

What has been ISEE's impact on me as a person and as a professional?

Uncertainties about the health impact of environmental hazards in my country of birth and residence (Nigeria) characterize many controversies leading to claims and counter claims about adverse health effects. Up to the early 90's, environmental science and health were largely two independent fields with very little integration between health and environmental research. With a B.Sc (Hons) and an M.Sc in Microbiology, I worked in the field of environmental science for some years. I later followed my aspiration to contribute to the evidence base on how the environment affects human health by enrolling for an MPH degree at the University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff, UK, in 1998. While working on a term paper, I came across a textbook "*Environmental Epidemiology: Epidemiological investigation of community environmental health problems*" by Dr John R Goldsmith. I was fascinated by the concept of Environmental Epidemiology described in the book. I followed the lead from the book to check up ISEE on the Internet.

In 1999, I submitted an abstract for the ISEE/ISEA conference in Athens. The abstract was accepted for a poster presentation and I also got an ISEE travel grant. During my poster presentation titled "A Critical Analysis of Management and Communication of EP Potentially Polluted Area in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria," there were lots of questions and comments on Nigeria's environmental issues that were making news headlines across the world at the time. Prof Elihu Richter invited me to attend the Ethics and Philosophy Committee (EPC) meeting at the conference. I later joined ISEE and the EPC. On another front, while networking with a group from Imperial College London that included Ana Grossinho, Mireille Toledano, Paul Aylin, Alex Bottle and Anna Hansell, we got talking about research opportunities and my interest in a PhD. On return to the UK, they introduced me to Prof David Briggs who was doing a similar research. On completion of my MPH, I returned to work in Nigeria, but kept in touch with the EPC through email, contributing developing country perspectives on global issues.

In 2001, I met Prof David Briggs and the late Dr Lars Jarup at the ISEE conference in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. After listening to my presentation, they advised me on further research opportunities and encouraged me to apply for a PhD. Some years later, I enrolled and completed my PhD at Imperial College London under the supervision of Prof David Briggs and Dr Anna Hansell.

Professional bonding within the EPC and working with members such as Profs Colin Soskolne, Jouni Jaakkola, Ruth Etzel, Tony Fletcher, Raymond Neutra, Wael Al-Delaimy, Drs Shira Kramer, Martin Tondel and Mathilde Pascal have provided mentoring and collaboration opportunities. I have contributed to papers published by the EPC, co-authored the 2010-2012 revision of the ISEE Ethics Guidelines, led ethics discussions at conferences and, in the last 2 years, I have been co-ordinating the ethics sessions for annual conferences.

I have also had the privilege of working with leading researchers in the technical/scientific programme committees of annual conferences. Working with people of diverse backgrounds, experience, and culture has afforded me a balanced view of issues. In 2010, I won the ISEE Rebecca James Baker Award that boosted my research career. ISEE has helped to open up my world and significantly contributed to my professional development.

Has ISEE contributed to a safer environment and a more reliable and ethical science?

ISEE activities provide opportunity for knowledge sharing and cross-fertilization of ideas among the global environmental epidemiology research community. Research by ISEE

members has contributed to the evidence base that has influenced, to varying degrees, national and regional standards. Sometimes, the re-awakening of a national conscience has been achieved when research findings obtained through relationship with ISEE are cited in local discussion. Such is the case for me, at a national industry conference in Nigeria in 2012, when my advocacy on health effects of local PM levels from traffic and other sources on children was strengthened by references to the work of Profs Bert Brunekreef and Douglas Dockery, both of whom I have had the privilege to work with or engage at events facilitated by ISEE.

Activities of the ISEE Capacity Building Committee such as regional chapter development and the [ISEE AuthorAID](#) have trickled down to human capital development to a certain extent. The ISEE Ethics Guidelines, accessible on the society's website and widely disseminated through an open access paper in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, provide a framework for ethical research conduct among ISEE members and a point of reference to help researchers comply with fundamental tenets of the discipline, especially where governance structures by ethics committees or review boards are relatively weak or do not exist.

Recent ISEE advocacy on issues of international relevance such as endorsing the [Position Statement on Asbestos from the Joint Policy Committee of the Societies of Epidemiology](#) (JPC-SE) that recommends a global ban on mining, use, and export of all forms of asbestos, would not only safeguard global public health, but may form the basis for policy development in resource-poor settings where robust studies cannot be afforded locally.

In these qualitative terms, ISEE has generally contributed to safer environments and a more ethical approach to science. Driven by the many challenges faced and through technological advances, more quantifiable impacts on research volume and quality as well as best practices that translate into policy and regulation should be expected in the foreseeable future.

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