

# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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## Editorial



**Dear Reader,**  
We are happy to bring you the fourth newsletter for the Collaboration for Evidence-based Healthcare and Public Health in Africa (CEBHA+) project in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope you enjoyed our previous newsletter [CEBHA+ Newsletter Vol.3 2020](#) which highlighted how CEBHA+ sites responded to COVID-19. Despite the pandemic-associated challenges, the CEBHA+ successfully implemented all the planned activities attributable to adaptation to virtual interaction and the team spirit (“ubuntu”) exhibited across the entire network.

In this issue, we continue to highlight the exciting achievements and progress across the CEBHA+ sites amidst the ongoing pandemic in 2021. We also share achievements of our students with a special focus on the anticipated impact of their research findings.

*All the best as you read this issue. Stay safe and resilient!*

**Prof. Rulisa Stephen, Principal Investigator, University of Rwanda**

### Sponsor



### Sub Saharan Africa

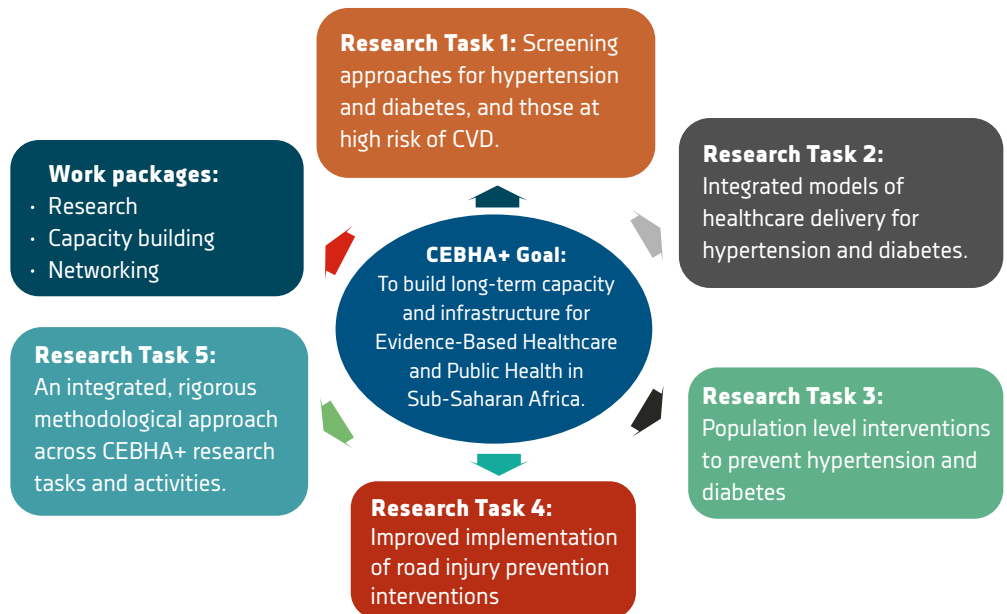


### CEBHA+ Contracts Management



## CEBHA+ Overview

Visit: [www.cebha-plus.org/](http://www.cebha-plus.org/)



## CEBHA+ Students News

### Graduations

Congratulations to the CEBHA+ supported students (here below) upon their graduation and we wish them the best in their future career endeavors.



Hannah Simba, Stellenbosch University, completed her PhD in Public Health on *“The role of genetic and environmental factors in the aetiology of oesophageal cancer”* and graduated in December 2021. She said, *“I’m very happy to have graduated...Prof. Harriet Mayanja, who is my CEBHA+ mentor, really helped with the defense preparation and support. I plan to do gene x environment interactions work in the near future”*. Hannah is currently in Lyon, France, where she was accepted for a postdoctoral fellowship at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Hannah and her research were featured online in African Business: *Young African Women in STEM: Hannah Simba\_Biomedical Science* and also published a piece in the *Mail and Guardian* in August 2021.

