1. **Understanding of Trade Unions**
   South Africa like many other countries have a history in which entrepreneurs used workers who are not educated to work for long hours and a very small salary. Entrepreneurs kept most of the profits for themselves and workers were unable to rise above their low wages and poor working conditions.

   Workers eventually were offended and organized themselves into trade unions.

   **Definition:**
   A trade union is an organization of workers striving together to get better working conditions for its members.

   A trade union works on the concept that unity is power. (A group of people working together is more powerful).

   In South Africa, there are a number of unions for different professions. These unions include:

   South African Municipal Workers' Union – SAMWU
South African Teachers Union – SATU

National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa – NAPTOSA

National Union of Mineworkers – NUM

The Congress of South African Trade Unions – COSATU
2. **Short historical development of trade unions.**
   During the 29th year of pharaoh Ramses 111 reign in the 12th century BC, the first strikes occurred.
   Strikes are a way of forcing the employer to negotiate with workers.
   Nowadays strikes are protected and organized by a trade union. **The South African Constitution provide for the right to join trade unions and to strike.**
   After the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa during the late 1800’s many artisans from overseas came to work here.

   In 1922 there was unrest and strikes at the mines on the Witwatersrand due to harsh working conditions.

   In 1924 the government, for fear of a repeat of the 1922 mine unrest adopted the first Industrial Conciliation Act, which later became the Labour Relations Act.

   From 1973 to 1994, trade unions played an important role in the establishment of a democratic South Africa. One of the main role players was COSATU. The Congress was formed in December 1985 after four years of talks between unions. COSATU is the largest labour union in South Africa.

3. **Roles and responsibilities of trade unions in South Africa**
   The main role of trade unions is **negotiation and representation.** The union is expected to determine the members’ grievances and relay the grievance to the employer. Often there is a difference between what the workers want and what employers offer. Union representatives negotiate on behalf of members to find a solution for these differences.

   **Workers also get other benefits as members of unions:**
   - Trade union officials are experts in labour law.
   - Union officials can advise workers on issues such as leave pay during maternity leave.
   - Where to get legal representation or advice.
   - How to get additional training.
   - Many unions also offer courses for their members.

   **The Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995 guarantees the right of an employee to participate in forming a trade union.**

   The Act also specifies **the conditions under which registered unions function.**

   Unions must be **democratically operated.**
Trade unions must have a constitution. (How officials are elected, what their duties are).

Trade unions get money to run their organisations by charging monthly fees of each member of their organization.

Trade unions are expected to ballot members before organising a strike.

4. Effects of unions on businesses
The main role of trade unions is to negotiate with businesses for better working conditions and to obtain better pay for their members.

- When workers strike, employers lose revenue due to strike in production and services.
- Workers lose their salaries because they are not paid when they are not working.
- Orders can’t be carried out and contracts can’t be renewed.
- Production in the future may decrease and workers may lose their jobs.
- On the other hand, a wage increase means that prices should be increased.
- Strikes can cause inflation (rise in prices).

5. Contribution of trade unions to sustainable growth and development
- Trade unions helped to combat poverty through the introduction of minimum wages.
- Trade unions ensure that health and safety regulations are adhered to at work and injured workers reimburse.
- Trade unions forced the businesses to be accountable and responsible for the environment.
- Trade unions also made the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS a major area of their work.
- Trade unions globally have done much to fight against child labour and to introduce minimum wages for employment.
ACTIVITY: TRADE UNIONS

1. Understanding unions (7)

Choose the correct word from the list, to complete the sentences.

profits educated
working conditions salary
trade unions

1.1 South Africa like many other countries have a history in which entrepreneurs use workers who are not ____________________ to work for long hours and a very small ____________________.

1.2 Entrepreneurs, kept most of the ____________________ for themselves and the workers were unable to rise above their low salaries and poor ____________________.

1.3 Workers were not satisfied and organized themselves into ____________________.

1.4 What is a trade union?

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

2. Unions in South Africa (10)

Look at the emblems of the following unions. Give the abbreviation and The name of each union.

2.1 _________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
3. **Brief historical development of trade unions**

3.1 When did the first recorded strike took place?

______________________________________________________________

3.2 Complete the sentences:

3.2.1 The South African Constitution provides for the right to __________________

______________________________________________________________

3.2.2 After the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa during the 1800s, many artisans from overseas, especially __________________ came to work here.

3.2.3 In 1922 there was unrest and strikes at the mines on the ___________ because of the bad working conditions.

3.2.4 In 1924, the government fearing a repeat of the 1922 mine unrest, passed the first ________________, which later became the _______________ Act.

3.2.5 From 1973 to 1994, trade unions played an important role in bringing about a _______________ South Africa.

3.2.6 One of the most important players was ____________________.

3.2.7 **COSATU** was founded in ________________.

4. **Roles and responsibilities of trade unions in South Africa**

4.1 What is the main service offered by a union to its members?

________________________________ and ____________________

4.2 What should the union do with the grievances of the members?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

4.3 Name two things the trade unions do for its members.

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
4.4 Where do trade unions get their money?

4.5 How can labour unions let their members vote, before organising a strike?

5. **Effect of unions on businesses**

5.1 What is the main role of unions?

5.2 What does **employers** lose in a strike?

5.3 What does **workers** lose in a strike?

5.4 What may a strike cause?

6. **Contribution of unions to sustainable growth and development**

   List five things that trade unions have contributed to growth and development in a country.

6.1

6.2

6.3

6.4

6.5