Speed-dating and Networking Cheat Sheet

This guide is intended to help students and young researchers get the most out of networking and speed-dating at the annual event 'Linking Research, Policy and Practice'.

The first part will be questions you should ask yourself before heading into a speed dating session, oftentimes these are things which organizations and professionals want to know from you right away:

- What is it that you are looking for? (An internship, volunteer opportunities, research ideas, to collaborate on research?)
    - Being clear with your intentions is important, what is it that you want to get out of this conversation?
- What would you like to learn from this person/organization? (how to work in fragile settings, what it is like to run HIV programs, how research looks in the 'real' world?)
    - What about this person or organization intrigues you the most? What are the specific skills or content which you can only learn from them?
- What do you think this person/organization can learn from you? (What is your background education in? How does that affect your outlook, skills, and work ethic?)
    - What do you bring to the table? How are you the best person for them?
- How can this organization improve? (be critical, do you think there is a gap within their current scope?(
    - E.g. looking at social media, including current literature on child marriage, etc.
- What is your biggest accomplishment so far?
    - You are more than just a student or recent grad, what have you accomplished that is unique to you?
- Why this organization?
    - What is it about this organization that caught your eye?

The next section contains some ideas of questions which you can ask to the person you're talking with:

- What do you like most about the work that you do?
    - What is the most rewarding? What tasks do they find most interesting?
- Can you walk me through your daily or weekly activities?
    - What does the job of a ___ look like in practice? What is it that you wish you had more time for?
- What was the best career advice that you've ever been given?
- What skills do you think a young professional should have to work in this field/in this organization?
- Are there any information gaps which need to be filled? (a segue into how you could do research for them)
    - What research is your organization currently interested in? What do you think is important to research for the future of this subject?
- What do you think young professionals should improve or are not good at?
- What is, according to you, the added value of young researchers within this sector?

- Looking back on your career, what is something that you wish you had done differently?
- What did you regret for not doing within your first jobs?

There is no secret formula to successfully networking, but coming into a conversation prepared and armed with questions is recommended. As we have a designated time for speed dating, the amount of time for questions is somewhat limited. When going into each 'dating' session, be ready to have a few main questions. It is encouraged to ask for emails or business cards in order to follow up with those you hit it off with.