

Before the conference.....

As an MA Researcher trainee with the Human Sciences Research Council, Research Use and Impact Assessment Unit. The need to harness my skills, to feed into my work as well as my professional and academic aspirations is of particular interest. My current work environment involves the use of different research methodologies and conducting impact evaluation studies. Hence the opportunity to be a part of the SAMEA 2015 was received with excitement and gratitude as this meant that I would have direct access to the current M&E debates informed by both the local and international M&E community.

After the conference.....

I had an urge to find the common ground between the research and evaluation agenda, and the opportunity to participate in the workshops was gratifying. I attended the *Utilisation of Evaluations* conducted by the USAID and *The crash course to address the measurement perspectives of Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programmes* by Measure Value. Both workshops were informative and provided a lot of practical examples. Of significance was the expertise of the facilitators who convened the discussion in a professional manner which could be easily adaptable to any environment, regardless of professional discipline. I also attended the annual AGM, which included members from across the country.

My personal recommendation....is to have a SAMEA Young professionals Council falling under the current leadership to directly be involved in growing and mobilising young/youth professionals across the country. As well as to build a network of past/present recipients of the SAMEA Emerging Evaluator Scholars.

I have since completed my MA studies and have subsequently been accepted for the PGD in Monitoring and Evaluation at the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology for 2016 at the University of Stellenbosch. I am confident that the resources and information received at the 5th Biennial SAMEA Conference 2015, has provided a basis for me to further build on my Monitoring and Evaluation skills.

A special thank you to SAMEA, partners and sponsors for the successful event. I would further like to acknowledge Ms Melody for her generous accommodation sponsorship during the course of the conference