

## Preface

Arsenic contamination in groundwater is a serious public health problem in Bangladesh and currently the majority of the World's patients suffering chronic arsenic poisoning are to be found here. The World Health Organization is playing its normative role to address arsenic-related health problems in Bangladesh and is providing technical assistance to the government in terms of capacity building, development of training materials, and research which has been well received and appreciated by the health sector.

The Directorate General of Health Services and the WHO Environmental Health Unit have jointly prepared this research compilation. The scope of this book is broad, ranging from research on arsenic levels in foodstuffs to clinical trials of different drugs for the treatment of arsenicosis. These research activities supported by the United Nations Foundation and WHO have highlighted the need for extended research on this disease. Although there is no recognized treatment regimen for the management of arsenicosis patients, researchers in Bangladesh have had success in using vitamins, spirulina, selenium and keratolytic agents to alleviate symptoms. The findings of the research studies included in this report contribute to moving us closer to identifying a satisfactory and efficacious treatment for arsenicosis. However, our primary aim must be to prevent arsenicosis occurring in the future through a process of careful risk assessment and ensuring safe drinking-water supplies. I am certain that both national and international researchers that are striving to find satisfactory solutions to the arsenic problem will find the information contained in this book to be extremely valuable.

I very much appreciate the efforts of the WHO Environmental Health Unit and Arsenic Cell of the Directorate General of Health Services for compiling the study findings. In addition I would like to thank the editor of this book for the technical inputs, and express my gratitude to the individual researchers and their field-level support staff for their dedicated work which has advanced our knowledge and understanding of arsenicosis.

Dr. Duangvadee Sungkhobol  
WHO-Representative to Bangladesh