

Projecto Oceano Monthly Report – August 2013

As the weather on Ilha has been lovely and cool due to it being “winter” over here, we have been enjoying some fun outdoor activities with Projecto Oceano, namely some fun beach volleyball days on the weekends throughout this past month. I never realized how easy this was to organize – all we needed was a proper ball, which I picked up in Nampula, because we already had the net and can borrow the poles from the high school. One such Sunday, we organised ahead of time, bought some snacks brought some music and turned into a little picnic and dance party for our members, as a way to celebrate the new semester.



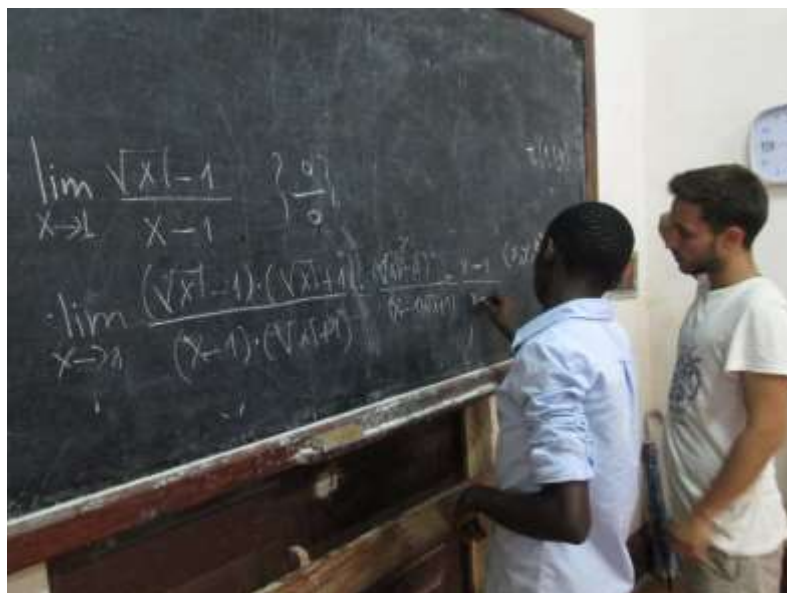
The members and I decided that it was about time to start making announcements again in schools for our classes for school-aged kids (Explicação and Ler e Aprender). So, one morning, Almiro, Riquito and I arrived at the Escola Josina Machel and went around to the different classrooms explaining what we offer here at Projecto Oceano. Accordingly, starting that very same afternoon we had a pack of children coming to the Project asking about classes and participating in our Explicação. Of course, after a couple days of packed classes the number of children has somewhat decreased and is now at a happy, manageable level. Our teachers – Naiza and Tania for Ler e Aprender and Fauzia, Riquito and Magda for explicação – have been energetic and good at managing all the new students.

The IT Level 1 classes have begun again post-holidays, and with great renewed interest. Almirante and Sofanias had the idea to keep the classes to younger students (ages 9-14) as a way to ensure that they are there to learn and not to goof off (perhaps that sounds counter-intuitive but the idea is that some of the older students have the tendency to want to learn IT just to mess around with the computers but the younger kids genuinely want to learn to use them properly – so far it has worked out this way). The class has a handful of seemingly earnest and eager young students who I expect will continue to the second level in a few weeks.



The new maths classes have gotten off to a really wonderful start as well. Though the former teacher, Pedro, left last month, he recruited a new MOVE volunteer named Antonio to teach and Antonio has brought great enthusiasm and energy to the Project.

Additionally, the English classes that I am teaching are going well – we managed to have a nice lesson on Martin Luther King Jr. where we read and listened to his “I have a dream” speech and learned a bit about his work and life. Following that class we read and listened to Bobby Kennedy’s speech after the assassination of MLK – it seems that my “English” classes are also turning into “American history” classes haha but I think it’s a great way for the kids to learn a language and a little more about the world.



This month we also had a practical photography class where some of the students and I walked around the island taking photographs. Each of the students are choosing individual projects to focus on in the next few months, and hopefully we will get some nice photographs to hang up in the Project!



This was an exciting month for our library as we have now received lots of new books – both from Patrick the Peace Corps volunteer as well as some that I purchased in the Leya bookstore in Nampula. The shipment we recently received included a whole bunch of new children's books, which is wonderful and also included a few books for the high schools students, which I think is even more wonderful as we have many avid readers in the Project. Our members have already gone through quite a few of them – it's a random selection but we have some Jane Austen, Agatha Christie, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Luis Sepulveda.

As soon as we got the new shipment in the two library managers got straight to work (with help from the other excited members) in stamping all the books and organizing them on the shelves. Our next step is to make a complete catalogue of all the books, something which – for better or worse – may take a little while now as we have so many! It would be really wonderful to get even more books for the high school kids to read for fun – books that will be fun and interesting to read, but also informative and thought-provoking.

This month we had two current affairs classes, both ending up focusing on topics from the Middle East. In one class – the one following the celebrating of Eid-al-Mubarak (end of Ramadan), we read an article about how this same holiday is celebrated in Syria. Or rather, how it is not celebrated in Syria this year because of the current civil war ravaging the country. The following class, Almiro chose an interesting article about the on-going civil unrest in Egypt and while everyone was extremely interested in the topic, the outcome of the class was actually that we all need to learn a lot more about what is going on there because the situation is complicated, to say the least. It was a useful class though because the kids got to see where their gaps in knowledge are and recognize where they need to be following the news more.

The debate for this month was a really fun and interesting experience. Bassma chose the topic of prostitution, which I was a bit hesitant about at first but am happy that I usually defer to the members' judgement on these things because they almost always pull through. As per



the suggestion of Riquito, we invited the new MOVE team (five young Portuguese volunteers who just arrived in the past few days/weeks) to join us and so we had a full house in the Project.

First, we started with introductions of all present and then Bassma followed with an introduction to the topic and a general question. Our members were all very participatory and engaged in the discussion. There were definitely different opinions around the room as to what constitutes as prostitution as well as the advantages and disadvantages of having prostitution in society. I think the conversation became the most interesting when we were discussing what would they do if they were the Mozambican government and were deciding to either legalize prostitution or not (after discussing a bit about places such as the Netherlands where it is legalized). Certain members brought up the point that if it was legalized at least it could be monitored better and relevant services could be provided; others believed that it is a practice that should not be encouraged but rather prohibited. Following the debate the MOVE volunteers all told me how very impressed they are with our members (and the Project in general), who all appeared very opinionated, confident, articulate and interesting. Which, of course, they always are!