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BUILDING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH TOURISM PROJECT (BEST)

PROJECT EXTENSION JUNE 2020 TO MAY 2021

FINAL REPORT



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Contract No. AID-278-C-15-00010

Cover photo: Salt Development Corporation staff member, Faten Khreisat, during practical social media training.

Photo Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh / @aqaisieh

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ACRONYMS

ADTRC	Archaeological Documentation and Tourism Research Center
ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone
B2B	Business to Business
BEST	Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project
BSC	Baptism Site Commission
CBJ	Central Bank of Jordan
DoA	Department of Antiquities
DoS	Department of Statistics
ENSA	Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme
GDP	Gross domestic product
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HSSC	Hospitality & Tourism Sector Skill Council
HVA	Habibi Valtiberina Association
ISO	International Organization for Standards
JFDA	Jordan Food and Drug Administration
JHA	Jordan Hotels Association
JIC	Jordan Investment Commission
JITOA	Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association
JLGC	Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation
JRA	Jordan Restaurant Association
JTA	Jordan Trail Association
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board
JTBNA	Jordan Tourism Board North America
JTS	Jordan Tourism Strategy
MFW	Microfund for Women
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions
MoTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NRA	(US) National Restaurant Association
PAP	Petra Archaeological Park
PDTRA	Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority
RACA	Royal Academy of Culinary Arts
SDC	Salt Development Corporation
SME	Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
TDGVA	Tourism Direct Gross Value Added
TRPD	Tourism Research and Planning Directorate
TRSD	Tourism Research and Statistics Division
TSA	Tourism Satellite Account
WHO	World Health Organization
WRPA	Wadi Rum Protected Area



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Between the project extension period of June 2020 and May 2021, the USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project (BEST) worked closely with government, communities, civil society, and the private sector to support Jordan's tourism sector. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis at the beginning of 2020, Jordan's tourism sector had come to a halt, as did that of the rest of the world. This unraveled the five years of dedicated USAID BEST efforts to boost tourism's contribution to Jordan's economy, and left the project in a recovery and support mode for the duration of the extension. The main achievements of USAID BEST according to area of work, and the lessons learned, as they worked through the global crisis and navigated government policies, are described below.

SUPPORT TOURISM SECTOR RECOVERY

In response to an urgent request from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in Jordan, in June 2020 BEST developed models for projecting visitor arrivals and expenditure to Jordan over the period 2020–2030. The assessment projected five possible scenarios (Very Optimistic, Optimistic, Expected, Pessimistic, Very Pessimistic) given the effect the pandemic was inflicting on the tourism sector. The World Bank Group utilized this study to help develop their general equilibrium growth model for Jordan, and the assessment was also used as part of MoTA's tourism recovery action plan, the Jordan Tourism Strategy, and the Jordan Marketing Strategy. In April 2021, BEST updated the assessment to take account of the most recent global developments and trends related to COVID-19 and the effects and impacts on the tourism sector. BEST also developed a tourism recovery plan to serve as a first year Jordan Tourism Strategy action plan and revised the full 2021–2025 strategy to reflect the impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector and identify subsequent priorities. This update was crucial in helping the tourism sector recover from the economic impact of the pandemic and provide a clear direction for development and growth.

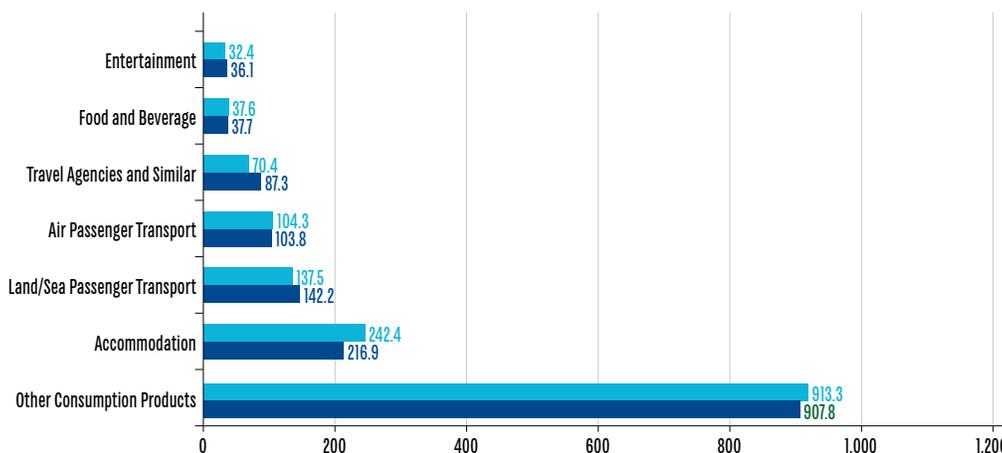


“The current pandemic has been devastating. USAID has provided extensive support to the ministry over the years, and their current support has been valuable in assisting the sector to prepare for recovery and return to providing significant employment and revenue for the country.”

H.E. Dr. Emad Hijazeen
Secretary General for the
Ministry of Tourism and
Antiquities

BEST supported MoTA to set up its new Tourism Research and Planning Directorate (TRPD), established in early 2020 to consolidate statistics and data-gathering, and introduce research, reporting and analysis for better decision-making. BEST prepared an operational plan and terms of reference for an industry advisory committee to link the directorate with public and private stakeholders to ensure a consistent and timely supply of data for more accurate reporting. BEST also trained MoTA staff on preparing Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSAs). The MoTA division worked in partnership with the Department of Antiquities and BEST to develop the 2018 TSA, which was published in March 2021. BEST also worked with the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) to replicate the research center model for each authority. By project-end, all three research centers were operational. This will increase efficiency and accessibility of high-quality research data, market intelligence, knowledge management, document management, and reporting on tourism data for Jordan and its key destinations. Such research and statistics data will aid decision-making among businesses and policymakers and help enhance industry competitiveness by identifying opportunities for improvement.

Tourism Direct Gross Value Added by Industry in Jordan (2016 and 2018)



This graph is an extract from the Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) 2018, showing the contribution to tourism in Jordan of various industries.
Credit: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, February 2021

SUPPORT SURVIVAL, RECOVERY, AND ASSET AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

BEST supported the As-Salt Municipality to develop operational guidelines for the new As-Salt Visitor Center and apply the As-Salt Storytown brand. BEST also facilitated an arrangement between the As-Salt Municipality, Salt Development Corporation, and MoTA to coordinate operation of the Visitor Center, and formalize the relationship, roles, and responsibilities based on lessons learned from the first year.

BEST supported the Jordan Trail Association (JTA) to develop domestic tourism packages along the trail that can be marketed in collaboration with tour operators. The packages were launched in April 2021 to boost visitors along the trail given the decrease in hikers due to the pandemic. BEST also supported JTA to fundraise for trail maintenance and development, and built the capacity of Jordan Trail local escorts, guides, tour leaders, and trail service providers to enhance the experience.

BEST supported MoTA's urban planning efforts and provided recommendations for enhancing the visitor experience and services at several religious and heritage sites. This included a visitor journey and site improvement

plan and interpretation for the biblical site of Machaerus; a tourism development report on Shobak Castle, focusing on immediate interventions needed to enhance the site experience; and recommendations for developing a visitor center for Karak, enhancing the visitor experience at Um Ar-Rasas, and restoration of the Aqaba Castle.

