



## Press Release

### **The National Prosecution Authority and Partners Introduce Innovative Mobile Courts Initiative to Address Prison Overpopulation.**

Lusaka, Zambia – Thursday, January 25, 2024.

Today, Mr. Gilbert A. Phiri, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), played a central role in hosting a historic Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony. This event unveiled a transformative alliance with the Judiciary of Zambia, Zambia Correctional Service (ZCS), the Legal Aid Board (LAB), Iris Rule of Law International (IRLI) and the National Prosecution Authority (NPA). This groundbreaking initiative aims to address the critical issue of prison and correctional inmate overpopulation within Zambia by the establishment of Mobile Courts.

The Mobile courts are intended to bring justice closer to inmates by having matters such as bail applications, variation of bail conditions, setting of trial and judgment dates conducted in the correctional facilities. This entails judicial staff such as the Magistrates and Judges being accompanied by Prosecutors and Legal Aid Officers to sit and conduct hearings in the correctional facilities. The Mobile Courts initiative is a strategic intervention designed to expedite legal proceedings, ensuring that bail applications and setting of hearing dates among other applications are dealt with swiftly while simultaneously reducing the strain on the correctional facilities.

The Mobile Court Model provides a timely response to prison overcrowding by bringing justice closer to the inmates and ensuring that unnecessary over detention is

mitigated. This model is especially important to indigent persons who may not have recourse to legal representation.

In his speech, the DPP delivered insightful remarks, highlighting the pervasive challenge of prison overcrowding and the compromised efficiency of the justice system and living conditions of those awaiting trial. The establishment of Mobile Courts, a proactive and transformative measure, aims to streamline legal proceedings and alleviate the backlog of cases contributing to prison congestion.

While not trial courts in the traditional sense where witnesses are called to testify, Mobile Courts will allow inmates to make simple applications which will allow them to experience the law in action and facilitate access to justice within the correctional setting. These courts will handle matters involving minor offences, contributing significantly to reducing overcrowding, expediting justice delivery, and restoring hope among inmates.

The commitment of the parties to this Memorandum of Understanding expressed during this ceremony is a testament to their dedication in the pursuit of justice. This transformative journey is not a mere agreement on paper; it symbolises a collective determination that will profoundly impact the lives of the incarcerated.

In conclusion, the National Prosecution Authority extends gratitude to all partners involved and eagerly anticipates the positive impact this collaborative effort will have on addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by prison overpopulation in Zambia.



.....  
Chali Mbewe Hambayi  
Public Relations Officer  
National Prosecution Authority