

Visit of Wim Reimert and Elske van Zanden to Senanga, 24 – 29 July 2016

As usual when visiting Senanga, the place where we lived and worked from 1980 to 1986, we stayed at Senanga Safaris, a charming place with a beautiful view across the Zambezi River and the plain beyond. This time there was a surprise: for the first time in 30 years there was water in the swimming pool! Less pleasant was the fact that from 16 hrs onwards the music played by the DJ at the pool bar was so loud that even a conversation was hard to follow. Luckily at around 19 hrs there was a power failure and everything became quiet and dark. When the electricity returned an hour or so later, the DJ had already packed his stuff.



The following morning we were woken up by the loud sound from a car with megaphones driving around town. In less than three weeks there would be general and presidential elections and all over the country there were political meetings. In Senanga as well and we would hear these loud calls to attend a meeting many more times during our stay there. This year the run up to the elections had been quite violent at some places but as far as we know no such violence had occurred in Senanga. That there was tension in the air, however, was undeniable.

After a late breakfast we walked to town to try and see if we could find Patrick Kozi, member of the local board of Zambridge Senanga but most of all a very good friend. Patrick was not at home but the news that we were looking for him had already spread and reached Patrick and so we met him when we were about to go back. It was good to see him again and to learn from him what the current situation was in Senanga. While walking back we were stopped at the road by a man in a big car calling out loudly "tou ye sweu". That's Silozi for "the white elephant" and that's what was written on the side of our little Renault F4 car that we used to have when living in Senanga in the eighties.

Wim and he and his wife finally drive payed a visit to doctor. As was van Kalsbeek hospital is the new some 90



The driver turned out to be a former student of was happy to meet his old teacher and drive him around town to visit the school and the market and them back to the Safaris. In the afternoon we the hospital, Elske's former place of work as a mentioned in the report of Jan de Waard and Alice who visited Senanga earlier in May this year, the being upgraded to a general hospital. We admired nursing school that offered a 3-year training to student nurses. Not a cheap course by the way.

About € 5000 in total for the three years. Classrooms, dormitories, dining hall, staff houses. Big and impressive. There was also a new eye clinic at the hospital compound. Signs of progress, you can say, as were the many new and large houses that we saw in and around Senanga. Many of these houses were built along the new road to the south which now includes a brand-new state of the art bridge across the Zambezi to replace the old pontoon near Sioma. It is now much easier to reach Senanga when coming from the south and this is definitely a good development.



The next day, Tuesday, we had hoped to meet Mike Mutti, just like Patrick Kozi a member of the Zambridge board who had promised to make an effort to see us. As it turned out Mike was very much involved in election related issues and couldn't make it that morning. So we decided to go and see an old friend in Litambya, a nearby village where the old hospital was situated in which Elske had started her medical work in 1980. The meeting with Esther Tabo, 74 years now, and her (grand)children was heartwarming but the sight of the old hospital, now a health clinic, was heartbreaking. The idea is to upgrade it again to a proper hospital once the hospital in Senanga has



become a general hospital but that means lots and lots of work has to be done. The condition of the houses where the staff used to live in former days wasn't much better. Those days, when living there, we used to have piped water in the house, nowadays there's only one pump at the inner court of the hospital serving the whole compound. While there is progress at one place there might be decline at another place.

On the way back to Senanga we paid a first short visit to the Maxanaedi Community School that is supported by donations from Zambridge Senanga. As the headmaster had just left, we

talked briefly to one of the teachers. She told us that there were between 50 and 70 pupils in one class. Luckily there are a number of student teachers at the school so that the workload could be shared evenly. We promised to come back later for a proper visit.