BEST and the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA) provided professional development training for 31 JITOA members and affiliates to prepare them for the return of tourism. The trainings built the capacity of tour operators as key sector players to help them recover from the pandemic when tourism returns, and to build future resilience.

In partnership with the Baptism Site Commission, BEST developed a training program for tour guides specialized in faith tourism to enhance their knowledge and skills for guiding at the site. In cooperation with the Jordan Tour Guide Association and JITOA, BEST trained 60 licensed tour guides, which will help improve the visitor experience at the Baptism Site.

SUPPORT SECTOR MEASURES FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION

To help prevent the spread of the coronavirus and elevate health, safety, and personal hygiene standards across the tourism sector, BEST worked with the MoTA to update the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and Guidelines Manual for cultural heritage sites to incorporate new health and safety measures addressing COVID-19 protocols and guidelines. BEST also trained 156 project beneficiaries and service providers staff on COVID-19 protocols. This included training guides and local tour escorts, tourism businesses, site staff, and service providers from As-Salt, BookAgri, Jordan Ranger Camp, the Baptism Site, Petra Archaeological Park, and others. BEST helped develop new health and safety guidelines for the Baptism Site and Petra Archaeological Park that are aligned with Ministry of Health regulations, the World Health Organization, and the World Tourism Organization. BEST trained the Baptism Site management to employ the new procedures and adopt COVID-19 prevention protocols to ensure the site is operated in accordance with best practices in health and safety. BEST supported the JTA to enhance service standards along the trail; 21 service providers were trained in safe food handling and hygiene, hospitality, and housekeeping to ensure service standards and experiences along the trail meet visitor expectations. Furthermore, 31 local escorts and licensed guides were trained in outdoor and trail guiding skills, such as map reading, compass navigation, and leave-no-trace hiking. They were accredited by JTA to guide on the Jordan Trail. BEST also conducted certified training Wilderness First Aid training for guides and service providers from Amman, As-Salt, Jerash, and Irbid. The training built their capacity to provide immediate support for injuries during hikes and outdoor activities.



“Various guidelines have been set for COVID-19 prevention for hotels and restaurants. Most service providers on the Jordan Trail are not licensed and the training supported by USAID helps them implement these COVID-19 standards, and also teaches them how maintain good hygiene and sanitation, and how to provide hikers with a hospitable service.”

Bashir Dawood

General Manager of The Jordan Trail



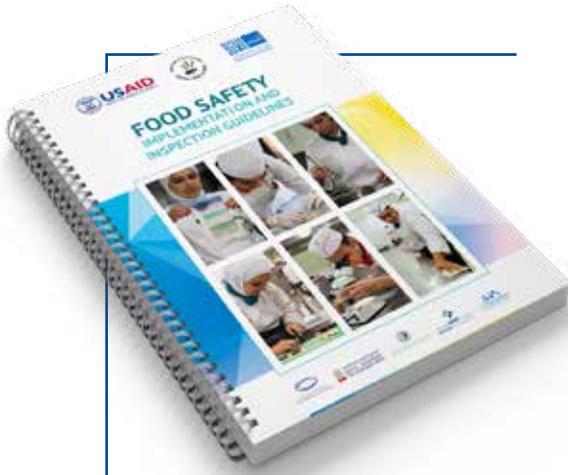
The Petra Archaeological Park COVID-19 prevention guidelines that USAID BEST developed.



One of the holiest sites in Christendom, the Baptism Site ranks among Jordan's 10 most popular tourism attractions.

DESTINATION EXCELLENCE

BEST worked with the Baptism Site management to strengthen management of the site and improve services and amenities to enhance the visitor/pilgrim experience. BEST supported the Baptism Site Commission to update the Baptism Site operational management organization framework, structure, process, procedures, and SOPs. BEST then trained managers, team leaders, supervisors, and local tour guides to acclimate to and implement the new management changes and SOPs. BEST also built capacity of Baptism Site tour guides, improved visitor services through the new operating procedures, and developed COVID-19 protocol and guidelines. Overall, the trainings helped strengthen employee skills and knowledge, improved team motivation, and will help improve the level of service provided to visitors.



The Safe Food Implementation and Guidelines Booklet developed by USAID BEST and JFDA to improve food safety within Jordan's hospitality sector.

BEST worked with the Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) to develop the Food Safety Implementation and Inspection Guidelines, along with a guideline manual, and trained more than 100 JFDA, Ministry of Health, and MoTA inspectors on the new guidelines. The new guidelines are aligned with international standards such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and the International Organization for Standards (ISO). BEST also developed and piloted a food safety and inspection “point of contact” program through the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts and JFDA for a more efficient inspection process. The new system, including the standards, inspection process, and point of contacts, is a pioneer in the region and offers a best practice model for achieving the highest standards in food safety. These new food safety and hygiene standards for hotels, restaurants, and food service businesses in Jordan will help ensure safety, security, and an excellent experience for all customers.

BEST supported the development of unified campsites standards that will ensure all camps meet minimum international campsite standards (security, safety, hygiene, and comfort) for better guest satisfaction. In May 2021, the National Tourism Committee approved the unified campsite standards. They will be adopted as regulations for campsites across Jordan, including the regional authorities of ASEZA, PDTRA, and Wadi Rum Protected Area, enabling authorities to enforce compliance with the minimum international standards for licensing and operation of campsites.



A view of the cabins at Jordan Ranger Camp in Jerash.

Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh 2019

MARKETING SUPPORT

BEST updated the Jordan Tourism Board's marketing strategy in response to the global pandemic. The strategy provides Jordan with a tactical action plan to re-engage with key source markets (including new markets). The plan is based on a data-driven approach to identify priority markets, channels, and partners as part of a phased structured approach to return to growth.

On a sector level, BEST worked closely with the Salt Development Corporation (SDC) and tourism stakeholders in the city of As-Salt throughout 2020 and into 2021 to build local capacity for marketing and promoting As-Salt in preparation for a return of tourism. BEST provided training in digital content creation, digital marketing, media and communications outreach, and social media management to both the

SDC and local experience providers. These training sessions strengthened their online marketing capacity to promote As-Salt and its tourism offerings and instilled the skills necessary to establish relationships with local media outlets to communicate messages about As-Salt as a destination. With BEST support, the JTA launched a sponsorship program to fundraise from corporations, entities, and individuals for maintenance of physical infrastructure along the Jordan Trail. This has been successful in raising funds to complete waymarking for two northern sections of the trail, with further commitments forthcoming. BEST also supported the JTOA to build capacity among their members to enhance customer service and standards to enable faster recovery when tourism picks up.

IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS, CORRECTIVE ACTIONS, AND DELAY COSTS

By the end of the main USAID BEST project, in March 2020, the SDC was about to launch the city as Jordan's first "Storytown" with USAID support, and this was to be the start of an intensive marketing campaign to increase awareness of the destination and the number of visitors to the city. However, plans had to be halted as a result of the pandemic and at the start of the extension, BEST worked to support SDC and the community of As-Salt to put in place the needed measures to target and attract domestic visitors at a time of changing nationwide government measures and restrictions. Packages developed and promoted by SDC and BEST in 2020 saw low demand, but helped SDC to better understand the demands of their target market and adjust their marketing efforts based on the results while learning how to cope with the "new normal" following the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this, SDC focused marketing efforts on creating awareness of As-Salt as a destination and of the Storytown brand for domestic travelers to "keep in mind" once they are ready to travel.



