

**GENEVA FOUNDATION  
FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**



**Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Course 2020**

**Course Evaluation Report**

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## **Acknowledgement**

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## Background

The 2020 GFMER Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) Course is one of the online training courses in the field of sexual and reproductive health and research organized by the Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The course was specifically designed to respond to the SRH needs of adolescents amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and for the first time in addition to the WHO, it was co-organized with the Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The course coordinator was Dr Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli of Department of Reproductive Health and Research, WHO. The duration of the course was four weeks from 12 October to 9 November 2020. The course theme was “Lessons learned and experiences gained in improving the SRH of adolescents in the 25 years since the ICPD and Responding to the SRH needs of adolescents in the context of the COVID-19 crisis”. The course covered four topics on key issues on adolescents sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Few months before the course, meetings were held between the organizing partners to deliberate on the course theme, content and structure and the concept note for the course was developed. Participants were recruited by announcements in GFMER, FP2020, UNFPA and WHO networks, including WHO regional/country offices, other local and international NGOs, WHO collaborating centres at the country level, health ministries, and universities. Several participants were nominated by sponsoring institutions and selection of participants was done based on set criteria. Participants were sponsored mostly by WHO/FP2020 (100) and UNFPA (79), by WHO Ethiopia (7) and other institutions or were self-sponsored. GFMER engaged 36 coaches from 19 countries to mentor participants of the course, as much as possible from their countries or regions. Coaches are also former participants of the course so are best placed to provide support to the participants. The teaching methods for the course consisted of on-line lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, additional references, expert commentary videos and referrals to related websites. The course was assessed by weekly written assignments. Coaches mark and provide feedback on the assignments using the marking guides provided. There were regular weekly meetings with the collaborating partners to ensure the smooth running of the course. Orientation and mid-course sessions were held with the coaches for quality and standardized tutoring. A total of 310 health professionals from all over the world, mainly from low- and middle- income countries and mostly between the ages 20 and 49 years, enrolled for the course. Of these, 286 were active (92.2% active rate) and 268 (173 female, 94 male and 1 non-binary) completed the course (93.7% of those active) and were awarded with certificates co-signed by WHO, FP2020, UNFPA and GFMER. The top 10 performers in each module and the overall top 10 performers of the course received an additional certificate of recommendation, the latter also received a book gift from WHO.

At the end of the course, a Zoom meeting was organized for all participants, coaches, course organizers and course resource persons. A separate follow-up meeting was held with the top performers in each module. They were encouraged to write and publish an article on COVID-19 and adolescents/young people for a lay audience drawing from the lessons from the course. The three participants who did received a cash award of USD25 from WHO. Top performers of the course were also invited to collaborate with WHO in writing a paper titled “25 lessons learned on ASRH in the 25 years since Cairo and Beijing” by submitting three suggestions on the lessons learnt, to start with. Nine of them responded to this invitation and submitted their suggestions. Moreover, participants from same countries/ regions, were introduced by email to WHO country and regional offices, ministries and other institutions dealing with adolescent and youth issues as possible resource persons for ASRH. A course evaluation survey was also

performed to assess the satisfaction level and usefulness of the course to participants and to identify areas of improvement. The report of the evaluation is presented in this paper.

## **Course evaluation report**

Of the 268 people who completed the course, 177 (66%) submitted the survey.

### **Method**

A link to an anonymous online survey to evaluate the course was sent to participants upon completion of the course. Participation in the survey was voluntary. The survey included questions to collect participants' demographic data and appraisal of the course, and open-ended questions for additional comments and to express their likes and dislikes about the course as well as suggestions on how to improve it as follows:

1. Demographic information on age group, continents of residence and profession
2. Course evaluation:
  - 2.1 Overall course rating:

Participants were asked to rate the course by choosing from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent); the highest rating being 5.

#### 2.2 Course objectives and structure:

2.2.1 Participants had to choose a number between from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements (highest score was 5):

- i. The course objectives were clear
- ii. The course was organized in a way that helped me learn
- iii. The course content was adequate
- iv. The course learning resources were clearly presented
- v. The assignments were relevant and helpful to my learning
- vi. The assignments were appropriate for the level of this class
- vii. I found the assignment clues useful
- viii. It was not necessary to include clues in the assignments
- ix. I will apply the knowledge gained from this course in my professional practice

2.2.2 An open-ended question asking participants to provide comments on keeping the clues in the assignments or not

2.2.3 An optional open-ended question asking participants to provide additional comments on course structure

#### 2.3 Relevance of course topics:

2.3.1 Participants had to choose from the options 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to rate the course topics in terms of their relevance to their professional practice (highest rating was 5). The topics covered in the course were:

- i. Lessons learned and experiences gained in improving the SRH of adolescents in the 25 years since the ICPD
- ii. Priorities to build on the progress made for the next 25 years, with a particular focus on the SDGs
- iii. The effects of COVID-19 on the lives of adolescents, and specifically on their SRH
- iv. Approaches to ensuring the continuity of SRH information and service provision to adolescents in the context of the COVID-19 crisis; and using the opportunity of COVID-19 to build back better

2.3.2 An optional open-ended question asking participants to provide additional comments on course topics

## 2.4 Participants overall rating of coaches:

Participants were asked to rate their coaches by choosing from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent); the highest rating being 5.

## 2.5 Quality of coaching received:

2.5.1 To assess the quality of coaching received during the course, participants were requested to choose from numbers 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- i. I felt encouraged to contact my coach if I had any questions or needs in the course
- ii. My coach was responsive when I contacted her/him
- iii. My coach gave me constructive feedback on my assignments
- iv. My coach provided feedback timely (before the due date of the next module assignment)
- v. The feedback from my coach helped me to improve my work
- vi. My coach encouraged my participation in the course

2.5.2 An optional open-ended question asking participants to provide additional comments on coaching.

## 2.6 Effectiveness of Google Group:

2.6.1 To assess the effectiveness of the Google Group discussion platform for the course, participants were requested to choose from numbers 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements (highest score was 5):

- i. I followed the discussions in Google Group
- ii. I found it easy to read the postings in Google Group
- iii. I contributed to the discussions in Google Group
- iv. I found it easy to post information in Google Group
- v. The discussions in the Google Group were useful to learn from and share experiences from other countries
- vi. The Google Group discussions contributed to my overall learning experience in this course

2.6.2 Optional open-ended question asking participants to provide additional comments on Google Group

## 2.7 Likes and dislikes about the course

2.7.1 An open-ended question asking participants to name one thing they liked best about the course

2.7.2 An open-ended question asking participants to name one thing they liked the least about the course

2.8 Readiness to recommend the course to others: Participants chose from the options of Yes, Maybe or No to indicate their willingness to recommend the course to others.

2.9 Study hours per week: Participants were asked to indicate how many hours per week they spent on reading the course materials and preparation of assignments. The hours were arranged as follows for analysis: 6 hours, < 6 hours, 7 to 10 hours, > 10 hours and Don't know.

3. Comment / suggestion to help improve the course:

3.1 An open-ended question asking participants if they joined another good online course, what they liked about it and to share the course details.

