

**Gender Justice and Health for ALL!  
8th March, The International Women's Day (IWD)  
A Call from People's Health Movement (PHM)**

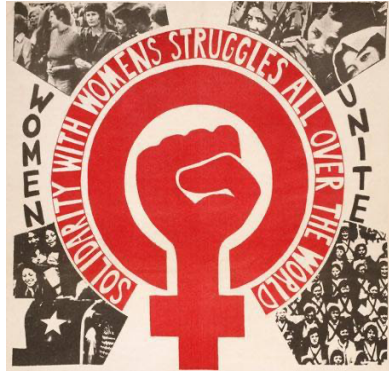


Image from Google: The Women's Library, London Metropolis University'

In the last few years, we have witnessed significant achievements and continued struggles for women's rights and gender equality. The long road ahead necessitates our collective action and solidarity.

We persevere in our resistances against a rising tide of authoritarian regimes and hetero-patriarchal backlash that threatens our achievements. We are seeing retrogressive signs, often in the name of culture, religion, traditions, at a global scale that jeopardize our right to equality and freedoms. Democratic spaces are shrinking, making it more difficult for civil society organisations and rights groups to dissent against rights violations and atrocities.

Further, the last two years has witnessed the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the persistent absence of accountability of States and non-State actors including Big Pharma that clearly prioritised profits over people.

At the moment, healthcare systems and infrastructure suffer from a blatant disregard for existing inequities that are determined by the health and well-being of the people, particularly the marginalised. The pandemic mismanagement has not just reproduced these inequities but also reinforced them.

These inequities persist in both public and private spheres. The crisis of gender-based violence experienced by many women and LGBTQI+ persons, the burden of unpaid care work and domestic chores, the issues of mental health and wellbeing, the systemic violence through the denial and delay of essential healthcare and sexual and reproductive health services, are all testament to how our homes and health ecosystems have not been a safe haven even in these times of acute crises. The women who have faced the brunt of the pandemic as frontline workers, healthcare professionals, caregivers, innovators, community organisers, and more, have had to struggle for wages, entitlements, social security, and workplaces free from harassment.

Women are being deprived of their bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Abortions continue to be criminalised or accessible conditionally in many countries. Maternal health care and avoidable maternal deaths are persisting concerns in many countries but lack the necessary attention. Guttmacher Institute report in 2018, more than 22,000 women and girls die each year after having an unsafe abortion. Lack of access to comprehensive sexuality education and other sexual and reproductive health services continue to remain limited or out of reach particularly for adolescents and those on the margins. Early and forced marriages have emerged as a critical issue, exacerbated by the pandemic context and socio-economic impact on marginalised communities. Governments have systematically failed to prioritise gender budgeting and allocate finances to fulfil the needs of women and girls.

Governments have an obligation to address the particular needs of LBTQI+persons, women and girls of colour, those from marginalised religious, racial, caste communities, living with disabilities, immigrants, women in prisons, frontline health workers, to name a few. Governments also have an obligation to address underlying structural factors which negate women's autonomy in decision-making regarding their own lives, health and bodies, to ensure their rights to autonomy and equality in all aspects of their lives.

Dismantling patriarchal and racist structures across institutions and systems is an inevitable need in the face of inequalities and injustices being exacerbated since the onset of this pandemic. Shrinking responsibility and the growing repression by Governments must continue to be resisted. Even in these challenging times, global solidarities and struggles for human rights, health rights, including sexual and reproductive health rights have sustained and strengthened to counter these threats and subversion of rights.

This International Women's Day (IWD), then, marks another opportunity to reimagine an equitable and gender just world. It is time for us to strengthen our longstanding political analysis of health and access to healthcare. The legalization of abortion in Argentina, Mexico and Colombia, is an inspiring illustration of the long struggle and victory of feminists and health activists in Latin America. This makes it more important to build alliances to share strategies, solidarities, support, and active engagement to confront these marginalizations and oppressions.

Our collective voices are as critical today as ever before on this International Women's Day and beyond for,

- A world that is equitable, inclusive and diverse.
- A world free of violence and discrimination.
- A world that respects autonomy and bodily integrity.
- A world that fulfils our vision of peace and harmony.

Join us on the International Women's Day (IWD), 8th March 2022 to remember our struggles and envision an equitable and gender just world.

