



# SPEAK



OCTOBER - DECEMBER '86

No.12



WHY DO WOMEN HAVE TO CARRY SUCH HEAVY LOADS?

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SPEAK's office is in Durban. Our address is:

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20 St Andrew's Street  
Durban  
4001

Our telephone number is: 3011624

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SPEAK Collective members are: Jane, Karen, Shamim, Sheila and Vanessa. We warmly welcome Phumolele and Jean who are both new SPEAK employees. Thanks to Susan for helping on this issue of SPEAK!

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# LETTERS

Dear SPEAK Collective

I am a loyal person and have a great sense of responsibility because I have to support my three fatherless girls without maintenance. I am sure that many women seem to be in the same predicament.

Because of having definite principles in life I feel like forming a Club of Black Single Mothers to share our problems and to do something for our children's future as they are the future leaders.

Because education is the only key to their future, our start for investigating money can be our talents for example, knitting sewing, crotcheting and any other hand work.

Any interested single parent can contact me in Cape Town or Maud in Durban:

Nomawethu Mnweba  
4 Claassen street  
Welgemoed  
7530  
Cape Town

Maud Dlomo  
P.O. Box 18109  
Dalbridge  
4014  
Durban

# WORKING FOR NOTHING

## IN ISITHEBE

Dudzile works in a clothing factory in Isithebe. She has 8 children and her husband cannot work because he is disabled.

" I wake up every morning at 3 o'clock and prepare food for the young ones who are going to school and for the ones who are staying at home. I spend all day at the factory sewing shoulder seams and if you get lazy you get sent to the office to get scolded. And working hard like this all day I only get R28.00 at the end of the week. I don't want to earn R28.00 a week because it is less money than my problems. When we complain about the money the bosses just say that if you are not satisfied with the money you can leave the job."

This problem of low wages and too much work in the factory and at home is a problem faced by women workers everywhere. But in places like Isithebe factory workers have even more problems than factory workers in town. This is because Isithebe is one of the industrial areas in the 'homelands' or Bantustans.

The Bantustans were created by the South African government. Over many hundreds of years, through battles and later through laws, the White rulers took the land of the African people of South Africa and left them without rights.



Photograph by Sara Ward

This article was written from work done by Lesley Lawson and others in the Sached publication "Working Women", from an article on Isithebe by Collette Pudisin and Sara Ward, and from work on Isithebe by Jill Nicholson.

The apartheid government has moved people off the land so that now 87% of the land ( and the best land at that ) is set aside for White South Africans who make up only 13 % of the population. The rest of the land is set aside as Bantustans for African people. People have always fought against apartheid and Bantustans but the government has been able to keep apartheid and Bantustans going through force and its laws.

The government expects people to live by farming small plots of land in the Bantustans. But the land in the Bantustans is overcrowded, dry and useless and cannot feed the families who live here. Very few have money to buy equipment or seed to make planting possible. So people are forced to look for jobs in order to live. Through its laws that take land away from African people, the government makes sure that they get workers for the towns.

Most often it is the men from these areas who go to the towns outside of the Bantustans working or looking for work. It is mainly the women who are left behind and forced to squeeze out a living for themselves, their children, the sick and disabled. Some work on White farms under very difficult working conditions and earning very low wages. Some try to plant but it is not easy.

Ma Dlomo who lives in a small village in the Transkei says, "I just live, I don't know how I manage. But I do eat. It's hard because I have to go to my neighbours and ask them for a meal. People are good. They do lend money if they have. We have helped each other. It's all there is ".

The factories that are set up in such areas do bring hope of work. Many women desperate for jobs and with no hope of a job in town take jobs in these factories.

