

Conservation and Management of Historical Buildings Advanced International Training Program 2009-2010 Lund University SIDA

Restoration and Maintenance Plan of Alfred Ilg's Residence

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Introduction

Abstract

Alfred Ilg's residence, is one of the few historical residences in Addis Ababa, Particularly the old part of the city- Arada. It was constructed in the 1890's and is the first of its kind in Ethiopia in combining both traditional Showan architectural form with a European interior. The house has been registered by the Addis Ababa city administration as the city heritage in 2003. It has been neglected and misused for the past 40 years. This paper is about maintenance, restoration and adaptive reuse of this house. As a back ground, the founding of Addis Ababa and the urban space development around the object will be described. A short introduction of the owner and constructor of the house Alfred Ilg, detailed description of the house and the needed extent of maintenance, followed by the actual maintenance proposal, and the method used will follow. The paper will be concluded by stating problems meet in this project, how they were addressed and lessons learned in the process.

Introduction

Background

Addis Ababa, today the capital of the Africa Union, as well as of Ethiopia, has a remarkable history. It all began in the 1880s when

King Menelik, ruler of Shewa in the central Ethiopia, established his camp in Entoto Mountains overlooking the present capital. His Consort, Queen Taitu, shortly afterwards moved down to the nearby plain of Finfinne, also known as Filwoha, to bathe in its thermal waters. Addis Ababa then situated between these two sites, came in to existence in 1887, when Taitu gave its Amharic name: Addis Ababa, or New Flower. The settlement which at first consisted largely of tents and temporary dwellings, later interspersed with stone buildings, grew rapidly in size and importance. Menelik's ascent to the imperial throne in 1889 made it the capital of the Ethiopian Empire. (Preface by Professor Richard Pankhurst, 2007, 12) Menelik's palace originally lay in the settlement's center, with those of his chiefs and advisors (one of them being Alfred Ilg) on the periphery.

Alfred Ilg (1854-1916) He was born in [Frauenfeld](#), Switzerland. He was sent to Ethiopia on behalf of a Swiss company in 1872 and served at the court of Emperor Menelik for 29 years, from 1872 to 1901, where he quickly learned the Amharic language. He contributed to the construction of the new capital, Addis Ababa. Menelik II rewarded Ilg with the title *counsellor in the range of an Excellency* in 1897 and, furthermore, named him minister of foreign affairs for the years 1897 to 1907. (Elisabeth Biasio, 2004, [ISBN 3-03823-089-8](#)) Among other things, Ilg built the bridge over the Awash River, installed the pipes and pump for the water system that supplied the imperial palace, and negotiated the contract for the construction of the first railway line in Ethiopia with France. He played a major role in inaugurating and promoting modern education, trade and postal services in Ethiopia. In fact, the first European- Style School in the country was opened in Alfred Ilg's own house after his departure. Alfred Ilg's house was located half way between the grand palace and Arada along the first street of Addis Ababa, which connected the two poles of the town, the market and the palace. The house, which was surrounded by large trees, is built on the hillside facing the imperial compound. (Fassil Giorgis & Denis Gerard, 2007, 236)



Figure 1: Left: View from Alfred Ilg's Residence to the grand palace, Right: Alfred Ilg's residence in 1900

Source: Zurich Museum-Ethiopian section

It is in a very strategic location, very close to the major governmental offices such as the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Large Hotels, such as the Hilton, Sheraton, International Commissions and conference centres such ECA(Economic Commission of Africa) where important international conferences and meetings take place. Currently the building is in a very poor state of disrepair.

