



6th Biennial SAMEA Conference Conference Report

Johannesburg Hilton, South Africa
23 to 27 October 2017

February 2018

Table of Contents

page

04

Introduction

page

10

Planning

page

17

Conference programme

page

25

Strands

page

27

Lessons learnt

page

32

Feedback

page

37

Annexes

Raising the bar

The SAMEA Conference recorded the highest number of delegates in its history – a sign of a growing profession.

Introduction



About SAMEA

Conference objectives

Conference format

Conference participation

About SAMEA

The South African Monitoring & Evaluation Association (SAMEA) strives to cultivate a vibrant community 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.

SAMEA aims to:

- Provide a platform for interaction and information sharing among all those interested in Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)
- Promote high quality intellectual, ethical and professional standards in M&E
- Increase the use of M&E theory and practice
- Promote the development and adoption of M&E approaches and methods suitable to a South African and development context
- Promote post-graduate education and continuing professional development in the field of M&E
- Increase the profile of South African M&E at national and international level
- Help build understanding of international developments and trends in M&E
- Be a resource on M&E in South Africa



Conference theme and objectives



This 6th SAMEA Conference aimed to broaden the evaluation community and increase commitment amongst evaluation users and decision-makers to use evidence for informed decision making.

Since the 5th biennial SAMEA Conference in October 2015, the South African environment has been characterised by the SA Government advocating for the National Development Plan, which is aligned to the international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There is also a growing demand for evaluations by different sectors for various purposes.

Key state institutions and development partners intend to use evaluation evidence to measure development results.

International and domestic debates currently emphasise the need for better quality and rigour of evaluation work,

clear frameworks for evaluator competence, evaluation standards and more advocacy for the use of evaluation evidence for informed decision making.

It is against this backdrop, that SAMEA has decided on the conference theme:

Purpose-driven Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)



Conference format



The Conference ran over five days, comprising 2 days of pre-conference professional development workshops. There were five strands for conference presentations (see adjacent).

Three plenaries were held, including the opening and closing sessions. Plenaries comprised international experts who shared their time and experience with participants over a range of practical, learning sessions.



