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Photograph of Women from Zeerust

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Phumelele, Shamim and Vanessa.

The government's State of Emergency stops us from
being free to write about many important things. If
there was no State of Emergency, we would be able
to write about these things.

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letters

Dear sisters and friends

I wish to send my greetings to you all through SPEAK magazine.

I learned about this magazine now recently from a friend I visited in Randburg. She gave me a copy to read. I must confess how delighted I felt after realising that there is at long last an organisation which listens to the plight of the domestic workers. I was so highly impressed that I asked for a copy to show my friends in Koster, where I am employed.

Showing the same impression, my friends asked me to write to you and subscribe for our own copies. We feel that we must also join SADWU, if you may kindly send us SADWU's address or any further information in regard to organising domestic workers, especially in Koster. There are also some gardeners who are also interested, but we are not sure if they also allow men members.

Keep the good work up! You enliven our spirits. We shall support you through thick and thin. We hope to receive one of your latest copies very soon.

Yours in the struggle for peace and justice,
Mavis Twala.

Dear Mavis, your letter is very encouraging. It means that SPEAK is doing its work. We hope that more women will read about how others are organising to change their lives. SADWU does take men members. Here is an address of a SADWU office that we think will be nearer to you: SADWU, 2nd Floor Barragh House, c/o Wanderers / Plein Street, Johannesburg, 2001. We wish you well in organising domestic workers in your area-SPEAK Collective

Dear SPEAK

In 1979 I went to have my loop checked at the clinic. They could not find it and they thought that it must have fallen out. Then they put another loop in. In 1983 I then had the second loop taken out because I wanted to change to the pill. I took the pill until 1985. Meantime I felt sick. I went to doctors who couldn't tell me what was wrong with me. I also stopped taking the pill. I was tired of it. I didn't mind having a baby.

Then in November 1987 I went to the hospital and they found that the loop that I had put in in 1979 was still inside me. It was taken out. Then I asked them to tie my tubes up because I didn't want any more children. It was at that time that they discovered that the loop had done a lot of damage inside me all those years. Doctors felt that I may as well have my womb taken out. If only I didn't have that loop put in me, I wouldn't be suffering the way I am now. I have had so many problems because of the loop.

Yours
Dudu, Durban

Dear Dudu, we are very sorry that you have suffered so much. We are glad that you are sharing your experiences with other women. Often women are not told about the harm loops can do in their bodies. We must demand to know about such things. This is our right - SPEAK Collective



Write a letter to SPEAK. Share your thoughts with others!
Write to:
SPEAK Collective
PO Box 19375
Domerton
4015
Durban

WE DON'T WANT TO BE THE TAILS

Taking the Struggle Home

It was already dark outside. The time was 7 o'clock. We were on our way to meet with women at their union office in Tembisa, near Johannesburg. There were many people on the streets. People were going home from work. Smoke poured out of the chimneys of houses in the township. It was the end of another day.

But at the union offices there were many people who had come to talk about their problems in the factories. And the women we met had come to talk about their problems as women workers.

Their day was going to be very long. After the meeting they still had housework to do.

"We have got to go home after this and cook and clean and wash the kids and see that our husbands are comfortable," the women said.

But one woman said that her husband was

cooking in her home. Everyone at the meeting clapped and laughed and shouted "Viva" when they heard this. The women rushed to her to shake her hand. She said "I was fighting for that, you know. He was fighting with me. I said if you want to wait for me you can wait. I will be here by 9 but it's not going to be easy for you. Because you want to sleep about half-past ten. Now he stopped fighting. I just send him meat and he can do the cooking."

The women we met are members of a trade union - the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) which is part of COSATU. They meet every week as a women's group of the union. The name they have given their group is the Local Women Workers Committee (LWWC)

The group decided that they could get their rights as women by forming a women's committee in their union. They are strong and

they know what they want.

"We just push hard," they said. "We are tired you see. We are oppressed at work and we are also oppressed at our location and we are also oppressed in our houses. So we are now sick and tired of this."

Women workers are worse off than men workers. The women are trying to change things in their factories. They are trying to get better maternity leave.

"We have problems of discrimination between women and men at the factory. But we have got few shopstewards who are women, so we formed this committee of women so that we could push hard for the demands of women in the companies. It was formed for these things. And secondly to maybe try to change the situation we are living in."

It has not been easy to get this women's group in the union.

