



Activity Report: Dia da Criança 2013

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Overview



In Mozambique, Dia da Criança is celebrated on June 1st and is an important holiday for children and families on the island and throughout the country.

I knew that there was a big celebration organized by Projecto Oceano, WAY and MOVE (two other community organisations based on Ilha de Moçambique) last year and I was very keen to make sure that another fun event was planned for this year. One of this year's MOVE volunteers, Mariana Ramos, was also interested in planning this event and so early on we discussed how the two of us could organize together. Initially we divided the work so that I,

as manager of Projecto Oceano, would be in charge of organizing the student volunteers, and Mariana would organize any ex-pat and other volunteers who were interested. Together we planned the general schedule of the day, including the lunch and the games, and we sought out funds from Cooperação Portuguesa and from our own personal resources.

The principal objective of the event itself was to create a day of fun for the island's kids to enjoy, above and beyond the other standard celebrations and activities of the day. However, in terms of Projecto Oceano's involvement and the benefits to the Project and our members and students, my objectives were similar to last year's objectives, which were as follows:

- To involve our members in the design, planning and implementation of an event on a significant scale; thus encouraging and utilizing their creativity, leadership and organizational skills, and making the event as 'youth-led' as possible
- To further consolidate the relationship we are currently building with younger kids within Projecto Oceano through our new classes; to create amongst these kids an affinity with the Project as a place to both learn and have fun, in order to maintain the current interest and eagerness to be involved
- To utilize the opportunity to publicize the Project and the work we do on the island
- To involve our members and also other students of the project in a fun event, working in collaboration with other organizations and working together as a team in an enjoyable environment, again to strengthen relationships and kinship with the project

- For everyone involved to have a good time and to see the results of hard work and creativity

Planning & Implementation

After initial conversations with Mariana from MOVE, I met with our Projecto Oceano members and we started brainstorming ideas for the day – games, music, food, snacks, general schedule and logistics, recruitment of other volunteers, etc. As had been done the year before, we decided that the fortaleza (fort) was the preferred location to hold the event and so with the help of some members I wrote and delivered a letter first to the Municipio and then to the Museu to ask permission to use the fortaleza for this year (which was eventually granted). Everyone that we spoke to about this event while planning was overwhelmingly positive about how successful it had been in the past about hopefully about how great it was going to be again this year.

The four main areas of planning and implementation for this event were as follows:

1. Inscrições (Sign-ups)

Though I was a bit anxious that we had started planning and announcing the event much later than last year, the members all assured me that we only needed to start the inscrições the Monday before the event (which was on a Saturday). As they have the best knowledge of the island, they were completely right and within two days we already had signed-up 200 children and had to turn others away.

All the members had spread the word amongst their families and around their neighbourhoods and we passed out little flyers to announce the event. For the two days we were accepting sign-ups the members were very useful whenever the kids came by – sometimes in rather large groups – and we even had to stop some of our normal classes just to get all the kids signed up. This is exactly the type of thing that the members know how to handle better than I do, as they speak the local language (not all the kids know Portuguese very well) and can write the names and addresses of the kids better than I or Mariana could. When a child signed up – and we decided only to allow children between the ages of 5 and 12 years of age – we gave them a small piece of capulana with a number, which they were told to bring to the event as their ‘ticket’.



2. Recruitment and coordination of volunteers

With 200 children signed up and more expected to arrive on the day, it was extremely important to have a solid team of volunteers to run the event. Without these volunteers, Mariana, I and the 10 members could not have pulled off this event and so one of the first things we had to organize was recruitment of these volunteers.

As we had decided to do in one of our meetings, I asked each of the members to each recruit at least 2 other students from the high school and bring them to a mandatory meeting the Monday before the event, making a total of 30 high school volunteers. In reality on the day, I believe we had closer to 40 volunteers, as the interest in helping out was very high. Because the members were in charge of recruiting these volunteers, we knew they would be people that we could trust to turn up on the day and be responsible with the kids. Together we all met and discussed the schedule for the day and gave out the responsibilities for each volunteer – one leader responsible for each of the 10 games/stations (including arranging the materials beforehand – this was mostly our own members who took this responsibility) and one leader for each team of 10 kids, as well as general monitors to watch over the space and help out where necessary.

