

# TVEP evicted from offices

By Tshifhiwa Mukwevho

**The Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP), which was served with an eviction order some two weeks ago, was finally evicted last Friday.**

This spells hard times for the TVEP, which makes use of 67 employees and cares for thousands of rape survivors and victims of domestic violence and other related crimes each year.

The eviction comes after the Limpopo High Court had ruled in favour of the Department of Public Works, who had filed court applications last year to evict the TVEP from their property at the grounds of the former South African Embassy in Sibasa.

"We tried all we could do to have the Limpopo High Court reverse the eviction judgement but then it was not successful," said TVEP's programme director, Mr Tshilidzi Masikhwa. "We couldn't afford to pay rent, and the Department of Public Works refused to negotiate a settlement with us, claiming that we had refused to provide them with our audited financial statements, which is not true."

The department wanted to grant the victim empowerment unit the go-ahead to use the buildings at no cost, provided they were satisfied with the contents of the financial statements that the TVEP was financially unable to pay rent.



**The furniture at TVEP had to be moved to at least five private homes for temporary storage.**

On Friday, the TVEP officials moved their property to at least five private homes in the neighbouring residential areas for temporary storage.

When *Limpopo Mirror* visited the TVEP, some victims of domestic violence were sitting on the chairs in the old makeshift structure of the TVEP that still stood in the grounds of the former South African Embassy in Sibasa. Among them was a mother with her two children, who all looked distraught and depressed.

"They need help and we will continue to help them, even when we do not have sufficient space," Masikhwa said. "It's so sad that our government speaks about us at national summits, praising us for the good work that we are doing. But now we fail to understand this very government and if it really cares for the very victims we help."

The TVEP's operational funds stem from donations, most of whom are from foreign aids, and the donors are mostly reluctant to cover these operational costs. Most donors feel that the South African government should play their part in this regard. "We assisted over 26 000 victims in the past 18 years that we have been operational," Masikhwa said.

The TVEP grapples to comprehend the reason why private individuals have been allowed to buy houses on the same property, while they were denied the right to do so in 2002. According to the TVEP, most buildings of the old embassy are in shambles now, rotting, decaying and falling apart. The TVEP always tried their best to keep the buildings that they occupied intact and clean.

"We moved out of the building, but the illegal occupiers said they would be breaking down the building and occupying it soonest, just like they did with the other buildings in the embassy grounds," he said.

To avoid confusion while the TVEP is still trying to settle, clients or victims are advised to visit the TVEP's Trauma Centres at Donald Fraser Hospital (015 963 6791) and Tshilidzini Hospital (015 964 2310).



**The TVEP was evicted on Friday, following a court order that was issued late last year.**