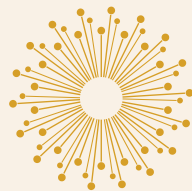


Navigating
Conferences
for Early Career
Professionals in
Gender-Based
Violence:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE



SVRI sexual
violence
research
initiative



GENDER VIOLENCE
RESEARCH
AND
COLLABORATION
NETWORK

COLLABORATION. WELL-BEING. KNOWLEDGE SHARING.

STEP 1: WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE CONFERENCE?

INTRODUCING YOURSELF: PERFECTING YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Before attending any conference, prepare a short elevator pitch. This is a concise introduction that quickly tells others who you are, what you do, and why you're attending the event.

Consider the following:

- **Who are you?**

(Your name, position, and institution/organisation, etc.)

- **What's your background?**

(Your area of interest and expertise)

- **What do you do?**

- If you are a researcher: what do you (want to) research?
(The specific topics or fields you are passionate about)
- If you are a practitioner: what does your work focus on?
(You can think of a concise way of representing your day-to-day for an outsider)
- If you are an activist: what social issue motivates your work?
(Think about the root of your engagement and try to identify what the core of your advocacy is)
- If you are neither or all of these: what is the essence of your work?
(What is the origin and the ideal destination of what you do)

- **Why are you attending this conference?**

(What are your goals—networking, presenting, learning about specific topics?)

Example Elevator Pitch:

“Hi, I’m [Your Name], a [student/activist/practitioner/etc.] based in [your location or institution]. My work focuses on the intersection of [your field] and [specific area of interest]. I’m here to learn more about [related conference theme] and to connect with others doing similar work. I’m particularly interested in your work on [their focus] and would love to discuss potential collaborations.”

When interacting, remember that your insights, passion, and research interests are unique and valuable. Share them using clear keywords or key phrases to capture attention.

STUDY THE CONFERENCE: PRIORITISING AND PLANNING

- **Research the Conference Schedule:** Identify which sessions are a priority and mark them on your calendar. Focus on thematic areas that align with your research but allow room for flexibility in case you need breaks or if unforeseen events arise.
- **Research the Presenters:** Check the backgrounds of key speakers and presenters. Aim for a balanced perspective by attending sessions with varying viewpoints or approaches in your field. You might also identify potential collaborators or people you want to connect with after their presentations.
- **Venue and Location:** Familiarise yourself with the conference venue and city. Consider planning some leisure activities during your downtime to recharge between sessions. Breaks are essential to avoid burnout.

Seasoned researcher's advise preparing questions beforehand. Even if the questions don't naturally come up during the presentations, don't hesitate to ask them afterward. Your inquiry might spark insights for yourself and others who share similar curiosities.

Remember: *There's no such thing as a wrong question.*



RECOMMENDED APPS FOR PRE-CONFERENCE PREP:

- Whova: Official conference app
- Google Calendar: To schedule and prioritise sessions.
- Evernote / Notion: For organising notes on speakers, topics, and sessions to attend.
- LinkedIn: To research presenters and connect with attendees beforehand.

STEP 2: YOU'RE AT THE CONFERENCE. NOW WHAT?

STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Conferences are perfect opportunities to leave your routine and engage with new ideas and people. Here are some strategies:

- **Frame Information in New Ways:**
Try to approach information from different angles. Consider how new ideas fit into your existing knowledge and what gaps they fill.
- **Initiate Conversations:**
Strike up conversations with people between sessions or during meals. The conference is your common ground, so use that to start discussions about presentations, research topics, or general experiences.

Remember: Everyone you know was once a stranger to you. Each conversation is an opportunity to build a new connection.

TAKE GOOD NOTES

With so much information coming your way, keeping notes is essential. Write down:

- Names, contact details, and (research) interests of people you meet.
- Key takeaways from presentations and discussions.
- The feedback you receive on your work.

ANALOG VS. DIGITAL NOTETAKING

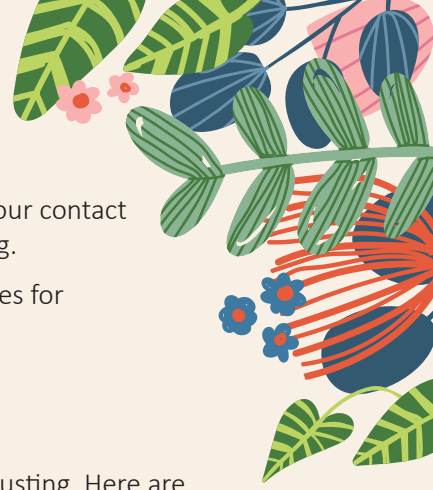
Seasoned researcher's advise preparing using pen and paper. Most of us tend to focus on speed, rather than on the information itself when typing on a computer. Consider ditching the distractions on a laptop and bringing a trusty notepad.



Recommended Note-Taking Tools:

Despite distractions, it's true that digital tools can help you process information more efficiently.

