

4th BIENNIAL SAMEA CONFERENCE 2013

Emerging Evaluator Scholarship Report 16 – 20 September 2013

by Uduak Johnson.

I will like to use this medium to thank SAMEA for all the hard work, care and support to us emerging evaluators through the Scholarship awarded to us to attend the 4th Biennial SAMEA conference. I appreciate especially the opportunity to learn and to present at this conference. It was significant in giving me a sense of belonging to an organization of professionals in my field of interest. This gives me a hope of a promising future and the motivation to work hard towards becoming a seasoned professional in the field of M&E. I also feel a sense of responsibility towards myself, and to SAMEA, hoping that such support and other meaningful relationships continues going forward.

The courses that I attended, "Managing Evaluation for Use" by Marlene Roefs & Anja Wolsky was very relevant to my particular interest. I was delighted to learn the difference between the evaluator and the evaluation manager in terms of roles and responsibilities. I have noted how conflating these roles can seriously constrain what evaluations can achieve. Moreover, the results of evaluation can more strategically become useful if the manager's role is well defined. Particularly significant was the distinction between the different kinds of uses of M&E by different stakeholders which also needs to be managed. This is definitely a way of ensuring that evaluation results are used positively. The second workshop that I attended: "Policy Research: Do Findings Make a Difference" by Sarah Bliss was an expansion of one of the uses of M&E and a deepening knowledge on how to ensure that results of M&E researches can be useful to influence policy. This is very relevant and related to me as a student of public policy and it would be very useful to my current PhD Study as I need to present the relevance of my study. I met Barbara Klugman at this workshop, and she accepted to mentor me to my utmost delight. The discussion on "Made in Africa Evaluation" by Sulley Gariba and Dr Andy Rowe was really inspiring, thought-provoking and presented for me a fertile ground of interest for future research.

The session "Advice and lessons for new and aspiring evaluators" was invaluable orienting us with issues and challenges to look out for. Jenny Bisgard gave us a useful list of online sources for further references, while Thabisile Zuma and Candice Morkel offered some very useful advice and discussions to emerging evaluators. It was a platform for those who are still young in the field to ask questions relevant to us. It really evokes some confidence in me.

Particularly thrilling to me was the merit award certificate for the "Best Conference Paper submitted by an emerging evaluator". It evoked a great sense of self-belief, and competence in my capacity and has motivated me a lot. It would remain a constant reminder that I can do better. I will appreciate more help in getting my paper reviewed towards publication. I will also like to know what is expected of me as one with this award. On my part, I am committed to motivating more young minds around me who have an interest in the field of M&E to be relentless in their efforts. I can feel that the experience is just a foundation and a stepping stone to my future engagement as a SAMEA member, and as one prepared to get into the field of M&E both as a scholar and as a practitioner. I would be glad to be of use whenever SAMEA needs me.

Finally, I would like to express my special appreciation once again for the organization, the wonderful accommodation, the travel, and the special care that we received as emerging scholars. Special thanks to SAMEA and ZENEX International because I would never have afforded to be at a conference of that magnitude without the scholarship. I met and networked with many people with whom I now keep in contact. I have learnt a lot. Finally, I say a very big thank you to SAMEA for empowering me through this conference.