Jean Damascene Bigirimana, University of Rwanda, completed his Master’s Degree in Public Health on *“Assessment of Perceived Benefits from “Car Free Day” to mitigate the risk factors for NCDs in Kigali – Rwanda.”* He said, *“The two-year study has transformed me into a Public Health Practitioner with added interest in Non-Communicable Diseases. I am grateful to my mentor Ass. Prof. David Tumusiime who was immensely supportive during my journey of acquiring this Master’s Degree. I am currently working on the manuscript from my thesis.”*



Dynamo Ndacyayisenga, University of Rwanda, completed his Master’s degree in Public Health on *“Prevalence and comorbidity of depression and alcohol use disorders among youth in Rwanda”* in July 2021. *“I express my sincere thanks to CEBHA+ project for the financial and other forms of support. I appreciate the technical guidance from my CEBHA+ mentors Prof. Stephen Rulisa and Mr. Seleman Ntawuyirushintege during this journey. I plan to pursue a PhD”* he said. Dynamo is currently working at the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) Mental Health Division as Director of the Drug Abuse Management Unit and the findings from his study are supporting the RBC and partners in planning for evidence based strategies to address substance use disorders.

## Other Students News

Helen Mearns, Cochrane South Africa, received a distinction for her Master’s dissertation *“To assess the effects of targeted, opportunistic or mass screening for type 2 diabetes mellitus in adults”*. Helen was supervised by two CEBHA+ researchers – Tamara Kredon and Bey-Marrie Schmidt. Congratulations Helen!



Dr. Kufre Okop, CDIA, a post-doc student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), focussing on Citizen Science, provided training, mentorship, and support on citizen science approaches to CEBHA+ colleagues working on research task 1 in Malawi, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Kufre, among other achievements, made a presentation titled “Co-developing cardiovascular disease risk prevention strategies and advocacy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from CEBHA+ Citizen Science project” at a three-day annual PhD Retreat of the Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU), Munich, Medical Research in Epidemiology and Public Health programme. This kindled a passion in some LMU students who have begun developing participatory Citizen Science-related project ideas as part of their research.



## CEBHA+ Output and Activities

### Networking Internationally

#### The CEBHA+ 4th Annual Networking Meeting, Rwanda



L-R Prof. Rulisa Stephen, Prof. Lyambabaje Alexandre

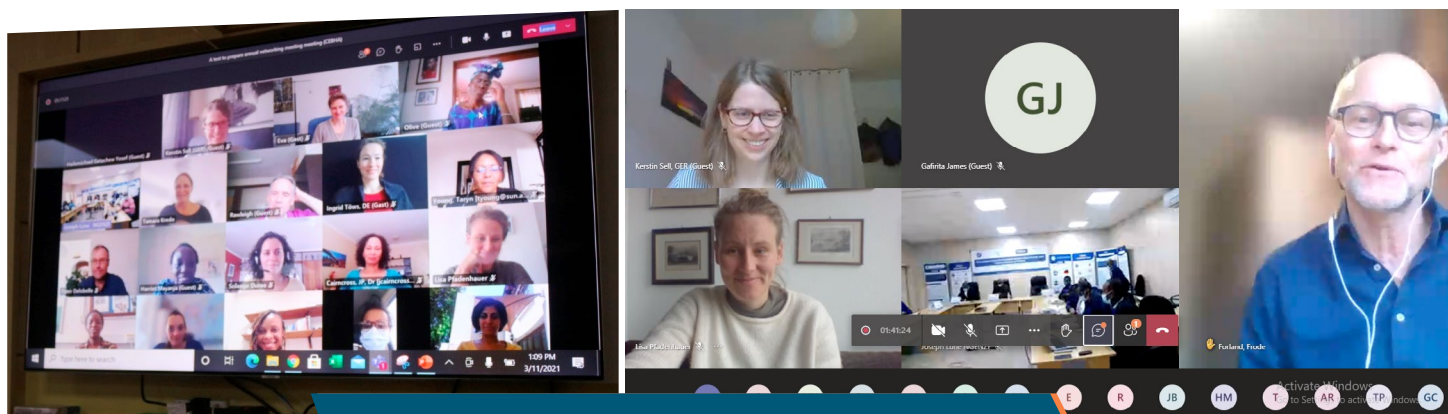
The fourth CEBHA+ annual networking meeting was hosted by the University of Rwanda (UR) from 10th to 12th March 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, only a few members of the Rwanda team met physically at the University campus. The rest of the Rwanda team and stakeholders as well as participants at other CEBHA+ partner sites and CEBHA+ Advisory Board members attended online.