"From long ago we are trying to form a women's committee. But we have been having some problems from our husbands. If we want

We are oppressed at work, at our location and also in our houses. So now we are sick and tired of this.

to attend meetings we can't because we have to go home and cook. We've been oppressed all along. Our husbands do not want us to come to meetings."

"For the first meeting one of our comrades was beaten by the husband. He said: Why did you go there? Why did you come late at home? She was trying to tell him that she was at a meeting of women. He did not listen to reason. So we took this issue to our local office bearer. We don't know whether they solved that problem but since then that lady did not come again." The women are trying to do something about this problem.

"The comrades are suggesting that we form a committee in the factory so that we could mobilise the women to come to a meeting. And that committee should try to solve some other problems that we come across in the community. That maybe if a woman has been





Photograph by Piyushi Kotecha

Everyone at the meeting clapped and laughed and shouted 'viva!' when one woman said that her husband was cooking at home!

beaten by her husband that committee should go and talk to that man."

The women's committee is part of the NUMSA Kempton Park local. The local is made up of all the workers in this area who are members of NUMSA. The men in the local see that it is important that women organise to fight for a better life. They are willing to give their support to the women.

A few weeks before we met them, the women's committee elected their chairperson, secretary and other office bearers. They feel that now that they have chosen women to do the different jobs they will be able to push ahead and win their demands. At meetings NUMSA workers decided to win many things for women workers. Many resolutions on women were passed. The women's committee will make it their job to see that they win these things.

The women are fighting for a better life for all women. "Our dream for the future woman is that a woman will be living a free life, having freedom of speech, having equal rights. We

must be treated like human beings.

We dream many things. That we should not have to work for two years before we can get maternity leave. This is unfair. It must change.

We are sexually harassed, we have to cook and do this and that and that. Meanwhile the man is sitting down and reading the paper and telling you that he is working hard in the company. Forgetting that you are also from work you see. When he comes in first he must make sure that the children are clean or whatever, he must just try to help you. "

They want to change things in the factories. And they also want to change things in the home, and in the country.

"We want everything to change. We want to live a free life. When that freedom comes and socialism reaches us we must be clearly knowing that we are going forward not backward and we don't want to be the tails you see, no we don't want to be the tails. We want to be just equal as women. Because we are

also human beings. "

The members of the women's committee know that many people believe that it is tradition that women should be treated differently from men. But they believe this must change . They see this as an important struggle. And they are prepared to take up this fight. "It is difficult", they said. "Its true it is tradition. And it will stay like that - it will never change, not unless we try to change it."

They believe they can change it. The lessons they are learning from the struggles in the factories are helping them in the struggles in the community and in their homes. They said:

"Like at work we work hard. There is a machine you have to push it. At the same time you must come home and cook and do this and do that. Now the organiser comes to the factory, to tell you to organise and to show you where is the way, what you have to do and where are your rights. Now why should I fight for hard labour and for maternity leave at work and not fight at home ? If we women don't fight for ourselves

there is nobody who is going to fight for us."

The committee members believe they can win their struggles through unity. They feel women can be strong if they begin to share their problems. They say that even those problems between a woman and her husband should be shared. By doing this women can help each other and organise together.

The Local Women Workers Committee was formed not very long before we met them. They are still trying to deal with problems of forming a strong group. But the women in this group are clear about what they want and they are strong. They are talking about getting together with women from other unions in the area to form a COSATU Women's Group. This will make them even stronger. They said:

"As women we have many common problems. We can share each others problem. From what we know a woman is brave. Since a woman is brave why can't we share that braveness and show the community we are brave."



Photograph by Piyushi Kotecha

Our dream for the future woman is that a woman will be living a free life, having freedom of speech, having equal rights. We must be treated like human beings.



'Join the women's struggle
"I'll have to ask my husband"

A KILLER SICKNESS

Polio is a killer sickness. It can also turn you into a cripple. Polio has made many children around Durban sick. Most of the sick children are from places that have great poverty like Inanda and Ndwedwe. They were admitted at King Edward Hospital.

Polio can be stopped from making people sick by giving them drops of medicine in the mouth. The polio medicine is given to children during the first year of their lives. All clinics have polio medicine. It is given free. But medicine is not enough. As long as people are hungry, with no proper houses and no water, these sicknesses will come back.

This time it is polio. A few years back it was cholera. Until people organise to have a country that has food and houses for everybody these sicknesses will go on.

