

Reflections on health, equity and gender

What we learned from the *Exploring the nexus between health, equity and gender* webinar held by the global cluster of universities for Sustainable Development Goal 3, led by the **Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)** through the **eHealth Center**, and the **International Association of Universities (IAU)**.

Gender inequality affects women's health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the health of women and girls is a source of particular concern for almost every society.

 Gender inequality and discrimination affect women's health worldwide in a variety of ways:

 Gender inequalities in health are made worse by a variety of socio-cultural factors whose relative importance varies significantly not just between countries but between different areas within them. These factors include:



1 Inequalities regarding power relations and gender-based violence

2 A health approach that focuses on women's reproductive role

3 Women giving priority to everyone's well-being at home above their own needs

4 Health research that fails to take sufficient account of the diversity of the population



Lessons from the pandemic for future crises

According to the speakers at the webinar, women, in particular, were affected by the COVID-19 health crisis. Some of the contributing factors could include:

 **Greater exposure to infection.** Predominance of women in sectors with greater exposure, such as:

 **Greater workload at home.** This may cause women to have:

 **The healthcare sector**

 **Poorer health - both physical and mental**

 **The care sector**

 **Fewer opportunities to advance in their careers**

 **The public care sector**

 **As a result, women's health - both physical and mental - may continue to be affected for years.**

Digital health to close the access gap

Digital health could have a high impact on health by increasing access opportunities while lowering costs. Experts agree about many of its benefits, but they have also identified some of the challenges that need to be dealt with specifically.

Benefits	Increased access to health information	More access to health	Strengthening of current healthcare systems	Reduced health-related costs
Challenges	Additional costs for families (devices, internet connection)	Building trust between patients and healthcare providers	Effects of the digital divide	Accuracy of the information published

Participants

Moderator:
Gemma Marfany, professor of Biology and Genetics at the University of Barcelona.

Speakers:
Lidia Arroyo, sociologist and member of the UOC's Gender and ICT research group;
Edward Bichetero, Senior Technical Officer of Data Science and Informatics in the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Support (METS) programme at Uganda's Makerere University;
Hannah Dahlen, Professor of Midwifery, Associate Dean of Research and HDR and Midwifery Discipline Lead at Australia's Western Sydney University, and
Retna Siwi, member of the Division of Public Health at Indonesia's Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Opening:
Hilligje van't Land, Secretary General of the International Association of Universities.

Closing:
Marta Aymerich, UOC Vice President for Strategic Planning and Research and Executive President of the eHealth Center.

Watch the webinar here:

The *Exploring the nexus between health, equity and gender* webinar was held on 7 June 2022.

