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Beyond the façade : instrumentalisation of the Zambian health sector

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Author's details



Melle Leenstra (The Hague, 1976) studied rural development in Wageningen. This decision was influenced by an early affinity with the developing world and Africa in particular. During his studies he conducted BSc-research on agricultural credit in Togo, hosted by the International Center for Soil Fertility Management (IFDC) in Lomé. Melle Leenstra also wrote an MSc-thesis on community-based tsetse control in Kenya, facilitated by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Nairobi. Even while attaining a degree in agricultural development economics, he was driven by a strong interest in socio-political and institutional issues. Following an internship at the poverty reduction and institutional development division and a temporary contract at the NGO division of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he formally joined the Ministry in 2004. As part of joining the Foreign Service, he followed a three-month postgraduate programme for starting diplomats at the Hague Campus of Leiden University.

While working as desk officer for Zambia and Zimbabwe, Melle Leenstra developed a PhD-project on the Zambian Health Sector, from a political science/public administration perspective. This research has been made possible by the IS-Academy partnership between the African Studies Centre of Leiden University and the Africa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the 2008-2009 academic year, Melle Leenstra was seconded to the African Studies Centre under the PhD-facility of the Ministry, to enable him to do field-work and write his dissertation. Subsequently he was posted to the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kampala, where at the time of writing he serves as the political officer. Melle Leenstra is married and has two daughters.