

# CEBHA+

COLLABORATION FOR  
EVIDENCE-BASED  
HEALTHCARE AND PUBLIC  
HEALTH IN AFRICA

# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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## Editorial



### Dear Reader,

As they say – time flies when you are having fun! This has certainly been the case for the CEBHA+ project. It has been an amazing 5 years of working together to build long-term research capacity and sustainability for evidence-informed healthcare and public health in Sub-Saharan Africa. Executing the goal and objectives of the project has been a rollercoaster full of ups and downs, but exciting at the same time. Despite the challenges so much has been achieved throughout the years across CEBHA+ work packages of research, capacity building, IKT and networking.

We hope you enjoyed our previous issue *CEBHA+ Newsletter Vol.4-2021*. In the current issue, CEBHA+ sites share their CEBHA+ activities, achievements, major challenges, lessons learnt and experience working in a large diverse multi-country network. We are grateful to the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for initiating and funding this work focused on some key non-communicable health issues in Africa.

Enjoy your read!

Prof. Taryn Young-Principal Investigator, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

## Sponsor



## CEBHA+ Contracts Management



## CEBHA+ Implementation Overview

**Research Task 1:** Screening approaches for hypertension and diabetes, and for those at high risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD).

**Research Task 2:** Integrated models of healthcare delivery for hypertension and diabetes.

**Research Task 3:** Population level interventions to prevent hypertension and diabetes.

**Overarching Goal:** To build long term capacity and infrastructure for evidence-based healthcare and public health in Africa

**Research Task 4:** Improved implementation of road traffic injury prevention interventions.

**Research Task 5:** Promotion of an integrated, rigorous methodological approach across CEBHA+ research tasks and activities.

**Work Packages:**

- \* Research
- \* Capacity building
- \* Networking

# The CEBHA+ Journey



**2014:** Team of researchers and decision makers in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, for the first CEBHA+ Planning meeting.



**2017:** CEBHA+ colleagues at the kick-off meeting and launch of the Research Network for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa at Oyster beach, Dar-el-salaam, Tanzania.



**2018:** Colleagues at the first annual networking meeting hosted by Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.



**2019:** CEBHA+ colleagues during breakout sessions at the second annual networking meeting hosted by the University of Malawi (now KUHeS) in Lilongwe, Malawi.



**2020:** Participants at the third annual networking meeting in Cape Town, South Africa.



**2021:** Some of the online participants at the fourth networking virtual meeting hosted by the University of Rwanda.



**2022:** Some of the CEBHA+ participants unwinding after a walk in the Unity park during the fifth networking meeting hosted by AHRI, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.





## The African Coordination Office - Makerere University

Coordinating nine CEBHA+ sites has been a challenging but fulfilling journey! Given the different project start dates and varying processes at the African and German partner institutions among others, there has been plenty of learning within-and across-sites interaction as we strengthen evidence-based healthcare and public health in Sub-Saharan Africa in non-communicable diseases research, capacity development, knowledge translation, and networking.

Established in 2014 and housed at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences, the African Coordination office provided oversight to all CEBHA+ partner site activities as



*CEBHA+ Makerere University team in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the 5th annual networking meeting, September 2022.*



*CEBHA+ Makerere University team handing over the mantle to the next meeting organisers, University of Malawi (currently KUHeS) at the first annual networking meeting in Uganda, 2018.*

well as coordinated dissemination of project outputs through the annual newsletter, website, social media, and other platforms. It hosted the first CEBHA+ annual networking meeting in 2018, providing the first face-to-face engagement for strategic and implementation planning between all partners. The Coordination office also developed a Grants Writing Training Manual and organised capacity development activities in grants writing, research administration, and finance management.

As summarized by Prof Harriet Mayanja-Kizza, the CEBHA+ African Coordinator, "CEBHA+ convened different African and German partners to collaborate in strengthening research capacity to improve health in Africa. CEBHA+ has been and continues to be a rich learning hub".



## Makerere University

Research Task 4 (RT4) Uganda hosted at Makerere University School of Public Health has had a significant impact working with the Uganda Police to develop a digital road crash database. They held several capacity building workshops for RT4 staff, librarians, journalist, researchers and Uganda Police members. There has been positive collaboration with the Parliamentary Forum on Road Safety committee, the Kampala Capital City Authority, Ministry of Works and Transport, Uganda Police Traffic & Road Safety Directorate and Ministry of Health. The stakeholders are working at lobbying resources to improve pedestrian safety and making roads safer for everyone in Uganda.

The team has also established collaborations with the Information, Communication and Technology Directorate of the Uganda Police, and various road safety NGOs. Stakeholder engagements is ongoing and will be important for continuity of activities beyond CEBHA+.