3.2 Participants were asked to provide any comment or suggestion for course improvement.

## Results

### 1. Demographic information on continents, age and profession

The 177 survey participants were from 5 continents. Africa had the highest number of respondents (109, 62%), followed by Asia (60, 34%), Europe (4, 2%), North America (3, 2%), Australia (1, 0%) and South America (0, 0%). (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1: Continents breakdown

Continents	No. of participants	%
Africa	109	62%
Asia	60	34%
Europe	4	2%
North America	3	2%
Australia	1	0%
South America	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

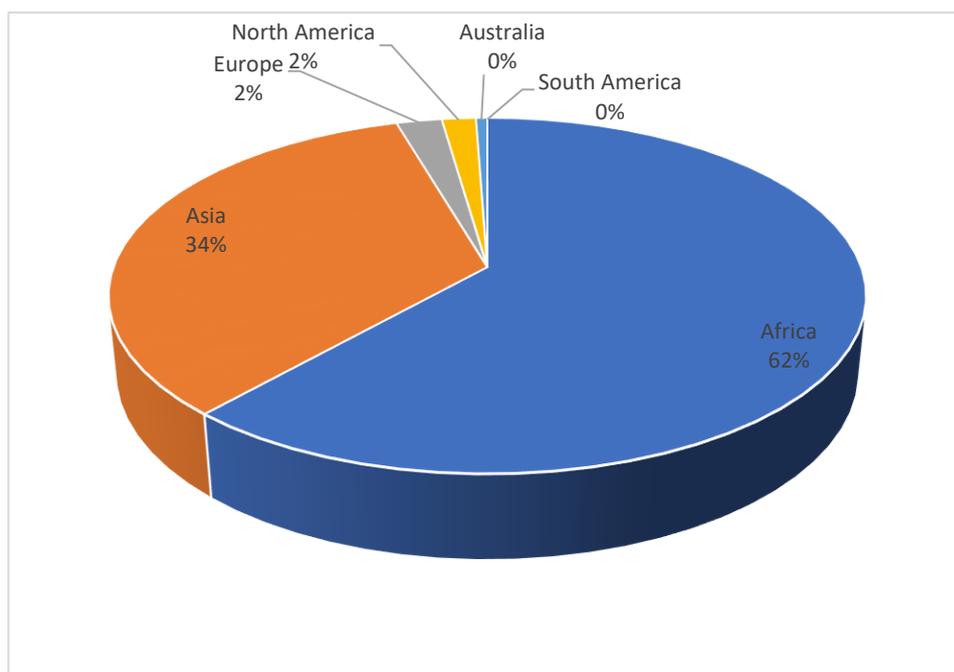


Figure 1: Continents breakdown of respondents

Majority of the respondents belonged to the age group 25-34 (70, 40%), followed by the age groups 35-44 (61, 34%), 45-54 (29, 16%), 18-24 (14, 8%) and > 55 years (3, 2%) (Table 2, Figure 2).

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age group	No. of participants	%
18-24 years old	14	8 %
25-34 years old	70	40%
35-44 years old	61	34%
45-54 years old	29	16%
> 55 years old	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

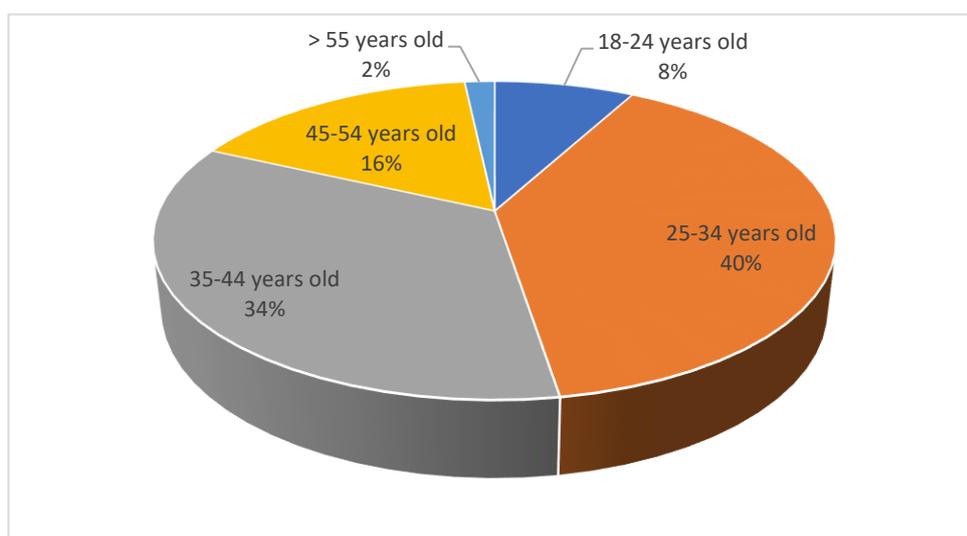


Figure 2: Age group of respondents

Respondents were mostly in program management / implementation (61, 34%) or were midwives / nurses (38, 22%), doctors (22, 12%) and professors/ lectures/ researchers (19, 11%) (Table 3, Figure 3).

Table 3: Profession of respondents

Profession	No. of respondents	%
Advocate	13	7%
Government Official	10	6%
Doctor	22	12%
Midwife / Nurse	38	22%
Program Management / Implementation	61	34%
Healthcare Worker	3	2%
Professor / Lecturer / Researcher	19	11%
Social scientists	4	2%
Student- Nursing /Midwifery / Medical	1	1%
Other	6	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

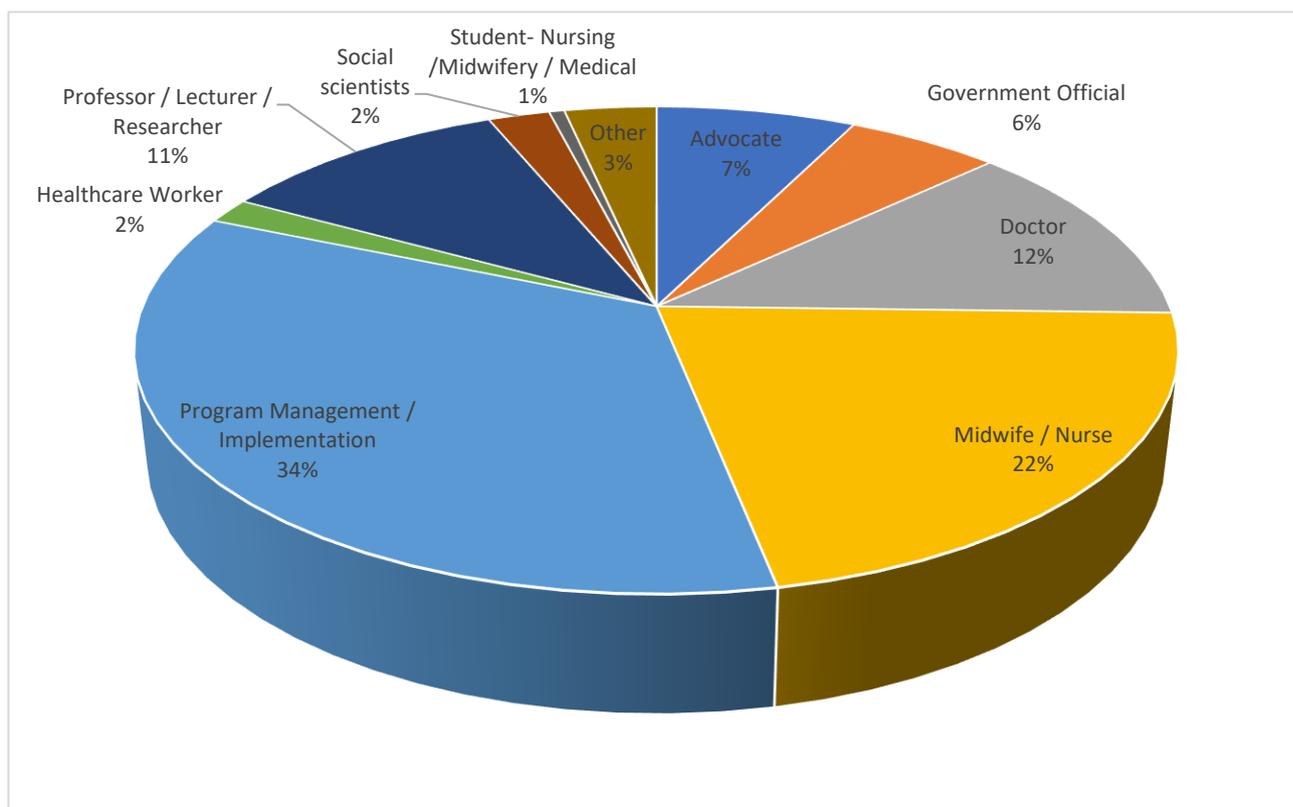


Figure 3: Profession of respondents

## 2. Course evaluation

### 2.1 Participants overall course ratings

Majority of the survey participants rated the course 5, excellent (54%), which is the highest rating or 4, good (45%) (Figure 4).

