

M&E News



INNAUGURAL SAMEA CONFERENCE "EVALUATION IN ACTION"

28-30 MARCH 2007, BIRCHWOOD HOTEL, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA



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SPECIAL EDITION PSC NEWSLETTER SAMEA INAUGURAL CONFERENCE



Keynote Speaker Prof. Gariba (left) with Prof. Sangweni, and Prof. Kahimbara

The South African Public Service Commission (PSC) has over the past few years played a key role in promoting monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at the international, regional and country level. As such the PSC has increasingly been called upon to make presentations on the progress of M&E in the South African Public Service. In 2004, the PSC co-hosted the 3rd African Evaluation Conference (AfrEA) which

drew together over 400 M&E practitioners from the continent, representing 61 countries. This event, apart from making M&E important at a continental level, also helped to create an African community of evaluators, largely from the government sector.

The purpose of the 2004 AfrEA Conference was to share experiences, stimulate debate and bring African

and other evaluators, evaluation clients, managers, governments and development practitioners up to date with the latest developments in evaluation in Africa.

The objectives of the Conference were:

- To showcase African evaluation expertise and achievements
- To highlight current issues that impact on M&E in Africa, drawing together international and African thinking on these issues.
- To share how innovative methods and approaches in M&E are applied to foster democracy, good governance and development.
- To encourage a better understanding of the articulation in Africa between evaluation theory and practice, and development theory and practice.
- To create a forum for the interaction between African and international specialists.
- To provide input into planning for the future development of evaluation in Africa.
- To build capacity on the continent.

The Conference was also important in that it brought together the South African M&E community, who hitherto had been working in an unorganized manner.

At this event the idea of creating a formal South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) was mooted, and a group of volunteers gathered to formalise an association. In 2005, SAMEA was officially launched, and began working towards its inaugural Conference, that we are now reporting on.



SAMEA Chair Jennifer Bisgard (left) with the DG of the OPSC Odette Ramsingh.



The theme for the Conference was:

“EVALUATION IN ACTION”.

Since the inception of our democracy in 1994, our democratically elected government has been firmly committed to the creation of a new society in which there is a better life for all. This commitment is enshrined in Chapter 2 of our Constitution (on the Bill of Rights) to redress the legacy of the past and is also an ideal that our President recommits to year in and year out in his State of the Nation addresses. At the centre of this ideal lies the significance of monitoring and evaluation in action. M&E and more specifically evaluation should purposefully aim at the creation of a new society and a better life for all not forgetting its role in strengthening our Continent.

More than 350 delegates, (national and international), attended the conference that was held at Birchwood Conference Centre in Johannesburg. African countries that were represented were Egypt, Nigeria, Botswana and Ghana. There were also delegates from the United States of America, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This highlights the interest, depth of evaluation and the need for the development of monitoring and evaluation skills. The delegates represented governments, donors, local and international development agencies, NGOs, academic and research institutions, private business and other influential stakeholders.

The conference was designed to share experiences, to stimulate debate and to bring stakeholders up to date with the latest developments in the field of monitoring and evaluation. The conference provided a platform for the sharing of lessons between organisations, evaluation associations and networks, and between individuals from the different countries who have some interest in monitoring and evaluation.

The conference was designed to provide a forum through which experiences and thinking could feed into the worldwide move towards reforming and reformulating development evaluation theories, approaches and methods. It also provided SAMEA with the opportunity to establish what

its future role and strategy would be in taking the development of monitoring and evaluation in the country further.

The conference was divided into 4 parts.

The **first** was a pre-conference training programme, with 14 different workshops. The **second** was the panel and round-table discussions, which brought together specialists around specific themes. The **third** was the parallel paper sessions, where 58 oral presentations were made. The **fourth** stream related to association matters, which included the Annual General Meeting and the Board election.

The Conference achieved the following:

- Brought together monitoring and evaluation specialists and users as part of SAMEA's mandate to promote the development of M&E thinking and practice in South Africa.
- Provided an opportunity for M&E specialists to take stock of what others are doing in the field and to participants to understand the state of development of M&E in South Africa.
- Stimulated debate and research around M&E practice and its role in society, given the specific development and service delivery challenges in South Africa.
- Promoted the integration of theory and practice in M&E.
- Publicised the existence of SAMEA and promoted its national and international profile.

