



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Today, March 8th marks International Women's Day – a day to remind ourselves and recognize that there is more to do as we work towards a gender-equal world. It is also a day of celebration of all the women who before us have paved the way to what has been accomplished up to now, and to lift all the women who right now, in different ways are fighting for a gender-equal world.

One aspect of gender equality relates to science, medicine, and global health matters. In Sweden as well as globally, mental illnesses have increased in frequency and severity over the past twenty years. Depression and anxiety disorders are among the major public health issues and are prevalent among people of all ages; however, they are two to three times more prevalent in women during the reproductive years. Although the increase in mental illness has been linked to various aspects of changed living conditions in society, there are currently no reliable explanations for the rising incidence or the gender difference. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in issues related to this, and to women's health in general. One reason is the sharp increase in sick leave rates due to mental illness among women, especially young women.

We still do not know enough about how much the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people's mental health, but a very different world has emerged since the outbreak of the pandemic. Challenges need to be met to ensure that the impact of the pandemic does not reverse the progress that women and girls have made worldwide. The pandemic has increased inequalities and sadly, in many countries and societies, numbers show that the restrictions have amplified the risk of gender-based domestic and sexual violence. But at the same time as we can see the light at the end of the pandemic, the world is entering a new era of insecurity. We cannot discuss International Women's Day without reflecting on the tragic situation in Europe. History has shown us that women have been the most affected by war and conflict, causing generations of harm. While there are millions of women in need of humanitarian assistance worldwide, at least one in five refugee women experience sexual violence. Moreover, war increases violence against women and uses sexual violence as a weapon of war. And even after a conflict has ended, sexual violence can be used as a tactic to reinforce gender inequalities. Sustaining peace encompasses more than just preventing war and handling the issue of conflict. It also addresses issues such as exclusion, discrimination, unfairness, inequality, and structural violence.

Finally, the International Women's Day is a reminder for us to never stop our struggle for an equal world. Steps are taken every day. Around the globe. We are in it together!