

Projecto Oceano Monthly Report – July 2013

During the first two weeks of July, the high school students on the island were preparing for and taking their end of year school exams. These were followed by a week of continued testing which culminated in the students then collecting their results and beginning two weeks of holiday. As has become a traditional at the project, we ran an altered schedule during the holidays, with a much greater focus on organising and facilitating a number of community events and games.

For example, some of our members, organised a “Campeonato de Futebol” (Football Tournament) on the continent, in the town of Jembesse, which is just on the other side of the bridge to the island. Their rationale was that while there are many opportunities for kids on the island to participate in events like this, Jembesse rarely gets this attention and so in addition to promoting the work of the Project in the community, they were providing a fun event for the kids over from Jambesse.



Before the first match started, each member spoke to the players (ages 12-14) about the rules and objectives of the tournament, their own involvement in Projecto Oceano, what we do over on Ilha, etc. I was really proud to see what initiative and responsibility the boys all took and how they organised the whole tournament with a serious but fun attitude. They had organised 8 teams of 10 players each and had even spoken to relevant community leaders to ask permission to hold the tournament and use the space for the games. They organised jerseys for the teams, nets for the goals, and there was a referee at each game (usually one of them, but they also involved friends).

The whole tournament lasted three days, with games in the morning and afternoon – and culminated in a final match on Thursday afternoon, following which there was a small ceremony and handing out of the prizes (a football, notebooks and pens). It was a very fun, well-organised event and I believe that everyone greatly enjoyed it. The members said that they kept receiving compliments from the participants and observers how greatly appreciated it was over in Jembesse to have such an event organised for them.

Additionally, during the holidays, two of our students – Fauzia and Tania – attended a training at the Cooperação Portuguesa on Animação do Livro e da Leitura (Book Animation and Reading). When we were first invited to send students to this training we all jumped at the opportunity, knowing that it would be a great experience for our students and would greatly help their work at the Project (and I believe that it did accomplish both of these things). The training was very thorough (every day for 5 hours) and included individuals not just from Ilha but from the surrounding area. The girls learnt how to read and orally relate a story to a group of kids, how to construct materials, etc. – and it culminated in a presentation from each participant in front of a group of children, in which both Oceano girls did extremely well. Both of the leaders of the training commented to me how wonderful our students were – and they were by far the youngest of the group!

In other Project news, the social debate this month was very interesting – on the issue of domestic violence and polygamy. The current members were joined by various former members who were home during the holidays and they discussed whether domestic violence lead to polygamy and/or vice versa. It was really interesting to see the dynamics between the current members and the former members. For example, Firoza, one of our scholarship students who is studying Medicine in Beira, is extremely outspoken and clearly very used to these debates, but it took some time before the current members really sunk their teeth in and debate alongside her. However, eventually everyone was talking and presenting their own opinions. I think it was very valuable for the current members to hear from the former members and to see how they are used to interacting in the Project.

We also had a very interesting Current Affairs class this month about Barrack Obama's visit to Africa in which we discussed both the US and China's role in Africa and the US' proposed \$7 billion dollar investment/donation in providing energy to several African countries, Mozambique included. We discussed various themes in international relations, including the concept of how a country may be taking with one hand and giving with the other... which of course led the students to critically assess whether the US' proposal is entirely selfless (perhaps that was not my intention in choosing that article and topic but I am happy to the kids critically assess things rather than accept them at face value). I am continually impressed with the members' insights and analyses in relation to these current affairs classes – often they will pick up on themes that I had not even seen or thought about.