



SPEAK



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Dear Women,

We are very happy to have this opportunity to write to you as women of Sunduza. We have an organisation which started with a membership of fifty people, both men and women. This organisation grew in numbers, but nobody has any experience in running an organisation. The name of the organisation is the Luncedo Farm centre. We have a big house where we sell all kinds of seeds needed by the local people. We also have tractors, and all kinds of tools for ploughing.

We weigh the seeds when they are being sold. And when a tractor is used to plough a certain field the number of times it enters and goes out of a field are counted. This has caused a great problem.

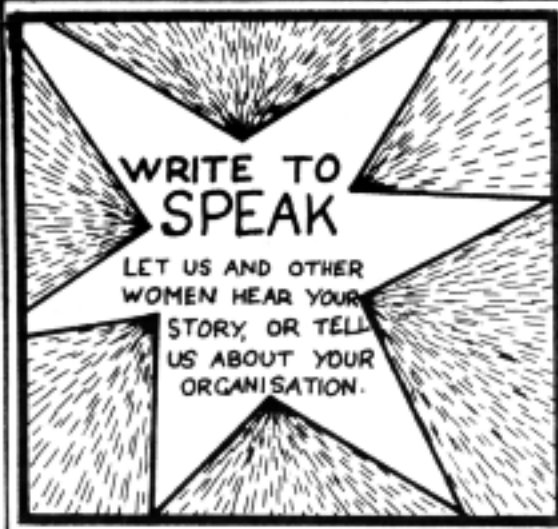
We would like different people to do the jobs so that everybody learns to do all the work.

Yours sincerely,

WOMEN OF SUNDUZA. (TRANSKEI).

* * * * *

SPEAK thanks the Women of Sunduza for this letter. We would like other readers to write about their organisations and problems, so that we can share our experiences.



TWO WOMEN'S GROUPS

There are a number of women's groups, in fact each township has more than one organised women's group. SPEAK went to 2 women's groups in two townships around Durban and asked the members of these groups to share with us and SPEAK readers some of their experiences.

The KWA MASHU WOMEN'S GROUP started in February 1983. There are about 35 women who are members of the group. The group organises handwork and cookery classes for women in the area and also sees to the needs of some families in the area who need help with groceries.

A member of the group told SPEAK, " One of the main activities we plan for this year is a welcome for Dorothy Nyembe who is to return to Kwa Mashu this year after 15 years of prison. " Dorothy Nymbe is a resident of Kwa Mashu who was very active in the struggle against passes for women, and who spent her life fighting for freedom for the Black people of this country. The KWA MASHU WOMEN'S GROUP is working with the Kwa Mashu Youth Group in planning this welcome home for Dorothy.

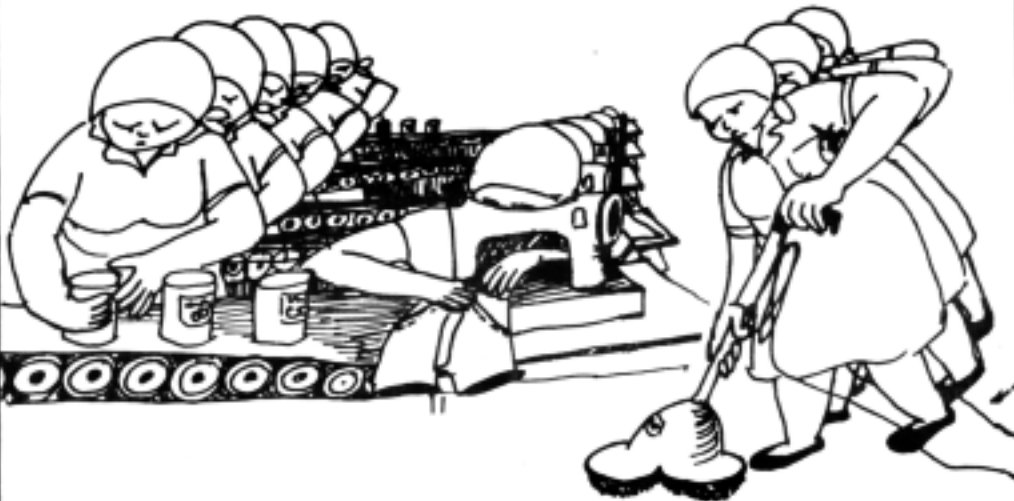
SPEAK met members of a Women's Group in Phoenix - the PHOENIX WOMEN'S CIRCLE that was started in 1978. At that time the Durban City Council planned to cut Phoenix off from Durban so that it could be autonomous. This would have meant that the residents of Phoenix would have had to pay for all their own needs in Phoenix and that they would have to therefore pay higher rents, higher light bills and water charges. Already life was difficult. With autonomy things would be much worse. All the organisations in the area protested against this. The women set up an organisation through which they could make their voices heard, and so the Phoenix Women's Circle was set up. The Women's Circle still continues to function. "We have been running preschool classes for children a year before they start school. This is now our main activity. We try to involve mothers and women in the community in running the preschool and in this way have new members join us. A lot of our time is spent in raising funds for the preschool, in arranging excursions, and training for our teachers.



