



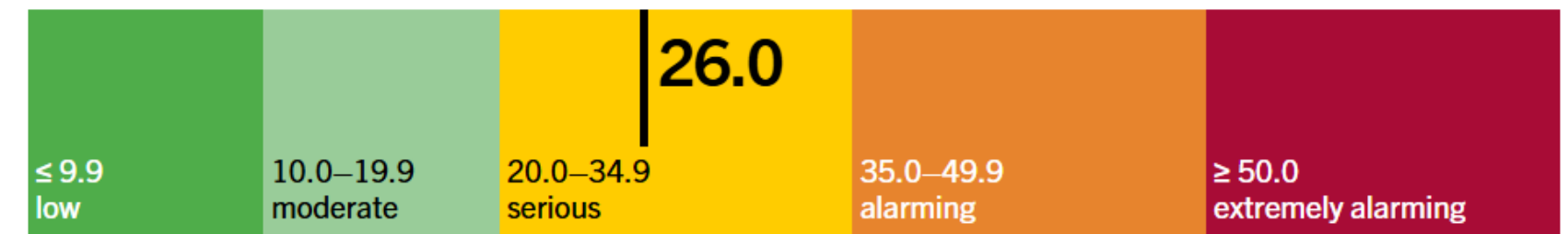
Delivering for Nutrition in South Asia  
Towards Impact at Scale

# Strengthening Nutrition Through the Scalable, Multi-Sectoral IGNIT3 Education Initiative in Pakistan

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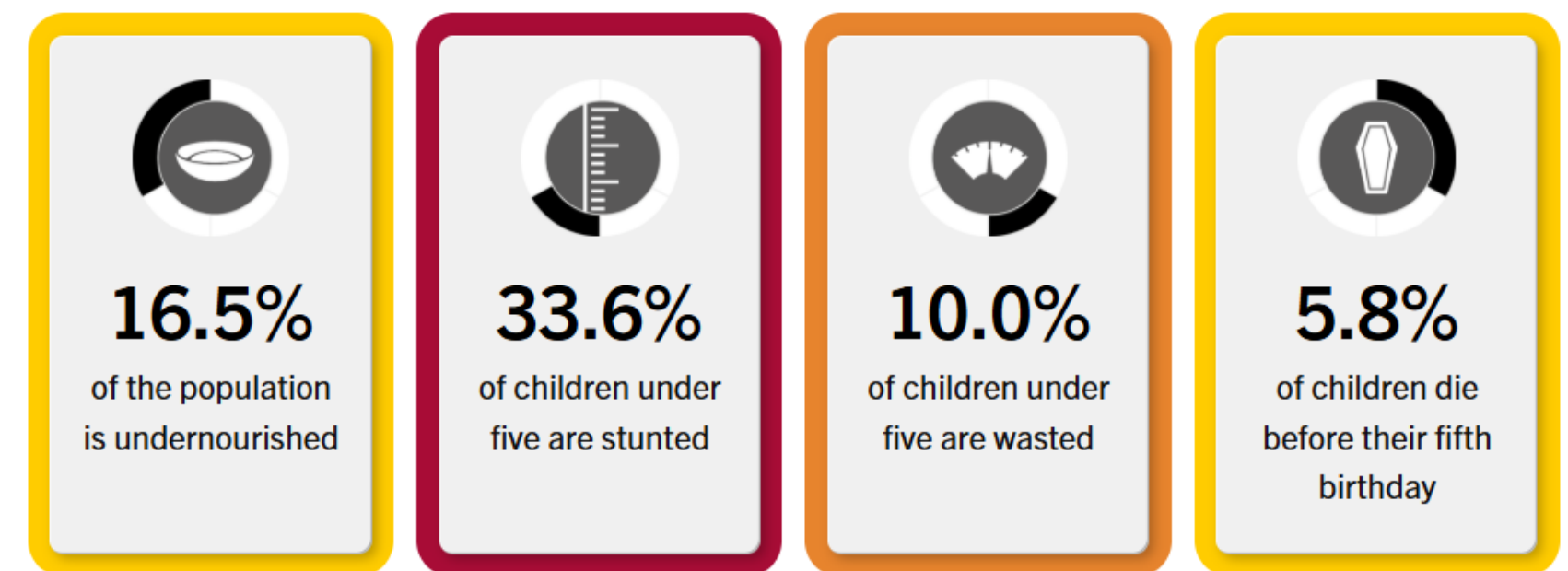
# Background

- In Pakistan, four out of ten children under five years of age are stunted while 17.7% suffer from wasting
- The double burden of malnutrition is becoming increasingly apparent, with almost one in three children underweight (28.9%) alongside a high prevalence of overweight (9.5%) in the same age group
- The prevalence of overweight among children under five has almost doubled over seven years, increasing from 5% in 2011 to 9.5% in 2018. (*National Nutrition Survey, 2018*)



In the 2025 Global Hunger Index, Pakistan ranks **106<sup>th</sup>** out of **123 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2025 GHI scores**. With a score of **26.0** in the 2025 Global Hunger Index, Pakistan has a level of hunger that is **serious**.

