

Forodhani Park and Seafront

ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

The 1994 'Conservation Plan' identified a number of schemes for Zanzibar's open spaces in order to ensure their protection, upgrading and rehabilitation. In particular, the work carried out by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) targeted three areas: Kelele Square, Forodhani Park and the Mizingani Seafront. Kelele Square was completed in 1997, following the adaptive reuse of the ex-Telecom Building into the Zanzibar Serena Inn, which defines part of the square. The much larger and ambitious rehabilitation of Forodhani Park, the most visible portion of Zanzibar's seafront, was completed in 2008–09, while the rest of the seafront, along Mizingani Road, is currently being planned and its rehabilitation is scheduled to begin in 2011. Together, these open areas represent almost seventy-five per cent of the public open spaces along Zanzibar's seafront and are the most visible and frequented public areas in the Stone Town.

Forodhani Park

Forodhani Park and the Mizingani Seafront form a continuous public open space along the Indian Ocean, stretching from the Orphanage House, at the southern end of the seafront, to the port at the opposite end. The area has the highest concentration of monuments and significant historic buildings in the Stone Town.

Prior to its rehabilitation, Forodhani Park was in very poor condition. It had, however, kept its original organization and layout from the time of its creation on the occasion of King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935. The design for the rehabilitation of the gardens was aimed at reconciling current uses and needs with the historic significance and traditions of the garden. To that end, its original elements were preserved and restored and some new features added. The aim was to create a contemporary urban space, while enhancing the original features and historic character of the place. Accordingly, the Park's layout includes new paths lined with benches, linking together the original elements of the garden with a new organization and structure. Today, as in the past, Forodhani Park functions both as an active meeting place and passive promenade. At the same time, it maintains and defines separate areas intended for pedestrian movement, food vending, sports, contemplation and repose. The layout of the Park and proportions



The Park and Seafront, together with Kelele Square, represent almost 75% of the public open spaces along Zanzibar's seafront.

Opposite page:
The original informal food bazaar at the northernmost end of the Park was polluted and unhygienic.



- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Children's Play Area | 4 Food Vendors | 7 Mizingani Seafront | 10 Old Fort |
| 2 Bandstand | 5 Fountain | 8 Palace Museum Garden | 11 Orphanage House |
| 3 Rebuilt Seawall | 6 Sultan's Landing | 9 House of Wonders | (future Maritime Museum) |



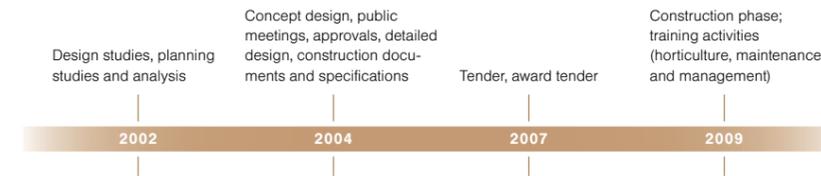
Project Scope/Objectives

The rehabilitation of Forodhani Park was part of a wider programme for comprehensive seafront rehabilitation in Stone Town. The rehabilitation of the Park was intended to be a logical extension of the work already completed along the seafront. The aim of the rehabilitation project was to upgrade social and recreational amenities in this historic park setting while providing for economic activity that will contribute to the sustainability of the Park. Considering its value for the local community, its attraction for visitors to the island, and the interaction of the Park with the landmark buildings facing the sea, the Park is expected to be a catalyst for broader social, cultural and economic development in the area.





Phasing 2002 → 2009



Opposite page:

In the newly rehabilitated Forodhani Park, its original elements, such as the bandstand, the fountain and the pier, have been retained and new paths lined with benches have been added to link these elements together. *Baraza* seating, following traditional examples, was also installed.

of lawn, paving and planting were derived from the main cross-axes defined by the fountain, bandstand and pier, all pertaining to the original configuration of the garden. These simple geometries were reinforced by structured plantings of palms and umbrella shade trees. Detailing was designed in a robust but understated manner, with a formal vocabulary and materials typical of the Stone Town. The paving has an exposed coral aggregate finish, a reminder of weathered surfaces found elsewhere in the historic area, while the park lighting is derived from the original cast-iron lamps manufactured in Glasgow. The *baraza* seating, modelled after traditional examples, accommodates the need for social interaction and provides the opportunity to simply enjoy the gardens in comfort. The remaining ship cannons scattered about the site were carefully restored and repositioned as a six-gun shore battery.

A survey and restoration programme was carried out for the historically significant buildings, such as the Bandstand, the Fountain, the Arch, and one of the kiosks. The other buildings were demolished due to their dangerous structural conditions or as a result of the significant regrading of the site, and subsequently rebuilt in keeping with their original footprint and style. A new pedestrian bridge linking the Park to the Orphanage House was added to the scope of works to replace the original bridge that was structurally unstable.