MARY MAGUBANE USED TO WORK IN A FOOD FACTORY. SHE HELPED START THE SWEET FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION. SHE WAS A SHOP STEWARD AND IS NOW AN ORGANISER FOR SWEET FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION. SHE HAS ONE CHILD AND SHE LIVES WITH HER PARENTS WHO ARE BOTH PENSIONERS. SHE SPEAKS ABOUT

THE PROBLEMS OF WOMEN WORKERS

More and more women are going out to work. At present women make up more than a quarter of the workforce. Half of these women are employed in the services such as domestic and office workers. But the majority of them are in the food and clothing industry. Generally then working class women in South Africa start off at a great disadvantage in jobs that are the most boring, tiring, which don't need any certificate, are the worst paid and least secure.



Because most women are unskilled they are easily replaced. They don't have bargaining strength with their bosses especially when unemployment is high.

Then again management is reluctant to train women. They argue that women don't stay long enough in jobs, that they go off to have children. That's their

argument. So, to make training worthwhile bosses don't train women and they don't see it is their responsibility to protect the jobs of pregnant women.

The Factories' Act makes no provision for paid maternity leave. The u.I.F. will only pay maternity benefits to women who are earning less than one-third of their normal wage and even then it is only 45 percent of the normal wage. This issue is left to the union to take up with the bosses. The ability then to bear children makes it difficult for women. It is an excuse for management who are reluctant to employ women in many jobs or to train or promote them. This attitude of employers to pregnancy is also a reason why women accept unpleasant and unsafe contraception such as depo provera injection.



I can give examples of factories where management run clinics of such contraception - Kellogs and Simba chips.



Then there are other health problems that women workers suffer from. Some of these are health hazards that only women suffer from. Others are problems that both men and women suffer from. But because there are more women in some jobs this causes a problem. A problem that only women suffer from is that of spontaneous abortion or the birth of a handicapped child. This can be caused by a number of things. One is carrying of heavy articles working with

essence of food colouring, sugar, spices, salt and salt dust. These things can affect the unborn child.

Then there is the problem that women in the food industry suffer from, that is working in extremely cold refrigerated spaces without protective clothing.



Then there is the problem many women in the service industry face when they work night shift. They go home to take care of their families. In the end they develop stress related illnesses which are common among women workers.

There is the major point that women get sexual abuse and harassment. For example in one factory a woman worker couldn't get an increase, when other workers got an increase, because the white supervisor wanted her to love him and she refused to love him. Presently we are investigating this case.



In many ways working class women in employment are very vulnerable. They are the most discriminated against and the most exploited.



LIFE OF A WOMEN ORGANISER

IN THIS INTERVIEW, WHICH APPEARED IN LABOUR BULLETIN, MAMA LYDIA NGWENA, THE TRANSVAAL ORGANISER OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION TALKS ABOUT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WOMEN ORGANISERS FACE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED BY JEREMY BASKIN.

HOW DID YOU JOIN THE UNION?



In 1974 I was working at Heinemann Electric and was approached by Mawu. There were mostly women at this factory. In three months we managed to organise the entire plant. I was nominated a shop steward. In 1977 I started working for the unions for

Mawu. I was the only women organiser in Mawu in the Transvaal. I was nominated in 1978 to get Transport and General Workers' Union off the ground. By then there were still no women organisers .

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A WOMAN WORKING WITH ALL THESE MEN ?

It was a real problem at the beginning but I learned to live with it. I felt inferior all the time, maybe because we African women think we are inferior to men.