This GHI Score is based on the values of four component indicators:



Source: Global Hunger Index 2025

# Rationale

- **Health professionals** in Pakistan are key to improving family health. Integrating maternal, child, and adolescent nutrition more consistently into routine care can further enhance their impact
- Factors impacting nutrition, such as **gender and climate change**, are rarely considered in routine care
- **Integrating nutrition** more systematically into healthcare offers an opportunity to strengthen health outcomes





# Where IGNIT3 Comes In

- **IGNIT3** (Increase Gains in Nutrition by Integration, Education, Evaluation, & Empowerment) is a 5-year initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada.
- It is active in Pakistan, Ghana and Malawi
- In Pakistan, the online courses are led by **Aga Khan University** with partners including SickKids Centre for Global Child Health
- **Aim:** To strengthen institutional capacity and improve nutrition outcomes for over 300,000 people in vulnerable communities, and promote the survival, health and well-being of women, adolescents and children
- **Objective:** To have 20000 courses completed to build a nutrition-knowledgeable workforce in Pakistan

**IGNIT3** | Increase Gains in Nutrition  
by Integration, Education,  
Evaluation & Empowerment



# Methods

Seven **Online Courses: Nutrition For Health Professionals (Pakistan)** were **designed** by experts from **Aga Khan University** and the **SickKids Centre for Global Child Health**, Canada

**Course launch dates:**  
October 2024 (three courses) and July 2025 (four courses)

Project IGNIT3 inception: **2023**

Comprehensive formative research study to identify the **enablers and barriers** to **digital learning** among **Pakistani health professionals**

The courses were **contextually validated** by a panel of Pakistani nutrition experts in 2024 and 2025

# Methods (cont.) – Course Objectives

While each course has its specific objectives, the overarching objectives of the course series are:

- 1. Outline** the **foundational concepts in nutrition**, and describe the relationship between these concepts and health outcomes for infants, children, adolescents, and women of reproductive age (WRA)
- 2. Demonstrate** skills required for **assessing and promoting good nutrition** in infants, children, adolescents, and WRA
- 3. Describe** how the health care team can **manage nutrition issues** and malnutrition in infants, children, adolescents, and WRA
- 4. Explain** the importance of **intersectoral aspects of nutrition**, including water, sanitation and hygiene (**WASH**), **climate change** and **gender** and the impact of these on the health and nutritional status of children and families





# Methods (cont.) - Available Courses

**Course 1:** Maternal and Child Nutrition in Pakistan: Assessment and Intervention

**Course 2:** Nutrition Across the Life Course in Pakistan Priorities in Children, Adolescents, and Women of Reproductive Age

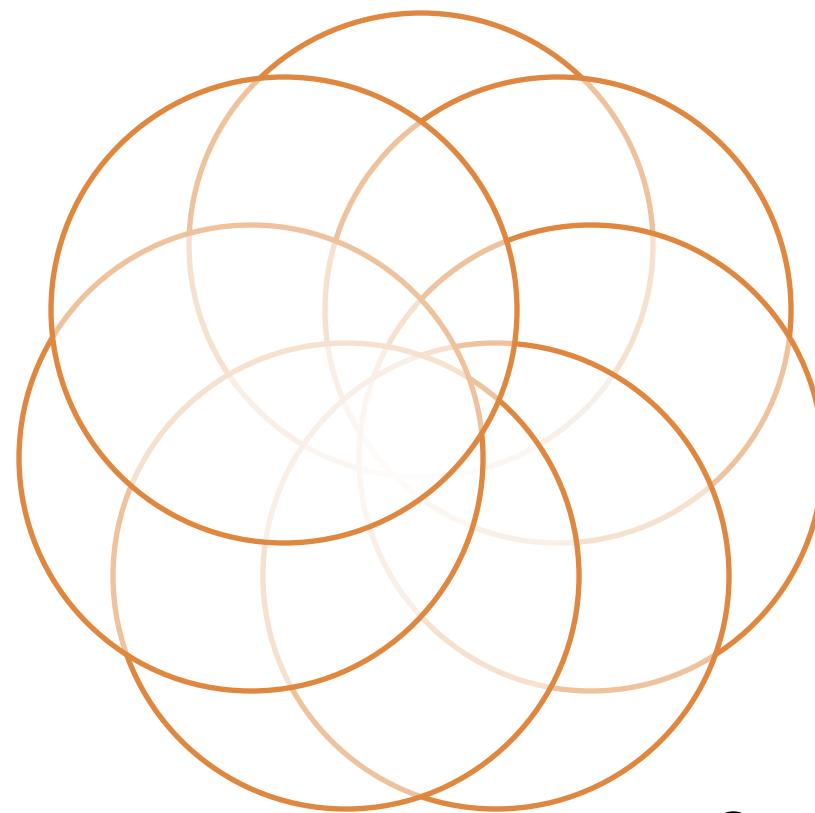
**Course 3:** Gender and Nutrition in Pakistan

