

PROJECTO OCEANO – JULY 2012 REPORT



July has been an unusually quiet month both on Ilha and at the project. The beginning of the month signalled the end of term and two weeks off for the island's school kids. A lot of students took this opportunity to travel to nearby towns and villages to spend time with family and so our contingent of members and students on the island was significantly diminished. On the other hand, we were also pleased to receive visits from past members Mingos, Firoza and Tino who are currently studying in Nampula and came back to Ilha for their holidays. I took the opportunity to interview them, along with our current members, on camera, for a video I was putting together about the project and AZLera's plans to provide scholarships for two of our brightest students to attend the top universities in the country next year. A lot of mouse-clicking later, you can now see the finished product here ([INSERT LINK](#)) - please have a look for the chance to get to know our students a little better and see some of our work in action!

Another special guest who popped in to see us this month was our colleague from London via Portugal, Joao Neto, who spent a few days with project member Levelinha developing an inflation index for the island. This is definitely a first on Ilha, and possibly for the region, and yet another important project to add to the ever-increasing list of educational and community-based activities led by our young people at Projecto Oceano.

The last days of the school holidays coincided with the beginning of Ramadan. With the island community being predominantly Muslim, everything started to wind down and there was a palpable air of calm and reflection as the month of fasting began. As the majority of our members and students are fasting, and as most of our classes happen in the afternoons and evenings when everyone is now at home with their families for the "quebra", we collectively decided to slim down the project activity and opening hours for the period.

And so it seemed like an appropriate opportunity for me to take some time out and get to know a bit more of magical Mozambique. Leaving the project in the safe hands of our senior members so that

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the island's school kids can continue to use the space and resources to help with their studies, and Zito valiantly continued to give reading and writing classes to kids every day of the week, I set off for the big south. A 3am departure from Ilha on a Wednesday morning got me to Inhambane, in southern Mozambique, approximately 36 hours later, and all the while I was suffering from some kind of inflammation on my right eyeball, so first stop in Inhambane was the hospital. When Vasco de Gama went to Inhambane he called it "the land of the good people"; I am convinced that my eye doctor was one of the people old Vasco met. Despite being forbidden from going in the sea, and needing to go back to the hospital on two more occasions, I managed to have a good few days at the very relaxing Tofo beach, and when I eventually got the "all clear" I was lucky enough to go swimming with whale sharks and humpback whales; one of Mozambique's classic and unforgettable experiences.

From Inhambane I then headed down to the big capital, Maputo, where I have been enjoying being able to do things like eat pears, visit art galleries, catch some of the Olympics on TV and sit in cafes with wifi (special thanks go to Nautilus Pasteleria where I have been sat for a while now with an absolutely enormous pastry). I'll be spending a couple of days here, having meetings relating to our plans to send students to university here on AZLera scholarships (please see here for more details), before making the long journey back up north, hopefully with a couple of nice stop-overs on the way. The problem is just deciding where to visit; this is a country with a lot to offer. Having said that, there's something about Ilha which is calling me back and part of me just can't wait to get home. As life gets back to normal after the month of Ramadan, we will be working on a few new initiatives at the project which I look forward to updating you all on next month.