The new As-Salt Storytown brand book.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The global COVID-19 pandemic created a huge challenge for Jordan's tourism sector, which was negatively impacted by the resulting drop in visitors and tourists to the country. The sector is in dire need of support to stay afloat, and BEST faced challenges in maximizing the assistance it could provide given limited time and funding. Many tourism associations and groups showed great resilience in seeking innovative ways to sustain their businesses, mostly by targeting the domestic market, and others utilized the time to enhance skills and capacities to maximize their chances for recovery. BEST was flexible in activity planning, which enabled the project to respond to sector needs and requests.

Although tourists have been slow to return, As-Salt is becoming a desirable filming location for international productions, which have been drawn to its quaint spaces and heritage buildings. Three of the entities that BEST supported were used as the location for filming of various productions in the past year. As-Salt's increasing popularity as a filming location will help promote the city and its unique offerings, which may increase visitation as a result of the exposure. This will also contribute to the national direction of promoting Jordan as a preferred destination for film-based tourism.

In terms of best practice, the new safe food system for hotels and restaurants in Jordan, including the standards, inspection process, and point of contacts, is a pioneer in the region and offers a best practice model for achieving the highest standards in food safety.

BACKGROUND

Between the last quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2020, the USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism (BEST) Project worked closely with government, communities, civil society, and the private sector to develop Jordan's tourism sector. BEST achieved this by increasing and diversifying products and services, increasing investment in the sector, raising service standards and quality of education, and boosting marketing efforts.

Through its various activities and grant support, BEST created 4,748 tourism jobs and leveraged private sector investments of more than JD 116 million in tourism. By project-end, visitors to Jordan, tourism receipts, and the number of people employed directly in the sector increased.

BEST's combined interventions contributed to the development of a sound foundation in marketing, business quality and services, human capital capacity, and investment promotion within Jordan's tourism sector. Although it is difficult to determine what proportion of increase can be attributed to the actions guided by this strategy, it certainly had a significant impact through the introduction of low-cost carriers and wide-reaching digital marketing campaigns that targeted key niche markets. Between 2016 to 2019, visitors to Jordan increased by 12 percent, tourism receipts increased by 41 percent, and the number of people employed in the sector went up by 6 percent. Unfortunately, with the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis at the start of 2020, Jordan's tourism sector came to a halt, as did that of the rest of the world. This unraveled the five years of dedicated USAID BEST efforts to boost tourism's contribution to Jordan's economy. To sustain the momentum gained in developing Jordan's tourism sector and to address the anticipated impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, in May 2020 USAID extended the BEST Project for one year. The project launched activities under this extension in June 2020, beginning with consultations with key sector stakeholders, including the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA). The priority across the sector was to address and mitigate as much as possible the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



SUPPORT
COMPETITIVENESS
AND RESILIENCE, AND
IMPROVE RESPONSE
TO COVID-19

STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS ON THE TOURISM SECTOR IN JORDAN

Leading up to the start of the extension, BEST was in close communication with MoTA, who identified an urgent need for a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in Jordan. BEST responded immediately and commissioned a study to develop a model for projecting visitor arrivals and expenditure to Jordan (and beyond) over the period 2020-2030. The findings were used to estimate Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) and employment in 2020 and apply various scenarios to the model to identify best and worst cases for visitor arrivals, expenditure, TDGVA, and employment. The model is based on origin-destination pairs to be more responsive to specific conditions in both the origin markets and the countries that tourists visit. The study presents five scenarios in four areas: tourist arrivals, tourist expenditure, tourism contribution to gross domestic product (GDP), and employment, with the scenarios ranging from most pessimistic to most optimistic. Key findings were:

- Jordan received 4.5 million international tourist arrivals in 2019; however, these were projected to decline to 1.8 million in 2020, before bouncing back to 3.5 million in 2021.
- In 2019, inbound tourists spent \$5.8 billion in Jordan; however, it was projected that less than \$2.4 billion would be received in 2020, a decline of just over 58 percent. It was projected that \$4.7 billion would be generated in 2021, an increase of 94 percent.
- In 2020, TDGVA was estimated to be \$1.1 billion. This compares to \$2.5 billion in 2019, a decrease of more than 55 percent.
- There were almost 97,000 tourism-related jobs in 2019; this number was projected to fall to around 52,500 in 2020, down 46 percent.

At the beginning of 2021, BEST updated its impact assessment, taking into account the most recent global developments and trends related to COVID-19. BEST presented the revised assessment in April 2021, highlighting the following findings:

- There were 1.1 million international tourist arrivals to Jordan 2020; these are projected to increase to 1.9 million in 2021, before growing further to 3.4 million in 2022. It is anticipated that Jordan will not reach the 2019 level of arrivals until 2024.
- Inbound tourists spent US\$1.4 billion in Jordan in 2020; an expected US\$2.5 billion is projected in 2021, a growth of 74 percent. The model estimates that expenditure will exceed 2019 levels by 2023.
- In 2021, TDGVA is estimated to achieve US\$1.1 billion, up from US\$0.76 billion in 2020, although down significantly from US\$2.2 billion in 2019.
- While the number of jobs created by tourism in Jordan was estimated to be more than 78,500 in 2020, this number is projected to fall to around 66,000 in 2021, or around 23,000 fewer jobs required. Of course, the actual change in employment may not be this high due to job retention schemes and other policies put in place by the government and businesses to retain staff over what is expected to be a relatively short-term drop in demand.

Both studies fed into World Bank modeling and planning for Jordan, and MoTA planning. The first study was utilized by the World Bank to develop their equilibrium growth model, and it was used as part of MoTA's tourism recovery action plan, the Jordan Tourism Strategy (JTS), and the Jordan Marketing Strategy.

RESEARCH INTO THE IMPACT AND CHALLENGES FACING THE INBOUND TOUR OPERATOR SECTOR IN JORDAN

As BEST began re-engaging with the sector under the extension, the MoTA, tourism associations, and other stakeholders were reporting that they had already conducted a range of focus groups to assess the impact of COVID-19 and obtain information to feed into recovery efforts. BEST collected the results of this research from various entities to inform its work during the extension and assessed the need for further information-gathering. Based on this, BEST conducted focus groups with and surveyed more than 750 private sector firms, institutions, and stakeholders to support development of the tourism recovery action plan. This information was used to update the JTS and forecast the impacts of COVID-19 on Jordan's tourism sector.

BEST also supported Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA) to prepare a report on the "Impact and Challenges Facing the Inbound Tour Operators of Jordan." Tourism stakeholders have been challenged in identifying their value to the tourism sector and the critical impact of closed borders and no inbound tourism for the past six months. The report offered a forward look for the sector and was circulated to all tour operators and industry stakeholders. Based on this research, BEST customized a targeted training program to prepare tour operators for a return to tourism.



