

# Mãos à Obra

Francisco Banha

## Activities Report

**Abstract**—After discussing with the responsible for the activity on the first day, we agreed that I and some other colleagues would help with some infiltration problems they had in Campo Grande's Social and Parochial Center (CSPCG) [1]. On the following days I and another colleague worked together in the first floor's yard, removing the soil from the flower beds into bags, and then transporting them into a van so they could be taken to a suitable place. This had to be done in time for their festive celebration on the 6th of June.

**Index Terms**—infiltration, flower beds, soil, bags, van, garden.

*inadequate as abstract*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

THIS report will describe what I did on my activity detailing each day individually and give an idea of what was required from me and the other volunteers. My activity consisted on helping a charity foundation with jobs such as small repairs and building recoveries.

## 2 INITIAL MEETING

It all began with the coaching team assigned to us - the ones that chose the activity Mãos à Obra - trying to contact the person responsible for the activity. Initially there were some delays since the person they were trying to reach had gone on vacation and afterwards left the institution. After some weeks they finally got in touch with the entity and arranged a meeting between them and us to decide what we were supposed to do.

Because there were two addresses in the e-mail sent by the coaching team to us, I was unsure whether the meeting was in one place or the other. I decided for one but went earlier in case I had gone to the wrong place and had to go to the other.

I went to the wrong place. Because the e-mail that was sent scheduling the meetings was sent from someone from the entity ENTREAJUDA,

their address was at the end of the e-mail and so I decided to go there. As I got there, I had to look for their office since it was in a neighborhood where there were lots of offices.

After asking around I finally found ENTREAJUDA's office. I spoke with the person in charge and told them about my situation. Initially they didn't clearly understand my situation as there were also students from Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) helping there. She thought I was there to do the same as my colleagues and was leading me to the warehouse where the others were.

Because I was talking about a meeting that had been scheduled she started to suspect that I might have been in the wrong place. We went back to the office and she tried to reach the person I was meeting with on the phone. After an initial failed attempt she reached someone and got the address where I was supposed to go. I thanked her and hit the road since it was almost time for the meeting. When I got to the right place I waited for some time with the others that were already there until the meeting started.

Finally the person in charge for the activity - Helena Presas - came to us. She gave each of us a piece of paper so we would write our name, e-mail address, phone number and motivation. We went to the room where we would meet, filled the papers with the information she asked for and waited for a while.

When Helena joined us, she told us what she

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*[incomplete information]*  
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(1.0) Excellent	ACTIVITY						DOCUMENT						
(0.8) Very Good	Object × 2	Opt × 1	Exec × 4	Summ × .5	Concl × .5	SCORE	Struct × .25	Ortog × .25	Exec × 4	Form × .25	Titles × .5	File × .5	SCORE
(0.6) Good	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.4		1.0	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.0	
(0.4) Fair													
(0.2) Weak													

would like us to do. She said they have a yard on the first floor that needs some treatment. The flower beds' soil needed to be removed and transported elsewhere since they were having some infiltration problems under them and this was the most urgent matter at hand. The benches also needed to be painted.

We each said what was our availability and so we grouped together with the others whose availability was like ours. I joined Bruno Rodrigues and we decided we would either go on Mondays and/or on Fridays after lunch, depending on our workload for that week.

And so, after everyone knew what they would do we went on our way.

### 3 DAY ONE

On the first day of work I met with Bruno at 1:30pm by the doors of the parish. We proceeded to go talk with Helena to know the details of the work we were going to do. She led us to the first floor's yard and gave us some tools for us to work with - shovels and hoes, and also some gloves and plastic bags. They only found one and a half pair of gloves, so one of us would only use a glove on the left hand. Bruno kindly let me use the complete pair since I had a wound on my right hand. There were two small sheds there and we put our stuff on one of them. She showed us the flower beds up close, told us what we had to do, and then let us be.

I had prepared for the time we would spend on the harsh sunlight beforehand by bringing some solar protection cream and also an extra t-shirt to use on my head - as it would protect my head and my neck. I also brought some old clothes and shoes since I was going to get dirty for sure. Bruno didn't come so prepared for the conditions but I did lend him some solar protection cream.