The government has been very anxious to help set up factories in these areas. But their concern is not for the workers. They want to show that the Bantustans and apartheid can work. The government wants to spread the factories so that too many workers do not move to the 'white' towns and cities. So they offer many benefits to employers who start factories in Bantustans. Some of these benefits for bosses in Bantustans are:

- \* The law allows bosses to pay as little as they want.
- \* Bosses are given up to R110.00 a month for each worker. Some employers pay workers much less than the R110.00 and so they make a profit out of the money they get from the government, even before getting the profit that is made by the workers work.
- \* Some Bantustans like the Ciskei also offer special low taxes to bosses.
- \* The Bantustan laws don't recognise 'South African' trade unions which makes bosses feel that they can get away with paying low wages and poor working conditions since the Bantustan workers find it more difficult to organise to fight the bosses.

| OCCUPATION     | COUNTRY AREAS<br>in Rands | DECENTRALIZED AREAS<br>in Rands | ESTABLISHED AREAS<br>in Rands |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| MACHINIST      | 32.08(ave)                | 20.00                           | 74.50                         |
| PRESSER        | 32.80(ave)                | 20.00                           | 74.50                         |
| CUTTER         | 36.46(ave)                | 35.50                           | 88.00                         |
| LAYER          | 28.85(ave)                | 20.00                           | 74.50                         |
| GENERAL WORKER | 28.15(ave)                | 18.50                           | 61.00                         |

This table shows the different wages that workers earn, depending on where they work. The 'Established Areas' are towns and cities in 'white South Africa', like Durban. 'Decentralized Areas' are those away from big towns and cities. They are industrial areas that have been created by the government. This is where the government offers special benefits to the bosses.



Photograph by Sara Ward

The bosses know they will find enough workers in these Bantustan areas. They also know that they can make more profits here than they could in town, outside of the Bantustans. Some have even closed down their factories and retrenched workers elsewhere to set up again in the Bantustan industrial areas, where there is cheap labour and the unions are not strong.

The bosses and government are not concerned with how much the workers earn, about their conditions of work or how they live. The bosses only concern is to make more profits from the Bantustan industry system. The government's concern is to try to show that apartheid is working.

For the women workers in these areas the only hope lies in organising together. These factories have brought work. But workers have a right to a living wage, safe working conditions and the right to fight to ensure that they have these things.

As Gugu who works in a textile factory in Isithebe, says, "The main problem is that we are working very hard. If one asks for the workload to be reduced that person is dismissed immediately. Six or seven women have been dismissed for this reason. Also the wages are very low it's a big problem. I have worked at three factories in Isithebe and they are all the same. I am interested in joining the Textile Union. I have seen some factories here who have joined the union. If they ask for improvements they get what they want. In fact even if a person makes a mistake she is not dismissed like a dog."

At the time of writing this article (October 1986), workers from Scotford Mills in Durban who are members of the Garment Workers' Union are on strike over a dispute with their bosses who want to move the factory to a Bantustan. The garment workers in Natal have decided to go on a work stoppage in early October to protest against the problems workers are experiencing as a result of the large number of factories that are moving to the Bantustans.



Photograph by Sara Ward

## COURT CHALLENGES TO EMERGENCY

Since the State of Emergency was declared many thousands of people have been arrested. Offices and homes of progressive people have been raided. Many have been forced to go into hiding. People have been killed. By declaring a State of Emergency the government wanted to stop us knowing about what is happening in our country. The government is trying to stop the unrest and resistance against apartheid and inequality. But people have not been defeated. Organisations are carrying on. Organisations have in some cases taken the government to court over The State of Emergency. In July the Metal and Allied Workers' Union took the government to court. As a result, the court said that lawyers should be allowed to visit all State of Emergency detainees. Some detainees were released because of this. Newspapers have challenged the government restrictions on journalists collecting and writing about what is going on. In some cases the government just changes the laws to make them tighter. But organisations will continue to challenge these new laws.

Organisations that have been affected by the State of Emergency are carrying on their work. Organisations have been forced to organize harder and better. New leaders came into the places of those detained. People are strengthening their struggle for a better life in South Africa.

If you need some help in trying to find a person who is missing and possibly detained, then Learn and Teach Magazine has produced a list of organisations that can try to help. The list was in Learn and Teach number 5 1986.

Learn and Teach phone number is:  
(011) 8383039 and (011) 8383030

For those in Durban the telephone number of the Durban Detainees Support Committee is (031) 315164.



## COMMEMORATION SERVICE

The Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) held a service on the 2nd of August 1986 to commemorate the life of Victoria Mxenge. Victoria was an executive member of NOW and a civil rights lawyer. She was brutally murdered last August.



Photo: Chris Qwazi, Afrapix

## ACTIVIST UNABLE TO ATTEND SON'S FUNERAL

In August, a mother was unable to attend her son's funeral because she feared the police would arrest her. Her son had been shot [REDACTED]. Because she has been active in working for a better South Africa, she was denied the freedom to be at her son's burial.

