



A Training Manual for Health Managers

World Health Organization

# Transforming Health Systems: Gender and Rights in Reproductive Health





“ Women are subject to particular health risks due to inadequate responsiveness and lack of services to meet health needs related to sexuality and reproduction. These problems should be addressed. ”

*Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, paragraph 97.*

“ In the coming years, . . . programmes should expand and upgrade formal and informal training in sexual and reproductive health care and family planning. ”

*ICPD programme of Action, 1994, paragraph 7.23d*

## Introduction

### Gender Equality

Is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities and the allocation of resources or benefits or in access to services.

### Gender Analysis

Examines the differences in the roles that women and men play and the power balance in their relations. It examines how these differences determine differential exposure to risk, access to the benefits of technology, information, resources and health care, and the realisation of rights.

### Human Rights

Refer to an internationally agreed upon set of principles and norms contained in treaties, declarations and recommendations at the international and regional level. Governments have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. In practical terms, international human rights law is about defining what governments can do to us, cannot do to us and should do for us.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing declared that women's empowerment and reproductive rights are essential for the realisation of sexual and reproductive health. The curriculum *Transforming Health Systems, Gender and Rights in Reproductive Health* was created in direct response to this call.

Reproductive health exemplifies the complex interaction between biologic differences between the sexes, and gender power differentials. Many of women's reproductive health problems are not simply the result of their having a womb or bearing children. They are a consequence of discrimination and lack of power to decide about how and with whom they will have sexual relations, and whether and when to bear children. For women, sexual and reproductive health are not just dependent on their own behaviour but, more fundamentally, they are dependent on the behaviour of their sexual partners, other family members and service providers.

Therefore, in order to achieve improvements in reproductive health, programmes and policies must promote gender equality and the realisation of sexual and reproductive rights for women.

This course focuses on improving participants understanding of gender and rights so that they can plan more effective programmes and services. It offers both conceptual and technical skills and tools for practitioners to integrate the promotion of rights and gender equality into their policies, planning and programmes.



## The Beginnings

In April 1996 a group of women from different parts of the world committed to women's rights and reproductive and sexual health came together to review existing training courses on reproductive health. They identified the need for a course which

- includes a gender and human rights perspective
- has a health systems orientation
- is accessible to health managers in developing and developed countries.

The resulting training initiative in gender and reproductive health is a collaborative project of the

- Harvard School of Public Health's François Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, USA
- Women's Health Project at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
- World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland.

The Initiative is run by a coordinating committee of individuals from the three institutions and three consultants who are experienced international trainers in gender and reproductive health issues. The Initiative is coordinated by the Department of Reproductive Health and Research of the World Health Organization.

“ The most positive aspect of the whole initiative process was being engaged in a collaborative international effort to develop a new course which has enormous potential to bring about positive change. ”

*Member of collaborating institution*

## The Process

“ I consider the course the best so far out of all the courses I have attended. It really changes you personally and enhances your work. ”

*South Africa*

*Transforming Health Systems: Gender and Rights in Reproductive Health* is a curriculum for health managers that is the result of a four year testing and adaptation process involving strong collaboration with institutions in different parts of the world.

- The draft core curriculum was pre-tested as a pilot course in Johannesburg, South Africa in August-September 1997 for 32 programme managers, policy-makers and trainers from southern Africa
- Four training centres in Argentina, Australia, China and Kenya were selected from among 30 applicants to test the course.
- To ensure that the curriculum offered by each of the selected centres was adapted appropriately a Regional Adaptation Workshop was held in November 1998. At this meeting representatives from the training centres and members of the coordinating committee discussed and developed ways to integrate regional issues into the core curriculum.
- During 1999, this course was offered by the four collaborating institutions
  - Centre for African Family Studies (CAFS), Nairobi, Kenya;
  - Centre for the Study of State and Society (CEDES), Buenos Aires, Argentina;
  - Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia;
  - Yunnan Reproductive Health Research Association (YRHRA), Kunming Medical College, Kunming, China.