We were the first ones of the group of students at the meeting to go there so we started by deciding how to proceed. We had to separate soil from rocks, plants, and plain garbage, so we decided to use one bag to put the plants in, and group the rocks in a corner of the flower beds. The garbage would also go into a corner.

In the beginning there was a pile of soil that - according to Helena - served as a comparison to the initial level the soil was at. Someone had already started to remove some soil. So we decided to leave that pile be for the time being.

We started by loosening the soil as it was quite compressed due to the time for how long it was left there. We loosened some soil and then started to dump it into a bag. We decided to use the same bag for the both of us since we could help each other not to spill any soil whilst dumping it into the bag. After it had enough soil - in our opinion - but not as much so that it would be torn or we couldn't seal it, we carried it to the yard. Initially we decided only one of us would carry a bag by himself at a time since we could handle it. By the end the weight of the bags was starting to be too much for only one person to carry, so we started carrying them together. We would also wait until we had three or four before carrying them to the yard.

After some time filling bags and carrying them to the yard, the doorkeeper of CSPCG - Mr. Jaime - came to us and gave us some tips on how to loosen the soil and also told us that if we wanted some water we only to go to the kitchen and ask for it. And so we did. We went to the kitchen and they were kind enough to give us some water. After some time one of the cooks came to us with two bottles of water and told that if we needed to refill them we only had to ask.

At more or less 4:30pm we decided to pause a little and go get something to eat. We went downstairs, washed our hands - at least four or five times, since we were really dirty - and went to the bar and ordered some food. After regaining some energy we went back upstairs and resumed the work.

At 6:30pm we decided to stop for the day. We had filled 37 bags and were really tired from all the digging and carrying. We went downstairs to once again wash our hands and register with Helena the time we had stayed there. However, Helena was no longer there and so we spoke with someone else to whom she had asked to handle our departure, and registered the information.

As I got home, I decided to send an e-mail

to the other groups that were going to go there next to tell them what we had done, how we had done it, and other information that might aid them in their jobs, but also so that they wouldn't undo what we did.

## 4 DAY TWO

On the second day we once again arrived at 1:30pm. We went to speak with Helena to see if anything had to be changed and to know what had been done by the other groups. She told us that some of them had painted the benches and some others had also helped on the flower beds. The later had also filled bags but they had mostly loosened the soil on one of the flower beds and gathered it in a pile... We were a little disheartened since it looked like they had mostly done the easy task and left the hard tasks to us. This time Bruno had followed my example and brought solar protection cream, and old clothes and shoes. He also brought some gloves of his own. They were however not needed because the previous group had found some more gloves.

After we grabbed the tools again we resumed our work. We proceeded to put the soil in the bags and carry them to the yard. This time we only had at our disposal smaller bags. This would work to our favor since they wouldn't get so heavy and so we would be able to carry them much easily.

This time we were filling a lot of bags and advancing on the flower bed. However the pile of soil that we had left on the first day was still there. After some discussion we decided to get rid of it since all the soil would eventually have to go.

The workload didn't differ all that much from the first day and so we did it as best as we could. This time we filled more or less 70 bags. It's true that they were smaller but they not as half as small so I believe we had improved our technique.

At 7pm we washed our hands and went on to register the time we were leaving at. This time Helena was there but she asked us to go the woman in the reception - Tita - for she would register our schedule henceforward.

## 5 DAY THREE

On the third day we got there at 1:30pm one more time. This time we went straight to the yard. Apparently our other colleagues had started working on the other flower beds, since there was a clear decrease in terms of plants. And according to Mr. Jaime, they had also carried some of the bags in the van.

We also wanted to add some variety to our work so we wanted to carry some bags to the van as well. Because we would need permission from Helena to do it and she wasn't there yet, we decided we would continue removing soil from the flower bed we were previously on. We were almost finishing the flower bed and all that was left was at the end below the air conditioning system. Because of the air conditioning system it was hard for us to properly use the shovels but we worked our way around it.