They were expecting me to do things. For example at lunch time people would put in money and they'd nominate me to go and buy lunch with the excuse that I could choose better because I'm a woman. It became a habit that every lunch time I should run around buying lunch, making tea for them, after that washing the dishes. My job would fall behind because I'd have to finish all the jobs they'd left behind from lunch time. Some of the young guys had already realised this was no good and suggested we should start rotating buying lunch. It was the young ones not the old ones. By the end I was quite happy because other organisers were prepared to share the jobs with me and not push me too much at lunch time to do jobs because I am a woman. I got used to resisting, saying, 'I'm not here to become the tea girl'. But at first it was quite hard.

DID YOUR HUSBAND OBJECT ?

That was a real problem. After I became a shop steward we were having excessive meetings, maybe twice a week. Our management was very hard so we needed a lot of planning. We'd have these meetings after work. My husband expects me to be home between 5.30 and 6 p.m. But sometimes I wouldn't

even get home because we'd be having meetings at our centre in Tembisa and I was living in Alexandra. Sometimes it was too late to go home and I'd sleep with friends. That made him very unhappy and it made our life very miserable.

He couldn't see why I was involved in this. He was scared that I'd be in politics and land in jail. He'd get very unhappy and think I was making excuses about meetings when I was going out jorling. When we got dismissed it was worse because he felt I deserved it. How could we overpower the management?



DID YOU TRY TO EXPLAIN TO HIM ?

Yes, always, and encouraging him to organise at his place. He was a worker, at a laboratory in Jeppe. But they had no union.

We'd have general meetings on weekends at Alexandra. We'd leave 8 a.m. and have whole day meetings. He claimed I had no time for him anymore. You know what husbands are like. He'd complain that I don't do anything -cook, make tea or do the washing for him. It's true that I preferred to do the washing at night rather than miss any meeting. I'd rather strain and overwork at night to satisfy him. But he wasn't happy and said that wasn't the answer. He needed me to be with him. But he couldn't put me off because I felt it was important to carry on. Now he's got used to it and he doesn't worry so much. He's getting old. That's the problem with married women in the organisation. You're in the middle and don't know what to do. Even at work if you think of problems at home you can't concentrate. You find yourself getting depressed. What will you find at home? What attitude will you get from your husband, and even your children?



DO MALE ORGANISERS HERE HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM ?

Yes, their wives also complain of the same thing. One of our organisers had to break his marriage. His wife couldn't stand it. She felt she wasn't useful to him. She



was young and didn't understand, maybe because she wasn't a worker before. But even if she was she wouldn't think it was worthwhile for her husband to stay away. She was not committed.

DO WOMEN HAVE SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHEN IT COMES TO JOINING THE UNION

At Heinemann we had six women shop stewards out of twelve. This was because we were insisting and our organiser, Khubeka, was encouraging us. But our chairman was a man. During meetings we tried to fight the underminings of women's suggestions. They thought we were not saying strategic things. But we managed to fight that. if a woman

Stands up and puts a motion or a suggestion it should be taken into consideration. We succeeded at Heinemanns because women outnumbered men. The women were taking the lead when we were on strike. They weren't scared even when the police were trying to trash us and scare us with dogs. I think that's when the women realised that women can be determined.



But now we have some women shop stewards from Anglo and even though they're not taking the lead (there are some men) they are actually participating quite well. I don't know if it is perhaps because these men have been organised by me and they give them respect. There are now a lot of women in FOSATU but no union has yet elected a branch chairlady. Off hand I don't know even of a chairlady of the shopstewards committee. Perhaps a female treasurer since people think a women is more responsible and will be more careful Even the women feel its important to elect men.

EXCLUDING OFFICIALS, ARE THERE WOMEN WORKERS ON THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Yes, particularly from Port Elizabeth, the Coloured women and some from the Western Cape.



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION FOR WOMEN ?

If the women officials were allowed to have their own grouping to discuss the day to day problems that we encounter in the union. Having meetings of women is the first step. Then maybe lectures later for our male executives and general membership.



If we could give especially the young ones an education it would not only assist the organisation but also their families. This business of oppressing women at home with unnecessary jobs maybe it will come to an end and the men will help out.

BUT WHY SHOULD WOMEN BE EQUAL ?