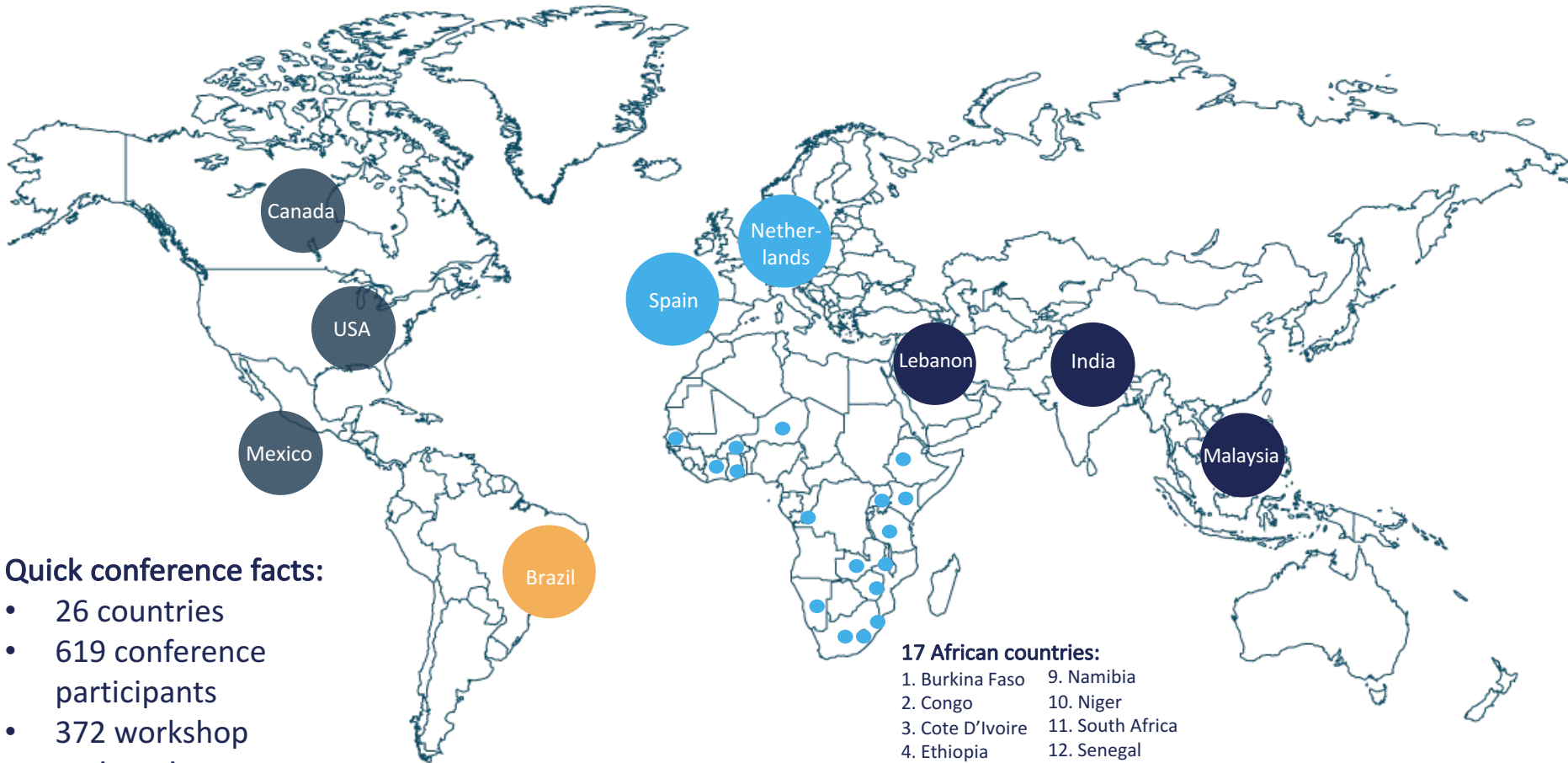
Conference strands

1. Strengthening Performance Monitoring Systems
2. Enhancing Data Management and Visualisation
3. Using Evidence for Decision Making
4. Lessons learnt from evaluation case studies
5. Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation Profession

“The presentations at the conference were of high quality, with high profile speakers that kept attendees engaged” – Dr Victor Naidu.

Conference participation

The SAMEA Conference has become truly international, as conference participation indicates.



Quick conference facts:

- 26 countries
- 619 conference participants
- 372 workshop registrations
- 5 strands

17 African countries:

1. Burkina Faso
2. Congo
3. Cote D'Ivoire
4. Ethiopia
5. Ghana
6. Kenya
7. Lesotho
8. Malawi
9. Namibia
10. Niger
11. South Africa
12. Senegal
13. Swaziland
14. Tanzania
15. Uganda
16. Zambia
17. Zimbabwe

Towards Purpose-driven M&E

The rise in M&E has necessitated the need for more purpose driven evaluations which will contribute to programmes that impact positively on the lives of people.

