20TH ICASA

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AIDS AND STIs IN AFRICA

KIGALI 2019

ICASA 2019

M&E REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since ICASA 2008, Conference evaluation has become a permanent feature for informing the Secretariat areas of good achievement as well as improvement and ICASA 2019 was the sixth in the series to be systematically evaluated. The 20th ICASA was held in Kigali, Rwanda from 2-7 December 2019. As in previous ICASA Conferences, the 2019 one had evaluation activities that included pre, onsite and post Conference assessments. This evaluation report reflects the pre, onsite and post-Conference evaluation results, discussion and recommendations.

OBJECTIVE OF EVALUATION

The objective of the ICASA 2019 evaluation was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Conference and assess its immediate outcomes for quality improvements in planning and delivery of future ICASAs as well as responding to the objectives of the conference.

II. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used mixed methods to collect a range of quantitative and qualitative data which were triangulated to provide holistic understanding of the ICASA 2019 participants' views.

Main activities of the evaluation included:

- Review of ICASA 2017 report to verify trends over time.
- Consultation with members of relevant ICASA 2019 Committees and with staff of the Conference Secretariat.
- Survey of participants at ICASA 2019 namely scholarship recipients, delegates and volunteers.
- Focus groups discussions with exhibitors, scholarship recipients and volunteers.

III.1. Data Collection

Questionnaires were designed to gather detailed information from delegates, volunteers, scholarship awardees and exhibitors before, during and after ICASA 2019. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaire administration while qualitative data was collected through focus group and individual discussions. The survey instruments were available in English and French, but French speakers responded on the online English version.

The survey questionnaires were administered online during the Conference for the pre and onsite activities.

Focus group discussions were conducted during the Conference with volunteers only. Focus groups discussion were not conducted among delegates nor scholarship recipients. Despite appointments taken by volunteers for the first appointment, only one person came and an individual interview was conducted. For the second appointment, an email invitation and reminder was sent to delegates. Unfortunately nobody came. For that reason, only 3 individual interviews with delegates and informal discussions were conducted.

III.2. Data analysis

Data from questionnaires were entered in Epidata and analysis with SPSS 20. Descriptive analysis was performed. Focus groups were recorded and notes taken. Records were transcribed then content analysis was manually conducted.

III. KEY FINDINGS

IV.1. PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES SURVEY

The pre-conference activities questionnaire was designed to gather detailed information from delegates, scholarship awardees and exhibitors on their appreciation of services received prior to the Conference. Online survey was administrated to participants from 30th November to 5th December 2019. The questions focused on tools and services available before the Conference to help participants prepare themselves and participate meaningfully at the Conference.

IV.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

In total 317 participants filled the online questionnaires. The respondents were from 50 different countries. There were 39.7% females, 59.3% males and 0.3% transgender who responded to the questionnaires. The age ranges of respondents was between 26 and 40 years (48.3%) and 41 and 60 years (33%). In terms of professions, most of the respondents were, clinicians (17.7%), other health care workers/social services providers (17.7%), program managers (14.5%), activists/advocates (13.2%), researchers (11.7%) and students (11%). Respondents profile was slightly different from 2017 Conference where most of the participants were activists, clinicians and researchers.

IV.1.2 Sources of information on ICASA 2019

Before ICASA 2019 55.8% visited the Conference or Society for AIDS in Africa's (SAA) website.

Respondents were asked to select from an eight-item list, the main source of information by which they heard about ICASA 2018 (figure below). The most frequent source of information was their colleagues (39.1%) followed by ICASA website (33.8%) and social media (11.0%). The main source of information remain similar to ICASA 2017 where website and colleagues were the first two sources. The least identified source of information was flyers/ posters (3.2%) followed by SAA website (4.4%) and word of mouth (8.5%) in 2019.
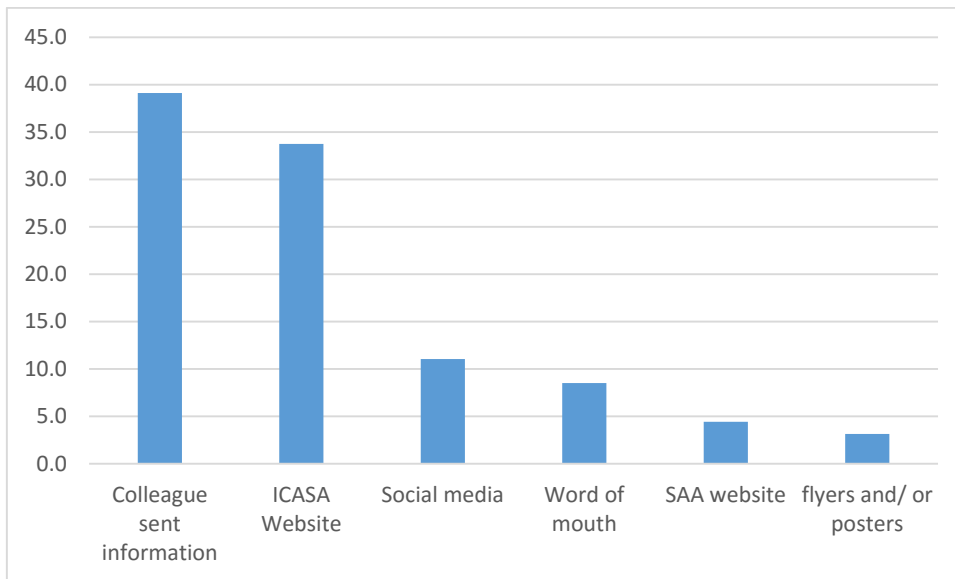
Figure 1: Participants sources of information about ICASA 2019.

IV.1.3 Quality of Services Received Prior to the Conference

Respondents were asked to indicate the ease or difficulty in submitting proposals to undertake specific activities at the Conference or to obtain information.

Most of respondents did not submit names for skills-building workshop, register for community village and review abstract. Of those whom used any other services, it was easy or very easy to make use of such services, registering online (81.1%), submitting proposal for community village (67.8%) and abstract (61.2%), booking accommodation (50.2%) and obtaining documentation for visas (58.0%). Trends for these services were better than 2017.

