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How Hindustan Zinc is supporting women to join mining operations

Hindustan Zinc claims to be the first company in India to deploy women in the underground mines. The organisation has 64 women employees who are working in the underground rescue operations, and 15 women employees dedicated to the underground mine rescue team. The company started recruiting women as underground mine workers in 2019 when the Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) approved the same.



Avanthika P, · ETHRWorld
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Highlights

- Hindustan Zinc claims to be the first company in India to deploy women in the underground mines.
- The company's first underground women rescue team was a seven-member team that got training for 14 days in mine rescue operations at Nagpur.
- The firm intends to scale its women workforce's strength by 25 per cent by 2025, and 30 per cent by 2030.
- When the company started the night shift for women employees, some women employees were happy to experiment as they felt it would add value to their careers. In some other cases, women faced restrictions from their families.
- Thirty-four per cent of the company's previous campus hiring were women. Last year, it hired 100 women from Banasthali Vidyapith, an all-women campus in Rajasthan.



Munish Vasudeva, SVP & CHRO, Hindustan Zinc, Vedanta Group

Hindustan Zinc, an integrated mining and resources producer subsidiary of Vedanta Group, is actively encouraging women to join its workforce in the hardcore mining operations! The company has over 600 women employees, including about 200 women engineers, which is around 21 per cent of

the entire workforce. The total employee strength of the company is 2,767.

Hindustan Zinc claims to be the first company in India to deploy women in the underground mines. The organisation has 64 women employees who are working in the underground rescue operations, and 15 women employees dedicated to the underground mine rescue team. The company started recruiting women as underground mine workers in 2019 when the Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) approved the same. The firm also had the first women mine managers by that timeline.

“At that point of time, we started training the All-Women Underground Mine Rescue Team focusing on the safety and maintenance in mining operations. The first rescue team that we started was a seven-woman-member-team who got training for almost 14 days in mine rescue operations at Nagpur. They are trained in first aid, dealing with mine gases, emergency responses and firefighting, which includes extinguishing various types of fires. They are also given regular drills and tests on various surfaces and underground for emergency preparedness,” says Munish Vasudeva, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Hindustan Zinc, Vedanta Group.

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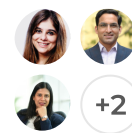


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“They are provided opportunities for exposure and skill development by participating in north-zonal, regional and national competitions for rescue teams. Last year, our women’s rescue team became the winner in the general category and we are preparing them to go on a global platform this year,” Vasudeva adds.

For mining operations, the company prefers employees with a mining background. Currently, most of the hires are mining engineers and a couple of them are BSc graduates. Currently, there are two dedicated teams for women's mine rescue operations, each comprising seven and eight members. Both the teams have been trained in RRT at VTC in Rajpura Dariba Complex, and as per the need, they'll be shifted to different plant locations.

Advt

“We not only hire women colleagues, but we also do a lot of interventions to speed-track their development and drive high-performance teams. We have flagship programmes for women in leadership like Winspire. We also talk about transformative themes of building a personal brand for women and mastering resilience through special mentorship. We intend to scale the women workforce's strength by 25 per cent by 2025, and 30 per cent by 2030,” says Vasudeva.

Challenges

Vasudeva points out that coaching female talent for hardcore operations has its own challenges. The HR team tries to mitigate these by focusing on the basics of building a culture of inclusivity and gender diversity across all levels. They also do sensitisation programmes across all levels to look at how diversity can add value to the overall business.

When the company started the night shift for women employees, some women employees were happy to experiment as they felt it would add value to their careers. In some other cases, women employees faced restrictions from their families.

“We were trying to open the door, but not pushing anyone in the door. The night shift wasn’t forced on any woman employee. We started it with women who voluntarily came forward. Later, many joined the shift as they were confident about the safety we promised, be it in terms of commute or working. Women security forces and drivers were also deployed to ensure a conducive environment for women employees working in the night shift,” Vasudeva says.

Creating a township to attract talent

All the employees of Hindustan Zinc usually stay in townships and colonies near their plant, and all these mining plants are far away from the cities. Hence, creating a township is a part of the firm’s operation, and it becomes a key parameter for the company to encourage good talent to join the organisation and promote work-life integration.

Vasudeva says, “Every graduate has options available in white-collar jobs and other new-age industries. Thus, encouraging talents to join the mining jobs is a challenge in itself.”

“We recognise that a good lifestyle with all the facilities is a necessity and not a luxury. So, we have to ensure that our workforce has the updated lifestyles, which matter to the young talent. We create infrastructure support, including schools, hospitals, daycare, creches, sports areas, and even places of worship. This helps in creating a vibrant social life. When life is holistic, the women workforce also feels more confident and finds comfort in a safe environment,” Vasudeva adds.

In some places, the townships are facilitated by employee communities,

whereas in others, the organisation ties up with the facilities in the vicinity through partnerships and outsourcing.

Hindustan Zinc has created a township in all of its business units, including Rajpura Dariba Complex, Zawar Group of Mines, Rampura Agucha Mine, and many more.

Talent acquisition

When it comes to talent acquisition, Hindustan Zinc prefers hiring a lot of fresher talents. “We grow our own crops. We have tied up with all campuses, including IITs and IIMs that produce talents from engineering branches, including mining, metallurgical, IT and electrical engineering. Thirty-four per cent of our previous campus hirings were women. Last year, we hired 100 women colleagues from Banasthali Vidyapith, an all-women campus in Rajasthan,” says Vasudeva.

“Initially, everyone will be trained in mining, and we pick up the brightest of the talent who meets the criteria, including the health parameters for the mine rescue team. The employees have to volunteer themselves for the rescue roles, and no one will be compelled to take up the role,” he adds.

Zinclusion for the LGBTQ community

According to Vasudeva, it isn't easy for the company to source transgender talents. The challenge that the firm faces while looking for transgender talent pool is the availability of engineering graduates. Thus, most of the currently hired employees from this community are from commerce and science streams.

The organisation ties up with consultants, and participates in job fairs to access the talent pools in the community. “We do not want to limit them only to their traditional job roles in safety or security. We also wanted to bring them into the frontline functions like lab testing and other

financial operations,” Vasudeva says.

“Under the Zinclusion programme for the LGBTQ community, we have hired about 16 transgender people by now and 12 more will join by August. We are planning to increase this number to 30 by 2025. Last week, we even called the parents of our trans colleagues to share their journey on how we are doing this differently,” adds Vasudeva.

Last year, Hindustan Zinc launched a policy that provides Rs 2 lakh of financial support for gender reaffirmation surgery and 30 days of paid leave for people undergoing the same. The organisation has also provided housing support to its transgender employees, as it’s not easy for them to get a house on rent, unlike others.

Last month, the company announced another policy that provides Rs 1 lakh as assistance for the personal development of transgender employees. Employees can use this amount to do the courses that would upgrade their learning and enhance their skill sets to take up higher job roles. “When the batch strength increases, we would also create customised work-life integration programmes like common MBA, engineering, or other postgraduate programmes,” Vasudeva says.

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