'WE NEED MORE SPECIALISED JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES'

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By DELPHINE ZULU -

KITWE High Court acting deputy director, Dava Mumba has said lack of specialised juvenile facilities in the country is the major contributor of delayed cases in the courts of law.

Mr Mumba, who served as a magistrate for more than 10 years in the same area with a bias in handling juvenile matters, said the need to have specialised juvenile facilities was urgent as the current situation was not conducive for young offenders.

He said most children who came in conflict with the law were made to share same cells with hardened criminals starting from the police up to the time they were sent to prison due to limited specialised infrastructure.

Speaking at the launch of a handbook of Juvenile Law in Zambia, Mr Mumba said the other challenge hindering the speedy progress on juvenile court cases was the lack of specialised prosecutors.

Chil Justice Forum project, coordinator Kangwa Ngandu said there is need for investigators to monitor how juvenile cases were progressing in court after effecting an arrest. He said his prison visits had revealed that many juveniles had been sent to prisons without appearing in court for years.

Centre for Law and Justice Co-Founder Timaneni Banda said the handbook was aimed at safeguarding the legal rights of children as well as advocates for systematic improvements in juvenile justice.

She said the handbook would improve access to legal representation for juveniles, inform juveniles of their basic rights, draw attention to gaps within the system, provide specialised training and research support for magistrates and other legal officials and legal advocates. Professor Muna Nkololo said it was said that Zambia had only two juvenile reformatories since Independence.

Law Association of Zambia (LAZ), he added, should lobby Government to build more juvenile detention facilities.

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