

**GENEVA FOUNDATION
FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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Preface by the director

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER) is a non-profit organization established in 2002. It is supported by the Department of Social Affairs of the City of Geneva and other Swiss and international institutions and works in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

In 2021 the foundation and its partners launched for the eleventh consecutive year, a series of distance training/online courses on sexual and reproductive health and research: a total of 177 health professionals from 33 countries attended the adolescent sexual and reproductive health training programme; a total of 311 health professionals from 47 countries attended the family planning training programme; and a total of 195 health professionals from 47 countries attended the research methodology and research protocol development training programme.

GFMER continues its active partnership with the UNFPA/WHO 'Campaign to end fistula'. The aim has been to create a 'Centre of Excellence for the prevention and treatment of obstetric fistula' in Northern Benin, which would serve other countries in the region under the name of "Tanguiéta Model". During 2021, several missions were conducted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Madagascar where Professor Charles-Henry Rochat (who has the overall responsibility for GFMER's fistula project) and his team of specialists, operated on a total of 346 obstetric fistula cases in different countries during surgical workshops and routine surgical practice. Moreover, local doctors were trained on the management of obstetric fistula.

In July 2021, the Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER) in collaboration with the Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute (OMPHI) announced a training course "COVID-19 in pregnancy, delivery and the neonatal period" in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic which has directly and indirectly negatively impacted the health and wellbeing of mothers and their babies. The Spanish translation of the course was completed and will be published in 2022. A total of 494 health professionals from 128 countries have so far successfully taken the course.

GFMER in August 2021 announced a public health course on Cancer in the context of Universal Health Coverage. Till date, 23 participants from 10 countries have registered for the course.

GFMER has built a strong partnership with governmental and non-governmental organizations and universities for the exchange of information and expertise at international level. The website of the foundation had 2451659 page views and visitors from all over the world.

We believe our efforts to assist in many countries and the programmes we deliver contribute to improving the reproductive and sexual health status of the populations in need.

Finally, I would like to thank the World Health Organization (WHO) and other institutions for their financial and technical support, which have ensured the successful implementation of our projects and programmes.



Prof. Aldo Campana
The Director

Mission

The overall objectives of the Foundation are to promote and develop health education and research programs.

GFMER has a mandate to address challenges, such as:

- The organization of training programmes in Geneva, covering research methodology, epidemiology, reproductive and sexual health, and other medical areas.
- The dissemination of the Geneva training courses in other countries.
- The initiation and provision of support for researchers to plan, conduct and publish their scientific work.
- The dissemination of medical information on Internet.
- The dissemination of clinical guidelines for use in clinical training programmes.
- The collaboration with the UNFPA/WHO programme to end obstetric fistula.

Foundation Council

- Prof. Giuseppe Benagiano (President)
- Dr. Blaise Bourrit (Secretary)
- Prof. Ana Maria Langer Glas

Executive Committee

- Prof. Aldo Campana (Director)
- Prof. Charles-Henry Rochat (Co-director)
- Dr. Karim Abawi
- Dr. Anne-Caroline Benski
- Dr. Hongguang Dong
- PD Dr. Pierre Vassilakos

GFMER main fields of activities

1. Training course in sexual and reproductive health research 2021

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/index.htm>

Since 2003 GFMER, in partnership with the WHO and other partner institutions, has organized a training course on sexual and reproductive health research. The course focuses on research methodology and attracts the participation of health professionals from different countries, particularly from developing countries. Through the pool of participants, GFMER has managed to disseminate the course in different countries.

In order to reach more health professionals, in 2010 GFMER in collaboration with WHO and other partners launched the online course on sexual and reproductive health research "From Research to Practice: Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research" that offers a training package specially developed for those health professionals involved in research in this field, whose access to learning is limited by time, financial resources or other constraints and for whom access to quality education and learning is limited. The programme is designed to meet a wide range of contemporary issues in sexual and reproductive health, especially in developing countries. It helps students to better identify the problems related to reproductive and sexual health, it helps to improve the skills of caregivers, and it promotes good practices. To better tailor the course to the specific needs of our participants, in 2018, the course was restructured into individual modular courses "Courses on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research" each with its own goal and objectives.

The courses form part of the WHO policy for increasing human resources in the field of sexual and reproductive health, particularly in developing countries. GFMER is mandated to organize the courses.

Course participants

The students in the courses are health professionals from diverse background but mainly from low- and middle- income countries, involved in the area of reproductive and sexual health and whose access to healthcare training is limited by time and/or financial resources. This includes doctors, midwives, nurses, health educators, social workers, advocates, reproductive and sexual health programme managers and other healthcare workers. Most of the participants are in the age groups 25 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years. The health professionals in these age groups have work or familial obligations and, for them, our courses are likely to have the most impact; thanks to the flexibility of the courses, which offers a good opportunity to access continuing training in the field of care. Women are well-represented in our courses.

Recruitment of participants

The participants became aware of the courses through various means including publicity for the course through local contact coordinators in the countries and regions and on the GFMER website and partner sites, as well as mobilization of the GFMER and WHO networks.

Selection of participants

This course is a post-graduate/continued learning course for health professionals with a diploma involved in the field of sexual and reproductive health. The standard criteria for selection are as follows:

- A degree in a relevant discipline of health sciences, natural sciences, or social and economic sciences.
- Involvement in the domain of sexual and reproductive health.
- Preference is given to health professionals who work for health establishments at the district level, an NGO, or a ministry of health.
- Nomination by WHO, WHO regional offices and other institutions- sponsored participants.
- The Foundation encourages the participation of women.

It is noted that the Foundation has established partnerships with NGOs, health ministries, and universities in different countries. Certain entities include our courses in their human resource development programmes. Moreover, each year, a number of participants find the information on their own when consulting the Foundation site or on partner sites.

The application must contain the following elements:

- A CV.
- A letter of motivation indicating clearly their interests and goals for the course.

Based on the application form and documents provided by the candidates, we make our pre-selection and the selected candidates or their employers are contacted by our Geneva Team. We communicate the list of candidates to the country coordinators who we ask to also contact the candidates by phone, email, or skype. When possible, we try – via our coordinators - to meet on site. For countries where we do not have local coordinators, we ask other coordinators in nearby regions to assume contact. For example, for South Sudan, we call our coordinator in Sudan.

Course contents

GFMER training courses are run by course coordinators who decide the content and schedule of the course and designate its contributors. The course coordinators are experts or scientists from WHO and/or various universities who possess important professional networks at the international level.

The content of our courses is based on recommendations by WHO and can therefore be recognised by other global institutions. It is also enhanced by field experience from our teachers with a wide range of experience in the field of sexual and reproductive health. It is based on groundwork, especially in low- and middle- income countries and proposes pragmatic solutions. We provide reference materials for our students and encourage them to use it in their professional practice (prevention, treatment and training as well as in advocacy and programming).

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/index.htm>

Teachers, partner institutions

The speakers, lecturers, and course facilitators are highly trained professionals from WHO, universities, and specialized institutions. They have a wide range of knowledge and experience in the field of sexual and reproductive health and research, especially in low-income countries.

Throughout the training course, participants are supervised by country coordinators, the course coordinators, teachers and tutors.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods for GFMER SRHR course consist of on-line lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, reading materials, additional references and referrals to related websites.

For each module, participants receive assignments. For their assignments, the students receive very precise instructions. We prepare a guideline for assignments. Before writing the assignment, the student is asked to follow the course, read the reference documents that we put at their disposal, and write their text according to the given instruction. We also create an evaluation grid of personal work. Tutors and coordinators revise the assignments using the assignment marking guides provided. The goal is to help students deal with problems of sexual and reproductive health in their respective countries, using what they learn in our courses and preparing their work with respect to academic and scientific standards.

In terms of documentation and published educational resources, the GFMER Training Courses in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research are among the richest in the world. They contain the most reference documents (guidelines), continuously updated in the field of sexual and reproductive health and research. These help participants to become more familiar with scientific reading and writing and use the knowledge acquired in the training courses in their day-to-day professional practice. A personal coach is assigned to each participant. Coaches are mostly GFMER country coordinators and former participants, who facilitate the learning process with the participants. As part of the students' work is based on the analysis of local situations in regard to sexual and reproductive health problems, the assistance of country coordinators / coaches is very important.

The participation of a student is measured by the submission of assignments in the time given. Once their work is completed, reviewed, and accepted for a given module, the student is credited with the expected hours of work (6 to 8 hours) per week, regardless of the actual time it took to complete the work.

To support the participants, different mechanisms of communication and interaction (Facebook, Google Groups, Skype, Twitter, Zoom) are used. These tools favour interaction between participants and teachers and, allow for the creation of a rich network of exchange between health professionals. The variety within the community of students and the establishment of communication tools has furnished an excellent means of learning and of sharing experiences between students from different countries.

GFMER provides free access to the course contents, which are an important source of information for professionals who are involved in the domain of sexual and reproductive health and research (only registered students benefit from a regular monitoring and obtaining a certificate).

The online community created by GFMER for the training course improves communication with and between participants and provides access to academic and administrative support. The diversity among participants and the network facilitated by GFMER provide an opportunity to learn from and share practices with peers from around the world.

In 2021, GFMER successfully implemented the eleventh edition of its online training courses, bringing to bear the experience gained from the previous editions.

1.1 Course in adolescent sexual and reproductive health 2021

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/adolescent-health/index.htm>

The 2021 online training course in adolescent sexual and reproductive health: “Meeting the needs and fulfilling the rights of adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health for WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region” was held for eight weeks.

Working in close Collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO), GFMER recruited a total of 177 health professionals from 33 countries for the course. The Course Coordinators were Dr Venkatraman Chandra-Mouili of the WHO Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health & Research and Dr Jamela Al-Raiby of the Department of Healthier Populations/ Child and Adolescent Health, WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO). Dr Raqibat Idris and Mrs Fionna Poon were the GFMER Course Manager and the GFMER Course Administrator respectively.