YESTERDAY TODAY

BREAKING THE CHAINS

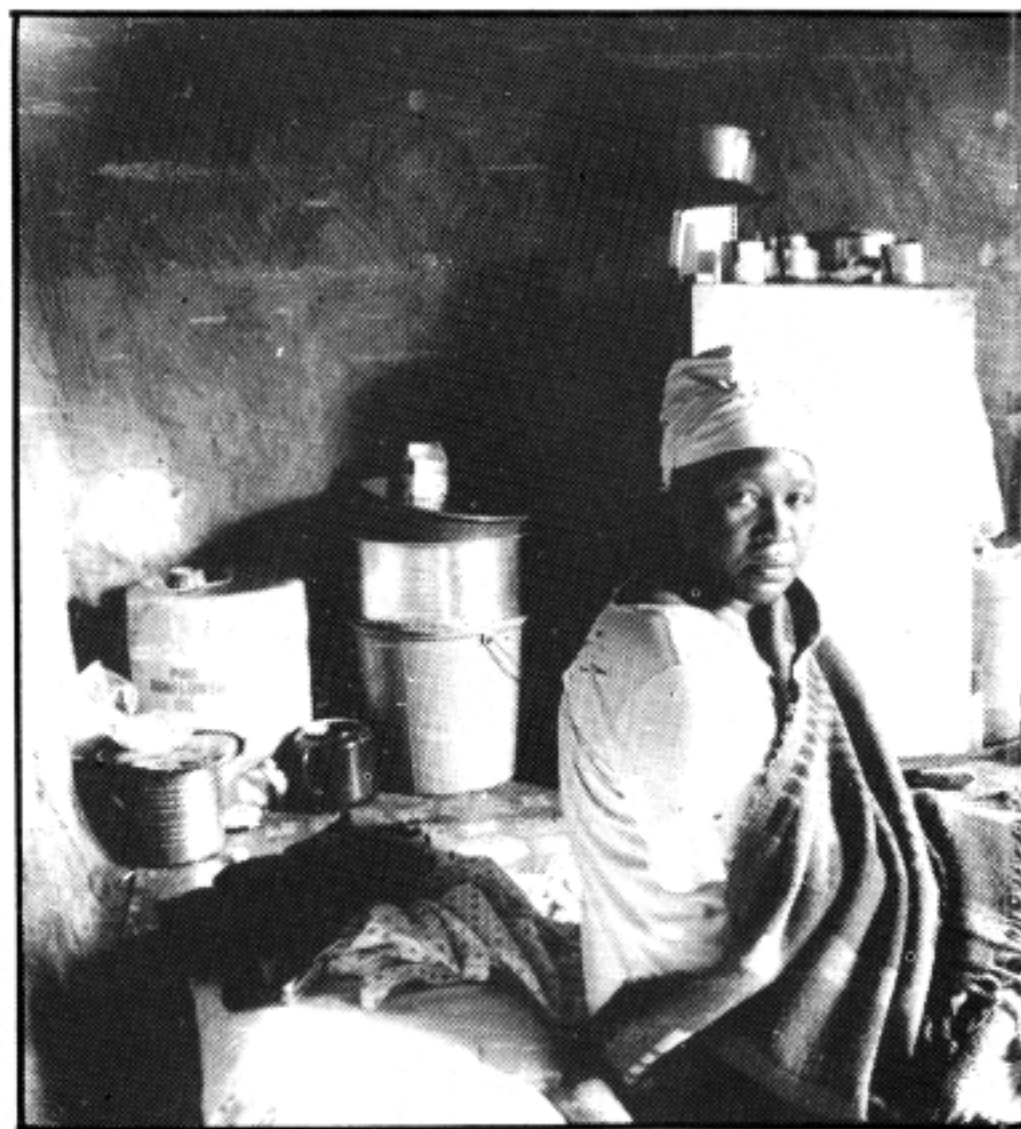
A group of women from Umlazi came together to discuss problems they face as women. They first came together because they wanted to do something about a shebeen nearby. Their husbands spent all their time in this shebeen.

They hope to start a women's discussion group with regular meetings. They want to tell each other about their problems and share them.

But one big problem they have is coming out of their houses to meet. "Men do not want us to go out and meet others. Yet they are ever out to drink. Now we want to break the chains around us. We are just going to tell them we are going. We are not going to beg them for permission. They do not ask permission from us to go. Once we achieve that, that will be a start, you know," said one woman.

