

## **Empowering Africa's Public Health Warriors: Evidence Synthesis Workshop in Addis Ababa Spurs Decision-Making Revolution**

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ADDIS ABABA, December 2023 — In an effort to bolster evidence-informed decision-making in public health across Africa, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (AfCDC) hosted the Evidence Synthesis for Public Health Decision Making workshop in Addis Ababa from December 5th to 8th, 2023. [BIS Uganda](#) PhD candidate Denis Okethwangu participated and shared learnings with the team.

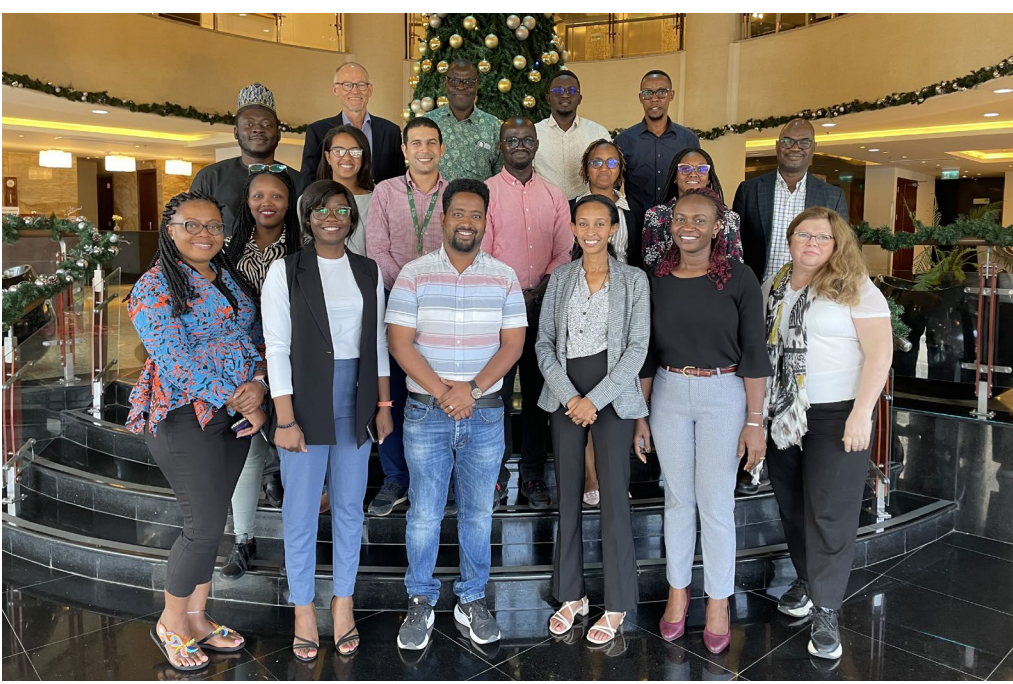
The AfCDC, dedicated to supporting Member States' public health initiatives, understands the pivotal role of informed decisions in shaping the continent's healthcare landscape. To ensure credibility, decisions need to be grounded in high-quality data. Recognizing this, the Health Economics and Financing Programme (HEP), Disease Prevention and Control Division, and National Public Health Institutes and Research Division of AfCDC, joined forces with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) – [Frode Forland](#) and [Katrine Bjørnebek Frønsdal](#) – both of whom also work on the Norad-financed [BIS Program](#). – to organize a transformative 4-day in-house workshop. and to organize a transformative 4-day in-house workshop.

The workshop aimed to equip AfCDC staff with skills for systematic evidence reviews and to advocate for evidence-informed decision-making. Participants, including representatives from the Northern Regional Collaborating Center, NCDs, and HEP, engaged in diverse sessions to enhance their expertise. The workshop utilized a multifaceted approach, combining didactic sessions, brainstorming, small group exercises, and plenary discussions. Topics covered ranged from understanding evidence synthesis frameworks to practical applications using tools such as RoB-2 and AMSTAR-2.

Fifteen participants, primarily AfCDC staff, emerged from the workshop armed with newfound competencies. These included understanding evidence-based policy principles, evidence-informed decision-making frameworks, and various evidence synthesis methods such as rapid reviews, scoping reviews, and systematic reviews. The workshop generated action items, signaling a commitment to putting knowledge into practice:

- A follow-up training program, emphasizing hands-on evidence synthesis, to further empower participants.
- Establishment of a community of practice to foster collaboration and support for ongoing evidence synthesis projects.
- Integration of evidence synthesis into the AfCDC support package for National Public Health Institutes.
- Urging NPHIs to prioritize rigorous evidence generation, employing systematic methods to inform national-level decision-making.

The workshop hopes to contribute to a new era of decision-making in the African public health landscape — one fueled by evidence, collaboration, and a shared commitment to advancing healthcare across the continent.



*Participants of the evidence synthesis workshop held in Addis Ababa from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2023. The author, Denis, is standing in the middle row with glasses and a pink shirt*