**Course 4:** Hospital-Acquired Malnutrition in Children and Adolescents

**Course 5:** Specialized Paediatric Nutrition Care in Pakistan

**Course 6:** Management of Paediatric Nutritional Disorders in Pakistan

**Course 7:** Intersection of Nutrition with WASH and Climate Change in Pakistan



✓ **Accredited by health professionals' councils and eligible for credit points through World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA)**

✓ **On the WCEA app and web browser**

✓ **Offer 2 CPD points/CME hours per course**

## Methods (cont.) - *Target Audience*

The suite of courses is for:

- Doctors, including obs/gyn, family medicine, and paediatricians, public health professionals
- Nurses and Midwives
- Dietitians and Nutritionists
- Students of these fields

Any health professional wants to apply nutrition assessment and context-specific counseling principles to every patient encounter.





# Methods (cont.) - Gender and WASH Integration in the Courses

## Case Study-family of seven



Sarang and Marvi reside in a peri-urban slum area of Karachi. Marvi occasionally works as a house help in a nearby urban area while Sarang works as a security guard, and they have five daughters aged 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10.

Identify which gender roles and norms within the household negatively impacted the nutrition of the children and mother in this scenario?

Choose the correct options from below and submit.

- ☐ A. The mother is solely responsible for preparing the meals and other household chores
- ☐ B. The mother and children eat after the father has been given his portion
- ☐ C. The girls in the family attend school

Integrated throughout the course objectives and case studies

Standalone course:

**Intersection of Nutrition, with WASH and Climate Change in Pakistan** focuses on WASH strategies to improve health outcomes related to nutrition

## WASH in Pregnancy and Childbirth

As highlighted in the previous sessions, adequate WASH services are essential for good nutrition and health to prevent infections that may hamper optimal nutrition. This also holds true for pregnant and lactating women.

Women face unique needs around the time of pregnancy and childbirth. According to the WHO, an estimated 30,000 women and 400,000 babies worldwide die every year from infections such as puerperal sepsis, often caused by lack of water, sanitation and poor hand-washing practices.

Handwashing at critical times prevents disease!



**i** Proper handwashing practice is important within the household, community and health facility to reduce infection transmission especially within the under-five population

# Findings

- For the live online courses, the Qlik analytics platform is actively generating data and insights about the uptake and results in real time
- Currently, over **1500 health professionals in Pakistan** have signed up for the courses
- **2800+ courses** are in process/completed
- **81%** of the courses have been taken on the WCEA app
- Quantitative data through pre- and post-knowledge tests to measure learning outcomes shows **major improvement** in knowledge scores