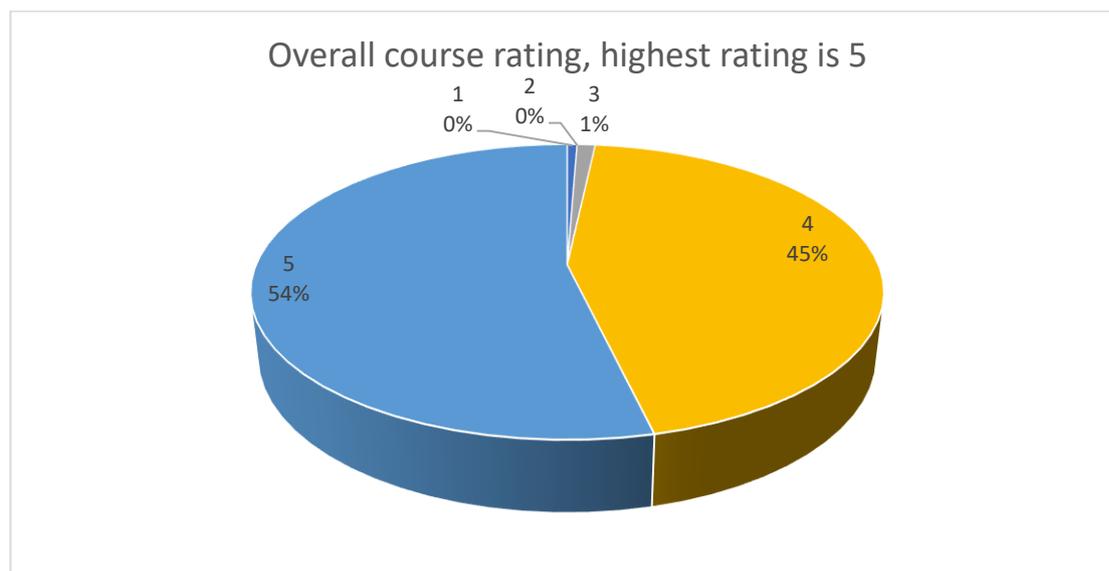


Figure 4: Overall course rating

## 2.2 Course objectives and structure

### 2.2.1 Participants' scoring of course objectives and structure

As shown in Figure 5, majority of the survey participants gave a score of 4 or 5, thus agreeing or strongly agreeing respectively to all but one of the statements assessing the objectives and structure of the course including statements on the clarity of course objectives, organization of the course, adequacy of the course content, the course learning resources, assignments, usefulness of the assignment clues and application of knowledge gain from the course. Regarding the assignment clues, whilst majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were useful, only a little over half of the respondents (97) strongly disagreed or disagreed that it was not necessary to include them in the assignments. About a third of respondents (55) agreed or strongly agreed that the clues were not necessary, whilst the remaining 25 respondents were neutral.

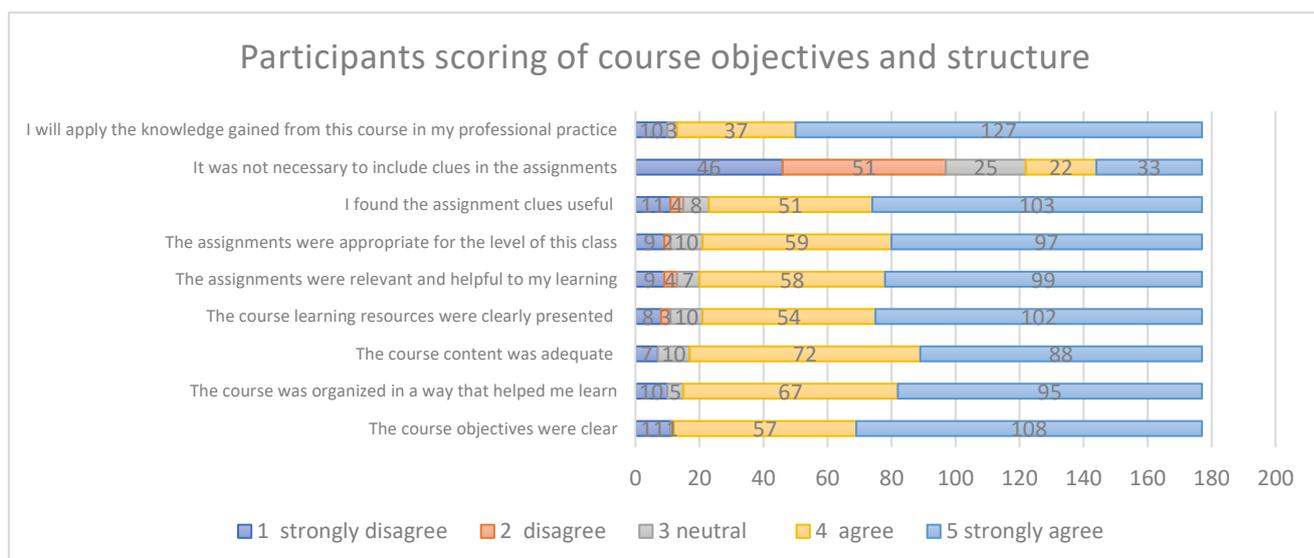


Figure 5: Participant's opinion about course objectives and structure

### 2.2.2 Recommend keeping the clues in the assignments or not

When asked in an open ended question if the assignment answer clues should be kept or not, majority of respondents were of the opinion that the clues should be kept for various reasons including, helping to prepare the assignments, guide to answering the questions, helping to focus and to remember, ‘facilitating active learning’, providing clarity on what is being asked, making it easier to navigate and read the course materials, helping to find information quickly, ‘to assimilate relevant knowledge’, time saving for busy professionals and ensures participants, coaches and course organizers have similar understanding of the questions.

Very few participants were against keeping the clues described as ‘spoon feeding’ because: it makes the assignments ‘too easy’, it limits ‘level of exploring and thinking’ of learners, important learning materials may not be read, participants may not read the resource materials and ‘will directly go to searching for assignment’, loss of marks for answers provided outside the clues, clues limited to the resource materials and participants not allowed ‘to give his/her opinions/ understanding’ or ‘talk about experiences’, ‘very clear clues are too easy and so not challenging and sometimes limit expression of ideas, and assignments should require more research and application of knowledge learnt.

Similarly, very few participants were both for and against keeping the clues. A few of such comments are: “I recommend that clues be always on. They are helpful. However students should be advised not to copy and paste whatever is on the referred clue”; “The clues had been helpful to keep focus and help understand what is needed from the question. The problem was that there was a tendency to read only the clues and answer and not the whole content and develop better understanding” and “Yes, it helps narrowing the areas of learning that need particular attention. However, I think it is still also important to encourage participants to provide answers beyond the clues”.