“With the assistance of USAID BEST over the past year, we have produced an impact study and tourism recovery plan, improved research and data accuracy and availability, and developed our Jordan Tourism Strategy to guide sector development over the next five years, along with a new marketing plan that will assist with Jordan’s tourism recovery.”

H.E. Dr. Emad Hijazeen
Secretary General for the Ministry of Tourism and
Antiquities

UPDATED JTS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The tourism business environment is an important factor in supporting and driving tourism experiences, site management and development, investment, and overall sector competitiveness. At the onset of the extension, BEST's priority was to support Jordan's business enabling environment to respond to and recover from the impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic.

In January 2020, prior to the start of the extension, BEST had submitted the JTS to the MoTA. Due to the emerging coronavirus pandemic, MoTA did not formally adopt the JTS when it was submitted. In June 2020, MoTA requested BEST to develop a tourism recovery plan for the sector to serve as a first year JTS action plan and then revise the full JTS to reflect the impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector, including updating figures and key performance indicators.

BEST began work on the tourism recovery plan based on consultations with Jordan's private sector, foreign market representatives, and tourism industry experts; discussions with leading international tourism organizations; and models of best practice. BEST held a series of consultations on tourism topics, including policy, investment, human

resources, global trends, and others, to determine the priorities and lay out actions. BEST submitted the "Final Recovery Action Plan: Stabilize, Transform, Grow" report to MoTA in October 2020. The tourism recovery plan provided a foundation for public-private consultations to further develop and agree to a recovery plan with a common vision and the confidence and support of the tourism industry and the government, as the need for public-private dialogue was identified as critical. The plan also serves as a first-year action plan for the JTS.

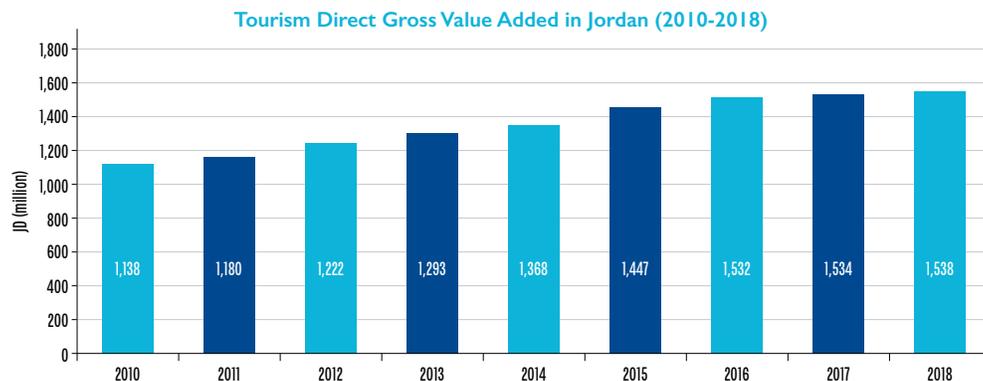
As part of developing the recovery plan, BEST presented TripAdvisor's "Jordan Destination Insight 2020" to the MoTA secretary general. This report detailed Jordan's international and domestic travel engagement, engagement from top markets, competitors' set analysis, and where Jordan's share of declining markets is going. It also proposed a strategy for Jordan going forward. As MoTA implemented its strategy for tourism recovery, it was important that they remained informed of global trends and strategies for tourism recovery, and how different markets are performing due to the impacts of COVID-19.

BEST then worked with MoTA and the private sector to update the National Tourism Strategy 2020-2025 to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and identify subsequent priorities. This update was crucial in helping the tourism sector recover from the economic impact of the pandemic and provide a clear direction for development and growth. MoTA identified private sector representatives to serve as focal points and to lead consultations with selected stakeholders on designated strategic objective/pillars covered in the draft strategy. The BEST team agreed that the updated strategy will focus on tourism sector priorities and integrate trends

that reflect the future of tourism post-COVID-19, and incorporate specific recommendations and measures that address conservation of cultural tourism assets. The update process continued through March 2021, due to differing views among stakeholders and changes requested by MoTA. The strategy period was updated to 2021-2025 and BEST submitted the finalized JTS to MoTA in May 2021. The strategy will guide Jordan's tourism sector over the coming years to prioritize key markets, ensure safety measures are in place, and identify areas of investment for both physical assets and human resource development.

SUPPORT MoTA RESEARCH AND PLANNING DIRECTORATE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GDP AND EMPLOYMENT

The Tourism Research and Planning Directorate (TRPD) at the MoTA was established in early 2020 to consolidate statistics and data-gathering, and introduce research, reporting, and analysis for better decision-making. Prior to its establishment, the ministry had a statistics department but there was no integrated research and planning function. From the start of the extension, BEST provided support to the ministry to set up efficient operations and an organizational structure for the new directorate. BEST drafted an operational plan along with terms of reference for an industry advisory committee to link the directorate with public and private stakeholders to ensure a consistent and timely supply of data for more accurate reporting. BEST assessed TRPD staff to identify their training needs, and conducted an IT support assessment to determine what resources are available to operate the directorate. BEST then conducted one-on-one training for MoTA staff on preparing Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSAs). The MoTA division is focused on preparing the TSAs in partnership with the Department of Antiquities (DoA) and BEST. MoTA actively participated in data collection, liaison with the Department of Statistics (DoS), and preparing calculation models for the TSAs.



Source: TSA 2010, TSA 2012, TSA 2016, TSA 2018

Note: Figures for 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017 are estimates

According to the 2018 TSA, tourism generated more than JD 1 billion direct gross added value per year between 2010 and 2018.

Credit: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, March 2021

SUPPORT PREPARATION OF TSAs (2018/2019 DATA)

For Jordan to expand its tourism potential it must compile verifiable information that will help identify new markets and product opportunities to become more competitive and expand the economic impact of tourism. One of the functions of the MoTA TRPD, as set out in its Operational Plan developed by BEST, is to prepare the TSAs. The TSAs are the backbone of verifiable information. The department compiles statistics from DoS in accordance with TSA data requirements.

During the extension, BEST supported the TRPD directorate team to compile and publish their first TSA, which was an important institutional capacity-building activity for the directorate. BEST has supported MoTA to publish four TSAs since 2008; however, this was the first TSA that the recently established TRPD participated in and owned.

The staff of the Archaeological Documentation & Tourism Research Center in Petra stand in front of the offices where they are based. The center provides tourism and archaeology research, planning, and archiving to aid policy and business decision-making and enhance industry competitiveness.



BEST developed a task plan for preparing and presenting the 2018/2019 TSA. Data collection began in September 2020 and the statistics tables were completed by early 2021. BEST recruited a TSA expert to support the directorate throughout the process of TSA development. Senior TRPD staff members worked with the USAID BEST expert to gather the data and the expert provided technical training to DoS and MoTA TRPD staff on how to model the gathered data to complete the TSA tables. BEST also delivered TSA awareness training to Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZA), Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), Border Control staff, Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), MoTA, and Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) staff to ensure all partners and stakeholders in the TSA process were familiar with the statistical modelling approach and the benefits of using the TSAs.