Finding information from ICASA 2019 website and adequate tracks were reported easy or very easy by 88.3% and 60.3% respectively (Figure 2).
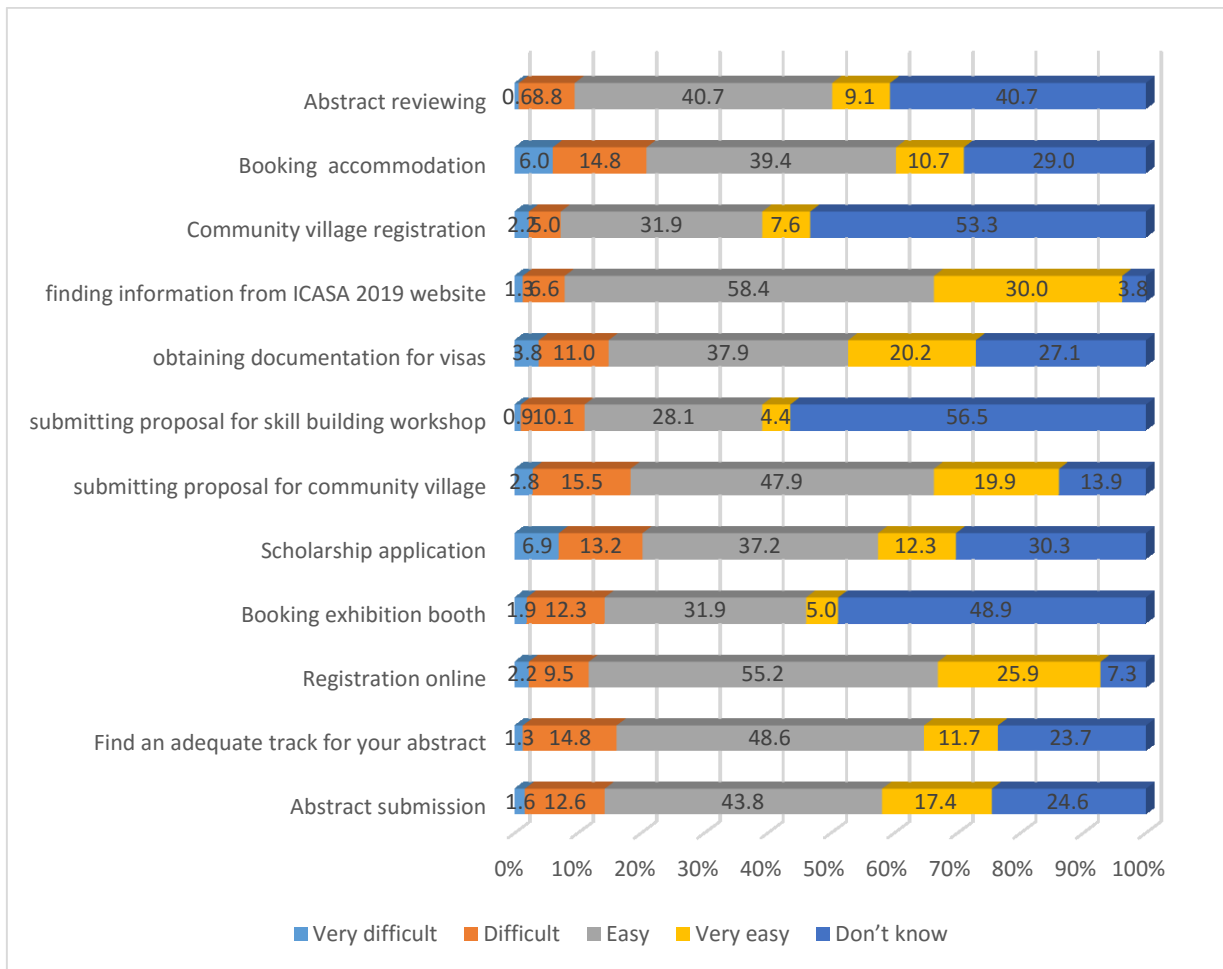
Figure 2: Participants rating of quality of services received prior to the Conference

Respondents were asked to indicate how various information on the website were useful. As showed in figure below, most information was found to useful and very useful. ICASA online programme was reported useful by 51.7% and very useful by 36.9% and this is similar to what was reported in 2017. Information in the scientific programme was reported to be useful by 59.3% and very useful 24.9% of respondents. This is slightly different than what was reported in 2017.
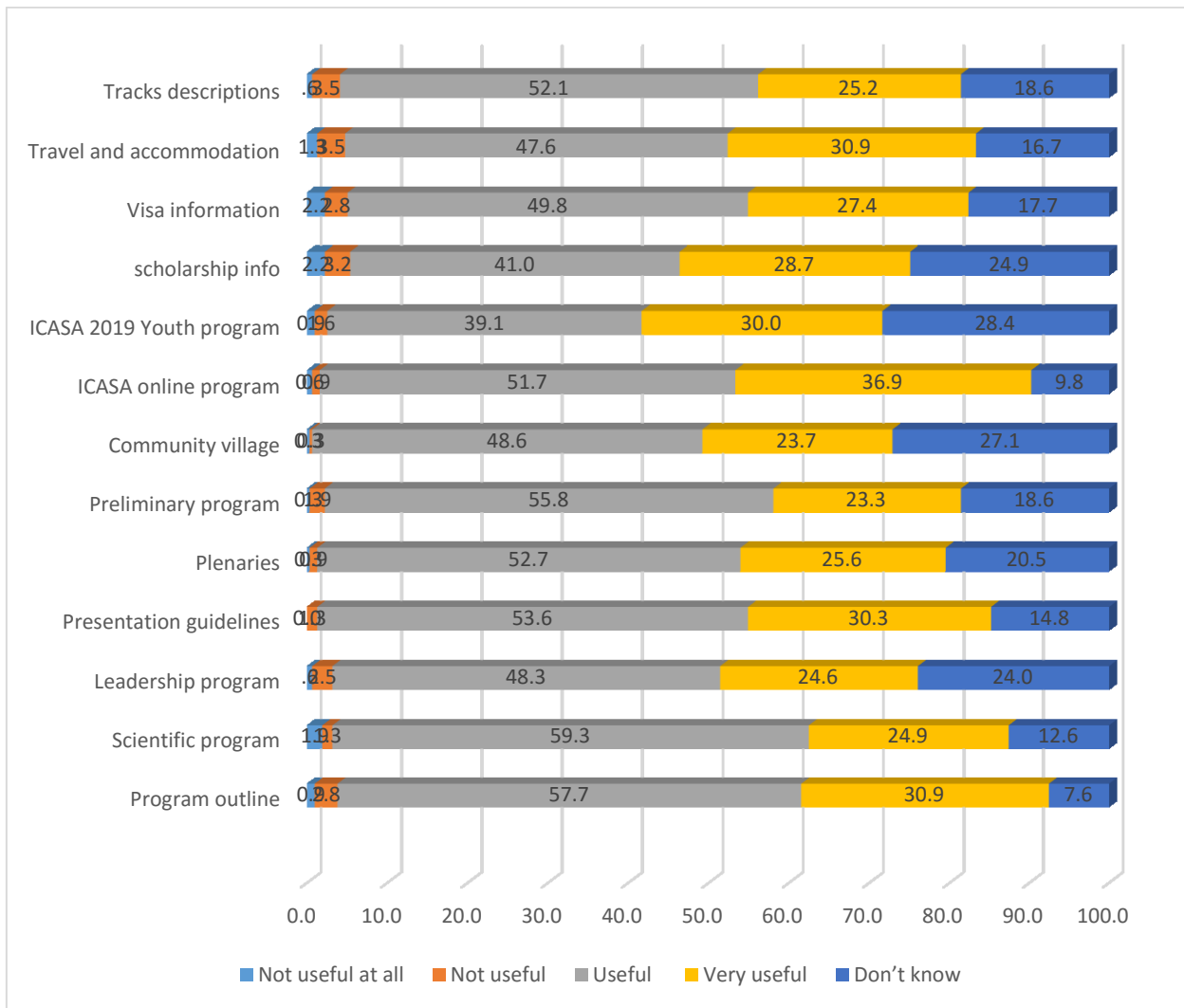
Figure 3: Participants rating of usefulness of information on the ICASA 2019 website

Respondents were asked to appreciate the time for the call for and review of abstracts and notifications. The majority of the respondents reported that the time was adequate for the call for abstracts (60.6%) and notification of abstract acceptance (59.6%). Only 10.4% and 10.1% reported that notification for scholarship and reviewing were long, that is less than what was reported in 2017 (figure 4).