The meeting aimed to share achievements and challenges and to collectively explore solutions for identified challenges. Beyond that, each CEBHA+ site shared lessons, and next steps across the three work packages; research, networking, and capacity building which includes integrated knowledge translation (IKT).

This meeting was officially opened by the University of

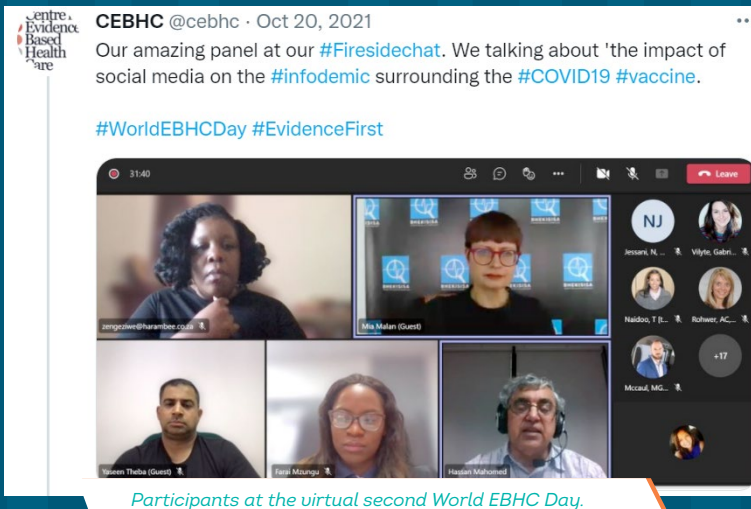
Rwanda Vice Chancellor, Prof. Lyambabaje Alexandre. Each CEBHA+ Advisory Board Member in attendance provided their input and evaluation of the program.

Read More: [The CEBHA+ 4th Annual Networking Meeting - Report](#)



Some of the online participants at the CEBHA+ 4th Annual networking meeting

## World Evidence Based Healthcare day: #Evidencefirst



The second World Evidence-Based Healthcare Day was held in October 2021. The Centre for Evidence based Healthcare (CEBHC) at Stellenbosch University, represented by Dr. Nasreen Jessani and a small team, was an official partner of the event. The theme for the year 2021 was the 'Role of Evidence in an Infodemic' – a very relevant topic with various (mostly online) events organized across the globe. The CEBHC hosted various webinars as well as a twitter chat. The meeting details are accessible on the link: [world-ebhc-day-fireside-chat](#), and a summary of international events can be accessed [here](#).

## The CEBHA+ COVID-19 response

A number of CEBHA+ members were actively involved in the COVID-19 response in various capacities. The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) facilitated some of these in-country activities by additional designated funding. We share with you some highlights from CEBHA+ sites.

### Malawi: COVID-19 Building Back Better Dissemination Conference



Group photo with Minister of Health, Dr. Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda

The CEBHA+ Malawi team hosted researchers, policymakers and public health professionals at the COVID-19 “Building Back Better” Dissemination Conference in October 2021. The theme “Building Back Better” emerged from a worldwide challenge to countries to build back from the pandemic in ways which are stronger, faster, more inclusive and more resilient to future shocks and pandemics.