Why can't we be equal. What do men see us lacking ? If they could tell what we are lacking to achieve the same rights in the union or in the family then I'd understand. But they don't give us proper reasons. Just that a woman is a woman! I'm not yet convinced. We pay subs equally, we work the same shifts, we work the same jobs, we participate in the same way in the unions. So I don't see why we can't have an equal say and equal rights! Why can't we have the right to have a say in one grouping, even if at home we are suffering ? I think it's time for women to come together and see this thing as a major problem for us. So that eventually we can

achieve the same rights. And we must think of many ways of doing this. It's a problem that will go ahead from one generation to another if we don't actually work on it. I wouldn't like my child to grow the same as I was. as I am now. I would like my grandchildren to actually feel free. In organisations, at home, everywhere. They should have the same say, the same rights.



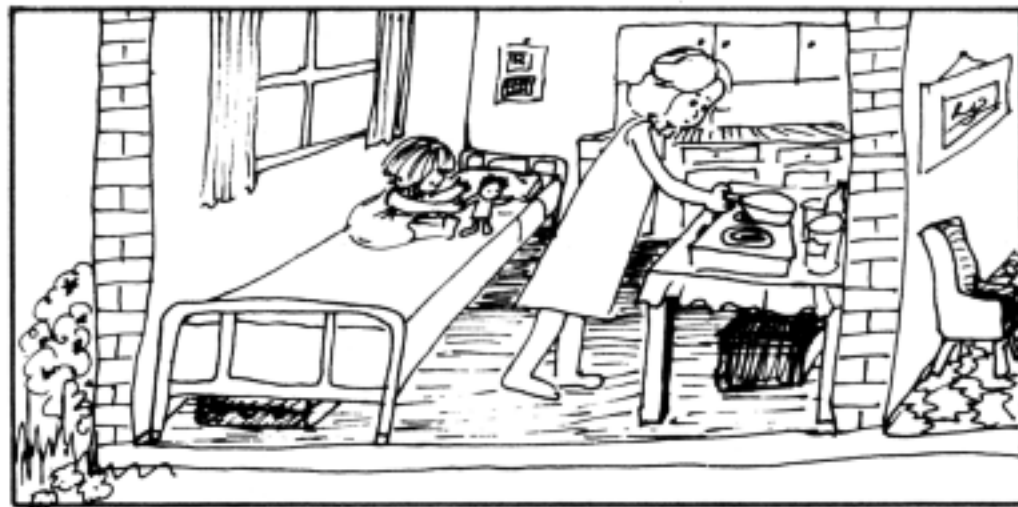
BUT WILL IT HAPPEN ?

If we plan properly it will. The problem is also that we women accepted it . We didn't fight it from the beginning. We felt it was important for a man to be what he is. And so it became a habit and even in ourselves we sometimes become very shy, say when my husband has visitors and I ask him to help me. Because I think his friends will think he's a fool. But if we can start discussing these things everytime. our children will adopt another system.



WORSE THAN SLAVES

I am a 27 year old single mother. I live with my two year old child in one room in Phoenix. I rent the room from a woman who is also a single mother. The area we live in is very rowdy. One night as we slept thugs removed the window panes of our house. It is not safe for women. I have applied for my own home in 1980 but I have been told I will have to wait another 10 years before I get a home. I work in a clothing factory. My take home pay is R 46. 50 a week. Of this I pay R 5.00 to a neighbour to look after my child, and R 7.00 goes on transport.



I started my working life at 15. My stepmother forced me to leave school before this to do the housework. My first job was as a saleswoman. I was earning R6.00 a week but I had to

leave that job due to ill health. My next job was in a clothing factory where I worked as a service hand, getting paid R 6.80 a week. I lasted out this job for two months. That is until a supervisor swore at me and I just gave him his job back and said I'm walking out. I was very short tempered then.



Since then I've worked at quite a number of factories but as a machinist. My shortest job was two weeks. Oh, I tell you! I was disgusted with conditions. It was so bad, we were treated worse than slaves. In fact even slaves are treated better. We couldn't go to the toilet when we wanted to. The toilets were locked. And when you have your periods you can't tell a man that you are sick. And if you just go to the toilet you



are shouted at, I had an argument over score and left because of this. Then we had security checks. We were watched all the time. All of a sudden a security guard would come up to us while we were working and would take one of us to be searched. And while this is happening another security guard is watching all the others to see that you don't tell the other workers next to you that security has taken someone.