At Christmas time they hired a minibus to go to a picnic they arranged.

These women have realised that if they come together and share their problems they will feel stronger to fight.



A WOMAN'S PLACE

The State of Emergency continues. People are still locked in prisons without going to court. The Emergency laws say that people can be locked up like that. Often no reason is given for keeping them locked up. Some of them are mothers who are forced to leave their children with no one to look after them.

Some people have died in detention. Their families suffer great pain. Ma Bani from Port Elizabeth died in detention last year. She was 56 years old. She suffered from sugar diabetes and high blood pressure. She was detained and was not tried until she died. She was a member of the Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation.

Her children saw that she was very sick before she died. They were worried. They wanted her back home, so that they could look after her. But she was only allowed out to be buried.

is not behind

BARS



There are many more who are suffering in prisons. Last year there was a campaign to think about children in detention. This year people are remembering the women who are suffering in jail. The Detainees Parents Support Committee has arranged meetings to pray and protest against the detention of women. Keep your eyes open for meetings in your area. Families of detainees need your support.

TOMMORROW

OUR PEOPLE ARE DYING

Many people have died in Pietermaritzburg townships. Each day more people die. This woman has been forced to leave her home. Her house was burnt down. The attackers said her children were UDF supporters. This woman is now sharing a room with a friend in the township.

We live in a society where people are not free to choose organisations they want to belong to. Until people are free to say how they want a future democratic South Africa achieved, these deaths will continue.



UNITING, FIGHTING



Indian women protest against being treated like things you can buy. Here they protest against the ma

**MARCH 8
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY**

This day unites women all over the world. It unites all women who are fighting for their rights as women and as people. The photographs show women from many countries who have taken up the

FOR OUR RIGHTS!



Marriage dowry system.

the world. It
g for their
These
different
se struggles.



Women in Brazil in 1980. They are on a march to protest against the government. The government had put a lot of metalworkers in prison.



Many, many thousands of women from all around the world become very ill or die from backstreet abortions. Here women in Italy in 1978 are fighting for women to be able to have safe, legal abortions.



International Women's Day in South Africa. Last year the Natal Organisation of Women held a day of plays, poems and songs.

A JOURNAL ABOUT
WOMEN AND GENDER

AGENDA

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION
OF WOMEN
N.O.W
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
MARCH 8th



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1988

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Rape Crisis

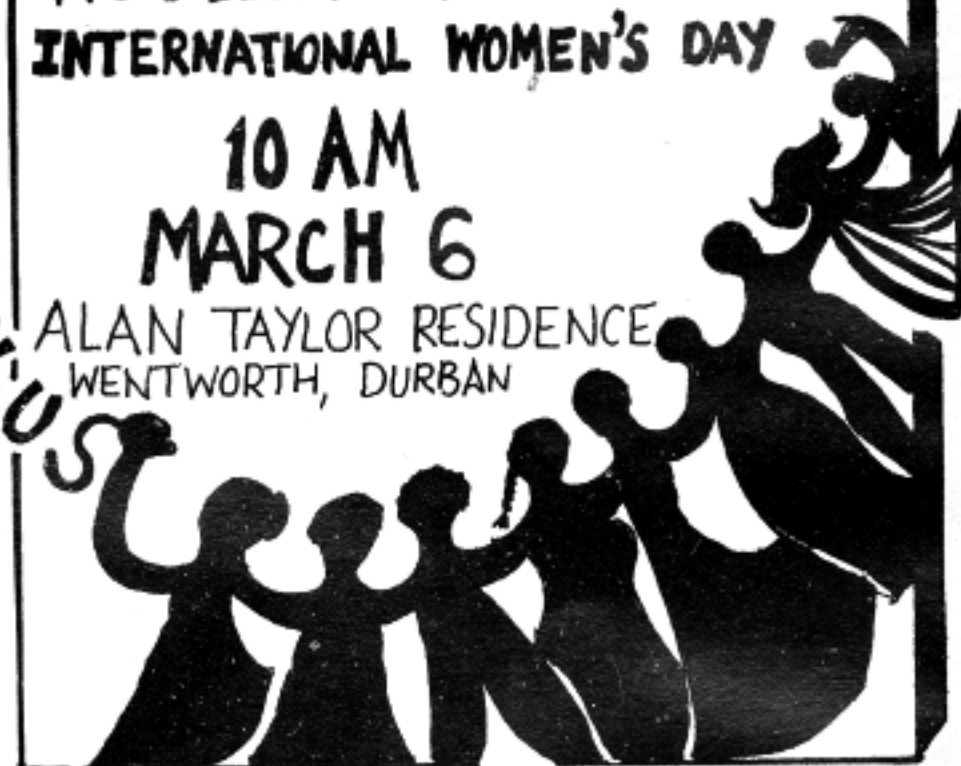
Rape Crisis is a women's
organisation. It advises women who
have been raped or sexually abused.
It also does research into why rape
happens. We are in Durban. If you
would like to talk to us, phone (031)
232323 or 295123.