## Knowledge Improvement

Pre-test

63.92

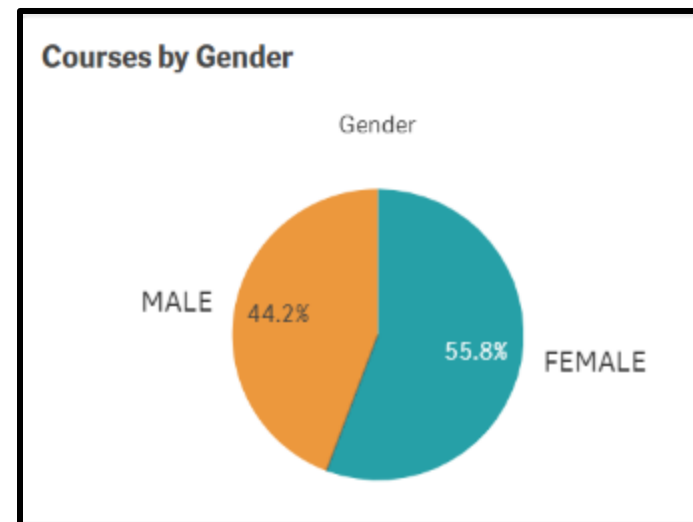
Post-test

89.29

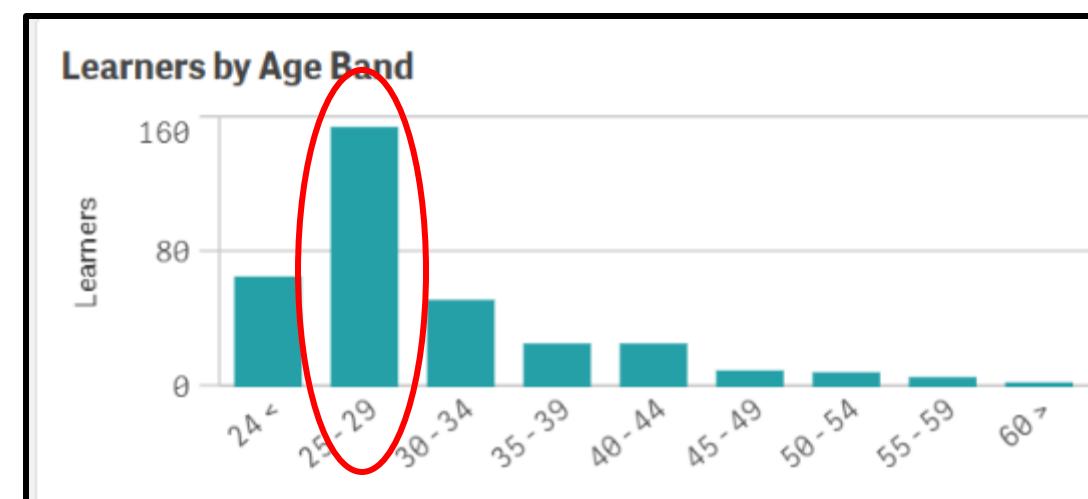
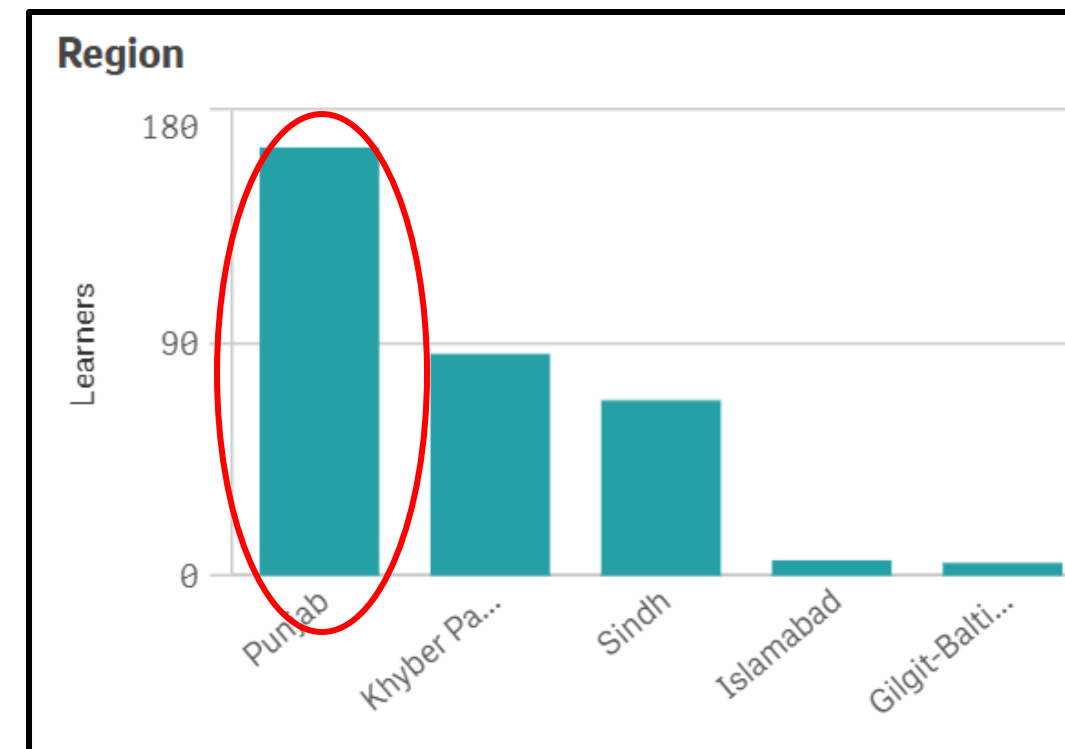
Improvement