Later we saw from where we were Helena arriving. After a while we went to talk to her to see whether we could start loading the van. She agreed and so we asked Mr. Jaime where were the carts for us to move the bags, since we knew the previous group had used some as well. He lead us downstairs to the basement to where the carts were. We grabbed the two that were there and brought them to the first floor through the elevator.

We loaded the carts with as many bags as they could fit without forcing them in, and drove them inside the building. Because there was a step when entering the building we had to lift the cart together, as they were quite heavy - at least 100kg each cart. Once inside we went through the dinning hall and the corridor to the elevator. We drove them one at a time to the ground floor since they wouldn't fit in the elevator together.

Because the doors that lead outside were locked, as that wasn't the main entrance, we had to ask the doorkeeper to open them. This time Mr. Jaime wasn't there but someone else - Mr. Madaleno - was there as the doorkeeper. He opened the doors for us and we started loading the bags into the van. We repeated this path some times until the van full and went to ask Mr. Madaleno if we were supposed to take

the bags to their destination. Mr. Madaleno said that these were supposed to go to Alverca and that he would drive the van and unload it himself, because it was a long drive and he had to do it anyway as he lived there.

Afterwards we decided to stop for the day since I had to leave earlier. We went to wash ourselves and register the time we were leaving at - 5:30pm - with Tita.

## 6 DAY FOUR

On the fourth day we arrived at 2pm. Since neither Helena nor the van were there we went to the yard to fill some more bags. We finished the flower bed we were on and moved to another. This change was both good and bad. It was good because on this other flower bed there was some shade and so it was cooler. It was bad because it was near the dumpsters and so the foul smell was a hindrance to us.

Not much changed on that day. We removed more than half the soil from that flower bed since it was smaller and decided to stop, since we were a bit tired from that week because the deadlines for project deliveries were almost upon us.

At around 5:30pm we proceeded to clean ourselves and register the time.

## 7 DAY FIVE

On the fifth day we got there at 1:30pm. Once again we started to take soil off of the flower bed and into the yard. After a while we noticed that Helena arrived and decided to go ask whether we should continue removing soil from the flower beds or if we should move the bags out of the yard.

She explained to us that there was going to be a celebration in the yard on the 6th of June. That would mean that there shouldn't be any bags on the yard by that time. So we were told to carry the bags into the van and then drive them to their destination which was a garden near Campolide - Horto do Campo Grande [2]. They gave us the directions to the garden and we then proceeded to get the carts to move the bags.

This time they suggested that we use a ramp that they had in the basement. Mr. Jaime went

to get the ramp ready while we took the carts to the first floor and filled them with some bags. We then drove the carts down to the ground floor like we had done previously. We did this journey several times.

On one of the times one of the carts' wheel went out of the ramp and the bags fell to the ground. We decided to get the remaining bags into the van and clean the mess on our next journey after we had brought some tools. On the next journey we brought some shovels and cleaned the spilled soil off of the ground and continued to fill the van.

When the van was full we went to store the carts and the tools, wash ourselves, and went to talk to Mr. Jaime to get some more information about our destination and also get the van's key and documents. We were told we were supposed to talk to a lady called Silvina when we got to the garden.

And so we took the van and drove there. This time I would be driving the van. It was heavy due to all the bags and the visibility was not as good as in a normal car but we managed to get to where we were supposed to deliver the bags to. We spoke with Silvina and she told us to back the van up into the space where we would put the bags. We had to put the bags against a wall but in a way that they wouldn't block the path.

And so we took all the bags from the van and onto the floor. This task proved to be quite physically demanding since we were constantly lifting and lowering the bags which weighted about 15 to 20kg each. After all the bags were on the floor we found ourselves really tired. We said goodbye to Silvina and drove the van back to Campo Grande.

When we got to the parish I parked the van, we went to get our stuff, and ended for the day. We registered the time we were leaving at - which was around 6:30pm - and went on our way.

