

## My SAMEA Experience

Firstly I would like to thank SAMEA for an Emerging Evaluator sponsorship. This was a valuable opportunity, the experience was priceless. As an Emerging Evaluator, attending the SAMEA conference did not only give me an opportunity to network with experienced evaluators but it also opened a door to learn and grow.

The first 2 ½ days were packed with conference workshops and more knowledge to take back home and apply it in my emerging career. I learnt a lot, from the basics of impact evaluation design and use as they apply in democracy, human rights and governance to learning when the impact versus traditional evaluation can be used. The highlight of attending the conference workshops was to meet Patricia Rogers from Better Evaluations. She is one of actors in the industry whom I admire a lot. Through attending her workshop I learnt about innovations and strategies in evaluations. This was a packed session which I felt that it needed more than one day.

The last 2 ½ days of a conference were packed with a lot of information from different speakers. Parallel sessions were all very interesting and made it difficult to choose which one to attend. In these sessions different topics were discussed and I got equipped with basic tools as an emerging evaluator. These were from understanding ethics in evaluation which I feel is one of the most important issues in the field of evaluation, to simplifying logic of logic models. The most burning issue of professionalization of evaluation and evaluators was discussed. This open forum discussion got everyone talking, some in for the professionalization of the profession and some against it, the remaining question was what effect it can have in the profession. It is a topic that still needs further discussion. To mention just the few, from these sessions I learnt what do I need to become a strong evaluator, what is expected from me as an evaluator, as well as how to use the evaluation results for advocacy.

Then we had some plenary sessions which were also very informative. The speakers touched mostly about learning from other developed countries to strengthen the African evaluation while keeping it within the African context. Speakers also emphasized on using evaluations to inform policy makers at all levels as well in all sectors.

The aim of designating 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation was to advocate and promote evaluation and evidence-based policy making at international, regional, national and local levels. It has been my great pleasure to be part of this movement, again, thank you to SAMEA for sponsoring, to all speakers for sharing their well-researched insights and experiences with us, and to organisers for this successful event. I am looking forward to SAMEA 2016.