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# Breaking Gender Barriers In Oil & Gas Industry

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In the traditionally male-dominated oil and gas industry, the role of women is increasingly gaining recognition and prominence. Despite persistent misconceptions and barriers, initiatives aimed at fostering gender diversity and inclusivity are gaining momentum. *Pushkar Kumar, Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), Cairn Oil & Gas*, delves into how the oil and gas sector is supporting the professional development and career progression of female talent, as well as encouraging more young girls to explore STEM fields and consider careers in this dynamic industry.

**Women play a crucial role in the sector, yet misconceptions persist, including doubts about their interests and skills. How does the industry support the professional development and career progression of female talent in a largely male-dominated oil and gas industry?**

The oil and gas industry has long been perceived as a male-dominated field, characterised by its

rugged landscapes, heavy machinery, and demanding work environments. As highlighted in a 2019 McKinsey article, women make up only about 15 per cent of the oil and gas workforce, with the representation being as low as 4 per cent in the oil field and 15 per cent in upstream exploration. In recent years, there has been a significant shift in this paradigm. The number of women in the oil and gas industry has steadily increased over the years, even though there is a long way ahead of us.

To foster an inclusive environment, the oil and gas industry has implemented initiatives to bridge the gender pay gap, enabling higher participation of women in the workforce and benefiting the industry by providing mentorship, leadership training, networking opportunities and addressing the needs of the women workforce.

Gender Intelligence Leadership (GIL) are workshops to promote gender diversity and an inclusive work environment are initiatives undertaken by Cairn, which seek to challenge the norms, improve teamwork, and raise understanding of gender inequalities in the workspace for both male and female participants while striving towards creating a safe, better, and empowering environment at its operational sites for women engineers.

**Women are breaking barriers and getting into roles traditionally perceived to be male-oriented, such as oil and gas engineering. In what ways has the oil and gas sector fostered an inclusive environment for women in STEM and addressed gender disparities to promote equal opportunities for women engineers?**

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, only one in five leadership positions in the energy sector is held by women. The industry actively engages in advocacy efforts to address systemic barriers and gender disparities. Through partnerships with organisations, educational institutions, and participation in conferences and events, we work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) while promoting gender equality in our sector. Closing this gender gap is crucial to driving innovative and inclusive solutions. Having more women in the oil and gas workforce not only helps in achieving sustainable development for the nation but ensures the contribution of diverse perspectives and unique experiences, creating a world of equal opportunities.

At Cairn, our end-to-end gender diversity chapter is part of a comprehensive D&I journey that is outlined in an organised roadmap. We have started an initiative to onboard diverse leaders across technical, operational, and enabling functions in line with our goal of achieving gender diversity throughout the Vedanta Group. To foster a learning and training culture for our female talent, we conduct 'Leader and You' sessions that facilitate one-on-one or small-group conversations between leaders and young employees. Through coaching and behavioural training, programs like the Climb(e) – Cairn leadership initiative for managerial and Business excellence, and Cairn Accelerator Programme for emerging leaders - (CAP-el), Cairn prepares aspiring leaders. A special talent identification programme is organised to identify and promote women top talent.

**How does the industry celebrate and showcase the contributions of women to driving sustainable growth? Share a few success stories of women in STEM or employee testimonials of women engineers working at operational sites who have made significant impacts on oil and gas projects and operations.**

The industry continues to recognise and celebrate the contributions of the women workforce in driving sustainable growth and energising the nation. These initiatives aim to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the oil and gas industry.

At Cairn, young women working in our oil fields across our locations in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh are an inspiration for all young women aspiring to join the oil and gas industry. Their innovative approach drives progress and inspires other women aspiring to be future leaders who shape the future of the energy sector. It is a testament to our initiatives and our efforts to achieve 50 per cent gender diversity by 2050 and a 30 per cent gender diversity target among employees by 2030.

### **Stories of Women Employees leading the way!**

- Seema Rayal was the first women installation manager in Oil & Gas and is one of our pioneer women leaders in Operations.
- Neha Sah has been identified as a top performer at Cairn repeatedly and has been one of the only women employees to lead our vendor management portfolio successfully, having received an Award from FIPI (Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry) for the same.
- Pooja Kutar, Associate Manager, Quality, from Suvali, Gujarat, has been working with Cairn Oil & Gas, Vedanta, since 2018 and she ensures platform, pipeline integrity, and live FFS certification for all the platforms and subsea pipelines.
- Deepika Chowdary, a Mechanical Engineer, and Kollipara Meghana, a Production engineer from Ravva, Andhra Pradesh, assist in the maintenance of various equipment and the production of operations, respectively, in both onshore and offshore activities.
- Amita Borad, Production Superintendent at Cambay, Gujarat site has been working with Cairn for almost 7 months. She looks after shift activities, monitors well options, and plans routine and non-routine tasks to ensure equipment availability.
- Ishwari Lande works at our Suvali offshore operations in Gujarat as an HSE Engineer and oversees both proactive management and reactive incident responses. Her responsibilities include conducting Hazard Identification (HAZIDs) and Job Safety Analysis (JSA) to pinpoint potential hazards and develop mitigation strategies, thus ensuring the safety of offshore operations.

**In what ways does the industry encourage young girls to explore STEM fields and consider careers in the oil and gas sector as a whole? What initiatives have been implemented to encourage more**

## women to pursue careers in STEM fields within the oil and gas industry?

There's no denying that progress has been made, but more needs to be done to boost gender diversity and inclusivity in the oil and gas sector. Breaking down barriers requires programmes and administering initiatives that encourage girls and young women to seek professions in science and technical disciplines. The Vigyan Jyoti Program launched by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India, aims to address the underrepresentation of women in STEM. Despite making up about 39 per cent of the global labour force, women's participation in the energy sector remains markedly low.

With an emphasis on behavioural and technical skills, the “Building Future Leaders Today” programme offers recent graduates a comprehensive learning experience, and we are consistently executing technical training and mentorship at our organisation programmes that help bridge the gap between education and practical application, encouraging more women to consider careers in the oil and gas industry.

### **How do you see India's female technical talent growing in the next decade? What do you think will be the drivers for a positive change?**

As the world grapples with climate change and the shift towards cleaner energy, women are playing an essential role in shaping the future of the oil and gas industry. Their contributions are beyond the stereotypes; they are steering innovation and sustainability. The representation of female students in higher education in India has increased, with 49.18 lakh students enrolled, of which 50.8 per cent are female and 49.2 per cent are male in the science discipline. We hope that more and more young talent joins the energy sector, but we also must ensure that we continue to create an environment of inclusivity and welcome more female employees.

With the growing emphasis on gender equality and inclusivity, there is a greater awareness of the importance of encouraging women to pursue technical careers. Many organisations, including us at Cairn Oil & Gas, are actively working towards creating a gender-balanced workforce by implementing policies and programmes that attract, retain, and promote women in technical positions.

The Indian government and educational institutions are taking proactive steps to encourage more women to pursue technical education, with success stories of women in technical fields serving as powerful role models for young girls.

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