



Activity Report: Dia da Criança

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Introduction – Concept & Objectives

Dia da Criança comes around every year on June 1st and is a big cause for celebration for children on the island. WAY (weandyou.pt) initially approached me about Projecto Oceano collaborating with them for some kind of event for kids on the island to celebrate the day, since she was aware that the WAY volunteers had done something last year.

The principal objective of the event itself was to create a day of fun for the island's kids to enjoy, above and beyond the other standard celebrations and activities of the day.

However, in terms of Projecto Oceano's involvement and the benefits to the project and our members and students, my objectives were as follows:

- To involve our members in the design, planning and implementation of an event on a significant scale; thus encouraging and utilising their creativity, leadership and organisational skills, and making the event as 'youth-led' as possible
- To further consolidate the relationship we are currently building with younger kids within Projecto Oceano through our new classes; to create amongst these kids an affinity with the project as a place to both learn and have fun, in order to maintain the current interest and eagerness to be involved
- To utilise the opportunity to publicise the project and the work we do on the island
- To involve our members and also other students of the project in a fun event, working in collaboration with other organisations and working together as a team in an enjoyable environment, again to strengthen relationships and kinship with the project
- For everyone involved to have a good time and to see the results of hard work and creativity

Process – Planning & Implementation

After the initial conversations with Joana from WAY, I put the idea to the Projecto Oceano members in a meeting, and we started brainstorming ideas for the day – games, music, a presentation by the PO capoeira group, etc. We discussed the pros and cons of doing the event in a closed environment, such as the fortaleza, or an open environment such as the beach. The consensus was that a closed and controlled environment would be preferable, and the girls from WAY delivered a letter to the município and the museum to ask permission to use the fortaleza for the event; which eventually was granted.

1. Inscrições

We held sign-ups for the event in Projecto Oceano every day during *Clube de Estudo* the week before the event. Zito, Naiza and Tania kicked off the inscrições in their reading classes, so their pupils were the first to sign up, and word quickly spread so we had lots of kids visiting the project every day

between 3 and 5pm. All the members also spread the word amongst their families and around their neighbourhoods and in the end we were inundated with kids. Zito was a great help with this – he was there every day to help take the names of the kids, give them their ribbons which would allow entry into the event, and explain the format of the day – when to arrive etc. Some of the kids who turned up to sign up for the event were then asking if they could sign up for the reading classes as well. In the end we were turning people away as we had reached the capacity which had been agreed between WAY and MOVE as 300.

2. Food

We needed to provide lunch for approximately 350 people. The WAY girls had secured sponsorship from the Cooperação Portuguesa to buy rice, beans, etc., but we needed to find some ‘mums’ who could cook in large quantities. I offered to take care of this, discussed with Shany, and his mother offered to take it all upon herself. We established what else she would need – such as extra ingredients and some money to hire 4 large pans – and with Shany’s help, we coordinated everything. On the day itself Shany’s whole family was there mucking in, chopping, washing, boiling etc., and Shany and I were running around buying last-minute extras, fetching water, coal, wood etc. It was amazingly generous of Shany’s mother to do everything herself and thanks to Shany everything went smoothly and the food was delivered to the fortaleza in time to feed 350 people. The last-minute extra purchases that morning were outside of the budget that the Cooperação Portuguesa had offered, but I had foreseen this and budgeted for a contribution to the costs of the event of 1000 MZN.

3. Recruitment and coordination of volunteers

With 300 children signed up and more expected to arrive on the day to try and get in, we needed to ensure a lot of help to monitor the kids, monitor the games, monitor the distribution of lunch, monitor the entrance, etc. Starting with the members of Projecto Oceano as the core group of monitors, we then began recruiting other volunteers. This included other students of the project, and the members suggested others; they needed to be people that we could trust 100% to turn up on the day and be responsible. Together we came up with a good list and hosted a meeting at the project on the Thursday evening where the programme for the day was explained, and responsibilities were distributed – one monitor for each of the 10 games; one monitor for every 2 teams of 10 kids; 4 monitors to be stationed on the door and monitor the entrance of kids with ribbons, and general monitors to watch over the space, make sure kids didn’t go where they shouldn’t, etc. The PO members took on the most important posts, that is to say as team monitors, each looking after a group of 20 kids for the whole day.

4. Capoeira presentation

The Projecto Oceano capoeira group were to give a presentation on the day. Gito organised for 3 extra members to come to Ilha from Lumbo. The idea was that the group would do 3 small presentations, during the 3 ‘lunch periods’, as the kids were divided into 3 groups to have lunch at different times. In the end, Gito was accompanying the 3 kids coming from Lumbo, and they arrived really late – which I don’t believe was Gito’s fault at all; as I saw on the day itself, the tradition on Dia da Criança is for the kids to have lunch at school, and spend time with their families before going off to play – this meant that the majority of the kids arrived later than we had expected, and Gito’s kids coming from Lumbo were delayed for the same reason. In the end, they gave a one-off presentation at about 5.30pm just before the film started, which worked out nicely because there was an attentive audience of over 350 people, they put on a great performance which was enjoyed by all.

Conclusion

- **Outcomes & member involvement and performance**

The day itself was a huge success. Every child that entered had the opportunity to play 10 different games, ranging from football to human football to sack races, a tasty lunch of rice and beans, papaya salad and fruit juice, lots of singing and dancing, and finally a film – Puss In Boots – projected on the walls of the fortaleza. It was obvious from the smiles and laughter on the day that every kid loved it – and this has been apparent since in further feedback from the kids and their parents too. I believe this was an important step in strengthening the relationship between our new younger students and the project. With kids of that age it's important that they see the project primarily as a place to learn, but also as a place to enjoy themselves, so that their interest and loyalty is maintained.

Looking after 300+ kids in a big space with hundreds of nooks and crannies was no easy task, but thanks to the hard work and responsible behaviour of all the monitors, everything ran smoothly, no one got hurt, and there were no tears. I was really happy with our member involvement and performance. We had 2 no-shows but for good reason and they had pre-warned me: Coman was sick and Rauf had suffered a family bereavement the day before. Otherwise, all members were present and punctual both for the meeting and the event, and on the day itself they carried out their tasks responsibly and with lots of gusto. Crucially, I think they all enjoyed the day as much as the kids did. And for me, it reinforced my feelings that we are working with a group of natural leaders. I have no complaints or issues to report regarding the performance of any of our members.

All the other volunteers we had recruited also performed well and we had no issues at all with the reliability or responsibility of the volunteer monitors. It was also great to see that our students of language and IT classes were really keen to be involved in other activities of the project – there is definitely a nice loyalty and appreciation of the project amongst our wider group of students.

Thanks to the posters that were put up around the island prior to the event, our hosting inscrições in the project, general word of mouth and buzz which was substantial in the run-up to the event, as well as myself and the members wearing our project t-shirts on the day, I think we positively made the most of the opportunity to spread the word about Projecto Oceano, and about twice as many kids and their families now know who I am, what Projecto Oceano is and what we do.