- Pooling their experience of running the course, representatives from the different collaborating centres and the coordinating committee evaluated the course in early 2000. New materials developed by the regional partners have been incorporated into the curriculum, thereby increasing its usefulness to trainers in different regions of the world.
- The revised core curriculum was again tested in South Africa in September 2000 after which the curriculum was finalised.
- The curriculum will be published in 2001.

## Goals of this Initiative



# 1

To build institutional capacity in training centres around the world so that they can offer regionally-appropriate, high-quality training in gender and reproductive health covering aspects of research, service-delivery and policy development.

# 2

To increase the number of programme manager, planners, policy-makers and trainers with both a gender perspective on reproductive health, and the technical skills needed to contribute to increasing access, quality and comprehensiveness of gender-sensitive reproductive health policies and programmes.

This curriculum provides training to health managers so they can

- Use and generate information
- Advocate and put in place policies
- Design, implement and manage programmes for reproductive health services which are both gender sensitive and respectful of human rights

## The Curriculum

### training methods used

- draw on participants' existing knowledge
- allow for participants to learn from each other and for facilitators to learn from participants
- facilitate learning from experience
- through this process enhance knowledge, skills and insights

The curriculum consists of six modules:

- Gender
- Determinants of health
- Reproductive rights
- Evidence
- Policy
- Health Systems

The first three modules on gender, determinants of health and reproductive rights provide the conceptual foundation of the course. These modules demonstrate the interconnectedness of gender, rights and reproductive health issues within the broader socio-economic and political context.

In the last three modules, gender equity and human rights are applied to the collection, analysis and use of evidence, the formulation and promotion of policy, and the development of well functioning health systems.

Reproductive health is the substantive focus of the course and forms the basis of all the case material, examples, and exercises. Each module includes six or seven sessions some of which can be used to introduce new technical developments or regional programmatic debates in reproductive health.

“ The course clarified my thoughts and feelings and empowered me to verbalise my feelings. I am gender sensitive but not completely woman-focused. Both sexes have different needs and whilst there is inequality, we must respect that both sexes have rights. ”

South Africa

## The Training Manual

*Transforming Health Systems: Gender and Rights in Reproductive Health*, is divided into two main sections. The first section contains a brief chapter on the people who the course is for, what it consists of and how it is run. The second section presents the teaching material for each of the six modules.

Each module includes:

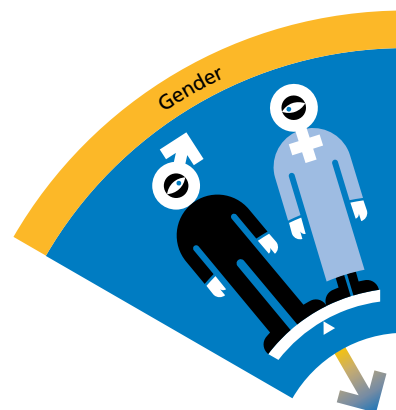
- **The module brief**, giving the objectives, rationale, and essential readings for the module, and a table outlining the sessions contained in that module;
- **Session guidelines** for each of the sessions, explaining the objectives, methodology and detailed guidelines on running the session;
- **Lecture notes and handouts** for the various sessions included in that module.

This section also contains a detailed description of the opening session, and of the concluding session which is structured so that participants are able to make linkages across all the modules and consolidate what they have learnt during the course.

Several annexes include additional material useful to trainers and facilitators of the course.

- Information resources, and where to access the readings mentioned in the modules
- Model timetable
- Assessment tools
- Resource list on participatory methods
- A compilation of “ice-breakers” and “energiser” exercises for groups.

The training manual is the outcome of a process of sustained interaction between a number of actors in different parts of the world. This has ensured that the content of this manual has undergone several iterations, modifications and refinements to produce an end product that offers a comprehensive and innovative look at gender and rights in reproductive health.



