

# Equal pay day in TT still an issue

ON SEPTEMBER 18, United Nations (UN) member states will commemorate International Equal Pay Day. This day is dedicated to raising awareness of unequal pay for women and pushing to close the gender pay gap.

Equal pay means that men and women in the same employment, performing equal work must receive equal rewards.

Data quoted by the International Labour Organisation from 2018 showed that the pay gap between men and women in TT ranged from 8.9 per cent for technicians and associate professionals and up to 34.7 per cent for service and shop sales workers.

The local statistics are very much in line with global statistics. According to the UN, globally, women still earn less than 80 cents for every dollar men do. For women with children, women of colour, women refugees and migrants, and women with disabilities, that figure is even lower. While gender pay-gap estimates can vary substantially across regions and even within countries, higher-income countries tend to have lower levels of wage inequality when compared to low and middle-income countries.

It is important to observe this day in the UN calendar to continue to raise awareness of this inconsistency so that there can be equal opportunity and treatment in the workplace. There have been decades of activism and dozens of laws on equal pay and there has been positive movement in the right direction but still, we are not at the place where we should be.

The Equal Opportunity Act is a critical and relevant piece of legislation in the fight against sex discrimination. The act generally prohibits employers from discrimination in the terms and condi-



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tions of employment afforded to their employees and prospective employees (applicants), which includes pay inequality. For an aggrieved employee to receive redress under the act, the employee should identify a workplace comparator, that is, in this instance, someone of the opposite sex. The comparator is a person who holds the same or similar position and who the employee can compare his or her salary to determine whether it is consistent.

An example of a comparator is a male information technology supervisor and a female information technology supervisor employed within a company with the same job title, performing the same duties. However, the male supervisor receives a higher remuneration than his female counterpart does.

## **Actions to promote equal pay**

Employers should take proactive

measures to assess whether their pay practices are fair, review their hiring processes and ensure that they adopt an equal opportunity approach during an employee's tenure with the organisation. Here are some examples of ways an organisation can promote equal pay:

1. Provide better training for hiring teams to reduce or eliminate the ways pay discrimination gets into the hiring process.

2. Implement methods across the organisation to create fair pay scales or pay grades for each role, where pay is based on the position, the level of responsibility in the role, and the level of experience. Set the remuneration before anyone has applied. This reduces the chances of inadvertently paying some candidates less based on their sex or salary history as opposed to the compensation that is appropriate for the job.

3. Consider making remuneration at least somewhat more transparent. When pay structures are more transparent, it forces those involved in salary decisions to be more careful in ensuring the decisions taken are fair.

4. Be clear about the requirements for getting a salary increase or promotion, and be consistent in using the established guidelines. This can help employers and managers remain fair and consistent in who qualifies for and gets an increase over time.

As we strive to build a better society post-pandemic, we must take the opportunity to end pay inequality against women.

**If you have been discriminated against, you can lodge a complaint at the Equal Opportunity Commission on its website [www.equalopportunity.gov.tt](http://www.equalopportunity.gov.tt) or via e-mail: [complaints@eoc.gov.tt](mailto:complaints@eoc.gov.tt)**