Planning



Timeline

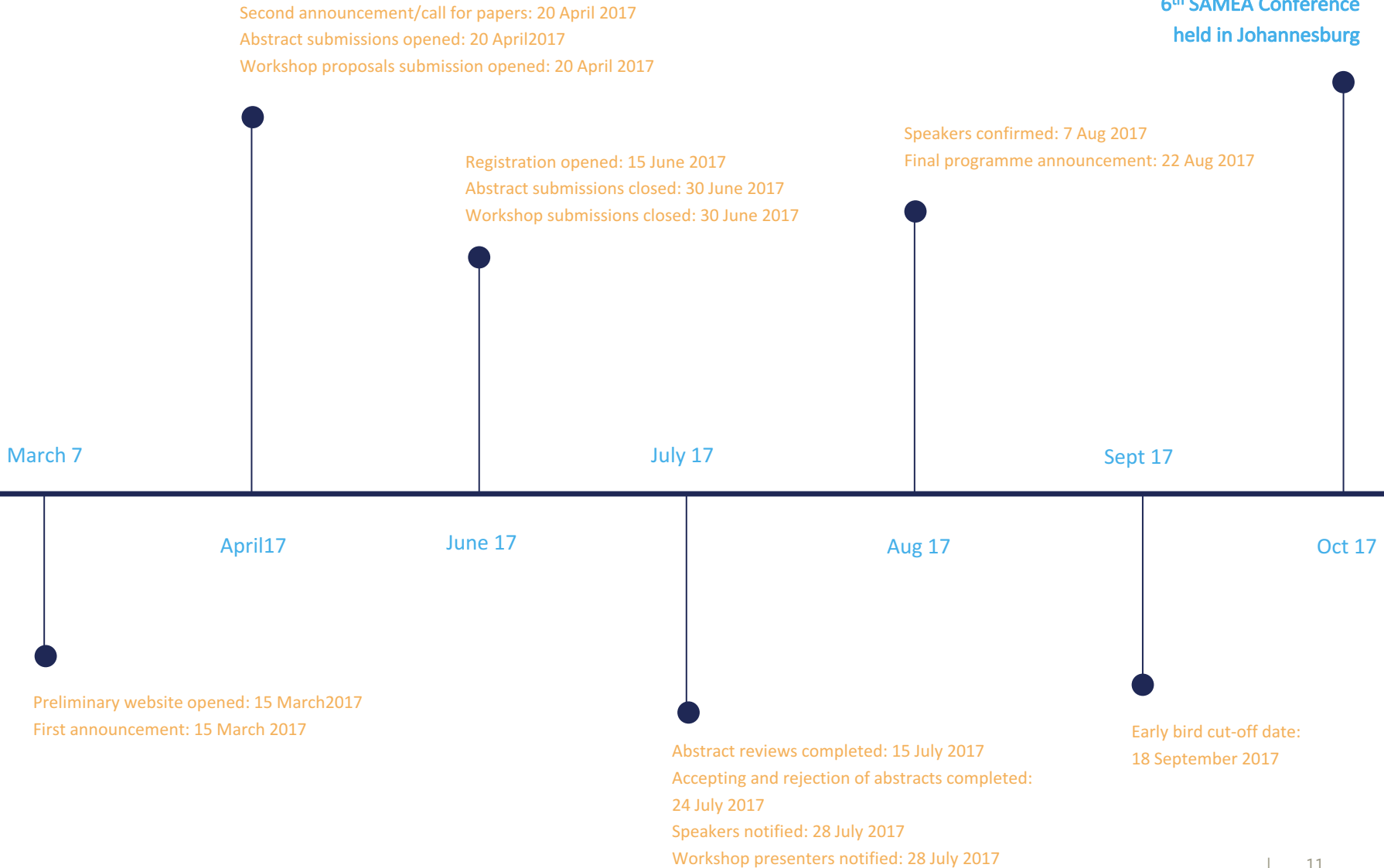
Organising team

Sponsors & bursars

Abstracts

Timeline

6th SAMEA Conference
held in Johannesburg



Organising team



The resources that pulled together the event worked tirelessly towards its success.

The five conference strands were organised by 14 strand coordinating teams (see Annex A for the names of the conference chair and strand coordinators).

The outstanding leadership provided by strand co-coordinators in conceptualising, reviewing and managing the strands contributed to a successful event.

The strand coordination process provided a memorable learning experience.

For a fourth year, the SAMEA Board contracted Ilios Conferences to organise logistics and event management.

Ilios did an excellent job in supporting the SAMEA Board with their mandate to host the 6th SAMEA Conference.

Volunteers were mobilised and briefed to provide front- and back end support towards effective event flow.

The team also knew how to have fun between all the hard work – as demonstrated by end-of-conference selfies and banter in the Secretariat office.

Sponsors



Sponsors and other partners played a critical role in the Conference.

Various types of sponsorship opportunities were available for the public, recognising that not all organisations have the financial flexibility to offer cash sponsorships. Cash sponsorship included:

- Premium Sponsorship – R500 000 each or above
- Select Sponsorship – R300 000 each
- Classic Sponsorship – R100 000 each

In addition to cash sponsorship, the funding structure allowed for:

- In-kind sponsorships for **strand management support** and **workshop contributions**

SAMEA secured the participation of nine conference exhibitors.

Sponsors

SAMEA wishes to thank our sponsors for their contribution to the conference.