*Ugandan Parliamentarians signing their commitment to supporting efforts aimed at improving and promoting road safety in Uganda at the breakfast meeting with Parliamentary Forum on Road Safety (PAFROS), 2022.*

The Ugandan PhD students, Jimmy Osuret and Esther Bayiga, have leveraged upon the range of skills and competencies with the CEBHA+ network - including the South-South and South-North mentorship and networks - to advance their research project in road traffic injuries.



*Jimmy Osuret PHD student, briefing school children on the low cost school traffic warden program to reduce the risk of pedestrian road traffic crashes at school crossings.*



*Journalists being awarded at the road safety media awards ceremony, 2022.*

In 2022, RT4 held the first ever road safety media awards in Uganda where journalists who wrote and reported on impactful, informative and inspiring stories regarding road safety were presented with awards to encourage and motivate them to report on road safety.



## The German Coordination Office - Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU)

The LMU coordination office supports the African coordination office as and when required.



*LMU Munich team*

The site has been involved in an exciting mix of CEBHA+ activities over the past five years, including research, integrated knowledge translation, capacity development, methods support, and networking. As can be expected in a large, complex and ambitious consortium project involving nine partners from six countries, not everything happened as

envisioned and there are both ups and downs along the way. When reflecting on this time, it is the highlights that stand out; here are the three unique features and successes which capture well the ideas and principles of CEBHA+.

Throughout CEBHA+, the use of **integrated knowledge translation (IKT)** to improve engagement and work with decision makers has been key. This involves extensive work in understanding IKT conceptually but also in defining a CEBHA+ IKT approach that would facilitate meaningful yet flexible engagement across partner sites. This has already proved invaluable to the CEBHA+ work, with the hope of ensuring that CEBHA+ research can inform policy in an appropriate and impactful manner. "So to me it's so obvious. [...] it's like obvious that you should have a KT strategy [for] your stakeholder, the users of the evidence that you produce" one CEBHA+ researcher said. CEBHA+'s innovative IKT approach has been presented at multiple international conferences including at The World Congress in Public Health (online), The European Public Health Conference (Berlin, Germany) and The FUSE International Conference on Knowledge Exchange (Newcastle, UK).

A key feature to the planning and conduct of robust CEBHA+ research was a **reactive strategy for capacity building and methods support**. This is highlighted well by the continued



collaboration with Makerere University focusing on reducing the burden of road traffic injuries among pedestrians. At different stages, this collaboration included targeted training in the conduct of systematic reviews, participation in and subsequently co-facilitation of the CEBHA+ workshop on Evidence-Based Public Health (EBPH), and multiple-year collaborative research between experts in road traffic injuries and in methods for intervention research. A lot was learned from each other, and the resulting systematic review fills an important evidence gap that will hopefully inform future research and policy in SSA.

**Networking within and across partners** has been a great success. While most partners were relatively unfamiliar to each other when the project kicked off; there is now meaningful and productive relationships. Whether it was the annual networking meetings, the interactions and work with partners have been a true highlight of the project.

LMU Munich team is extremely glad to have been involved with the network and looks forward to continuing collaborations and conducting relevant and impactful research in SSA.



Participants at the first EBPH workshop in Uganda, 2018.



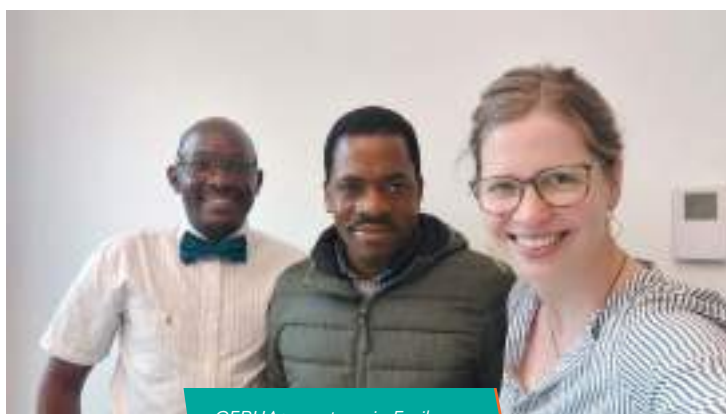
## University of Freiburg

The site's work for CEBHA+ commenced in 2014; the team has supported various activities that many know from their regular career in academia and science: grant application writing, conducting research, critically reviewing others' scientific work, disseminating findings, attending online meetings etc. CEBHA+ has also challenged the team to think outside the box which was meaningful and pleasant. How so?



