

**LOCAL ACTION PLAN ASSESSMENT
ACTIVITY 3.1.3**
The operative plans revised after 3 years of project

JUST – UMM QAIS, JORDAN

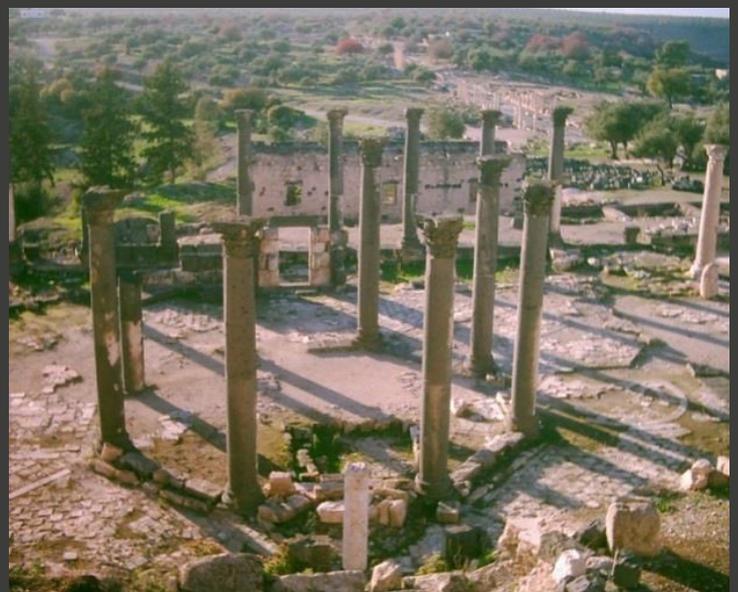
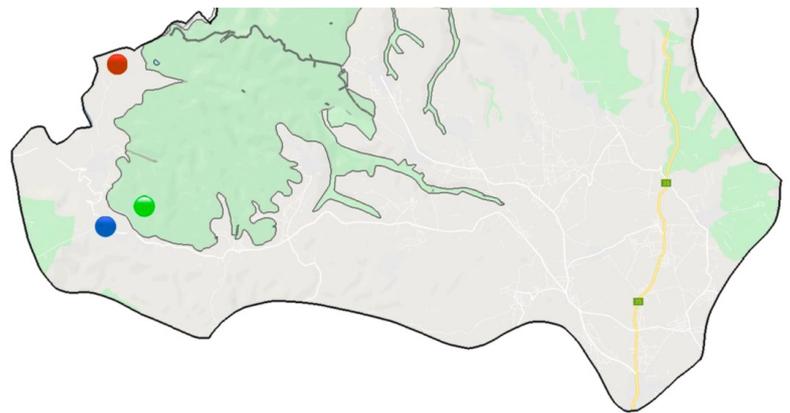
The targeted geographical areas include:

1. Umm Qais and its historical contents.
2. Al-Yarmouk natural reserve.
3. The natural hot springs of Al-Himmah.

Located in the district of Bani Kinanah in Irbid, about 115 kilometers north of the capital, Amman, these areas comprise the different kinds of tourist attractions in the area. Including historical, cultural, medical and ecological tourism. In addition, the Governorate is surrounded by Yarmouk River and Tabrieh Lake from the north and Jordan River from the west. The area of Umm Qais is considered as one of the unutilized attractions of “Nature Tourism” in Jordan. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in 2018 in the area there were 128 tourism businesses, 1.157 employees, a total of 146,656 tourists of which the majority are from Jordan. The Site of Umm-Qais (Gadara) can be divided into two main parts: the ancient city of Umm-Qais including the Greco-Roman, Byzantine, until the Ottoman

occupation level, the modern village of Umm-Qais coupling with the rural landscape including farms and green spaces within the region. The ancient part has great historical value with, among others, two ancient streets (Cardo and Decumanus maximus), two roman theaters, the Tiberias Gate, the Roman Temple and the octagonal Church but they suffer of poor management and conservation.

-  Yarmouk Natural Reserve
-  Himmah hot water springs
-  Umm Qais historical site



HOW?