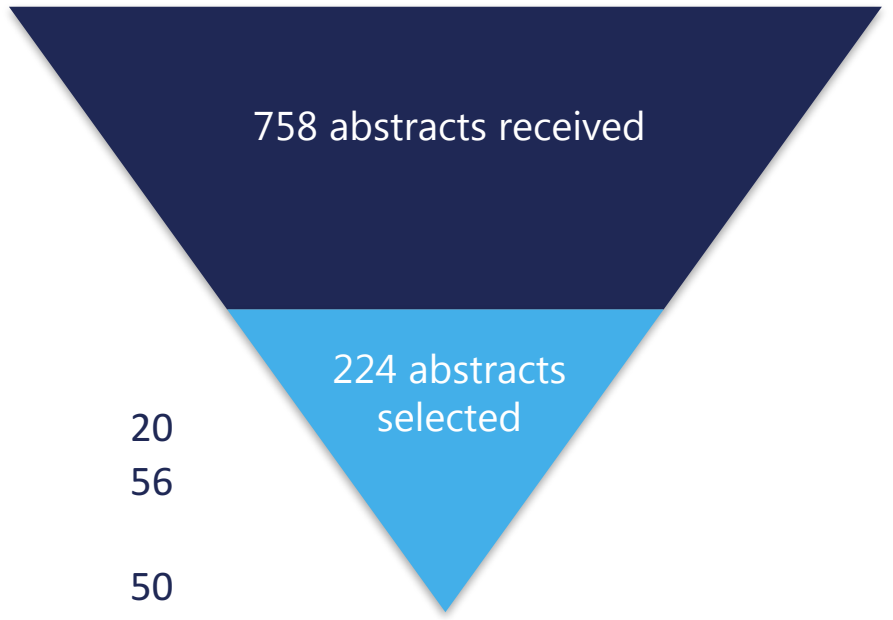


University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence



Abstract management

Strand managers reviewed, scored and selected 758 anonymous abstracts via Ilios Conferences' digital system. The abstracts were of a very high standard.



Accepted abstracts per strand

Enhancing Data Management and Visualisation	20
Lessons learnt from evaluation case studies	56
Strengthening Performance Monitoring Systems	50
Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation Profession	38
Using Evidence for Decision Making	60

Why the need for Purpose-driven M&E?

Private sector institutions see the benefits of using evaluations to measure value for money of their corporate social investments.

Conference programme



Workshops & posters

Parallel sessions &
plenaries

Awards

Events

Technology

Workshops & posters



High quality professional development workshops and posters set the scene for a purpose-driven event.



- 21 workshops were presented at the SAMEA Conference (See Annex B for list of workshops presented)
- 24 posters were presented

Parallel sessions and plenaries

The opening plenary framed the conference against the theme of Purpose-driven M&E. Several high-profile speakers presented.

Opening speakers included:

- Dr Arunaselam Rasappan (President, Asia-pacific Evaluation Association (APEA))
- Dr Ntsiki Tshayingca-Mashiy, DG in the Department for Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (DPME) in the South African Presidency (for Hon Mr Jeff Radebe)



Conference day 2 speakers included:

- Opening address by Hon Senzeni Zokwana, Minister Of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
- Sara Vaca, Independent Consultant, Visual Brains

Chaired by Dr Victor Naidu, the closing plenary included the following speakers:

- Jozef Leonardus Vaessen, IEG Methods Advisor, World Bank Group
- Ziad Moussa, President, International Organisation For Cooperation In Evaluation (IOCE)
- Summary and closing by Dugan Fraser
- Feedback from strand leaders and concluding remarks



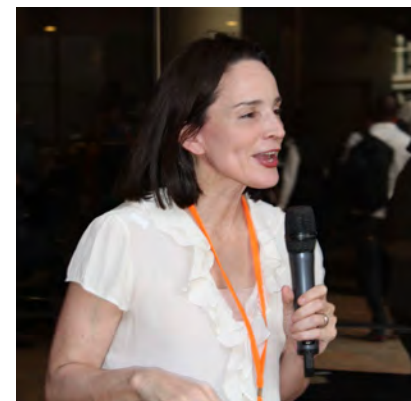
Events

On Wednesday evening, 29 October, delegates enjoyed a opening cocktail during which the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) launched the Young & Emerging Evaluators (YEE) Network.



Twelve emerging evaluators were sponsored to attend the conference: Miriam Chikwanda, Bongiwe Pasiya, Geeta Morar, Cynthia Mendoza, Onias Hlungwani, Faith Chinungwe, Noleen Advani, Mkhululi Mnyaka, Veronica Mkuyamba, Schwarzenegerr Kusikwenyu, Nomathamsanqa Mfundisi and Neville Mangwiro.

