

## Report on working visit, June 2017

It is Saturday 3 June. A huge thundercloud bursts over Beira. Most unusual for the time of year. It's winter here, which usually means that the weather is dry and cool and the skies are clear. Following last year's El Nino, this winter is very different. It is humid, it rains often and the temperature remains on the high side. But still it is a good time to be working here.



*One of the impressive baobab trees that dominate the Mozambican skyline*

We are sitting with 37 Doctors for Mozambique scholarship students in the medical faculty's large rondavel, known as the Machesa. The teaching method the medical faculty applies is called Problem-Based Learning (PBL). This method is used in a small number of Dutch universities, including Maastricht. The Universidade Católica de Moçambique (UCM) in Beira, where Harrie and I work and our scholarship students study, has adopted Maastricht's medical training programme pretty much in its entirety. The academic year is divided into 7 study blocks of 6 weeks each, and on the Friday of the last week of each block, there is an exam. Because the day following that end-of-block exam is always a day on which students can relax, we use it to meet with all our scholarship students. The purpose of our time together is to address any academic problems, as well as any personal problems that may have arisen. First, the students gather in their year groups for about 30 minutes to note down the issues they have. The representatives of each year group then outline these issues to all those present. The pattern this Saturday is the same as usual. But no sooner have we taken our places in the Machesa than the torrential rain begins. It beats so hard on the roof that we can't even hear each other speak. Fortunately, we can relocate to 'my laboratory'. We arrive there soaked to the skin, but at least it's dry inside. And for once we don't need the air conditioning.



*The Zambezi river that flows through Mozambique*

The conclusion we draw this morning is that the students themselves are not satisfied with their grades. They are used to performing well, but recently they have been struggling. We decide that they need to take studying in study groups more seriously, and that the students who are good at certain subjects will help those who are weaker. We keep encouraging them to stay positive. We cite the example of our first scholarship student, Felix, who started off failing all his subjects in his first year. But gradually he got the hang of studying, and developed the habit of asking his fellow -students for help where necessary. After that, he never failed a single block ever again. Harry quotes an African proverb:

**If you want to go fast, go alone.  
If you want to go far, go together.**

Gitta  
Beira, July 2017