Needs are assessed through:

- **Research and experts' consultation.**
- **Local focus groups.**
- **Continuous consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure the alignment of local action plans with local communities' needs and values.**

Needs are identified considering three main categories of stakeholders (Local communities; foreign and local tourists; administrative and local authorities in the area) and trying also to identify responsibilities and solutions, when possible.

THE MAIN NEEDS IN THE AREA

- **Planning tourism in the long term**

there is the clear need from the official bodies to participate in building a comprehensive plan for the area, this needs a supportive regulation procedure to make it easier for locals and SMEs to start with minimum boreoartic regulations. National governments need to take the lead in the industry's strategic planning. This process of developing a long-term strategy requires the adoption of a clear vision for tourism. It should be built on an open discussion with all stakeholders and allowing them for Land-use that incorporates community views, especially allow people to invest in the old city of Umm Qais

- **Cultural and natural resource management**

from the critical context analysis was evident that there is the need for a user-friendly system and methodology for addressing identification, evaluation, registration and management of these cultural and natural resources within the region.

- **Infrastructures and services**

there are a lack of services and also infrastructures both for tourists and local communities (both accommodation and connections to main attractions) that can be one of the main reason why tourism is not so developed in the area.

- **Boosting innovation and entrepreneurial skills**

the development of new business models needs to be supported by Government and providing a funding for innovative ideas and of new products and services, and help them to access global markets through private sector partnership

- **Human resources**

based on our experience in the targeted area we noticed a poor personal skill in quality of services provided, communication skills, language skills and managerial skills, so the sector in the intervention area needs new skills to meet changing tourism trends which can be provided to people working in tourism services. The Ministry of Tourism can help to provide funding to provide training programs to upgrade the skills of tourism-sector workers.

- **Marketing**

improve the marketing of community tourism enterprises by the national tourism marketing body such as the Jordan Tourism Board, to promote the tourism assets inventory in the targeted area.

- **Funding:**

local actors in rural areas face the challenge of finding sustainable financing sources to start small businesses.

- **ICT Support:**

need, especially for small businesses, to have specialists and consultancies to help in building a website for marketing, accounting, and payment.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

SWOT analysis has been carried out by JUST team based on research, experts consultation and field visits in the focus area.

Strength

- Richness in natural and cultural resources (mainly natural reserves and archaeological sites as desert castles.
- Availability of basic infrastructure
- Being close to other urban centers and connected with transportations

Weaknesses

- Low level and standards of infrastructure (water systems) and other services in many areas
- Lack of awareness about cultural heritage and negative behavior in tourism sites (mainly reserves)
- Lack of tourism development (strategies, policies and investments) & facilities in the area
- Lack of adequate marketing

Opportunities

- The need of tourism development for economic benefits (income & jobs)
- Safety of Jordan compared to other neighbor countries
- Engagement of the private sectors in decision making, and the private sector is supported with trainings and networking
- Increasing numbers of tourist destinations and visitors
- Growing investments streams in Jordan
- Candidature of Petra to the New Seven Wonders in terms of visibility

Threats

- Urban sprawl
- Maintaining the current levels of environmental problems
- Shortage of water
- Illegal excavations
- Lack of exhibitions and museums.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FROM THE SWOT ANALYSIS

- Integrate sustainable tourism principles into the mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention.
- Strengthen the enabling environment by advocating policies, strategies, frameworks and tools that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.
- Promote broad stakeholder engagement in the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism that follows a destination approach to heritage conservation and focuses on empowering local communities
- Provide World Heritage stakeholders with the capacity and the tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably based on the local context and needs.
- Promote quality tourism products and services that encourage responsible behaviour among all stakeholders and foster understanding and appreciation of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value and protection of World Heritage.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

- Increased awareness and knowledge both at local level and national/international of these less known destinations
- To better connect and provide services to these less known destinations to make them accessible and attractive.

Three main thematic routes have been developed and improved:

Cultural route (Umm Qais)

this route represents a Roman, Byzantine and Islamic Ottoman, and new history. It was one of the Decapolis cities in the Roman period, and famous as a cultural center. This route is the most attractive for tourists to come to visit Umm Qais and it will be the main point where they can visit another route.

