



Women of the International Benefits Network Celebrating Women in Employee Benefits

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170 years and more have passed since the first legal, activist and global struggle for the famous moto "Each is Equal". 2021 is unique due to the disastrous impact of Covid 19 on all levels of societies and states. The pandemic united people regardless of their differences. At the same time, it shed the light on the various discrimination and violent acts against women.

While the policy makers were busy setting up mechanisms to protect public health, numerous women were suffering from domestic violence, lack of support for motherhood and childcare, the risk of career preservation and development, and mostly the undermined social cohesion versus the limited institutional capacity.

While comparing the world economies and practices, the findings show that mental support and wellness have been a priority on the agenda for leading organizations in their employee benefits discussions for pregnant workers, breastfeeding mothers and single working parents. Requested modifications were mostly limited to the developed countries and multinational organizations.

Visions for diversity and inclusion acceptance are still blurry in developing countries. Women may not be anxious of dying from the corona virus or other critical illnesses but are living with daily insecurities in their respective environments.

I am a mother of two exceptional charming children, a decision maker at Associated Insurance Consultants SAL, an esteemed regional brokerage insurance firm in the Middle East, the Chairperson of the International Benefits Network, a global independent employee benefits consulting network. In my part of the world, I am considered lucky as I have been supported by my family and company under challenging circumstances and provided with equal pay. People in my part of the world believe in luck and not rights.

I look around me and I witness inequalities, weak socio-economic plans and reforms, excluding women from the central activities, and throwing blame for being responsible in spreading the virus. Some dare to think that Covid is a result of women wearing certain clothing. Others believe that working mothers should manage virtual work, children eLearning and housework alone. It is still considered a shame for some men to engage in domestic chores. Husbands would not directly admit gender inequality and would hide behind incompetency in dealing with housekeeping.

The most painful example remains observing women being tortured and unable to report such incidents due to religious and family limitations or considerations. The survivors fall into a lifetime of depression and the dead victims are soon forgotten. In many circumstances, the legal framework is also fragile. The existence of corruption guarantees that any convicted can be claimed innocent.

Hopes are on raising governments commitments and awareness on the importance of Women's rights and protection of those rights. This will be a living struggle to end the gender differences in laws, rules, regulations, traditions and practices. Until such a time, I dedicate International Women's Day to those heroines and bow my head to thank them for their courage, patience and sacrifices.

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