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Economic Growth Sector PROJECT PROFILE

April 2012



Eco-tourism is a tool for supporting environmental protection and local communities. It is a rapidly expanding niche market in Jordan.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Implemented by: U.S. Department of the Interior's International Technical Assistance Program

Duration: 2009 – 2013

Total Funding: \$2 million

Beneficiaries: Local communities, tourists, managed park areas

Geographic Coverage: Petra Archaeological Park and numerous other protected areas throughout Jordan

Nature-Driven Rural Development

BACKGROUND

Eco-tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world, as many travelers look for alternatives to over-crowded resorts and seek more individual experiences. A rapidly growing sector of global society, concerned about environmental issues, wants to support sustainable tourism. These trends are recognized in Jordan's National Tourism Strategy, which seeks to expand the adventure and eco-tourism sectors.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) has been the leader in developing eco-tourism in Jordan as a vehicle for generating revenue and job opportunities for local communities as well as creating awareness in support of its conservation goals. USAID has supported RSCN's eco-tourism programs over many years, recognizing their value to both biodiversity conservation and economic development in poor rural areas. USAID was a major contributor to the success of the Dana Nature Reserve, Jordan's most developed eco-tourism destination, financing the construction of the award-winning Feynan Eco-Lodge, a popular desert 'hotel' which supports many Bedouin families.

The current 'Eco-Tourism Project' builds on RSCN's experience and aims to create a world-class nature tourism complex in the south of Jordan, linking three of the Kingdom's most spectacular scenic areas: Dana, Feynan and Petra. This "must see" regional nature destination will bring widespread benefits for Jordan's tourism industry and underprivileged local communities. It is estimated that over 60,000 tourists a year will visit this complex when the project is completed, with over 10,000 people living in the area gaining better livelihoods.

ACTIVITIES

- Renovating the old Ottoman Village of Dana to be Jordan's first heritage village for tourism and the principal gateway to the Dana Nature Reserve
- Developing a network of routes and facilities for eco-tourists between Dana, Feynan and Petra, managed by local entrepreneurs
- Creating new eco-tourism activities for visitors to all RSCN-protected areas in order to improve the tourism experience and encourage longer stays
- Encouraging further engagement of the private sector in eco-tourism development



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Bike trails are being introduced to several eco-tourism sites.

- Building the capacity of RSCN and other eco-tourism players to effectively manage growth and capitalize on opportunities

PROGRESS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Finalized Dana Village master plan, approved by local stakeholders; received 95 applications from villagers for renovation projects; prepared detailed designs for tourism facilities and recruited local contractors to build over 40 new guest rooms, shops, internet café, restaurants and a reception/interpretation center. Designed new sewage treatment-water supply network, awaiting environmental assessment. Established a village management company, enabling stakeholders to coordinate tourism programs and maintenance. Handover of completed properties begins July 2012.
- Completed major archaeological trail around Feynan Eco-Lodge, with 4x4 and hiking options, now operational; identified/mapped new Feynan-Petra tourist trails, started developing a new campsite in Wadi Araba, prepared tourism master plan for proposed new protected area in Shaubak
- Developed many new tourist activities for other RSCN eco-tourist sites, including new bike trails and bus tours in Azraq and Ajloun, folk dancing in Azraq and new hiking trails in Dana and Mujib
- Completed a transformation strategy, mapping RSCN's institutional development and expanded role in eco-tourism; implementation well underway, with task forces responsible for executing 14 'Big Ideas,' such as restructuring Wild Jordan as an independent business operation to partner with the private sector to develop eco-tourism ventures supporting protected areas

PARTNERS

- U.S. Department of the Interior's International Technical Assistance Program
- Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
- Ministry of Tourism
- Jordan Tourism Board
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs
- Governorate of Tafila
- Municipality of Qadissiya
- Dana, Wadi Araba and Jebel Masuda local communities

CONTACT:

Office of Program Management
USAID, c/o American Embassy
P.O. Box 354
Amman 11118, Jordan
Tel: 962-6-590-6000
jordan.usaid.gov