### **2.2.3 Additional comments on course structure**

Participants were asked to comment on the course structure. This was an optional comment and 95 participants responded to this question. The comments provided were mostly positive. Below are two quotes from the respondents:

“Course was incorporated with different links, documents and presentations that has helped participants to know the updated information globally. Apart from that assignment questions help me to know the updated status, policy and way forward strategy for improvements of Adolescent Reproductive Health status”

“adequate to the level of learners, appropriate in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and ASRHR”.

Other comments described the course structure as being good, clear, well organized, ‘superb’, ‘appropriately prepared’, well structured, educative, well designed, easy to read and learn, ‘to the point’, ‘comprehensive and systematic’, interesting, enjoyable, ‘simplified learning’, excellent, very helpful, ‘the best course I ever take’, ‘eye opening’. Many respondents commented that the course was relevant to their professional practice and a few participants expressed their liking for the video lectures, the coaching and the weekend and flexible deadlines for assignments.

A few respondents commented on what they did not like which were that: the course duration was too short, the “Google forum good but not interactive enough to understand other participants’ work and learning experiences and course ‘too technical and highly advanced’. One respondent expressed a dislike for the Google Group forum.

Some participants gave suggestions in their comments which were: require participants to write assignments on the topic of each module, include more videos, face to face lectures, live discussions, ‘one or two online interactive class like zoom meeting’, offline access of course materials, additional assignments as multiple choice questions and short answered questions in between the main assignments, ‘more practical things and stuff’, transcripts of video presentations, extend assignment deadlines, weekly discussion between coaches and their mentees, Zoom meeting discussions on certain modules after its completion, adaptation to people with disabilities, more opportunities for discussion with instructors/ contributors, opportunities to collaborate on assignments with classmates, provide opportunities to share experience with other students, expert commentaries should provide alternative options to implement case examples where the recommended ones are not available, send course materials and questions as email attachments in addition, include more case studies, assignments with class presentation and discussions which will also help build network, split assignments into two twice a week, and provide for the separate needs of adolescent girls and boys.

## **2.3 Relevance of course topics**

### **2.3.1 Participants’ rating of relevance of course topics to their professional practice**

With a rating of 4 or 5, majority of the participants respectively agreed or strongly agreed that the course topics were relevant to their professional practices. Eight participants each strongly disagreed that the course topics were relevant to their practices, with a rating of 1 (Figure 6).

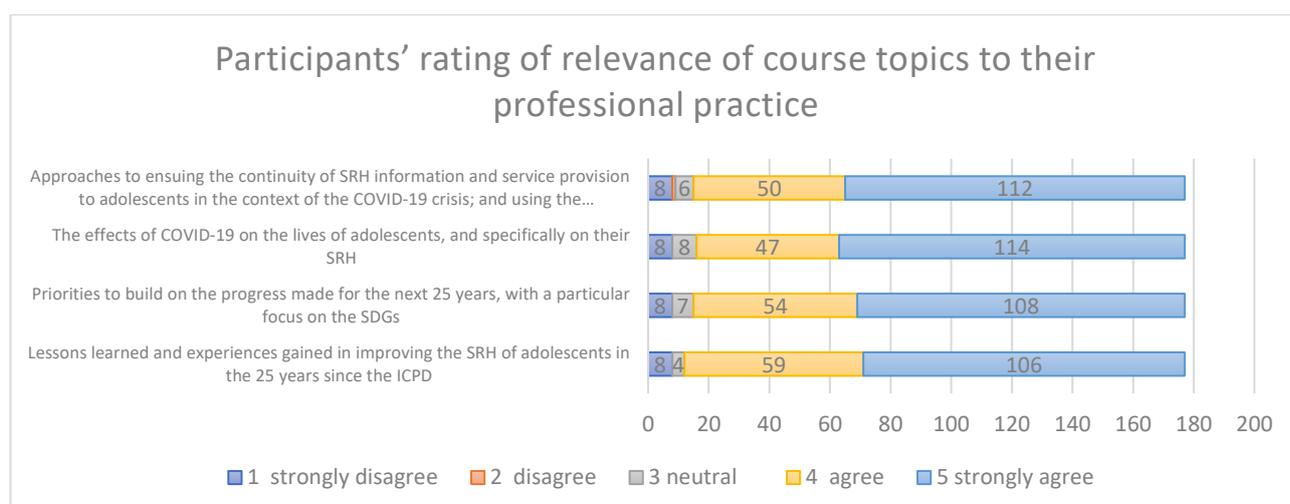


Figure 6: Relevance of course topics to participants' practice

### 2.3.2 Additional comments on course topics

Respondents were asked in an optional open-ended question to provide comments on the course topics and 68 of them expressed their opinions. Comments received described the course topics as complete, well organized, 'excellent picks', well structured, related to adolescents globally, 'had great knowledge contents for current situations of ASRHR and COVID-19 crisis', informative and educative, appropriate, relevant, 'rewarding to learn', on point, insightful into life of adolescents in the COVID context, relevant to professional practice, useful for further practice and to strengthen SRH of adolescents, timely, well adapted to context and ASRHR needs, well prepared, appropriate for the course duration, well designed, 'provided practical skills in improving SRHR in the context of COVID-19', informative. There were comments that the assignment submission reminders were helpful while one participant was expecting 'more conversation and another structure'.

Quoting a few respondents:

"I gained understanding on the scope of SRHR (topic table). This is very helpful for my work and future programming."

"I have gained knowledge that I will apply and which I am already applying whilst giving health education to adolescents and young adults in my area of operation."

"I appreciated the course progression from background (where we are) to the current situation. The COVID sections were especially timely and exciting to learn about."

"Since I am currently working on an advocacy program on adolescent development and wellbeing, the course topics were totally relevant and useful for me".

Other comments provided suggestions as follows: include more topics ('key populations, CSOs engagement, advocacy'), include assessment and evaluation methods of the lessons and gains in project implementations of community based interventions, talk more about efficacy

and impact of the various programs discussed in the modules including the SRHR services provisions for adolescents during the COVID pandemic and the monitoring and evaluation techniques of the programs, more learning resources on COVID-19 experience in different settings and their responses, group activities, discussions and interaction with other participants to understand the situation in other parts of the world and more information on HIV/AIDS , FGM and Family planning/ child spacing in each topic.

## 2.4 Participants rating of coaches

Overall, most of the participants (97%) gave their coaches a rating of 5 (45%), 4 (42%) or 3 (10%). However, 3% of participants rated their coaches 2 (2%) and 1 (1%) (Figure 7).

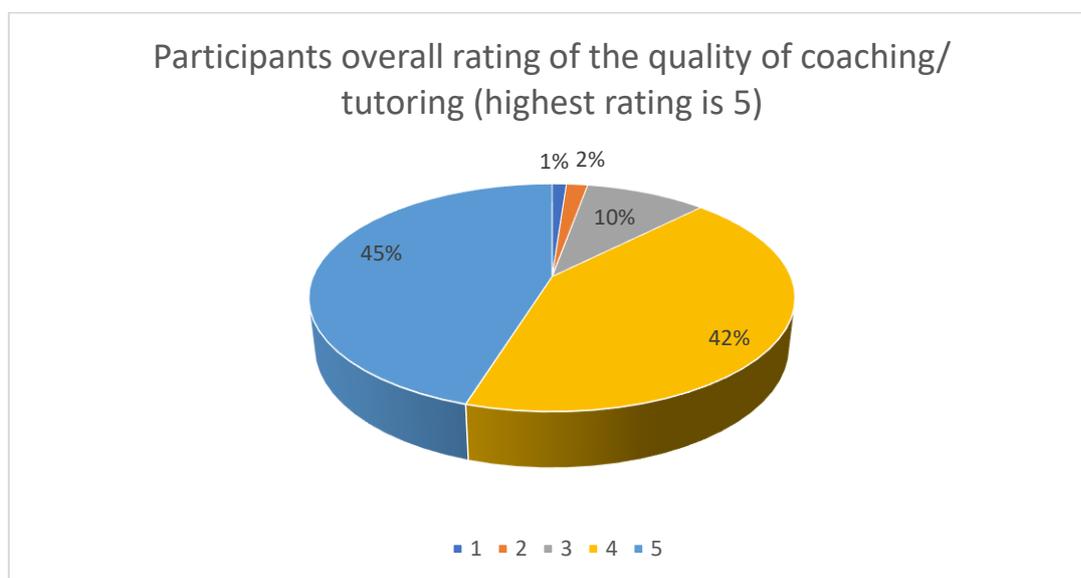


Figure 7: Participants rating of coaches

## 2.5 Quality of coaching received

### 2.5.1 Participants' assessment of quality of coaching received

At least 140 survey participants (79%) agreed or strongly agreed to each of the statements assessing the quality of coaching received during the course, while a few were neutral. Between 11 (6%) and 16 (9%) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements (Figure 8).

