

Biographies Speakers WHS 2025

About Maria Rebollo Polo

As Lead of the Global Onchocerciasis Elimination Program at the World Health Organization, Dr Maria Rebollo is helping direct the fight against river blindness. Prior to this position she was Team Leader of Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN) at the WHO Regional Office for Africa. She is a **physician** and public health specialist with two decades of experience in NTDs, project management and international public health throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas. She also holds a PhD in medical epidemiology.

About Johannes Waltz

Johannes is **Director of Strategy and Finance at the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance (GSA)** which he helped to set up in 2015 as enabling and facilitating platform for members and the wider schistosomiasis community. Johannes is also **Head of the Merck Schistosomiasis Elimination Program (MSEP)** at the German science and technology company Merck. In this position he is responsible for the placement of 250 million tablets of praziquantel throughout sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. In addition, Johannes is chairman of the German Pharma Health Fund which aims to improve health care and medicines supply by supporting the fight against counterfeit and substandard quality medicines proliferation using GPHF-Minilab™ test kits. Johannes holds an **MBA** from Henley Management College, an **MA from the School of Oriental and African Studies** at the University of London, and a Doctorate of **Law** from the University of Vienna.

About Carol Karutu

Prior to **joining the END Fund**, Carol served a **Chief** of Party for a USAID funded integrated health project implemented by IntraHealth International in Eastern Uganda, where she provided technical, financial and overall managerial oversight across 30 districts and in over 600 health facilities. Previously, Carol served as project director for multiple **HIV and AIDS, maternal child health, family planning and human resource for health projects** supporting the design phase, implementation, evaluation and documentation with international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and South Sudan. Throughout her career, Carol has played leading roles in health workforce development, identifying and strengthening health service delivery gaps and building partnerships with governments and local communities for sustainable solutions. **Carol received her Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) and Master's in Public Health (MPH) from Boston University School of Public Health and a Bachelor of Science (Botany and Zoology) from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya.** Carol's doctoral research which employed quantitative, qualitative and quality improvement methodologies focused on building evidence to improve retention of HIV positive women enrolled in the prevention of HIV from the mother to the child programs in Kenya. Carol is a 2014/2015 American Association of University Women (AAUW) International Fellow; a 2010 Boston University Distinguished Alumni Award recipient; a 2004 recipient of the Boston University Women's Guild Award for Academic Excellence and a 2003 recipient of the PEO International Peace Scholarship. Outside of work, Carol enjoys reading, long distance running, and visiting new places.

About Laurent Fraise

Laurent Fraise joined the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) as Research & Development **(R&D) Director** and Executive Team member in October **2019**. In this capacity he drives DNDi's science strategy and oversees all research and clinical activities worldwide. **Laurent is an experienced biotechnology and pharmaceutical executive**, and a leading expert in infectious diseases, having led R&D for large pharmaceutical firms such as **Sanofi** and **Evotec**, and served as chair of the European

Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) Strategic Governing Group dedicated to infectious diseases. Laurent joined Sanofi in 1999 after a ten-year tenure as a science leader in Elf Atochem. During 20 years at Sanofi, he rose to serve as Vice President for Infectious Disease R&D, addressing medical needs in bacterial, parasitic, and viral related infections. He then joined Evotec as Executive Vice President for infectious diseases with the mission to accelerate the infectious disease research pipeline development and initiate new open innovation R&D initiatives. Laurent graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Agronomie in Rennes, France, with a specialty in Biochemistry and was awarded a **PhD in Biotechnology** by the Institut National Polytechnique in Toulouse in 1993.