

## **ELIJAH BISUNG**

### **Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement**

Dr. Bisung was recently awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor at Queen's University. He has been a member of the CAG for over a decade and served as the Chair of Geographies of Health and Health Care Study Group from 2018-2021. He remains within the award eligibility window after graduating in 2015 with a PhD in geography from the University of Waterloo and taking parental leave in 2018. Dr. Bisung is a stellar health geographer whose environmental health equity research positively impacts communities locally and globally and has significantly advanced the subfield of health geography.



Specifically, Dr. Bisung's research focuses on how the physical, built, and social environments influence health and wellbeing in resource-constrained settings. He engages with social and ecological theories, innovative methodologies, and analytical frameworks to understand and disrupt environmental determinants of health that manifest in health inequities. These inequities are unjust and avoidable and, in most cases, negatively affect human rights, including the right to health, water, education, safe environment, safe working conditions etc. To help respond to these inequities, the cornerstone of Dr. Bisung's research program is built around a strong commitment to equity-centered research. His field research activities are often informed by principles of *inclusion* (i.e. proactively and intentionally creating opportunities for diverse people to be engaged in the research process, particularly those who might otherwise not participate); *humility* (i.e. continuously placing himself in a place of learning, and recognizing his positionality in every research context); *shared benefits* (i.e. always thriving to ensure that his intentions and actions are aligned around equitable research relationships, processes, and creating a foundation of trust among all research partners); and *responsiveness to the causes of inequities*. Dr. Bisung has applied this equity-centered approach to his primary research areas: environmental risk perceptions and psychosocial health; access to water, sanitation and women's empowerment; and collective action for environmental health promotion.

Dr. Bisung's scholarship is considered exceptional given his career stage, measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. As a recently established researcher, Dr. Bisung has over 50 peer-reviewed publications and co-edited two peer-reviewed books in health geography. He has received over \$1 million in research funding, including grants from both SSHRC and CIHR demonstrating the relevance of his research across disciplinary boundaries. These numbers are exceptional in health geography.

Qualitatively, Dr. Bisung's research program is also exceptional. His impact to the academy includes new theoretical and empirical contributions as well as methodological innovations to the fields of geography and public health. Further, Dr. Bisung's equity-centered research requires building strong community-based collaborations, extensive fieldwork, and the development of knowledge dissemination strategies that extend beyond academia. For instance, Dr. Bisung's seven policy reports have influenced decision-making for enhanced environmental health in sub-Saharan

Africa and other resource-constrained settings, while his work with the *Empowerment in WASH Index* is now being used internationally to empower women through improved access to water and sanitation. The level of success and impact that Dr. Bisung has had working collaboratively in an international context is exceptional at this stage in his career, and is even more remarkable given that his international fieldwork was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In short, Dr. Elijah Bisung is an outstanding recently established research and health geographer with significant impact within and outside the academy. He epitomizes early career success and research achievement and is most deserving of the Julian M. Szeicz Award.