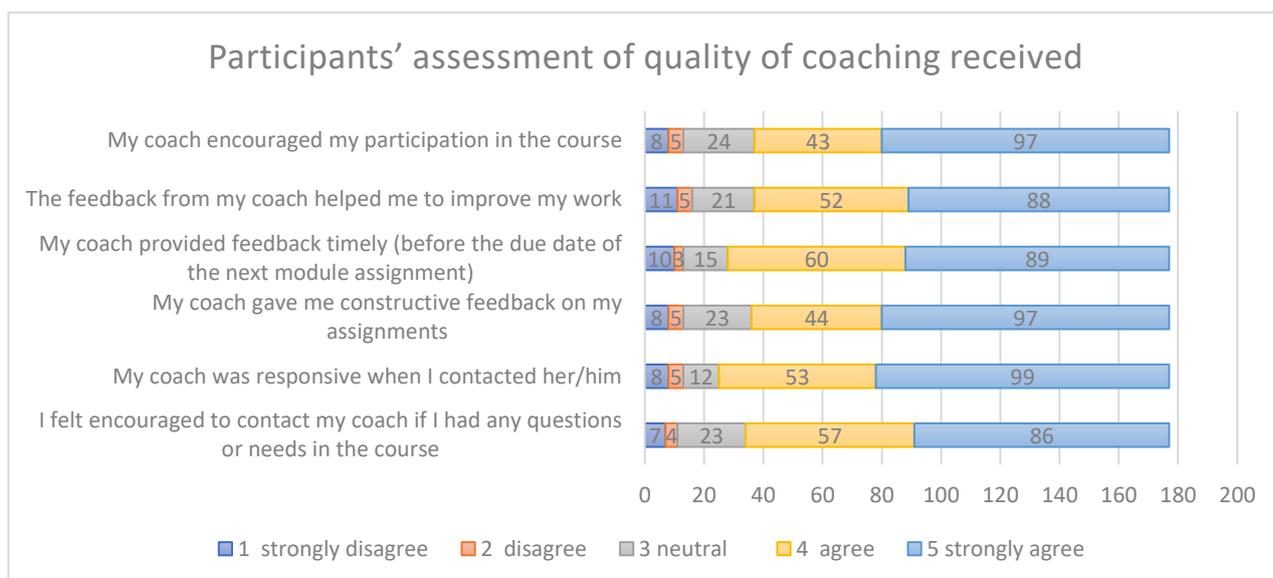


Figure 8: Participant’s scoring of the quality of coaching received

### 2.5.2 Additional comments on coaching

A total of 94 participants commented on the coaching in an open-ended question. Most of the comments were positive with respondents describing their coaches as being encouraging, supportive, ‘passionate about SRHR’, efficient, helpful, excellent, empathetic, approachable, awesome, dedicated, knowledgeable, compassionate, professional, amazing, inspiring, cooperative, interacting and responsive. Many also appreciated the timely reminders on assignment submission from their coaches. However, a few others would like to see improvement especially timely, enhanced and more interactive tutor to student communication including Zoom or WhatsApp meetings/ webinars before the course and during the course to discuss assignments, to ‘understand the challenges and the way forward’ and to ‘improve networking among colleagues’.

Below are some of the responses received (names and country information have been removed and replaced by an ‘X’):

“Starting from the first day, my coach provided me continuous support to engage in the course.”

“My Coach reminders has really helped me. I was extremely busy and out of network, but her message kept on coming in and reminding me. I quiet appreciate that.”

“Excellent coach ever had and was very helpful, approachable and encourage us every time...Really very inspiring coach we had and we thank her for every thing and would wish for same thing in future ....”

“I really enjoyed the coach aspect of the course, it differentiates this course from other online courses. However, I would have preferred to be able to choose my 'region'. While I am located in the X, most of my field experiences are from X and would've liked to be part of a coaching group in this region.”

“My coach X was the only reason I was able to make my assignments worth reading. His patience with all his students, ensuring we develop an understanding of what the assignments entailed along with detailed reviews and thought provoking comments on my work enabled me to detail and refine the content. Introducing me to Mendeley was another major growth professionally for me all possible because of X. I would love for him to tutor me in the future, there is a lot more I believe I can learn from him and his natural teaching skills.”

“My coach reached me via whatsapp when I wasn't participating initially. That was extremely encouraging and inspiring!. Thank you”

“The coaches were supportive and the effects encouraged many participants to keep working hard on the course. The feedbacks from the assignments were also encouraging. The subgroup can continue to work on projects after the training. I would like to become a coach someday.”

“For future sessions perhaps a weekly meeting with the coach and other team members via zoom for those able to make it would have helped create more connection between participants and their tutor. This should however remain voluntary given people's time constraints.”

## 2.6 Effectiveness of Google Group

### 2.6.1 Participants’ assessment of effectiveness of Google Group

Well over half of the survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that they followed the discussions in the Google Group, that it was easy for them to read the postings and that the discussions were useful for knowledge and experience sharing among colleagues as well as to their overall learning. However, less than half of them strongly agreed or agreed that they contributed to the discussions or that it was easy for them to post information in the Google Group (Figure 9).

