

26th of March again to MEC

Kerst en Griet, Jan en Yvonne

A new adventure in Zambia. This time we want to spend 5 weeks at MEC. We went from Schiphol via Nairobi to Lusaka. Arrival time at Lusaka was half past eleven in the night so it was very dark when we arrived. We were quick passing the formalities without any problems. Each of us had 2 trunks and some hand baggage, so there was a little tension when we passed the customs officials. Transport to our home at MEC was organised; the driver was already waiting for us with a minibus. Arriving at MEC felt a little bit like coming home.

We have to get used to the early darkness in the evening and of course the regular power cuts. We were happy with the lights with solar panels Kerst smuggled in his trunk. So we could have our meal in the evening under the big tree. Not every evening we had this party because rainy season was not finished yet! First 3 weeks we had very often a shower and even thundery rains. For Zambia this is not normal in April. Farmers are complaining; the harvest will be less.

When we are settled we are starting our activities. Yvonne and Griet have their plan for remedial teaching. They have consultation with the teachers of the pupils. There are 19 children for this program. They made a timetable for every day.



Yvonne with some of her pupils

Kerst starts his work with pupils in the carpentry. They are going to make chairs and a table for in the garden. And I am going to teach mathematics at the school, grade 9 and grade 12. Most pupils think it is difficult. It is not. But first I had

consultation with Mrs. Mulimba, head teacher of the school, and with the regular teacher of maths.

Kerst and I have also the purpose of repairing water pumps in the settlements. On our first Monday we go for buying parts for this: pipes, rods, and spare-part kits -- all we think we need in Mwomboshi. And we go for buying the wood for making the furniture.

Wednesday we go early to Mwomboshi for the pumps. Mrs. Dil and Mrs. Mukuyamba are going with us. First we have to go to Kalwelwe to pick up the tools we need. Bad roads and deep pools on our road.

Kerst and I have here our first experience with the tools and list of the parts that must be replaced. All is wrong! We make a new list and next week we are going again with new supplies to Mwomboshi. Then we go with the ladies and stay there for a little week.

Now we are going on with our other activities. I am teaching sawing and hammering with Cap and Nandu and the pupils for Kerst. When there is a big shower on the roof of my classroom I have to wait with my explanation of the exercises. It did not hamper Yvonne and Griet so much, because they have small groups.

After Easter we go with the car full with all kinds of stuff to Mwomboshi. We live there in the house of Mrs. Dil. Primitive, no water, no power, no kitchen and a toilet you don't want to use. But for everything is a solution!

With the new bought tools we are going to work the following days. A team of settlers is ready to work with us and that has results: at the end of our stay 3 pumps are repaired and the settlers can do it themselves.

Every time the first water comes out there are cheers, some of the pumps did not work for years.



Meanwhile the ladies organised a sport and play day at the school. Together with the teachers and 130 children they did games and little matches and at the end of the day there was a little surprise and an orange for everyone.

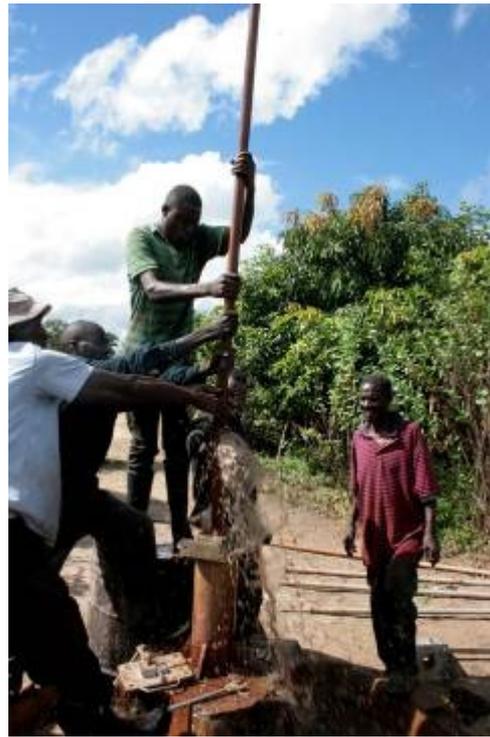
It was a beautiful week at Mwomboshi, far away from civilisation and at night a very clear starry sky. And don't forget the nice people and their hospitality.

After our stay in the "back of beyond" we enjoy the luxury of MEC. Because we did our job just in one settlement we want to see if we can organise something for the 2 other villages. It is possible, one day to Kalwelwe and also a day to Chisamba. That will be long days working with the people there.

We decide to buy for each settlement a complete toolkit. Kerst makes with his boys for every set a wooden box in the carpentry. The board of the settlement is responsible for these boxes.

On a Saturday we go to Kalwelwe first. Mr. Silwenga, the manager, and Mr. Kabamba, the agriculture-officer, are going with us. Both of them want to see how the pumps will be fixed. When we arrive the first thing we do is hand over the toolkit to the chairman of the settlement.

Rust and damage of the pipes, we have seen all kinds of problems. This day we repaired with the team 2 pumps and the next day they will do the third themselves.



Rust and other problems

At the end of the day we eat with the team we worked with. There were also a couple of spectators joining the meal. Chicken, nshima, cabbage and a delicious sausage.

It was now very late to go home. We had to pass Lusaka through the compounds in the dark. Streetlights rare, not like home in Sneek, and many people walking around. You just see them when they laugh. Nevertheless we were home at 20.00 and Yvonne, Griet and Wenda were waiting for us with a little drink. They said we earned it after a good day's work.

Our activities at MEC went on. Kerst finished some chairs and a little table. And I enjoy getting on with the pupils in class. I see working accurately and precisely is not natural for everybody.



Yvonne and Griet are not only active in school but also in the orphanage.



On Saturday the 25th of April was a party in combination with the Dutch consulate and the Dutch people living in Zambia and we went there with Mrs. Dil. It was our King's day. The place was the Showground in Lusaka. We had to survive the traffic to arrive there. It takes about one hour and a lot of patience. We all enjoyed it very much. There were 2 Dutch bands playing both national anthems, *haring* and *bitterballen*. I think about 100 people, very pleasant.

On our last Sunday we once again had lunch at Sandy's Lodge.

After that there were just 2 days to finish our activities. We had a marvellous farewell meal at St. Nicholas orphanage. Mrs. Dil and Mrs. Mulimba were invited. Ireen had organised a delicious diner and singing and dancing by the children.

We all get a little bit emotional because in these 5 weeks we became a little more like family together.

We all hope we can go again sometime.

Jan, Yvonne, Griet and Kerst