

PREFACE

Over the past two or three decades, our understanding of poverty has broadened from a narrow focus on income and consumption to a multidimensional notion of education, health, social and political participation, personal security and freedom, and environmental quality. Thus, it encompasses not just low income, but lack of access to services, resources and skills; vulnerability; insecurity; and voicelessness and powerlessness. Multidimensional poverty is a determinant of health risks, health seeking behaviour, health care access and health outcomes.

As analysis of health outcomes becomes more refined, it is increasingly apparent that the impressive gains in health experienced over recent decades are unevenly distributed. Aggregate indicators, whether at the global, regional or national level, often tend to mask striking variations in health outcomes between men and women, rich and poor, both across and within countries.

An estimated 70% of the world's poor are women. Similarly, in the Western Pacific Region, poverty often wears a woman's face. Indicators of human poverty, including health indicators, often reflect severe gender-based disparities. In this way, gender inequality is a significant determinant of health outcomes in the Region, with women and girls often at a severe societal disadvantage.

Although poverty and gender significantly influence health and socioeconomic development, health professionals are not always adequately prepared to address such issues in their work. This publication aims to improve the awareness, knowledge and skills of health professionals in the Region on poverty and gender concerns.

The set of modules that comprise this Sourcebook are intended for use in pre-service and in-service training of health professionals. This publication is also expected to be of use to health policy-makers and programme managers as a reference document, or in conjunction with in-service training.

All modules in the series are linked, but each one can be used on a stand-alone basis if required. There are two foundational modules that respectively set out the conceptual framework for the analysis of poverty and gender issues in health. Each of the other modules is intended for use in conjunction with these two foundational modules. The Sourcebook also contains a module on curricular integration to support health professional educational institutions in integrating poverty and gender concerns into existing curricula.

All modules in the Sourcebook are designed for use through participatory learning methods that involve the learner, taking advantage of his or her experience and

knowledge. Each module contains facilitators' notes and suggested exercises to assist in this process.

It is hoped that the Sourcebook will prove useful in bringing greater attention to poverty and gender concerns in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of health policies, programmes and interventions.