

Assembling my learning from TIGR₂ESS General Assembly

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I got an opportunity to attend the first General Assembly of [TIGR₂ESS](#), a UK-India research programme. The five-day Assembly which had participants from 20 research institutions working in six flagship projects of the programme was organised to take stock of, share the progress and plan ahead. The Assembly was conducted in two parts: professional development of the early career researchers; and a General Assembly.



In the picture: Group photo of all the participants from 20 research institutions who participated in the General Assembly

Shuvajit and I reached the accommodation arranged for us a night before the Assembly to be held in ICRISAT, in Hyderabad. I had been to the city and the ICRISAT campus once before so there was a feeling of coming back.

Next day I woke up early in the morning and went to have breakfast in the ICRISAT canteen. Then after finishing the registration formalities we went to Bentley's hall, where first of the many sessions was to start.

My learning from the sessions:

There were many sessions conducted around various topics for the capacity and skill building of early career researchers and Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRA). The first session started with the Facilitator posing the following question: *why are (journal) papers rejected?* Some of the reasons which came out of the discussion among the participants were: Inappropriate or incomplete statistics and instrumentation, over-interpretation of the result, difficult text, insufficient problem statement or data presented, and biased or small sample of study. Then we moved ahead to discuss the *structure of a journal article*. Any research paper tends to follow a standard structure, known as IMRAD (Introduction, Materials and method, Results and Discussion). This was interesting for me as I have been closely and fully engaged in data collection process for the TIG₂RESS project. However, translation of data into a journal paper and what all entails the whole process was new and very fascinating. In addition to journal paper, we also had sessions on writing blogs and the different ways through which articles or blogs can be made interesting and effective. Some of those ways like including images or diagrams, using simple, short and crisp language, catchy title, using active language and etc.

Another session of utmost interest and usefulness to me was the one on *research data management*, something that I am currently involved in for the TIG₂RESS project. Before I started working closely around data, I had almost no idea about the hard work which goes in managing the data collected. Research data management covers all the decisions relating to the data within a research setting, from a planning stage of a project up to the long term preservation of data. The biggest learning for me from this session was that a Data Management Plan outlining decisions on planning the project, data collection, data processing and analysis, and data storage and security should be established at the outset of any research project.

Speed dating of Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRA)

I was amused at the name of this session which was aimed at fostering inter-personal connections between PDRAs. We all had to talk to a minimum 6 PDRAs and try to build a group to develop our ideas and then present a pitch to the wider group of participants. I was

not at all prepared for this session and panicked when all of sudden I saw my name on the list but despite being unprepared, I attended the session as I wanted to explore new things coming up. My partner was Tess Dilks who is studying the effects of heat stress on heat morphology and gene expression. One of the topics we discussed on was inventing a new variety of crop with combination of millet and wheat which could be grown in ‘kharif’ season and would be protein-enriched. Though, at the first glance, it seemed to be not so realistic but we talked of giving it a try in near future, if possible. It was interesting experience for me to listen to and collaborate with Tess.

There were other professional development sessions such as: on assertive influencing skills and inter-personal communication. The focus was to help us deepen our understanding of assertiveness, explore the blocks that hold us back from communicating assertively and learn a range of conversational tools to influence more effectively. On reflection, I can say that my takeaway from this part of the session was that I could acknowledge that there are certain roadblocks which can hold each of us back from being assertive and which then requires us to practise deep listening.

Overall experience in the General Assembly:

In the general Assembly, I got the opportunity to listen to varied perspectives of the project from the various stakeholders of the project which was immensely enriching. There were planning around activities and outputs required for further 18 months in the project. Furthermore, there were fruitful discussions on various needs each institution has and offers we could make (including other Flagship Projects) in order to build an integrated approach towards next 18 months of the overall research programme.

Presentations by the PDRA's were one of the highlights of the Assembly. I shared my experiences and struggles in the project in addition to describing the processes undertaken and outputs achieved.



In the picture: Me presenting my experiences and struggles from the project in Chakai to other participants in the Assembly

The five days of the Assembly were full of memories and experiences of learning new skills and getting introduced to interesting topics and perspectives. Interactions, discussions and deliberations with wonderful group of people is something where lies immense possibilities for future research and collaboration. I feel assemblies like this should be an essential part of multi-stakeholder projects and programmes to harness the full potential of the diversity and have enriched collaboration.