Objectives

The objectives of the course were as follows:

To build knowledge and understanding in the following areas:

1. The rationale for the provision of a package of effective health and social interventions to promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health, to prevent health and social problems, and to respond to them if and when they arise, with particular relevance to the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
2. WHO’s recommendations for the delivery of these interventions.
3. Special considerations in delivering these interventions to adolescents including in humanitarian settings and COVID 19 pandemic.

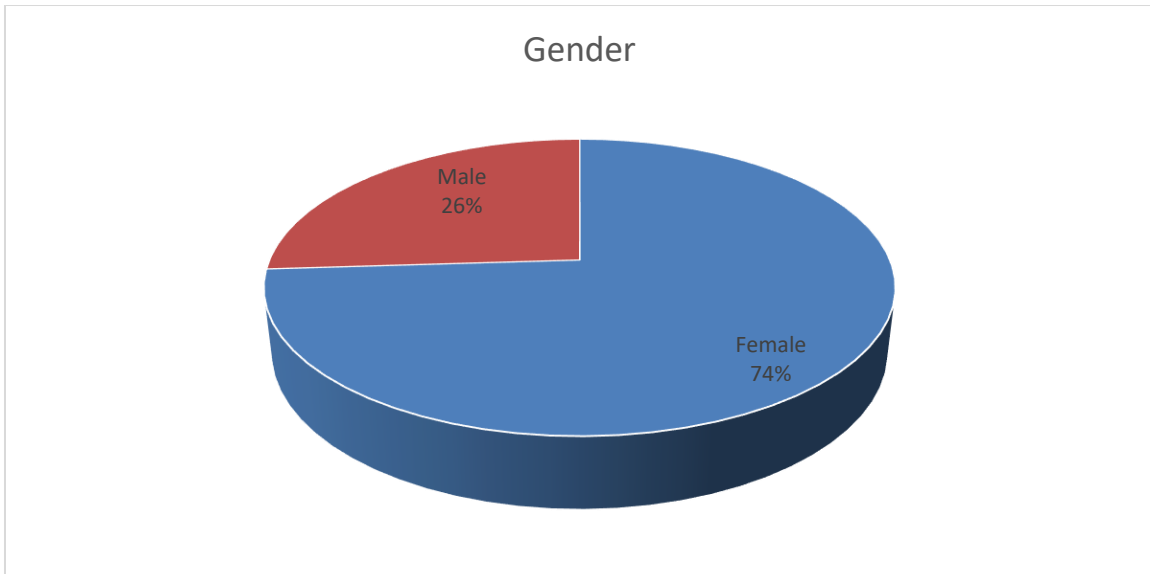
Course participants

The students in the course were health professionals from diverse background but mainly from low- and middle- income countries, involved in the area of reproductive and sexual health. Most of the participants (37%) were young adults in the age groups 25 to 34 years (Table 1). Women were well-represented as they made up almost three quarters (74%) of the participants of the course (Graph 1).

Table 1: Age of participants

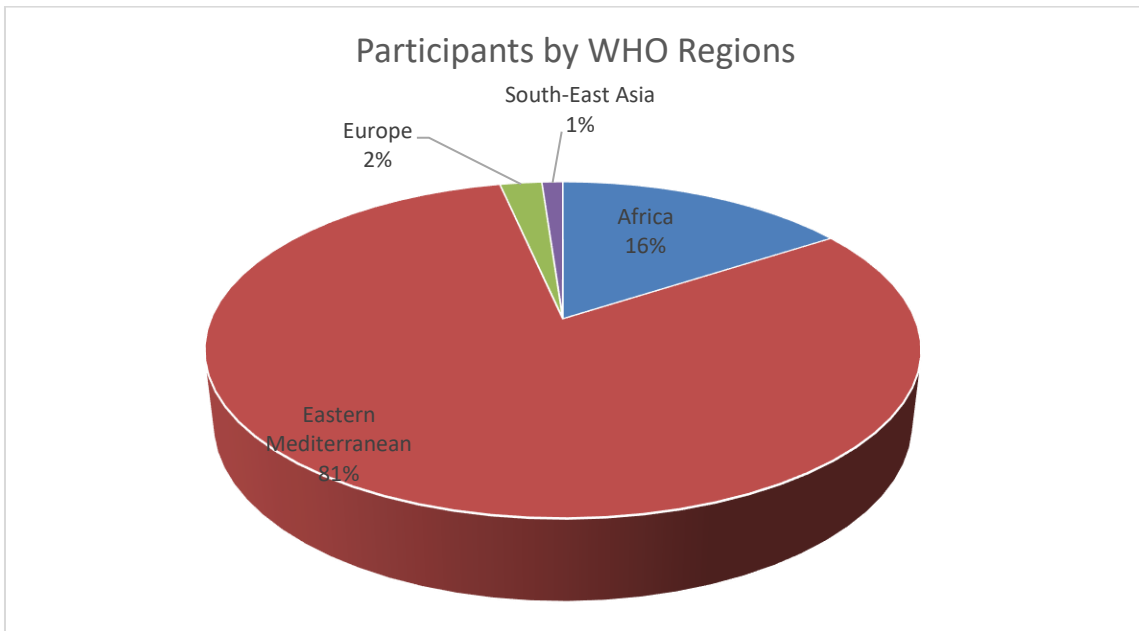
Age Group	No. of participants	%
18-24 years old	6	3%
25-34 years old	65	37%
35-44 years old	54	31%
45-54 years old	38	21%
> 55 years old	14	8%
Total	177	100%

Graph 1: Gender of participants



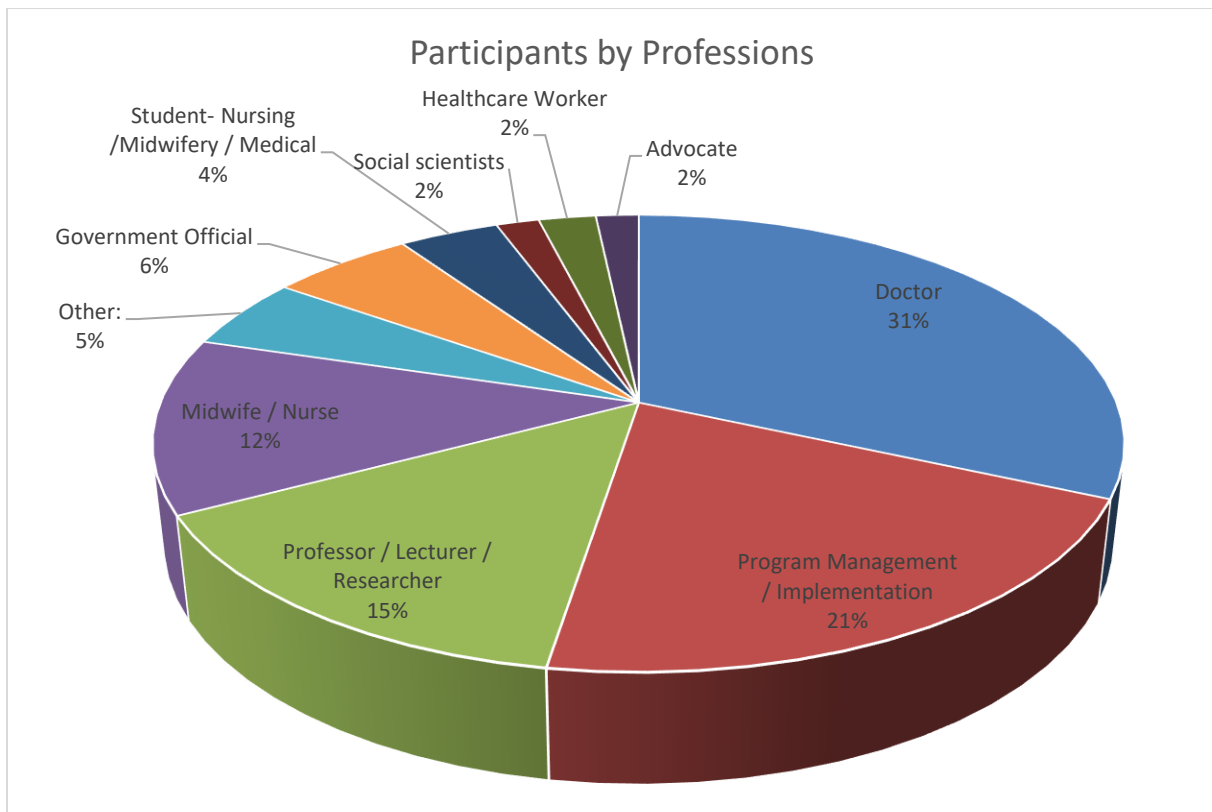
This course was attended by health professionals mainly from Eastern Mediterranean (81%) - for which the course was adapted, Africa (16%), Europe (2%) and South-East Asia (1%) as shown in Graph 2 below.

Graph 2: Geographic distribution of participants by WHO Regions



The following graph shows the proportions between the different professions. The largest proportion of participants were doctors (31%).

Graph 3: Participants' professions



Recruitment of participants

Participants became aware of the course through the following means:

- Publicity for the course through local contact coordinators in the countries and regions.
- Publicity for the course on the GFMER website and partner sites.
- Mobilization of the GFMER and WHO networks. WHO EMRO nominated and sponsored 101 candidates from 10 target countries (Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen). These nominations included health professionals from WHO regional/country offices, local and international NGOs and WHO collaborating centres at the country level, health ministries, and universities.

Selection of participants

Using set criteria, participants were selected based on the application form and documents they provided. Sponsored participants were nominated by WHO EMRO and other institutions. Participants or their employers were then contacted by our Geneva Team. The list of candidates was communicated to the country coordinators/ tutors who also contacted the candidates.

Course contents

The content of this course was based on recommendations by WHO. Reference materials were also provided to students.

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/adolescent-health/Adolescent-health-weekly-schedule.htm>

Teachers, partner institutions

Teachers from WHO, GFMER as well as other national and international institutions were involved in teaching and tutorship for the online training course.