39.69

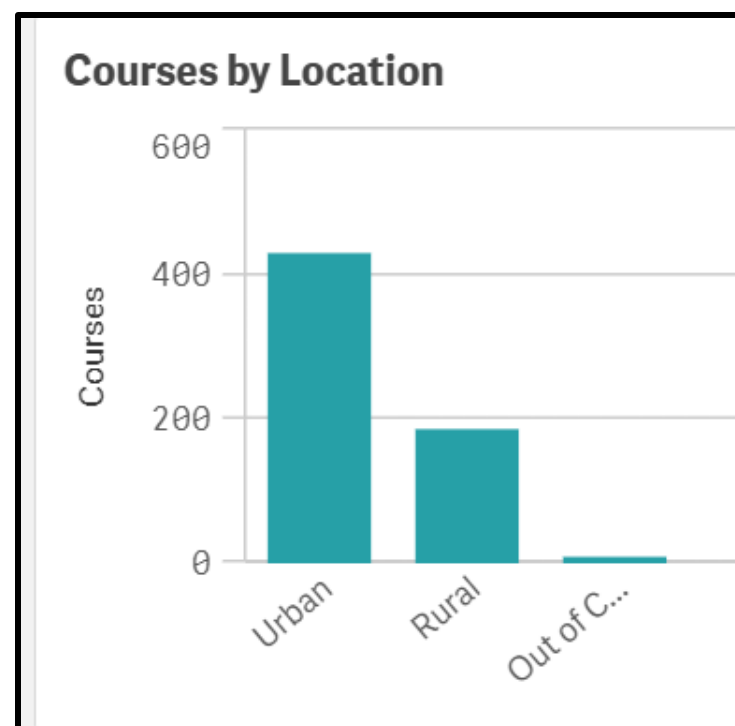
# Findings (cont.) - Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Learners



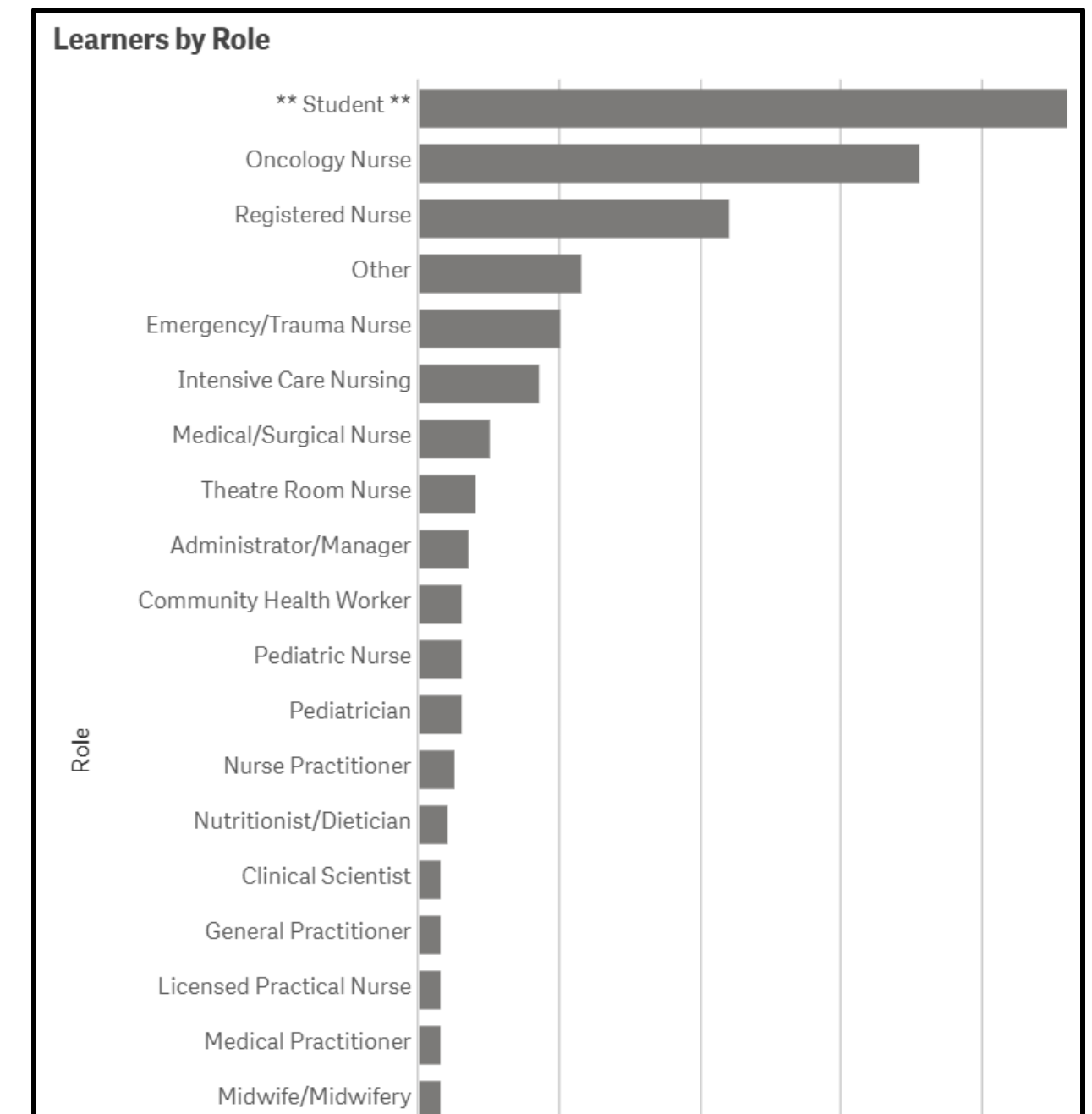
- ✓ Females take a slight lead in course uptake