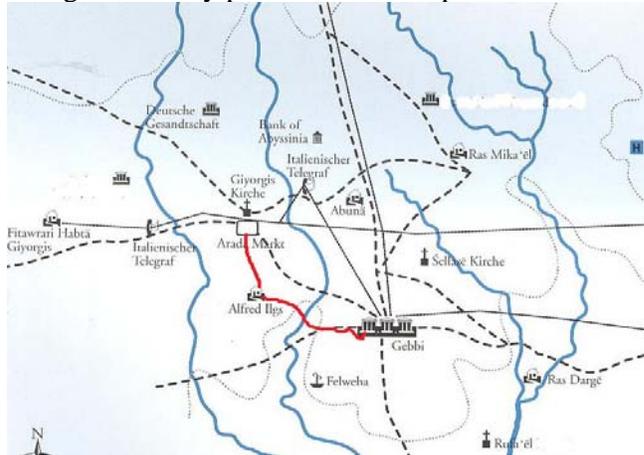


Figure 2: Alfred Ilg's residence was along the first road in Addis Ababa between the palace and the Market Place (Arada)

Source: Book by Elisabeth Biasio: *Prunk und Pracht am Hofe Menilek*

Originally, the house had a rectangular plan. The veranda running around the entire plan was oval and the oval roof on timber posts was covered with thatch. The interior of the house was furnished in a European fashion with imported wallpaper and, a supreme luxury, a decorated fireplace. The Compound was landscaped with different indigenous trees, a fish pond was also found in the compound to the left of the house using the natural spring water.



Figure 3: Left: Mrs. Ilg in the compound with the children around 1904, Right: Living Room of the house in 1900

Source: Zurich Museum-Ethiopian section

Alfred Ilg designed and supervised the construction of the house. There were also small servant quarter tukuls (round plan traditional Ethiopian houses with conical straw roof) in the compound around the house. It had a basalt stone strip foundation and the whole house was made of wood frames with mad and lime plastering from the inside on

top of which the wall paper was applied, and on the external walls, sand stone joined in mud mortar and plastered with lime was cladded on the wooden frames. The wall has a total depth of 70cm. Alfred Ilg and his family lived there for almost 20 years and After Ilg left the country in 1907, the house was transformed in to a modern school for the two young nobility, Teferi Mekkonen (Later King HaileSilassie) and Lij Iyasu (Queen Menen's brother). Other young nobility joined them a short while later. After the Menelik II school was opened in a large scale, the students were moved there and Alfred Ilg's house was occupied by Loenzo Tazaz, who was a close advisor of Emperor Hailelessilassie. Based on the interview with the elders and officials of the neighbourhood, it was at the time of the Italian occupation, where the house served as an office and living quarters for one of the Italian officials, that the rectangular plan was transformed in to an oval plan including part of the veranda on both sides in to the house. The two rectangular extensions were also added using brick combined with wood frame and mud mortar (similar to the oval block) at the rear forming a beautiful courtyard in the middle where apple and peach trees were planted.

Interior

The spacious living room (45m²) with a fireplace and a bar is accessed from the veranda. A 1.40 m door on the left side wall of the living room opens to the dining room (25 m²) which has a large solid wood framed glass door opening to the veranda and facing the fish pond in the garden. The Master bed room (240sqm) is accessed through the dining room. It has large windows facing the garden and the fish pond and a walk in closet which opens in to a steam bath room, on the left rectangular wing of the house. A shower with WC and bidet is also in this wing but accessed from the corridor facing the courtyard. A smaller bed room (11 m²) and a bath, both with windows opening to the garden on the left complete this wing. The kitchen (15 m²) which is found adjacent to the living room in the right rectangular wing of the house, had a sink and a stove with ceramic cladded wall and a small window opening to the garden to the right, Two bed rooms, (11 m²) each, complete the right wing connected with a corridor facing the courtyard. (Refer Appendix 5)

After the house was nationalized by the socialist government in 1974, It was transformed in to a Hotel "Key Bahir Hotel". The oval form was used as a bar and the rectangular wings as privet residence for the hotel owner and his family. Small rectangular blocks were added in the compound for the hotel rooms. It was at this particular time that the house started to lose its identity. The fruit trees had to be removed

and the courtyard had to be covered with corrugated iron sheets on a wooden rafter to hung and dry clean bed sheets and towels from each room during the rainy season. This darkened the corridor and the rooms on either side of the rectangular wings facing the courtyard. The house was plastered with cement mortar and painted both on the interior and the exterior. The wall paper was left untouched only in the bed room. The original wooden posts and reed balustrades in the veranda were replaced by polished wooden posts and balustrades. The interior reed ceiling was replaced by a cotton fabric nailed on wooden buttons. Different furniture and fixtures were reshuffled. The steam bath was converted in to a kitchen and the thatch roof was covered with corrugated iron sheet to avoid the leaking.