Coaching

During the course, a coach was assigned to each participant to facilitate their learning. A total of 21 coaches from 16 countries were assigned to 177 participants in their countries or nearby countries. The roles of coaches were to:

1. collect, review and comment on participants' assignments, and
2. answer any technical questions in relation to the course.

Coaches motivated and interacted with their students through different means including Email, WhatsApp, Zoom meetings and Webinars.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods consisted of on-line lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, reading materials, additional references and referrals to related websites.

For each module, participants received assignments with very precise instructions. An assignment guide was prepared to guide participants. Tutors and coordinators revised the assignments using the assignment marking guides provided and communicated feedback to students. The goal was to provide the students with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the needs and fulfil the rights of adolescents' sexual and reproductive health in their respective countries, and especially the Eastern Mediterranean region.

The participation of a student was measured by the submission of assignments in the time given. Once the student's work is completed, reviewed, and accepted for a given module, he/she is credited with 6 hours per week (48 hours in total), irrespective of the actual time taken to complete the work. At the end of the course, the student received a certificate signed by the organizing institutions.

To support the participants, various mechanisms of communication and interaction (Facebook, Google Groups, Skype, Twitter) were used.

1.2 Course in family planning 2021

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/family-planning/index.htm>

In response to the real need and a high demand for continuing training in family planning, the Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research, in partnership with the Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research of the World Health Organisation, offered an online upgraded training course in family planning "“Family Planning”: An Online Evidence-based Course".

This training course is designed for health professionals of different levels of knowledge and education (Doctors, nurses, midwives, managers, social workers etc.) who are involved in the provision of sexual and reproductive health services worldwide, particularly family planning, especially in the developing and least developed countries.

Objectives

The goal of this course was to promote the provision of evidence-based informed reproductive choices and access to family planning services among health service providers in different countries.

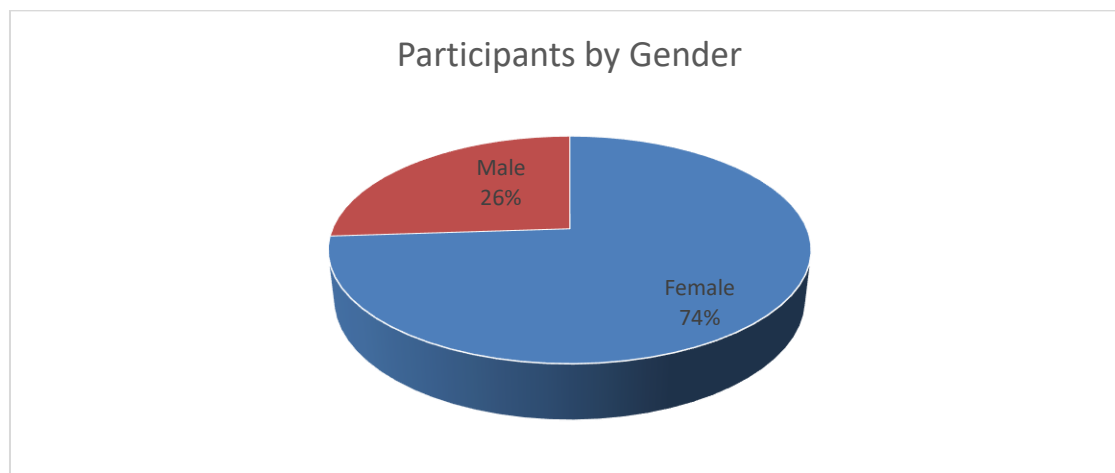
Course participants

A total of 311 health professionals from 47 countries attended the family planning training programme. Majority of the participants (38%) were in the age group 35 to 44 years (Table 1), and as indicated in Graph 1, women made up 74% of participants.

Table 1: Age of participants

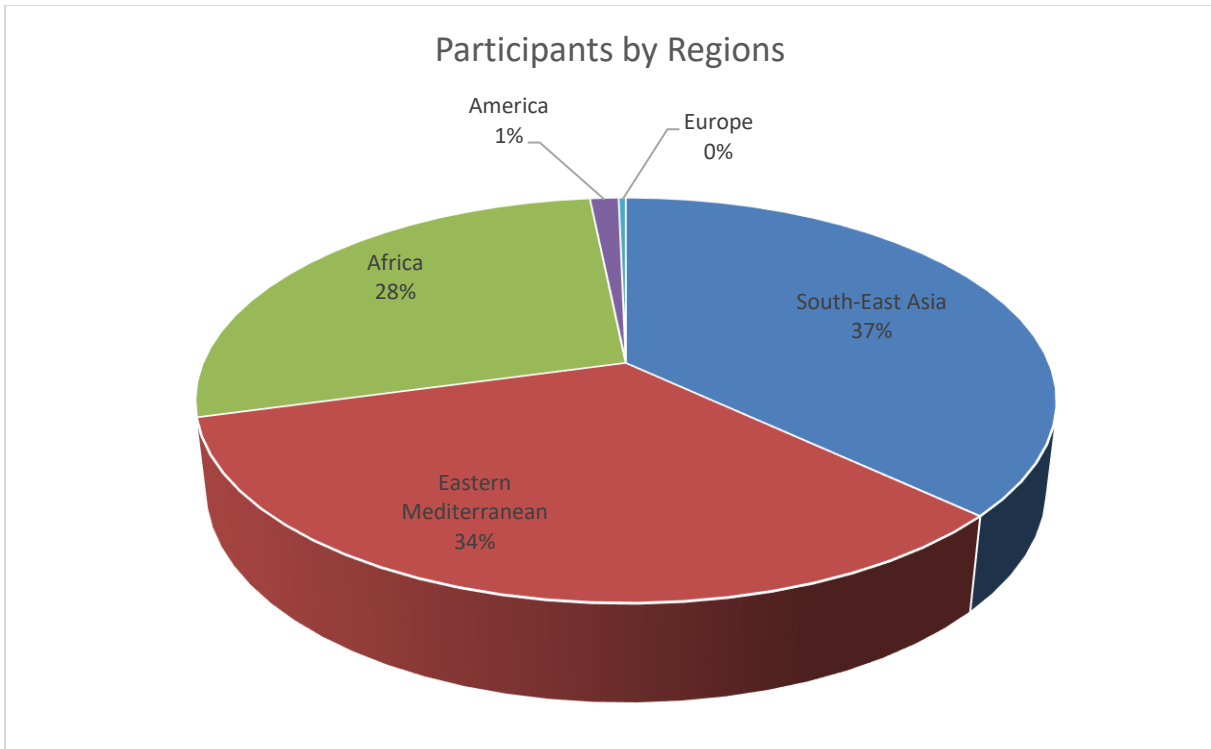
Age Group	No. of participants	%
18-24 years old	4	1%
25-34 years old	77	25%
35-44 years old	117	38%
45-54 years old	84	27%
> 55 years old	29	9%
Total	311	100%

Graph 1: Gender of participants



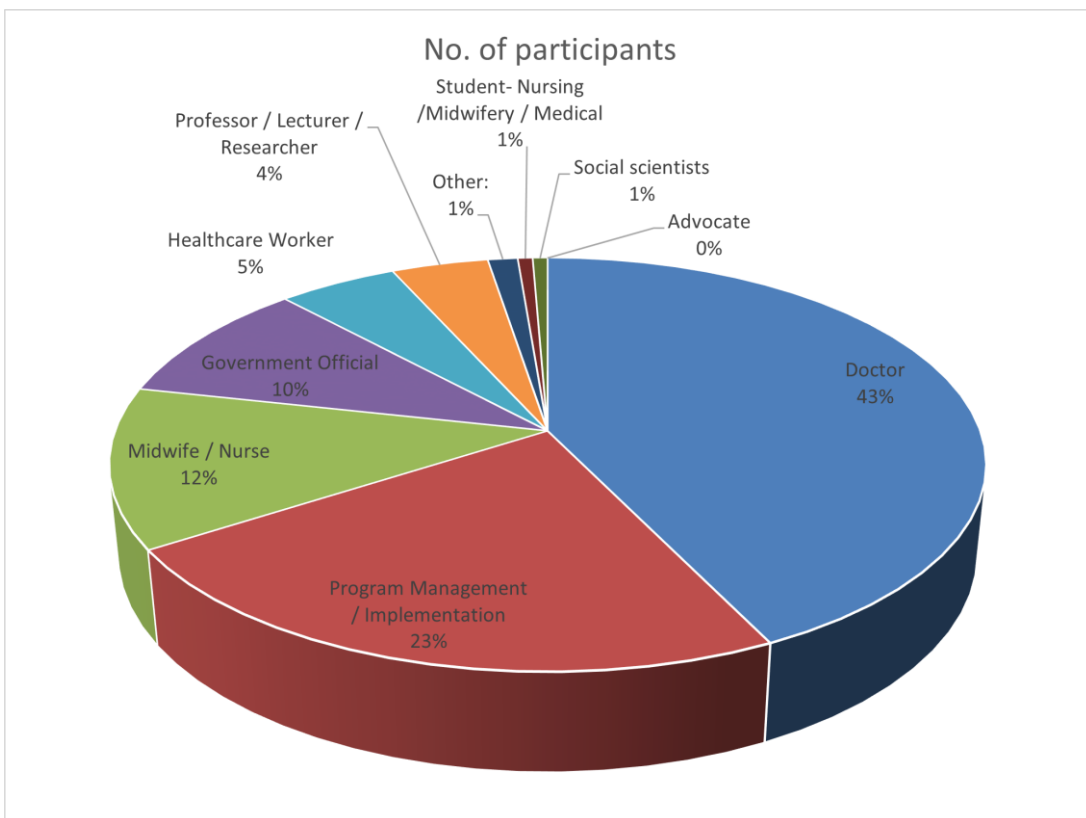
This course was attended by health professionals mainly from South-East Asia (37%), Eastern Mediterranean (34%), Africa (28%), America (1%) and Europe (0%) (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Geographic distribution of participants by WHO Regions



Graph 3 shows the proportions between the different professions with the largest being doctors (43%).