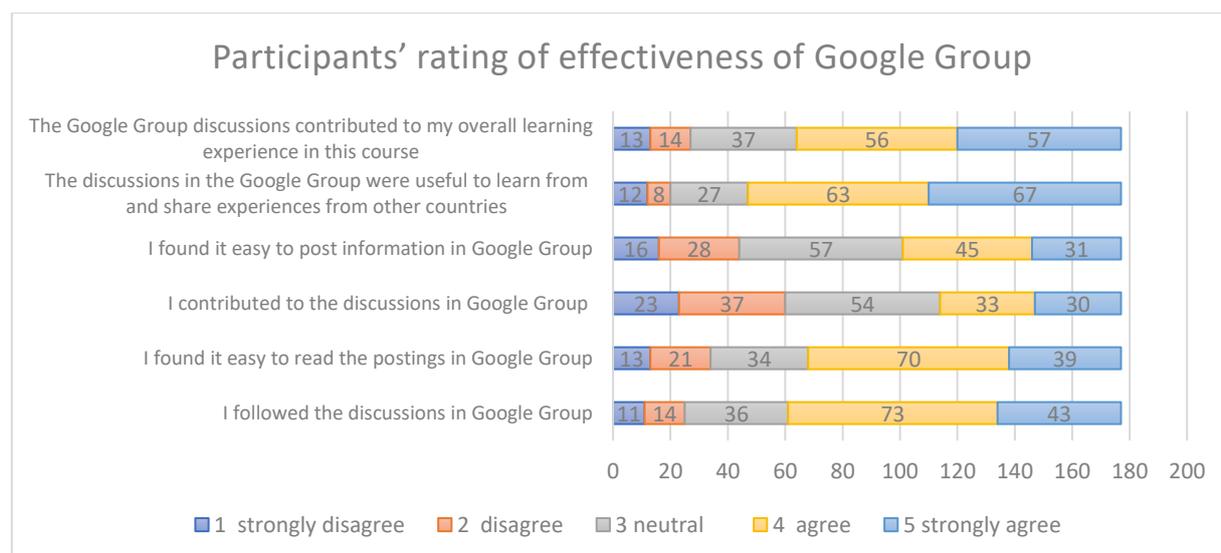


Figure 9: Participants' assessment of effectiveness of Google Group

### 2.6.2 Addition comments on Google Group

This was an optional open-ended question to which 76 survey participants responded. Many of the respondents liked the Google Group platform and learnt a lot from it. Few participants expressed either initial challenges to join the group and inability to participate in the group either due to time constraints, internet challenges or lack of interest. A few complained about lengthy posts, found it challenging to use the group or follow the posts, or received too many emails. There were suggestions to keep the Group on after the course, provide 'more friendly' instructions to use the Group, have smaller groups by regions, have word limits for posts, use WhatsApp or Telegram groups or to have Zoom meeting discussions after each module replacing the Google Group. Some of the comments received are as follows:

"Quite helpful and it kept us the participants together. we were able to consult with one another through this."

"I did not understand the Google Group at first but later got the idea and was able to follow suit."

"The Google group was a good learning media, the only thing is maybe to add word limit next time cause some of the posts are just too long"

"I have got huge knowledge and experience from the participants of the course. The interactive adult learning and knowledge sharing with different experiences participants was useful."

"The Google Group served as a good platform for learning."

"It should be made compulsory for participants to post their own contribution and comment at least on two contributions from other students"

"At times there was an overwhelming amount of information flowing on the group and it became difficult to track."

"The Google Group was very good and relevant. It was an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences. It was also an opportunity for the participants to know more about different countries where other participants reside."

"It provides us with additional informations and get to know situation of other countries and moreover give us clues and helps in assignments."

"I could not commit my time to be active on google discussion for which I feel bad. But I loved going through the experiences of different countries."

## **2.7 Likes and dislikes about the course**

### **2.7.1 One thing participants liked best about the course**

What many of the respondents liked best about the course included every aspect of the course to its content - especially its clarity and relevance to the current COVID-19 pandemic, organization and structure, assignments, assignment clues, the videos and PowerPoint presentations, and communication with participants. Others liked the flexibility of the course, the fact it is self-paced, the interaction, feedback and guidance received from coaches, the Google Group, usefulness of the learning resources to their practice, interaction on Zoom with resource persons and other participants. A few respondents expressed their likes for specific course topics like early marriage, effect of COVID-19 on the lives of adolescents and, 'History and effort put in place for several years to achieve SRH in adolescent's lives and more.'

Below are a few of the comments:

"The course was timely and relevant to my practice, the web page is user friendly, the training materials were clearly provided and the coaches were supportive."

"It is timely course, easily accessibility of the course materials, the swift response of the course coordinators it shows me how the organization is well equipped with great employees, in addition to reading materials videos and different materials where additional source for the course."

"Group discussion and zoom meeting"

"Assignment well structured and clearly explained."

"The tutors were excellent, made the course easier."

"The video presentation along with the presentation. Also the way the questions of the assignments were designed."

"I liked the google group discussion a lot."

"How it links the learning with concrete examples/case studies from the field/different countries."

"The opportunity to reflect and learn from other, through the google group"

"Assigning a coach to guide through the course"

"The youtube videos, the speakers made the course come alive"

### **2.7.2 One thing participants liked the least about the course**

About a third of the respondents did not have any dislike about the course. Reported as least liked about the course were: too bulky, too short duration of training, course is fully online, too many communications, assignments (too frequent, submission deadlines, clarity on grading criteria, page limits, lengthy questions, clues), Google Group (navigating the platform,

too many emails, participants do not respond to postings etc), videos (repetitive of the slides, not 'fully understandable'), not interactive enough, feedback from coaches and inadequate references. A few did not like specific topics like Adolescents in the next 25 years, antenatal care and the absence of a topic on mental health. One respondent did not like that the course is not a Master Programme training.

Few of the comments are:

"I found it difficult navigating the google group."

"Many to read within a week. Difficult with work"

"There was no clear guidance from time to time on how to approach some questions"

"I did not like the clues in the assignment"

"I didn't like the google group. It was overwhelming."

"One thing I like least about the course is the short time frame. One month for this important course was not great to provide more understanding."

"The fact that students did not comment each others posts"

"Nothing, everything was very helpful"

"Being online sometimes I would be challenged by the internet connection"

"Grading criteria for assignments"

"Honestly, I liked everything about the course, the content, the coaching, the team work was just perfect."

"I liked most things about the, it was favorable in a sense that I cannot tell what I least liked about it"

"This is maybe not directly pertaining to the course but the I felt that the time was too short for students to complete the assignments. Not all students may feel the same way though."

"Every information was helpful. Wishing to have more reading material s"

"Time boundary was something I liked the least about course. As we all were working in different field, the time constraint was somehow challenging at some point."

## **2.8 Readiness to recommend the course to others**

Majority of the participants (97%) were definite that they will recommend the course to others, 3% were however not sure (Figure 10).

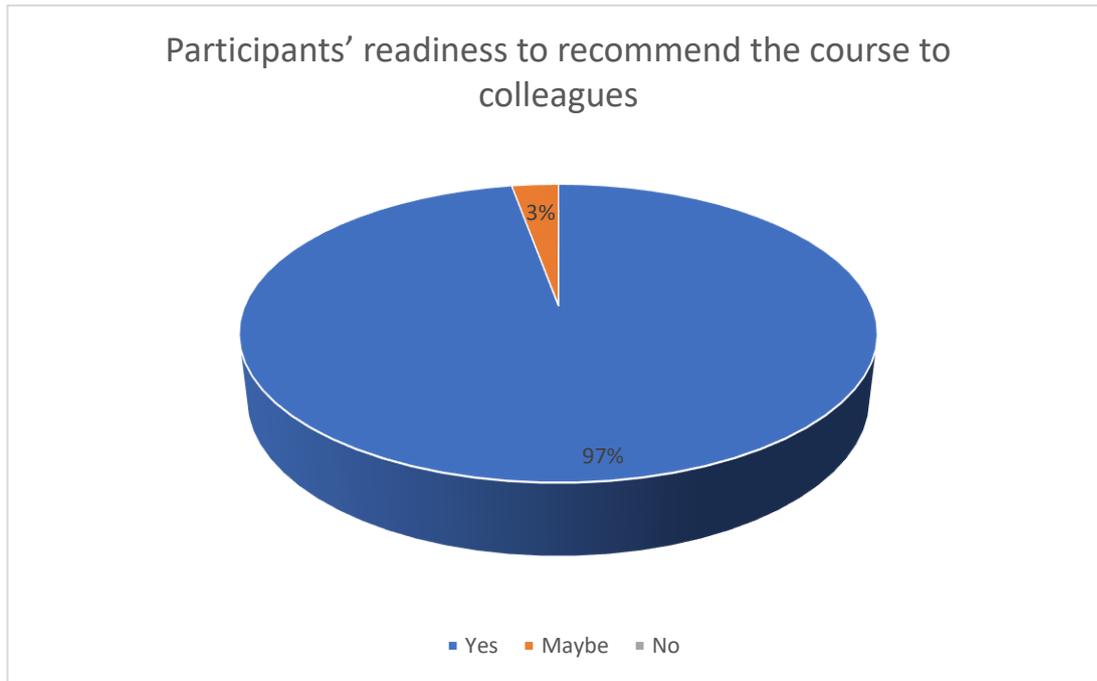


Figure 10: Participants' readiness to endorse the course

### 2.9 Study hours per week

A little over a third of participants (36%) spent less than 6 hours / week reading the course materials and preparing the assignments, 10% spent 6 hours / week, 25% spent 7-10 hours / week, 27% spent more than 10 hours/ week. The remaining 2% of participants did not know how much hours they spent on the course each week (Figure 11).