German team at the 5th networking meeting, AHRI, Ethiopia, 2022.

Although the team can, without a doubt, be considered interested in and quite well-informed about what is going on globally, it was immensely educating for the team to see in close-up and subsequently understand the realities and challenges that the Sub-Saharan African region is confronted with health-wise. The team's engagement in CEBHA+ granted access to learning about the implications of the specific



CEBHA+ meet-up in Freiburg

population structures, the variety and impact of diseases and their co-occurrence, the immense burden on the strained health care system and, last but not least, the tough research environment that CEBHA+ colleagues were and are doing excellent work in.

With this in mind, the team's motivation to collaborate in support of high quality meaningful research in Sub-Saharan Africa was sparked continuously and considered an outstandingly wise use of time. The team is immensely grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with inspiring individuals and thereby build a long-term network with committed and smart researchers. This has motivated them to envision and design future research with partners in

Sub-Saharan Africa inspired by the manifold activities in CEBHA+ that built this unique network and achieved remarkable capacity development in so many individuals and institutions.

“We hope that the CEBHA+ network maintains momentum, has the courage to go back to the roots of being an (unfunded) network of highly motivated researchers who want to expedite health research and care in Sub-Saharan Africa. We would be honored to be part of this” says Prof. Joerg Meerpohl.



## Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS), Malawi

KUHeS contributes towards research tasks 1, 2 and 3 activities and is involved in research, networking and capacity building. The site has held several stakeholder engagements with the Non-Communicable Diseases Department at the Ministry of Health Malawi. The Malawi team organised successful EBPH workshops and hosted the second CEBHA+ annual networking meeting in 2019. The additional COVID-19 grant further broadened the network of CEBHA+ in Malawi to include the National Commission for Science and Technology, UNICEF, WHO and AFIDEP.



Malawi team with the African Coordinator at the 2nd Annual Networking meeting 2019, Malawi, Lilongwe.

Being a part of a consortium that has a wide range of expertise has been very beneficial to the Malawi CEBHA+ team as there has been a lot of learning from each other. In the area of Integrated Knowledge Translation (IKT), there have been several training sessions by Stellenbosch University that the team has benefitted from. In 2022, Talitha Mpando (IKT research fellow) participated in the short course: Evidence Informed Decision making: “The Art, Science and Complexity of Knowledge Translation”. Dr. Stephen Kasenda (RT1 and RT2 scientist) and Talitha Mpando also had the opportunity to attend an “Issue Brief Writing retreat” in Cape Town in July 2022 which allowed the team to fast track some of its IKT



Talitha emerged overall winner at the issue briefs competition at the networking meeting AHRI, 2022.

deliverables. In regards to response towards COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Tamara Phiri (RT3 lead and COVID-19 team leader at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital) was acknowledged and awarded by the Malawi president Lazarus Chakwera for the great work done towards the COVID-19 pandemic fight. Malawi Masters scholarship recipients, Dr. Nginache Nampota and Yusuf Mtila, were a significant part of CEBHA+ capacity building efforts. After overcoming delays due to COVID-19, both students graduated from KUHeS with an MSc in Epidemiology. The PhD student Jonathan Chiwanda is on the right track to completing his PhD research.





*Dr. Tamara Phiri (R) with a colleague in a COVID-19 patient ward.*



*Nginache Nampota graduated with an MSc in Epidemiology in 2022.*



*Yusuf Mtila graduated with an MSc in Epidemiology in 2022.*



## University of Rwanda

The site is involved in CEBHA+ activities for Research Task 1, 2,3 and 4. Over the last 5 years, Rwanda has held several key stakeholder engagements including Ministry of Health, Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), the Police, Ministry of Sports and Culture and others. In addition, they have organised capacity building activities through Evidence Based Public Health training and systematic review training. CEBHA+ has sponsored 4 Masters (Jean Damascene Bigirimana, Dynamo Ndacyayisenga, Seminali Theoneste and Niyitegeka Jean Pierre), 4 PhDs (Agnes Gatarayiha, Ntaganda Evariste, James Gafirita, Richard Nduwayezu) and 1 post-doctoral student (Mukaruzima Lela). The PhD students and a post-doc researcher are working on their research projects. Despite restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rwanda held a successful virtual fourth CEBHA+



*Training workshop for the pilot study on community level CVD risk screening and referral for care study in Rwanda, March 2022.*



*Prof. Stephen Rulisa (R), Selemani (L) and others at the NCDs conference 2022 in Rwanda.*

annual networking meeting in March 2021. In May 2022, University of Rwanda CEBHA+ team worked with RBC to organise a workshop to develop the community health workers' manual on CVD risk screening and referral for care study in Rwanda, presented in both in English and Kinyarwanda. In November 2022, the Rwandan CEBHA+ disseminated the project results and shared experiences at the regional NCD conference under the theme "Shaping an East Africa free of NCDs through people centered interventions and transformative development".