Graph 3: Participants' professions



Recruitment of participants

Participants became aware of the course through the following means:

- Publicity for the course through local contact coordinators in the countries and regions.
- Publicity for the course on the GFMER website and partner sites.
- Mobilization of the GFMER and WHO networks. WHO HQ nominated and sponsored 80 candidates from family planning accelerator countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste, DR Congo, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Tanzania). WHO EMRO nominated and sponsored 74 candidates and WHO SEARO nominated and sponsored 57 candidates. These nominations included WHO regional/country offices, local and international NGOs, WHO collaborating centres at the country level, health ministries, and universities.

Selection of participants

Using set criteria, participants were selected based on the application form and documents they provided. Sponsored participants were nominated by WHO HQ, WHO Regional Offices and other institutions. Participants or their employers were then contacted by our Geneva Team. The list of candidates was communicated to the country coordinators/ tutors who also contacted the candidates.

Course contents

The content of this course was based on recommendations by WHO. Reference materials were also provided to students.

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/family-planning/weekly-schedule.htm>

Teachers, partner institutions

Teachers from WHO, GFMER as well as other national and international institutions were involved in teaching and tutorship for the family planning online training course.

Coaching

During the course, a coach was assigned to each participant to support their learning. A total of 29 coaches from 18 countries were assigned to 311 participants in their countries or nearby countries. The roles of coaches were to:

1. collect, review and comment on participants' assignments,
2. answer any technical questions in relation to the course, and
3. facilitate participants' group work and the development and submission of group assignments.

Coaches motivated and interacted with their students through different means including Email, WhatsApp, phone calls, Zoom meetings and Webinars.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods consisted of on-line lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, reading materials, additional references and referrals to related websites. Live webinars were organized where technical experts answered to questions from the students.

For each module, participants received assignments with very precise instructions. An assignment guide was prepared to guide participants. Tutors and coordinators revised the assignments using the assignment marking guides provided and communicated feedback to students. Participants also worked in groups to develop and submit a group assignment facilitated by their coaches. The goal was to equip the students with the knowledge to promote the provision of evidence-based informed reproductive choices and access to family planning services in their respective countries.

The participation of a student was measured by the submission of assignments in the time given. A student whose work is completed, reviewed, and accepted for a given module is credited with 6 hours per week (24 hours in total), irrespective of the actual time taken to complete the work. At the end of the course, the student received a certificate signed by the organizing institutions.

To support the participants, various mechanisms of communication and interaction (Facebook, Google Groups, Skype, Twitter) were used.

1.3 Course in research methodology and research protocol development 2021

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/research-methodology/index.htm>

Objectives

The objective of this course is to provide knowledge and skills in research methodology and research protocol development to health professionals in sexual and reproductive health field. This course will enhance participants' knowledge of research methodology and how to develop research protocols and improve their scientific writing.

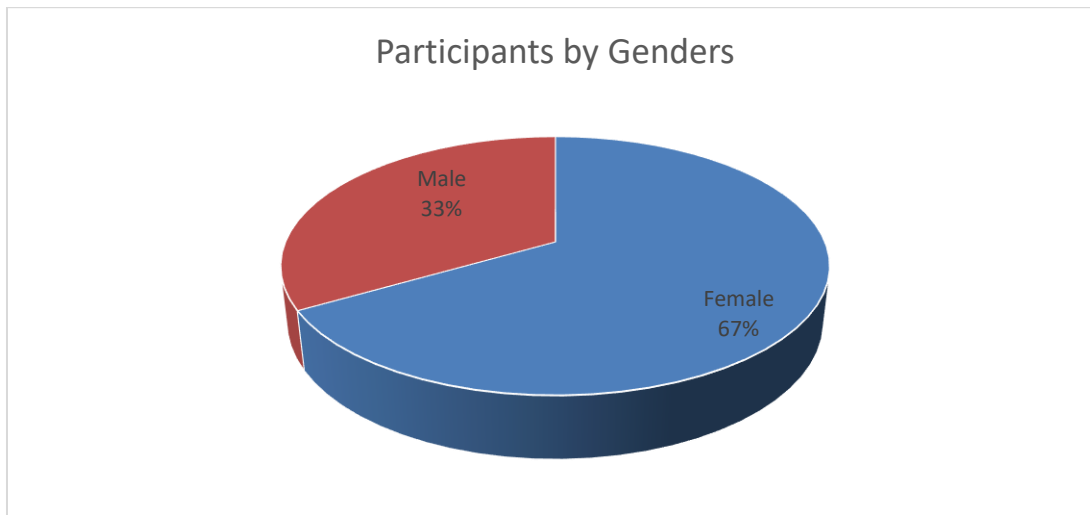
Course participants

A total of 195 health professionals from 47 countries attended the research methodology and research protocol development training programme. The majority of participants (46%) were in the age group 35 to 44 years (Table 1) and females (67%) (Graph 1).

Table 1: Age of participants

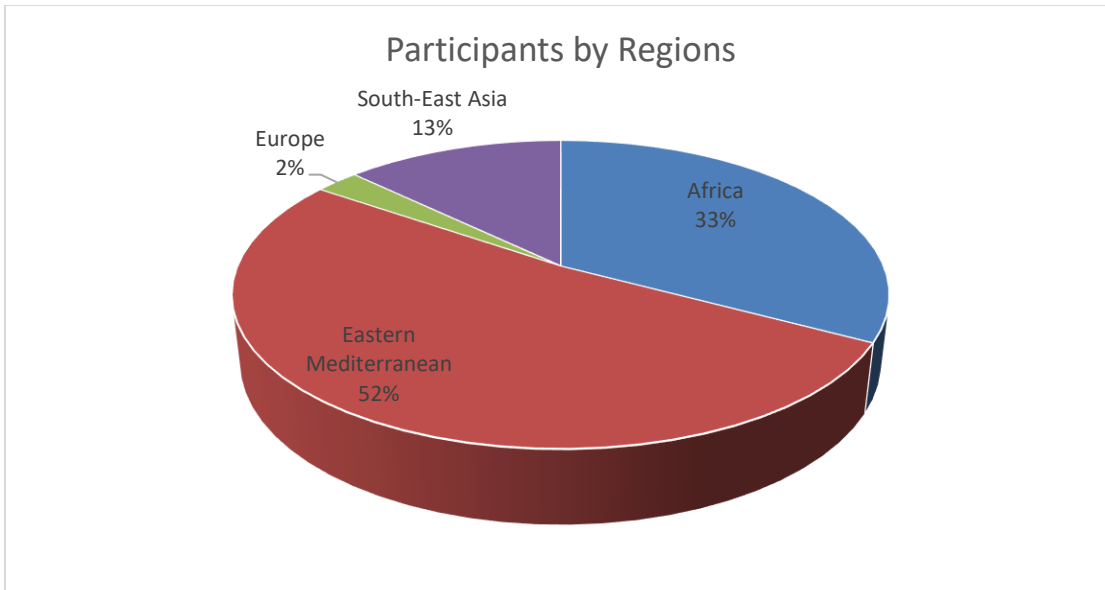
Age group	No. of participants	%
18-24 years old	1	0%
25-34 years old	50	26%
35-44 years old	89	46%
45-54 years old	43	22%
> 55 years old	12	6%
Total	195	100%

Graph 1: Gender of participants



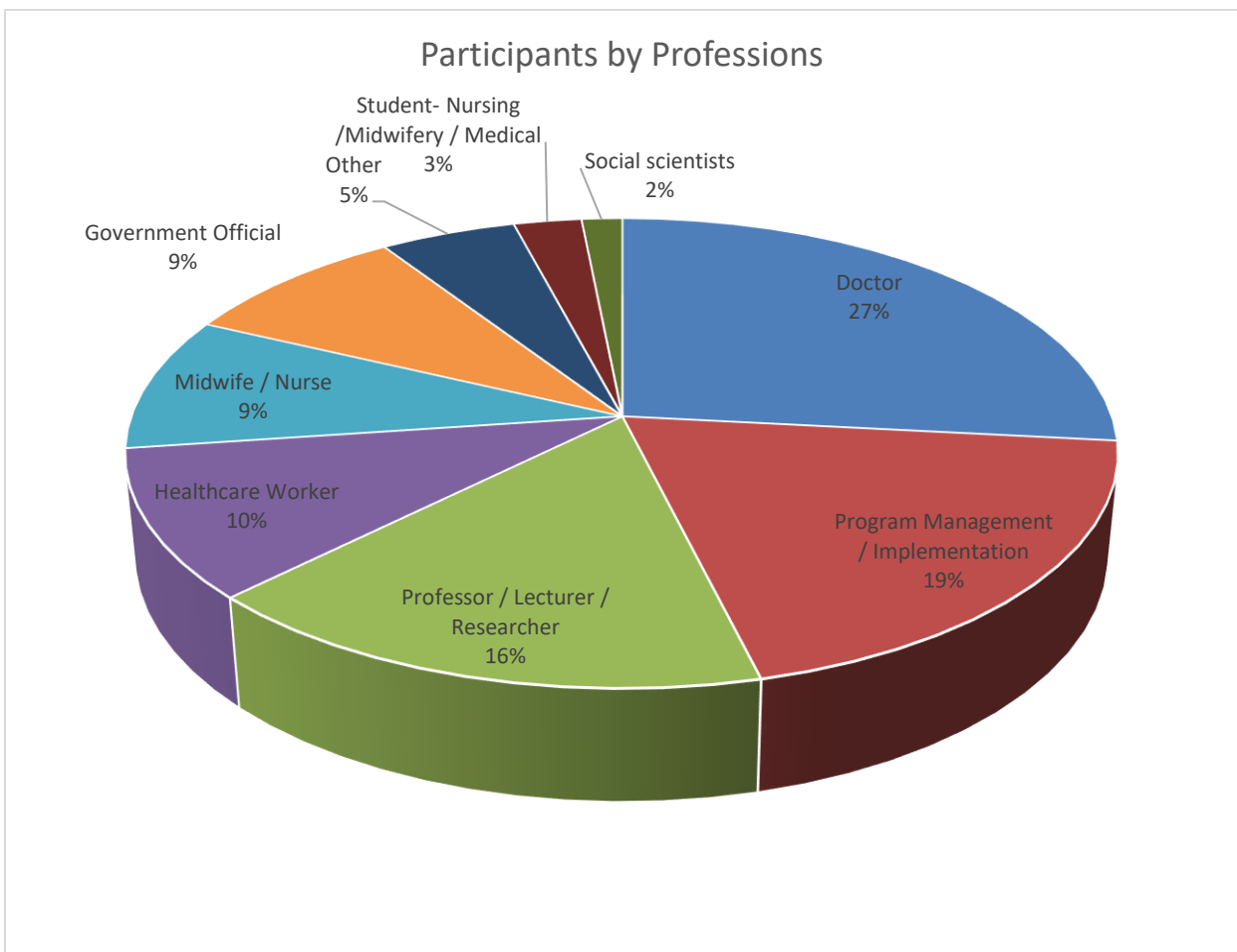
This course was attended by health professionals mainly from Eastern Mediterranean region (52%), then Africa (33%), South-East Asia (13%) and Europe (2%) (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Geographic distribution of participants by WHO Regions



Graph 3 shows the proportions between the different professions with the largest group of participants being doctors (27%).

