Breakout Session I (A): Early Career Challenges and Opportunities

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Early Career Challenges and Opportunities

- Planning your career (Setting goals)
- Identifying growth opportunities (competitions, trainings, and conferences)
- Finding a mentor and a support group
- Establishing online presence and professional branding
- Work-life balance
- Action items for career growth (individual activity)
Common Challenges Faced by Early Career Professionals/Researchers

- **Coping with change**
  - Transition from doctoral studies to job hunting can be daunting, emotional
  - Major life changes (new job, moving, marriage, children)

- **Career issues**
  - Path to post-PhD employment not straight, many challenges
  - Doubts about academic careers (mix of research, teaching, administration, academic politics)

- **Work-life balance**
  - Time management in new situations
  - Risk of burnout

- **Identity crises**
  - Many PhDs end up outside of academia, yet they spent years preparing for it.

- **Lack of access to resources**
  - Disconnect from previous sources of support (networking, professional development or career advice)

- **Lack of support from supervisors**
  - Most supervisors joined academia in better economic climate

- **Sustaining writing productivity**
  - “Publish or perish” - academic publications make/break careers
Opportunities/Potential Solutions

Systematic efforts needed to address challenges that early career professionals face during training and their career paths.

• Networking
  - Collaborating, attending conferences and networking events, very critical

• Mentoring
  - Effective mentoring is indispensable
  - Mentoring promotes work satisfaction, increases the sense of personal accomplishment, while stimulating work projects and success rates.

• Work-life balance
  - Managing calendars, coworkers, projects
  - Effective time management
  - Work environment - autonomy, time-management, flexibility, and dedicated research (or family) time
  - Mental coaching, mindfulness or personal leaderships workshops - gain skills to optimize work-life balance - efficiently leave the workplace and its duties behind
  - Satisfaction and motivation at work increases in parallel to the sense of usefulness and engagement.
Personal Experience/Advice

• Mentoring – mentors opens doors, provide opportunities
• Recognize your talents – writing, analytical
• Look for gaps within your team/organization that you can turn into opportunities
• Continue learning new skills
• Confidence in your abilities
• Think “outside the box”