

## PROJECTO OCEANO – OCTOBER 2012 REPORT



I'm rather struggling these days to get my head around the fact that it is Halloween, fireworks, winter coats and bonfire time back home in the UK, while here nothing has changed apart from an increase in humidity and the first few drops of rain to signal the arrival of summer. This is not a complaint; I'd take flip flops over winter boots any day. What this time of year signifies here on the Ilha de Moçambique is the end of the school year and the beginning of the *loooong* summer holidays. For us in the project this represents a challenge: how to keep the students engaged, stimulated, and constantly developing their academic and personal skills, while everyone is in holiday mode. More on this later... First, a few words on the goings on of the month past.

Excitement was in the air at the beginning of the month as we prepared to welcome a new volunteer into the Projecto Oceano family – Daniela Lima, joining us from Portugal for 2 months on a science mission. The kids wanted to plan a special surprise welcome dinner for her, and so while I went to fetch her from the airport in Nampula, the project members shopped, chopped, and laid out a veritable Macua feast, and a really special welcome, in the project classroom. And thus began what has been a fantastic month for Daniela and for all of us at the project thanks to all her hard work and the new energy and enthusiasm that comes with the advent of a fresh face and fresh ideas.

Just about to finish her doctorate in Biomedical Sciences, Daniela has come on board to give classes in Biology and Chemistry, but not just any old classes – the kids so far have been creating erupting volcanoes, constructing molecules out of plasticine, and much more – applying the theory that they may have already learned in school into real life experiments and seeing how science exists and works all around them in their daily lives. It's a real eye opener for the students, a new kind of learning and they can't get enough of it – every lesson, the classroom is full to the brim with kids of all ages. Meanwhile Daniela has also been really impressed with our students, their eagerness to learn and the potential that is being tapped. I urge you to read more about Daniela's classes and her general experience and impressions so far on Ilha, from the lady herself, [here](#).

Our 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have also been making the most of Daniela's presence and scientific expertise (which is something I can't deny I am seriously lacking) as they prepare for their

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final school exams, which start next week. She and I are available every day to go over any doubts or issues, to generally help with study methods, and to lend text books for revision – and so now we wish the students all the very best next week and look forward to seeing the results of their hard work!

For all the students bar the 12<sup>th</sup> grade exam-takers, the long summer holidays are already on – and this is where we need to get creative, as there is a tendency to think, primarily amongst the younger kids that attend our reading and writing classes, that because school's out, that's it for studying until January. And so plans are afoot for a range of activities, competitions, tournaments etc. that can occupy the kids in a fun and educational manner during the holidays. Let's see if we can't create a kind of Projecto Oceano summer camp, to make sure these kids are constantly stimulated during the next couple of months.

One new initiative that I've been getting underway this last month is my educational children's choir. Twice a week we gather together in the old bandstand in front of the museum, and as an ensemble we are composing new songs and writing lyrics that will expand and consolidate the kids' knowledge of a variety of topics. I turn up with the beginnings of a song, the kids generally adapt the melody and rhythm to make it more authentically Mozambican which is totally fine by me, and together we discuss topics that are relevant to them in their daily lives and education, such as the history of Ilha, and come up with lyrics that fit to the music. Between sessions I send them off on a mission to research the topic, asking their teachers, parents, or older brothers and sisters for information to contribute to the lyrics. It's a genuine collaborative effort in the creative process, which gives all of us more satisfaction as we complete a new piece of music. Little by little they're learning to sing well in harmony, and I have no doubt that before long we will be ready to give concerts and participate in any cultural event that's happening on Ilha. Before I leave I want to have recorded an album and some music videos too. There we go, I've said it in writing, now I am obligated to fulfil my mission. Watch this space...

In the middle of all this I had a quick trip to Malawi this month in order to get the obligatory stamp on my passport for visa reasons, and also to pick up my brother and friend who were on a short trip. We spent a few days at Lake Malawi which was beautiful and very relaxing, before making the long journey back to Ilha. I loved being able to show them around the place which has become my home and the friends who have become my family over the last 6 months, and suffice to say they loved it too. I also used them in my English classes to get the kids practising their conversational English which was quite amusing for all involved, and good training.

Also this month we've had another successful and absorbing debate on the subject of domestic violence, invited in a professional IT Engineer to speak to some of our students who are interested in embarking on that career path, given a capoeira presentation at an arts & crafts fair on the island, and completed the latest edition of our newsletter Voz Jovem, which includes a beautiful poem written by project member Aicha, aka Mamy, yet another hidden talent we've just uncovered... you can read the newsletter [here](#).

And finally, in other very exciting news this month we received a total of 7 new laptops for the project which came as an extremely generous donation from Thomas Olsson, and is making an indescribable difference to the project since we've suffered from a lack of computers and various IT issues ever since I arrived. As well as breathing new life into our IT classes it's just fantastic having the extra computers available for the kids to do their schoolwork, play educational games, use encyclopaedias and so on. So from the bottom of our hearts we'd like to send out a HUGE thank you to Thomas for making this happen and contributing so significantly to the project.

All in all it's been another busy and successful month, and now as we step into November we've got something else to look forward to... the much anticipated arrival of AZLera founder Wilbert Sanchez, and our UK-based manager Freddie Brunt, at the end of the month, when we will be instigating the scholarship selection process amongst many other things. For further info on the scholarships which we are offering for the first time, why it's important for us and our students and how you can contribute, please check [here](#).