BEST also provided the directorate with detailed specifications and a checklist of data requirements for compiling the TSAs, which specifies which sources each set of required data is collected from, including the CBJ, DoS, JTB, and the ministry. Clearly, the directorate team are involved in developing the TSA from the sourcing stage.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTATION AND TOURISM RESEARCH CENTER ESTABLISHED IN PETRA

BEST recommended that the MoTA TRPD model be replicated at the PDTRA to produce needed data on Jordan's most popular tourist attraction. Previously, the PDTRA Promotion and Statistics Department and Quality Assurance Department were responsible for gathering data from the Petra entry ticketing system and data on hotels and restaurants. BEST proposed that the Petra Archaeological Park (PAP) authority management establish a new Archeological Documentation and Tourism Research Center (ADTRC) at the PAP; PAP approved and appointed a director and team, including a statistical expert and economist.

BEST developed a concept and framework for the PAP ADTRC, which includes forming a public-private advisory committee, a plan for staff capacity building, and an IT needs assessment. Establishing the ADTRC will increase the efficiency of PAP to provide accessible, timely, high-quality research data, market intelligence, knowledge management, document management, and reporting.

The ADTRC was established in June 2020. It works on both tourism and archaeology research, planning, and archiving for better access. In Petra, there are minimal documented research initiatives and mechanisms for crisis response, improved policy formulation, and implementation. Such research and statistics data will aid decision-making among businesses and policymakers and help enhance industry competitiveness by identifying opportunities for improvement. To ensure sustainability, BEST worked with PDTRA and PAP to establish and build capacity within the center. BEST also assessed the general competency and IT skills of the new center team, and conducted an IT hardware and software needs assessment for its document management for archeology archiving and tourism statistics and data management systems.

SUPPORT ESTABLISHMENT OF ASEZA TOURISM STATISTICS AND RESEARCH DIVISION

BEST worked with ASEZA to improve the tourism research capacity in Aqaba. The ASEZA Tourism Commission established a Tourism Research and Statistics Division (TRSD) and approved an operational plan prepared by BEST. BEST supported the development of an annual research action plan, establishment of a public-private advisory committee, and an IT and staffing needs assessment. The TRSD was formally established under ASEZA regulations and the Chief Commissioners Council

in January 2021. The Commissioner for Tourism was appointed chairperson of the TRSD Steering Committee. The ASEZA TRSD actively participated in compiling the 2018 TSA. ASEZA and MoTA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for sharing tourism statistics. The TRSD will provide decision-makers, investors, and researchers with up-to-date data to support the development of Aqaba as a tourist destination.



SUPPORT ASEZA TO PUBLISH “TOURIST APPROVED” STANDARDS, INCLUDING COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR GUEST HOUSES, FARMHOUSES, AND HOMESTAYS

In light of the coronavirus crisis, the priority of all domestic and international tourists is to feel safe, protected, and secure in all forms of accommodation. Feedback from industry stakeholders indicated a need for guidelines on minimum “tourist approved” standards for operating tourist guest houses and homestays. These minimum standards would be in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs) rather than regulatory standards, and a steering committee (consisting of MoTA, ASEZA, PDTRA, JTB, and Jordan Hotels Association [JHA]) would guide the preparation, development, and approval of the standards.

BEST provided support to ASEZA by preparing the minimum tourist-approved standards for guest houses to enhance security, safety, hygiene, and comfort for guesthouses, farm stays, and homestay accommodations. While the accommodation businesses are not legally obliged to implement them, the guidelines offer guidance on the standards that should be in place to offer a safe and satisfactory experience. By BEST project-end, the standards were being tested and piloted as a lead-in to full implementation.



SUPPORT SECTOR
MEASURES
FOR COVID-19
PREVENTION TO
RETURN TO BUSINESS



Petra Archaeological Park employees and staff hold certificates of completion following training given by USAID BEST on applying COVID-19 protocols. The staff are now equipped to ensure the health and safety of visitors to the site.

SUPPORT PDTRA TO PREPARE HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OF PAP

In Petra, BEST developed new COVID-19 protocols to facilitate the reopening of PAP for domestic and international tourists. The guidelines include recommendations and guidance from the MoTA, World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization. They cover visitors to PAP, responsibilities of PAP employees, and visitor flow through the park. BEST also trained 42 PAP Quality Assurance Division employees, PDTRA hotel and restaurant classification inspectors, and representatives of the Petra Hotels Association and restaurant businesses on implementation of health and safety COVID-19 guidelines. The training included a “train-the-trainer” methodology so participants can cascade the workshop content and guidelines by holding similar workshops for other hotel and restaurant operators. The training participants are now better qualified to ensure their own health and safety in moving around the site as well as that of visitors to the park, and are also able to deliver the training to other employees.

SUPPORT GOVERNMENT AND TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS TO INTRODUCE SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE STANDARDS AND/OR A HAZARD ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL CONTROL POINTS (HACCP) PLAN

From the onset of the BEST extension, safety and hygiene at all levels became one of the main priorities for the tourism sector to recover from the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, BEST approached the Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) to help streamline and strengthen safe food handling and hygiene standards for food and beverage service outlets across Jordan, in partnership with ASEZA and PDTRA. In September 2020, JFDA and BEST signed a joint agreement of cooperation to develop safe food standards and publish a guideline manual and checklist. BEST facilitated the establishment of a national steering committee to lead the development of safe food handling and hygiene standards guidelines and a guideline manual. The committee included representatives from JFDA, ASEZA, MoTA, Jordan Restaurant Association (JRA), JHA, Royal Academy of Culinary Arts (RACA), and the Hospitality & Tourism Sector Skill Council (HSSC).

The committee developed a Food Safety Implementation and Inspection Guidelines manual to serve as the definitive national protocol on safe food handling and hygiene standards, drawing on best practices from HACCP, the International Organization for Standards (ISO) food safety management system (ISO 22000), and WHO standards for the hospitality sector. The new manual includes an auditing checklist, auditing excellence, food safety systems, good hygiene practices, HACCP, a food safety management system (ISO 22000), and SOPs. The manual was launched in February 2021, at which time the hotel and restaurant associations distributed the Food Safety Implementation and Inspection Guidelines manual to hotels and restaurants throughout Jordan. BEST then trained 100 JFDA, MoTA, and Ministry of Health inspectors, auditors, and assessors from across

Jordan on the new guidelines, standards, and checklists. The food inspectors and industry are now attuned to the new inspection guidelines and service standard expectations are aligned. The manual will help the industry implement the best practices of food safety and hygiene standards according to JFDA rules and regulations. Food establishment employees will have a better understanding of the food safety and hygiene standards and the inspection process. The new system, including the standards, inspection process, and “points of contact” (detailed in the following section), is a pioneer in the region and offers a best practice model for achieving the highest standards in food safety. These new food safety and hygiene standards for hotels, restaurants, and food service businesses in Jordan will help ensure safety, security, and an excellent experience for all customers.

PROGRAM FOR TOURIST ACCOMMODATIONS TO ENHANCE SAFE FOOD HANDLING AND HYGIENE STANDARDS INDUSTRY INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION



Credit: USAID BEST, February 2021

JFDA and RACA signed an agreement in 2021 to pilot a new “point of contact” program to improve food safety and inspection standards at hotels and tourist restaurants in Jordan.