Most women stick it because they can't find other jobs. I feel very sorry especially for the African workers. They have to stick it most because most clothing factories don't want to take them. Machinists are o.k. They can find jobs easily but the poor service hands and table hands and others can't get other jobs.

Workers are badly treated by supervisors and bosses. I'm forced to work for a living, but I'd like to go to a night school to do a secretarial course so that I could get out of the factory. But the courses are too expensive.



This clothing union does nothing. They are bought off by the bosses. That is the talk in the clothing industry. The union is bought off by the bosses. The shop stewards are afraid they will lose their jobs so they don't do anything for the workers. But the workers in the factory are nice. I'm friendly with all races.

THE NEW TAX LAW



In the new tax system different people are taxed in different ways. People are divided into 3 main groups. These are the groups:

1. Single women and men, divorced women and men, and women who are second and third wives.
2. Married men
3. Married women

From March 1 1984 people will be taxed in a new way. The government has introduced the same tax system that they use for Indian, Coloured and White people. This has been done without any warning. People have not been consulted about it, and many are confused by it all. It is a very complicated tax system, and it has not been clearly explained.

Under the old tax law all African women and men earning the same wages paid the same tax. They did not pay less tax if they were married or had children and other dependants.

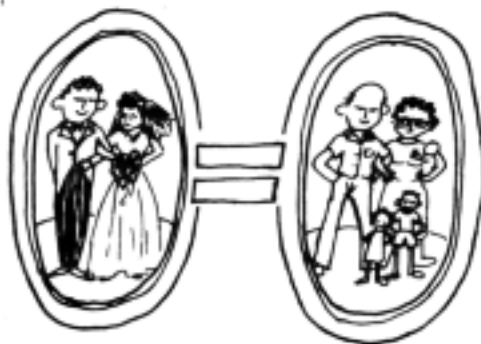


If a married woman has a husband who is unemployed, or earns very little, she can ask to be taxed as a 'married man'. Also, if her husband is dead she can do this too. In these cases, the women must make a special request to be taxed like this. Then less tax is paid.

The special request is filled in on a form called an IRP 2 form, which the bosses keep for the workers.



Under the new tax law some people will be paying less tax than before. This is mainly single women and men with children, and married men. But married women will pay much, much more money in taxes to the government.



CHANGES IN TAXES

1. This chart shows the old and new tax for single men and women, and for divorced or separated people.

Here are some examples of the changes that will take place:

- * A CHILDLESS SINGLE OR SEPARATED MAN OR WOMAN EARNING R400.00 A MONTH USED TO PAY R11.20 TAX. NOW THAT SAME PERSON WILL PAY R14.40 IN TAX.
- * A SINGLE OR SEPARATED WOMAN OR MAN EARNING R400.00 A MONTH AND WHO HAS 2 CHILDREN, USED TO PAY R11.20 TAX. NOW THEY WILL PAY NO TAX.

1	MONTHLY WAGES	TAXES PAID EVERY MONTH UNDER OLD LAW	TAXES PAID EVERY MONTH UNDER THE NEW LAW			
			No Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
R 200	R 0,74	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 250	R 1,94	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 300	R 4,34	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 350	R 7,20	R 7,20	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 400	R 11,20	R 14,40	R 4,40	No Tax	No Tax	
R 450	R 15,62	R 21,60	R 11,60	R 1,60	No Tax	
R 500	R 20,82	R 28,80	R 18,80	R 8,80	No Tax	
R 600	R 31,88	R 43,20	R 33,20	R 23,20	R 13,20	
R 700	R 45,04	R 57,95	R 47,95	R 37,95	R 27,95	
R 800	R 61,48	R 74,94	R 64,94	R 54,94	R 44,94	
R 900	R 80,44	R 95,22	R 85,22	R 75,22	R 65,22	
R1000	R102,16	R118,30	R108,30	R 98,30	R 88,30	

2. This chart shows the old and new tax for married men, widows, widowers, and married women whose husbands earn very little.

Here is an example of the change that will take place:

- * A MARRIED MAN WITH 4 CHILDREN WHO EARNS R400.00 A MONTH USED TO PAY R11.20 IN TAX. HE WILL NOW PAY NO TAX.