On Thursday evening, SAMEA hosted the African Authors cocktail – an event that showcased the work of African authors, editors and publishers.



Authors, editors and publishers gathered on Thursday evening for the the African Authors cocktail.

Awards



In recognition of the many people who are contributing to the development of the evaluation profession, SAMEA held an awards function on Wednesday evening, 29 October.

The SAMEA Distinguished Service Award went to:

- Eastern Cape SAMEA chapter: Prof Edwin Ijeoma
- Western Cape SAMEA network: Dr Mark Abrahams



The SAMEA Emerging Evaluator Award was awarded to the following young evaluators:

- Ashleigh Fynn: Genesis Analytics
- Khotso Tsotsotso: CLEAR
- Letitia Rambally Greener: MatCH Research Unit, Wits Health



Consortium was awarded in absentia

Awards



Category 1: An evaluation in the DPME's evaluation repository that received a high-quality assessment score

Mr Edwin Moshabele, Director: Recapitalization and Development (Programme Manager)

Ms Thokozile Masangu, Director: Evaluation and Research (Evaluation Champion)

Mr Charles Machethe University of Pretoria (Independent Evaluator)

Category 2: A national department that has institutionalised evaluation

National Department of Social Development
Mr Thabani Buthelezi, Chief Director: Monitoring and Evaluation (Evaluation Champion), Professor in School of Agriculture & Rural Development

The Government Evaluation Awards recognised best performance in government evaluations with the aim to promote a culture and institutionalisation of evaluation in government. The awards comprised four categories.

Category 3: A provincial department that has institutionalised evaluation

Western Cape Department of Agriculture

Dr Dirk Troksie, Director: Business Planning and Strategy (Evaluation Champion)

Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Mr Manelisi Sogwagwa, Senior Manager: Evaluation (Evaluation Champion)

Category 4: An office of the premier that has institutionalised evaluation

Gauteng Office of the Premier

Ms Annette Griessel, DDG for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the Office of the Premier (Evaluation Champion)

Western Cape Department of the Premier

Ms Zeenat Ishmail, Chief Director: Strategic Management Information (Evaluation Champion)

Technology



The use of technology is particularly important in a data-driven profession. Thus, SAMEA prioritised real-time delegate feedback via a twitter wall and conference app.



Technology applications:

- Active social media participation and live feeding on conference twitter wall
- The adoption and engagement with the conference app allowed organisers to visualise conference participation and provided real-time feedback to delegates
- The conference app provided a greater focus on content. It also provided an opportunity to investigate what attendees found important
- Lastly, it allowed organisers to benchmark where M&E was positioned relative to other countries

Why the need for Purpose-driven M&E?

Non-governmental organisations and civil society groups have raised citizens' awareness to actively participate in the evaluation process and to use evaluation evidence for accountability.

Strands



Strengthening Performance
Monitoring Systems

Enhancing Data Management
and Visualisation

Using Evidence for Decision
Making

Lessons learnt from evaluation
case studies

Strengthening the Monitoring
and Evaluation Profession

Strand outcomes

Strengthening performance monitoring systems

Outcome 1: Monitoring and Evaluation stakeholders from across sectors have an improved understanding of purposive performance monitoring systems, data management and data visualization for informed decision making.

Enhancing data management and visualisation

Outcome 2: Evaluation users, decision-makers and evaluation managers, commissioners, development partners will have a better understanding of how fit for purpose monitoring and evaluation can be used for policy-making, oversight, accountability, and changes to interventions that ultimately lead to efficient and effective development.

Lessons learnt from evaluation case studies

Outcome 4: The evaluation field in South Africa is strengthened through the development of purposive M&E frameworks, ethics, standards and competencies.

Using evidence for decision-making

Outcome 3: Evaluators of all levels will have deepened their knowledge and skills to apply purposive evaluation approaches, designs and methods for better quality evaluations.

Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation profession

Cross cutting thematic and key development areas for all strands.

Why the need for Purpose-driven M&E?

Higher education institutions have responded to more focussed evaluation efforts by offering a wide range of M&E qualifications.