BEST worked with the JFDA to strengthen safe food handling procedures at Jordan’s restaurants and hotels by improving the inspection process in line with the new guidelines developed. BEST supported the JFDA to adopt a new process whereby all tourism food and beverage businesses will have at least one staff representative who is certified in safe food handling and hygiene standards to be the point of coordination for JFDA inspections and monitor and maintain standards between inspections. BEST sought out organizations that can conduct safe food handling and hygiene auditing, reporting, and certification for Jordan’s restaurants and hotels. RACA was selected to be the pilot for certifying safe food handling standards training, and BEST linked them with the US National Restaurant Association (NRA) to become an accredited ServSafe Training and Certification agency, which adds international recognition to the certification. RACA was accredited in February 2021 by the NRA to certify industry organizations to provide safe food handling

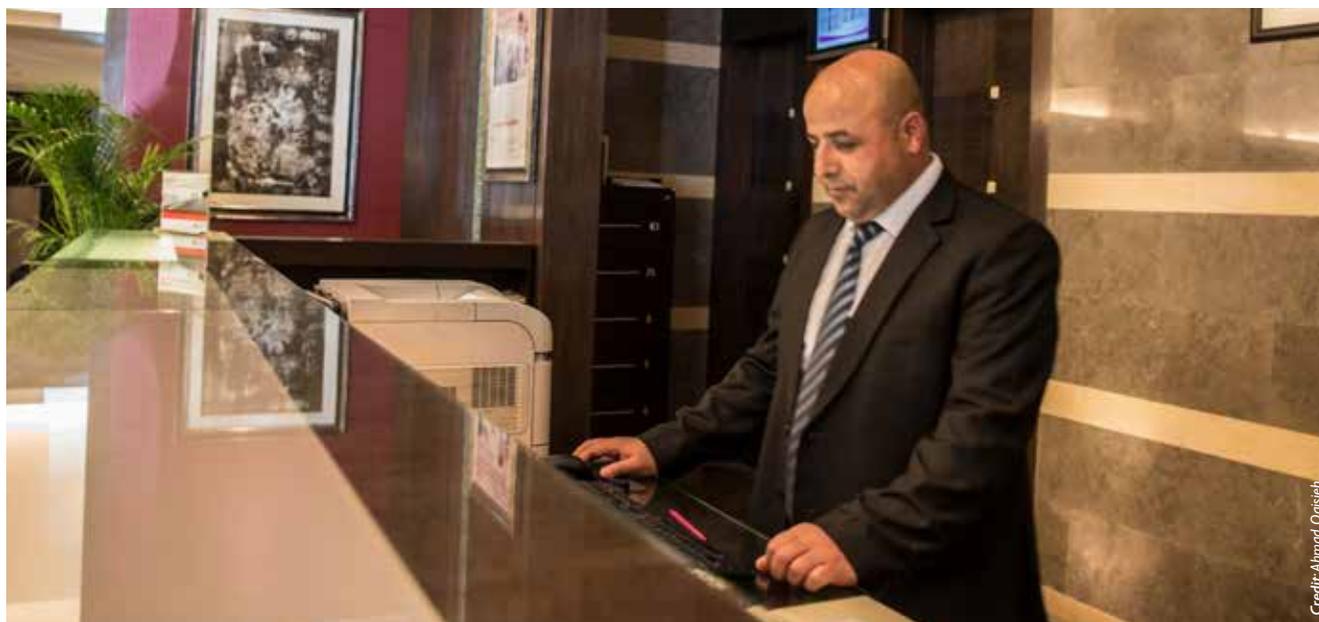
standards training. JFDA accredited RACA to offer food safety and inspection guidelines training for hospitality sector “points of contact.” RACA piloted the program and trained 25 participants from hotels and restaurants as points of contact. RACA and JFDA jointly endorsed and presented certificates of completion to the first batch of 22 individuals who successfully completed the program in May 2021. RACA will continue to offer the course as a fee-based program for hotel points of contact across Jordan. The certification program can be replicated at other institutions in Jordan. By project-end, JFDA was equipped to launch the point of contact program as a mandatory requirement for all tourist restaurants and hotels. This will provide for a more efficient and effective process to ensure that service standards meet high guest expectations and are unified across all of Jordan’s hospitality outlets.

SUPPORT JHA TO IMPLEMENT A TOURISM SAFE AND SECURE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR TOURIST ACCOMMODATION THROUGH JHA

BEST worked with MoTA's Directorate of Classification and Quality Assurance to review the classification and definition of tourism accommodation establishments. This will impact the hotels bylaws and guest house regulations and standards published in 2019 with BEST support. As part of the review, existing lodge and ecolodge standards will be combined into one category and the accommodation sector will be divided into two main types: hotels (apartments, camps, ecolodges, and resorts) and guest houses (agritourism, bed and breakfasts, homestays, independent homes, and youth hostels). In September 2020, BEST developed a protocol system called "Tourism Commitment to Safety Standards" and proposed it to the JHA as an option that can be incorporated into the association's guidelines for hotels. The system includes self-assessment, commitment to training, and implementation. MoTA and the ASEZA were considering adopting the system, which will give customers assurances that participating hotels and

restaurants are committing to all guidelines for preventing the spread of the coronavirus. By early 2021, this activity had been halted at this milestone due to circumstances at MoTA. However, ASEZA did introduce a "Tourism Commitment to Safety Standards (COVID-19)" manual. In addition, BEST worked with JHA to include a module on Commitment to Health and Safety Standards into the Pathways Level 4 program for Middle Managers.

JHA published a guidebook for the operation of hotels in the Kingdom amid the pandemic, which was developed with BEST technical support. The guidebook incorporates the guidelines issued by the ministries of health, tourism and antiquities, and environment, in addition to practices determined by the World Tourism Organization, WHO, and international hotel management companies. The guidebook has been distributed to 500 tourism accommodation establishments that are JHA members.



STRENGTHEN HOTEL AND RESTAURANT MIDDLE MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE THE TOURISM EXPERIENCE UNDER THE NEW COVID-19 GUIDELINES

The JHA, in partnership with BEST, offered scholarships for a self-learning online program for hotels in Jordan. Fifty-five middle managers and supervisors, representing 23 hotels in Petra, Dead Sea, Aqaba, and Amman, and a range of hotel professions, completed the Pathways to Professionalism Operation Management Program Level 4, completing courses in guest service and relations, service that sells, teamwork, management, COVID-19 protocols, and leadership styles. Fourteen percent were women, a higher proportion than the 9 percent women

employed overall in tourism in Jordan. The participants received Level 4 certification, which is endorsed by the JHA, International Hotel and Restaurant Association, and MoTA. The addition of the Pathways to Level 4 program is the first major expansion to Pathways since the handover from USAID BEST to JHA in 2019. The association is on track to run a second iteration of the program after the BEST project has concluded in May 2021.



SUPPORT SURVIVAL,
RECOVERY, AND
DEVELOPMENT OF
JORDAN'S TOURISM
SECTOR AND ASSETS

SUPPORT SALT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE AS-SALT AS JORDAN'S FIRST "STORYTOWN"

Marketing Jordan's First "Storytown"



A USAID BEST trainer in a one-on-one communications and media training session with Khaldoun Khreisat, SDC General Manager.

