



## The Island of Mozambique

*Nampula Province, Mozambique*

Surrounded by rocky coastline and small sand beaches, the Island of Mozambique is a coral-reef barrier island in the Indian Ocean off the African coast. In the sixteenth century the Portuguese built a trading center, called the City of Stone or Stone Town, at the north end of the island. The city was planned around a grid system with narrow streets and courtyards. Throughout the island, villages are linked by small boat transportation networks, to retain the traditional way of life, and are characterized by age-old building techniques. The southern part of the island was used for limestone quarries to provide construction materials. Structures were built from coral, lime, clay, ironwood, mangrove poles, bamboo, and palm leaves, and display architectural influences from Africa, Asia, and Europe.

A majority of the island's historic architectural fabric has deteriorated and requires major repair and reconstruction work. The Island of Mozambique was included on the 1996 Watch after destruction caused by Typhoon Nadia. Now there is concern because of the anticipated growth of tourism to Mozambique, which could negatively affect the cultural and natural heritage as well as the Swahili character of the island. Although successful restoration projects have been completed at various locations, protecting the island's complex heritage is a challenging priority. Sustainable approaches must be encouraged in order to sensitively integrate new development into both the social and built fabric of Mozambique. Balancing heritage conservation and urban growth will be imperative to maintaining quality of life for the local population. How Mozambique negotiates the environmental, economic, and social costs and benefits of development could serve as an important model to cities around the world facing similar challenges.