Graph 3: Participants' professions



Recruitment of participants

Participants became aware of the course through the following means:

- Publicity for the course through local contact coordinators in the countries and regions.
- Publicity for the course on the GFMER website and partner sites.
- Mobilization of the GFMER and WHO networks. These include WHO regional/country offices, local and international NGOs, WHO collaborating centres at the country level, health ministries, and universities.

Selection of participants

Using set criteria, participants were selected based on the application form and documents they provided. Sponsored participants were nominated by WHO HQ, WHO Regional Offices and other institutions. Participants or their employers were then contacted by our Geneva Team. The list of candidates was communicated to the country coordinators/ tutors who also contacted the candidates.

Course contents

The content of this course is based on recommendations by WHO, enhanced by field experience from our teachers with a wide range of expertise in sexual and reproductive health and research. Reference materials were provided to students for them to use in their professional practice.

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2021/research-methodology/weekly-schedule.htm>

Teachers, partner institutions

Teachers from WHO, GFMER as well as other national and international institutions were involved in teaching and tutorship for the online training course.

Coaching

A total of 29 coaches from 18 countries were assigned to 195 participants in their countries or nearby countries during the course. The coaches' responsibilities were to:

1. collect, review and comment on participants' assignments,
2. guide participants through the development of their research protocols,
3. review and provide feedback on the research protocols developed by the students, and
2. answer any technical questions relation to the course.

Coaches motivated and interacted with their participants through various means including Email, WhatsApp, phone calls, Zoom meetings and Webinars.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods consisted of on-line lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, reading materials, additional references and referrals to related websites. Live webinars to teach and to respond to participants' questions were organized.

For each module, participants received assignments with very precise instructions. The students also developed a research protocol on a topic related to their area of practice. Guides were provided to help the participants prepare their assignments and research protocols. Tutors and coordinators

revised the assignments and research protocols using the assignment marking guides provided and communicated feedback to students. The goal was to enhance participants' knowledge of research methodology and how to develop research protocols and to improve their scientific writing.

The participation of a student was measured by the submission of assignments and the research protocol in the time given. A student whose work is completed, reviewed, and accepted for all the modules including the submission of a research protocol is credited with a total of 60 hours, irrespective of the actual time taken to complete the work. At the end of the course, the student received a certificate signed by the organizing institutions.

To support the participants, different mechanisms of communication and interaction (Facebook, Google Groups, Skype, Twitter) were used.

1.4 Course evaluation

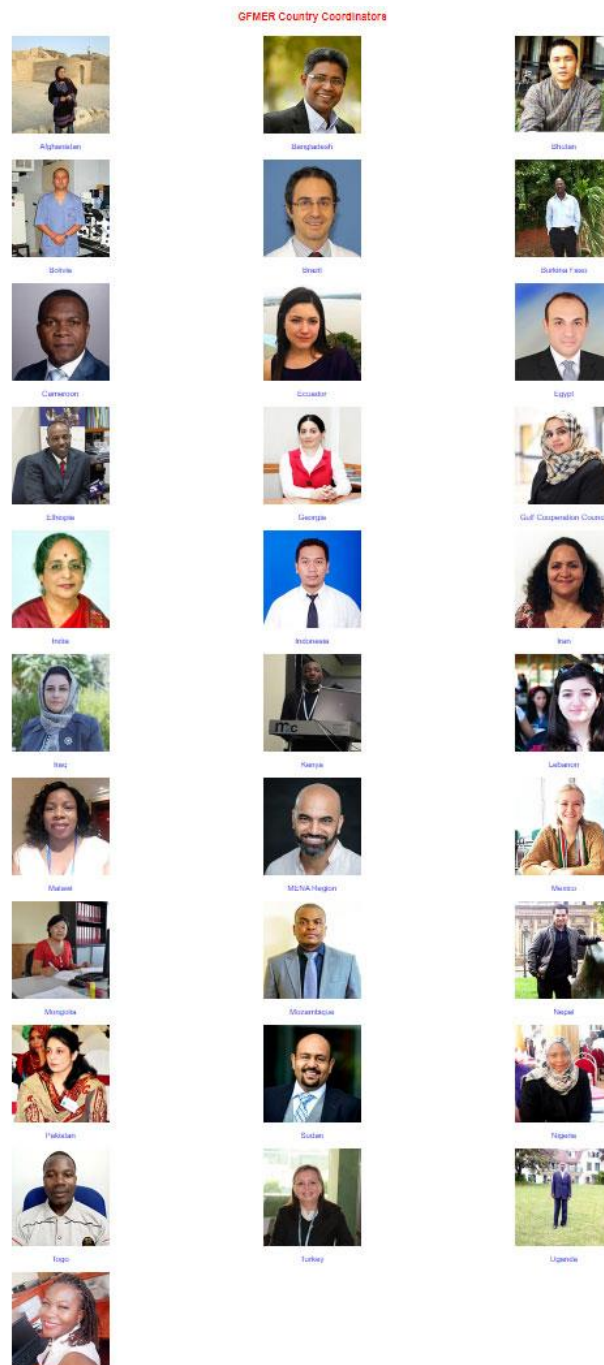
At the end of the course, participants and coaches of the training courses in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research are required to complete and submit the end of course survey. The responses from these surveys are used to monitor how well our courses meet the needs of our participants and to improve on the courses.

1.5 Following participants after the course

Each participant of our courses becomes a member of our Foundation, and we continue to keep contact with them. Monitoring and maintaining contact with them and between them prove to be very useful. Today, GFMER has available an international network of healthcare professionals on ground in direct contact with their communities. It is thanks to this network that we have established collaborations with Harvard University and Oxford, and the Service of Gynaecology at the University Hospital of Geneva. These institutions collaborate with GFMER to develop training tools for healthcare providers at the community level. The network that the Foundation runs facilitates the dissemination of these tools. This also allows us to establish contacts with NGOs, ministries of health or other institutions in a number of countries.

1.6 Course coordinators at country level

<https://www.gfmer.ch/country-coordinators/GFMER-country-coordinators.htm>



GFMER has appointed a total of 31 coordinators in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Gulf Cooperation Council, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, MENA Region, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, and Zambia.

The main tasks of country coordinators consist of:

- Student coaching at local level, i.e., helping the students to access the teaching material and learning methods. As the majority of student's work (assignments and research protocol) is

based on the analysis of local situations in regard to sexual and reproductive health problems, the local coordinators can offer the appropriate assistance to the students.

- Ensure communication with the course organizers and students.
- Advertise the course to various local training and research institutions.
- Recruit eligible candidates for the course.
- Create a network between students from the same country.
- Organize if possible some meetings with students from the same country.
- Identify potential sponsors to provide scholarships for students. It is worth mentioning that the majority of institutions allocate funds for their human resource capacity building programmes.

1.7 Picture of the week

<https://www.gfmer.ch/gfmervoices/pictureoftheweek-2021.htm>

We have created a section on our website entitled “Picture of the week”. Each week, we publish the photo of a student showing their professional activities in a treatment facility, in a refugee camp, on site, in class, etc. This initiative has proved to be very gratifying for our students. It emphasizes the importance of distance training for health professionals where access to training is sometimes limited. It also shows the application of knowledge acquired by our students in their professional practice.

2. Sexual and reproductive rights

<https://www.gfmer.ch/srr/index.htm>

In order to achieve sexual and reproductive health, people need to know their sexual and reproductive rights. The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER) therefore sees a close relationship between sexual and reproductive health on the one hand and the legal and political system on the other. For these reasons, the Foundation created a dedicated website on Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Since its establishment in 2002, GFMER has exchanged sexual and reproductive health expertise with governmental and non-governmental organizations all over the world. GFMER has become a resource centre for training and research in human sexuality and reproduction, creating a vast network of health professionals in developing and developed countries.

With this website GFMER seeks to contribute to a meaningful inclusion of human rights in sexual and reproductive health issues.

Content of the sexual and reproductive rights website:

- Introductions to major sexual and reproductive rights topics.
- Regularly updated summaries of national legislations for the major areas of sexual and reproductive health.
- Selected publications on legislation and ethical issues in sexual and reproductive health.

3. Clinical training, prevention and treatment of obstetric fistula

<https://fistula-group.ch/>

<https://www.gfmer.ch/fistula/index.htm>



Since 2020, the health crisis has spared no continent, no region, no gender, and no country. But some populations already affected by various kinds of calamities suffer even more violently from its effects.