## WORKERS WIN FACTORY CRECHE

The BMW workers in South Africa have won the right to have a creche for their children at the factory. The creche will be financed by the bosses. A joint committee of the union (National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union) and the company is now investigating all aspects of the creche.

## WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

When 1 200 women of varying class and race met together for the National Assembly of Women conference in Johannesburg in early August, it was a big voice of women.

The women came together as women to talk about what they are doing and can do in the fight against the ideas that place women as well as workers and Black people in an inferior and disadvantaged position.

Issues raised were very varied, but they were all looked at from one united perspective - "How are we as women going to tackle these problems". As one speaker, Dr Mamphela Ramphele said: "You can remove apartheid today and this country won't change fundamentally. What has to alter is power relations".

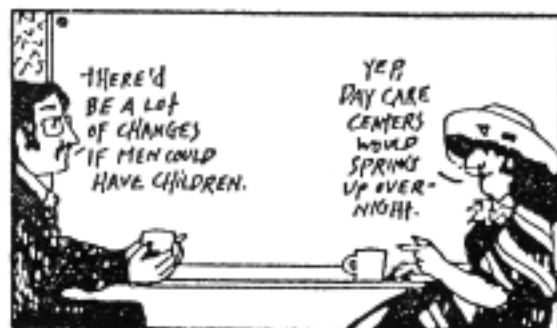
## COSATU'S DEMANDS FOR DETAINEES

COSATU has met with representatives from the major bosses organisations and made these demands for their members who are detained:

- \* No COSATU member who is detained should be dismissed.
- \* Any detained COSATU member should be paid their wages in full during the time spent in detention.

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 1956 - 1986

In Durban, women came together around the time of August the 9th in solidarity against our oppression now, and in remembrance of women's struggles in the past. At the University of Natal, two separate meetings were organised by the Black Student Society (BSS) and the University Forum. On the 23rd of August a women's cultural day and evening was held at Alan Taylor Residence, organised by the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) and BSS. There was singing, poetry reading and plays. The message that was left by the Greenwood Park youth after a short play was: "Remember, there will be no liberated man before women are liberated."



# YESTERDAY TODAY & TOMORROW

## CLOVER WORKERS

### FIGHTING FOR REINSTATEMENT

Clover workers are fighting for the reinstatement of their fellow Clover workers in Pietermaritzburg. Support committees in Natal and the Transvaal have been set up. The Clover workers all belong to the Food and Allied Workers' Union.

## CHESTERVILLE CLINIC

A few months ago, women in Chesterville started a first aid clinic because of the problem of getting ambulances for injured people. A few weeks later, police closed the clinic down, saying that the women were holding meetings which is illegal under the State of Emergency. But those women did not give up. Before long they organised to get permission from the Township Manager to re-open the clinic. Supplies for the clinic are urgently needed. Anybody who can help in however small way, with aspirin, bandages or any medical equipment, please leave your contributions at:

The Women's Centre  
10 Ecumenical Centre  
20 St Andrews Street  
Durban  
Phone: 3012696

## 'WOMEN AGAINST RACISM' DEMONSTRATE

About fifty women from a group called "Women Against Racism" tried to block traffic outside the South African Embassy in Canberra, Australia. The angry women hurled balloons filled with paint, smashed the embassy windows, and punched police officers. The women were dragged away after they tried to sit in on the main road in front of the embassy. Fifteen women were arrested.



