

## Neville

I would like to thank SAMEA and all its partners for awarding me the scholarship to attend their 6<sup>th</sup> biennial conference held at the Hilton Hotel in Sandton. When the year began I knew I would attend this conference but did not know how I would be able to afford it until a colleague brought it to my attention that I could apply for this scholarship, later during the year, which I am eternally grateful for.

This conference allowed me to be at the same place as professionals in the field of monitoring and evaluation from across the world that I would not have ordinarily been able to meet. My highlights include meeting some of the esteemed African writers on monitoring and evaluation (that I have cited in some of my assignments this year in my now completed Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation from University of Witwatersrand). Some other highlight include the realisation of how current and relevant my qualification is to the current discourses in the field of monitoring and evaluation (well done Wits), winning a book by one of the authors I have cited and having him sign the book for me, having another of the authors I have cited invite me to write a book with him (watch the space), meeting leaders in industry from both South Africa and the rest of the world, being awarded a professional in the field as a mentor to help me achieve my career ambitions, and being able to share knowledge with and learn from professionals in the field of monitoring and evaluation.

Some of the lessons learnt and observations made that I can take away from the experience I encountered include a common voice echoing the need to standardise how one can identify and/ or qualify a monitoring and evaluation professional, there is not yet one agreed upon voice regarding professionalization of the profession globally, it is a difficult task to agree on one set of standards that identify one as a competent monitoring and evaluation professional, there seems to be consensus that (that is not realised yet) indeed there are basics in monitoring and evaluation that already exist and allow it to be professionalised like discussions about logframes and theory of change, monitoring and evaluation is only as great as its use which is lacking, there is need to get policy in place in countries that have monitoring and evaluation in place to encourage usage of finding and facilitate the learning process monitoring and evaluation is supposed to provide, and there is a need to improve data visualisation. This is however not an exhaustive list but one that just highlights some of the most noticeable discussions for the events in the different strands that I was able to attend.

As a Young Emerging Evaluator I would like to participate more, by using this experience I encountered, to help shape an improved mentorship programme for future awardees of this award, participate in mentoring future awardees when I have emerged, be a part of solving some of the burning issues within the monitoring and evaluation domain, increase the number of African authors in monitoring and evaluation by publishing journals on different subject matters in the field through our own lens, be an inspiration to other Young Emerging Evaluators, and most importantly to teach in the field of monitoring and evaluation through facilitating workshops, presenting at conferences and doing consulting work in capacity development and/ or capacity building for different organisations globally. It would be a waste to have all this knowledge as well as experiences and not be able to share or plant it back to increase peer learning which is the heart of doing monitoring and evaluation.