Eco & Adventure Natural route (Yarmouk reserve)

another product in the area located in the Yarmouk Reserve, it is about 1 to 2 km from the cultural site, but newly started, it attracts those who love nature and hiking. Visitors can experience the beauty of nature and the history of the place; Yarmouk Reserve is about 20sq km with hundreds of plant species and birds.

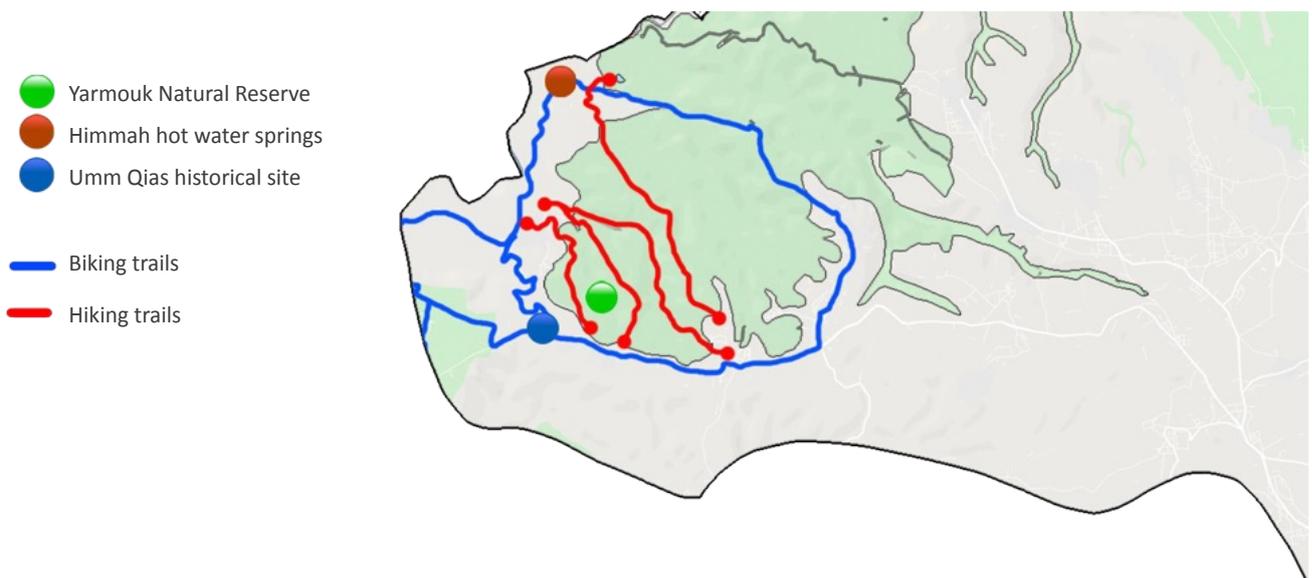
Health and Spa route (Al-Himmah)

The main hot spring, whose mineral-rich waters are a warm 57 C and has been used by Roman for health and relaxation, they are about 10km from the cultural site, for those who plan to hike and walk from the historical site or the natural site, they can ends at the hot springs walking or by car and enjoy the hot springs for health or relaxation.

Agrotourism route (Umm Qais)

marketing for new tourism products experiencing, tourists had a special experience while collecting organic vegetables by hand. agricultural areas where there are private farms that grow special vegetables that only grow in north Jordan called (Ja'beer and Fagous). Each visitor has the chance to experience collecting vegetables by his own hand.

The routes can be a single day activity, or they can be coupled to extend the experience of a couple of days. More infrastructures are needed to fully exploit this second option.



