

NEWS RELEASE

Advice for IWD month: Find your balance

Port of Spain, 7 April 2022 - Breaking the bias has to start by looking within. The statement was made at seminars hosted recently by the Trinidad Operating Company of CIBC FirstCaribbean, in observation of International Women's Month.

The Trinidad team hosted two seminars - one for staff and another for students of ASJA Girls' College, Charleville and St Francois Girls' College, Belmont, were specially invited to attend.

Supporting the global International Women's Day theme #Breakthebias, the conversations with staff and students leaned on introspections of how women can break the bias of gender norms at home, breaking the expectation that everything can be accomplished easily and effortlessly. It was agreed that while breaking the bias in the workplace is a great achievement, biases faced daily outside the work environment also must be dealt with.

Among those biases can be the belief that a woman can have it all - that is, to be successful at taking care of the family and the home while ensuring she maintains her work schedule and deliverables.

"But sometimes, wonder woman can take off her tiara and give herself a break," said one of the presenters, Petal Bharat, Audit Manager. "Even the best planners need a break. We have to know how and when we need support and not only ask when we break down."

Fellow presenter Elizabeth Ramdeo, Legal Counsel, also pointed out that in the home, gender norms are not realistic expectations. "We can run ourselves ragged to be everything expected of us," she said. "We have to challenge that assumption."

At the office, both Bharat, a first-time mother, and Ramdeo said their work experiences were nothing but filled with encouragement.

The role of internal auditor is constantly evolving in accounting and business management fields, now there is a balance ratio of men to women in the profession.

Bharat, who works with a team of only women, said she received compassion and support. It is a big contrast, she said, to a widely held point of view that women managers are more difficult to work with in any business space. "At work, I have seen strong, committed, team players," she said.

As a law student, Ramdeo noted the ratio of women outnumbered the men on campus. At work, the ratio was balanced and teamwork was the focus. However, considering women in the overall scheme of business, Ramdeo said it was necessary to make room for them at the table.

"Women form 50 percent of any business' consumer base. Right now, there is a disconnect between what we want and those who think they do. At least we should have the opportunity to be heard," she said.

To the students, Bharat and Ramdeo advised them to challenge the assumption. For example, Ada Lovelace, an English mathematician and writer, was the first computer programmer. Two centuries later, IT is still underrepresented by women.

Diversity, the women agreed, allows for improved experiences. Being different is not bad, neither is failing, they added. It does not matter how many times someone falls. What is more important is how many times a person gets back up, learning from the experience to move forward with more determination.

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