



SHOP STEWARDS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The duties of a shop steward is multi- faceted and takes place on various different levels. The two most prominent levels are:

(a) As a representative of trade union members in the workplace;

(b) Taking an active interest in union structures, processes and by adhering to the union's policies and constitution of the trade union itself. Based on the principle of worker control, members, shop stewards and worker leaders play an integral role in building unity and ensuring that the union is acting in members' interests at all times.

The main duties of shop stewards include being a:

- **Worker leader:** You would have gained skills and experience to listen and assist union members. You need to instill confidence, work towards unity and help build worker democracy at the workplace and in your community.
- **Organiser:** Shop stewards must build a strong, progressive, disciplined and informed membership at plant level and ensure every worker is recruited, is paying subscriptions, hold regular general meetings and develop unity in the workplace;
- **Representative:** You need to take workers' grievances and decisions to the employer, negotiate with he/she and report back to workers after each meeting. You need to voice the concerns of your fellow members in trade union structures and in the community;
- **Monitor:** Shop stewards must monitor that negotiated workplace agreements are being implemented by employers and get written undertaking from them;
- **Leader:** As a leader in the workplace, you need to be able to listen and give guidance to fellow members but don't seek to control workers;
- **Learner:** The union provides training so that shop stewards are well-informed of the union's policies, employment practices in their workplace, legislation and agreements in your specific sector as well as social benefits;
- **Educator:** Inform fellow members about developments in the workplace and in trade union structures.