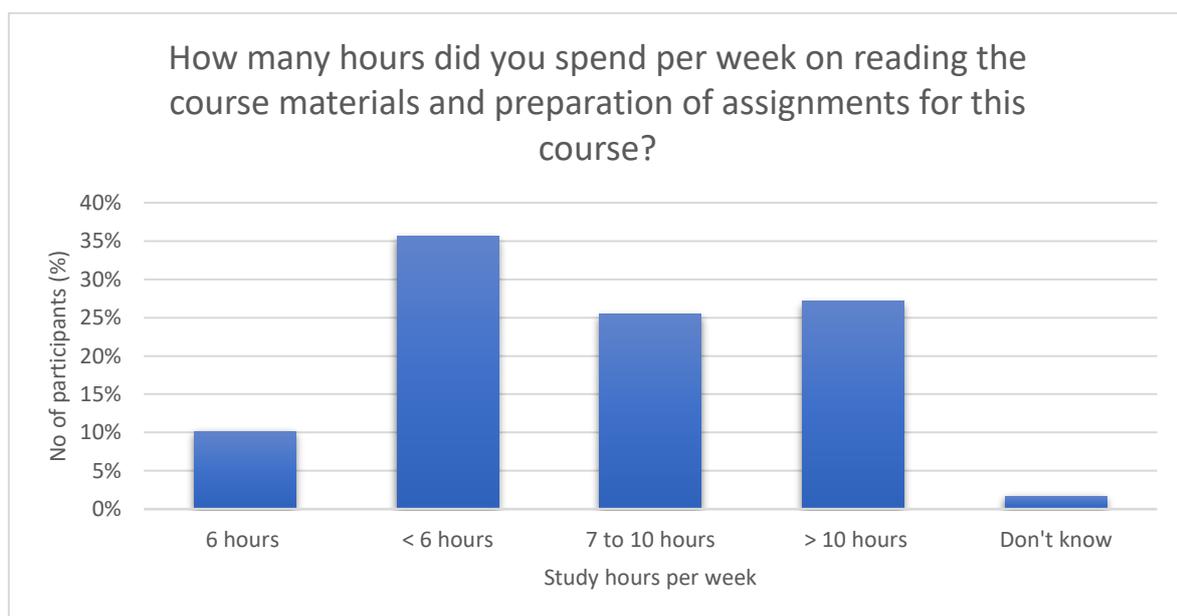


Figure 11: Number of hours spent per week on reading the course materials and preparation of assignments

### **3. Comments / suggestions from participants to help improve the course**

#### **3.1 Participants' experience sharing on other online courses**

Participants were asked if they had participated in other online courses that they thought were of very good quality and what they liked about them. They were also asked to provide details on the courses so we would learn from them. For many respondents, this was their first online course. For those who had attended other online courses, many did not find them better than this course, a few found this course to be better (coaching, better facilitated, assignments, appropriate for duration ) and a few found the other courses to be better (use of scenarios, case studies and colourful graphics, MCQs after each module, use of animations for slides, audios and videos in each modules, live online sessions, requirement to log in to comment and post in discussion forums with no emails, no assignment requirements, pretest for each module, short video clips with transcripts and less time consuming assignments, short video presentations with pictures, graphics and short quizzes, black board application for interaction, group discussions, live tutoring and discussion with mentors via Zoom, weekly summaries by trainers, course easier to follow, open assignments with choices, learning and interacting with experts via online didactic sessions, presentations by individual participants at the end of the course, learning materials in 'words' shared by email, individual and group assignments).

Examples of comments are (names of courses and organizations replaced by an 'X'):

“No, GFMER online course is the best in my opinion. It is intensive, educative, interactive and informative”

“The most interesting thing is the feedback and it was present in the course”

“Yes, the presentation was live and there was quick quiz after the course and it helped me to grasp the content so well.”

“They were basically the same methods used”

“I have been taking e-learning courses from X and that is not similar with this course and I found yours is better than the e-learning one.”

“Yes, it was about X. We had to form groups (I signed up with a friend) and worked together throughout the course. I like this aspect of forming small groups so that you hold each other accountable and solve problems together. We could form our own groups, or you could let the administrators choose for you, based on your location/interest/etc.”

“Yes, there was realtime online video, and not recorded. however recorded videos give time to review but no time to discuss with the lecturer”

“I have taken the course on X. It was a 3 month course where they had an interactive online didactic session every alternate week. There were live discussions and experience sharing, hence learning was very collaborative and interactive. That is something I missed in this course, to learn and interact with the experts. Even if it is 1-2 session for an hour.”

“Yes, the assignments were more open and we could choose what to talk about”

“The course I attended had a weekly compulsory session with the trainers and participants. here the trainers will summarize the tasks and lessons for the week. It allowed mastering further the topics”

“Yes, the course involved short videos and audios in each module with brief explanations in key areas of the each topic/module in which this course did not have but all courses are uniquely offered whereas the clues provided in this course made it unique to other courses.”

“Excellent courses; need of masters program to be delivered”

“This course is better facilitated than other Online courses I ever attended.”

“I never participated in any online course. The experience through ASRHR course is amazing I was waiting for the course for the last whole year and I am very happy to be a member of this course. I also looking forward to connect in more courses such as SRHR research methodology course.”

“Never participate online training as good as this course.”

“Your course was better than other which I took before”

“I had attended X - online course on X which I liked and found equally good as this one”

“Most were of similar quality with GFMER”

“I participated in the X online course and what I liked about it was the use of scenarios and colourful graphics to further buttress the points and case studies. It also had personal reflection at the end of each module of the online course.”

“I was participated lot of course but there wasn't any course like GFMER AH2020.”

“I participated on X course but was not as fantastic as this one”

### **3.2 Participants comments / suggestions**

Majority of the survey participants gave suggestions on how to improve the course. The recommendations were mostly on making the course more interactive with use of live sessions - videos, webinars, group discussions with other participants and coaches and inclusion of more infographics and visuals in learning resources. Other suggestions were to use adolescents advocates as resource persons, improve the course learning platform, shorten / extend course duration, remove assignment clues, have context specific assignments provide alternative platforms to Google Group for Group discussions, smaller discussion groups by time zones, summary presentation of key points at the end of each module, inclusion of MCQs, make course available in other languages like French and Russian, extend assignment submission deadline, downloadable materials including videos for offline use, tailor coaching support for participants, provide reading materials in ‘words and video press’, allocate marks to participation in Google Group, include more topics of interest like key populations and advocacy, to keep sharing information with the cohort, offer face to face training locally, offer

course regularly, provide participants opportunity to attend conferences, upgrade course certificate to a Diploma or Master and to offer the course free or provide scholarships.

Few of the responses are listed below:

“Keep up the awesome work and engage more youth”

“1. That the training time allocated for 6months if conducted online.

2. That the training participants be gathered in a specific country and the course conducted for 3weeks in the training country.

The office job and activities was interfering with the online course. Thank you very much for knowledge impacted”

“I would like to thank the course facilitators and my coach for their valuable support during the course and of course you are still sharing other important and new information’s with us and please keep doing this.”