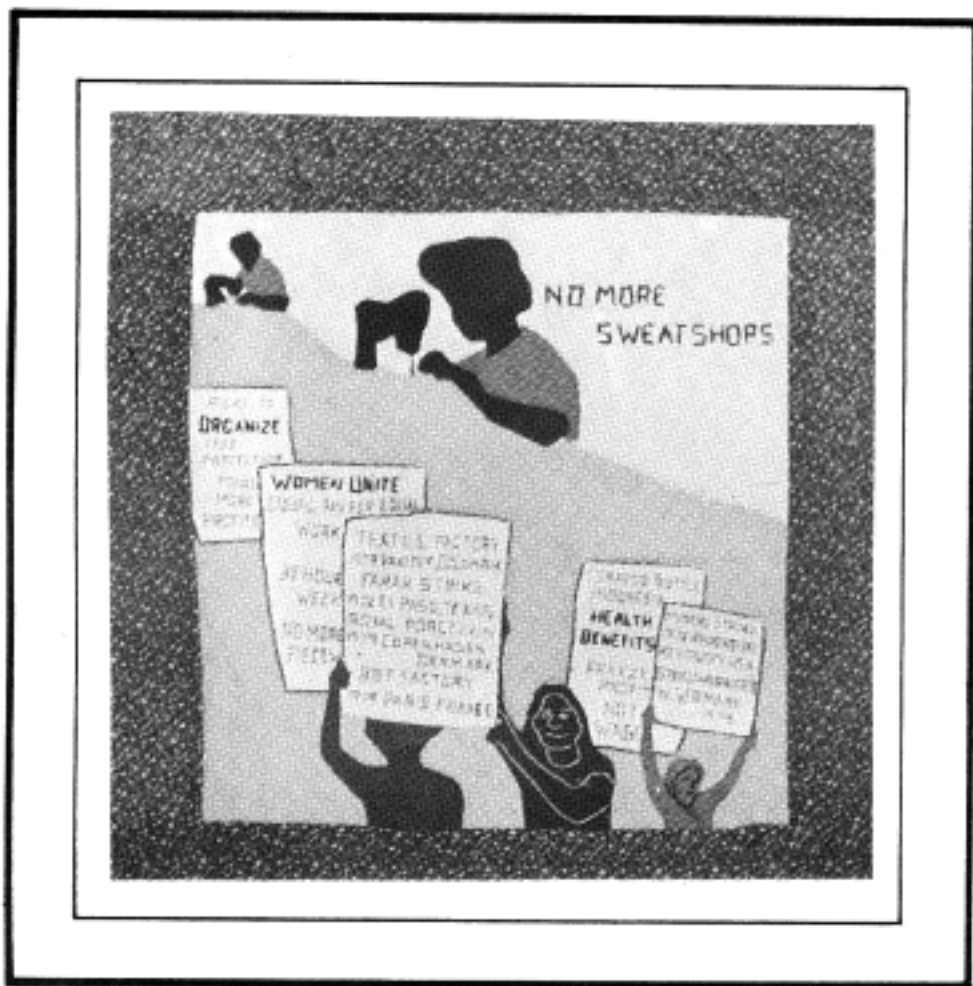
# WOMEN'S ART



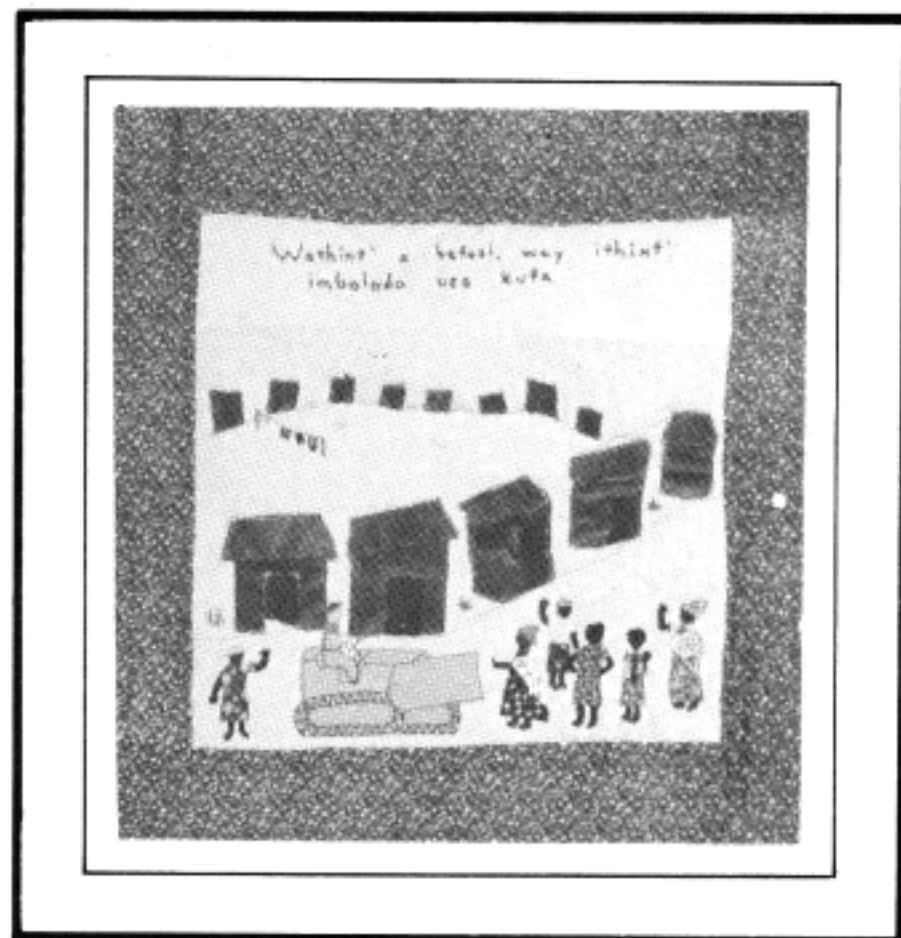
Fifteen women from Sweden made and sent this banner of life-size women to Greenham Common, where women are demonstrating against the nuclear missiles that the USA government has built at Greenham Common in England