The opening addresses were delivered by Founding Chairperson of SAMEA, Ms Jennifer Bisgard, who welcomed everybody at the Inaugural SAMEA Conference and the Chairperson of the PSC, Professor Stan Sangweni, who officially opened the Conference. Ms Bisgard said in her welcoming address that she was proud to be part of this inaugural conference that focused on such a wide array of M&E themes - from the utilization of M&E practices and findings in programme development, management and implementation, to knowledge management within organizations and programmes, the challenges of building evaluation systems for tiered, multi-sectoral and multi-partnered programmes and building evaluation capacity.

She then went on to introduce the Keynote Speaker, Professor Stan Sangweni. In his opening address, Prof Sangweni focused on the importance of action-oriented evaluation, on ensuring that M&E is relevant to the challenges that the different sectors in our country are faced with and on the importance of training of evaluators.

Emphasizing the importance of action-oriented evaluation Prof Sangweni said “we have a responsibility to promote the kind of M&E that delivers results. I am talking here about M&E that is not merely done to advance one's publication track record or promote excellent conferencing. I am talking about the kind of M&E that has relevance to the challenges that our different sectors are faced with.

Unless such relevance is established, there is a risk that M&E may become a bandwagon which many embrace for the wrong reasons. Indeed, it can even become a cliché with no substance which some would flaunt only to signal that they are also moving with the times. In this regard, let us remember the immortal words of Shakespeare, who in Macbeth wrote that: *'Life... is a tale told by*



From left to right: SAMEA members: Zozo Mamabolo (Former Board Member) Kevin Kelly (Board Member) Bongani Magogo (Former Board Member) Geoffrey Setswe and Nonvunzo Mamabolo

an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' evaluation needs to be put in action to ensure that it does not degenerate into a tale full of sound and fury, which signifies nothing".

In his speech, Prof Sangweni also focused on the importance of appropriate training for evaluators. He said, "there is a fallacy that any research qualification makes one a 'natural' evaluator, and that this on its own, is adequate. Whilst sound research and writing skills are necessary, these are not enough.

SAMEA has a role to play in ensuring that there are better training and developmental opportunities for

its members to become competent practitioners." He further urged SAMEA to ensure that evaluators do publish their work. There are many evaluations that are conducted in South Africa, yet many of these seldom find their way into local and international journals.

He suggested that SAMEA finds a way of ensuring that such South African evaluation stories are recorded for ease of access and dissemination. For SAMEA to successfully play its role of promoting good evaluation practice in the country, it would be important to ensure that it functions as an accessible network.

There are many people in the country who share an interest in and a commitment to evaluation, and SAMEA should open its doors and facilitate access for such people. Access to information, advice and training opportunities should not be determined by who you know or how much money you have. Without such access, SAMEA would run the risk of becoming an exclusive club of well-connected individuals. He encouraged all the participants in the conference to ensure that this does not happen.

Other keynote addresses were delivered by:

- **Dr Sully Gariba: President of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA).** *Towards a decade of African Evaluation.*
- **Dr Zenda Ofir: Board member of the American Evaluation Association.** *Shaping M&E in the Developing World: Our response, Our Responsibility, Our Challenge.*
- **Dr Mark Orkin: Director-General of SAMDI.** *The SAMDI Capacity Building Strategy.*
- **Prof Patricia Rogers: Director of the Institute for Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation, Melbourne, Australia.** *Strategies for Improving the Quality of M&E.*

A highlight of the Conference was a special panel presentation on the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&ES) in South Africa. The session was organised by Ms. Ronette Engela from the Presidency. It was Chaired by Mr. Mashwahle Diphofa of the OPSC. It included presentations by the National Treasury, Department of Provincial and Local Government, the South

African Management Development Institute, Statistics South Africa and the Department of Public Service and Administration.

SAMDI TAKES THE LEAD IN BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) is in the process of reconstitution to an Academy. The primary objective of this Academy will be to foster and co-ordinate the delivery of training in leadership and management on a meaningful scale, which advances the common ethos and values of professional public service in a developmental state.

