

Abstract

The construction sector is the largest employer in India after agricultural labour in the unorganised sector. However women construction workers are not allowed to acquire skills and become masons. Women join as unskilled workers and remain unskilled till the end of their working life. Men, on the other hand, are trained and given an opportunity to up-grade their construction skills while working and become masons, supervisors and contractors. This study analyses the causes which lead to gender discrimination, and the problems and constraints at home and workplace which affect women's participation in the construction sector in India and the barriers for women in the construction sector to acquire skills for masonry work and how they could be trained to become masons. In this study, a total of 440 men construction workers and 440 women construction workers and 51 contractors were studied.

The findings of the study show that many women construction workers are illiterate, widows, only earning members of the family and from low income families when compared to men construction workers. Women construction workers face harassment at home and work place. There is also gender discrimination in work, wages and in promotion opportunities. The findings also show that the important barrier for women being promoted as masons is the gender bias which men and women have, and women construction workers are not given an opportunity to be trained informally like men in construction sector. It is found that women are willing to become masons, and men, especially the contractors, are willing to accept them, train them and give them placements in the construction sector. This study analyses the methodology of training offered to men in the construction sector and proposes a methodology of training that would empower women construction workers in India.