# — QUILT WORK



This quilt was made by women in support of women workers' strikes around the world where women are fighting to make sure that working people have healthy, decent working conditions.



Women's successful resistance to apartheid in South Africa. "Now you have touched the woman, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed."

# ***SHE STILL WANTED TO SCREAM***

By Zaidi Harneker

Lindi is a girl of fifteen. She lives in Umlazi - a township which speaks of the joys and sorrows of Lindi's people.

In 1971 Lindi was born to Agnes and Samuel - they were both blind people. So Lindi became the eyes of both her parents. They were very dependent on her. She was not able to go to school since her mother and father went to work and she had to be a mother to her baby sister, Zodwa. So, Lindi never learnt to read and write and she didn't learn to speak English and understand the things in life which some of the other girls and boys in the township learn in school and from one another.

One Friday evening at dusk, Lindi's mother and father sent her to the shop to buy some milk and bread for the family. As always, Lindi was quite happy to go to the shop for her mother and father since she understood that it was difficult for her parents to do so. And she always looked forward to seeing some of her friends at the shop since they'd tell her stories about the school that she could not attend. But, on that Friday night Lindi didn't meet any of her friends so she had to walk the distance home all by herself. On her

way home, Lindi was softly humming to herself and thinking of her mother and father and the stories that they used to tell her. Suddenly, a young boy approached her with a large knife and said: "Walk to the bush, before I kill you." Lindi said: "But why should I go to the bush, I have to take this food home to my family." She felt very scared because this boy wanted to kill her if she didn't do as he told her to. She thought about her parents and family and how much they needed her and she didn't understand why this boy wanted her to go to the bush or kill her. But he forced her to go with him.

This boy did things to Lindi which she did not understand. All she knew was that he was hurting her very badly and she cried and cried. When he had done to her what he wanted to, he decided that he wanted to kill her. She pleaded with him and said: "Please you cannot kill me - what about my mother and father - they are both blind and who will lead them to my body if you should kill me and leave me in this bush which they do not know." This boy then decided that because Lindi's parents were blind, he'd allow her to live. Lindi walked away from him bleeding and feeling very sore. She cried and cried all the way home - she needed to be with her mother to ask her to bathe her and to share with her the physical and emotional pain that she was experiencing. She wanted to speak with her mother because she did not understand.

Lindi arrived home crying. Her father called the police who decided to forget Lindi and the pain that she was experiencing. He took her to the doctor who washed her, gave her some ointment and decided to forget about the pain that



Painting by Melanie Naidoo

Lindi was feeling. The only person who understood and felt Lindi's pain was her mother, but didn't know how to help her.

Because Lindi's mother understood and felt Lindi's pain, every time her child spoke to her about the day the boy took her into the bush, every time Lindi started wanting to talk about that horrible day, her mother called her to her side and told her stories about the farm on which her mother and father lived - the work they used to do, the walks they used to take and the birth of Lindi and Zodwa on the farm. She also told her stories about the school for the blind which she used to go to in Cape Town. Her mother didn't realise that what Lindi needed was to talk and talk and talk about her terrible experience until she had talked some of it right out of her body.