This is the case for the population of the region of Tanguiéta, in the north of Benin, who attend the Saint Jean de Dieu hospital with which the GFMER and the Fistula Group have been working for over 25 years. In addition to this health crisis, there are also difficulties related to the risk of terrorism. This is linked to attacks by terrorist groups that have now crossed the border from Burkina Faso to Benin. These health and security crises are drastically reducing and even eliminating the possibility for revenue-generating consultations, while at the same time the number of patients without income is increasing. For this reason, we need to strengthen our funding for this needy population.

A national strategy is being developed

However, against this tragic backdrop, a national strategy for fistula has been built up over time. This shows that our tenacity works.

To start, the implementation of a program of free caesarean section was developed in 2005, giving care designed to prevent development of obstetrical fistulae. Following this, better access to healthcare through extensive information and awareness campaigns was begun.

Today, we have established a focal point in Cotonou and created a toll-free number for better organization and distribution of cases and harmonization of the work of recruiting and follow-up of patients with the NGOs. The Fistula Group, which helped develop this program, welcomes this major advance. But the eradication effort must continue, because the free caesarean section program pays only for the surgery itself and does not cover transport to a facility or the cost of medicines, which are obvious obstacles for the poorest women.

In addition, the free treatment of obstetric fistulas when they do occur, and routine obstetrical care is not yet a reality. Finally, universal access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health care are in their early stages. But the ideas are coming along...

Towards the autonomy of projects

Another development that should be highlighted is the importance of South-South cooperation, one of Fistula Group's priorities: this involves the sharing of knowledge and experience, through training and the transfer of knowledge. The Fistula Group network is growing over time, allowing for greater cooperation and economies of scale, improving economic viability of projects and the dissemination of information. In this report, we highlight how the next generation of fistula surgeons had been and is being trained and are becoming ready to take the baton. Nevertheless, the financial needs are still very great and the traditional donors are still in Switzerland. Let's stay mobilized!

Activities and achievements in 2021

1. Operating missions and routine operations

A total of 346 patients were operated on in 2021 during surgical workshops and routine surgical practice.

- In Cameroon and Benin: 4 surgical workshops, 58 victims of complex pathologies
- Fistula Group organized 2 workshops in Cameroon during which a total of 21 patients were operated on. The Group celebrated the nomination of Prof. Tebeu as Director General of CIESPAC on 18 December 2021. This will allow the Fistula Group to consider:
 - continued activity in other CEMAC countries
 - the establishment of the network of providers in the fight against obstetrical fistula in Central Africa
 - the centralization of data for a detailed analysis of the status of fistulas and other neonatal genital pathologies in this region of Africa.
- 2 workshops were planned in Benin in 2021. In April 2021 Dr Rochat and his team operated on 31 patients. The second workshop was aborted in Tanguiéta due to terrorist attacks nearby in

Porga, but was completed in Cotonou. The partnership agreement with the Artemedis Foundation signed in 2020 was renewed, facilitating the funding of field activities in Benin.

- 27 patients were operated on in routine care in Benin - Fistula Group has treated 11 fistulas and 16 prolapses during 2021 as part of routine surgical care not associated with specific specialist missions.
- In Burkina Faso: 147 patients were operated on in 2021
- In Madagascar: 114 patients were operated on in 2021

2. Scholarship

The Fistula Group program focuses on reconstructive surgery, treatment of obstetric fistulas and prolapse, improvement of local health care systems, prevention of fistulas, reintegration of patients to society after treatment, and most importantly, training and research. The "Tanguiéta Model" which was developed over more than a decade of work has resulted in one of the most successful training centers for surgical treatment of fistula in West Africa. In Tanguiéta, many surgical experts who are now instructors, as well as dozens of surgeons seeking to learn fistula surgery have passed through and followed operative workshops.

Because of the structure of the program and its location, Tanguiéta has the patient volume and complexity of cases needed to develop expertise in fistula surgery in the sub-Saharan region and more generally, on the African continent.

The hospital has generated a "cascade effect" with the replication of "fistula treatment schools" in emerging countries. The training of African doctors developed by the Fistula Group is bearing fruit, as demonstrated by the fact that it is now primarily doctors from the continent who treat fistula cases on a daily basis.

More than 150 surgeons were trained during the surgical workshops, including around 15 who can treat the most difficult cases.

Today, Dr. Moussa Guiro for Burkina Faso, Dr. Pierre-Marie Tebeu for Central Africa and Cameroon, Dr. Jean de Dieu Yunga Foma for Benin, and Dr. Kindy Dialo for Guinea have become respected experts in this field. Dr Renaud Aholou, a former Fistula Group Fellow, was appointed on 4 January 2021 as the chief of the maternity ward at Saint Jean de Dieu Hospital in Tanguiéta. This objective of knowledge transfer is essential.

The scholarship program set up and supported by CARIGEST is for long-term funding of training and covers several years (up to 6 years for surgeons).

The program is based on practical workshops/operational missions organized on a recurring basis in these partner locations, several times a year, in partnership with the Saint Camille and Paul VI hospitals in Ouagadougou, the SALFA hospitals (Groupement des Hôpitaux Luthériens de Madagascar) as well as CIESPAC and OCEAC for Central Africa.

It also aims to train more than 15 doctors and nurses who have been carefully selected for their technical skills, seriousness of purpose and motivation to learn practice and teach fistula surgery in Africa in the future. The scholarship holders are from the Saint Jean de Dieu Hospital in Tanguiéta (Benin), a long-standing partner of the Fistula Group, as well as from Madagascar, which has a severe shortage of specialized surgeons, and from Congo and Cameroon.

In Benin, two scholarship holders are in the process of completing their specialization:

- Dr. Sosthène ADENIRAN who will take over the service at the hospital in early 2022.
- Dr Roméo HAOUDOU who will finish at the end of 2022.

Dr. Stalin Adisso is successfully completing her second year of specialisation in obstetrics and gynaecology, while Dr Maurel M'Po is currently in her 6th year of medical school.

In Senegal, Dr Martin, supported by the program since 2020, came first in the first year core surgery exams out of all the interns. He is also the only individual to have passed the GFMER / Oxford and Harvard online fistula course with a 100% score.

In Congo, Dr Jean-Claude Otshudi Diumi completed his speciality in obstetric gynaecology and in 2021 and participated in the surgical workshops organised at the Beniker polyclinic located about 35 km from the city of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This facility treats patients with obstetric fistulas on an ongoing basis and hosts three to four campaigns each year.

3. Projects to Raise Public Awareness

A Philanthropy Lunch with the University of Geneva was held on 06 December 2021. The aim of this event was to present an integrated model of maternal health that is now validated and internationally recognized, based on field experience.

Programme

Introduction: Prof. Henry Peter, Director of the Centre for Philanthropy

Panel:

- Dr. Charles-Henry Rochat, urological surgeon and founder of Fistula Group, Alumnus 2020 of the University of Geneva
- Dr. Anne-Caroline Benski, Head of Clinic, Department of Obstetrics, DFEA-HUG, Head of Clinic, University of Geneva, Technical Coordinator for ICRC projects in gynaecology and obstetrics
- Prof. Giuseppe Benagiano, President of GFMER, former Professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics at the Universities of Geneva and Rome "La Sapienza", former Director of the Special Research Programme on Human Reproduction of the United Nations (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, World Bank), former Director of the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS).

Moderator: Prof. Antoine Geissbuhler, Head of eHealth and Telemedicine at the University Hospitals of Geneva, Vice-Rector of the University of Geneva and Director of the HUG Innovation Centre.

Organizer: Laetitia Gill, Executive Director of the Centre for Philanthropy.

4. Press Review

- A doctor of human medicine. Date: 14 January 2021, Paris Match, by Romaine Jean
- Operating workshops in Tanguiéta. Date: 7 April 2021 Eden Benin
- Report - From Geneva to Tanguiéta, a urologist's itinerary to serve women Date: 8 April 2021, Report - Conference of 8 April 2021 in Cotonou produced by the Beninese Society of Urology
- Remote medicine? Date: 5 May 2021 RTS Temps Présent
- Health for all, one man for all. Date: 20 May 2021 TEMPO TV

- Care is a duty. Date: 22 November 2021 L'AGEFI

5. Research

A scientific article was published in 2021:

Title: Vécu des femmes souffrant d'incontinence urinaire au Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Yaoundé (CHUY), Author(s): Pierre-Marie Tebeu, Jesse Saint Saba Antaon, Sandra Edzigui Ndzana, Yvette Nkene Mawamba, Charles Henry Rochat, Support: International Journal of Health Preference Research Publication: June 2021.

6. Delivery of equipment

Given the great need in this country, Fistula Group sent essential equipment to SALFA's hospitals in Madagascar in 2021 including an ultrasound machine, a generator, a respirator, and oximeters. Madagascar has indeed fallen into a critical economic and social situation. It is now one of the poorest countries in the world. This is particularly true in the area of public health.

Supporting institutions for obstetric fistula project

Fistula Group has increased the number of cooperation agreements:

Europe

- The Artemedis Foundation
- Sentinels

Africa

- The Claudine Talon Foundation
- Local NGOs
 - ESSOR (Benin)
 - Sentinelles (Burkina Faso)
 - OCEAC (Central Africa)
 - CIESPAC (Central Africa)
 - SALFA (Madagascar)
 - Engender Health (Guinea Conakry).
- Local teaching hospitals

World

- **ISOFS**: International Society of Obstetric Fistula Surgeons (Asia-Africa).
- **FIGO**: International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics.
- **FISTULA FOUNDATION** (First in Africa but also in Asia).
- **UNFPA**: United Nations lead agency for sexual and reproductive health.
- **WHO**: Department of Reproductive Health.
- **OFWG**: International Obstetric Fistula Working Group.

The involvement of parapublic institutions is important. The work with the Claudine Talon Foundation, the foundation of the First Lady of Benin, is emblematic of this.

Raising awareness among the authorities and the population is also an important part of the Fistula Group's joint work with international and local NGOs.

