



WOMEN POWER

According to a report by the National Commission for Women (NCW), statistics show that Public sector employment of women in construction industry increased from 49.8 (in thousands) in 1981 to 63.2 (in thousands) in 2000. In contrast, private sector employment of women in construction sector fell from 9.5 (in thousands) in 1981 to 4.0 (in thousands) in 2000. Hopefully the private sector will take cognisance of this trend. Today Women have moved on from being home makers to home builders. They are now carving themselves a niche in upper echelons of the construction industry. This Anniversary we profile you women distinguished by their contribution to the Sector. We hope very soon, such Women Power will dispel the myth that construction sector is a male dominated domain.

An Aparajita

Miriam Carter, Director, OP Jindal Community College, is a woman with global dimensions and yet she fits hand-in-glove into her current assignment in India. She is culturally adapted to India, right down to speaking elegant and fluent Hindi! She has held Directorial posts in South Africa and was **Commissioner, Montgomery County Commission for Women, Baltimore, Maryland Area, USA**. One important programme run by her college is for women trainees, the “Aparajita” project, a women’s empowerment programme providing construction skills training in local villages focused on strengthening Self-Help Groups for sustainable livelihood creation. Aparajita provides a cadre of certified, skilled women masons and industrial painters, who are not only gainfully employed as “skilled” trades persons, but represent a powerful symbol of change in the construction sector, heralding gender equality. This needs to be underlined by the fact that India has a tradition of women working in the construction sector, often as the least skilled, and the lowest paid casual labourers.

The most important asset she has is her holistic focus. It covers the entire value chain; from basic education imparting skills to construction workers, making them employable without further ‘on-job-training,’ to accurately identifying skill gaps, re-skilling needs, and mapping the job structure in the construction industry. This is a lady with a global experience who chose to work in a State which is among the least developed in India. The local community has benefitted immensely from her expertise. Undoubtedly, we will see more seminal contributions from this lady, breaking new frontiers.



MIRIAM CARTER

Director, OP Jindal Community College

“Strategy must include educating and sensitising Men”

Women must become key partners in construction education and training. We bring different perspectives and sensitivities to the myriad links of the skilling to employment value chain. At least 50 per cent of the construction workforce in India are women. Unfortunately, they are the least paid and most vulnerable, unskilled workers. Imagine the potential of the sector if women worked alongside men as competent, certified construction workers, supervisors, real estate developers, trainers, assessors, and contractors! This workforce, coupled with global practices, upgraded machines and tools, and the latest

technology would be a game changer, accelerating infrastructure and civil projects to take India ahead and boosting the nation’s competitive advantage and quality of life.

International experience shows that women are the drivers of inclusive growth. In India, we give voice to ground realities that are needed to shape skills development initiatives, innovations, conditions of work, wage equity, and policy. The strategy also must include educating and sensitizing men; in so doing, work environments will be enabling for everyone, resulting in improved productivity, results, and growth. ■