So everytime Lindi wanted to talk - her mother thought of a story to tell her child so that she could try to forget the pain and not cry. But, until today, late, late at night when her mother is asleep, Lindi remembers that Friday evening at dusk - the boy, the knife, the bush, the fear, the pain, the anger - and Lindi still feels the need to SCREAM!!!

Because this is a true story, the names of the people have been changed.

Rape Crisis is an organisation which helps women and girls who have been raped. Their phone number in Durban is: 232323 Lifeline or 295123 Autopage.

# THE WOMEN'S CENTRE BOOK REVIEWS

an idea to share!  
a poem you've written!  
a drawing!  
**WRITE TO SPEAK!**  
a story to tell!  
a letter!  
a photograph you like!

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**A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE - The Lives of Older Women** by Susan Hemmings  
 Eighteen women from Britain, between the ages of 40 and 65 talk about what they've done with their lives. Each story is different, with women talking about different problems, hopes, frustrations and joys, and about all the various people in their lives. The stories are six to ten pages long, and make interesting reading.

**THE UNBELONGING** by Joan Riley  
 Hyacinth's cruel father forces her to leave her happy childhood in Jamaica to live with him in Britain. This powerful story takes you into Hyacinth's life in a foreign country. It tells of her painful experiences of her father and other men, and of the problem of racism. She dreams of returning to Jamaica. 'The Unbelonging' is a book written in such a way that you feel completely part of Hyacinth's life.

**YOUR BODY, YOUR BABY, YOUR LIFE** by Angela Phillips  
 Many people write baby books in which they suggest ways of bringing up children. There are many ways of bringing up children and in this book, Angela Phillips has put together the experiences of parents themselves. They share their ideas with you, or criticize what mistakes they feel they have made. It is one of the best supports for mothers there is around!

Pandora Books sent The Women's Centre some exciting new women's books. Here we write about just three of them!

These books, and many more can be borrowed from The Women's Centre.

It costs R2.00 to join the library, and books can be borrowed for a month at a time. The Women's Centre is at The Ecumenical Centre, Office 10, 20 St Andrew's Street, Durban. The phone number is 3012696.

# Periods— We All Have Them!

"I remember the first time I had a period. I had waited with excitement for this to happen, because I knew I would be fussed over. I got a new white dress and presents from all my family. I had to sit in one room while they all came to see me."

"When I lived with my family on the farm, the women in our family were not allowed to drink milk or amasi from the family cows when we had our periods. In the city, it doesn't matter now because the milk and amasi we drink comes from the shops anyway."

"For me having my periods is a difficult time when I am visiting my husband's family. I know that with his family's customs a woman doesn't eat with the others during this time. But I feel too shy to tell them. So I try and hide that I've got a period and hope no one will find out."

"When I was younger and lived with my mother, periods were a difficult time. My mother always told me not to wash my hair or walk around with bare feet when I had my periods!"

How each woman experiences her periods depends on many things - her age, religion, wealth, the customs and beliefs about women in her part of the world, and the amount of information that

is available. For all women something very natural is happening to our bodies - our monthly egg has not been fertilised and so our uterus does not need its lining of spongy tissue for a baby to grow in. This comes out as our period and it happens to all women every month unless they are pregnant.

There are all sorts of ideas and customs about women's periods. Both now and in the old days menstruating women are and were seen to be something different - a bit dirty. But at the same time they are seen as special, for example - in some customs a time for women to be separate from other people, and for some it is a time to rest.



With support amongst women growing stronger we women can begin to see that our periods are something really special about us. Having them enables us to bear children. This is not to say that periods don't still cause us pains and problems! But we don't need to feel dirty and uncomfortable when we have our periods. We can start asking for support from people close to us if our periods are bad. It is our right to rest if we need to. We have got to fight for better conditions at work and at home.

Periods are also a money issue, especially when it comes to what women use to catch their flow of blood. These days women with money can choose between pads, tampons, natural sponges and diaphragms. But these often become luxuries when money is short.