“ I was concerned before starting that it may not have been appropriate because of the level of power that I have and that I may not be able to influence policies, but that soon disappeared! It was challenging, and it clarified and built on my knowledge base. ”

Australia

## Course Structure

### Gender

This module lays the basis for understanding how the combination of biological differences and gender inequalities has an impact on the health of women and men, on their health seeking behaviour and their access to health services.

On completion of this module participants will be able to

- understand how gender is constructed, maintained and reinforced, and the difference between sex and gender;
- understand how norms and values about gender roles are related to gender based inequalities in workloads, in access to education, control over economic resources and power;
- have the skills to apply gender analysis to specific health conditions, to understand how gender impacts on health status.

### Determinants of health

This module examines the broad socio-political and economic context within which health must be understood. It presents a framework for analysing the social construction of health and illness at household, community, national and international levels.

On completion of this module participants will be able to

- apply a social determinants framework to the analysis of health;
- identify the factors affecting women’s health as they relate to their social and economic status and as they relate to men;
- understand the various levels at which health determinants operate, and how these levels interrelate;
- gain an insight into how such analysis can shape and inform policies and interventions and to become aware of the structural factors underlying the impact or success of policies and programmes.

## Reproductive Rights

This module aims to provide participants with the knowledge about basic concepts of rights; participants learn to appreciate ways in which unequal gender power relations underlie the denial of women's reproductive and sexual rights in different settings.

At the end of the module, participants will be able to

- state the basic concepts of rights, including reproductive and sexual rights;
- understand the ways in which rights are defined in international human rights documents and how they are used by various actors;
- identify and describe the institutions which are promoting, monitoring, implementing and enforcing human rights norms relevant to reproductive health;
- apply a reproductive and sexual rights approach to research, interventions, service delivery and policy development;
- conceptualise and apply a reproductive rights model to concrete examples

## Evidence

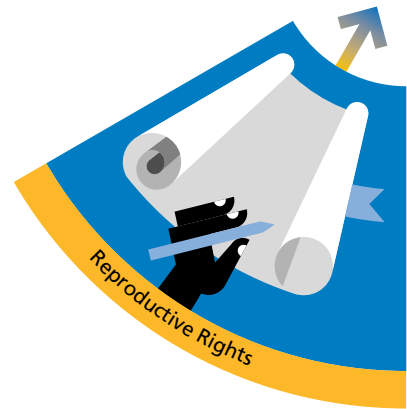
This module promotes the effective use of existing data and of data monitoring systems to improve gender equity and reproductive health policies and programmes.

At the end of the module, participants will have

- an overview of different types of evidence useful to health managers and policy makers;
- the capacity to recognise the main forms of bias, particularly gender bias in research design, implementation and analysis;
- the ability to locate, analyse and use different types of information to promote gender sensitive reproductive health services;
- the capacity to develop indicators for monitoring and assessing gender equity in this area.

“ The new perspectives and new methods learned in the module on determinants of health can greatly help the obtaining of real and objective research results. ”

China



“ This course affirmed my belief that gender inequality exists, and made me realise that there is something that we can do about it. ”

Australia

## Policy

This module equips participants with the tools to understand and monitor the policy environment within the larger social, economic and political context. It also illustrates how gender-sensitive information is essential for rational policy development as well as service planning.

At the end of the module, participants will be able to

- conceptualise the policy-making process including the range of factors which influence policy decisions and policy implementation at various levels;
- identify the components of strategy design/planning for policy changes;
- identify and address gender inequality in policies and programmes;
- use international agreements for motivating changes in policy or implementation;
- use specific tools to analyze policy making processes and design intervention strategies to impact on current policies or programmes;

## Health Systems

This module demonstrates how the organization and functioning of health systems impact differently on women and men, often to the disadvantage of women, and how to address this.