4. GFMER Global Health New Challenges: Online Courses

E-learning public health course on Emergency and surgical care in Universal Health Coverage (UHC); and on Cancer in the context of UHC

<https://www.gfmer.ch/surgery/cancer.htm>

The GFMER Global Health New Challenges Online Courses program creates awareness on global public health issues and promote education through highlighting key messages from evidence-based publications specifically World Health Organization (WHO) for an easy understanding of the impact of the global burden of diseases and policies addressing them. An earlier GFMER's online public health course on Emergency and Surgical Care in Universal Health Coverage (UHC) created an interest by several academic partners for collaborations to further explore topics on Global Health New Challenges online courses and include them in their outreach education and training programs by sponsoring participants from low- and middle- income countries (LMICs).

In collaboration with [experts](#) from academia, WHO and International Scientific Organisations, several online public health courses were developed in various global health topics: [Emergency and Surgical Care in UHC](#); GFMER collation of specific [WHO online courses on COVID-19](#); [Cancer in the context of UHC](#).

These courses provide health professionals with knowledge and skills to address challenges with evidence-based solutions to global health issues towards UHC. The GFMER Global Health New Challenges program is overseen by [Dr Meena Nathan Cherian](#) with the following collaborative activities with partners in 2021:

4.1 E-learning public health course on Cancer in the context of Universal Health Coverage

This [course](#) provides evidence-based knowledge and experiences from the field for decision-making to engage and prioritise policy issues at all levels of healthcare on cancer in the context of UHC. It was developed in partnerships with academic [experts](#) with over 90 reviewers. It was launched in November 2021 with the aim of providing knowledge in the following areas:

- Public health implications of the unmet need for access to safe and quality cancer care.
- Public health solutions to strengthen cancer management with multidisciplinary approach at all levels of healthcare.
- Policies for an integrated people-centred cancer care including strengthening surgical systems towards achieving UHC.

Target audience are health professionals, project planners and managers, students (medical, nursing, allied health sciences, public health), and anyone interested in public health.

It takes approximately one hour to complete at one's own pace and contains three modules:

- i) Global burden of cancer.
- ii) Integrated cancer care.

iii) UHC policies for cancer: strengthening surgical cancer services.

It is a free online course with a mandatory registration. A certificate is provided after completion of the course, a short assignment and MCQ test (before and after the course, which allows evaluation of the knowledge gained). To date 23 participants from 10 countries registered.

4.2 E-learning public health course on Emergency and Surgical Care in Universal Health Coverage

This course gives an understanding of timely safe surgical care services in reaching the SDGs 3. It highlights that five billion people lack access to basic life-saving surgical care and it is still not considered as a priority in the field of public health globally and in the national health plans. Timely access to lifesaving and disability-preventing emergency and surgical care services are crucial in the entire life-course from birth to old age (in pregnancy-related complications, trauma, congenital anomalies, cancer, abdominal conditions, disasters).

It was developed with [experts](#) and over 100 reviewers from published resources of the WHO, Lancet Global Surgery, Disease Control Priorities (3rd edition), International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières, with the following learning objectives to:

- understand the implications of the unmet needs for timely access to safe and quality surgical care services within health systems,
- identify public health solutions to surgical care crisis at all levels of healthcare, including humanitarian crises, and
- understand ways to strengthen surgical care systems towards achieving UHC.

Target audience is anyone interested in public health including surgical care services in maternal and child health, noncommunicable and communicable diseases, and humanitarian crises.

It takes approximately four hours to complete at one's own pace with four modules:

- i) Global Impact of surgical (sexual & reproductive, injuries, anesthesia) care.
- ii) Surgical care in humanitarian crisis.
- iii) Quality and safety in surgical (sexual & reproductive, injuries, anesthesia) care for UHC.
- iv) Crucial role of surgical care in the context of UHC.

It is free online with a mandatory registration and MCQ test which allows self-evaluation and learning progress. Participants can upgrade (with a fee which was reduced due to the challenging times of COVID-19 Pandemic) in order to obtain a certificate which includes 4 CPD credits approved by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, following an MCQ test (repeated until 70% score) and a short assignment.

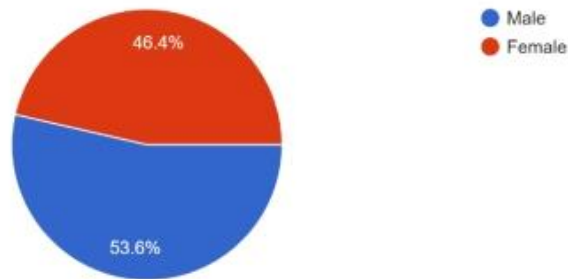
It is aimed to engage people interested to:

- apply evidence-based knowledge for influencing decision-making in policies
- advocate as a public health issue on a global platform.

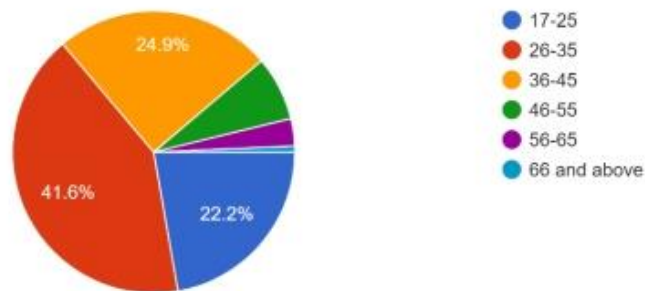
To date 1439 participants of diverse disciplines from over 70 countries have registered (graphs below). The outcome of this course has thus far been successful based on the response received

from participants who have asked for additional information on surgical care’s role as a public health issue.

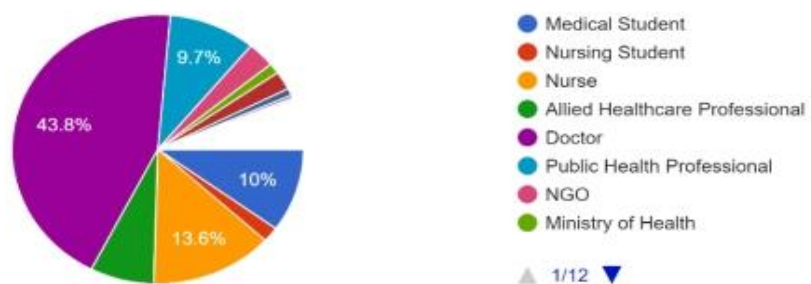
Gender
1,439 responses



Age in years
1,439 responses



Which of the following closely matches your profile or affiliation? (check one)
1,439 responses



4.3 Research with GFMER Global Health New Challenges: Institutional partnerships

<https://www.gfmer.ch/surgery/research.htm>

i) Prior to the launch of the Emergency and Surgical Care in UHC course, the GFMER Global Health New Challenges program in partnership with Office of Global Health, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre, Dallas, TX, USA, conducted a worldwide anonymous public health

awareness survey to understand the gap in surgical care knowledge. This partnership resulted in a paper publication titled: [Global community perception of ‘surgical care’ as a public health issue: a cross sectional survey. BMC Public Health 2021 May 20;21\(1\):958. doi: 10.1186/s12889-021-10936-0.](#) This [paper](#) highlighted the widespread gap in awareness on the importance of surgical care as a public health issue. ‘Surgical care’ was not seen as a priority to reach the SDGs and a low awareness of the WHO programme and not perceived as an important topic for public health courses.

ii) Collaborations of the GFMER Global Health New Challenges Emergency and Surgical Care program with the SurgiBox, MIT D-Lab & IMES, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA, assisted in a four-minute anonymous ‘Patient Isolation and Personal Protective Technology Survey’. The objective of this survey was to identify product characteristics for the development of an improved, patient isolation technology and/or personal protective equipment.

iii) Collaborations of GFMER Global Health New Challenges with the Global Innovation Hub for improving Value in Health Housed in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Health resulted in a paper publication in titled Beyond capacity management: [How can health systems ensure value for money in addressing the elective care backlog created by COVID-19 Riyadh: Dec. 2021.](#) This [paper](#) highlights the global scale of backlog in surgical procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and provides policy measures to address this challenge.

4.4 Partnerships/collaborations/sponsorships with GFMER Global Health New Challenges

- Collaborations with WHO Global Learning Open courses added open access COVID-19 courses on GFMER Global Health webpage for a wider outreach: [GFMER collation of specific WHO online courses on COVID-19](#)
- Sponsorship by the Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) program provided the online upgraded certificate Emergency & Surgical Care in UHC course in their education and training program to over 67 doctors in Cambodia.

4.5 GFMER Global Health New Challenges representation in global conferences/meetings and education programs with partners

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation all [talks and presentations](#) were made via digital platforms as follows:

- International Anaesthesia Conference of Anaesthesiologists on Quality and Safety: Guest lecture on ‘Creating an Environment of Patient Safety in Anaesthesia Services’. Indonesia, March 2021.
- Building Development Gaps (BDG) Annual Meeting: Interests in GFMER courses for Africa. Switzerland, March 2021.
- United Nations Association on Partnerships for World Health Day: Keynote speaker on SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals. USA. April 2021. (Meena Cherian Recording talk at 19 min on the link below):
<https://unfoundation.zoom.us/rec/share/n0VTjM1W1opEYgEoFkRZyPYItccFA7YMkMUH5JaMH2Tkr6CF4cH6noyToL--WN-n.fh82QogzAZA0hMvt?startTime=1617838628000>
- Health Information For All (HIFA) and WHO COVID Essential Health Services Working Group Meeting: Maintaining essential health services during the pandemic: Deep dive. May 2021
- Venous-Lymphatic World Network: Delphi Consensus Consultation. Italy, June 2021.

- Global Alliance for Surgery Obstetrics Trauma Anesthesia Care (G4 SOTA) Permanent Council Meeting on Leadership to Promote Equity in Among Countries: Towards Equity in safe SOTA Care: a distant dream? USA, Nov. 2021.
- World Health Network (WHN) for Zero Covid Global Summit: Global session on Listening to Children in the pandemic. USA, Feb 2021.
- A G20 Initiative: Accelerating the transformation towards Value-Based Care: Global Innovation Hub for Improving Value in Health: Keynote lecture on Elective Surgical Backlog during COVID Pandemic, Value-Based Approaches. Saudi Arabia, Nov. 2021.