Lessons learnt



Challenges

For the future

Challenges

Although lauded as a highly successful conference, every event offers opportunities for learning. To continue the improvement of SAMEA conferences, we have noted and earmarked the following three challenges to address during the next event:



Registrations

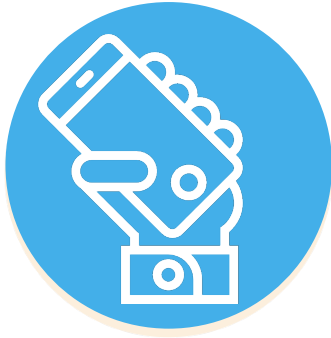
Cancellations

Navigation

- The registration process was delayed, hence delayed training times. We are looking into different ways that the registration process could be improved to avoid such delays in the future
- Presenters dropped out without notice. SAMEA will put in place mitigation measures for this
- Navigating around the conference was still a challenge as there was no enough signage around the conference venue and rooms.

For the future

post-event
conversation



technology &
innovation



university
engagement in
SAMEA chapters



In line with our vision to make each SAMEA Conference better, we identified six activities for the future. These could be broadly themed as technology & innovation, post-event conversation and university engagement in SAMEA chapters.

- Having real-time updated conference programme on a computer screen at the conference for those that cannot access the app
- Continue improving and using the conference app to cater for our delegates
- Using technology to record the conference and develop live conference presentations
- Using strands as topical interest groups to continue the discussion post-conference
- Inclusion of free networking sessions like the authors' night, tech salon at future events
- The need for having SAMEA chapters working with universities in the chapters to strengthen M&E capacity

The new SAMEA website will be launched in the first quarter of 2018

Towards Purpose-driven M&E

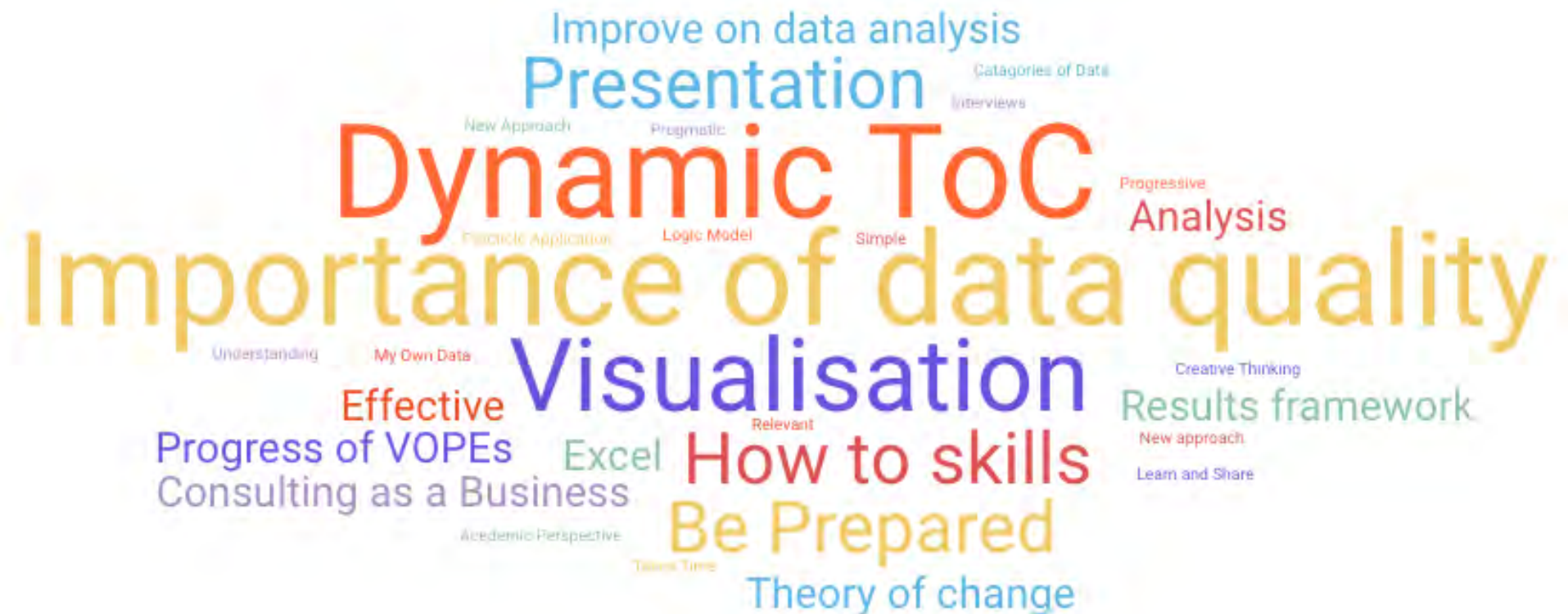
“The conference facilitates discussions on fresh thinking to achieve purpose-driven evaluation congruent with the development agenda – let’s continue to think about this critically” – Dr Ntsiki Tshayingca-Mashiya (DPME).

