

## Emerging Evaluator Scholarship

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### 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial SAMEA Conference Write Up

#### Experience of the Conference

The emerging evaluator experience at the SAMEA conference was incredibly valuable. I was able to attend a variety of workshops and sessions on topics I had not been exposed to before (e.g. evaluation consulting, systems thinking, big data, social media analysis). It broadened my thinking around what a career in Monitoring & Evaluation could look like.

The experience also gave me a new network of contacts and support in the industry. M&E tends to exist as a part of organizations but with no connection to broader research communities outside of industry specific interests (e.g. HIV/AIDS, Agriculture etc). This frustration was repeated by many individuals I met at the conference and SAMEA has become a forum for cross-industry collaboration, allowing people to exchange tools and ideas developed for the health, education, social policy, agriculture, environmental and technology sectors. It showed me how translatable M&E skills are to various sectors, including corporate social investment, ICT4D and business analysis.

As a monitoring and evaluation professional with 2 years experience I felt that this was an opportune time to attend the conference, I had enough experience to take full advantage of the connections and sessions but with space to learn a lot more. It has reinforced my resolve to be involved in the growth of SAMEA, including the focus on EvalYouth and emerging evaluator programmes. I would not have been able to attend the conference without the support of the scholarship

The one issue I had was the heavy focus on evaluation. As an M&E professional at an NGO, my experience and interests lie with the monitoring side, specifically setting up M&E systems, identifying the right data management tools and technology and in-depth performance monitoring for programmes team. My mission is to ensure that programmes and implementation buy into monitoring & evaluation and that these are not seen as policing mechanisms but instead as an integral and vital part of any programme. Coming from the NGO world, I would have benefitted from having more NGOs there, especially small-medium sized NGOs that are just starting to understand the need to invest in monitoring systems.

The entire experience at SAMEA was fantastic and the scholarship made sure we were able to take full advantage of the opportunities. Thanks again for giving me the opportunity to attend and I look forward to engaging with SAMEA for a long time to come.