2.	MONTHLY WAGES	TAXES PAID EVERY MONTH UNDER OLD LAW	TAXES PAID EVERY MONTH UNDER THE NEW LAW				
			No Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children
R 200	R 0,74	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 250	R 1,94	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 300	R 4,34	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 350	R 7,20	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 400	R 11,20	R 3,92	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 450	R 15,62	R 9,92	R 1,58	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 500	R 20,82	R 15,92	R 7,58	No Tax	No Tax	No Tax	
R 600	R 31,88	R 27,92	R 19,58	R 11,25	R 2,92	No Tax	
R 700	R 45,04	R 40,04	R 31,71	R 23,38	R 15,04	R 6,71	
R 800	R 61,48	R 54,03	R 45,70	R 37,37	R 29,03	R 20,70	
R 900	R 80,44	R 70,77	R 62,43	R 54,10	R 45,77	R 37,43	
R 1 000	R102,16	R 89,83	R 81,50	R 73,17	R 64,83	R 56,50	

3. This chart shows the old and new tax for married women.

Here is an example of how their tax will change:

* A MARRIED WOMAN WITH 2 CHILDREN AND EARNING R400.00 A MONTH USED TO PAY R11.20 UNDER THE OLD TAX. UNDER THE NEW TAX SHE WILL PAY R32.83. SHE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED DEDUCTIONS FOR HER CHILDREN.

3. MONTHLY WAGES	TAXES PAID EVERY MONTH UNDER THE OLD LAW	TAXES PAID EVERY MONTH UNDER THE NEW LAW
R 200	R 0,74	R 6,42
R 250	R 1,94	R 11,42
R 300	R 4,34	R 16,42
R 350	R 7,20	R 22,83
R 400	R 11,20	R 32,83
R 450	R 15,62	R 42,83
R 500	R 20,82	R 52,83
R 600	R 31,88	R 72,83
R 700	R 45,04	R 92,83
R 800	R 61,48	R112,83
R 900	R 80,44	R132,83
R 1000	R102,16	R152,83

WHAT SOME PEOPLE SAY

Sheena Duncan of the Black Sash says, "The new law is a strange thing. Many men will pay less tax than before. But many thousands of married women will pay much more tax. Only men pay less tax because of children. But women also look after their kids. Men of all races must remember this. They must remember the women are paying most of the tax for the family."

Many trade unions and worker leaders are worried about the new law. One worker leader says, "The new tax law might be a good thing. But the government did not talk to workers before they made the new law. So workers will not trust the law. Black workers will also pay the same tax as white workers. So now bosses must do the same - they must pay equal wages for equal work."

"But the biggest complaint of all", says Sheena Duncan, "Is that black workers pay the same tax as whites. Yet they don't have the vote and the government does not spend the same on blacks as it does on whites."

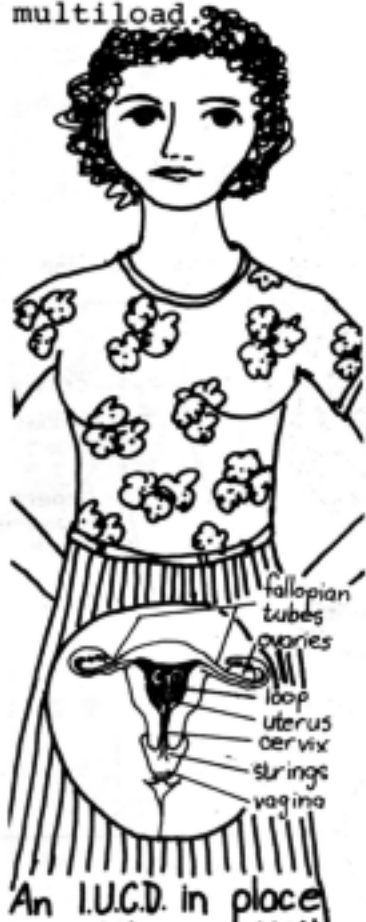
Much of the information in this article comes from Learn and Teach.

THE IUCD/THE LOOP

(INTRA-UTERINE-CONTRACEPTIVE - DEVICE)



The I.U.C.D. is most commonly known as the loop, but there are different kinds of I.U.D.'s. The most common ones are the loop, the Copper T and the multiload.

