

AFADWU prioritizes worker education for newly elected shopstewards



Members of AFADWU at COSATU House after attending the Provincial Basic Shopstewards Training

The COVID-19 crisis triggered a number of changes among the trade union movement across the world on how to organize unorganized workers, how to sustain funding for education, training and on leading recruitment campaigns in sectors deemed vulnerable sectors. Revitalization of worker organization to defend jobs has been on the rise in the aftermath of the worst pandemic which eroded jobs and plunged many communities into poverty as a result of crashing of sustainable livelihoods of many informal economy role players. Many trade unions and their federations are exploring various approaches, capabilities and methodologies that can help trade unions to revitalize themselves by anticipating, navigating and shaping change.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has been providing training to promote labour education for workers and workers' organizations. The programme responds to the training needs of workers' organizations through courses, materials, projects, and advisory services.

Through the Chris Hani Institute programmes, the shopstewards were taken through an introduction to understanding the philosophy of the working class, the philosophy of Marxism which lays a foundation for workers to appreciate the system of capitalism

and how it exploits labour for profits. And how workers and the trade union movement must fight to abolish exploitation of man by man and on the ruins of capitalism, then build a case for introduction of a system of socialism where production is for use and not for profiteering. In socialism what is produced by the working people belongs to the working people. The concept of a state was exposed to the shopstewards and it was emphasized that 'in slave society, the state belongs to the slave owners. In feudal society, the state belongs to the feudal lords. In capitalism it belongs to the capitalist class. In socialism it belongs to the working class. The state in slave society, in feudalism and in capitalism is designed to keep control over the working people, it is the state of exploiters, the state of looters, the state of plunderers, it is designed to force the working people to submit to the small groups, the rich and exploiting class. In socialism the state is designed to suppress the capitalist class and those others who do not want socialism. In socialism the working class owns and controls the means of production through its own state. The working class defends its ownership and control over the economy against capitalist class by using the state. But as socialism develops into communism, the state goes away, it slowly becomes no longer necessary, it withers away. Socialism then develops into socialism, class divisions die out too. In communism there are no classes.

Chris Hani Institute argued that 'Today all states are dictatorships of the ruling class. Imperialism and capitalist are the same side of a coin as both are cruel, vicious systems exploiting the poor working class and undermining world peace, development and advancement.'

Recently, COSATU Gauteng held a Provincial Basic Shopsteward Training workshop for more than fifty [50] members of the Agricultural and Allied Democratic Workers Union at Braamfontein for two days.

COSATU Gauteng Provincial Secretary, Louisah Modikwe welcomed the massive attendance by the newly elected from AFADWU who displayed high levels of discipline in attendance and engaged every presenter on various presentations on the history of trade unionism, class struggle, organizing in vulnerable sectors, the philosophy of the working class, understanding the roles and responsibilities of shopstewards at the workplace, understanding labour laws and other legislation and the use of social media as an organizing tool in worker organizations.

"COSATU Gauteng supports AFADWU in empowering its shopstewards to defend jobs in the agricultural sector as the trade union movement today is facing reorganization in the labour markets whilst tackling challenges such as retrenchment, unemployment, poverty, inequality and high cases of gender based violence. We appeal to the newly shopstewards to appreciate understanding their roles and responsibilities in the union, participate in COSATU campaigns to strengthen the union. AFADWU has done well on many fronts such as visibility in marches around Gauteng, during COSATU Red Fridays and there a room to do more. Workers must never be led to participate in unlawful strike in this sector and we must invest more resources of empowering comrades to understand issues related to collective bargaining."

AFADWU President, Walter Msimanga acknowledged the trade support programme by COSATU and appealed to shopstewards to invest their time and space to embrace the intervention which seeks to help them to fulfil their duties at the workplace as advocates of workers.

“Members of AFADWU must be able to interface with the challenges faced by the working class such as food insecurity, retrenchments, unemployment, poverty, corruption, state capture and racism and ensure that shopstewards may assist in their various plants, farms and sites to conscientize employees about the brutal system of capitalism. We need such interventions to empower workers to handle cases of workers better, to deal with issues of harassment and other unfair labour practices. Other issues may relate to tackling current issues affecting the sector such as the bird flue, listeriosis, high prices of food, high prices of fuel which affects the working class in the value chain. And this is a good start supported by COSATU to build AFADWU as a campaigning trade union.”