As stakeholder relationships continue to be central in CEBHA+ activities, this event was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the

National Commission for Science and Technology. The event was graced by the Minister of Health, Dr. Khumbize Chiponda Kandodo who was the guest of honor, and representatives from the WHO, UNICEF and the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS). Dr. Janet Kayita, the WHO country representative highlighted in her key note address the importance of research to the COVID-19 response, and the need to build resilience and work differently. The conference attracted stakeholders from different sectors and institutions such as the Malawi Liverpool Welcome Trust, KUHeS, the Ministry of Agriculture and Malawi University of Science and Technology. Research findings were presented in three parallel sessions: Epidemiology & Health Systems; Social Science, public engagement and communication and; Biomedical Sciences.



*Dr. Kondwani Jambo from Malawi Liverpool Welcome Trust presenting on COVID-19 variants.*

## Uganda: Results validation meeting with road safety stakeholders for COVID-19 study

Research Task 4 team, Uganda, held a results validation meeting for the CEBHA+ COVID-19 study in November 2021. This study assessed the impact of COVID-19 on mobility patterns in Kampala metropolitan area. This was a blended workshop with participants attending both physically and virtually. Participants included health workers, market vendors, taxi drivers, motorbike “boda-boda” riders, personnel from Kampala Capital City Authority (Department of Engineering and Technical services), Traffic Police, Ministry of Works and Transport and Makerere University School of Public Health.



*Some of the participants at the data validation meeting, Uganda.*

The workshop shared preliminary findings with study participants, validated findings with the respondents and clarified unexplained concepts in the results. Through this workshop, the study team gained insights into the results and got information that was otherwise not captured during data collection.

**South Africa:** Cochrane South Africa and Stellenbosch University. Under the additional COVID-19 response grant, and in collaboration with key national stakeholders, the following activities are underway:

**Doing research:** Aligned with CEBHA+ activities, together we have completed 10 rapid reviews to inform national guidelines with several more currently underway.

**Engagement support:** Working with the National Department of Health and other partners to implement strategic

engagement and communication with key stakeholders for the COVID-19 rapid reviews and guidelines (Nasreen Jessani)

**Communication support:** Specifically for the national COVID-19 rapid reviews and guidelines, hiring of an infographics designer to support social media product development.

**Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of activities launched under the strategic engagement mentioned above was approved by the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) ethics committee. M&E planning and implementation is underway with support from Bey Marrie Schmidt (University of Western Cape) and Tamara Kredon (SAMRC).

**South Africa:** Chronic Disease Initiative for Africa (CDIA). The funding is facilitating the “*trying to understand the vaccine hesitancy in our society*” study. Field workers were trained in qualitative methodology and data collection was carried out in 3 districts in Cape Town. Data analysis is underway.

**Ethiopia:** Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI). Funds are supporting institute research projects on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in Ethiopia. Additionally, a research project assessing impact of COVID-19 on diabetes care in public and private clinic settings is ongoing.

**Rwanda:** University of Rwanda. The team is collaborating with stakeholders supporting in the mitigation and management of COVID-19.

The site continues to collaborate with the regional and networking countries regarding experiences and evidences synthesis of the pandemic.

## CEBHA+ Integrated Knowledge Translation (IKT) Workshop for Qualitative Data Analysis



Members of the IKT teams from LMU Munich, a former member of the Ethiopian IKT team, and PhD students from Makerere University and the University of Rwanda met in an online workshop on Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) in October 2021. The goal of the workshop was to (i) provide theoretical input with regards to qualitative data analysis, and (ii) align those workshop members who will participate in joint data analysis in the CEBHA+ IKT evaluation study. Workshop topics included an introduction to qualitative research, different qualitative research methods, and an introductory session to qualitative content analysis.

The workshop was set up in a blended mode with an asynchronous online module comprising the theoretical base (pre-recorded presentations) and a synchronous workshop where the theoretical insights were applied. After a short refresher, the participants embarked on a hands-on “*coding session*” working on interview excerpts. Beyond the practical coding skills, the live workshop provided an opportunity to discuss qualitative research plans in students’ PhD proposals, previous qualitative research experience, and plans for QDA in the CEBHA+ IKT evaluation study. Some workshop participants will subsequently contribute to QDA steps and data interpretation in this study.

