

4th BIENNIAL SAMEA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2013
Emerging Evaluator Scholarship Report – 1st October 2013
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It is difficult for Emerging Evaluators to find a platform where they can get meaningful trainings on issues unique to evaluation. Over the years, I have found that conferences and workshops deliver the best value in professional development. The educational value of the 4th Biennial SAMEA Conference that I attended had been cost-beneficial. In addition to its content, the conference provided ongoing opportunities to discuss emerging issues and best practices with colleagues, vendors, and consultants across a broad continuum of evaluation. For example, in a single presentation, you could learn consultant's experiences, best practices from leading development institutions, investigate new ways to look at old problems, hear experts address codes and standards and talk one-on-one with them. Past attendees told me that the value of the networking opportunities alone exceeds the price of admission. I was lucky to be awarded the 2013 EE scholarship and thank SAMEA and Zenex Foundation for it.

My goals for the conference included to learn as much as possible, network (meet people), learn new cultures and present a paper. My participation at the conference met all of these goals and also gave me the opportunity to discuss monitoring and evaluation issues, and best practices with my peers and colleagues. This was one of a kind event.

I got the opportunity to visit South Africa, a country endowed with rich culture and welcoming people. I met other Africans and had the opportunity to visit some parts of Johannesburg. I booked the Gautrain and saw Sandton City. The experience was just breath taking and only wished I could stay longer.

From the beginning of a journey in Kenya to a world only heard in the news and learnt about in school, the days I spent in South Africa and the time I come back to Kenya was a lot more than I could imagine. Thanks a lot to the conference organization team and SAMEA. I started learning new things at the Jomo Kenyatta International airport in Nairobi where I boarded a plane to Johannesburg. Everything was well organized such that I never experienced difficulties the moment I landed at OR Tambo international airport and was well received at Courtyard hotel in Sandton where I spent the rest of the nights during my stay in South Africa. I must comment that SAMEA did a very wonderful job in identifying a good hotel since the reception was nice and the hotel rooms were nice and comfortable including food. I was also a stone throw away from the conference venue. Kudos SAMEA Conference Secretariat!

There were pre conference workshops that ran for 2 days i.e. 16th to 17th September 2013. I got the opportunity to interact and learn from some of the brightest minds in the evaluation world. I attended a two day training facilitated by Dr. Andy Rowe and Stephen Porter on Rapid Impact Evaluation (RIE) and learnt how Random Control Tests (RCTs) are applied in RIE. I received a certificate at the end. During this time I interacted with Dr. Andy Rowe and discussed how we can apply RIE in Emergency, Conflict and post Conflict environment. Though we never concluded our discussions due to limited time I believe we will carry on the ideas and find platforms to actualize them. It was good to learn firsthand as I had the ability to ask questions. Since I am a Master's student at the University of Nairobi Pursuing MA in Project Planning and Management, I was able to interact with researchers and students hence was inspired to develop research ideas of my own as I was exposed to different styles of presentations. The second pre conference workshop I attended was on Policy Research; Do findings make a difference where I learnt linking Evaluation to policies. I also interacted with leaders from the Department: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The conference was opened on the third day of my visit to South Africa. I had a chance to listen to key note speeches from one of the brightest minds on earth; the likes of Dr. Babette Rabie, Sean Philips, Jim Rugh, Prof. Howard White and Jennifer Bisgard to mention but a few. The most important and happiest moment in my life was when I was awarded with a certificate as a recipient of SAMEA Emerging

Evaluator Scholarship Award. At this point I confirmed that I am a destined Evaluator. I plan to utilize the knowledge I gained during the conference period to conduct evaluation and inform policy both in Kenya and the globe. Unfortunately I had to leave back to Kenya the next day as my flight was scheduled early in the morning. In spite of this I had a wonderful time in Johannesburg.

I take this opportunity to thank SAMEA, The SAMEA Secretariat and ZENEX foundation for making this event a success and uplifting my status as an Emerging Evaluator. I hope there will be other opportunities to attend the 5th Biennial SAMEA Conference and support SAMEA as they expose the youth a lot. Thank you SAMEA, Thank you DPME.