In 2003, another major intervention happened to the house, mainly to the compound. The large compound with an amazing landscape, a century old tress and the fish pond were demolished during the construction of the low cost apartment buildings. Even the house was going to be demolished if it wasn't for the strong protest by Ethiopian Architects, Historians and Alfred Ilg's Grand son who flew in from Switzerland. It was at this time that the Addis Ababa city Administration registered the house as heritage. Currently the house is used as residence. The house has lost the beautiful building-site proportion it once possessed due to the fact that the entire compound has been demolished. But one can still have direct view to the palace despite the 5 story low cost apartments that have been added in front of the compound.

Table 1: Summary of Recorded Occupants of Alfred Ilg's Residence in Chronological Order

Year in GC	Occupied by	Function	Intervention
1890's	Alfred Ilg	Residence	Newly Constructed.
1907	Ethiopian Nobility	School	None
1910	Lorenzo Tazzaz	Residence	None
1935-1940	Italian officials	Office/ Residence	Addition of the two rectangular wings and the courtyard in the middle
1940	Bilaten Geta Hiruy	Residence	None
1974-2003	Rental Housing Agency	Hotel	Addition of rectangular blocks in the compound and courtyard was covered with roof
2003-2010	Kebele (Governmental Neighbourhood Administration)	Residence	Compound taken over by Addis Ababa Housing Project

Note: This is the only data that has been obtained and some occupants might be missing from this table.

Expected needs of repair and maintenance: Sanitary fixtures, Kitchen, floor parquets and external tiles, wooden door and window frames, glassing, bed room furniture, wooden beam in the living room, external plastering, electrical cables and fixtures, the fire place.

Conservation, restoration: the fish pond to be reconstructed as it was but this time at the centre of the compound. The only reference obtained about the type and position of the fish pond is based on the interview with the recent tenant of the house and the neighbourhood elders. The reed ceilings, the thatch roof, paint, wall paper, replacement of the mortar plaster with the original lime plaster. New functions: Phone lines and internet networking, technical equipment.

■





Figure 4: Expected needs of repair: top Left - hand rails on the veranda, top right -fire place
bottom left- reed ceiling, bottom right-crack on walls due to the introduction of Cement mortar.

Analysis

The cultural historical values of the building /site

Identity Value: The oval form, the thatched roof, the reed ceiling and hand rails, the masonry wall with traditional mud mortar joint and the lime plastering all have a strong Ethiopian Identity. But the interior characterizes a modern European setting. Therefore the building is unique in combining two extreme cultures in one setting.

Cultural value: The house was used as the first European style school. Many Ethiopian Nobility were educated there. So it has great cultural significance.

The garden with 100 years old trees and the fish pond are demolished and the whole compound has lost its identity.

History:

1. Alfred Ilg: the original owner and constructor of the house, was a prominent person in Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Menelik.
2. Emperor Hailesilassie and Lij Iyasu as well as other nobility of the last royal family in Ethiopia used the house both as school and dormitory.

Patina: The parquet floor, the reed ceiling, doors and windows, the wall have patina.

Authenticity:

- The rectangular extensions with a courtyard in the middle have been added on the original rectangular form with oval verandah, which has later been transformed in to an oval form. Later have been modified when the courtyard was covered so it has not maintained its authenticity of form.

- The thatched roof cover has also been covered by corrugated iron sheet and has lost its authenticity.
- The lime plastering has been covered by cement plastering creating large cracks and its difficult to call it authentic.
- But the front part of the house still maintains its original form and interior appearance and with some conservation and repair it can regain its original significance.

