

Where you  
can swim  
with the  
dolphins

**MENAI  
BAY**



**CONSERVATION  
AREA**  
Eneo la kifadi  
**ZANZIBAR**



**M**r. Yussuf Ratib Ashkina has been a fisherman for all of his 36 years. Yussuf was born on the exotic spice island of Zanzibar where he learned traditional fishing from his father and grandfather just as uncounted generations of his family before him.

As he hoisted the triangular sail on his traditional dhow I was struck by the feeling that time had transported me to a place where change had ceased to exist. Now could be yesterday, today, or even tomorrow all blended into the smooth gliding motion of this vessel. A vessel propelled by the tropical breeze. Aladin and Sindad set off on their adventures in a boat just like this one.

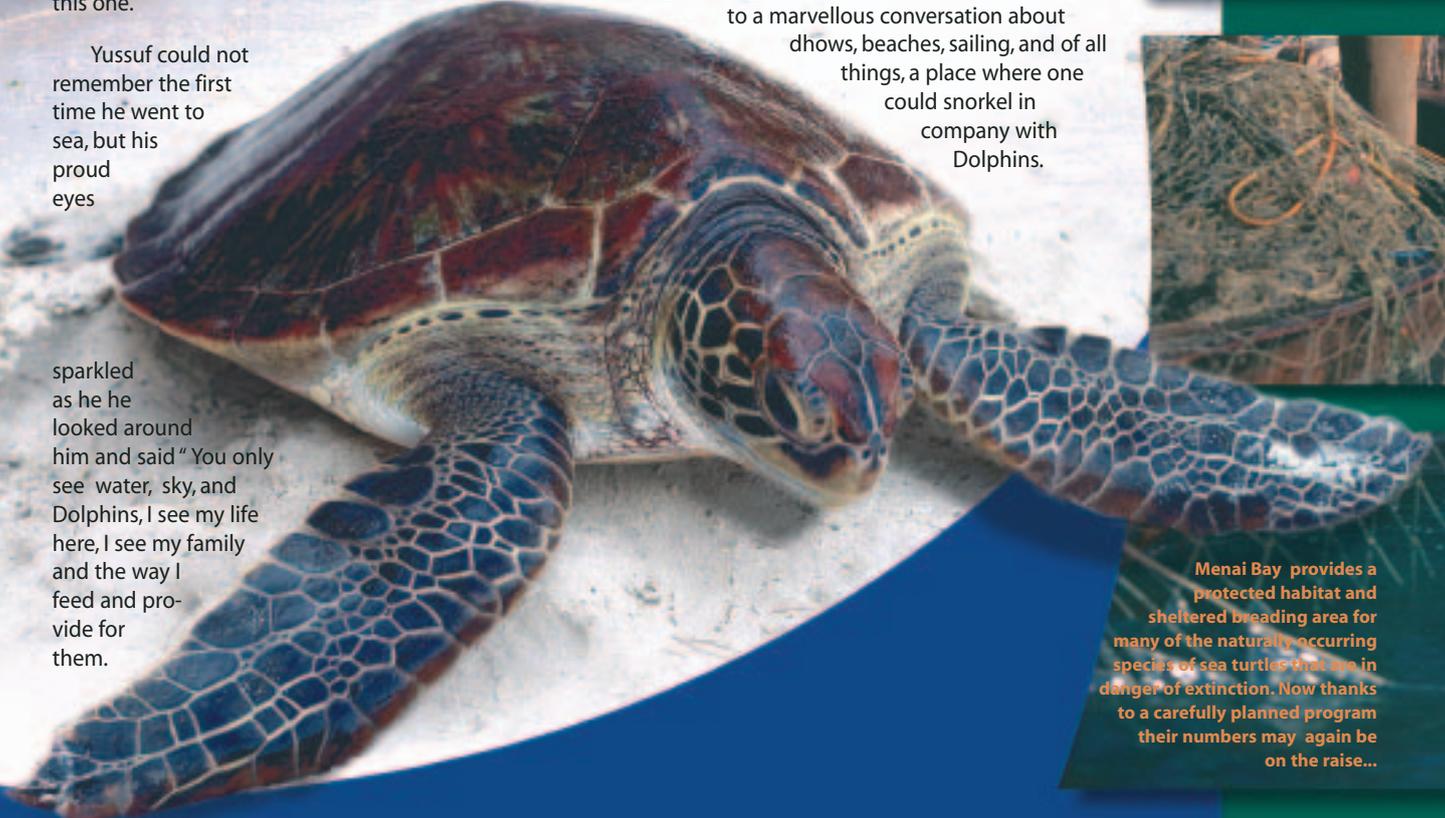
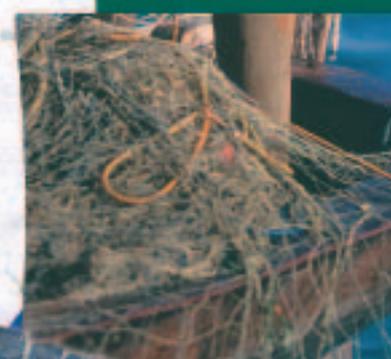
Yussuf could not remember the first time he went to sea, but his proud eyes