- Microsoft OneNote: Ideal for organising research notes, tags, and to-dos.
- Notion: Great for creating detailed project boards, saving contacts, and integrating notes with other resources.
- Notability: A versatile note-taking app that allows you to combine handwritten and typed notes, annotate PDFs, and record audio during sessions, making it perfect for organising and revisiting conference materials.



NETWORKING TIPS

- **Collect Business Cards or Digital Contacts:** If you don't have business cards, make sure your contact details are ready for digital exchange through apps like LinkedIn or using QR code sharing.
- **Follow Up Immediately:** If you have meaningful discussions with someone, jot down notes for follow-up later.

WELL-BEING DURING THE CONFERENCE

While conferences are exciting and valuable, they can also be mentally and physically exhausting. Here are tips to help maintain your well-being:

MANAGE YOUR ENERGY

- **Take Breaks:** Schedule some downtime between sessions. Attending back-to-back presentations can lead to information overload, so stepping away helps reset your focus.
- **Stay Hydrated and Eat Regularly:** It's easy to forget meals in the excitement. Carry snacks and stay hydrated to maintain energy levels.
- **Exercise:** If possible, incorporate light exercise like walking or stretching during breaks. Many conferences are located in walkable cities, so take advantage of this to explore and relax. Some conferences may even incorporate well-being events throughout the conference.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

- **Mindfulness Apps:** Consider using mindfulness apps like Headspace or Calm to take short meditation breaks if you feel overwhelmed. Even a five-minute meditation can clear your mind and help you recharge for the next session.

PREPARE FOR SOCIAL EXHAUSTION

If you're an introvert or find networking draining:

- **Set Limits:** You don't have to attend every social event. Choose the the most important ones to you and allow time to recharge alone.
- **Focus on Small Groups:** If large crowds are overwhelming, try to find smaller group discussions where you can engage more personally.

Wellbeing Programme at the SVRI Forum

The SVRI has prepared to support everyone's wellbeing at the SVRI Forum 2024. Activities include Trauma Release Exercises (TRE), Breathwork, Meditation, Yoga, and Zumba. Counseling will also be provided during specific timeslots. Do not hesitate to make use of the resources that are at your disposal at the Forum. Refer to svriforum2024.org/wellbeing/ for the full wellbeing programme.



Apps for Well-Being:

- **Headspace / Calm:** For quick meditations or mental breaks.
- **Pacer:** A simple app for tracking steps and making sure you're staying active.
- **WaterMinder:** Helps you track and manage hydration throughout the day.

STEP 3: WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CONFERENCE?

What happens next is in your hands. To build lasting relationships, you'll need to follow up thoughtfully and promptly.

FOLLOW UP ON CONNECTIONS

- **Send Thank You Notes:** Thank people who offered feedback or advice. Personalizing your message will show that you value their input.
- **Share Relevant Materials:** If you discussed specific articles or papers, send them in your follow-up emails.

Sample Follow-Up Email Template:

“Hi [Name],

It was a pleasure meeting you at [Conference]. I really enjoyed our conversation about [topic]. I’ve been thinking about the ideas you shared, and I’d love to stay in touch or possibly collaborate on [related topic]. Let’s continue this conversation in the future.

Best, [Your Name].”

STAY ENGAGED

- **Stay Active on Social Media:** Engage with presenters and attendees on Twitter or LinkedIn. Conferences often have hashtags, so you can share your reflections and stay visible within the academic community.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Consider attending conferences regularly and joining professional organisations to continue building your network. Over time, these connections will help you establish a community of collaborators and mentors in your field.

JOIN RESEARCH GROUPS, PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS, AND WEBINARS

Becoming a member of academic and professional communities helps you stay updated on the latest research and expand your network beyond conferences through ongoing webinars, workshops, and collaborative opportunities. Here’s some recommendations:

- **Gender Violence Research and Collaboration Network (GVR-CN):** The group aims to create an inclusive, collaborative global platform for researchers at all career stages, with a special emphasis on highlighting and supporting the work of early career researchers, to advance the study and understanding of gender-based violence through knowledge sharing, networking, mentorship, and innovative research.
- **SVRI:** Access learning resources, attend webinars on gender-based violence research, and stay informed about the latest developments in the field through newsletters and updates.
- **Prevention Collaborative:** Offers a wealth of resources, including research, practical tools, webinars, and guides, all aimed at advancing the prevention of gender-based violence, along with opportunities to join a global community through newsletters and updates.

CONCLUSION: TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE


A conference can be one of the most enriching experiences of your early career, but it requires planning and mindfulness to make the most of it. By preparing yourself with an elevator pitch, organising your schedule, stepping out of your comfort zone, and prioritising your well-being, you’ll leave the event with new insights, meaningful connections, and the confidence to further your academic career.



Keep in touch with us

 svri@svri.org  www.svri.org

 [@TheSVRI](https://www.facebook.com/TheSVRI)  [@TheSVRI](https://twitter.com/TheSVRI)  [thesvri](https://www.instagram.com/thesvri)  [@TheSVRI](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TheSVRI)

 [SVRI - Sexual Violence Research Initiative](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

SVRI NPC (2019/197466/08)

