

PROJECTO OCEANO – MAY 2011 REPORT



It was fitting that the start of May coincided with the last drops of rain and the arrival of some blistering African sunshine. A fresh start to what promised to be a busy month, and which didn't disappoint in the slightest! A unique mixture of Presidential visits, newspaper interviews, European rugby finals, faraway royal marriages, malaria tests and traditional Makua dancing in Ilha's Portuguese-constructed museum...

I.T. classes continued to function well, with Rauf and Firoza doing a good job with teaching our mathematics / logic programming courses to young students. This course, the second level of free I.T. classes given by the Project, takes those students that have passed through Shany's Level 1 class. The penultimate week of the month saw a line of nervous 14 year olds lining up outside the Project before Professora Firoza's dreaded exam. Although not everyone passed with flying colours, the results were very encouraging, as was Firoza's continued training of Rauf to help her with the bigger classes.

May provided the island with the annual celebration of the *Semana Comemorativa do Dia Internacional dos Museus*. For 2011, the Museum had chosen the theme *Museus e Memorias*, which Projecto Oceano helped to advertise through our monthly newspaper. We encouraged students to attend the variety of debates, films and presentations that took place during the week, and interviewed several of the speakers. We were lucky to witness debates on education (led by an extremely eloquent 96 year old Mozambican born on Ilha), presentations of traditional *tufo* dancing, and oral histories of traditional elements of Mozambican culture. It was an extremely positive experience for all Project members who attended, and has helped to strengthen our relationship with the museum management.

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Projecto Oceano's monthly newspaper, *Voz Jovem* (The Voice of Youth), dedicated the majority of its May edition to addressing the issues raised during the Museum's presentations. James had organised to delegate a large part of *Voz Jovem*'s editorial tasks to one of our Project members. Tino rose to the occasion and welcomed the responsibility, not only writing a perceptive article on education, but also helping other contributing authors with their articles. As the student in charge of the newspaper he has a large responsibility every month, and whilst he is not quite ready to take the reins for the whole publication, he is making major strides and should soon be in a position to do so. In addition to his article, he wrote an emotive poem on the value of oral histories and culture...it is fantastic to see older generations' memories reflected in the words of a young Mozambican in a newspaper. *Voz Jovem*, the brainchild of our previous volunteer Max, provides Projecto Oceano with a means to reach wider communities on Ilha which are not directly involved with our work. As such, May's edition included an invitation to any Ilha inhabitants, regardless of age, to contribute to our journal through poems, articles, ideas or photos. May also witnessed an increase in the number of copies printed monthly, and a wider distribution pattern. We now print 350 copies per month, and take them to Macuti Town (the less developed Southern half of the island), the hospital, all schools on the island, and a selection of touristic and local restaurants.

In terms of the volunteer experience, May provided James with his first dose of African illness (since 2009 at least!), necessitating a visit to the hospital for a malaria test (thankfully negative) and a few days R&R in his new accommodation. For the first time in 2 months a degree of nostalgia crossed his mind as reports of Prince William's marriage in London filtered through the Projecto Oceano grapevine. An effort was made to find some champagne to celebrate, but ultimately a luke-warm beer shared with a fellow Brit sufficed. James' longing for the Old Country was compounded by 3 weeks of sporting disaster, as Leicester Tigers and Northampton Saints lost the Premiership Rugby and Heineken Cup Finals respectively, and Manchester United capitulated to the genius of Barcelona and their Argentinian assassin Messi in the Champions League Final.

Any lingering sadness was soon dispelled, however, as the Project hosted an impassioned debate on the state of public health on Ilha. The reality of struggling infrastructure in Mozambique is certainly brought home by hearing first-hand stories about the unavailability of simple medication, or the inadequacy of medical training among nurses on Ilha. The island itself is considered lucky to have a hospital and access to a qualified Doctor and trained nurses, despite their failure to cope with the ailments suffered by Ilha's 18,500 residents. Varied viewpoints were shared during the debate, which will be followed shortly by a debate on the emotive issue of domestic violence, which unfortunately occurs frequently on Ilha. Firoza continues to run the debates well, and with a little encouragement is starting to chair them admirably. From James' position as 'observer', it seems that students have no problem sharing viewpoints and rising to a challenge or question posed during a debate. We are therefore lucky enough to have impassioned debates, with the odd raised voice being testament to the emotive subject matters and the involvement of the students. The area of improvement lies in the structuring of responses, and in using reason and logic to control emotional responses and make more persuasive and watertight arguments.

In true Mozambican style the Presidential visit was postponed by a week, serving to increase the anticipation of his arrival on our fair shores. As it will now coincide with the *Dia Internacional das Crianças* and Projecto Oceano's renovation plans for our classrooms, the first week of June promises to be a busy one for all... Rest assured that our attention will not be on the Great Leader's visit, but on the continued improvement of our students and the painting and carpentry work to be carried out by our students. The involvement of all Project members in our long awaited renovation work will provide us with fresher, cooler and more effective classrooms that will provide an environment more conducive to learning.