Use Value: Though the house has been used as residence, school, office and hotel.

Economic Value: The site is located in a high land value area of the Addis Ababa master plan. Though currently the house is not income generating to the Kebele Administration, it has a very high potential.

SWOT Analysis

Strength

- Part of the original settlement and the base of the capital-Addis Ababa
- Marked heritage in the urban evolution of the capital.
- Inhabited by a series of prominent people of the different era in Ethiopian history for more than a century.
- Unique from its kind in combining two extreme traditions. Ethiopian form and exterior with modern European interior.
- Played a major role in the introduction of modern way of life and education in Ethiopia.

Weakness

- In a very sad state of disrepair. Barely saved from demolition.

Opportunities

- Located in a very strategic location.
- Located on a number 1 value land, income generating for the Owner- Kebele (Local Authority).
- Can be reused as a guest house for tourists, journalists and historians.

Treats

- Swamped by newly constructed G+4 low cost apartment buildings with tenants constantly urging the local Authorities to demolish the house to get larger parking space. Building endangered by Vehicles parked too close.

Proposal

Currently the government of Ethiopia has given special attention to such heritages and a new team comprising of Engineers and Historians has been founded under the name 'Arada Renaissance'. They are engaged in marking and protecting historical residences around the palace as part of a five year plan to renovate them. TK Consulting Architects and Engineers will submit this proposal to the team mentioned above as a contribution for their work. We have volunteered free technical assistance to follow through the implementation of this proposal and the team is looking forward to the assistance. A lot has to be done to formalize this arrangement but the head of the team believes this can be a pilot project for the other renovation works in the coming 5 years. This has been decided in a meeting held with the relevant stakeholders and steering committee; the kebele (the rightful owner of the house), three members of the Arada renaissance team, representative from TK Consulting Architects and Engineers (writer of this paper), the current tenant of the house.

Defined aims of the restoration and maintenance is;

- To save this historical building from deterioration
- Create awareness among the community about the importance of this heritage
- To encourage the restoration and conservation approach in the city.
- To use the building as exhibit for the new generation as a sample of the 19th century Ethiopian city Architecture with all the original construction elements in place.

Hence this historical residence can be reused as a guest house for tourists, journalists and historians, who would like to experience a feel of the typical country side tukul with a luxurious interior in a house that has been occupied by a significant amount of celebrities for a century. One room will be dedicated to tell the story of the original owner and constructor of the house- Alfred Ilg and his loyalty to Emperor Menelik. All the books about him, and the movie by Christoph Kuhn will be displayed to students and guests.

The major challenge is the fact that the house has been neglected by the neighbourhood. Awareness should be created among the low cost house tenants about the importance of the house. Currently the house doesn't have the required influence in its surrounding. But the renovation will bring the desired effect because it will regain its original significant presence acting once again as a landmark for the new low cost apartments making their compound unique from the

countless similar low cost apartment compounds all over Addis Ababa which, during design and construction did not consider site adaptation and the urban character at all. (refer pictures on Appendix 3) But there is one good example in a similar low cost apartment building half a kilometre away from this site along the piazza (Old colonial) road. An attempt has been made to blend the building with the surrounding classical buildings by decorating the facade.

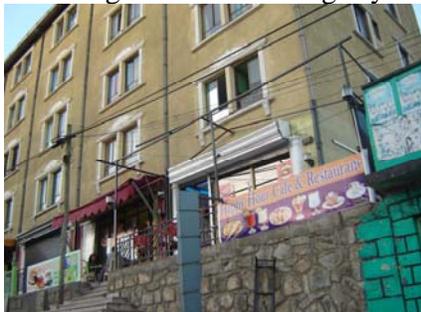


Figure 5: facade decoration on a low cost apartment close to the house

Though choosing Alfred Ilg's compound for the low cost housing scheme was a mistake, the damage is irreversible. The main goal of this proposal is to make use of all the changes in a positive way.