Additionally, Mariana had organized a team of other volunteers, including ex-pats (MOVE, Peace Corps, etc.) and local islanders, who were willing to help both before and during the event. The week leading up to the event we gave out various responsibilities to each of these volunteers, who helped us arrange things such as popcorn, music, projector for the movie, etc. We needed a team of adults to run the 'security' of the event (monitoring the staircases and exits) as well as oversee the entrance and stations such as lunch, which could easily become disorganized and messy. On the day we had 10-15 of these other volunteers helping, without whom the event would have been impossible.

3. Games and general organization

As a group we had spent quite a bit of time thinking about which games would be most appropriate. The games all needed to be easy to organize and understand, low on materials, and most importantly safe. We decided to have 8 stations of games and chose ones such as jump rope, sack races, dodgeball, and bowling. We also had two different, more creative stations; one station of an educational math game to promote the work of the Project and one dance station. The idea of the dance station was that as each kid would go to all stations, they would each learn the dance and then together as a group we would all do the



dance at the end of the day (unfortunately it did not work out that way, but it was still a very fun station). The volunteers – mostly PO members – who were in charge of each game were responsible to find or buy the required materials, as well as lead the game on the day of the event for each team of kids that came through.

In addition to the games, we also organized a film to show at the end of the day, which took some preparation beforehand to figure out electricity, extension cords, projector, and of course a kid-friendly film ("Zambezia"). This was mostly organized by the non-PO or high school volunteers, though all of us had to help out on the day with monitoring the kids once the film had begun.

4. Lunch and snacks

We needed to provide lunch for about 200-250 kids and around 50 volunteers. We had secured sponsorship from the Cooperação Portuguesa to buy the food, and so we organized one of the MOVE entrepreneurs to cook this lunch for everyone. Mariana and I spent a whole day running around the island buying several kilos worth of rice, beans, tomatoes, onions, etc. and on the day of the event the entrepreneur delivered the food up to the fortaleza without any problems. We arranged that two of the stations would be lunch (served with water), and so on the day of the event each team stopped by to get lunch and we were able to successfully feed all the participants and helpers.

We had also budgeted to buy bread and popcorn, which we distributed before and during the film. The popcorn was made in a machine that we had rented from a local woman who sells popcorn on the street, and it was a nice treat for the kids. Additionally, when the kids were leaving the event we handed out some candies for them to take home, as a little treat for them on the walk home.

Conclusion



The day itself was a huge success for all the organizers, but I think especially for Projecto Oceano as we played such a big role in the day. Every child that entered had the opportunity to play several different games, a tasty lunch of rice and beans, lots of singing and dancing, and finally a film projected on the walls of the fortaleza. It was obvious from the smiles and laughter on the day that every kid loved it – and this has been apparent since in further feedback from the kids and their parents too.

Generally, all the student volunteers were present and participatory both for the meeting and the event, and on the day itself they carried out their tasks responsibly and with much energy and enthusiasm. In fact, I think they all enjoyed the day as much as the kids did.

Looking after that many kids in such a large space with hundreds of nooks and crannies was no easy task, but thanks to the hard work and responsible behavior of these volunteers, everything ran smoothly, no one got hurt, and there were no tears (we did also have a volunteer from the Red Cross on location to deal with any emergencies but luckily did not need their help). Whenever a child needed special attention – getting lost from the team, needing to use a toilet, or losing a shoe – there was someone available to help out. During the time between stations the volunteers organized the kids to sing or dance in a circle and while walking around the teams were often found marching, holding hands, singing, and laughing.

I was particularly proud because I received a number of compliments about our Projecto Oceano members both on the days leading up to the event as well as on the day of the event. One MOVE volunteer commented, for example, that the dance station that two of our female members were running was great but he was sure that after a few teams went through the girls would be tired – much to his surprise (although not to mine) the girls stayed energetic and enthusiastic the entire time, dancing with each team like it was the first time, and for over two hours.



All the other volunteers we had recruited – from amongst project students and friends of the members, also performed well and we had no issues with the reliability or responsibility of these volunteers. It was also great to see that our students of language and IT classes were really keen to be involved in other activities of the project – there is definitely a nice loyalty and appreciation of the project amongst our wider group of students.

I hope very much that this – organizing a nice celebration for Dia da Criança – is a tradition that Projecto Oceano and the other organizations on Ilha de Moçambique will continue to do in the years that come because it was a really wonderful day for the kids and everyone else involved.