## Engaging stakeholders

### Road Safety Media Training in Uganda

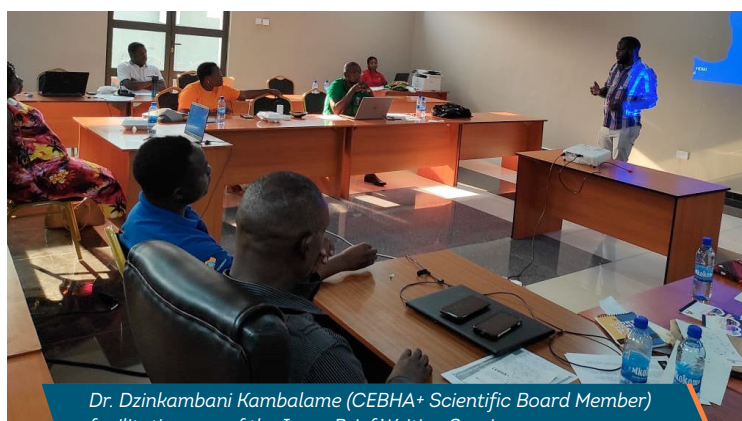


Interactive moment between (L-R) Dr. Olive Kobusingye (PI RT4), Mr. Joachim Buwembo (Journalist) and CP. Lawrence Niwabiine (Uganda Traffic Police Officer).

Research Task 4 Makerere University organized a three-day media engagement workshop on Road Safety in May 2021. This workshop targeted journalists and editors from different media houses including print, radio, television and online media. The workshop was aimed at interesting editors into covering and giving space for road safety stories as well as equipping journalists with the skills to comprehensively report on road safety events and sensitize the masses on road safety. This workshop was facilitated by CEBHA+ staff, personnel from Ministry of Works and Transport (Ms. Judith Karara, Eng. Patrick Osele), Uganda Insurer's Association (Mr. Bandru Bengo), Uganda Police Force (CP. Lawrence Niwabiine) and veteran journalists (Mr. Joachim Buwembo & Mr. Christopher Bendana). The workshop was attended by 30 journalists from different media houses. To encourage and motivate the journalists to pick interest in reporting on road safety, research task 4, Uganda, announced the National Media road safety awards to be conducted in 2022.

## Issue Brief Writing Sessions in Malawi

In an effort to synthesize the research presented at the COVID-19 Building Back Better Conference, the CEBHA+ team, Malawi, selected 6 presenters to develop recommendations for decision makers. In partnership with the Ministry of Health Knowledge Translation Platform, the team held a 5-day writing workshop in November 2021. At the end of the interactive workshop, the selected writers had completed issue briefs in a range of areas including the ethics review process, the production of face masks, and the training of healthcare workers. "The workshop was beneficial and allowed us to think beyond dissemination of research results to decision maker engagement" remarked one of the participants.



Dr. Dzinkambani Kambalame (CEBHA+ Scientific Board Member) facilitating one of the Issue Brief Writing Sessions.

## CEBHA+ Capacity Development



Malawi

### Evidence Based Public Health (EBPH) workshop

The aim of the 5-day workshop, September 2021, was to introduce the concepts of EBPH. The workshop focused on formulating clear questions, finding evidence, appraising, interpreting and applying best evidence to public health problems relevant to the Malawian setting. The course was registered with Stellenbosch University in South Africa and participants received certificates of attendance. 21 participants took part in this workshop including researchers, academics, post graduate students, stakeholders and representatives from the Ministry of Health, Malawi.