“Make the course duration longer (it was a lot of reading material in a short amount of time, with a full time job it was quite stressful to finish the assignments on time).”

“As the course has participants across the globe, hence it might be difficult to have a common time for interactive sessions. But if smaller groups could be made with participants from same timezone, and if 1-2 experts can lead the discussion session even once during the whole course that could be a good learning experience. Thank you”

“Please include compulsory live webinars/zoom meetings whereby participants and trainers discuss the weekly topics”

“Some more live discussion sessions and participation would be good”

“MCQs should be included through web based for main concepts.”

## **Discussion**

Majority of the survey participants were from Africa, that is, from low-income countries, thus reflecting the overall reach of the course to those with limited geographical or financial access. The professional background of the survey participants in diverse areas of the health profession also indicates that the target audience for this course was reached. While the ages of most of the participants were between 25 to 54 years falling in the working age population, it should be noted that a few of the respondents were also youth. Thus, participants are more likely to benefit from and apply the knowledge from this course.

The responses received from participants on the course were mostly encouraging. The overall rating for the course was 4 (45%) or 5 (54%) with 5 being the highest. The respondents were generally in agreement that the course was well structured, with almost all of them scoring the different aspects of the course (objectives, organization, content, leaning resources and assignments and their readiness to apply the knowledge gained in their practice) a 4 or 5, and many expressed these in the ‘one thing liked best about the course’. However, they were not

all in agreement concerning assignment clues provided, with a little over half maintaining that they were necessary for various reasons especially ease of task for busy professionals, while about a third did not find them necessary mostly because they make the assignments too easy. These views were also reflected in respondents likes and dislikes about the course. It will therefore be necessary to strike a balance in future courses between providing clues to further support busy participants and draw attention to key areas of reading without limiting their scope of reading or thinking.

The course topics were also thought to be relevant with ratings of 4 and 5. Interestingly, 8 respondents strongly disagreed that the course topics were relevant to their professional practice. It is hard to understand why the participants would have invested time and financial resources on a course that they did not find useful. The only reasonable explanation for this is that possibly these were sponsored participants who felt they had to complete the course to justify the sponsorship. Overall, the respondents found the course topics educative, appropriate and relevant though some would have liked to see topics on key populations, 'CSOs' (presumed to be Civil society organisations) engagement and advocacy, better integration of HIV/AIDS, FGM and Family planning/ child spacing in each topic and to have more interaction and group discussions.

Most participants were satisfied with the coaching received with over 95% of them rating their coaches a 3 and above (maximum rating was 5) and over three quarters of them agreed to the statement assessing the quality of coaching received. However, few participants did not have satisfactory interactions or timely and supportive feedback from their coaches. It is worth noting that in a separate evaluation for coaches asking similar questions, they all felt that they interacted well with their participants with 6% of them giving a minimum rating of 3 for the level of interaction with participants and all agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statements assessing the quality of coaching except the statement on timely feedback, where two coaches were neutral. All coaches corresponded with their participants by emails, many of them created WhatsApp groups for participants and some organized Zoom meetings during the course. Nonetheless, the need for continuous guide and monitoring of the coaching team to ensure that all participants receive adequate coaching during the course cannot be overemphasized.

Participants' experiences with respect to the Google Group discussion platform for the course were mixed as shown in the questions assessing the platform itself and, in the likes and dislikes about the course. Though most respondents agreed that the platform was useful and they benefitted from it, the responses showed that many of them only followed the discussion and did not themselves post information in the Group due to various constraints including time, internet connectivity and challenges to use the platform. Similar responses were obtained from the coaches in a separate evaluation. Thus, while we cannot disregard the usefulness of the platform, we acknowledge the need to review its use or consider an alternative platform to enhance the learning experience of all participants.

In all, 97% of the participants would recommend the course to their colleagues. However, about 3% were not sure. This shows that despite the few participants who expressed dissatisfaction with some aspects of the course, almost all of them considered the course to be useful enough for them to endorse it.

The expected study hours per week for this course was 6 hours and about 10% of the respondents spent these number of hours to go through the course materials and prepare the

assignments. Others spent a few hours less (< 6 hours, 36%) or more (7 to 10 hours, 25%). Up to 27% of respondents however spent much longer (> 10 hours, 27%). This is not unexpected for a self-paced online course and poor internet connectivity could also have affected the participation of some. In addition, the extent to which participants consult the learning resources and additional reference materials varies and this is well explained by the answer of one respondent to the question on expected study hours: “I read it many time times because I am enjoying it.”

There were various recommendations from the survey participants. Mainly is to improve the level of interaction in the course with more videos and live presentations and webinars. It is to be noted that addressing similar request for more audio/video contents from the evaluation of the ASRH 2019 course, the course coordinator made laudable effort to incorporate two recorded videos in each module of the ASRH course, one on the module topic and the other an expert commentary. There was also an end of course Zoom meeting organized for the participants to interact with coaches, course organizers and course resource persons. While we will look into these suggestions in consultation with the course coordinator, we would like to remark that during the course and from these evaluation findings, participants who live in countries with poor internet access had challenges accessing the videos and live lectures may further limit their access. Moreover, this is an online and self-paced course which has been designed to make quality learning available and affordable to a wider audience. Therefore, cost and other access implications will be taken into consideration when introducing new features to the course. A few participants suggested to have offline course materials, a facility which the course already offers. All course materials can be downloaded for offline reading. The video presentations on the module topics have corresponding slide sets which can be downloaded. Possibly, some participants may wish to download the videos, but this may mean incurring additional data charges for others. The recommendations to use adolescents and youths as course facilitators is one that is already being implemented with their inclusion in the course advisory group and resource persons.

The responses received in this evaluation inform that the objectives of this course were met, and the course was beneficial to the participants. The timing of the course though quite appropriate to address the needs of adolescents in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging for most of the participants, coaches and course resource persons who had to make adjustments to their personal, family and work schedules and/ or take on additional responsibilities due to the pandemic. Their effort is very much commendable and appreciated.

While we try to make the ASRH course as affordable as possible, in previous years, some participants from resource constraint countries still lacked financial access to the course. The course coordinator, Dr Chandra-Mouli worked hard to ensure that as many participants of the ASRH 2020 course as possible from target countries were sponsored, with WHO and UNFPA sponsoring majority of the participants. GFMER as per protocol, also looked for funding opportunities for participants. Thanks to the funding, the largest enrolment for the ASRH course and the highest completion rate was achieved. We believe that the course has built a network of professionals who will be valuable resource persons for the advancement of ASRH in their respective countries and globally.

Finally, we appreciate and thank all the participants who took part in this course evaluation survey and have therefore provided invaluable feedback for the improvement of future ASRH and other GFMER courses.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from the evaluation of the 2020 GFMER Adolescent sexual and reproductive health course showed that majority of participants were satisfied with the standard of the course and found it timely and relevant to their practice especially in view of the current pandemic. The findings also provided various recommendations by which future courses can be improved on to meet the needs of participants. The key recommendations from the findings are listed below.

### **Key recommendations based on findings from this report**

1. Make the course more interactive with seminars, webinars etc.
2. Improve on the level of interaction amongst students with group works and smaller discussion groups on WhatsApp, Telegram, Zoom, Google Group or other platforms.
3. Improve student and tutor interaction with discussions on Zoom, WhatsApp groups, timely and constructive feedback on assignments with explanation on scoring.
4. Review the assignment clues, provide clearer guidance on the grading criteria, and consider having MCQs.
5. Review the Google Group platform to make it more user friendly, provide instructions for use and consider alternatives.
6. Continue to maintain flexibility with the assignment deadlines.