease in Chad. Furthermore, she is interested in the local research capacity building of junior female scientists as a basis for promoting women in science.

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## Project

### **Unraveling the hidden burden of Female Genital Schistosomiasis in rural Chad**

Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS) is a neglected tropical disease posing a significant public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa. The disease is primarily caused by untreated infection with *Schistosoma haematobium* acquired through contact with contaminated freshwater bodies used by rural communities, particularly women and girls for daily activities. Chad is endemic for schistosomiasis. However, in-country data on the burden of FGS is lacking. Indeed, as a neglected disease, affected individuals and frontline healthcare workers are generally not aware of FGS owing to its overlapping manifestation with sexually transmitted infections. A critical aspect of assessing the burden of FGS is understanding the nature and prevalence of the disease among communities. Here, I will measure the current FGS burden in Chad and contribute to providing evidence-based data to implement policy decisions for girls and women at risk of FGS.