On return at the Safaris we met Mike Mutti who was accompanied by Rose Kalaluka, the treasurer of the local board of Zambridge and coordinator of SODC, Senanga Orphans Day Care Centre, another project supported by Zambridge. Mike couldn't stay long as he had to attend a political meeting in Litambya and because it was Wim who gave him a lift in our car one might say that we have contributed a tiny bit to the final election result of Mike's party. With Mrs Kalaluka we made an appointment for an 'official' visit to SODC on Thursday. Later in the afternoon Patrick Kozi also came to see us, this time together with his daughter Limpo. The latter is a teacher at the school for the deaf in Senanga and we agreed to go and see her at the school the next day. It was Limpo who told us a lot about school fees (primary school is free though one has to contribute K 75, about € 7,50, to the PTA, the Parents Teachers Association; secondary school fees are K 720 per term if you are in the boarding) and about teachers' salaries (K 4200 per month if you have a certificate or diploma, K 5200 if you have a degree and K 6200 for those who have a masters). Private schools pay less and they can do so because there is a surplus of teachers who can't find a job at a government school despite the fact that classes at those schools are very large. 70-80 in one class is no exception.

While we had dinner together we saw on tv a debate with the running mates of the presidential candidates and for Zambia that was quite unique.

On Wednesday morning Mike phoned to ask if the meeting planned for the afternoon could be postponed until Thursday as he had to go to Mongu (the provincial capital, 100 km north of Senanga) to deliver reports. It was agreed that the Zambridge Senanga board meeting would take place at 5 pm the next day. After a late breakfast we left to go and see Limpo Kozi at the school for the deaf. Despite the directions given by Limpo we had some problems in finding the school but eventually we did. Limpo gave us an extensive tour of the school and it was impressive to see how much was achieved with such limited resources. At the moment there were only about 50 students. It used to be more but after the introduction of boarding fees many had to quit attending the school. The school had a modern kitchen with two big shiny electric cooking pots but as the heating coils had broken down soon after the installation, cooking was now done by the deaf cook on firewood. Not a new story, unfortunately.



In the afternoon we had another look at the secondary school and were lucky to meet the new deputy headmaster and the current head of science department, a firm lady biology teacher. We found her in the office where Wim once was residing as head of science. The old wooden bookshelves that had served as a free meal for termites had been replaced by

bug-resistant metal ones. Here, just as in Litambya and at the deaf school, another example of progress and decline: in the computer room with at least 15 working computers an energetic young teacher explained how to add extra columns to a table in Excel while in the science room the lab assistant showed how heating was now done with charcoal stoves during chemical practicals because there was no gas anymore and not even spirit for the spirit-burners.



The evening was spent at the *New Horizon* restaurant in the very pleasant company of Patrick, Limpo and her children Malcolm, Wana and Lukama and their nanny Mary.

Thursday morning had been reserved for a boat trip on the Zambezi river together with four sons of Esther Tabo. We had promised to pay for the fuel but when arriving in Litambya at the agreed time we found that the fuel still had to be bought in Senanga, as well as oil for the engine. While Wim went back with Philip to buy the stuff, Elske assisted Esther who was knitting a scarf. When finally on the river it turned out the boat needed continuous bailing to keep it afloat. In spite of that it was a very nice trip especially because at one point we saw a huge crocodile lying at the riverbank. And then of course there were the very many beautiful birds to be seen in the plains. On coming back we were invited for lunch which of course we accepted so eventually left for Senanga where we were supposed to visit SODC.



At the SODC school we were taken round by Mrs Kalaluka and her son Ron Liswaniso who had also become a member of the local board of Zambridge. They introduced us to Mr Andrew Munukayamba, the new headmaster of the school, and we had a very pleasant conversation with him. He seemed to be very dedicated to his work and determined to make the best of it. As it was the time of the mock exams there were not many students around. While walking around the school compound we were informed about the many challenges facing the school, such as lack of sufficient benches, huge classes, few working computers, no proper electricity supply, not enough toilet facilities and - very urgent - a borehole that had collapsed leaving the school without water for three months. It was a relief that we



were able to tell that Zambridge had decided to donate the money that was needed to repair the borehole. Asking whether something was done regarding local fund-raising the answer was affirmative and we were shown a pile of bricks that had been made for the construction of a new classroom. As the school area is rather large without a fence around, it was difficult - so we were told - to ensure that no items disappeared from the compound. A great wish therefore, was to have one or two staff houses at the school premises so that there would always be supervision. We took note



of all the wishes and suggestions and promised to raise these issues in the next board meeting of Zambridge Senanga in Holland.