# Stellenbosch University

Stellenbosch University (SU) is involved in research, capacity development, integrated knowledge translation (IKT) and networking. The team has led and contributed to many papers and issue briefs. As part of capacity development, they have supported short courses and conferences, and offered various workshops to partners within the CEBHA+ network.



CEBHA+ team convened in Cape Town to advance issue briefs on NCDs for policy and practice in July 2022.

These workshops strengthened capacity within the network to teach evidence-based healthcare, develop IKT strategies and write issue briefs, but were also an opportunity to connect with CEBHA+ members and grow as a network. Indeed, over the project period, opportunities to meet in-person have been very valuable – the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging, in that there was need to learn to collaborate in a fully virtual environment. The Master's and PhD students (Shahista Mustafa Jaffer and Hannah Simba respectively) have both graduated and have continued to engage with the CEBHA+ network.

The SU team has been working closely with the other South African CEBHA+ partners (Cochrane South Africa and the



Colleagues at the virtual "Global Health at a crossroads conference" organized by Consortium of Universities for Global Health in October 2022.

Chronic Disease Initiative in Africa) to coordinate activities related to implementation of the IKT activities, especially the engagement with policymakers in South Africa. In addition to finding opportunities to engage with Provincial and National Department of Health, they engage with a variety of other stakeholders that are likely to have an interest in their work, impact it or be impacted by it. This includes other research organisations doing work on NCDs and/or integrated models of care. This is informed constantly by revisiting the stakeholder analysis and engagement strategy. Capacity building on Issue Briefs through our SU short courses has led to over 20 tailored issue briefs for policy makers, directors and practitioners across the CEBHA+ network. Stakeholder dialogues have been ongoing throughout the 5 years with a final webinar and policy dialogue planned for the end of 2022.

In addition to stakeholder engagements as per the CEBHA+ IKT strategy, the team led a systematic review on the effectiveness of integrated models of care for diabetes and hypertension in low and middle income countries that informed some of the recommendations in the WHO consolidated guidelines for HIV prevention, testing, treatment, service delivery and monitoring.



Colorful presentation of successes, challenges and lessons learnt across sites, at the Networking meeting South Africa 2020.





## Chronic Disease Initiative in Africa (CDIA)

The site leads research task 1 activities where the team is using a citizen science approach to explore CVD risk perception, presentation and communication in communities of Ethiopia, Malawi and Rwanda. The team also leads on an RT2 study on co-morbidity. CDIA has worked with colleagues in implementation of research, networking, capacity building and IKT. Dr. Kufre Okop, a CEBHA+ sponsored post-doctoral fellow, completed his post-doc and joined the CDIA CEBHA+ team as a full-time senior research fellow on 1st January 2022. His role includes the coordination of NCD interventions, focusing on CVD assessment and evaluation in Rwanda, Malawi, Ethiopia, and South Africa. He is also facilitating capacity building on implementation research and citizen science for these selected African countries. In October 2022, Kufre spearheaded the citizen science project launch within the Bishop Lavis and Langa communities in Cape Town; planning to expand the project in 2023.



Kufre Okop (2nd from the right) with CDIA's supporting fieldwork team at the citizen science project launch.



Prof. Brian Oldenburg (left), the CDIA special guest with CEBHA+ partners at the 5th Annual Networking Meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2022

Dr. Mashudu Mthethwa joined the CDIA in January 2019 as post-doctoral research fellow and conducted research on the prevalence of multimorbidity in people living with HIV and on antiretroviral therapy as part of the site's main CEBHA+ project. For the this study, she successfully coordinated CDIA's field team at the Gugulethu research site where the team managed to recruit 281 participants during April, May, and July 2021.

The CDIA team continues to provide technical support on the implementation of community health worker-led screening for CVD risk in the rural and urban communities of Ethiopia, Malawi, and Rwanda, as part of RT1. The team has also supported the development of several draft manuscripts, of which six have been published, five conference abstracts published, and four issue briefs.



## Cochrane South Africa

It has been exciting collaborating with African and German partners on this network, working together to improve evidence-based healthcare and public health in Sub-Saharan Africa. The site has closely worked with South African partners in implementing IKT stakeholder engagements, organizing the third annual networking meeting hosted in South Africa and conducting and

implementing rapid reviews on COVID-19 with the South African Department of Health. Under capacity building, the PhD student Helen Mearns completed her PhD whereas Derrick Sekgala is in the final stages of his PhD studies.