By the end of the core USAID BEST project, in March 2020, the Salt Development Corporation (SDC) was about to launch As-Salt as Jordan's first "Storytown" (a program created by MoTA and USAID BEST to develop secondary tourism sites around the country into distinctive destinations) with USAID support; this was to be the start of an intensive marketing campaign to increase awareness of the destination and attract new visitors to the city. However, these plans were halted as a result of the pandemic. With the start of the BEST extension, the project supported the SDC and the community of As-Salt to put in place the needed measures to target and attract domestic visitors, while taking into consideration the changing nationwide government measures and restrictions that were being imposed.

BEST and SDC developed a marketing action plan that was implemented by SDC. BEST also developed a social media training program for SDC and As-Salt beneficiaries and delivered general training to 27 SDC staff and local service providers, followed by one-on-one training sessions for experience providers. BEST provided ongoing marketing and social media technical support to SDC and the experience providers to strengthen their online marketing capacity to promote As-Salt and its tourism offerings.

In July 2020, SDC and BEST developed and promoted three tourism packages to attract visitors to As-Salt and encourage domestic tourists to explore the city as Jordan's first Storytown. While demand for the packages was low, given the summer heatwaves and pandemic situation, this activity helped SDC to better understand the demands of their target market and adjust their marketing efforts based on the results while learning how

to cope with the "new normal" following the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this, SDC focused marketing efforts on creating awareness of As-Salt as a destination and of the Storytown brand for domestic travelers to "keep in mind" once they are ready to travel.

Throughout 2020 and into 2021, BEST supported SDC to run online marketing campaigns on Visit As-Salt channels to introduce As-Salt as Jordan's first Storytown and spread awareness of the city and its brand. The campaigns succeeded in increasing engagement, reach, and followership from the target domestic audiences. To enrich content on As-Salt and its unique offerings, BEST developed four short videos in coordination with SDC and local service providers. The videos showcase the unique heritage of As-Salt and the different experiences the city has to offer. SDC began publishing the videos on their social media channels in March 2021. BEST also provided SDC staff with media and communications training to develop their capacity to promote As-Salt and instill the skills to establish relations with local media to communicate their messages about As-Salt as a destination. The training enabled SDC to promote the city and create public awareness of the experiences and services that As-Salt has to offer with the ultimate purpose of increasing visitation. Between December 2020 and April 2021, BEST provided practical training for SDC in digital content planning and developing materials for use online. This helped SDC promote As-Salt through its social media channels. In addition, SDC and BEST organized a media tour of downtown As-Salt in August 2020. Representatives from Jordan TV, Al-Mamlaka TV, Al-Rai, and Addustour newspapers took part and, with BEST support, learned about the work to transform the visitor experience in

the city. They also heard how businesses are coping with COVID-19 measures and developing packages for domestic tourism. The tour generated extensive media coverage on local media channels, including social media pages.

To enhance marketing and sales operations, BEST revised SDC's SOPs for tourism marketing, sales, and operations to reflect the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and provided on-the-job training to SDC on how to apply the revised SOPs. The training covered operational aspects, such as pre- and post-sales, reservations, cancellations, and finance operations. This ensured the SOPs become an integral part SDC's daily activities.

BEST connected SDC with Souq Fann, an online regional crafts market, which began selling products from the As-Salt Gifts & Crafts Shop via its online channels for artisan crafts. This came at a time when local producers were facing challenges in marketing and selling their products due to COVID-19 restrictions. Facilitating an online presence helped SDC to promote products by producers from As-Salt and gain market exposure to increase sales. The listing began in March 2021, and 16 items by five As-

Salt brand shop producers were sold in April 2021 via the platform, which was a promising start.

While tourists have been slow to return, As-Salt is becoming a desirable filming location for international productions, which have been drawn to its quaint spaces and heritage buildings. Three of the entities that BEST supported, including interior design, furnishings, and food and beverage services, were used as the location for filming of various media productions in the past year. Two project grantees, Beit Aziz and Aktham's Coffeehouse, served as filming locations for an Egyptian TV series that aired during Ramadan 2021. The series features some of Egypt's most prominent actors and is anticipated to be amongst the most watched Ramadan series in Arab countries this year. As-Salt's increasing popularity as a filming location will help promote the city and its unique offerings, which may increase visitation as a result of the exposure. This will also contribute to the national direction of promoting Jordan as a preferred destination for film-based tourism.

Training

To support SDC to create awareness among As-Salt service providers of how to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, BEST conducted an awareness session in August 2020 on COVID-19 health, safety, and personal hygiene standards for work readiness. The session targeted BEST beneficiaries and other service providers in As-Salt and was based on the training course developed by the National Sector Skills Council for Hospitality and Tourism in partnership with the MoTA. Fifteen guides, service providers, and gift shop employees in As-Salt took part and successfully completed a post-training online exam. They are now aware of and able to implement the government-mandated protocols for receiving visitors. The two As-Salt Gifts & Crafts Shop staff were trained on COVID-19 protocols and on using visual display to enhance the salability of products.

BEST provided social media training and planning support to SDC service providers as part of efforts to promote the city. This included general social media training and customized one-on-one training for 16 SDC staff and tourism business providers. Both SDC and business owners reported greater interest in As-Salt and its offerings, and some reported an increase in visitors. For example, Aktham's Coffeehouse and Iskandarani Restaurant attracted a significant number of visitors as a result of their social media marketing, which enabled them to sustain the businesses throughout the pandemic period (within government restrictions).



Two brothers, Aktham and Abdullah Arabiyat, set up a coffeehouse in As-Salt with USAID BEST support. Throughout the year, USAID BEST provided them with extensive training to promote their coffeehouse and the city of As-Salt as Jordan's first Storytown.

Visitor Center

In August 2020, As-Salt Municipality requested BEST support in developing operational guidelines to ensure smooth operation of the new As-Salt Visitor Center, as well as support for interior design and application of city branding. BEST submitted a design for integrating the city brand within the newly established visitor center to As-Salt Municipality. The design incorporates optimal visitor flow, interior design elements, and indoor and outdoor seating, and includes detailed specifications for design production. BEST also developed content and designs for maintaining physical distancing at and around the center for the municipality to adopt. Work on the Visitor Center

was halted due to a government decision in early 2021 to dissolve local and municipality councils and is pending the appointment of a new mayor.

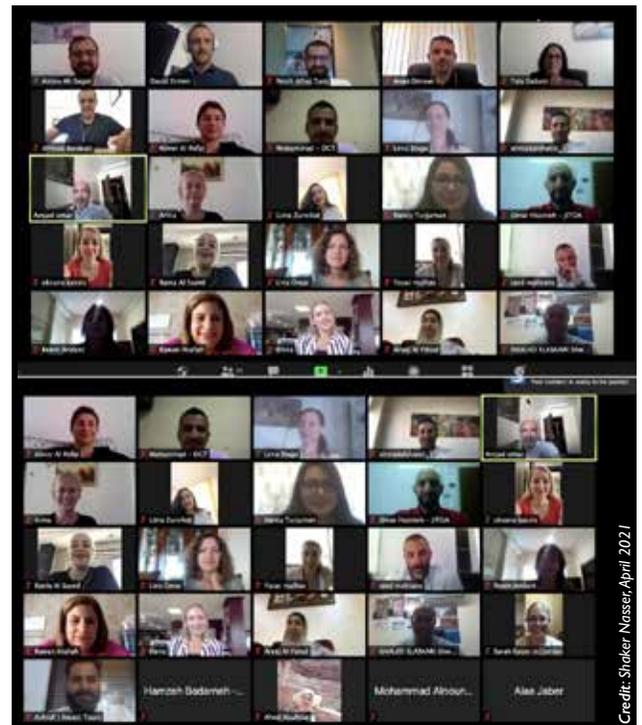
BEST facilitated an MoU, developed by the three parties, to coordinate operation of the Visitor Center for the first year, which will be followed by an agreement to regulate the relationship, roles, and responsibilities based on lessons learned from the first year. The MoU will be the reference for collaboration between the three entities to ensure successful operation of the Visitor Center.

