

PROJECTO OCEANO – AUGUST 2012 REPORT



To pick up where we left off at the end of July, I believe I was enjoying some of the sophistication of Maputo for a few days, before heading into Swazi bushland and then back approximately 2,000 kilometres up the coast of Mozambique to reach lovely Ilha. Despite visiting some beautiful places on my travels, nothing beat the feeling of crossing the 3.5km bridge to the island and seeing the place which has so quickly become my home, come into view. My welcome back to the island was typically Mozambican, very loud and very warm, and it was great to step back into the project and see how the members had taken care of everything perfectly in my absence. This is an indication of the crucial skills that our young people have been encouraged to develop by being given responsibility from an early age; dealing with their duties in a conscientious and utterly dependable manner that surprises me on a daily basis.

Life was rather subdued on my return to the island as Ramadan drew to a close, but things have gradually been perking up as people get back to their regular daily routines. We have also resumed normal practice at the project with our Foreign Language, IT, Current Affairs, and Academic Skills classes for students of the secondary school, as well as reading & writing and English classes for primary school kids. This past week has gone by in a flurry of activity as we've had lots of new students coming through our doors and wanting to sign up for the classes, since we embarked on a little promotional push around Ilha in order to reignite things appropriately after the pause.

We got straight back into the swing of things with yet another stimulating Social Debate last week, which revolved around the topic of traditional initiation rites here in Mozambique; a topic that is somewhat shrouded in secrecy, since anyone who experiences an initiation rite is forbidden from speaking about the event to anyone else, and in particular what goes on in women's initiation rites must remain a mystery to the men and vice versa. But this didn't inhibit the attendees from debating the subject as vigorously as ever. For any Portuguese-speakers out there, you can read project member Naiza's reports on the Social Debates [here](#) every month.

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August also saw the commemorations for the *International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition*. Tiny Ilha de Moçambique, due to its strategic position as a gateway to the Indian Ocean, was a key centre for the export of African slaves around the world in the 18th and 19th century and so it was fitting that the day should be remembered in the *Jardim da Memória*, a monument on the island at the exact site where hundreds and thousands of slaves were shipped off to foreign lands. This year's tributes included a performance from the Projecto Oceano capoeira group, some traditional Tufo dancing, and a play about the slave trade and its workings specifically on Ilha, with project member Gito, a dark horse as it turns out with previously undisclosed acting talents, putting in a stellar performance as a slave master. There was a poignant atmosphere in the garden as the islanders remembered the suffering of their ancestors and the significance of their home in the history of such events.

And now as August draws to a close we are plotting project participation in various upcoming events such as a Gastronomic Fair, the *Dia da Cidade* and the *Festival Omuhipiti*, as well as planning a series of academic and career-related presentations and workshops at the project, inviting specialists in the fields of journalism, medicine and tourism amongst others to come and share their expertise, motivations and inspirations with our students. We also open our doors to any tourists visiting the island to come and share a skill, teach a class, or show off their ping-pong skills, so do stop in if you're round this way!