## 8 DAY SIX

On the sixth day we had already completed the amount of hours we were supposed to do for the course but since we had started to help them, we decided not to leave them with an



incomplete job and agreed to go help out some more. We arrived there at 1:30pm.

We were told that the van was cleaned and was ready for the food campaign that was going to happen on the next weekend, and so they were unsure what van we should use. While we were getting the ramp and the carts from the basement, they were left to decide what van we should use. They decided we would use the same van but we would have to clean the van afterwards.

Bruno suggested that we put a carpet on the van in order to minimize the dirt we would cause with the bags, and so he went to get the carpet while I started getting bags onto the carts.

When we got to the ground floor we set up the ramp and started loading the van. After some trips from the yard to the van and vice versa the van was full. So we went to get van's key and documents and drove off. This time Bruno was driving.

We spoke once again with Silvina and took the bags from the van onto the floor and when we were done we took off saying to Silvina that we would still come back one more time.

When we got to Campo Grande we parked the van near the door and once again started filling the van with more bags. We drove the van back to the garden, emptied the van, said goodbye for the day to Silvina and got back to Campo Grande.

We then got some brooms, removed the carpet, and started cleaning the van. After it was clean we stored everything, washed ourselves, and registered the time we were leaving at - 6:30pm.

## 9 DAY SEVEN

On the seventh and last day we agreed I'd call the CSPCG to know if there was any work left that needed to be done, and so I did. I spoke with Tita and she told me that they still had some jobs they needed help on, and so I told Bruno and we got there at 1:30pm. The jobs they had for us to do were no longer related with the soil bags but rather with preparations for the party that was going to happen on Saturday. When we got there the first thing we

did was arranging some tables that were on the yard for the party. Then we moved some other tables to the ground floor. Then we were told to help carry some drinks from the basement into a refrigerator on the first floor. We then moved two refrigerators from the basement onto the ground floor and finally helped to hang a large cloth made from several pieces, done by the senior elements that go spend the day there. At 4:30pm there was no longer any more tasks for us to do, so we went to talk with Helena to say goodbye, and then went to get our declarations from Tita. We said goodbye to everyone and left with the intention of helping out some more on some other occasion.

## 10 CONCLUSION

After completing the work I agreed to do I got to know some more about the inside works of a charity institution as well as how to deal with flower beds. I was just glad I could help out even if a little. It was also a good escape from the daily engineering life.

I was glad I could help out even if a little this big chain of people helping people. It was also a good escape from the daily engineering life. In the future I will definitely consider helping out some more.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the people from ENTRE-AJUDA and CSPCG for having accepted my participation on this activity and all the people involved with them for every bit of help they gave me during the activity. I would like to thank the other volunteers for helping with the task, and a special thank you to Bruno Rodrigues, who was my partner during the course of this activity and helped me greatly and I feel we got be friends in the end. I would also like to thank the coaching team that helped us during the initial conversations with the entities and for being available when I had any questions. Finally I would like to thank the course's professor Rui Santos Cruz for being available help with any problems that might appear and allowing us to do so many diversified activities that teach us lessons that

we don't usually learn on any other course at IST.



## REFERENCES

- [1] "Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande," [http://www.igrejacampogrande.pt/cg/?page\\_id=98](http://www.igrejacampogrande.pt/cg/?page_id=98).
- [2] "Horto do Campo Grande," <http://www.hortodocampogrande.com/>.



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## APPENDIX DECLARATION

	<b>CENTRO SOCIAL PAROQUIAL DO CAMPO GRANDE</b>	

### DECLARAÇÃO

O Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande declara para os devidos efeitos que

Francisco Marques Canelas F. Banha, CC 13754851, fez  
voluntariado neste Centro no Projeto 'Mãos à obra', tendo realizado tarefas de requalificação de  
espaços, totalizando 31 horas.

A obra realizada permitiu requalificar espaços e foi de enorme utilidade para esta instituição.

Lisboa, 3 de Junho de 2015

Pela Direcção  
  
Maria Helena Presas