CEBHA+ South African team handing over the mantle to Rwanda team, the host of the 2021 networking meeting.



Hannah Simba (up) and Derrick Sekgala (down) presenting their research project updates at the 5th Annual Networking Meeting, Ethiopia



# Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI)

The site is actively involved in Research Task 1 and 2. Participating in a large diverse network has necessitated much support and learning from each other. The site has collaborated with multiple stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, Ethiopia and held multiple evidence-based healthcare trainings. Ethiopia also hosted the fifth annual networking meeting in September 2022. This final meeting of CEBHA+ enabled partners to share success stories, achievements, challenges and lessons learnt in executing CEBHA+ activities of research, networking, IKT and capacity building.



Participants at the 5th annual networking meeting, Ethiopia, September 2022.

The CEBHA+ funding has further supported AHRI research projects on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in Ethiopia and assessing the impact of COVID-19 on diabetes care in public and private clinic settings.

Hailemichael Getachew, PhD student, has greatly benefited from the CEBHA+ sponsorship; he is in the final stages of his



AHRI colleagues dressed in their Ethiopian traditional attire, at the 5th annual networking meeting, Ethiopia 2022.

PhD research studies. The site has also used CEBHA+ funds to initiate a multi-stakeholder IKT initiative with comprehensive longitudinal training on systematic reviews which led to the completion of 5 reviews on research questions prioritised by the Ministry of Health. The team has further promoted training within the Knowledge Management Directorate at AHRI.



CEBHA+ participants experiencing traditional Ethiopian dances at the 5th annual networking meeting, 2022 in Ethiopia.

## CEBHA+ Publications

The CEBHA+ consortium has published over 40 publications over the last years including research articles, protocols and issue briefs.

In this issue we share the 2022 publications. Click [here for more publications](#).

### Issue Briefs

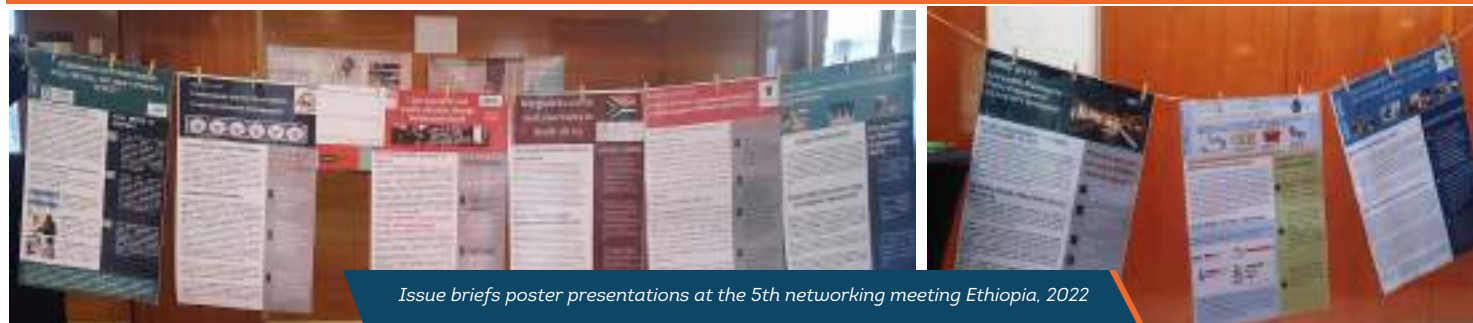
Issue briefs are a concise summary of research on a particular issue, with key findings and some recommendations for a target audience, eg government policymakers or others tasked with formulating or influencing public health or healthcare decision making.

1. Preventing non-communicable diseases in South Africa: time to evaluate what works!
2. Unsafe roads in Kampala: Need to cater for pedestrians with physical disabilities
3. Cardiovascular disease risk perception: A need for

community level education

4. Pandemic in a Pandemic: Urgent Call to permit physical activities during the pandemic period in Rwanda
5. Fight depression and anxiety disorders through Multisectoral Action
6. Genomic research on Esophageal Cancer in African populations suboptimal: Funding needed to address disease burden
7. A call to roll out a comprehensive physical activities program in Malawi's civil service
8. Implement new approaches to patient education and counselling for NCDs
9. Integrated care for multimorbidity in South Africa
10. Adequately Planning for Policy Engagement: A Long-term Investment
11. CVD burden in Ethiopia: A need for Community-driven risk screening
12. Tackle NCDs in Malawi by buying into the Best Buys





Issue briefs poster presentations at the 5th networking meeting Ethiopia, 2022

## Research articles

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