1. Since all the low cost apartments have used the compound as parking, the house should be protected by a vegetation buffer of young trees which will be introduced between the historic residence and the parking space in memory of the demolished trees. This space can also be used as a playground for the children living in the apartments.
2. A single story block, which is a common kitchen for the apartments, has been constructed in the original position of the fish pond. The fish pond can be reconstructed in the centre of the current compound in the roundabout for the apartment's driveway creating a unique character to the compound and providing a recreation space for the residences.
3. The low cost apartments have external stairs with a metal shed on top but it doesn't have overhung and does not protect the stair from rain or sun. A corrugated iron sheet with a thatch roof can be introduced to each floor with overhung, protecting the users from extreme sun and rain and at the same time creating similar elements between the buildings.
4. The rectangular hollow section metallic handrails for the open stairs in the apartments can also be topped with wooden rails creating more comfort for the tenants and similarity with

Alfred Ilg's residence as part of the renovation expense.



Figure 6: Satellite map of Alfred Ilg's residence and Compound

Source: Google Map

Maintenance and repair

- Foundation: Though there is no visible crack on the foundation, for strengthening purpose, trench can be excavated part by part to paste or grout visible cracks with a thin cement paste and plaster white water proof bitumen membrane and then back fill.
- Wall: External walls: remove and replace cement plaster with lime plaster, internal wall: Remove and replace lime plastering and apply wall paper similar to the original.
- Floor: damaged terrazzo floor finishes to be repaired. Polish and varnish existing parquet floor.
- Roof: removal of the corrugated iron sheet and thatched roof, varnish the truss members, replace worn out trusses and reconstruct the roof with corrugated iron sheet under the thatch roof for protection against leakage. Thatch roof to be constructed by known local craftsmen.
- Ceiling: repair the reed and leather tongue using local craftsmanship, internal interventions of chip wood and plywood will be replaced by the original reed and leather tongue ceiling.
- Glassing to be replaced and provided to all windows.
- Removal of the roof over the courtyard and replanting greenery.
- Furnishing: The Original bed, mirror, cupboard in the Master bed room to be mended. The painting in the steam bath room should be cleaned up.
- The fireplace though still functional to be cleaned.
- Electrical: Cables to be reinstalled, TV and satellite dish wiring to be installed.
- Sanitary lines and Fixtures: Plumbing should be redone, sewerage pipes should be replaced, bath tub, WC and Bidet should be replaced shower tray, HWB, to be repaired.
- Communication: internet network cables to be installed.

Wooden posts and balustrades on the veranda polished and varnished.

- Reconstruction of the fish pond and landscaping the garden.
- The house already has modern functions incorporated only maintenance and repair is needed. The only additional wiring needed is for internet network and satellite dish TV cables.
- Ramp for disabled access to be provided
- Further detailed study will be done to incorporate Eco friendly approach in the applied technology in the house.

Method



Table 2: Five year plan 2010-2014

Refer Appendix 4 for Maintenance Program and Plan with suggested time table.

Process

The major written document for the house was found in the book ‘The City and its Architectural Heritage’ by Fassil Giorgis & Denis Gerard, 2007. Pictures collected from The Zurich museum Ethiopian Section in communication with the Switzerland Embassy in Ethiopia, A Film by Christoph Kuhn “ALFRED ILG Der Weisse Abessinier”, and the rest of the information was obtained by interviewing Architect Fassil Giorgis-Author of the book mentioned above, the current resident of the house (the owner’s Son at the time the house was a hotel), the Arada sub city engineering team that’s currently involved in the ‘Arada renaissance’ project which has included Alfred IIG’s residence in the long term renovation program, elderly around the house who have lived there for more than 40 years, Ato Fekadesilassie, W/o Mulu Kasa. Since there was no plan of the house, as built plan was prepared. Based on the interview with the Arada sub city engineering team the building height regulation for the surrounding is between one storey and 5 storeys. After comparing the pictures taken on site with a few of the old pictures and based on the interview result, the major interventions in the house were recorded.

