

Emerging Evaluators Feedback Report: 5th Biennial SAMEA conference 2015

To: SAMEA

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I applied for the 2015 SAMEA Emerging Evaluators scholarship because of the strong interest I have for learning more about Monitoring and Evaluation. As a recipient of the SAMEA Emerging Evaluators scholarships I am pleased to write out this feedback report on my experience at the 5th Biennial SAMEA conference 2015.

The 5th Biennial SAMEA conference 2015 was the first high profile conference event which I have ever attended outside of my university. I did not know what to expect from the entire experience. Nevertheless, back to the basics, I have to highlight that my travelling itinerary was very informative and straightforward. It was submitted to me on time nothing was delayed. The accommodation was very comfortable. The registration for the workshops was very easy and straightforward there were no problems. I had decided to attend the *Utilization of Evaluations* workshop. There was a lot of relevant and critical information to absorb from this workshop. The facilitators of the workshop were very helpful in answering some of the issues which I had queried. I also found the interactive group work helpful especially for networking purposes. Through this workshop I have some valuable direction as to what the focus of my first academic article will be about.

The second workshop that I had chosen was the half day workshop which focused on the *Introduction to Randomized Impact Evaluations*. I had come across the term randomised impact evaluations and so this was a field that I wanted to be better educated about. The workshop provided an excellent outline of this field. I also appreciated the group work session we had. I appreciated the ambience of both of these workshops because as attendees of the workshops everyone was treated equally and as people who were there to learn, and this really put me at ease in posing questions or answering questions that were asked during the workshops sessions.

I also found the conference session to be very well planned and extremely informative. I attentively listened to the Deputy speaker of parliaments as his speech set the tone for the afternoon, and I found the activist perspective on M&E presentation was really focusing on the main purpose of the conference which was on using M&E to improve the lives of people. This presentation was also challenging other activists from different communities in South Africa to learn from this practice of exercising M&E in a democratic environment. The other session that stood out for me was the one that accommodated Emerging Evaluators. The topics that were presented on were very relevant to me, I could really relate. I also attended a session in Hilton 1 and I was inspired by Scholastica Nytoyanto who is rather young but she managed to deliver a well research presentation.

Another presentation that was thought provoking was Kate Mckeggs presentation. In my application for this scholarship I had mentioned that one of the reasons why I wanted to attend this conference was so that I could be get advice on the career direction I would need to take in order to be an evaluator or specialise in the field. Kate Mckeggs speech stood out for me because she questioned the

professionalization of evaluation. Most people, myself included, want to have a career as evaluators. She pointed out that evaluators have to compete with auditors, projects managers, data analysts and many other established professions. Another mindboggling presentation that coincided with Kates speech was Paul Kariuki who has vast experience in evaluation and yet he considers himself, with all of the academic credentials under his belt, an emerging evaluator. He just like the rest of us is finding his feet in this relatively new field.

In conclusion I am so grate to SAMEA for ensuring that the flame for M&E will continue to burn. I have been so motivated to witness the numbered people that believe evaluation is a critical skill that to must be systemically developed especially in the South African Public Sector. The events that took place at the conference fulfilled the core of my reasons for wanting to be at the conference. I aspire to work within the public sector and in so doing I hope to improve the lives of communities, and I want to achieve this by being a policy analyst that correctly evaluates policies, programs, projects that are put in place by the South African government. I now know what I should do to work towards developing and sharpening my evaluation skills and knowledge.

Thank you SAMEA.