Horticulture was a very significant aspect of the park design, and Forodhani Park has the good fortune of having maintained several very large original trees. The trees form an almost continuous green canopy across the Park and make a large shaded area in the central zone around the bandstand. When construction began, the old trees were in very poor health due to neglect and mistreatment. One of the first measures was to rescue the historic trees: they were monitored by a horticultural specialist, and actions taken to bring them back to good health. Old compacted soils and accumulated waste were removed from around the trunks and roots and replaced with new soil and nutrients, followed by a programme of irrigation and pruning. All the trees were saved, and a healthy green canopy has now developed. New planting was also used extensively throughout the Park, with over 130 new trees. The new specimens were selected to restore the green structure, colour and ambience of a classic public garden, as well as reflect the botanical character of the island.

In addition to the paths, lawns and trees, some modifications were made to optimize and redefine spaces for contemporary use, such as a secure playground and a multi-purpose park plaza available to food vendors. The southern area of the Park, opposite the Orphanage building, serves today as an intensive play area. It has been designed to withstand constant use, with lighting installed to extend its use after dark. The informal food bazaar, which is one of the most popular attractions in the Stone Town, occupies the



A comparison of the Park before and after intervention.



Comparative views of the Seafront as it is today and after the proposed AKTC intervention, which includes the construction of a new seawall extending approximately five metres beyond its existing boundaries.

northernmost part of the Park. It has been repaved to withstand heavy pedestrian traffic and properly lit to extend the use of the area into the night, which is the busiest time for vendors. These various improvements are also flexible enough to accommodate additional uses in the future.

The Park infrastructure is entirely new and includes a much needed irrigation system, a new electrical network and new street and park lighting. Storm-water drainage is natural due to the slope of the site, with the water flowing over the paving directly into the ocean. The seawall is an integral part of the Park: its condition was very poor as a result of erosion, loss of material, subsistence and collapse of the park grounds. Today, it has been extensively restored, as well as rebuilt to stabilize and reinforce the Park's edge along the sea. The historic portion is made of sandstone material, while the rebuilt portion is made of hand-textured and custom-coloured cement blocks to replace the unstable coral rag wall. Initially, it was intended to use stone from the same source as the original construction. To this end, an environmental study was commissioned. Its results confirmed the compatibility of the coral stone with the original fabric of the wall, but indicated that exploitation of the quarry was inappropriate from an environmental standpoint. A mix of concrete or 'cast stone' was therefore formulated to resemble the original sandstone as closely as possible in both colour and texture. Each block was cut by hand to its final dimension, employing traditional masonry methodology and tools. This solution was specifically designed to match the appearance of the original seawall and reflect the status of the Stone Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Forodhani project includes a programme to assist the local authorities in managing the Park and identifying opportunities for future financial sustainability. The management staff is supported by AKTC with training in specific areas of expertise. This support is considered essential to maintain the Park in the long term as a well-functioning public amenity for the residents and visitors of the Stone Town.

The Mizingani Seafront

The Mizingani Seafront project, which is due to start in 2011, will extend the public space of Forodhani Park, creating a linear promenade almost 360 metres in length. The project is part of the 'Zanzibar Urban Services Project' (ZUSP) financed by the World Bank and comprises the entire width of the Mizingani Road from the seafront to the foot of the buildings located along the road, including the seawall, pavement and carriageways. It includes the construction of a new seawall extended approximately five metres further out beyond its existing boundaries, with the necessary backfill and foundation work; and the refurbishment of the underground infrastructure including water, sewer, storm sewer and electrical and telecommunication lines. These will be located below the roadbed of Mizingani Road. In addition, the project foresees the resurfacing of the road and introduction of traffic calming measures. The road will be of sufficient width to accommodate two-way travel, parallel parking and a small pavement along the base of the buildings. Finally, a three-metre-wide pedestrian promenade is to be established, including planting, street lighting and street furniture along the seaside. Some densely planted areas will be included to create shaded areas for gathering along the promenade. The materials and details will be the same as those employed in Forodhani Park.

Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE

In the 1800s the park site was occupied by warehouses and bombarded by the British in 1896 in reaction to the political takeover by Seyyid Khalid. In 1935 the site was transformed into the Jubilee Gardens to commemorate the occasion of King George V's silver jubilee. The large trees now seen in the park date from this period; in 1936 the bandstand and the concrete shade structures were added. The site deteriorated throughout the 1980s and 1990s, in dire need of maintenance, controls and upgrading. It was recognized and identified in the 1994 'Conservation Plan' as a significant public open space to be improved. In 2004 AKTC committed both technical and financial assistance for the restoration of Forodhani Gardens with the support and collaboration of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar. In July 2009 His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan and His Excellency President Karume of Zanzibar inaugurated Forodhani Park.

Challenges

PROJECT RISKS

Studies were carried out during the early 2000s in order to minimize risks to the Park in light of the planned upgrading and rehabilitation. The main risks were not properly addressing the needs of the public and intervening in ways that were insensitive incompatible with the historic context. The 1994 'Conservation Plan' formed the basis of the various subsequent design and social studies, and informed the meetings and consultations with local authorities and citizens.