Results/Current Status of the Work

The status of the work is in the design and Proposal stage.



Figure 7: Left: Alfred Ilg's Residence in its current situation, Right: The Proposal

Discussion & Conclusions

One of the major problems encountered in this project was the general fact that all historical documents in Ethiopia focus mainly on the socio cultural, religious and political issues and little or nothing is said about the Architectural and Engineering aspect of building heritages. Relatively, Alfred Ilg's house has better documentation but still was not enough for this project. As a solution documents were gathered through interview with different stakeholder's mentioned above. Undefined ownership is the other major challenge encountered in this project. The house was nationalized in 1974 by the socialist government. At that time it was rent by a business man from the Rental Housing Agency and was transformed in to a Hotel. In 2003 when the low cost apartments were constructed by the Housing Development Agency in collaboration with the Kebele, the Rental Housing Agency was compensated for the price of the house. The Hotel owner's Son currently lives in the house; his rental contract has been terminated after the compensation. Technically the Kebele should have collected the rent from him but they have not started till to date. He claims he owns the house, and the Kebele have not claimed their rightful place yet. During the meeting mentioned above, the Kebele Administrator Mrs Mulu Kasa, has stated that the Administration intends to start managing the house soon. And that the administration would be happy to assist as a client in the 5 year old implementation plan.

Acknowledgement

Last but not least; I would like to thank Lund University, all the professors in this training program, SIDA, The Arada Administration and Engineers, The Kebele, TK Consulting Architects and Engineers, Architect Fassil Giorgis (Msc), Switzerland Embassy and Zurich Museum-Ethiopian section for all their support.

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Zurich Museum-Ethiopian section

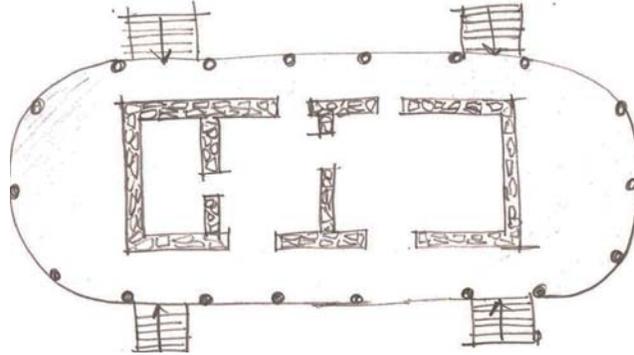
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All the Pictures taken around the 1900 were obtained from the museum archive.

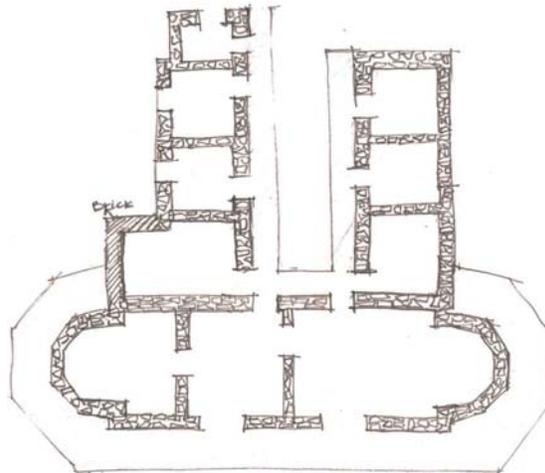
All pictures in the paper which have no source description are taken by the writer of this paper