PARTNER ROLE

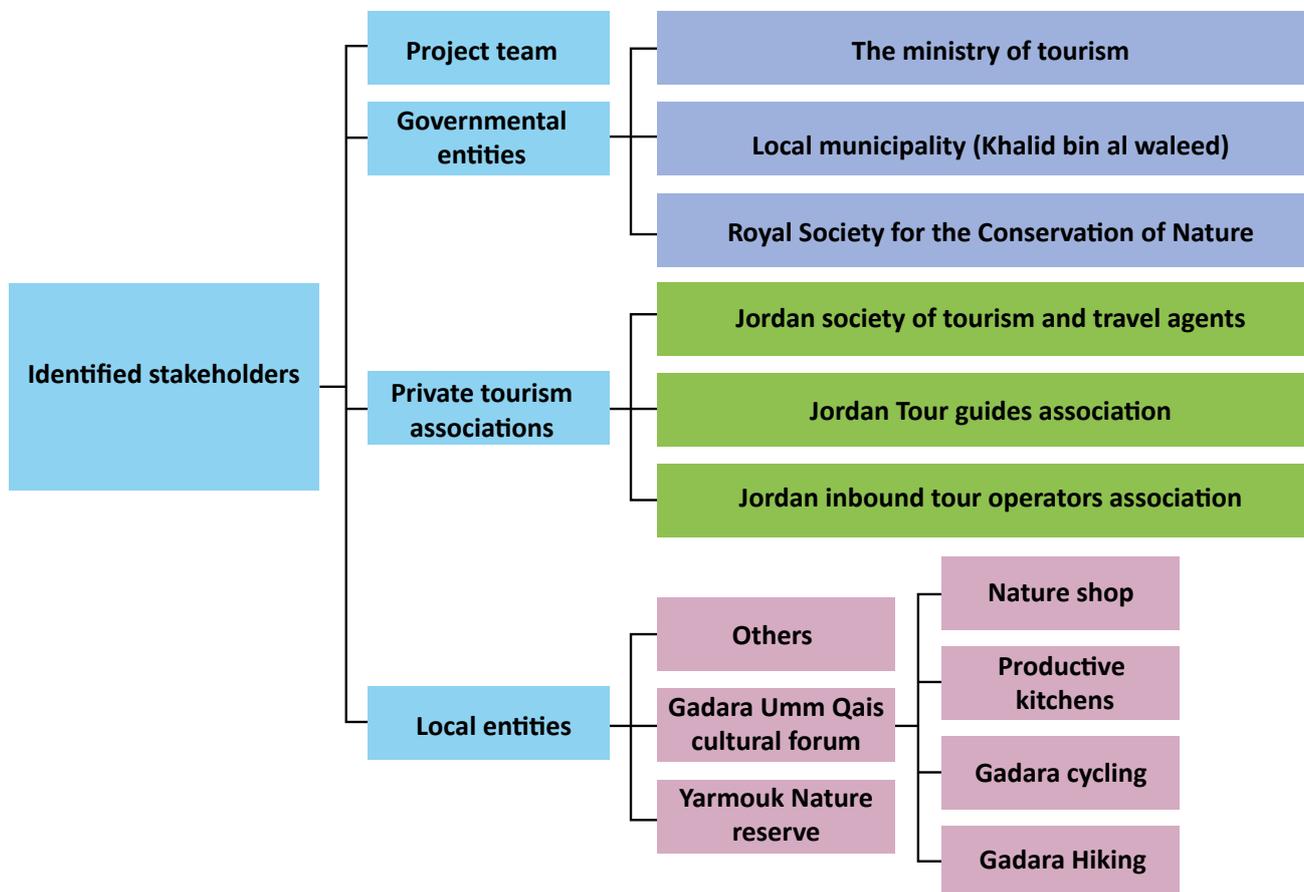
JUST is not part of a local Destination Management Organization, rather they are facilitators in this process of sustainable tourism development in the natural and archeological area of Umm Qais. As University has a Committee on Community sustainable development and within this area of interest, tourism is identified as one of the tools for the economic development of communities in Umm Qais.

Therefore, JUST focus its activities mainly on community engagement and capacity building. Regarding tourism product development, they also work on visual identity and promotional materials, train the community to do business plan, marketing plan, manage multiculturalism, events management, online services.

JUST team liaise with travel guides to guarantee services, Department of Antiquities to develop projects, local community for sustainable development of the tourism, travel agencies from Amman and other cities.

First, we map the stakeholders

The main stakeholders working and operating in the selected area are first mapped by the JUST team as illustrated below. Then specific stakeholders for each single trail are further identified.