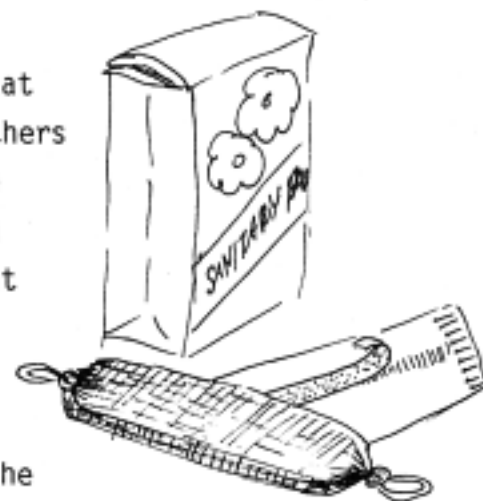
So many women end up using anything from pieces of soft cloth to cotton scraps, toilet paper and newspaper. Some of these can cause infections. But even the expensive tampons which are meant to be so safe, have caused some serious problems for women.

Let's start talking to each other more about our periods. They are not dirty and we don't want our daughters and sons to grow up thinking they are. We must start thinking about ways to help women rest more when they have period problems, and to make sure that all women can use comfortable, safe methods to catch their blood flow.

# Ways of Catching Menstrual Blood

## SANITARY TOWELS AND PADS

These come in all shapes, sizes and prices these days. There are ones that keep on with an elastic belt, and others that stick onto your pants. They are safe to use and are thrown away each time after use. Pads and tampons that are perfumed are not good for your vagina, as the chemicals from the perfume can cause irritations. For bleeding after the birth of a baby the cotton pads like Dr Whites are much more gentle on cut or sore vaginas.



## TOILET PAPER AND NEWSPAPER

If used outside the vagina toilet paper is not so harmful so long as bits don't get stuck in the vagina. But it is not very good at catching blood. Ink from newspaper is not healthy used in or outside the vagina. Putting toilet paper and newspaper inside the vagina is harmful because it is often not very clean, and little bits can easily stay inside you. This can cause serious infections.



## DIAPHRAGMS

The diaphragms that are used as contraceptives can also be used to catch blood during periods. They are inserted into vagina and they hold quite a lot of blood at a time. They are just washed and put back inside. If they are kept very clean they do not cause problems like infections. Unfortunately diaphragms are expensive to buy from chemists and very few family planning clinics keep them.



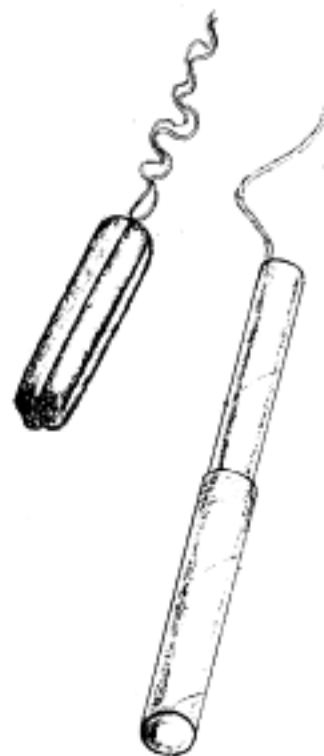
## NATURAL SPONGES

These sponges come from the sea. They are very small. First of all the sponge is made soft by wetting it and then squeezing out the extra water. It is then pushed into the vagina where it just fits into your shape. When full of blood the sponge is taken out, washed and squeezed out, and then re-used. There don't seem to be any problems with natural sponges. The problem with these sponges for us is that they are not available in South Africa. They can be bought mainly in Britain and USA.



## TAMPONS

Tampons are made of very tightly packed cotton wool. Tampons are pushed into the vagina so the blood is absorbed before coming out. Each tampon has a string on the end to pull it out with when it needs to be changed. Tampons are often used because they are convenient and comfortable, although some women do find them uncomfortable or sore to use. The large or super-absorbent tampons are dangerous, even if you bleed a lot, because they absorb too much moisture from the vagina walls. It can be better not to use tampons when there is only a little blood flow, like at the end of your period, for the same reason.



## COTTON SCRAPS

They are not a problem used outside the vagina if they have been washed clean. But inside the vagina there will be the same problem as toilet paper because pieces left behind will cause infections. One good thing is that at least cotton scraps are free or cheap.





**2000 WOMEN WORKING IN A FACTORY IN ISITHEBE**