- ALFRED ILG Der Weisse Abessinier- A Film by Christoph Kuhn

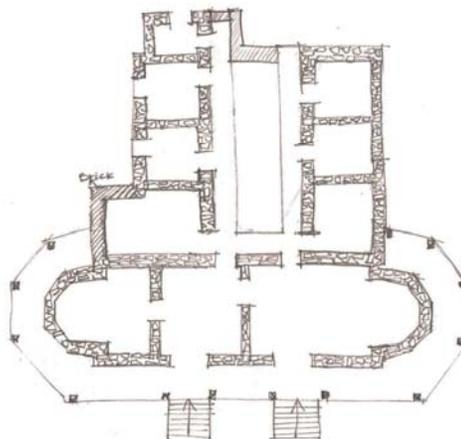
Appendix 1 Transformation of the House



Alfred Ilg's Plan in the 1890's



Addition of the rectangular blocks in 1935



Courtyard Covered with roof and wall constructed connecting the two rectangular blocks in 1974

Appendix 2

Design Proposal



Design Proposal



Existing Situation

Appendix 3



Left: Courtyard Covered , Right: Damaged part of the Parquet floor



Sanitary fixtures to be replace and mended in the bath rooms



Left: Broken glazing on windows replaced by wooden and card oards

Right: Brick wall combined with wood frame with mud on the rectangular extensions of the house



Left: No Architectural relationship between the residence and the new Apartments, Right: Currently, Cars parked very close to the house



Low cost apartments similar in different parts of Addis Ababa- No site adaptation and response to particular site conditions

Appendix 4

A. Maintenance Program

Item No	Work Description	Remark	Time
1	Preparation for writing Abstracts (Summary)	Defining long, medium and short term objectives	August 2009
2	Information of the building -Data collection of the building -Data collection of the compound and the environment -surveys and documentation	-Survey of the site -Assessing inventory data of the building -Research in Archives -discussion with owners and beneficiaries	August 2009- July 2010
3	Values and Threats analysis -Cultural value -Economic value -Identity value -Use value Threats	Intangible and tangible aspects of the building Identification and analyzing threats- Neighbourhood apartment tenants	August 2009- November 2009
4	Goals -Identification of objectives and goals	-Restoration of the house -Adaptive reuse of the house -economic advantage of the owner -Model for similar typologies	November 2009- January 2010
5	Description of Maintenance -Condition Study -Recording the existing situation		November 2009- July 2010

Item No	Work Description	Remark	Time
6	History of the building -Research of historical evidences/ written and oral -previous intervention -previous use of the building	Research in Archives and interview	August 2009- December 2009
7	Present Situation -study of the existing condition -Recording of the existing house condition -Recording of existing condition	-Original material, design and skill identification -Preparation of measure drawings -observation of the status of the building elements -changes in material and fitments -study of roof, windows and doors, structural elements, water drainage	October 2009- July 2010
8	Description of interior part -type of decoration -type of material Type and function of rooms		October 2009- July 2010
9	Register of printed and non printed source -Archival search -Interview and discussion		December 2010
10	Practical Contact Details -Identification of contact		August 2009- April 2010

Item No	Work Description	Remark	Time
11	Design Proposal presentation to relevant stake holders and steering committee		March 2010
11	Restoration measures to be taken Plan Emergency activities		January 2011- December 2011
12	Restoration and Maintenance		January 2012- December 2014

B. Maintenance Plan

Item No.	Work Description	Remark	Time
11	Work plan and time schedule -Identification of tasks -preparation of time schedule	-Identify tasks to be accomplished -decide the time needed Annual work plan, medium and long term plan	February 2010
12	Resource needed -Identify Professionals needed -trained craftsmanship -trained craftsperson on traditional building techniques -identification of local materials and equipment needed		February 2010

Item No.	Work Description	Remark	Time
13	Budget -preparation of labour and material needed -Identification of financial resource	Consult for stakeholders, owners and beneficiaries	February-October 2010
14	Results -preparation of forms recording of work done -Assessment of the process of activities -identification of challenges encountered	-Recording, reporting and review of the result -revised work program	January-February 2010
15	Preparation of checklist -Identification and follow up of phases or progress		February 2010
16	Documentation of -drawings -descriptions -Photos	-Maps, history, condition Conservation plan	August 2009-February 2010
17	Routine maintenance planning		April 2010

Appendix 4

As Built Plan