Participants at the Malawi EBPH workshop pose for a group photo

## Systematic review training

The CEBHA+ Malawi team in collaboration with the Africa Center of Excellence in Public Health and Herbal Medicine (ACEPHEM) organized a 5-day workshop on conducting systematic reviews - 18 participants were selected from 56 applicants. These were selected based on their research interests and motivation statements submitted. A range of professional backgrounds were considered including researchers, public health practitioners, academics, masters, and PhD students. Methods of delivery included lectures, interactive group exercises, case scenarios, group discussions, question-answer sessions, hands on searches for evidence and presentations of the systematic review protocols.



### Ethiopia

## Evidence Based Public Health (EBPH) workshop



Participants at the EBPH workshop in Ethiopia

The CEBHA+ AHRI team organized a workshop on EBPH in December 2021. The workshop was aimed at introducing the concepts of EBPH and focused on finding, appraising, interpreting and applying best evidence to public health questions relevant to the African setting. Participants included researchers planning to

undertake systematic reviews of public health interventions or working on other aspects of evidence-based public health, mid-career professionals working in public health institutions, higher institution academic staff and students undertaking postgraduate studies and wishing to embark on a career in evidence-based public health. The workshop was held both in person and virtually to accommodate external facilitators from Stellenbosch University and Cochrane Germany. The workshop was registered with Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and 26 participants successfully completed the training.



### Uganda

## Research administration and finance management training workshop



Participants having a health break after Mr. Mordecai Tayebwa's session (Senior Grants Officer, MakSPH)

A 5-day training in December 2021, was organized by the CEBHA+ Coordination Office, Makerere University, to enhance trainees' knowledge and skills in research grant administration and finance management. This was attended physically and virtually by 41 participants including project administrators, finance persons, grants officers, research associates and project coordinators from three CEBHA+ countries (Uganda, Rwanda and Malawi). This training was based on results of the capacity needs assessment conducted in 2020 at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences by the consultant team from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) and Capacity Development International who conducted the 'Health Africa' program evaluation.





## Rwanda

### Preliminary results sharing workshop for the study evaluating the impact of Friday Physical Activity (FPA) intervention



Participants analysing data at the workshop

The research task 3 team, Rwanda, organized a workshop to speed up data analysis for the study aimed at evaluating the implementation of Friday Physical Activity in Rwanda. The overall aim of this workshop was to review and clean the dataset, to undertake descriptive analysis and to explore further analysis needed to respond to study objectives. The workshop, held in May 2021, was attended by 13 participants comprising of CEBHA+ project staff, CEBHA+ sponsored PhD students, and academics from the University of Rwanda.

### Workshop to train CEBHA+ sponsored PhD students and staff on systematic reviews

In the context of providing CEBHA+ sponsored PhD students with regular mentorship on research skills, a workshop was organized to train both CEBHA+ sponsored PhD students and staff on systematic reviews from 29th September to 1st October 2021. The aim of the workshop was to provide fundamental knowledge and guidance on how to independently conduct a good quality systematic review and meta-analysis.

### Capacity building of Ministry of Health staff on research methods

Sparked by an expressed need by the Ministry of Health to train its staff on research skills, a training on research methods was organized in November 2021 to train staff of the Ministry of Health and its implementing agency (Rwanda Biomedical Center), as well as data collectors. This training was attended by 80 participants.



## South Africa

### Cochrane South Africa hosts a writing retreat

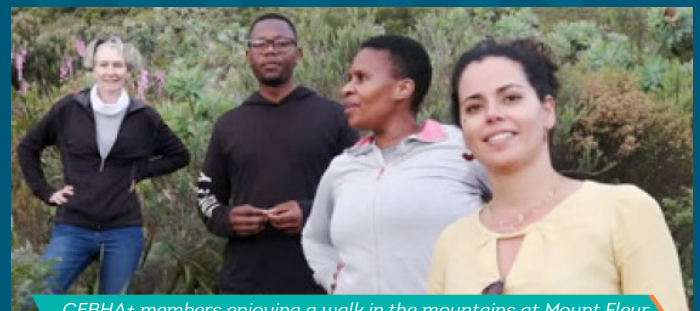


Cochrane South Africa writing retreat group photo

In November 2021, Cochrane South Africa hosted a writing retreat at the scenic Mont Fleur in Stellenbosch, Western Cape.