Figure 4: Participants appreciation of time procedures for abstracts and scholarship

Overall respondent appreciated pre-conference activities but some details need to be improve. Frequent complaints were about communication in terms of promptiness of response to emails sent by delegates. Communication need to be more effective. In addition more scholarships were requested.
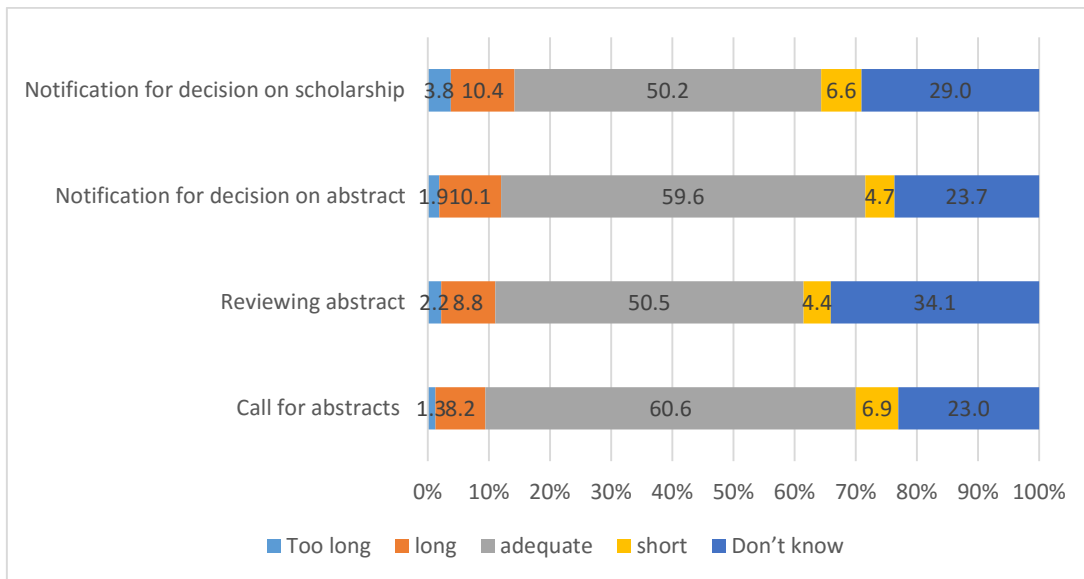
IV.2. ONSITE ACTIVITIES SURVEY

Onsite activities were assessed from 5th to 15th December 2019 through online surveys Questions focused on activities performed during the Conference.

IV.2.1 Socio Demographic characteristics of respondents

Questionnaires were filled by 180 respondents with profiles such as delegates (87.2%), exhibitors (5.0%), and scholarships (7.8%). Respondents were male (53.3%), female (45.6%) and transgender (1.1%). In terms of age, 47.8% were between 41 and 60 years and 41.1% were between 26 and 40 years. Most of the respondents were other health care workers / social services providers (20.0%), programme managers (18.3%), researchers (16.1%) and activists/ advocates (15.0%). In comparison with 2017, respondents were older and more female responded.

IV.2.2 Quality of Services Received during the Conference

Respondents were asked to appreciate quality of services they received during the Conference.

Figure 5 below shows that it was either easy or very easy to collect Conference bag (93.9%), find the community village (92.2%), information about the Conference venue (88.3%), exhibition hall (87.2%) and getting accommodation (66.1%) and register onsite (64.4%). In comparison to 2017, respondents were more satisfied in collecting Conference bags even though the Conference book was delivered later. They were also more satisfied with the onsite registration process.

Getting meals (55.0%) was reported to be difficult or very difficult as in 2017.
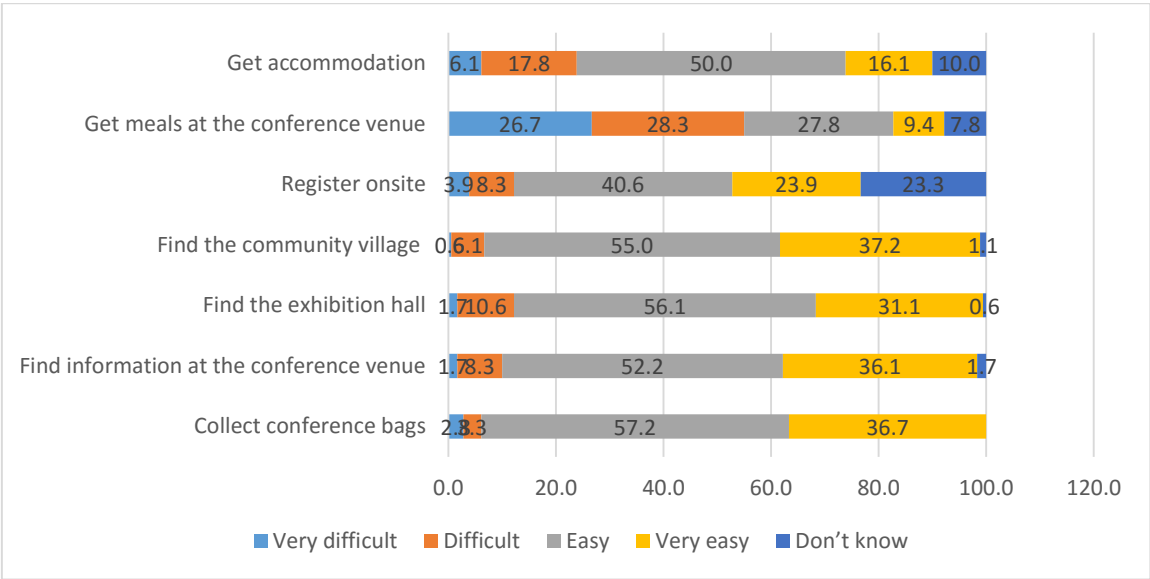
Figure 5 : participants rating of quality of services received during Conference

IV.2.3 Rating of Abstract book and Mobile application

Respondents were asked to rate the Conference book. The majority indicated that the abstract book met their expectations (79.8%). This could be explained by their satisfaction in the quality of the book that was good (62.2%) and the usefulness of the information contained useful (56.1%) and very useful (38.9%). The information provided by the information desk was also reported to be useful (56.1%) and very useful (35.6%).

In order to know more about the use of the mobile application, questions on use of this application were asked. Only 40% of respondents used the mobile application of the Conference. In comparison to 2017, there was an increase of 25% of people who used it.

Among those who used the mobile application, the majority found it good, very useful and easy to use as stated by this respondent « *It was simple to use, very user-friendly and I ended up using the mobile app instead of the pocketbook*».

Even if the application was good, there were some complaints related to language (only available in English) and difficulty to get updated information (cancellations and change of room session) as stated by this respondent « *The information on the mobile application was inaccurate and not updated in real time. I wasted a lot time looking for my session locations* ».

Respondents expected to benefit by attending ICASA 2019 (63.9%). Only 36.1% did not expect any benefit.

IV.3. VOLUNTEERS SURVEY

Volunteers had a key role in the success or failure of the Conference. An online survey was conducted to capture their perceptions and challenges volunteers faced during ICASA Conference. A specific questionnaire was designed for them and a focus group was also conducted.

There were seven (07) participants in the focus group discussion. The majority of the participants were between 20-25 years old and it was their first participation in an ICASA Conference as volunteers.

The volunteers had a good appreciation of the Conference. Particularly they appreciated the fact that they learnt more about HIV and various topics around as stated by this volunteer « *I'm inspired because I'm from a background of SRH/HIV, but there are key issues I didn't*

know, now the Conference has opened my eyes ». They also appreciated the opportunity they got to meet people from different countries with different cultures. However they raised some issues about the organization, such as:

- Delay in sessions due to no respect of timing,
- cancelation of some sessions without any communication on change,
- difficulty in getting meals for delegates who requested cheap food and also for volunteers,
- differences in time work for volunteers, some worked as part time others as full time ;
- lack of headsets for translation due to imbalance in distribution by rooms ;
- lack of communication about availability of translation or other details on particular sessions ;
- Lack of tours and social events.

