

## PROJECTO OCEANO – APRIL 2012 REPORT



I think it's quite telling of the spirit of both Projecto Oceano and the island as a whole that, just three weeks in, the place feels like home and the project feels like family.

Of course there were some hairy moments at the start. My flight into Nampula was delayed, and poor Zito had to wait several hours for me at the airport (though having said this, I'm starting to learn that having to wait several hours for someone isn't completely out of the ordinary on Mozambican / Ilha time). After being wowed by the Mozambican landscape dotted with inselbergs during our descent into Nampula, on stepping off the plane the brightness and the heat hit me, and from that moment on this poor little English girl was practically debilitated. How does anyone ever do any work in this heat? Or get by without having a shower and a nap every quarter of an hour? I was genuinely worried for my future here. But lo and behold, on day 3 the rains came and brought welcome respite while I grew accustomed to the climate and nailed some 'survival tactics'.

I was promptly impressed and touched by the project members' hospitality, work ethos and numerous talents. A couple of weeks had passed between James's departure and my arrival, and I knew I had some very big shoes to fill, but the guys and gals welcomed me with open arms, showed me the ropes and we got to work right away. Some computer issues to be fixed, my first experience of island bureaucracy as I sought permission to hang the Projecto Oceano plaque outside our door, and a sweaty dawn till dusk trip to Nampula to trawl the streets in search of good deals on school text books to expand the project library and revitalise the daily Study Group - an opportunity for island schoolchildren to come and use a space conducive to learning, with extra resources available to them, every day after school.

I have particularly enjoyed sitting in on Shany, Rauf and Mami's IT classes, noting their individual teaching styles and the impressive levels of commitment and concentration amidst their students. Last week, after a gruelling test, Shany's class completed their Level 1 course and will be moving on to Level 2 with Rauf and Mami next week; meanwhile Shany and I have been welcoming sign-ups for the next cohort of Level 1 pupils and I'm pleased to see there seems to be a very healthy flow of interest in taking these courses.

Another priority on my arrival was to complete April's edition of *Voz Jovem*, the monthly community newsletter researched and written by project members. Before James's departure,

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he and project-member Levelinha had, with the help of some experts on the island and the other project members, conducted surveys in the community to look at the eating and drinking habits of islanders and their awareness around dietary issues and food safety. The result of the surveys and further research is a special *Nutrition* edition of the newsletter, chock-full of important findings and practical tips for maintaining a healthy diet. You can see the newsletter here on the website. Inspired by this process and cognisant of the importance of these matters in daily life for the islanders, we have now arranged to have a special presentation and workshop on nutrition at the project in May, given by Aniko, a trained nutritionist.

Through the medium of *Voz Jovem* I also had the opportunity to introduce myself to the wider community as the new manager of Projecto Oceano, and to draw attention to our new language courses (English, French and Spanish taught by yours truly with the help of certain project members); Current Affairs classes (to broaden the horizons of students in terms of awareness of global issues as well as developing analytical and essay-writing skills, crucial for further education), and reading groups for children (extending our reach to the younger echelons of the community, encouraging learning and rousing creativity through reading). Again, we've been inundated with interest for the language classes which will be starting with a bang this week, now that the school holidays are over and people are in study mode again.

Last week at the project we also hosted a very animated debate around the topic of *polygamy*. Interestingly the group was pretty much divided in two, for and against, with a couple of attendees being the children of men with several wives. Some fascinating points and varied opinions surfaced, and it proved to be an issue that our members and other guests, perhaps without previously having realised it themselves, were very passionate about.

As I write this I have just returned from the first demonstration of the Projecto Oceano Capoeira group since my arrival. I seem to have come home with aching thighs... no, I wasn't participating (next time perhaps), but was performing my own variety of acrobatics while trying to take photos and videos at the same time; the guys flipping through the skies at the beach next to the 16<sup>th</sup> century fort, to the backdrop of a spectacular Indian Ocean sunset, was a sight that needed to be captured and cherished.

In short, reflecting back on my first few weeks here just fills me with excitement for what the next few weeks have in store.