

AZLera's Projecto Oceano: Monthly Report – December 2013



My first month working at Projecto Oceano has been full of new and interesting experiences. After a long and eventful journey – involving travelling halfway around the world and failing to be reunited with my luggage upon arrival – I finally made it to Ilha de Moçambique in early December 2013. I have been pleasantly surprised with the island. I was expecting to be located in a fairly remote area with none of the luxuries I had grown accustomed to after a year living in the United States. Aside from the occasional blackout, the lack of certain goods and at times excruciatingly slow internet, the transition has been quite smooth.

Although many of the project members have been away this month I was able to get a few together shortly after my arrival for a meal at “Tia Sara” - a local gem I am told! It was great to have that opportunity to talk to them and hear their ideas and plans for 2014. I was very impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication they showed towards the project, a stark contrast to my moody and introvert teenage self at their age! I've also had the pleasure of meeting many other people on the island related to the project in one way or another. They have proved very helpful in getting me up-to-date with the project and helping me get acquainted with the island

The intense heat and humidity here were quite challenging at first but thankfully, my room boasts the luxury of an air conditioning unit, which has been a saviour many nights. The close proximity of the ocean also allows for the occasional refreshing swim. The island itself is very impressive; full of old colonial buildings and a

bustling population. In such a beautiful setting it's hard at times to remember that you are not here on vacation!

Back to work: This month the members have been busy with preparations for the food festival, or Tztotziva. The Festival took place on the 28th of December and was a great success. We were able to raise funds for the project and are hoping to purchase a new whiteboard for our classroom as the ageing blackboard we are currently using is on its last legs. We also worked with our friends from APERTUR and MOVE – a Portuguese micro-finance NGO based on the island – to organise a day of fun and games for local children on the 27th of December. Over 70 children took part in the festivities, which included team games and dance performances.

We also celebrated Christmas with some children by showing an open-air film on the 24th of December. Many children, as well as adults attended, and it was so successful that we are planning to make it a monthly event in different neighbourhoods across the island.

We are also in the final stages of selecting the recipient of our 2014 scholarship and I will shortly start working with her – there are currently three female candidates – to look into the application procedures for potential universities. This is a very exciting part of Projecto Oceano's work and an important step in helping our members realise their ambitions.