

## **SAMEA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2013**

### **Emerging evaluator scholarship report**

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I am pleased to report that I attended the conference, and how I will use this knowledge and experience to further monitoring and evaluation.

The conference was well organised and was of a very high standards. The first area of interest for me was the extent at which monitoring and evaluation has evolved in the past years in our country, our continent and internationally. Also comparing the challenges faced by other countries as compared to South Africa in implementing evaluations. Questions raised by Dr Andy such as “What is the truth? And who is evaluating?” stood out for me and to a certain extent encouraged critical thinking in me. What was also encouraging was to see government’s commitment to performance monitoring and evaluation. Despite the number of negative challenges they are faced with, there seems to be some hope in utilising monitoring and evaluation as a tool for improving performance in their departments. The worrying issue is the political influence over monitoring and evaluation that ‘seemingly’ cannot be controlled.

The Second area of interest was the discussion on the Thursday afternoon at the session entitled “advice and lessons for new and inspiring evaluators”. This session was filled with practical tools and techniques and very helpful advice. Ms Candice stood out for me. However I am concerned that, the lack of specific requirements or standards for evaluators and or emerging evaluators may weaken the quality of evaluations. Hopefully in the next conference this will be looked into carefully.

On Friday I attended the ‘enhancing use and results through a participatory approach’, which is my area of interest. I was hoping to hear more about how this approach can be applied as an alternative to the current top down approach which does not suit our ‘African context’ but that didn’t really surface during the discussion. Nevertheless I still believe we will eventually move in this direction very soon.

I intend to use everything I have learnt in this conference for my new monitoring and evaluation organisation in the Eastern Cape, working together with the University of Fort Hare, the people I have networked with and SAMEA.

I would like to express my gratitude to SAMEA for the scholarship. I really enjoyed this conference. I also found the accommodation lovely, the conference venue fantastic and the food excellent. It was such a privilege to attend this conference.

I look forward to being part and parcel of this prestigious event again in 2015.