

## PROJECTO OCEANO – DECEMBER 2012 REPORT



As December began, and we waved goodbye to our celebrity visitors Freddie, Wilbert, Priscilla and Mario, it was time to reflect on all the knowledge gained, plans conceived, and ideas envisioned during those energising few weeks. And, crucially, for us the AZLera management team, it was time to make a call on the successful university scholarship candidates for 2013. As mentioned in last month's report, we were so impressed with the performance of each and every candidate over the course of the interviews and the rest of the selection process that it was never going to be an easy decision. Two candidates did, however, stand out enough for us to be confident in our resolution and we were very happy to award the scholarships to Manuel Domingos (aka Mingos), to study Architecture in Maputo, and Firoza Abdulcadre to study Medicine in Beira. This is a huge opportunity for both of them, and we at AZLera are really excited about what the future holds for the two youngsters. I wish I could have filmed the moment I delivered the good news to them both – their reactions were further testament to how much this opportunity meant to them, how much they hungered after it; and this will indisputably go down as one of the highlights of my year in Mozambique.

As for the students who missed out, and whose families are unable to finance a university degree, our efforts are now focused on supporting them into alternative opportunities – and so our past few weeks have been spent in conversations and meetings with various institutions that offer shorter professional training courses, and researching other avenues for scholarships, exchange programmes, and so on. Good progress is being made and so hopefully I'm not getting too ahead of myself by saying that 2013 is going to be a big year, not just for our scholarship students but for all 'graduating' members of Projecto Oceano.

As the saying goes, every silver lining has a cloud, and these exciting developments also imply some sad times ahead, as seven of our current nine core project members will potentially be flying the nest, or disembarking the Ocean ship I should say, in the next month or two. These will be bittersweet moments as their departure will undoubtedly signify a great loss for the project, but at the same time a huge achievement for each of them as individuals after years of hard work, and a big step for the organisation as this is the first time we are supporting students into further education and training. And it goes without saying that this is not the end – Projecto Oceano, and AZLera is and will remain a family; they will have our continued support and I know we will have theirs too, returning to help out at the project whenever the occasion arises.

## PROJECTO OCEANO – DECEMBER 2012 REPORT

Enough of the sentimental and back to business... Aside from the above, December has mainly been a month of preparation – preparation for university entrance exams in January; and preparation for the coming of 2013. This involves looking out for potential new members to replace the departing troops; current members developing manuals for their respective areas of responsibility in order to facilitate the handover and training of new members; developing ideas for new courses, curricula and activities that we can offer in the new year; new collaborations with other institutions and associations to widen the impact of our work; preparation for the arrival of the next 'me', for my departure at the end of March, and the million and one things I want to get done before I go.

And then... I can hardly write December's report without mentioning the festivities. Christmas Day was a strange one for me, being a long way from family and friends, in a place where Christmas isn't celebrated, in 30+ degree heat and intense humidity, and not hearing a single Christmas song on a single stereo; it just felt like any other day on Ilha. There may not have been any turkey involved, but I still managed to spend most of the day eating, thanks to several feasts with the Portuguese crew on the island, and eventually my ears were even blessed with the sound of Wham!'s *Last Christmas* during dinner. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, we had a festive dinner in the project, getting all the members together to congratulate everyone on their success in the scholarship application process, for their achievements at school and in the project over the course of the year, and to bring the focus round to the significance of the year ahead. And henceforth 2013 was seen in with more eating, dancing, sunrise over the Indian Ocean, and an obligatory jump off the pier into warm crystal waters; not a bad start to the year.

So, now it's time to wish our students the very best in the university entrance exams that they will be sitting over the next few weeks. Let's hope that by the time I sit down to write January's update I have lots of good news to report!