At the end of the module, participants will be able to

- understand the impact of the macroeconomic environment and health financing on the organisation of health care services;
- understand the interrelationship between the components of a well-functioning health system;
- use methodologies for gender-sensitive planning and managing health systems change;
- apply the tools learned throughout the course to a health systems issue affecting reproductive health

## Current debates in Reproductive health

In addition to the six module, the course schedule has room for special sessions and guest lectures on current debates in reproductive health of relevance to the country/region where the course is held.

“ The course gave a wide perspective of gender through use of interesting and participatory methodology that held interest throughout the course. ”

Australia

“ This course has empowered and given me the practical advocacy skills to try and change policies in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department of our Hospital. ”

Kenya

## Regional Collaborating Institutions

**Centre for African Family Studies (CAFS)**, with headquarters in Nairobi (Kenya) and regional offices in Lome (Togo). Founded in 1975, CAFS is an African regional institution dedicated to strengthening the capabilities of organizations working in sexual and reproductive health throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Serving both Anglophone and Francophone Africa, CAFS provides management and technical training in sexual and reproductive health throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and has been an international leader in the translation of gender and reproductive rights perspectives into the realities of service delivery.

**Centre for the Study of State and Society (CEDES)**, established in 1975 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is a leading social science research centre dedicated to basic, and applied research, post-graduate training of social scientists, and technical assistance. In 1993, the Health, Economy and Society Department initiated the Regional Program on Social Research, Training and Technical Assistance on Reproductive Health and Sexuality for Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Columbia. This Program has since sponsored national and regional training workshops throughout Latin America, a Resident Fellows Regional Program, and most recently, a Master Program on Social Science and Health in collaboration with the Facultad Latino-americana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO-Argentina)

**Key Centre for Women's Health in Society**, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia was established in 1988. It is a multi-disciplinary research and teaching institution in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, and was an international forerunner in the development of post-graduate course in women's health. In 1993 the Centre became a WHO Regional Collaborating Centre for Women's Health. As part of their WHO mandate, they initiated a regional Network in Women's Health, expanding their training activities into Vietnam, Pakistan, and Fiji, and establishing collaborative research and institutional linkages with Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and the South Pacific.

**Yunnan Reproductive Health Research Association (YRHRA)**, Kunming, China, was founded in 1994. It was the first NGO established in China to promote multi-disciplinary reproductive health research and training, and to raise public awareness of reproductive health based on a woman-centred and community-based approach. YRHRA faculty represent more than 30 institutions in China, and have a close relationship with academic institutions and NGOs in neighbouring countries such as Thailand. YRHRA sponsors reproductive health courses and workshops within China, with participants from neighbouring Asian countries, for both NGOs and government family planning and maternal and child health institutions.

## The International Coordinating Committee

**Jane Cottingham, BA, MSc**, is Technical Officer for Women's Perspectives and Gender Issues at the Department of Reproductive Health and Research of the World Health Organization in Geneva. She works with women's health groups, policy-makers and scientists to ensure that women's rights and gender perspectives are integrated into the reproductive health research agenda. In 1976 she co-founded ISIS Women's International Information and Communication Service. During her 11 years as Director of ISIS, she helped to create an international women's information network and co-authored and edited numerous publications on women's issues. Ms Cottingham received a Masters in Population Sciences from Harvard School of Public Health in 1991.

**Sharon Fonn, MD, PhD, FFCH**, is a medical doctor with a PhD in community health focussing on occupational epidemiology, and a public health specialist. She is the Director of Research at the Women's Health Project in Johannesburg and is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of the Witwatersrand. Dr Fonn has worked extensively in and with the public health care system in South Africa. She has also initiated and been involved in research on the functioning of health services and women's access to health services and health related behaviour in Africa, and has worked for many years on cervical cancer. Dr Fonn has been involved with numerous international agencies working on gender and health research, taking account of gender relations in health policy and programmes, and developing training materials and running training courses on how to promote gender equity in health programming and service delivery.