IV.4. POST CONFERENCE SURVEY

Post Conference assessment was conducted through online survey from 19 December 2019 to 28 February 2020.

IV.4.1. Socio Demographic characteristics of respondents

In total 563 questionnaires were filled by delegates (68.7%), scholarship recipients (22.2%) and exhibitors (9.1%). The numbers are higher than respondents in 2017.
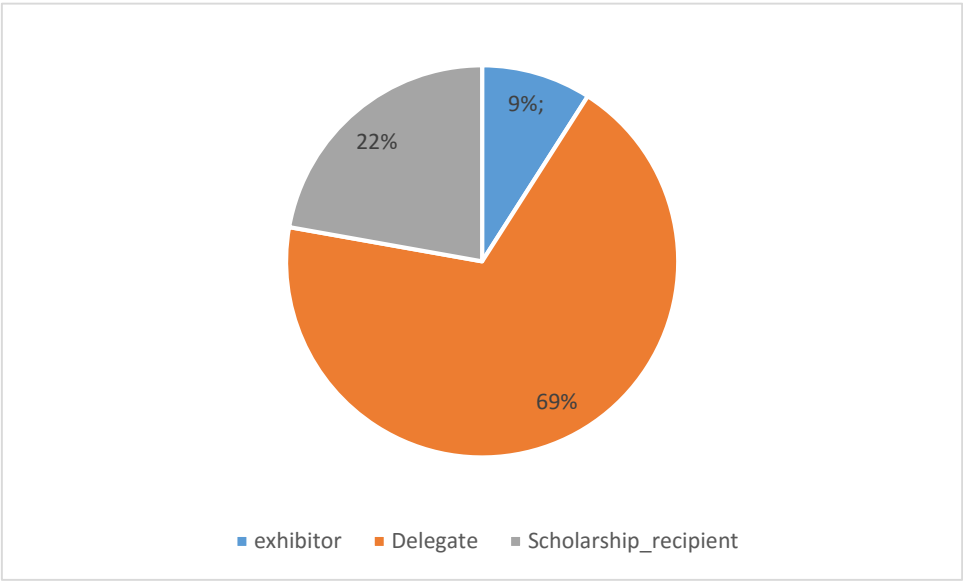
Figure 6: Profile of respondents to post ICASA survey 2019

The respondents were from 50 different countries. They were male (62.2%), female (36.2%) and transgender (0.7%). Most of them they were aged between 26 and 40 years (43%) and 41-60 years old (34.1%).

They were, activist/advocate (17.2%), student (14.7%) clinician (13.3%), other health care worker / social services provider (13.3%), researcher (11.7%) and program manager (10.1%).

IV.4.2. Extent to Which the Conference programme achieved its Objectives

Respondents who participated in the survey were asked to indicate whether they found that the Conference programme was useful in achieving the followed objectives:

- Promote community, scientific, and technological innovations for ending AIDS
- Advocate for financing sustainable national health responses, political leadership, and accountability
- Promote youth-driven and youth-friendly approaches for an AIDS-free generation

Figure 7 shows that more than 70% of respondents agreed that the Conference programme was successful in achieving the objectives. The first objective: "Promote community, scientific, and technological innovations for ending AIDS" received the highest rating as 91.8%.
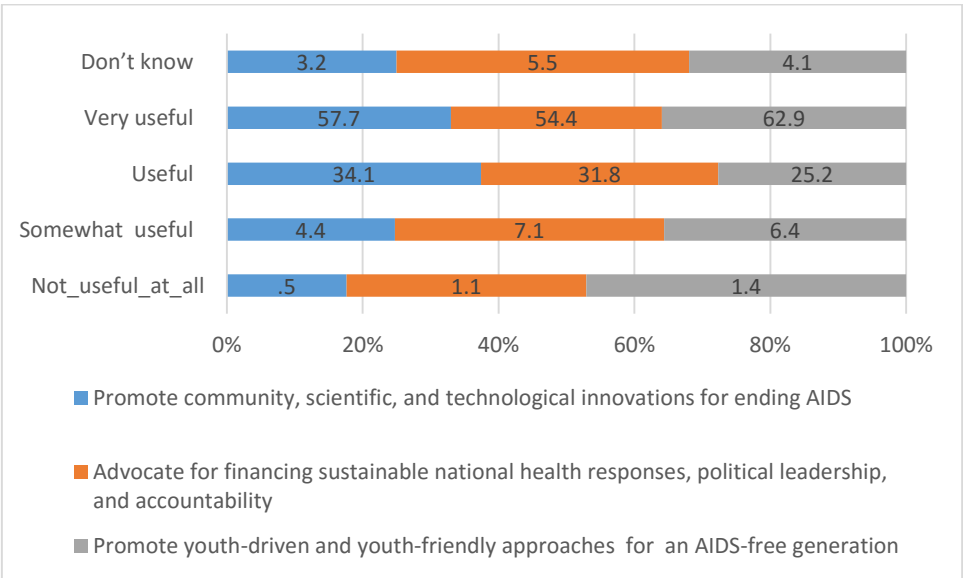

Figure 7: Respondents rating Conference programme in achieving its objectives

IV.4.3. Main Tracks and activities of interest

Respondents were asked to rate quality of each track on a scale of 1 to 10; 1 being the worst and 10 the best. On average respondents rated the tracks a 7 or higher. As shown in figure 8, track C received the highest rating in which 75.8% of respondents indicated that the quality of the sessions was good or very good. Track A was the least rated because 69.4% indicated that the sessions were good or very good. The rates were similar to 2017 Conference.
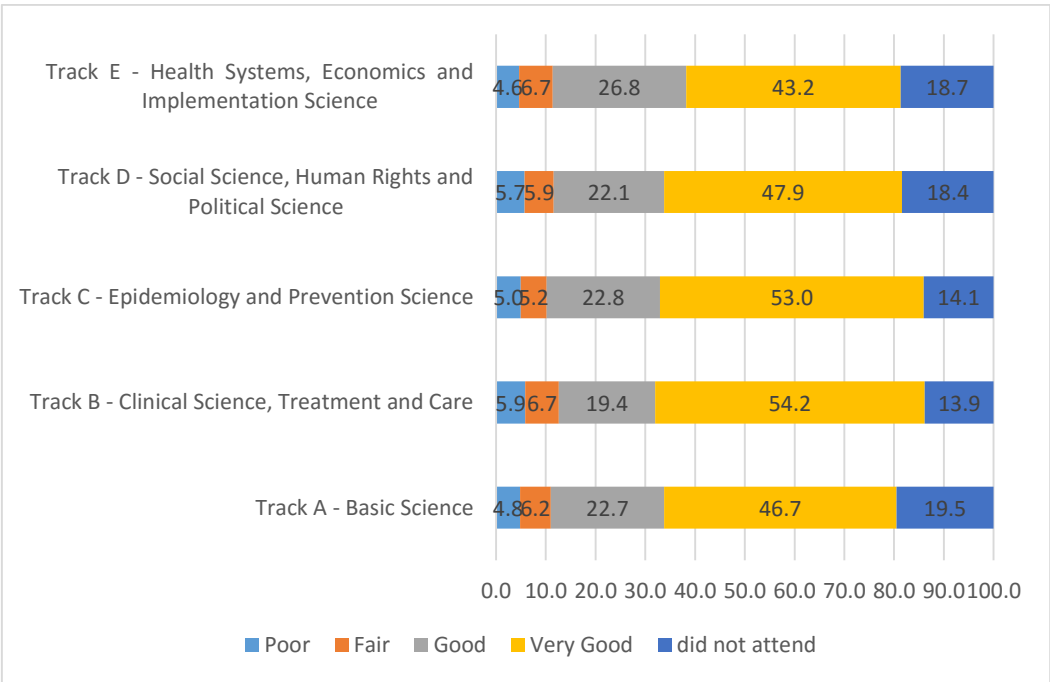
Figure 8: Respondents rating of main tracks