CEBHA+ PhD student, Machoene Derrick Sekgala was invited to the retreat to allow him time away to focus on his thesis. Derrick had this to say *"The writing retreat offered me a great opportunity to analyze my PhD data. It was quite different and refreshing to work on my PhD results in a different environment together with other students and researchers from the Medical Research Council. More especially, I was always writing at home in my house every day due to COVID-19 restrictions. The whole experience was breathtaking as the venue was very quiet and high up the mountains."*

### Capacity development opportunities in Cochrane South Africa



CEBHA+ members enjoying a walk in the mountains at Mount Fleur

As part of the CEBHA+ capacity development initiative, Cochrane SA supported 12 students and researchers (6 students/academics from South African Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs); 3 South African researchers and 1 each from Cameroon, Gambia and Kenya) to attend the accredited Primer in Systematic Reviews online short course offered by Stellenbosch University from 1st November to 20th December 2021. Bursaries were also awarded to 12 students and researchers from HDIs and the South African Medical Research Council to attend the Systematic Review and meta-analysis Masters-level short course at Stellenbosch University from July - November 2022.

## CEBHA+ students' research studies- Anticipated impact of the study findings

Machoene Derrick Sekgala, PhD, Cochrane South Africa. *"Metabolic syndrome and the risk of consuming street food among commercial taxi drivers in South Africa: a cross-sectional study."* This study will develop recommendations based on key findings. Prioritisation of recommendations will be assisted by the Gender Analysis and Integration Matrix (GAIM) that prioritizes gender-specific findings to implement evidence-based gender-specific prevention programs and clinical recommendations in future as well as determine at which level(s) the policymakers/researchers may intervene. We foresee interventions in the form of educational entertainment including comic booklets and digital storytelling comprised of curricula on food and nutrition literacy, ceasing smoking and alcohol consumption, introduction of leisure physical activity especially during break times, reduction and maintenance of healthy weight and waist circumference, and management of stress.



Derrick Sekgala (R) taking anthropometric measurement (Height) of a study participant

Lela Mukaruzima, Post Doc, University of Rwanda. *"Implementation of a workplace aerobic fitness program among office staff at Rwanda Military Hospital (RMH): A pilot intervention."* Provided the study findings show implementation feasibility at the workplace, the intervention may be replicated in other institutions to promote physical activity as one of the prevention strategies for NCDs. Otherwise, additional measures may be explored based on participant suggestions.

Hannah Simba, PhD, Stellenbosch University. *"Environmental and genetic factors associated with oesophageal cancer development in South Africa."* Knowledge from this study will improve understanding of the genetic and environmental basis of oesophageal cancer in Africa, and ultimately play a role in efforts to modulate risk and susceptibility to oesophageal cancer development and progression.

Shahista Jaffer, Masters, Stellenbosch University. *"Prevalence of Non-communicable diseases in adults living with HIV: An overview of systematic reviews."* Findings from this overview can inform policies as well as address new research topics where gaps are found. Also, it tells us the quality of systematic reviews conducted which are of low to moderate quality as per our assessment hence the evidence is not at par and better-quality evidence may be required.

Hailemichael Getachew Yosef, PhD, AHRI. *"The economic impact of metabolic syndrome (MetS) and the acceptability and cost-effectiveness of annual screening among adult people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia."* Findings could be used to show the potentially high economic impact of MetS among PLHIV and in using this evidence for public health advocacy and priority setting. It will also inform decision makers on the potential economic gains that can be achieved in implementing screening interventions and lifestyle modification. Further, it will answer the question of acceptability and cost-effectiveness of regular MetS screening for the Ethiopian setting.