Feedback



Workshop feedback

A word cloud summarising attendants' impressions of the SAMEA workshops:



Emerging themes

Strand coordinators provided feedback on the the different strand sessions, which resulted in identifying the following dominant themes:

1. The importance of data quality in a robust M&E system
2. The use of a dynamic theory of change as a conceptual tool in evaluations
3. Data visualisation to present data more creatively and accessibly
4. The focus on evaluation training on practical “how-to skills”
5. Strengthening data analysis in M&E reports

Strand feedback

Specific feedback from strand coordinators on their sessions, are captured below:

“There is no single schema or framework that has proven to be the ideal model to follow to support evidence use. In all cases and examples presented, it appeared that some form of hybrid is required. This reinforces the idea that context matters in evidence use, and evaluators (and evaluands) need to be intentional about understanding contextual issues as part of ensuring the effective use of evidence.”

From strand: Using evidence for decision-making
Feedback by strand coordinator: Dr Ruth Stewart

“The purpose of an M&E system is grounded in the belief system and philosophy of an organisation. Understanding this will help you locate your role within the system, and what the appropriate actions are that you need to take.”

From strand: Strengthening performance monitoring systems
Feedback by strand coordinators: Ms Fazeela Hoosen & Mr Asgar Bhikoo

Ending on a high note

All in all, the 6th SAMEA Conference was a major success. Thought provoking discussions took place amongst a record number of delegates, which sets the tone for an exciting 7th SAMEA Conference in 2019.

Annexes

A thick, horizontal blue brushstroke graphic that tapers to the right, positioned below the word 'Annexes'.

Annex A: Strand leaders

- Strand 1:** Ms Fazeela Hoosen & Mr Asgar Bhikoo
- Strand 2:** Mr Taurai Bwerinofa &
Ms Jerusha Govender
- Strand 3:** Ms Alyna Wyatt, Dr Ruth Stewart &
Ms Sunet Jordaan
- Strand 4:** Mr Antonio Hercules, Ms Seirah Ngcobo &
Dr Ian Goldman
- Strand 5:** Dr Donna Podems & Dr Lauren Wildschut

**A special word of thanks to Dr Victor Naidu,
the Conference Chair.**

Annex B: Workshop list

Data Visualisation	An Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Development And Education Programmes
Theory-Based Evaluation in Practice	Fundamentals of The Integrated Results-Based Management (IRBM) System
Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in Evaluation	How to Improve the Quality of Your Evaluation. A Workshop for Project Managers and Consultants
Using A Theory of Change to Design, Monitor and Evaluate a Programme Using Lessons From Real Life	Introduction to Evaluation Consulting
Evaluative Monitoring Systems: How to Use Monitoring Data to Improve Project Decision-Making and Learning	Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in Evaluation
Impact Evaluations: Designing and Implementing Comparable Case and Control Samples. Practical Methods in Context.	Strengthening VOPE's Workshop
Strengthening M&E Data Management and Analysis Capacity Using Advanced Microsoft Excel	Enhancing Qualitative Data Management, Analysis and Visualization Using Nvivo Software
A Systems Thinking Approach to Results Based M&E for Social Development Projects	
Creative Data Visualisation	
Developing a Purpose-Driven Measurement, Monitoring & Evaluation (PDMM&E) System and Institutionalizing Outcomes through a Standardized Logic Model Approach	
Strengthening the Local Community Engagement in Performance Monitoring for Good Governance	

Conference presentations

All presentations from the 6th SAMEA Conference is available on the conference website at:

<http://sameaconference.co.za/presentations/>