Activity of interest in which respondents attended most was t h e community programme followed by the leadership programme. Respondents were asked to rate quality of each activity of interest on a scale of 1 to 10; 1 being the worst and 10 the best. Community programme received the highest rating in which 75.8% of respondents indicated that the quality of the sessions was good or very good followed by the leadership programme (75.4%) (Figure 9 below). The rating is similar to ICASA 2017.
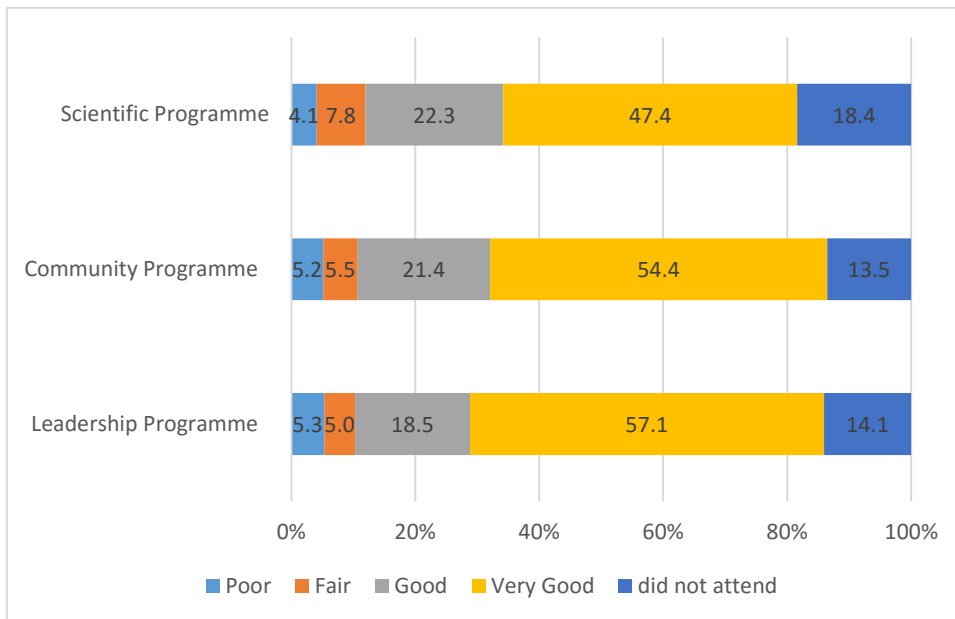
Figure 9: Respondents rating of activity of interest

IV.4.4. Rating of Various Conference Sessions

Respondents were asked to rate the relevance of the various sessions, activities or areas at ICASA 2019 in the context of their work. Majority of respondents rated the relevance of the sessions, activities and areas as having substantial relevance or very relevant to their work (Figure 10). Plenary sessions were found to be most relevant to respondents' work as 81.2% of them indicated that the sessions were of substantial relevance or were very relevant to them. Rapporteur session and exhibition had the same rate of relevance (53.1%).
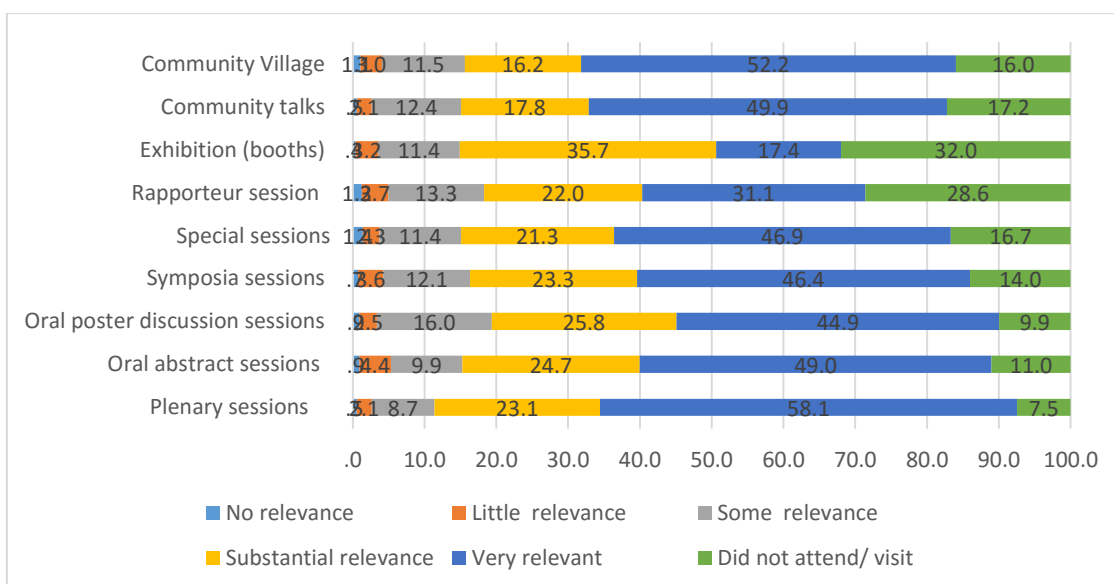

Figure 10: Respondents rating of relevance of Conference sessions and other activities

IV.4.5. Quality of Information Presented at the Conference

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful the information presented at the Conference sessions for your work or community environment. As shown in figure 11, most of respondents (90.6%) found the quality of information useful or very useful. This rate is higher than in 2017.
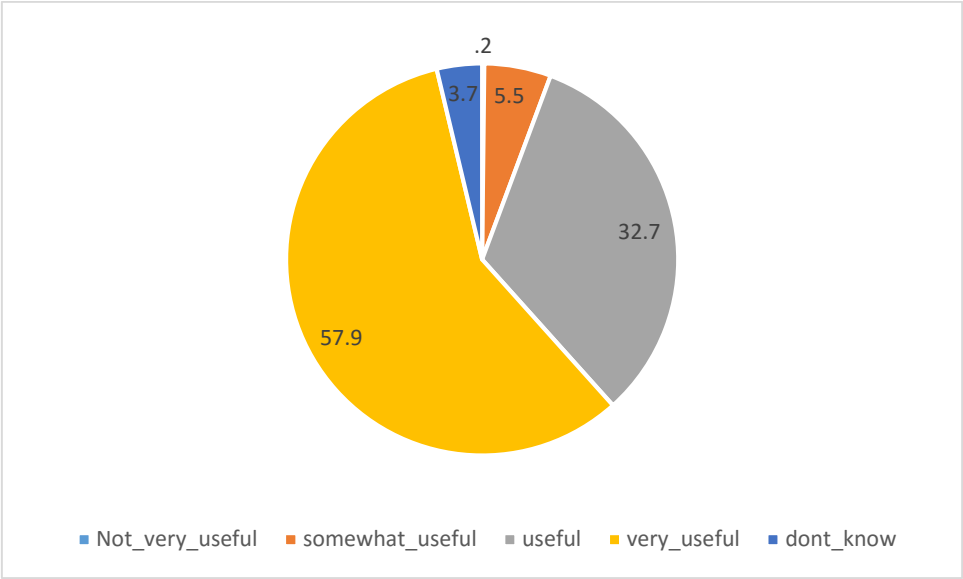
Figure 11: Usefulness of information presented at Conference sessions

