

## ZAMBIA

Zambia is a land-locked country situated in southern Africa, approximately between latitudes 8–18 and longitudes 23–38 degrees south of the equator.

The country is endowed with varied cultural heritage resources, which include a wealth of heritage buildings from the pre-colonial and colonial periods in traditional, Victorian and other architectural styles. In addition, the country has ancient ruins, rock-art sites, historic sites, cultural landscapes, historic towns, archaeological sites and other natural heritage sites with dual significance from the natural and cultural heritage point of view, such as the Victoria Falls.

### Management System

The major custodian of Zambia's immovable heritage is a statutory organisation – the National Heritage Conservation Commission (NHCC) – with its headquarters in the southern border-city of Livingstone. ICOMOS Zambia, together with other stakeholders, provides direct assistance to NHCC with respect to the conservation and management of these resources.

NHCC's profile report of heritage resources, which provides a broad overview of their current status countrywide, indicates that there are 2936 heritage sites in Zambia. The overwhelming majority of these are archaeological sites (1959 sites). Other categories include:

- historic/architectural/buildings (384)
- historic sites (180)
- anthropological sites (189)
- engineering industrial structures (62)
- geomorphological sites, geophysical sites, paleontological and ecology sites.

For a considerable period of time, there have been no condition surveys done for the majority of these sites to establish their state of conservation. This means that the current condition of most of these sites is unknown. Furthermore, the above statistics only represent about 15% of the country's land area that has been adequately surveyed for cultural heritage – the remaining 75% of the country is yet to be surveyed. This state of affairs is in itself a threat to the very existence of cultural heritage resources, for how can one manage a resource whose condition is unknown?

Diverse impacts affect these heritage resources. They can only be conserved in perpetuity if their condition is known, as well as that of their surrounding environment, in order to determine immediate risks that may threaten their existence.

To date, survey work indicates that out of the 2936 identified and documented sites, only 1714 sites can be said to have good documentation, and 496 historic buildings and structures can be said to be only fairly documented. Substantial work remains to be done in terms of documentation to improve on management of these sites.

### Risks Related to Natural Processes: Termites

Of all known insects that present a real danger to timber elements of heritage building by infestation, termites probably present the most vicious threat in Zambia. Villages have been deserted because of the pest. Also, historic buildings in urban and suburban



Barotse Royal establishment, Litunga's winter palace, Lealui, built in 1902. The roof has been severely attacked by termites.



View of Mukuni Park from Musi oa tunya Street in Livingstone. The developer has put up a billboard to advertise the proposed development.

The derelict isolation ward at Mwenzo Health Center before restoration, 1995. An example of the effects of a combination of neglect and termite attack.





Niamkolo church ruin, built in 1896 – currently a national monument. The ruin suffered from vandalism by locals removing stones to repair their own houses.

centers are sometimes abandoned and eventually deteriorate after heavy termite attack.

Sadly, traditional methods of preservation of timber against termite attack have often been ignored in preference to modern chemical treatment. Mostly, these chemicals call for spot treatment of infested elements. Unfortunately, it is often impossible to reach all infested parts, especially those that are concealed. Fortunately, traditional methods of conservation are practiced in some parts of rural Zambia and some heritage buildings have benefited from this knowledge. The Litunga's Palace in western Zambia is one such case in point.

## Development Related Risks

### *Mukuni Park, Livingstone*

Mukuni Park, built in 1905, is the most historic garden in Zambia. It was at Mukuni Park, known then as Barotse Center, that the Paramount Chief Lewanika of the Lozi people of western Zambia mounted an exhibition of art and crafts of Batotse in 1910, for his meeting in Livingstone with the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. This was a great cultural affair for Livingstone and led to the inception of the Livingstone cultural festival.

A lack of appreciation of the cultural value of this site has resulted in it being allocated to a 'foreign investor' who has decided to build a modern shopping mall on this piece of land. Suggestions to move this type of development to an alternative site seem to have fallen on deaf ears. A subsequent legal battle, waged by

NHCC, ICOMOS Zambia, the Livingstone Residents Association and other traditionalists, unfortunately seems to be going in favour of the developer. A court injunction that was granted to restrain the developer from going ahead was recently overturned by the High Court.

## Risk due to Neglect

A number of heritage buildings have deteriorated to alarming levels in most historic towns and villages, particularly those that belong to the government and mission stations. Much as it can be appreciated that financial resources to maintain these cultural heritage buildings may be scarce against the backdrop of poverty and basic social needs, it should be noted that some of the reasons advanced for such neglect lack validity. Surely, some routine maintenance activities necessary to stave off decay do not require huge amounts of money – such as clearing leaves from gutters, and making good spoon-drains to allow water to flow away from a historic building. Government houses and office buildings were the most affected in this regard.

The current regime's deliberate policy of home ownership, has resulted in the sale of a large stock of government pool-houses, most of which were historic houses. New private owners are now co-operating with NHCC and local authorities in matters of repair.

## Risks due to Vandalism

Vandalism has proven to be another big threat to the conservation of cultural heritage, particularly in urban centers. The young generation, and some adults, have no appreciation of heritage. In many cases, unjustified damage has been done to heritage sites by youths, where security has been seen to be lacking. Adults have also taken part in ransacking heritage sites, removing valuable items such as fossil remains and building elements from unoccupied historic buildings. Obvious examples are the Chirundu fossil forest site case in southern Zambia and Niamkolo national monument at Mplungu Harbour in northern Zambia. This threat is real; measures should be taken to curb it so that our sites can be protected for posterity.

NHCC, with its co-operating partners, has put in place an ambitious project which aims to re-identify all recorded cultural heritage sites, and also to identify new ones in areas that have not been surveyed, with a view to updating its cultural heritage inventory. Further, a deliberate publicity campaign has been planned to raise public awareness on the need for private sector participation in heritage conservation, especially as present political developments have brought changes in terms of home ownership. It is hoped that the campaign will help minimise the apparent risks to these non-renewable resources.