WOMEN CELEBRATE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

10 AM
MARCH 6

ALAN TAYLOR RESIDENCE
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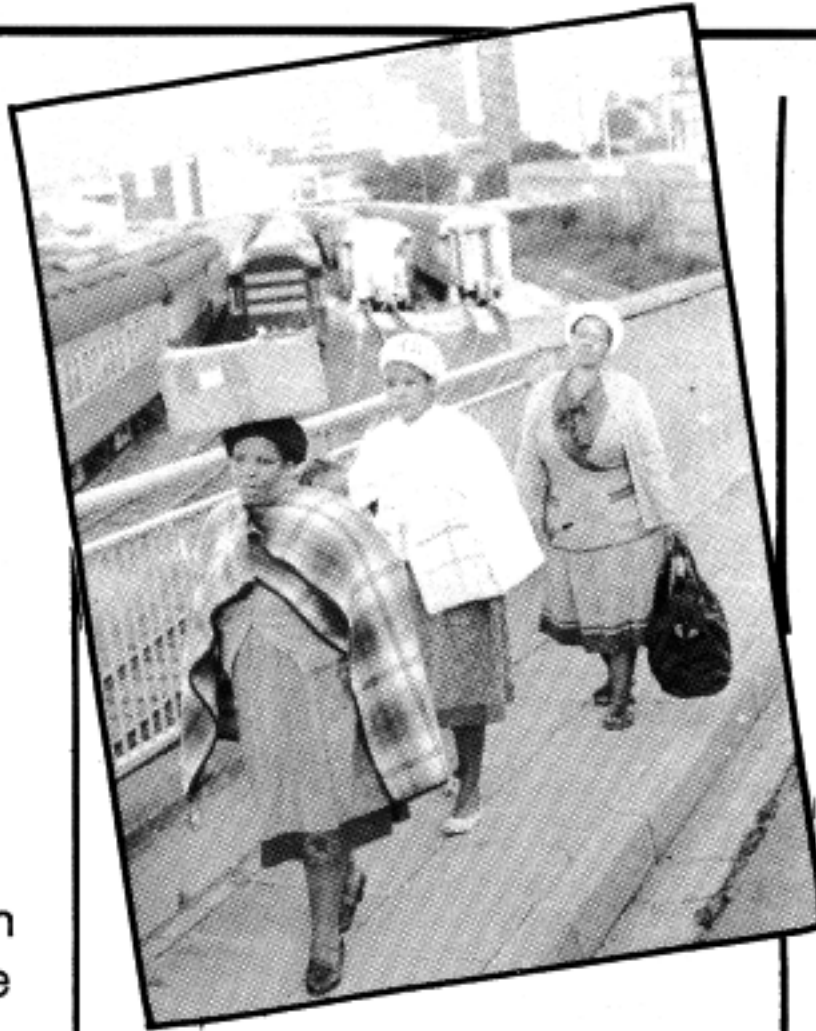
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THULA BABA



Ntombi is 33 years old. She works in a house in the city. She sits down in her room after work and writes about her life and her friends.

The story is told in a book called Thula Baba.

Ntombi starts her story when her baby is one day old. She has three children in the homelands. This baby, her last born, is with her. Ntombi is very happy that she can be a mother to this baby. But she also worries. Her "madam" may change her mind. She might be forced to take her baby away. The police may come and find her baby.

This is the hardest problem for Ntombi and her friends. They cannot be mothers to their own children.

Tembi works in another house. The "madam" is hard and Tembi cannot care for her child who is sick with T.B. She is forced to get another job. The new "madam" lets her keep her child but pays less money.

Sibongile is sick with worry. Her son has been boycotting school with other students in the location. He is arrested by the police. Her "madam" allows her to go the location to see him.

