

FOOT NOTE

This all-women team is not just breaking ceilings, it's building them too

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Civil engineer Kanagambihai T has been part of several construction projects in her career spanning two decades. Now she will be heading the construction of a 13-storey multi-storey building (MSB) at L&T's Manapakkam campus in Chennai. What's more, all 17 of her team members are women.

The project executed at a financial outlay of ₹500 crore is an example of women breaking barriers to enter the hitherto male dominated construction sector. The team members, who come from different engineering streams such as civil, electrical, mechanical, mechatronics and architecture, do everything from planning, quality assurance and control, safety, accounts and administration.

Their day begins with a meet-



READY FOR IT: The all-women core construction team, which is constructing the 13-floor multi-storey building (MSB) at L&T's Manapakkam campus in Chennai

ing inside a container-turned-office at the worksite. After that each one goes to supervise their respective teams, while some check the inventory and review design and quality. One of the engineers ensures all workers follow safety practices such as wearing helmets, gloves and other gear.

Kanagambihai, project manager, says the 18-member women's

team is relatively young, its members aged between 22 and 42. "It is the first job for seven of our team members. The advantage of having an all-women team is that they are in a comfort zone," she says.

Besides employing their core engineering skills, the women have been showing their acumen in people management, especially those of construction workers

who are all men. "The biggest challenge for us was in the initial phase of laying a three-level basement below the ground. Water gushed out as we went deeper, but we successfully executed it, thanks to some smart construction workers," says Kanagambihai.

TC-4 is the first project of the L&T's buildings and factories' ver-

tical where the core project team comprises women. With a built-up area of 7 lakh sqft, it will have a capacity to accommodate 5,100 employees, a canteen with 1,000 seats and an auditorium. The construction started in April this year and it is expected to be complete by June 2024. About 30% of work has been completed so far.

V Sukumar Hebbur, EVP & head - Health, Residential & Commercial Buildings, L&T Construction said, TC-4 is developed to expand workspace.

"In the past decade we have ensured gender equality by increasing

the intake of women graduate and postgraduate engineering trainees. We have a lot of women who have hands-on experience in execution, planning, quality and safety. We thought it prudent to do one project with an all-women core team to let

them display skills and gain more confidence to handle bigger responsibilities," he says.

With the task

demanding long hours at the construction site, how do the women manage their work-life balance? "Balancing was a little tough initially," says S Vasuki, senior manager (planning) and an architect. "Now my family has got used to my working hours."

Kar Kuzhali, construction manager who is part of the execution wing, says there was no big difference between working in an office and working at a construction site. "When I was a student, only six or seven of the 100-odd civil engineering students were women. This scenario is changing as women are ready to take up new roles and responsibilities," she says.



Kanagambihai

Kar Kuzhali