

## Democracy centre launched

The Kutlwanong Democracy Centre was launched at the end of May. The centre is located at 357 Visagie Street in Pretoria.

The national director of Lawyers for Human Rights, Jacob van Garderen told *De Rebus* that the centre is a unique hub for civil society in Pretoria. He said it brings together a range of organisations working in human rights, social assistance and development.

Services offered at the centre include free legal assistance and litigation, community advice, social assistance and social work, health services for farm workers and rural occupiers, as well as trauma and psycho-social counselling.

Mr van Garderen said: 'The building has become a landmark, reflecting the recent political history of South Africa and its transformation. Symbolism and design incorporates these elements throughout the building and garden, including the democracy wall and the memorial rock from the Robben Island quarry to commemorate the struggle for democracy in South Africa. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's amnesty hearings, for example, were also hosted at the centre.'

The centre is currently home to organisations such as –

- Lawyers for Human Rights, a South African human rights organisation devoted to social justice activism and public interest litigation. It provides a full range of free legal services to social movements and marginalised communities through targeted advocacy and strategic litigation, including refugee and migrant rights, land and tenure reform, rural and urban evictions, environmental rights, socio-economic rights and international justice.
- Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), which is an organisation that works in the field of trauma and focuses on clinical, research and advocacy interventions that address the challenges faced by societies in transition. CSVR offers trauma and psycho-social assistance to refugees.
- Zimbabwe Exiles Forum, a non-political, non-profit and non-partisan human rights organisation with an eye on the future of Zimbabwe. It is engaged in research, documentation, advocacy, lobbying and litigation around issues of human rights in Zimbabwe and the rights of Zimbabweans in South Africa.
- International Federation for Human Rights, an international non-governmental organisation defending all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It acts in the legal and political field for the creation and reinforcement of international instruments for the protection of human rights and for their implementation; and more recently, ProBono.Org (see 2015 (June) *DR* 7).

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