IV.4.6. Quality of Conference Programme

The quality of the Conference programme was rated by the respondents in terms of the quality of presentations, quality of discussions and debates, range of topics covered and usefulness of information covered to the work of delegates. Overall the quality of the Conference programme was found good by the majority the respondents. The most highly rated was t h e quality of presentation as 86.3% of respondents indicated that the quality was good or excellent (figure 12). That rating is higher than ICASA 2017.
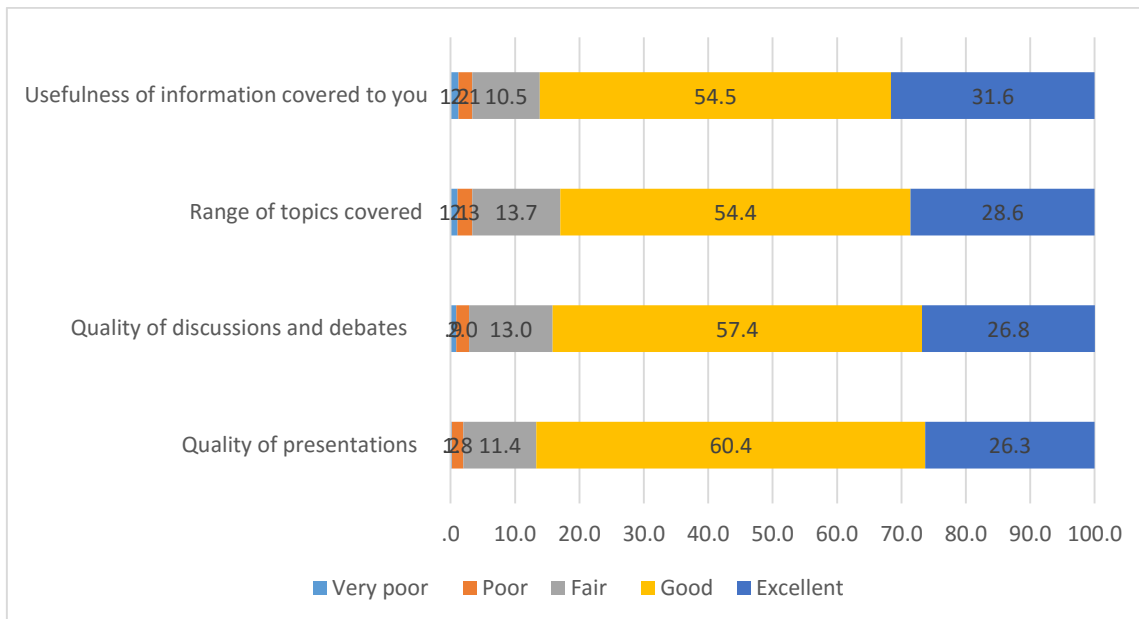
Figure 12: Respondents rating of quality of Conference programme

IV.4.7. Intention to Attend Future ICASA Conferences

Majority of respondents (93.8%) declared their intention to attend future ICASA Conferences. This rate is high than the one in 2015 and 2017. Only 5.9% did not intend to attend future Conferences while about 0.4% was unsure about the possibility of attending future Conferences.
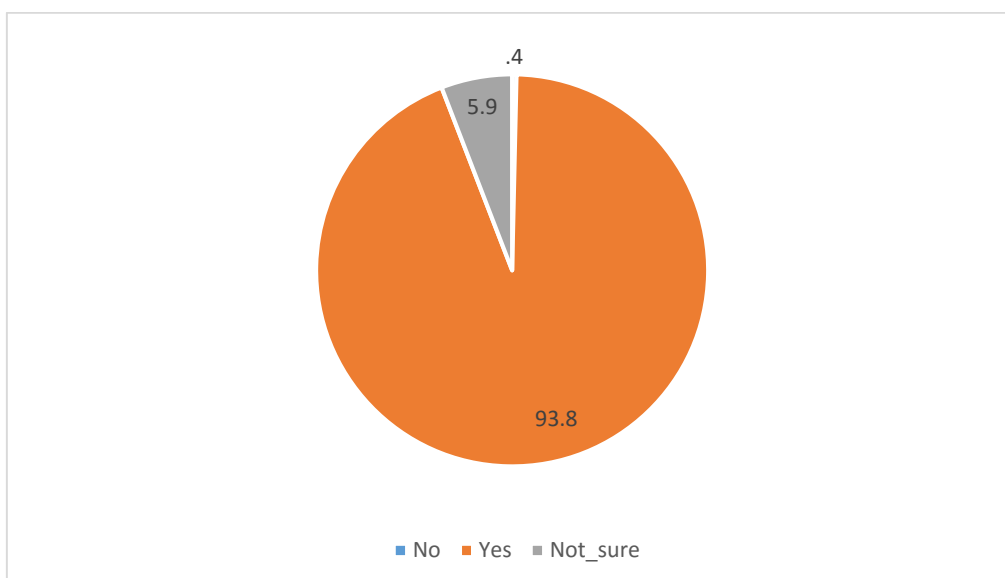

Figure 13: Respondents considering attend to next ICASA

IV.4.8. Willingness to Recommend ICASA Conference to a Peer

ICASA is still recognized as an important event. Majority of the respondents (96.3%) expressed their willingness to recommend ICASA to their peers. This rate is similar to the ICASA 2015 and 2017.

IV.4.9. Added Value of ICASA Compared to Other Scientific or Health Conferences

Respondents were asked if ICASA offered something they do not get from other similar Conferences. Majority of respondents (58.3%) replied yes. Those who replied were asked to provide specific reasons they thought ICASA offered something similar Conferences did not offer. The following were the issues put forward:

- Diversity and update of topics discussions with comprehensive coverage of the topic for Africa

- Involvement of key populations and particularly youth engagement
- Organization such as availability of transport
- Networking and interaction with people from difference social, professional and cultural background
- Skills building such as approaches for prevention and abstract writing

