



Thulamela Municipality's leadership lead a fun walk from the municipality's offices to the local Thohoyandou Stadium, where the event was held.

## EPWP workers boycott Wellness Day

*By Elmon Tshikhudo*

In an unexpected move, more than 100 extended public works programme (EPWP) workers at Thulamela Municipality boycotted the annual Wellness Day, citing several challenges they are facing at the municipality.

Thulamela Municipality's annual Wellness Day sees more than 600 employees come together for a day of exercise and team building. The day, which started with a fun walk from the Thulamela offices in Thohoyandou to the Thohoyandou Stadium, took place on Friday.

Speaking during the event, Thulamela Municipal Manager Hlengani Maluleke said the day was very important in that they came together with the aim of improving their health. He said the municipality was very serious about the health of all its employees, which would lead to more production.

He said he always urged staff to exercise for the sake of their health. "We are very humbled as a municipality that we dedicate every Wednesday to sports. Out of

the different sporting codes, some have gone out and made us very proud by participating at national and international level," he said.

When the time came for the workers to take the floor for aerobics, the EPWP workers remained seated on the grandstand and did not participate in the exercises. "We are treated as trash at this municipality. They do not see us as employees, but as ordinary people who do not exist. We have so many work-related challenges that need to be addressed, but the last straw is what is happening today," one of the workers, who preferred to remain anonymous, said.

He mentioned that they were isolated and that all other participants, including the visitors from the defence force,

had received free T-shirts. "We do not know what wrong we have done to deserve this, and when we complain, we are told to shut up or face expulsion," he said. According to another worker, it is degrading and they "feel very helpless".

The worker further indicated that the morale was very low among the workers as they were treated like young children.

Thulamela Mayor Mushoni Tshifhango, who could not attend the event, was shocked when he was told about the incident. "I know nothing about this. EPWP workers are part of our workforce and are treated like any other employee of the municipality. We are going to get to the bottom of this and find out what happened," he said.



Time for aerobics: municipal employees busy exercising during the event.