The HBC, Home Based Care, one more project supported by Zambridge, is located next to the SODC school and so we decided to have a look there as well. Unfortunately no one was present and the building was locked. The new *Ventilation Improved Pit latrine (VIP)*

and the handwashing facility that was built with 'Zambridge money' appeared to be in good order. On our way to the Maxanaedi Community School we made a brief stop at the carpentry workshop of the deputy head of the secondary school to enquire about the cost of school desks. K 250 for a single and K 450 for a double desk. A discount was negotiable though.

A bit later than the 3 pm we had agreed on in the morning, we arrived at Maxanaedi. Unfortunately neither the headmaster nor the deputy headmistress with whom we had spoken earlier that day were present because of involvement in the election process. But we did meet three of the teachers and a whole bunch of pupils who sang and danced for the visitors. The teachers showed us around



the classrooms and the newly built row of 16(!) VIPs. Zambridge had provided the funds for these toilets and for extra VIPs for the staff. During his visit in May chairman Jan de Waard of Zambridge Senanga Dutch board had officially 'opened' this very welcome new addition to the school. We were very surprised to see that the poles for carrying electricity had now reached the school and we were told it was only a matter of weeks before the school and the staff house would be connected to the mains. All that was needed was a transformer to be installed. The initiative for linking the school to the grid had come for the Zambridge local board using money that had remained from the construction of the VIPs. Considering the fact that computer science is now an official exam subject no school can actually do without electricity. Despite this new development at Maxanaedi we did discuss the possibility of introducing solar power, just as we had done at SODC, as a means of keeping the electricity bill low and having electricity if there was a power cut. The latter happens quite frequently due the shortage of electric power in the country which forces ZESCO, the electricity supply company, to apply *load shedding*, i.e. disconnecting in turn whole areas from the electric grid. As we had experienced our first day in Senanga at the Safaris. At the end of our tour we were informed about the need for extra computers for the school and the wish for an additional classroom block for grade 8 and 9 and a staff room for the teachers. We were told as well that the engine of the hammer mill, used for grinding maize, had broken down some months ago and had not yet been repaired. The mill serves as a money generating device as people can have their maize ground there on payment of a certain fee.





It was time to go back to the Safaris for the meeting with the local board of Zambridge that was scheduled for 5 pm. Except for Patrick Siyauya, the chair of the board, everybody was there: Mike Mutti (vice chair), Patrick Kozi (secretary), Rose Kalaluka (treasurer) and the members Therese Sikwatiketo and Ron Liswaniso. Using the latest “List of Observations, Questions and Discussions” that had come out of the Dutch board meeting of June as the agenda, many points were raised and thoroughly and lively discussed. While Elske took notes so as to be able to write the minutes of this meeting for the Dutch board, Patrick Kozi did the

same for the Senanga minutes. These would later be exchanged and discussed in the separate meetings of the local board in Senanga and the Dutch board (in Zwolle). Altogether it was a valuable meeting and it gave us the chance to share ideas in an open and direct conversation with our Zambian counterparts. It was well after 7 pm before we said goodbye and we could go and rest after a busy but useful last day in Senanga.

The Friday morning was spent shopping: a shirt for namesake Mbanga Wim, son of a former colleague at the secondary school who is having his birthday today, souvenirs for the people at home who were trying to keep our cat Moyo and the bananaplant alive, and tomatoes for ourselves. The last hour in Senanga was spent with a drink at *New Horizon* in the company of Patrick and Limpo Kozi. It was good to have seen them again and to notice that were doing fine, having recovered from the loss of their wife and mother Rose who died in 2009. A year later, together we had visited her grave to pay our last respect to a very dear friend. This year it was another friend’s grave that we had to go and see before coming to Senanga, the grave of Bertha Mwayanguba who was our friend ever since the time we lived here in the 80’s. Bertha had passed away in Kapiri Mposhi and was buried in Mongu where she lived and where we had stayed with Mbanga Wim’s parents Richard and Irene Ndiulu for a week before coming to Senanga and where we were now going to return to. In two years time we hope to be back in Senanga.