IV.4.9. Benefits Gained Directly from Attending ICASA 2019

A list of potential professional benefits was presented to respondents who were asked to identify those that they had gained as a result of their attending in ICASA 2017. The three most frequently cited benefits were: "Increased understanding of the challenges to achieving treatment access in Africa" (11.9%) "New knowledge/insights into HIV and STI care and support" (11.5%) and "Ideas/directions for new project(s)" (10.1%) (Figure 14). The first and third benefit were among the three most cited in 2017. Only 2.1% of the survey participants replied that they did not gain any benefit from the Conference that is similar to ICASA 2017.
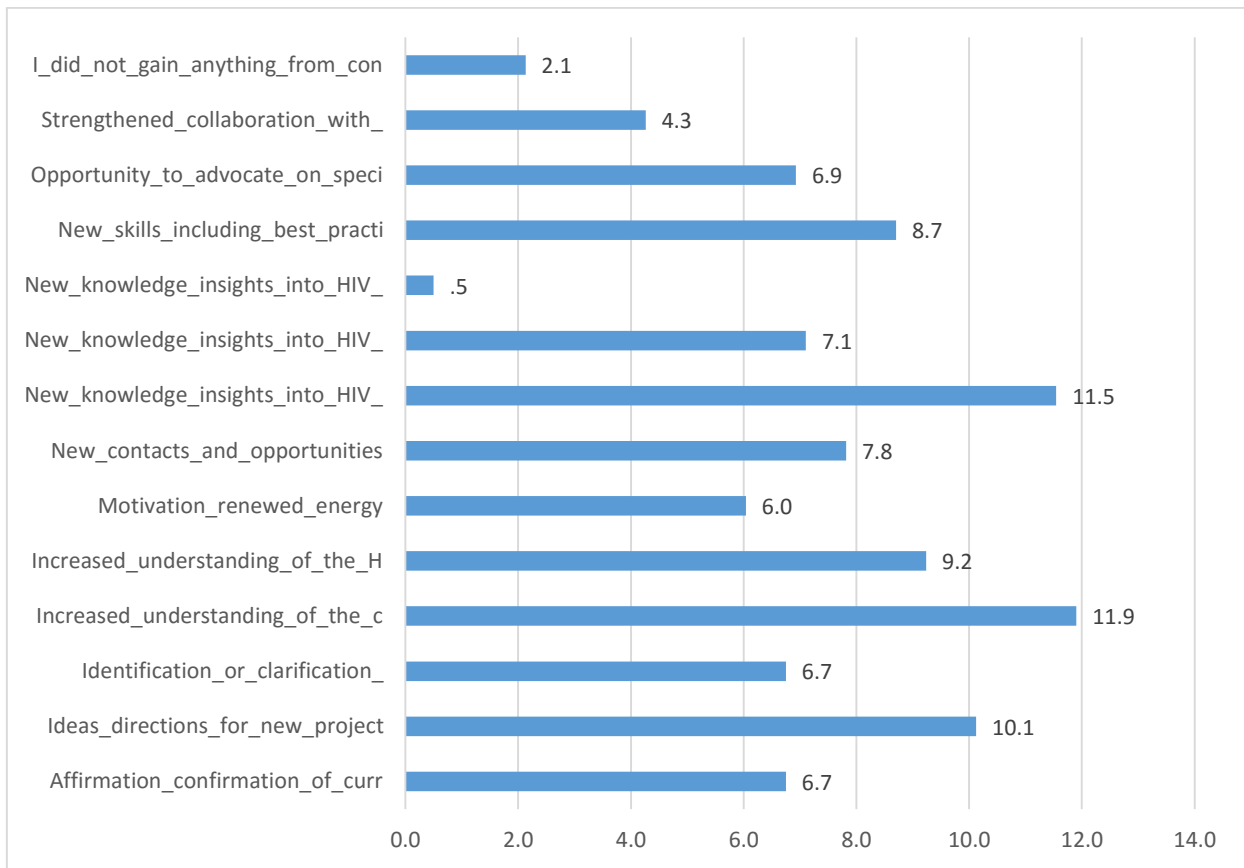
Figure 14: What respondents gained professionally from ICASA 2019

IV.4.10. Opportunity to Build Professional Relationships

Majority of the respondents (88.6%) indicated that they had opportunity to build professional relationships with other delegates. This is more than what was found during ICASA 2015 and similar to 2017.

IV.4.11. Anticipated Use of the Benefits Gained from Attending ICASA 2019

Respondents were asked to select from a list of 15-action point and indicate how they would use the benefits they gained from attending the Conference. As shown in Figure 15, the most cited action (27.9%) was « build capacity within my organization/network ». In addition, they would undertake other actions; such as sharing information with colleagues, peers and/or partners organizations (14.6%) and developing new collaborations (12.1%). Respondents selected many other actions. These actions were also cited by 2017 respondents. Only 0.9% selected "I will do nothing differently" and 1.6% were unsure.
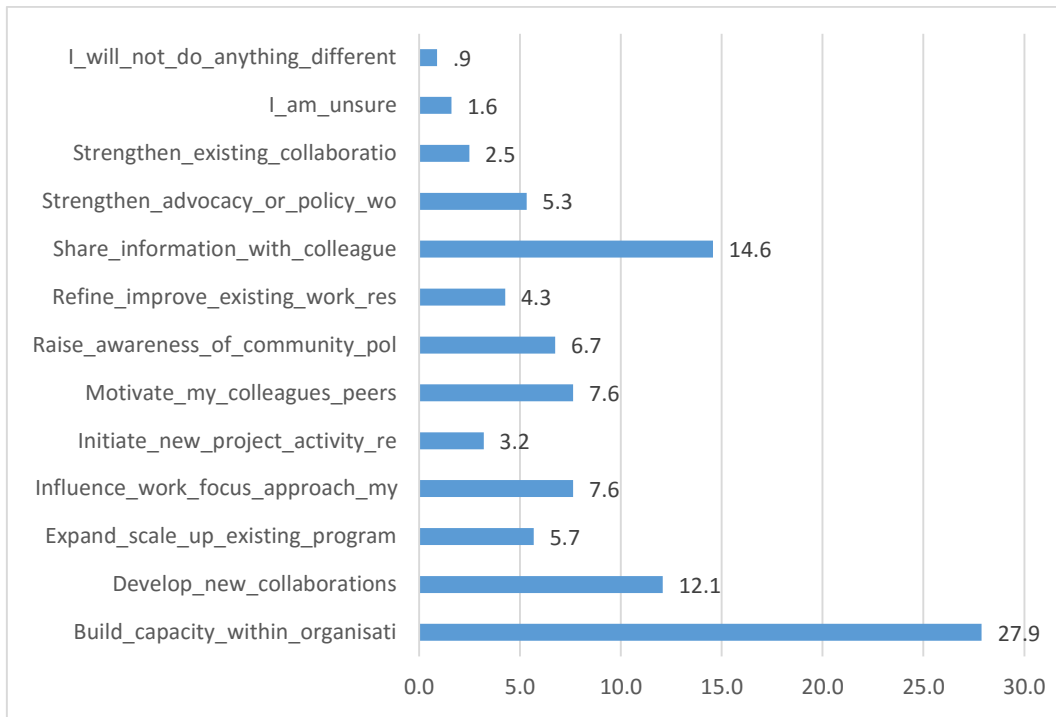
Figure 15 : Respondents intentions to use the Benefits Gained from Attending ICASA 2019

IV.4.12. Attendance of Previous ICASAs

Respondents were asked whether they had attended previous ICASA Conferences.

Most of respondents (98.9%) had attended any previous ICASA Conferences. Those

who replied 'Yes' were presented with a list of eight previous Conferences and asked to indicate

which one(s) they had attended. Most of them who had attended previous Conferences indicated that they attended other ICASA that was not in the list provided

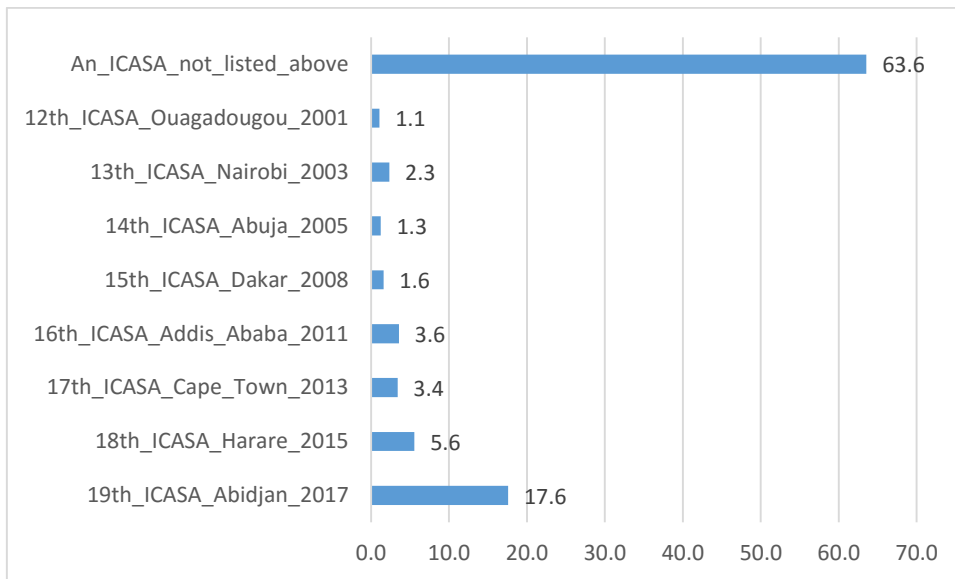(Figure 16). That is higher than in 2017 and 2015.

