

APPRENTICESHIP

The Second Building Bridges Tradeswomen Delegation Makes an Impact in India

Veronica Godinez

Director, Northern California Cement Masons Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee

The second Tradeswomen Building Bridges delegation arrived in India last November to meet tradeswomen there and help them make connections. I was one of the 12 tradeswomen who was there representing this delegation. We were all there to show ourselves as tradeswomen, inspire and be inspired. Within one week, I experienced generosity, creativity, bravery and saw an unrelenting struggle to make a living.

We visited the Archana Women's Center in Kerala, where we were greeted by a wave of smiles and women playing musical instruments that are normally played by men. This center, which now has 2 locations, teaches women an array of skills. There are 18 programs available to teach and empower women—including plumbing, electrical, masonry, carpentry, taxi driving, culinary, IT, painting and cosmetology.

Our visit brought some recognition to the center. Several local television stations and newspapers were there to cover our visit as we toured construction sites where women were building homes from cinder blocks for families that had recently lost their houses in floods.

We were able to speak with community leaders about the untapped potential of women and asked what they can do to help the center. We also met with union leaders, as well as female workers, and discussed issues like child care, career advancement for women and safety on jobsites.

The experience was amazing and I hope that the attention we were able to bring to the struggle of women in Kerala will make a positive difference. I want to thank the people of Kerala for their great generosity and to also thank our Unions for their support. I am proud to be a union cement mason journeywoman and proud to have been part of this inspiring delegation.



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