

Local

# Zain Group introduces revolutionary HR policy embracing working mothers

Extending maternity leave period to 4 months, with flexible hours thereafter



KUWAIT: Bader Al-Kharafi with women champions from Zain operations during a recent conference in Kuwait.

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading digital lifestyle provider in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has introduced one of the most progressive and innovative human resources policies in the region, providing female employees who become new mothers with four months of paid maternity leave, with a flexible schedule for returning to work.

This restructured leave policy, which falls under the Human Resources Policy Transformation theme, will be rolled out as a Group-wide initiative ensuring a unified approach to the program.

The new policy soon follows the creation of a new senior position within the organization, namely Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, to drive Empowerment initiatives that define, enhance and continue to cultivate an equitable work environment within all Zain operations.

The introduction of flexible working models has also been designed including six-hour work weeks for mothers with children up to four years old and an optional compressed working week enabling working mothers to work more hours over a compressed week to avail one day off.

The incoming flexible work program will complement Zain Group's recruitment, retention and development efforts, as the company shows itself to be an organization in tune with the needs of female employees to balance their careers with their family responsibilities.

The announcement follows the hosting of the second annual Gender Diversity (WE) conference held in Kuwait in November 2018, where Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi, the brainchild of the WE initiative, first announced the significant regional first regarding the application of flexible hours for working mothers with children up to the age of four years. Commenting on the new HR policy, Bader Al-Kharafi said, "As a leading innovative corporate entity in the region, it is incumbent on us to providing more supportive working environments for female employees and forging an inclusive working environment."

He continued, "There are very few companies globally that offer a uniform family leave policy and we are proud to be bringing new standards of human resources support and implementation to the region. As an organization we

are already well on the path to empowering our female counterparts on numerous levels, and this new maternity leave and flexible hours policy for working mothers will add further momentum to our efforts."

Once the new HR policy is fully implemented, Zain Group's Human Resources team will measure the impact and effect of the policy, through annual engagement surveys, the cost benefit involved such recruitment and retention and the number of returning mothers. Zain's WE program has already scored major successes in raising the profile of women in the organization, with the organization working towards increasing female leadership positions within the organization from 14.5 percent to 25 percent by 2020; and ultimately evolving towards a gender diverse workforce. Since Zain's WE initiative official launch in November 2017, it has achieved the following accomplishments:

- Female leadership, director and above at Zain Group has grown from 14.5 percent to 15.5 percent in one year.
- Female recruitment into Zain across all operations grew from 21 percent of total recruitment to 29 percent.

- The number of women at Chief level increased from 6 to 11, an 83 percent increase.

- 33 high potential female leaders have been identified to form the Centered Leaders program.

- 61 Women Empowerment Ambassadors have been onboarded and tasked with action planning.

- Zain signed up to the UN Women Empowerment Principles and communicated this to all 6,000 employees.

- Introduced a Women Empowerment communications app with 300 employees already using it.

- Women Empowerment embedded into the board of director's agenda and placed on CEO Scorecards.

- Two talented women from Zain operations sponsored to attend MBA programs at ESADE, Barcelona.

Bader Al-Kharafi concluded by reiterating his conviction in the WE initiative: "I firmly believe that championing gender diversity at Zain will create competitive differentiation, fast-track our strategic ambitions of unlocking the tremendous growth opportunities in the digital arena and at the same time improve the company's bottom line."



## Construction of new Adan Hospital to finish by 2020

**KUWAIT:** Construction of Kuwait's new Al-Adan hospital is set to be completed by April of 2020, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and

Development (SCPD) said yesterday. Construction works for the 232.12 million (\$766 million) medical facility have reached 39 percent completion, according to Suad Al-Awadh, who follows the progress of plans and programs at SCPD. The new hospital is part of broad healthcare reforms currently underway in Kuwait, she said in a statement. On the project, the official said it entails major renovations to the sprawling medical facility, making sure that the hospital is well-equipped to treat the influx of patients. The hospital contains special centers for surgery and physiotherapy, in addition to other departments, she pointed out. — KUNA



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P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait  
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621  
E: info@kuwaittimes.net