Figure 16: Attendance of respondents to previous ICASA Conferences

IV.4.13. Comparison of quality of previous ICASA Conferences

The quality of registration, visa procedures, delegates information, programme, exhibition and satellites sessions was rated by respondents as compared to previous ICASA. As shown in Figure 17, the most highly rated was visa procedures as 83.7% of respondents indicated that the quality was good or excellent. Participants were satisfied with access to internet connection and the organization of the Conference in general. Overall the quality was higher than ICASA 2017.
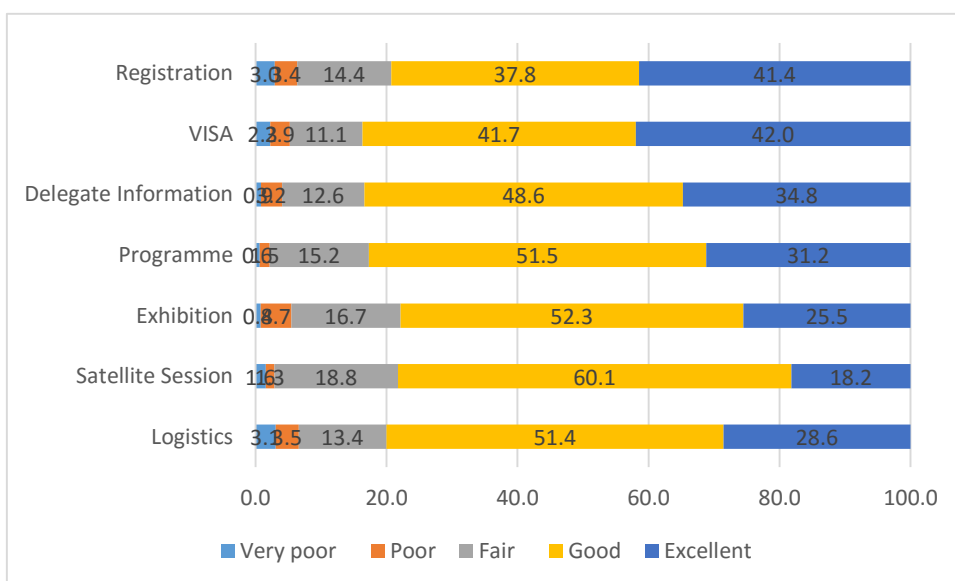
IV.4.14. Influence of Previous ICASA on the work of respondents and their organizations

Respondents were asked to select from a list of 12-items that illustrate how previous ICASA attendees could have used to influence their own work and those of their respective organizations. The most cited influences were "affirmed current work focus/strategy and motivated them" (14.4%) followed by "shared information, best practices or skills gained from attending previous ICASA with colleagues" (14.2%) and "Refine/improve existing work/research practice or methodology" (13.3%). These cited influences were different from those cited in 2017. Only 1.6% indicated that the Conference did not influence them to do anything different (Figure 18). That number is lower than in 2017.
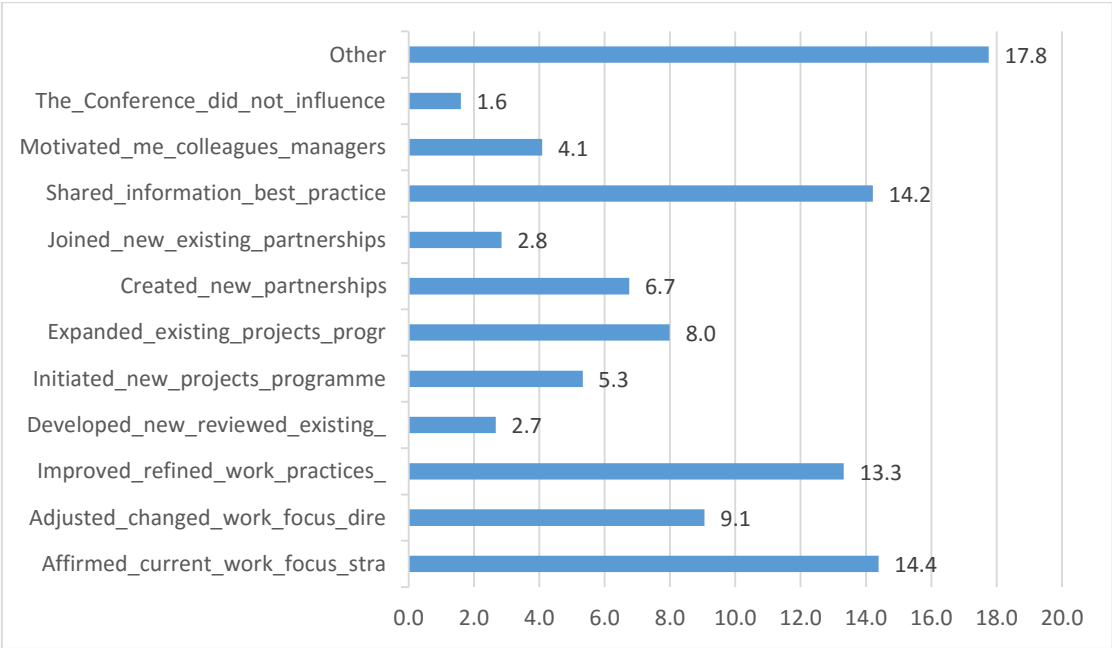

Figure 18: Impact of attend previous ICASA on respondents' work or organization

IV.4.15. Maintain contacts from previous ICASA Conferences

Respondents were asked if they still in contact with somebody met for the first time at previous ICASA. Most of respondents who attended to previous ICASA were still in contact with other participants (60.2%). In addition 43.9% of respondents did enter into a partnership/joint-venture with other participants. However these rates are low than for ICASA 2017.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

All the respondents were asked if ICASA has to change anything in order to remain relevant regarding the changing health priorities under the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Most respondents (55.1%) did not agree that ICASA has to change. Those who replied yes (44.9%), were asked to provide specific reasons they thought ICASA needs improvements. The followed suggestions were cited :

In terms of thematic :

- The approach of universal health coverage (UHC) as the new approach of comprehensive prevention care and treatment
- New STIs such as HCV and others,
- Strengthening HIV new infection prevention,
- Involvement of people with disability especially youth,
- Multisectoral response to HIV,
- Refugees as contributors to HIV/TB/Malaria prevention.

In terms of logistics:

- Increase number of scholarships,
- Improve organization of posters exhibition by choosing an accessible place,
- Improve communication with delegates,
- Improve translation during sessions,
- Improve financial system payment onsite.