Hailemichael Getachew (L), PhD student, conducting training of data collectors with other CEBHA+ colleagues in Ethiopia.

Bayiga Esther D. Zziwa, PhD, Makerere University. *"Pedestrian safety and the built environment in Kampala city, Uganda."* Findings will provide policy makers with information on how to improve the design and planning of the city while ensuring safety of pedestrians.

Agnes Gatarayiha, PhD, University of Rwanda. *"Oral microbiome in chronic periodontitis: Association with hypertension among adults in Rwanda."* Findings will be of great value to dentists and other scientists. These will help in designing new oral treatments, promoting a healthy oral microbiome whilst protecting cardiovascular health.

Nginache Nampota, Masters, KUHeS. *"Renal function in adults on antiretroviral therapy (ART) – results from a nested cohort study in Malawi"*. The findings will provide recommendations for renal function monitoring in PLHIV on ART.

Jimmy Osuret, PhD, Makerere University. *"Effectiveness of safe pedestrian crossings for primary school children in Kampala, Uganda: Implications for road safety management."* Findings will be beneficial for the development or strengthening of relevant safety policies and practices to reduce child pedestrian crashes.



Jimmy Osuret (in orange reflector) with colleagues setting up mini cameras to collect information on road user behavior in Kampala.

Helen Mearns, Masters, Cochrane South Africa. *"Screening strategies for adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus; a systematic review"*. There are insufficient randomized controlled trials to address whether screening for type 2 diabetes mellitus improves health outcomes, therefore, this systematic review will cast a wider net and synthesise evidence from non-randomised intervention studies

Dynamo Ndacyayisenga, Masters, University of Rwanda. *"Prevalence and comorbidity of depression and alcohol use disorders among youth in Rwanda"*. The findings will inform health care providers and policy makers to reflect on clear hypothesis of diagnosis, clear policy and appropriate interventions.

Yusuf Mtila, Masters, KUHeS. *"The Prevalence of Diabetes Mellitus (DM) and its risk factors among Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Drivers in Blantyre, Malawi."* Results from the study will inform policy makers on the epidemiology of DM and associated risk factors among NGO drivers in Blantyre, and inform the design of health promotion interventions for DM targeting NGO drivers and all drivers at large.

James Gafirita, PhD, University of Rwanda. *"Prevalence of the metabolic syndrome (MetS) and the associated risk factors among adult people in Rwanda."* Determining MetS in Rwanda is beneficial for the purpose of control and prevention of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. As such, findings from this study will inform relevant government authorities and their stakeholders about the magnitude, recommended control and prevention measures.

Jonathan Chiwanda, PhD, KUHeS. *"Impact of integrating screening and management of depression on clinical outcomes among cancer patients in Malawi"*. Findings will inform policy makers on the feasibility and acceptability of integrating screening and management of depression among cancer patients, evaluation of integrated screening and management of depression on cancer treatment compliance, the quality of life, and survival.

Jonathan Chiwanda (R), PhD student, with colleagues during an orientation exercise for data collectors for the project at cancer center, Kamuzu Central Hospital in Lilongwe, Malawi.



## Obituary

### Tribute to Prof. Birhanu Ayele

We would like to remember and celebrate the life of our colleague and friend, Prof Birhanu Ayele who passed away in the year 2021. He was a key member of the CEBHA+ team known for his immense knowledge in biostatistics, and his excellent mentorship and support.

He impacted the lives of many students, colleagues, and friends through his inspiration and commitment to advancing biostatistics in Africa. His passion for biostatistics was evident in the way he enthusiastically shared his knowledge with colleagues and students.

We shall remember his kind words, his warm smile, and his helpful hand. We shall remember his love only for Ethiopian coffee and his commitment to his country. We shall remember his generous nature and his brilliant mind. We shall remember his love for his family. Words cannot describe how we all feel at this time. His loss will be sorely felt at Stellenbosch University as well as across CEBHA+. We wish to convey our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to his bereaved family.



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