

The Simunye Women Workers Forum

The Simunye Women Workers Forum raises the awareness of women about their exploitation and oppression. The Forum mobilises support for women's struggles and tries to connect workplace struggles with community struggles. The SWWF is part of the Simunye Workers Forum, an unregistered trade union which organises mainly labour broker and contract workers. The SWF has successfully fought for permanent jobs, improved wages and conditions of employment and access to benefits for workers since 2015.

Casual Workers Advice Office

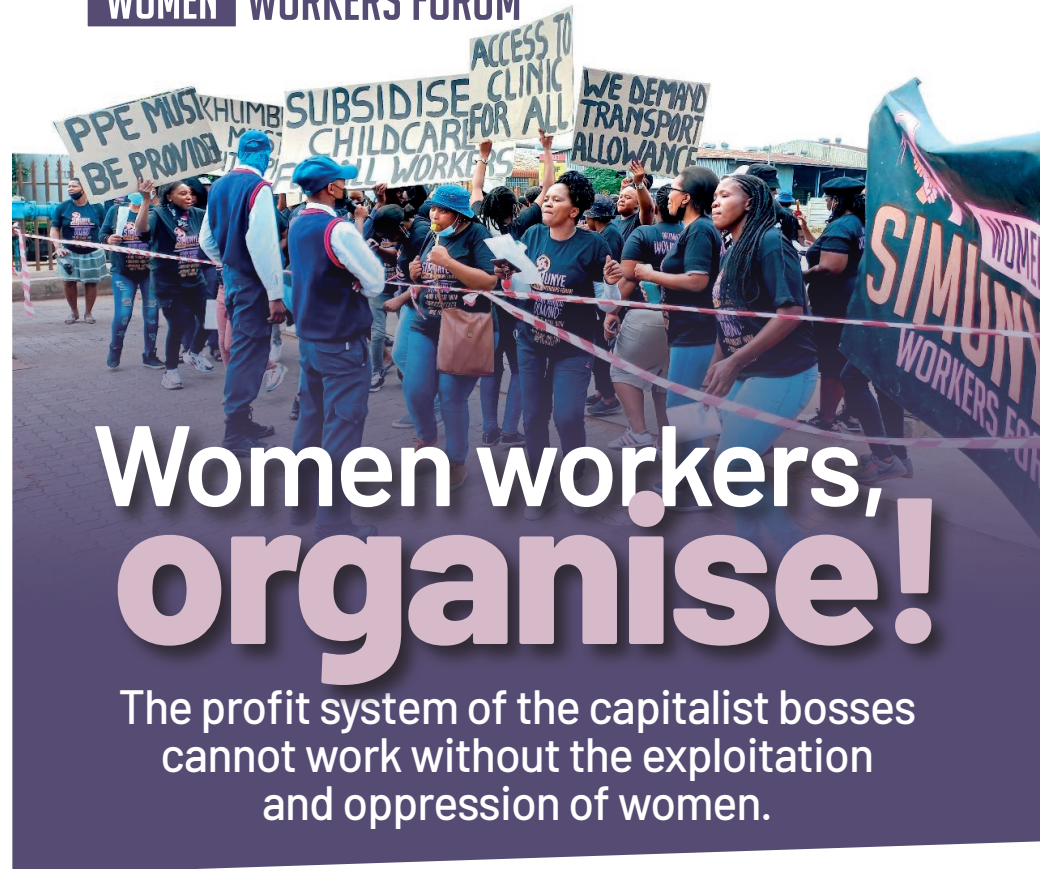
The Casual Workers Advice Office is based in Germiston and provides free support to workers who want to organise and fight their bosses. It also supports the Simunye Workers Forum and the Simunye Women Workers Forum.



Contact the Simunye Workers Forum,
the Simunye Women Workers Forum or
the Casual Workers Advice Office

on
082 812 1934 or 011 873 0903.

Or visit us at 2 High Road, Germiston.



The unpaid work of women in the home gives bosses higher profits

In the home, women cook, clean, raise children and look after the sick and the elderly. All for mahala. If workers had to pay women for things like cooking and cleaning, they would not survive on their wages. They would have to demand higher wages from their bosses.

Higher wages always mean lower profits for the bosses. In other words, the unpaid labour that women perform in the home allows bosses to pay workers lower wages and to make higher profits. Women also provide them with future generations of workers to exploit.

Women are also exploited at work

Many women also do paid work for the bosses in addition to unpaid work in the home. At work women workers are exploited like all other workers. Under capitalism, the bosses keep the profits that workers create through their labour. Workers are never paid wages for all the work they do. They are paid wages to keep them alive so that the bosses can exploit them again the next week. The value of a worker's wages is the amount of food, clothing and shelter that worker will need to stay alive so that the boss can again exploit them.

Women do the lowest paying jobs

Although women workers are exploited like other workers, women do the lowest paying and worst jobs. Many of these jobs are similar to the jobs they do at home, like sewing, preparing food, cleaning and caring for the sick. The bosses say these are not skilled jobs so pay women low wages. Domestic workers and women farm workers are amongst the lowest paid workers in the country. Bosses also argue that women are not the 'breadwinners' of the family and can therefore be paid lower wages than men, even when they are doing the same jobs.

New forms of work

Over the past 20 to 30 years bosses have started replacing permanent, full-time workers with labour broker and sub-contracted workers. Many of these workers are women. The new kinds of workers do not have job security, they earn about half of what permanents doing the same jobs earn, they have poor conditions of employment and no benefits. Many of them find themselves in labour pools, where they work only a few days per week or per month, even as 'permanents'. It is normal now to work over weekends and public holidays and more workers are working shifts. It is also normal to go to work, wait around for a few hours and then to be



sent home without pay. The trade unions, whose members are mainly permanent workers, have failed to organise the new workers, exposing them to even further exploitation.

Women workers are most affected by the new forms of work

The new forms of work are affecting women workers the most. Women are forced to exchange sex for work. This sometimes leads to breakdown in their relationships with their partners. Even when they do get scheduled, women get paid close to or even under the very low national minimum wage of R25.42 (from 1 March 2023). Being scheduled can mean working just a few days per week or per month, paid by the hour. This forces many women into doing braiding, selling or taking other piece jobs to survive.

Workers often get an SMS to come to work at short notice. For women, this means having to find childcare at short notice, or locking young children up in the house for long hours. The same happens when women work nightshift. Or they have to pay fines for fetching children late from creche when they work overtime. Shift work, especially night shift, also means women are not safe when they travel to and from work.

The position of women is made worse by government policies that favour the bosses, like cutting expenses on healthcare, housing, education, social grants and all other services that affect workers and their communities. Cutting expenses allows the government to cut the taxes of the bosses. Less tax means more profit.

The new forms of work affect women workers' home life, work life and also their life in the community. As one comrade said: 'We are not part of society.' The only way for women to become part of society is to change that society. The only way to change society is to organise.