SITE CONDITIONS

Prior to works commencing, the Park was in very poor condition from overuse, lack of controls and limited maintenance over many years. The historic trees were suffering due to the compaction of the soil around the roots, and lack of care, nutrients and irrigation. The seawall was much deteriorated, allowing water to erode the park creating dangerous sinkholes.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Environmental concerns for Forodhani Park include proper solid waste management, improving the health of the tree specimens, and increasing the coverage of areas with shade trees. Another important environmental concern in Forodhani Park is erosion from the sea. The existing seawall system is required to protect the city land from the sea and the effects of erosion. The poor condition of the old seawall, due to erosion and voids in the masonry, has allowed for sinkholes to be created in most areas along the Stone Town seafront.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Park lacked functioning infrastructure prior to the rehabilitation.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

There are only four small buildings in the Park boundary: a washroom block and three kiosks. The kiosks, containing traces of the original reinforced-concrete gazebos from the 1930s, were in dangerous structural condition due to decades of exposure to water and salt. The washroom block was a concrete block structure in very poor condition. A fifth structure, the bandstand, was in good condition when the project began.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS

A topographic survey of the seafront zone from Africa House to the Old Dispensary was undertaken during 2004, which provided comprehensive physical data of site grades and contours for roads, open spaces and beaches; spot elevations inside building entrances; positions and alignments of roadbeds, sidewalks and curbs; location of public utilities and infrastructure; location and size of all trees; defined footprints of buildings, with details such as entrance locations, stairs and *barazas*. Subsequently, individual buildings within the Park were documented for restoration and rehabilitation proposals, and a detailed stone by stone survey of the cut limestone seawall in Forodhani was performed in 2003.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

Forodhani Park is located in one of the four Action Areas identified and defined in the 'Conservation Plan' of 1994. The design studies for Forodhani Park have adhered to and affirmed the planning guidelines legislated in the 'Conservation Plan'. Furthermore, the formal public review process has provided a forum for the exchange of ideas so that the final approved design was able to integrate any concerns that were raised, all the while maintaining conformity to the original approved master planning principles.

PLANNING ISSUES

The planning strategy for the Park layout sought to maintain and strengthen the site's historic character while incorporating the contemporary needs and uses of the community. The Park's historic elements and general organization provided the main nodes around which the new plan evolved. A three part 'zoning' strategy was developed in the project shown in the 'Conservation Plan' of 1994, which clearly delineated areas for specific uses within the Park bounds. However, the overall geometric structure and organization of the Park was enhanced through the organization of pathways, plantings and seating areas. The main zones are a secure play area to the south; a central passive leisure area with lawns and benches organized around the bandstand; and a multi-purpose paved plaza organized around the historic fountain. A densely planted garden along the street and pavement provides a buffer from traffic, while the broad promenade along the Seafront provides seating, open views and swimming access to the Indian Ocean.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED

Several significant historic elements and social traditions related to the Park were identified, affirmed and preserved during the rehabilitation process. The old seawall bounding the park edge was fully restored (south-west portion), rebuilt (north-west portion) and maintains its original alignment throughout. Original architectural elements such as the bandstand, the fountain, and the arch at the landing were all restored, while the historic trees were saved and brought back to health. Perhaps the most significant social tradition identified and preserved was the evening food market in Forodhani, where local vendors sell grilled fish, sugar-cane juice and roasted cassava among other things. The Forodhani food market has evolved over several decades to become one of the most identifiable aspects of Forodhani Park for both Zanzibaris and visitors.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/PROGRAMME

Preparation for the design of Forodhani Park involved public hearings intended to increase awareness and raise comments and insights about the significance of the seafront area.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING

AKTC has undertaken training and support activities for park maintenance, park operations and park management, and for horticulture and gardening. Furthermore, training in food preparation and hygiene for the vendors was also instituted. All of the activities were done in collaboration and conjunction with staff, workers and professions from the Municipality and the STCDA.

CONTRACTING METHODS

Public tender.

RELEVANT CODES/STANDARDS ADOPTED

The Stone Town 'Conservation Plan' provided the main legislative framework for the project's terms of reference. Furthermore, the UNESCO charter informed all technical and theoretical project parameters so as to guarantee compliance with international guidelines for restoration.

LESSONS LEARNED

In the context of HCP, the 'Forodhani Park Rehabilitation Project' continues the mandate of providing enhanced open public spaces for the use of the community, a programme of governance and maintenance through a comprehensive management plan and the continuity of support achieved through agreements for financial and institutional sustainability. Forodhani Park's success demonstrates that a programme of aesthetic and functional improvements can resonate deeply in a community when the social traditions associated with a particular place are fully integrated into the design.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS

Ministry of Water, Construction, Energy, Land and Environment, Stone Town, Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority, Zanzibar Municipal Council, Ministry of Information, Culture, Tourism and Sport.

Donors

The World Bank.

Authoritative Framework

Seafront Trust Deed under development.