Matshepo is forced to send her baby away. The inspectors find her baby with her and give her 24 hours to



take the child to the homelands.

The women feel for each other. They do their best to help each other. They share the little they have. They go to the station with Matshepo.

Ntombi writes: "At five o'clock this morning we walked to the station. It was dark and cold. It was a long walk. We wore blankets to keep warm. We carried babies on our backs. We carried the boxes on our heads. I have walked to the station five times to send a child away. It doesn't matter if it is my own child, or a sister's child. I feel the same sickness and sadness in my heart. It is such a terrible thing for a mother to send her child away. It is

such a terrible thing for a child to lose her mother.

For me the saddest thing in my life was to take my children on the train and come back without them. For Matshepo it was even worse. She took Teboho home. A month later her baby was dead. I was sick in my heart when I looked at Tshidiso ... He didn't know what was happening. Matshepo did know ... But she had cried her tears last night. She was strong now in the morning.

She smiled at us as the train left the station."

The book makes you feel what the women feel. It tells you about their pain as mothers and workers.

As workers in peoples' homes in South Africa it is not easy for them to organise to change things. The law gives them no protection. Each one is alone with her "madam."

But they see that they can find hope if they stand together.

They say, "We find friendship if we meet together. And we find answers if we talk together. And we find strength if we work together. And we find hope if we stand together."

The book is easy to read. It is in English. It can be used in literacy groups and in discussion groups. There are many photographs in the book. The book costs R4.00 It is published by Ravan Press. P.O. Box 31134 Johannesburg, 2017.

If I Could Jump So

"If I could jump I would jump so high to show how happy I am. I have witnessed many changes for women. We work as bricklayers, we build our own villages, we do all the work we were not free to do before. We are feeling liberated..."

There are women in Mozambique who speak in strong, happy voices about the changes they have seen in their lives. These changes came during the war with the Portuguese. Women were free to do things they could not do before. Women were respected in a new way.

But there are still many things that need to change for men and women in Mozambique today. Some women still suffer under old customs. And there is a war going on against the Mozambique National Resistance. People in Mozambique are fighting to build a country where everyone will live a better life. And women are fighting to make sure that their lives will be better too.

Fighting Portuguese masters

For many years men and women in Mozambique lived very hard lives. They lived under Portuguese masters. Many people worked on the farms and in the factories of rich Portuguese bosses. They were treated badly and earned very little money. Most people had no say in the government. And their children suffered with almost no education and no health care.

Womens lives were very hard. Women were the slaves of slaves. They also suffered under the old traditions like lobola and a man having many wives. Women said, "We women are at the bottom and the men are sitting on top of us."

In 1964 people in Mozambique started the war against the Portuguese. They fought under their organisation Frelimo. Men and women fought side by side. Women formed the Organisation of Mozambican women, the OMM. This was part of Frelimo. Frelimo saw that the struggle had to include a struggle for women's rights. For some women there were new lives, "During the war we women were respected because we were organised. Men and women were equal. One week it was the women who was away. Another week it was the man. When the wife was away, it



Women in Mozambique



was the husband who did the housework and looked after the children. Men and women worked together for the same goal."

But it was not always easy to change the old ideas about women. There were still many men who did not want their wives to be involved in meetings or classes. They beat their wives. Some women were beaten so badly they had to be taken to hospital.

Building is not easy

In 1975 Frelimo won the war against the Portuguese. This was a new government. It brought the promise of a new life for Mozambique. It also brought new hope to us in South Africa. But building a new country was not easy.

Today there is a war in Mozambique between Frelimo and the Mozambique National Resistance, the MNR. Some people have run away from Mozambique to escape the war. Frelimo is still struggling to bring a better life for all people. And it seems like it will be a long struggle before people in Mozambique will see an end to suffering and hardship.

Under Frelimo women have the hope of better lives. Frelimo has brought new laws. There is now paid maternity leave. Women workers get two hours off from work a day to breast feed babies. There are laws against assaults and sexual harrassment to women. There are laws that say men must be responsible for children. Women are taking new jobs. Women are driving tractors, and learning to be mechanics and electricians. There are women judges and magistrates. There are women leaders in Frelimo.

But women say there are still many struggles to take up. The OMM needs more women leaders. Women are still right at the bottom in education. Men still beat their wives. The OMM tries to see to these things. They say that laws are not enough. The way men see women must change also. They work for a time when men and women would be as equals. When there would be respect and comradeship between wives and husbands.