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...
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

Phasing 2002 – 2009

| Design studies, planning studies and analysis | Construction phase; training activities (horticulture, maintenance and management) | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 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.

A comparison of the Park before and after intervention.
Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE

In the 19th century, Stone Town was separated from the sea by a cut limestone seawall that was transformed into the Jubilee Gardens to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. The large trees now seen in the park date from this period. In the 1930s, this seawall and two concreteadcortades were added. The site deteriorated through-out the 1960s and 1970s, due in 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 to 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 Excelency President Karume of Zanzibar inaugurated Forodhani Park.

CHALLENGES

PROJECT RISKS

Some risk was 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 interfering in ways that were inconsiderate incompatible with the historic context. The 1994 ‘Conservation Plan’ formalized 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 suffering from lack of controls and limited maintenance over many years. The historic trees were under threat due to the composition 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 the construction of a new seawall extending 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 Developers of the Mizingani Road. In addition, the project foressees the rerouting 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 seawall. 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.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

There are only four small buildings in the Park boundary; a resthouse located on the north side of the site; the Masjid, containing trace of the original reinforced-concrete pavilion from the 1950s; and a severely damaged building condition due to decades of exposure to water and salt. The seawall block included some structural damage 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 seawall 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 beach access; spot elevations inside building entrances; positions and alignments of roadsides, sidewalks and curbs; location of public utilities and infrastructure; topography and size of all trees; defined footprints of buildings, with details such as entrance locations, sizes and facades. 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 on one of the four Atrium 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 views concerns that were raised, all of which maintained 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 was developed. A four-part strategy was developed in the project shown in the ‘Conservation Plan’ of 1994, which clearly defined areas for specific uses within the Park bounds. However the modern geometrical strategy and organization of the Park was enhanced through the organization of pathways, plazas and seating areas. The main concept was to place a secure play area to the north, and a central promenade along the seafront area.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED

Several architectural features and design and social traditions related to the Park were identified, affirmed and preserved during the rehabilitation process. The most seaward boundary the Park was fully restored (south-west portion), rebuilt (north-west portion) and maintained in its original alignment throughout. The seawall included some structural damage in very poor condition. A fifth structure, the stone bandstand, was in good condition when the project began.

Urban Design Principles

In the context of the NCHC ‘Forodhani Park Rehabilitation Project’ continues the mandate of providing enhanced open public space for 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 improvement can resonate deeply in a community when the social traditions associated with a particular place are fully integrated into the design.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS


Donors

The World Bank.

Authoritative Framework

Seawall Trust Decree under development.