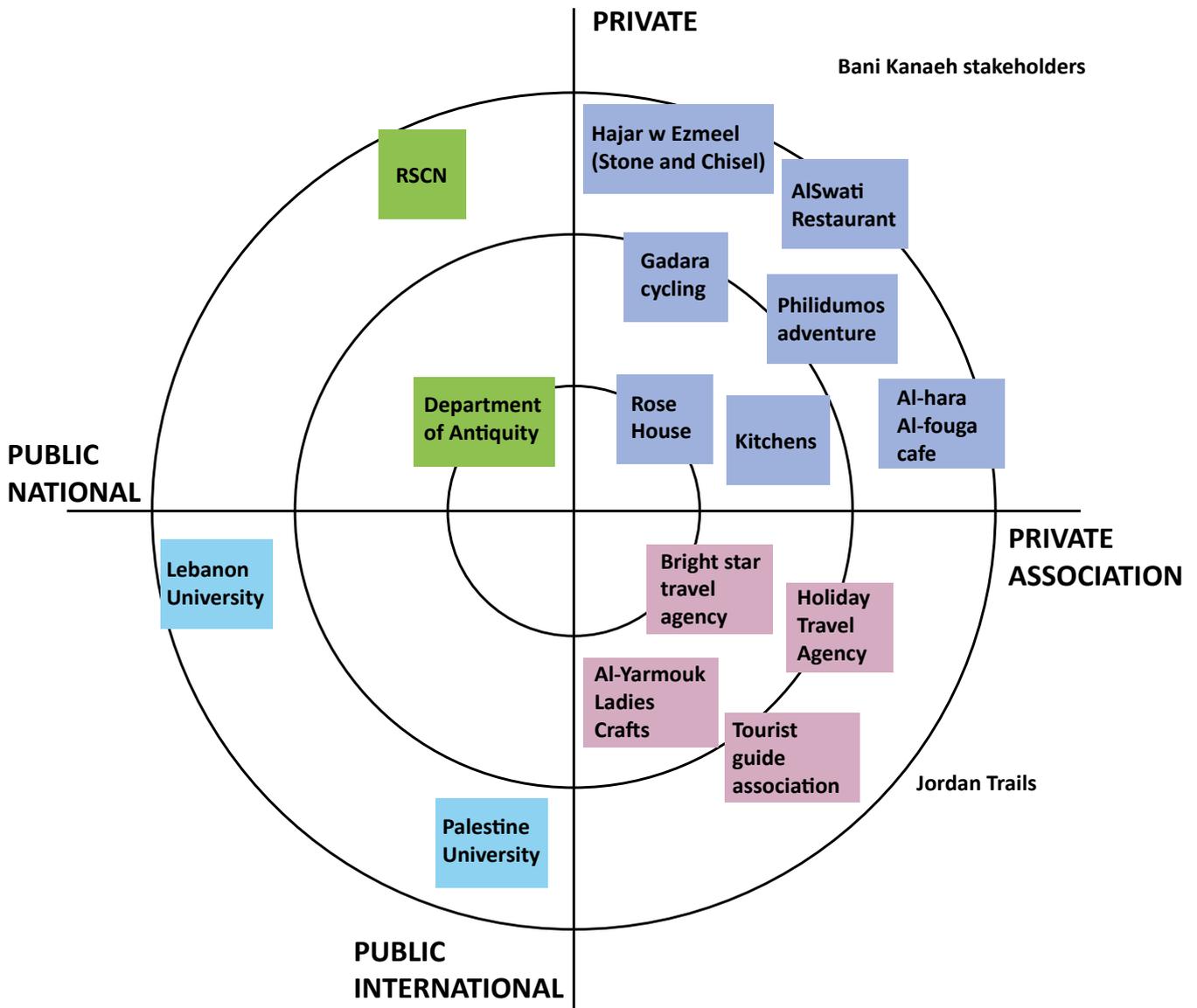
Then, we prioritize the stakeholders

Stakeholders are identified and categorized according to the typology (public national, public international, private association and private business). Further, stakeholders identified are then prioritized according to the level of involvement and proactiveness in collaborating to achieve partner’s objectives.

The most involved stakeholders have a balance between private for profit, non-profit and public national, while there is no public international organization highly involved.

At an intermediate level: there are both private business and associations such as cycling, adventure businesses and travel agencies a tourist guides association.

With a limited level of involvement there are two foreign Universities, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), and some local private businesses.