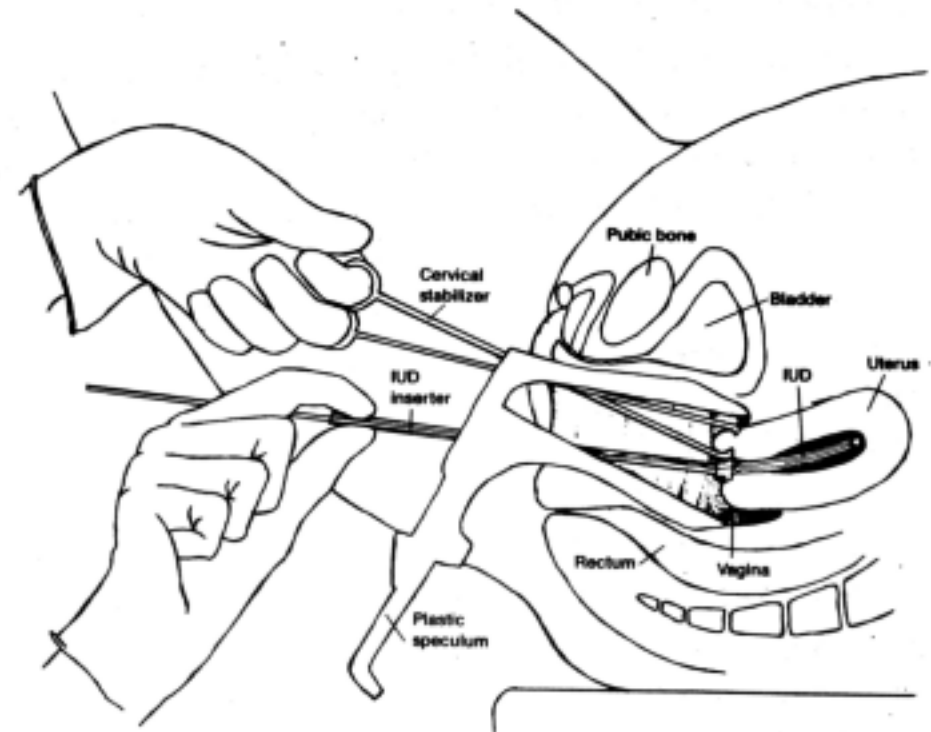


HOW THE IUCD WORKS

People think that the I.U.C.D. prevents women from falling pregnant by changing the environment inside the womb. This means that the egg will not be able to grow in the womb and it will die.

HOW TO USE THE IUCD

The I.U.C.D. fits inside the womb. It has to be fitted by a doctor or nursing sister. Most I.U.C.D.'s can stay in the womb for 2 - 3 years and then have to be changed.



ADVANTAGES OF THE IUCD

The I.U.C.D. is quite good at preventing pregnancy. It does not affect a woman's health like the pill and injection which contain hormones and go into the blood.

It is easy to fall pregnant after the I.U.C.D. has been taken out as long as there were no serious problems with the I.U.C.D. while it was in the womb. It does not change a woman's desire for sex. Once the I.U.C.D. has settled, after about three months, there are no frequent visits to the clinic. thereafter it would be necessary to go once a year for pap smear.