sparkled as he looked around him and said "You only see water, sky, and Dolphins, I see my life here, I see my family and the way I feed and provide for them.

This is my home, This is mine."

As usual Yussuf had come right to the point. This magical voyage was more than a chance to marvel at the beauty of nature and the wonderful way in which Zanzibari fishermen continue to blend their traditional ways with the modern.

My adventure began on a sea front terrace in Zanzibar town. I was enjoying a long cold refresher and watching the sunset bath the great sailing dhows in a glorious golden light. A comment to my neighbor led to a marvellous conversation about dhows, beaches, sailing, and of all things, a place where one could snorkel in company with Dolphins.



Menai Bay provides a protected habitat and sheltered breeding area for many of the naturally occurring species of sea turtles that are in danger of extinction. Now thanks to a carefully planned program their numbers may again be on the raise...



That was how I met Winnley Sichone, WWF advisor to the Menai Bay Conservation Program.

Now, to me, conservation areas always seem to be the way Governments take away the land and few remaining resources from people who depend on those resources for a living without giving them any alternative. And precious little good does it do to tell them it is for the good of their children when their children are at home hungry. The same people who have lost their homes, their land, and their income now have no viable means of support, and that's exactly what I told Mr. Sichone.

When Winnley, as I came to know him, stopped laughing he said "In most cases I might agree with you, but, in this case you are



**F**rom 1994-95 uncontrolled fishing pressures coupled with destructive fishing practices all but destroyed the natural environment of Menai Bay. In response to the hardships caused by reduced fishing yields local communities formed their own committees in order to attempt the sustainable management of this important natural and economic resource. World Wildlife Fund For Nature (WWF) was invited by the Department of Fisheries to support these local efforts. The cooperation of Government, community, and WWF has been extremely effective.

**M**enai Bay Conservation Area was officially Gazetted in August of 1997 and the program became operational the following year. The conservation area comprises 467.5 square kilometers and is based on a traditional fishing area called Unguja by the local inhabitants. This tropical marine environment is rich in coral reefs, tropical fish, sea grasses, and mangrove forests. It extends from the south west corner of Zanzibar Island encompassing several small islands and sand banks each with it's own spectacular coral reef.

very wrong. Menai Bay belongs to the people of Menai Bay. They are the ones who decide what will happen and how they will make it happen. And do you know it is working. Would you like to come with me tomorrow and see for yourself?"

That is how I found myself early the next morning on the beach at Kizimkazi Dimbani, talking with Mr. Ramadhani Abdullah Issa, or Rama as his friends call him. Rama is a gentle, soft spoken giant of a man who explained how Menai Bay Conservation Area came to exist.