**Claudia Garcia Moreno, MD, MCM**. For the last 10 years Dr. Garcia Moreno's work has focused on women's health, including reproductive health, and on gender and health. She participated in the negotiations on reproductive health and rights at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), the Social Summit (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). She was Chief of Women's Health in the World Health Organization from 1994-1998 and now works in the Global Programme on Evidence for Health Policy where her primary responsibilities include mainstreaming gender in WHO, and violence against women. She co-ordinates a Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women being conducted in 7 countries.

**Sofia Gruskin, JD, MIA**, is the Director of the International Health and Human Rights Program at the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights and Assistant Professor in Population and International Health at the Harvard School of Public Health. The emphasis of her work is on the policy and practice implications of linking rights to health. Ms Gruskin currently serves as an advisor to both UNAIDS and WHO, is a Board Member of Amnesty International USA and a founding member of The Consortium for Health and Human Rights. She is the Editor of the International Journal of Health and Human Rights, and has authored numerous chapters and articles on issues relating to health and human rights.

**Barbara Klugman, MA**, is Director of the Women's Health Project in Johannesburg, South Africa. She was chairperson of the core group appointed by the Ministry of Welfare in South Africa to develop a new population policy for the post-apartheid government, and was responsible for the development of a Green paper and a draft White paper on this topic. She was in the South African government delegations to Cairo and Beijing, responsible for negotiations on health. She has published widely on population policy, sexual and reproductive and women's health, gender and women's rights. She is a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee of Reproductive Health Matters and the Essential National Health Committee of the South African Department of Health. She is currently working on national and international policy and training initiatives to mainstream gender in health.

**Adelina Ndeto Mwau, MA**, is currently Executive Director of the Women's Resource Centre (Kenya) as well as founder and steering committee member of the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW). From 1994 to 1997 she was the East Africa programme officer for Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) where she worked to strengthen the capacity of women's rights NGOs throughout Eastern Africa. Prior to that she had worked for six years as gender programme officer for Oxfam, Kenya. She is the co-author of the Oxfam Gender Training Manual. Ms Mwau is currently one of the 21 commissioners nominated by all religious groups and civil society organisations to review the Constitution of Kenya.

**Sundari Ravindran, PhD** is an economist with extensive research experience in women's health and development. She is currently Honorary Professor at the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies, Kerala, India, and teaches courses on gender issues in health and health and development as part of their MPH Programme. She is also Honorary Executive Director of the Rural Women's Social Education Centre, Tamil Nadu, India, a grassroots women's organisation. Formerly co-editor of Reproductive Health Matters, Dr Ravindran has published

extensively on various aspects of women's social development, and on the linkages between gender, development and health.

**Rachel Snow, ScD** is Unit Head for Reproductive Health at the Institute for Tropical Hygiene and Public Health, University of Heidelberg Medical School, Germany. She has been teaching international reproductive health courses for over 10 years, at Harvard, the University of Heidelberg, and internationally. She co-teaches the advanced module in Reproductive Health for Trop-Ed-Europe, a European Masters Program in International Health. Her research focuses on improving measurement of the reproductive health burden in poor countries, improving delivery of appropriate contraceptive and diagnostic technologies, and wider application of a gender analysis in health. She is a founding editor of The African Journal of Reproductive Health.

**Makhosazana Xaba, RN, RM, B.Cur E et A**, is currently the Country Representative for Ipas-South Africa based in Johannesburg. In 1991 she co-founded the Women's Health Project and worked there for nine years. From 1996 to 2000 she was the Director of Training and Capacity Building. She has experience as a nurse and midwife, a health systems researcher and a gender trainer, and has published on women's health and quality of care. She is the co-chair of the Gender Advisory Panel of the Department of Reproductive Health and Research in WHO. Ms Xaba was an anti-apartheid activist and, while in exile, obtained a diploma in Journalism in Berlin, Germany, and subsequently worked as a radio journalist in Zambia.



“ I’m better able to operationalise the gender approach to reproductive health, conduct better policy analysis and advocacy, and am more confident in addressing gender disparities.”

*Participant at the pilot course in South Africa, 1997*

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