

GENEVA FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH



Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Course for WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region 2022



Course Report

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Introduction

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER) Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) Course 2022 with WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region (WHO, EMRO) was one of the online training courses in the field of sexual and reproductive health and research (SRH) conducted by GFMER in 2022. It was organized in collaboration with WHO EMRO. The course was adapted and targeted to respond to the SRH needs of adolescents specifically in this region. It is the second edition of the course that was first held in 2021. The course coordinators were Dr Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli of Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research, WHO Headquarters, and Dr Khalid Siddeeg of the Department of Healthier Populations/ Child and Adolescent Health, WHO EMRO. The duration of the course was eight weeks - from 24 January 2022 to 20 March 2022. The course theme was "Meeting the needs and fulfilling the rights of adolescents' sexual and reproductive health for WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region". The course covered eight topics on key issues on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, ASRHR: Comprehensive sexuality education provision, Contraception counselling and provision, Antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care, Safe abortion care, Sexually transmitted infections prevention and care, HIV prevention and care, Violence against women and girls: prevention, support and care, and Harmful traditional practices (child marriage and female genital mutilation) prevention and response. Approaches to ensuring the continuity of SRH information and service provision to adolescents in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and humanitarian settings were integrated into each module.

To oversee the regional process of reviewing the modules, a Course Advisory group was set up by WHO EMRO comprising of Dr Mamdouh Wahba (Egypt), Dr Nafisa. M. Badri (Sudan), Dr Nadia Bezad (Morocco), Ms Sheena Hadi (Pakistan) and Dr Ashraf Badar (Yemen).

About the course

A total of 200 participants from 54 countries were enrolled in the course, up from 177 enrolled participants in the 2021 course. Participants of the course were recruited by announcements by GFMER through its website, network, social media, coaches and country coordinators; by WHO EMRO, WHO country offices and other WHO networks as well as regional NGOs and health ministries. The majority of the participants were nominated and sponsored by WHO EMRO, mainly from 10 target countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Pakistan, Qatar, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates). The participants were mostly female (64%), in the age groups 35-44 (35%), 25-34 (29%) and 45-54 (23%) years, from diverse professional background with the majority being medical doctors (45%), programme managers/ implementers (15%) and nurses/ midwives (14%), and from various organizations, especially government ministries (32%) and government hospitals/ clinics (15%). Other organizations represented were the academic sectors (15%), local institutions (13%), international organizations (12%), international NGOs (10%), local NGOs (3%) and private organizations (2%). GFMER engaged 23 coaches from 18 countries, 10 of whom were from EMR to mentor participants of the course. Coaches, majority of whom are former course participants, reviewed and provided feedback on participants' assignments.

In advance of the course, an orientation session was held for the coaches and regular follow-up and communications maintained with them throughout the course for high quality and standardized tutoring. The teaching methods for the course consisted of on-line lectures (video recordings of presentations using PowerPoint slide set), key readings, additional references, expert commentary and case study videos and referrals to related websites. A new feature introduced this year was webinars; four webinars were organized during the course to respond to questions from participants and coaches. A course Google Group was also created for interactions between participants, coaches and course

organizers. Communications during the course were by emails, telephone, WhatsApp, Google Group and Zoom meetings.

Of the 200 enrolled participants, 185 were active (93% active rate, surpassing the 89% active rate for 2021 course) and 176 completed the course (completion rate of 88% of enrolled and 95% of active participants) and were awarded with certificates co-signed by WHO 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 EMRO.

At the end of the course, an end of course Zoom meeting was organized for all participants, coaches, course organizers and course resource persons to reflect on the course. Moreover, participants were introduced by email to WHO country offices in their respective countries, as possible resource persons for ASRH.

Course evaluation

After the course, participants and coaches were invited to complete separate course evaluation survey forms to assess their perceived levels of satisfaction and usefulness of the course and to identify areas of improvement. More than half (69%) of the participants and about half of coaches (52%) responded. The course was highly rated by 95% of participants and all coaches (100%) who responded with a rating of 'excellent' or 'good'. The majority of those who responded felt that the course was well structured with clear objectives. Most of the participants believed the course topics were relevant to their professional practices with over 90% concordant responses to all but the topic on Safe Abortion care with 81%. Six participants mentioned this module as 'the least liked thing about the course', and two of them believed it to be "*controversial*" and "*not taking in consideration the religious background*", probably given the sensitive nature of sexuality, reproduction, and sexual and reproductive health in the region. Since culturally sensitive issues that challenged practices that impact negatively on the health and well-being of adolescents were discussed in the course, participants were asked in the evaluation survey if they would recommend the continuing discussion of these sensitive issues. A large proportion (88%) of the survey participants responded 'yes', hence we can assume that most participants would like for discussions around culturally sensitive issues to continue in the course. Participants were happy with the overall quality of coaching received during the course with a 99% response rating of excellent (54%), good (40%) of fair (5%). We are also pleased to see that most of the participants (89%) said that they would recommend the course to others. Respondents to the surveys gave some suggestions to help improve the course which the course organizers will consider for future courses. A few of these suggestions were to increase the interactive sessions in the course, improve the quality of the PowerPoint presentations, use presenters with neutral or clear accents for video recordings, include more case studies, and to add new topics like substance abuse among adolescents and suicide in adolescents.

Acknowledgements

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research team expresses its heartfelt appreciation to the World Health Organization Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) for its collaboration in organizing this course and for the sponsorship provided to participants of the course.

Our profound gratitude also goes to the Course Coordinators, Dr Chandra-Mouli (Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health & Research, WHO) and Dr Khalid Siddeeg (Department of Healthier Populations/ Child and Adolescent Health, WHO EMRO), Dr Maha El-Adawy (Director, Healthier Populations, WHO EMRO), Dr Mohamed Afifi, Dr Karima Gholbzouri, Dr Anna Rita Ronzoni, Dr Nilmini Hemachandra (Department of Healthier Populations, WHO EMRO), Dr Bridget Mugisa (HIV, Hepatitis & STIs, WHO EMRO), Dr Lamia Mahmoud (WHO Department of Non-Communicable diseases and mental health), Dr Hiba Hussein (WHO Sudan), Dr Qudsia Uzma (WHO Pakistan), and

Dr Shatha Elnakib and Dr Belhafiane Madani (both external contributors who reviewed the 2021 course materials and updated them), for their support throughout the course.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank our coaches, all the course resource persons and the course advisory group for their contributions towards the success of the course. Special thanks to all other institutions that funded participants to take the course including Packard Foundation through WHO HQ, EngenderHealth, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Marie Stopes International, Pathfinder, Plan International, UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNICEF.

Finally, our appreciation goes to all the participants and coaches who completed the course evaluation surveys, and to our coaches, Ms Nana Abuelsoud and Ms Nefertari Boles who helped to analyse and report the evaluation surveys.