"When I was a boy, even up until about 1993, there were a lot of fish in the bay. As a boy I could walk to the shore toss out my line and almost always catch a fish. Sometimes, when guests would come, my mother would say "Quick Rama, go and get another fish for the meal!"

Then about 1993-94 People started coming from the main land to fish here. "See, the main land is just over there" he said indicating with his hand a low band of shadow on the distant horizon, "At first they came to fish then they started to use dynamite. That is a very destructive way to fish, it kills everything so there are no small fish to get big, no food to attract big fish. By 1995 we had to go farther and farther out to sea in hopes of catching enough to eat, nothing to sell. Something had to be done so the village elders formed committees, they made a plan, and started a surveillance program in which all we fishermen helped," explained Rama, "At the same time they ask the government for help. Government tried to help, but it is not an easy problem, so the Fisheries Department invited the WWF to help. Since then WWF and the government together have helped a lot."

Several elders were glade to show me how they now had a well developed management plan, were participating in research and monitoring programs as well as educational programs, and have instigated an extensive mangrove tree replanting program. On the organizational side all seems to be flowing smoothly. The dynamite fishing has been stopped. The outside fishermen have been chased away, and plans for sustainable development are under way.



Then again, man does not live by conservation alone. How do they plan to provide jobs, if fishing is to be voluntarily reduced? Big smiles pervaded the room as one elderly man said "the tourists are helping, come we will show you." That started an amazing tour. Several modest, but quite comfortable, hotels have been built by local families where the food is good, the rooms and facilities kept spotless, and the prices very reasonable. Traditional boats, that until recently had been employed for fishing, now make regular trips for snorkeling on the reefs, picnics on the islands and the star attraction of swimming with Dolphins and Whales. Well appointed beach bars and a very nice restaurant have been built. Tour operators, never slow to realize a good thing, now bring their clients. I was pleased to note that they pay the management committees a fixed sum for each visitor to help with the costs of running the conservation area.

On a different level, sea weed farming has been introduced, as well as several profitable arts and crafts programs. Mangrove wood, which is in constant demand, will soon provide a ready and renewable resource.

The list seemed to go on for ever. The excitement and energy was contagious. People who several years ago were faced with disaster are now looking toward a bright future that they themselves are creating.