5. Institutional partnerships

GFMER collaborative activities with Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute and Harvard Maternal Health Taskforce

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/index.htm>

The evidence-based management of pre-eclampsia and eclampsia

<https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2010/pre-eclampsia-University-of-Oxford/index.htm>

OMPHI and GFMER developed the first online training course on the evidence-based management of Pre-eclampsia and Eclampsia in June 2011. The update of the course is currently ongoing.

The dissemination of this module continued until June 2021 and then it went offline for updating. Since its launch to June 2021, a total of 3317 health professionals from 120 countries have successfully completed the training and knowledge assessment and have been awarded certificates.

The evidence-based management of postpartum haemorrhage

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/pph/index.htm>

After the success of the evidence-based pre-eclampsia and eclampsia training course, OMPHI and GFMER developed another online training course on the evidence-based management of postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) in June 2013. This course is available in English, Spanish and Russian.

The dissemination of this module continued during 2021 and, since its launch to December 2021, a total of 3379 health professionals from 128 countries have successfully completed the training and knowledge assessment and have been awarded certificates.

Maternal infections

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/maternal-infections/index.htm>

Following the success in disseminating evidence-based knowledge on pre-eclampsia and PPH and the high demand for similar courses, in 2014 GFMER in partnership with the Maternal Health Taskforce of the Harvard School of Public Health, the Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health and the Global Health Network developed a third e-learning module on Maternal infections, that is one of the six major causes of maternal death worldwide.

The dissemination of the module continued during 2021. Since the launch of the module in June 2015 to December 2021, a total of 1652 health professionals from up to 90 countries successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

Obstetric fistula

<https://www.gfmer.ch/fistula/Obstetric-fistula-2015.htm>

A fourth training module was developed on obstetric fistula. Its dissemination continued in the current year. Since its launch in July 2015 to December 2021, the fistula module has been disseminated to a total of 1369 health professionals from up to 90 countries who successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

A French version is also available (<https://www.gfmer.ch/fistule/Fistules-obstetricales-2017.htm>).

INTERGROWTH-21st

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/intergrowth-course/index.htm>

The International Fetal and Newborn Growth Consortium for the 21st Century is a global multidisciplinary network of more than 300 researchers and clinicians from 27 institutions in 18 countries worldwide. They are dedicated to improving perinatal health globally and committed to reducing the millions of preventable newborn deaths that occur as a result of preterm birth or poor intrauterine growth.

In order to meet this goal, there is need for the international growth standards to measure and improve maternal and newborn clinical care and compare outcomes across populations. Such standards exist to monitor the growth of infants and children. These are the WHO Child Growth Standards and their release in 2006 was a landmark achievement. These scientifically based standards are now used worldwide.

However, the fetal and newborn counterpart has been missing, which led the Consortium to implement the INTERGROWTH-21st Project. Their aim was to extend the WHO Child Growth Standards into the fetal and neonatal period, providing tools for continuity of care from conception to 5 years of age.

The INTERGROWTH-21st Consortium implemented three population-based studies using standardized methods and clinical and research protocols. They gathered a rich body of data on health, growth, and nutrition from pregnancy to early infancy from close to 60,000 women and newborns across five continents, making the INTERGROWTH-21st Project the largest collaborative venture in the field of perinatal health research to date.

The resulting data provide unique insights into growth and development for the 21st century. The findings also provide new ways of classifying preterm and small for gestational age newborns. In addition, a new international equation for estimating gestational age through ultrasound early in pregnancy based on the first international crown-rump length standards was produced, and the resources necessary for enabling the adoption and scale-up of these tools at all levels of the health care system were developed.

By improving the ability of clinicians to monitor growth and development, standardizing research methods, and providing maternal and newborn health programme and policymakers with new, practical, international tools, the health of women and newborns worldwide can be improved.

GFMER has been designated as one of the principle partners for the dissemination and implementation of the INTERGROWTH-21st project at a global level through its international network of health professionals and partner institutions.

The INTERGROWTH-21st course on maternal, fetal and newborn growth monitoring was jointly developed by the [Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research \(GFMER\)](#), [The Global Health Network](#), [Maternal Health Task Force at the Harvard School of Public Health](#) and [Oxford Maternal & Perinatal Health Institute \(OMPHI\)](#). The course development was motivated by the commitment of the INTERGROWTH-21st Consortium to improving perinatal health globally. The course communicates the methodology of maternal, fetal and newborn growth monitoring and the application of the INTERGROWTH-21st international growth standards to make judgement about appropriateness of growth.

This open, online training course was officially launched in June 2016 with the publication of its first module “Assessing newborn size by anthropometry”. The module was published first in response to the need for guidance on the correct measurement technique for newborn head circumference and an international prescriptive standard for comparisons, following the outbreak of ZIKA virus infection in some part of the world at that time. The module is available in four languages, English, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. GFMER disseminated the course through its vast network of health care professionals in three phases: 1) Provision of training to the current participants of the annual course “From Research to Practice: Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research 2016” as well as the participants from the 2010 to 2015 editions of the course; 2) provision of the training module to a much larger number of health care providers worldwide and 3) dissemination of the course, through the Foundation network of country coordinators, collaborating institutions and former students in selected countries.

The dissemination of the course continued during 2021. In March 2021, adapting to the restrictions on large gatherings because of the Covid-19 pandemic, an online local dissemination of the Portuguese version of the course was commenced in collaboration with Programa de Pós-Graduação em Enfermagem, Escola de Enfermagem, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (the Graduate Program of the School of Nursing at the Federal University of Minas Gerais). A second module “Assessing maternal anthropometry and weight gain during pregnancy” was launched in January 2017. The translation of the module to Italian was completed in 2021. As at December 2021, a total of 6100 health professionals from up to 195 countries successfully completed the knowledge assessment for one or two of the modules and were awarded certificates.

INTERPRACTICE-21st

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index.htm>

The INTERPRACTICE-21st Project promotes the optimal postnatal growth of preterm infants and standardises growth measurement in selected populations around the world. It is based on the implementation of the INTERGROWTH-21st international standards for preterm postnatal growth and evidence-based feeding recommendations based on human milk.

The “Preterm infant feeding and growth monitoring: Implementation of the INTERGROWTH-21st protocol, interactive e-Learning course” was launched in September 2017. Spanish (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-spanish.htm>), Russian (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-russian.htm>), Portuguese (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-portuguese.htm>) and Italian (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-italian.htm>) versions of the course are available.

The dissemination of the module continued during 2021. In March 2021, due to the restrictions on mass gatherings caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, an online local dissemination of the Portuguese version of the course was commenced in collaboration with Programa de Pós-Graduação em

Enfermagem, Escola de Enfermagem, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (the Graduate Program of the School of Nursing at the Federal University of Minas Gerais). As at December 2021, a total of 3442 health professionals from up to 127 countries successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

It is worth mentioning that the above-mentioned modules can also be accessed by Smartphone and tablet. Moreover, a PDF version is also made available for each module to allow for their offline use.

COVID-19 in pregnancy, delivery and the neonatal period

In 2020, the world witnessed a global emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic. Its effects on pregnancy and newborn include the direct spread of disease to pregnant women and their babies and indirectly, the reduction in access to essential maternal and newborn healthcare services resulting in maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality. In response to this pandemic, GFMER and OMPHI developed an e-learning course on COVID-19 in pregnancy, delivery and the neonatal period, completed in 2021. The aim of the course is to provide healthcare providers with evidence-based recommendations for disease prevention and management of pregnant women and their babies during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to reduce the adverse maternal and newborn outcomes.

The dissemination of the module was started in July 2021. As at December 2021, a total of 494 health professionals from up to 128 countries successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

E-learning modules – Statistics

E-learning module	Duration	No. of unique participants who successful completed the test
Pre-eclampsia and eclampsia	June 2011 – June 2021	3317
Postpartum haemorrhage	June 2013 - December 2021	3379
Maternal infections	May 2015 - December 2021	1652
Obstetric fistula	July 2015 - December 2021	1369
INTERGROWTH-21st/Assessing newborn size and /Assessing maternal anthropometry and weight gain during pregnancy	June 2016 - December 2021	6100
INTERPRACTICE-21st/Assessing preterm infant feeding and growth monitoring	September 2017 - December 2021	3442

COVID-19 in pregnancy, delivery and the neonatal period	July 2021 – December 2021	494
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GFMER website (<https://www.gfmer.ch/>)



The GFMER website is extensive, regularly updated and provides easy access to useful information. The website contains information about the Foundation, education programmes (courses), partners, international collaboration and information resources such as publications, presentations and databases. The GFMER website contains information in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

In 2021, the website of the foundation had 2451659 page views and visitors from all over the world. See the following link for the statistics of the website:

https://www.gfmer.ch/Usage_statistics/pdf/GFMER-visitors-2021.pdf

Activities planned for 2022

Courses on sexual and reproductive health and research 2022

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research in collaboration with the World Health Organization and other partners will continue to offer a series of online training courses in the field of sexual and reproductive health and research in 2022 as follows:

- Adolescent sexual and reproductive health
 - Target WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region
 - Target Francophone South, Central and North Africa
 - Target South East Asia
- Family planning in English and French versions
- Research methodology and research protocol development
- Sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS

GFMER collaborative activities with Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute and Harvard Maternal Health Taskforce

1. Dissemination of e-learning courses

GFMER will continue to disseminate all courses through its wide and expanding network of health professionals with ongoing monitoring.

2. Update of e-learning courses

GFMER will propose the update of other existing e-learning courses to its partners as necessary.

Development of new e-learning modules

GFMER and partners will explore the possibility to develop new e-learning modules in sexual and reproductive health and related fields.