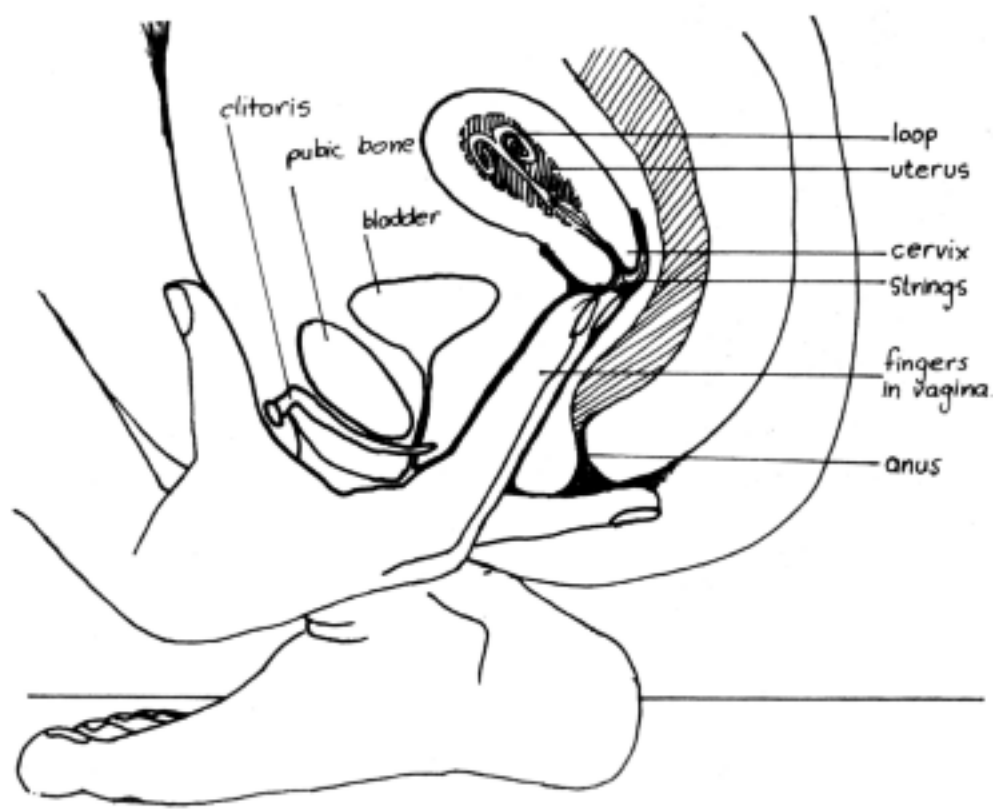
DISADVANTAGES OF THE I.U.C.D.

- * Women who use I.U.C.D.'s have a greater chance of developing an infection in the womb or tubes. If a woman does have a very bad infection or a number of bad infections it could make her sterile.
- * In one out of every 1 000 women the I.U.C.D. can penetrate the womb. This could cause dangerous infections and the I.U.C.D. has to be removed through an operation.
- * Some women bleed more heavily and have more pain during their periods. Sometimes there is also spotting, that is bits of bleeding in between periods. Sometimes the I.U.C.D. has to be removed for this reason.
- * The I.U.C.D. can fall out of the womb sometimes without this being noticed. This can happen during a period in the first three months after it was put on. You can check your pad or tampon during a period to see that the I.U.C.D. has not come out. Also the strings of the I.U.C.D. can be felt . They strings hang in the top of the vagina and feel like nylon fishing line.
- * Fifty percent of the women who fall pregnant with an I.U.C.D. will spontaneously abort, that is they will have a misscarriage in the early months of pregnancy

FEELING THE STRINGS OF THE IUCD



← From the outside
From the inside
↓



IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



Women usually have pain and cramps for a few days after the I.U.C.D. has been put in. If these don't go away after a few days you should go back to the clinic.



If you have very heavy bleeding OR bad smelling discharge from your vagina in between periods you should go to the clinic for a check up. It could mean that you have an infection.



You should check each month for the strings of your I.U.C.D. to see that it is still in position. If you cannot feel them go to the clinic for a check up.



There is a possibility that antibiotics and aspirin change the inside of the womb and work against the I.U.C.D. If you are taking antibiotics you should use another contraceptive, like a condom to make sure you don't fall pregnant.

SOME WOMEN'S COMMENTS



I had the loop put in at the hospital 6 weeks after my first baby was born. They didn't have the right size loop for me so they put in a bigger one. I had bad pains with my periods and went to the clinic about this. I was told that they would go away. But the pain got worse. Then I also got a high temperature and felt very sick. I went to a doctor and he took the loop out because it had caused an infection in my womb.



With my first IUD I felt much happier than with the pill. But somehow I don't want to go back for another one - I think partly because it is very sore having it put in, and also I don't like the idea of having something inside me all the time that I have no control over.



Well, out of my three children I had two while I was using 'IUD's. The one baby came out holding it, and the other had the loop tucked behind his ear.



After I'd had my first IUD for about three months I was having a shower one day when I suddenly saw it lying on the floor. But I've now had the next one in for two years and it hasn't given me any problems. I just make sure I check to feel the strings regularly.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 March is International Women's Day. It is a day when women all over the world remember their common struggles, needs and hopes - and also learn from each other and support each other in their struggles. The very first International Women's Day was marked by a strike of women workers in Chicago, U.S.A. in 1909. Some years later women from many countries held an International conference to talk about what they could do to achieve women's rights. It is in this spirit that on International Women's Day we strengthen ourselves for our fight for jobs for all, for decent housing, lower food prices, an end to unfair treatment of women