# UNGUJA ISLAND MENAI BAY CONSERVATION PROJECT

- Border
- Villages
- Road
- Land/MBCA
- MBCA
- Island

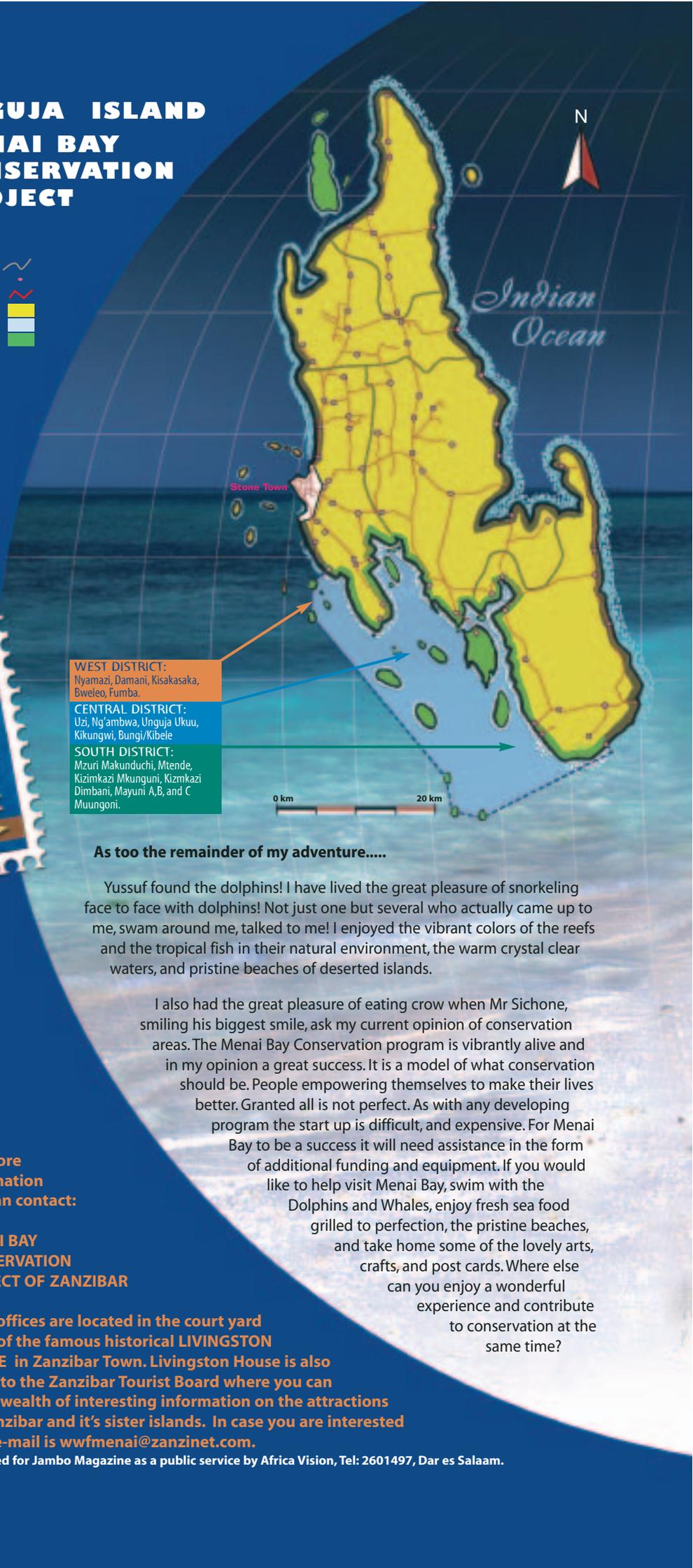


**For more information you can contact:**

## MENAI BAY CONSERVATION PROJECT OF ZANZIBAR

Their offices are located in the court yard patio of the famous historical **LIVINGSTON HOUSE** in Zanzibar Town. **Livingston House** is also home to the **Zanzibar Tourist Board** where you can find a wealth of interesting information on the attractions of Zanzibar and it's sister islands. In case you are interested their e-mail is [wwfmenai@zanzinet.com](mailto:wwfmenai@zanzinet.com).

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- WEST DISTRICT:**  
Nyamazi, Damani, Kisakasaka, Bweleo, Fumba.
- CENTRAL DISTRICT:**  
Uzi, Ng'ambwa, Unguja Ukuu, Kikungwi, Bungi/Kibebe
- SOUTH DISTRICT:**  
Mizuri Makunduchi, Mtende, Kizimkazi Mkunguni, Kizimkazi Djimbani, Mayuni A,B, and C Muungoni.

### As too the remainder of my adventure.....

Yussuf found the dolphins! I have lived the great pleasure of snorkeling face to face with dolphins! Not just one but several who actually came up to me, swam around me, talked to me! I enjoyed the vibrant colors of the reefs and the tropical fish in their natural environment, the warm crystal clear waters, and pristine beaches of deserted islands.

I also had the great pleasure of eating crow when Mr Sichone, smiling his biggest smile, ask my current opinion of conservation areas. The Menai Bay Conservation program is vibrantly alive and in my opinion a great success. It is a model of what conservation should be. People empowering themselves to make their lives better. Granted all is not perfect. As with any developing program the start up is difficult, and expensive. For Menai Bay to be a success it will need assistance in the form of additional funding and equipment. If you would like to help visit Menai Bay, swim with the Dolphins and Whales, enjoy fresh sea food grilled to perfection, the pristine beaches, and take home some of the lovely arts, crafts, and post cards. Where else can you enjoy a wonderful experience and contribute to conservation at the same time?