

Radebe launches access to justice programme

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A programme designed to assist South Africa's vulnerable was launched on Monday with the financial support of the European Union.

At the launch of the "Strengthening of Civil Society" programme, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development Jeff Radebe said that government and the EU aimed to improve access to justice institutions for vulnerable and marginalised groups and to enhance participatory democracy.

Radebe said that while the government had increased social spending to uplift the poor, the newly launched programme would reach many more South Africans.

The funding would be dispensed to various rights-based institutions.

The targeted communities and beneficiaries include women and children, rural and urban poor communities, farm workers, child headed households and refugees and asylum seekers.

"The commitment to supporting civil society thus finds concrete expression in this programme.

"The programme is directly aimed at building civil society's capacity in the areas of access to justice, creating greater awareness of constitutional rights and promoting participatory democracy," Radebe said in a speech prepared for delivery.

He said that the programme would address the prevalence of racism and xenophobia as well as increase access to justice for the poor.

"Many are vulnerable because of their lack of access to information as well as their lack of access to education.

"Poverty, unemployment, and inequality are all potential threats to South Africa's fledgling democracy, impacting negatively on the challenge of ensuring that poor people know and understand how to access various human rights services," said Radebe.