- ✓ Promising age category, showing that early career professionals are eager to engage in CPD courses



- ✓ Urban areas have shown more interest



- ✓ Nurses collectively make up the largest learner category



## Findings (cont.)

- Qualitative feedback via satisfaction surveys to inform continuous improvements
- The high engagement on the user-friendly mobile platform and the rapid pace of course completion indicate strong potential for this model to scale and achieve measurable outcomes at a national level



"... This course helped me a lot because it enhanced my knowledge about the relation between disability and nutrition .

After this course I will be able to give a suitable care and make an evidence based intervention to the disabled children and educate their parents about feeding techniques and all the management."

"Very informative regarding the weight management during pregnancy, nutrition intake during pregnancy, breast feeding benefits, role of male gender"

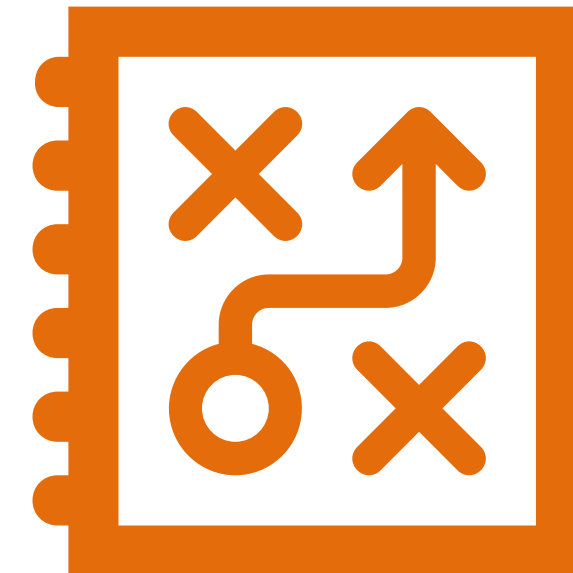
"The module is beneficial for all nurses, doctors, and allied health care professionals to have a positive contribution in the community setting."

## Findings (cont.) - *Challenges and Limitations*

~57% of learners are still in progress with the courses

App registration is difficult for rural health setups, e.g., in interior Sindh

Uptake by physicians and nutritionists is lower as compared to nurses



# Implications for Policy and Practice

- The IGNIT3 online nutrition courses provide a clear roadmap for scaling impact through a multi-sectoral, systems-based approach
- Currently, **28** national healthcare institutions have been engaged to disseminate the IGNIT3 courses to their students, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive
- By strengthening the institutional capacity of health professionals and leveraging data to drive adaptations, the program is well-positioned to facilitate transformative change in nutrition outcomes
- The successful and sustainable implementation of this model offers an example for other low-resource settings to improve nutrition education and health outcomes at scale.





# IGNIT3 Project Partners



# Thank You