

## PROJECTO OCEANO – JANUARY 2013 REPORT



After all the festivities of the passing of the year, as they say in Portuguese, and happily all of us at Projecto Oceano entering into 2013 with two legs, as they say in Mozambique, it was back to work with new energy and lots of excitement for what the future holds. January meant university entrance exams for many of our students, so after getting their heads down with revision, it was off to Nampula to sit the exams, and then, the waiting game began. I was hoping to have lots of good news to report by now, but unfortunately most of the students are still waiting; it seems Mozambican universities run on Mozambican time as well, and even exam results and course start dates seem to experience difficulties in the department of punctuality. Some congratulations are already in order, however, with Felício being accepted to study medicine at Unizambézia, and our scholarship student Firoza being all set up to study medicine at UCM in Beira, after a weekend of selection and orientation there with our partners, Dutch NGO *Doctors for Mozambique*.

For our non-university goers, we have been working to support them into alternative further study or professional training options – and I am happy to report that so far we have Mamy already a week into her course in Tourism at INEFP (*Instituto Nacional de Emprego e Formação Profissional*) in Nampula, and Shany signed up to start an I.T. engineering course at the same institute in February. Meanwhile, Gito is days away from receiving his final acceptance into the teacher training course at ADPP in Nacala, after successful performance in the entrance exams and interviews.

Another long-time project member, Coman, is, fingers crossed, about to be accepted onto an international cultural exchange programme with AJUDE, an association working for the personal and professional development of young people in Mozambique via 6-month exchange programmes with Canada, Tanzania and South Africa. If all goes to plan, Coman will be embarking on the Canada programme, which will involve him spending 3 months on work placements in Mozambique before going off to Vancouver for 3 months of cultural immersion and more work placements. This is a very exciting opportunity, and hats off to Coman for seeking it out and making it happen. This is the kind of 'go-get-'em' spirit that we like to see and encourage at Projecto Oceano! I have in the meantime been in discussions with the lovely folk at AJUDE with regards to an on-going partnership between us and them, potentially opening the doors for one or two of our students each year to take part in the

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exchange programmes, as well as developing ideas for other cultural and youth development projects that we can initiate together on Ilha and in Nampula.

Another crucial task for the month of January was the recruitment of new members, since as many as seven of our current nine will be departing their beloved Ilha over the course of the next couple of months. After welcoming interested parties from the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades at both the Secondary and the Professional Schools, the recruitment process culminated in a very lively induction and assessment session in the project last week. After giving an introduction to AZLera, the project, our work and our vision, I invited several of our current members to the stage to talk about what it means to be a member of Projecto Oceano. I have to admit that I had to hold back the tears; it was quite something to hear them talking, so eloquently and confidently in front of a sizeable audience, about how important the project has been for them over the years, how much they've learned, how the project has been like a family to them, and how they hope that future generations will continue to work hard to keep the project growing and growing. I have no doubt that the audience of potential new members were left feeling suitably inspired.

We then set them to work on various activities in pairs and in groups, in order to observe their competencies in areas such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. A highlight was the 'transport the egg from a low place to a high place over a certain distance without using your hands' activity – a classic, encouraging them to think outside the box, and never failing to arouse raucous laughter. Finally, each candidate had to submit a form whereby they were given the opportunity to discuss their motivations, areas of interest, and new ideas. The current members and I are now putting the final touches to our selection and will be welcoming the new members into the family in the coming weeks. Lots of work ahead as we allocate them into various areas of responsibility, train them up as teachers of younger kids, and get to thinking about new activities sprouting from the ideas of the newcomers. The times they are a-changing, and I've got a feeling that 2013 is going to be another good one for the Projecto Oceano family.

In other news, as January draws to a close, Mr. Weatherman seems to have decided to shatter my illusions, believing as I was to be living in a microclimate, where the rains of the rainy season hardly struck; and the heavens have well and truly opened. It's quite a wake-up call to see the roads and passages of Makuti town completely flooded, an inescapable visual representation of the increased risks of cholera and malaria during this period, and a stark reminder of how much work remains to be done on Ilha in terms of the development of infrastructure and reasonable living conditions for the community. On a positive note, the spirits of the Ilha people will not be dampened; the kids are as happy as larry playing in the pouring rain, and the general atmosphere of jollity and solidarity prevails. As one of my favourite Mozambicanisms goes: '*Estamos juntos!*' (We are in it together!)