Three principles will underline the functions of the new Academy:

- i. It will act as a facilitator of training
- ii. It will collaborate and not compete with service providers
- iii. It will massify the delivery of training interventions

In keeping with the mission of the new Academy, SAMDI intends working collaboratively with organisations like SAMEA especially in areas that promote capacity building for the government wide monitoring and evaluation system (GWM&ES).

In his message of support read at the SAMEA conference, the Director General of SAMDI, Dr Mark Orkin stated that this event, 'comes at an exciting time in the history of post-apartheid public management and administration, when issues of good governance and accelerated service delivery, occupy centre stage.' There is no doubt that the promotion of good governance must be premised on appropriate knowledge, skills and responsibilities within the public sector. Given the relatively late entry of South Africa into the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) domain, it seems the requisite skills in this regard are not at an optimal level. Moreover, the demand for M&E in government systemically currently outstrips the supply of experienced individuals.



Prof. Sangweni (left) and Dr Orkin (DG SAMDI) in discussion



Kevin Kelly (Conference Organiser) Flanked by Keynote Speaker, Prof. Patricia Rogers (left) and DR. Zenda Ofir (right)

At the SAMEA Conference the Director-General of SAMDI provided an input on the capacity building programme which forms an integral part of the GWM&ES.

SAMDI is the lead agency for capacity building and as such it has an immense responsibility in ensuring the successful implementation of the GWM&ES. Dr Orkin is the overall project leader and champion of the M&E capacity building programme. SAMDI has established a project team for design and implementation led by Mr Oliver Seale, Chief Executive Manager in the Corporate Resource Management Training Unit. He is being supported by an external consultant Dr Ross Hirschowitz, who is a former Deputy Director General at SatsSA. SAMDI has determined that there are currently various service providers offering M&E training at different levels. It will investigate outsourcing key components e.g. curriculum development to appropriate experts and course delivery to selected providers, as required. To date SAMDI has offered training on M&E for programme and project management to 502 officials in the public service. This will continue until the rollout of the new targeted training programme in November 2007.

SAMDI also recognises that shared learning through networks, website links and informal gatherings will support the implementation of GWM&E and will enhance capacity building. These mechanisms will assist in the development of a common understanding of M&E principles and practices as well as the sharing of best practice. SAMDI participates and supports the work of the National M&E Learning Network managed by the Department of Provincial and Local Government. It will use these opportunities for ongoing engagement with stakeholders in the design and rollout of M&E training.

SAMDI looks upon institutions such as SAMEA to develop M&E professional and other networks. This partnership will harness the skills of the private sector, civil society and academia which in turn, will advance training, development and implementation of the GWM&ES. SAMDI is committed to the goals and objectives of the GWM&E and as such, will ensure that its mandate on capacity

building responds to the need for greater accountability in the Public Service and improved service delivery, for all citizens of South Africa.

ELECTION OF A NEW SAMEA BOARD

SAMEA is governed by a Board consisting of 11 board members. Five vacancies existed at the time of the SAMEA Inaugural Conference and were filled by democratically elected members.

Currently the following members serve on the Board:

Dr Mark Abrahams, University of Cape Town	Chairperson
Mr Indran Naidoo, OPSC	Deputy Chairperson
Ms Benita van Wyk, Feedback Performance Metrics	Treasurer
Ms Angela Bester, Deloitte & Touche	Member
Ms Donna Rae Podems, Otherwise	Member
Prof Fanie Cloete, University of Stellenbosch	Member
Dr Kevin Kelly, Rhodes University	Member
Dr Marlene Roefs, Social Dimensions	Member
Ms Octavia Khabeleni Mkhabela	Member
Prof Sarah Jane Howie	Member
Dr Sefiso Khumalo, OPSC	Member

In conclusion, SAMEA strives to cultivate a dynamic community of evaluators that will support, guide and strengthen the development of M&E as an important discipline, profession and instrument for empowerment and accountability in South Africa. The inaugural conference was a success and has contributed to achieving these aims of SAMEA.

A full report will soon be available from the SAMEA website www.SAMEA.org.za. Papers delivered at the conference can also be accessed on the same website.



From left to right: Mohammed Manai, Indran Naidoo, Benita Van Wyk, Jennifer Bisgard, Marlene Roefs, Mark Abrahams, and Athanasius Coker.



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