



Historical and current views of Forodhani Park

Situated along the historic waterfront of Stone Town, Forodhani Park is one of the last open spaces in this densely populated World Heritage Site. Zanzibari families come to stroll, purchase snacks and drinks, and talk. An increasing number of tourists are also drawn to it as a vantage point on Zanzibari life and culture, as well as a viewing platform for sunsets and sunrises. Surrounded by exquisite architecture on one side and the glittering sea on the other, it is a place resonating with history and culture, a unique synthesis of African, Arab, Indian and European influences.

The Park was once the location of the Port and a landing point for the former Sultans of Zanzibar. Sixty years ago, the area was converted to a Park called “Jubilee Gardens”, which featured a wide range of trees and plants. Over the years, it became one of the most popular places on the island, functioning as a central meeting place for civic discourse, leisure and entertainment.

In the last decade, the Park has shown the stresses of age and its growing popularity. Maintenance has suffered in the face of other pressing social priorities. Businesses have taken up residence in the Park, displacing some of the space traditionally left for leisure. In recent years, it has become clear to all parties that an important part of the patrimony of Stone Town was in need of revitalisation.

REVITALISING PUBLIC SPACES

Originally in Cairo, Kabul and Delhi – and now in Mali, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kenya, as well as Zanzibar – the Aga Khan Trust for Culture has been working to restore and rehabilitate public spaces and historic buildings in ways that spur social, economic and cultural development.

Inspired by His Highness the Aga Khan’s work on the preservation of historic cities in the Muslim world, the Trust’s overarching aim has been to prove – through direct implementation – that not only can public spaces be self-sustaining, but that they can be catalysts for economic and social development and overall positive change.

In Cairo, the Trust’s construction of a 35 hectare park on top of a rubble dump in the poorest part of the Historic City now draws 1.5 million visitors a year, employs over 1000 people and pays for its own upkeep. The Project’s impact has since extended to the revitalisation of the entire historic district adjacent to the Park. In Delhi, the Gardens of Humayun’s Tomb – an overgrown, run-down and underused green space restored to its original Mughal splendour – now generates more than enough funds to pay for its maintenance. The Project is now expanding to the neighbouring Nizamuddin district. In Zanzibar, the Serena Inn is a further example of an economically productive urban redevelopment project.

The Trust has been active in Zanzibar since 1989, successfully completing the restoration of the Old Dispensary, now renamed the Stone Town Cultural Centre, and the old Customs House, as well as the rehabilitation of Kelele Square. It has worked, with the Government and international partners such as the Government of Sweden and the Ford Foundation, to provide training



Plan for the landscaping of Forodhani Park

workshops on conservation practice and traditional construction methods for craftsmen, building professionals and Government officers working in the Stone Town. Nearly 100 people were trained. Eleven buildings – many of them on the point of collapse – were restored as part of a programme to show the building techniques needed to preserve this World Heritage Site. Sixty families were re-housed in rehabilitated housing.

Over the last 20 years, these cultural revitalisation efforts have been carefully integrated into the broader economic and social programmes of the Aga Khan Development Network – reflecting His Highness the Aga Khan’s belief that development is a complex process that requires multiple inputs.

In Zanzibar, AKDN’s efforts include the Rahaleo Health Centre, which records over 16,000 patient visits per year, many from Stone Town residents. While the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development restored and converted historic seafront buildings into the Zanzibar Serena Inn, the Aga Khan Foundation was involved in programmes on education, training and health, including pre-schools on Zanzibar and Pemba, an educational Resource Centre and the training of hundreds of teachers. AKDN’s development work in Zanzibar dates to the signing of a Protocol of Co-operation for Development between the Network and the Government of Zanzibar in 1988.

REVITALISING FORODHANI PARK

The rehabilitation of Forodhani Park was proposed by the Trust in 2001 as part of a programme for comprehensive seafront rehabilitation in Stone Town. It was intended to be a logical extension of the work already completed in Kelele Square. Following meetings between President Amani Abeid Karume and His Highness the Aga Khan, agreements for the restoration of the Park were signed in 2002.





Plan for vendor stalls

The restoration is to be undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in co-operation with the Government of Zanzibar and will take approximately one year. The aim of the rehabilitation project is 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.

The overall objective of this project, therefore, is to restore and secure the green space while improving the quality of civic life for Zanzibaris. The project aims to achieve these results by:

- Restoring the walkways, infrastructure and landscape of the Park;
- Improving infrastructure, including lighting, sewage, and drainage;
- Restoring and upgrade civic amenities;
- Preserving a unique heritage and ensuring civic use of open space;
- Stimulating economic activities and small enterprise, with improvements for vendors; and,
- Promoting related socio-economic development.

The expected impact of the project includes:

- Creation of 200 new jobs in construction phase;
- Stimulation of the local economy through Park reconstruction costs of approximately US\$2.2 million;
- Generation of employment opportunities in the informal sector;
- Improvement of the image of Zanzibar as a tourist destination; and,
- Creation of a more attractive environment for Zanzibaris and visitors.

The Trust will be sharing its expertise – gained by restoring parks and gardens in historic cities elsewhere and through work with the local authorities – to develop a sustainable post-rehabilitation park operating plan.

THE INDIAN OCEAN MARITIME MUSEUM

The Indian Ocean Maritime Museum, to be situated in the Stone Town Cultural Centre, will also be a part of the redevelopment of Zanzibar's Stone Town and its waterfront. The museum programme will be constructed around the theme of the Indian Ocean as a context for the exchange of goods, ideas and myths between diverse civilisations. It will also showcase the maritime cultures of the Indian Ocean, including the display of naval vessels and other artefacts that illustrate the history of the commercial and cultural contacts between Africa, the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent.

Over the long-term, pending agreement, it is hoped that a larger seafront initiative encompassing upgrades to the Historic Port Area can be contemplated.

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The Stone Town Cultural Centre, formerly the Old Dispensary, before and after restoration. The Centre is the future home of the Indian Ocean Maritime Museum.



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THE REVITALISATION OF FORODHANI PARK ZANZIBAR

PROJECT BRIEF