The stakeholders that we will need to get involved in the future are:

- Stakeholders (mostly private) from Bani Kanaeh Region so to expand the actions to neighbor's areas
- Jordan trail, an association focusing on trails all over Jordan.

How we consulted the stakeholders to develop and endorse the LAP

The project team adopts a continuous consultation and communication plan with stakeholders and relevant parties, and routine monthly meetings with focus groups and representatives of different stakeholders.

- Confirming and defining the geographical target areas: 3 Field visits and 2 stakeholders' meetings to identify the geographical boundaries of the areas and activities which have the most potential as attractions for all kinds of visitors. These areas and activities emphasize the less known touristic aspects of Umm Qais and the surrounding areas

How we engaged the stakeholders engaged during the whole project

- 20/03/2021 brochure for each trail and activities schedule
- 27/03/2021 participatory testing of the heritage Trail
- 3/04/2021 participatory testing of the Eco-Tourism trail
- 10/04/2021 participatory testing of the Biking Trail (part of the Eco-tourism trail)
- 12/04/2021 participatory testing of the Health & Spa Trail
- 19/04/2021 participatory testing of the Agrotourism Trip
- 25/11/2021 Open Public day of presentation of the project with stakeholders and community
- 25/11/2021 and 2/01/2022 Stakeholders Trainings on Administration issues, Financial issues, quality management, Online services, how to deal with multi-cultural client, Interior design (as universal designing) and photography
- March 2022 the Website is still in progress



20th of March 2021

Brochure for each Trail Activity Schedule



27th of March 2021

Testing the Heritage Trail



3rd of April 2021

Testing the Eco-tourism Trail



10th of April 2021

Testing the Biking Trail



19th of June 2021

Agrotourism Trip



25th of November 2021

Open public day



25th of Nov 21- 2nd of Jan 22

Stakeholders Training



March 2022

Website in process

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

Main activities

- Initial SWOT analysis to frame the opportunities and challenges of the area
- Activities for developing new sustainable products: developing thematic trails, defining visual identity, storytelling videos, local product exhibitions.
- Activities to promote the tourism products to tourism agencies and with the development of graphic materials. Testing all the trails was done by travel agencies.
- Development of the marketing plan for the trails. Promoting the trails for tour guides, and Marketing Umm Qais as a tourism package.
- Community development and empowerment: through capacity building, training, workshops on quality management for tourism, and networking activities with other stakeholders and CROSSDEV partners to exchange good practices.

Unexpected changes

In presence activities with the stakeholders have been postponed of a year because of COVID-19 measures to limit the spread of the virus. Consequently, many activities have been canceled due to delays and project deadlines. Also, the number of attendants were less than expected due to COVID movement restrictions and also was not possible to visit the other project partners destinations so to exchange ideas and practices. Online meetings were a way to

Still to do before the end of the project

**TRAINING
FOR TOURIST
GUIDES**

**TRAINING FOR
TOURISM STUDENTS
(postponed due to Covid)**

**PROMOTION
MATERIAL
to be developed and
distributed (videos, brochures..)**

Our future needs towards the sustainability of the LAP

From 2023 and Beyond:

- Develop sustainable plan and product for the future;
- Consolidate the agreement with Ministry of Tourism, to develop a permanent exhibition of the local heritage products;
- Increase the number and improve facilities and accommodations to be able to offer 2 days experiences;
- Develop an adventure training center for visitors.

The resources needed in order to make this project sustainable beyond the end of the project. i.e. Type of resources (finance, human capital, infrastructure, organizational, marketing,...)

The main needs for the future are to develop accommodation facilities and more experiential products so they will need investments to equip the local business for supporting hikers and bikers for example, and also to train both local guides and visitors.

Also, financial resources, capacity building and knowledge sharing targeted to national public organizations (e.g. Department of Antiquities) with the aim of improving the conservation, valorization and management of the historical, cultural and natural heritage along the project's trails. All these would help improve the development of the tourist offer by making it guaranteed, safe, accessible and coherent.

From whom we expect to derive additional resources (e.g.local, visitor tax, project funds etc)

There is already an agreement with two NGOs in Amman which will have the trails as their sustainable product to promote; funds and capacity building from other EU projects in the future; from the agreement with the Ministry of Culture there will be funds to open the permanent exhibition.

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