RAISE TOURISM INDUSTRY STANDARDS, BUILD EMPLOYEE CAPACITY, AND DEVELOP PACKAGES FOR DOMESTIC TOURISM

Preparing Inbound Tour Operators for the Return of Tourists

BEST and JTOA signed an agreement to provide professional development training for JTOA members and affiliates to prepare them for the return of tourism. BEST provided three training modules in total. In November 2020, BEST provided training on tourism service experience management to enable local tour operators to make the preparations necessary to keep them engaged in the market once tourists return; 55 participants who represented 23 local tour operators were trained on topics such as the importance of customer experience management, how the COVID-19 crisis has affected customers and businesses expectations, using experience mapping to address service gaps, designing and delivering a great customer experience in Jordan, and more. In March 2021, BEST implemented a second training module on the Business to Business (B2B) Customer Journey to build the capacity of tour operators as key sector players and help them overcome and recover from the COVID-19 crisis and build more resilience for the future. It gave participants an understanding of the challenges of managing B2B customer journeys and provided them with tools to better manage these relationships. In April 2021, BEST and JTOA offered a module on managing guest communications and interactions to enhance their standard of service and enable them to overcome the current challenges and recover faster when tourism picks up.

In November 2020, BEST supported JTOA's communications activities by covering the annual hosting and domain costs for its website, which was developed three years ago through BEST support. JTOA has made greater use of its website in recent months due to the pandemic; the association is using its site to share research and data relevant to the sector regularly and implement webinars. The site has been a useful resource for many travel agents/operators.



Participants in one of the digital training workshops that JTOA, supported by USAID BEST, offered to its member tour operators. The trainings helped build the capacity of tour operators and ensure they are ready to offer the best customer experience to visitors.



Credit: Reem Katami, September 2020

Salt Development Corporation staff and local guides take part in Wilderbess First Aid training.

Supporting Adventure Tourism

BEST supported the Jordan Trail Association (JTA) to develop domestic tourism packages to boost visitors along the trail given the drop in hikers due to the pandemic. The packages offer new experiences that can be marketed and promoted in collaboration with tour operators. They target a diverse audience with different interests. JTA launched these in May 2021 to attract domestic visitors and hopefully bring some much-needed revenue to the local economies supported by the trail.

Also, through BEST support, the JTA launched an “Adopt a Trail” gateway on their website to fundraise by asking corporations, entities, and individuals to sponsor maintenance of physical infrastructure along the Jordan Trail. Individuals can support three out of the eight regions on the trail, while adoption packages for the remaining regions are offered to corporations. The trail adoption program was successful in raising funds to complete waymarking for two northern sections of the trail, with further commitments forthcoming.

Building Sector Capacity

BEST conducted SOLO-certified training sessions on Wilderness First Aid and COVID-19 prevention guidelines as part of its efforts to elevate the standards and build the capacity of sector employees and the tourism industry. SOLO is one of the most respected wilderness medical schools in the United States. The training was delivered to 38 participants, 16 of whom were women, from BookAgri, which offers agritourism experiences in Jordan, Jordan Ranger, and SDC’s local escorts and guides from Jerash, As-Salt, Zarqa, Amman, and Irbid. The training built their capacity to deal with injuries while in the wilderness and provide immediate support to the injured during hikes and outdoor activities, and raised awareness on health guidelines associated with COVID-19 prevention based on recommendations by the Adventure Travel Trade Association. The certification will reassure tourists of the measures the service providers are taking to deliver a safe adventure tourism experience considering the COVID-19 situation. Moreover, enhancing safety and service standards of local escorts will strengthen their reliability and support the sector to enhance the adventure tourism experiences offered.

BEST supported the Jordan Ranger Camp to promote its offerings through targeted online marketing campaigns. The campaign — and analysis of its results — helped Jordan Ranger Camp better understand their target market and demand to enable them to align their marketing efforts with the market and redevelop packages to suit the needs and expectations of domestic tourists post-COVID-19, leading to increased bookings. The campaign resulted in 100 percent occupancy at the camp over five consecutive weekends in March and April 2021, and a high mid-week occupancy rate.

As COVID-19 prevention is a main concern for tourists, BEST supported Bookagri to develop an awareness campaign on COVID-19 safety protocols and measures for its rural tourism and experiences. The campaign materials present the protocols for tour operators, community-based tour managers, local tour guides and escorts, community-based food and beverage providers, local communities, and tourists during visits and tours. Clear presentation of the COVID-19 prevention protocols gives Bookagri greater credibility in running its experiences safely and reassures tourists, participating communities, and guides that their wellbeing is prioritized.

DEVELOP SAFETY AND SANITATION STANDARDS (PER COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS) ALONG THE JORDAN TRAIL

To help maintain the Jordan Trail, one of the country's key adventure products, BEST supported the JTA to put in place needed COVID-19 prevention measures, enhance the capacity of service providers along the trail, fundraise for trail maintenance, and attract hikers. BEST and JTA signed an agreement to this effect in August 2020. BEST supported JTA to carry out multiple training sessions to enhance service standards along the trail. Service providers were trained in safe food handling and hygiene, hospitality, and housekeeping, in addition to COVID-19 prevention guidelines, to ensure service standards and experiences along the trail to meet visitor expectations. In total, 21 participants from homestays and camps along the Jordan Trail were trained.

Furthermore, licensed tour guides who wanted to develop their outdoor and trail guiding skills received theoretical and practical training. Participants learned to read topographic maps, compass navigation, leave-no-trace hiking, and World Trail Network COVID-19 prevention guidelines. A total of 31 guides successfully completed the course and were accredited by JTA to guide on the Jordan Trail. They were added to the list of guides on the Jordan Trail website.



“Bookings at Ranger Camp reached premium stages as a result of the marketing plan implemented by the USAID BEST team. We got a lot of reservations and new customers that we were not expecting to reach. We achieved 100% occupancy for five consecutive weeks, and had to turn people away. Bookings by foreigners residing in Jordan increased by 400% and we received more than 350 local visitors.” April 2021

Thair Ayyash
Owner of Jordan Ranger Camp



Jordan Trail Association provided training in map reading to trail guides to build their capacity and enhance the Jordan Trail hiking experience.

Credit: Jordan Trail Association, August 2020



ENHANCE THE BAPTISM SITE EXPERIENCE AS A KEY COMPONENT OF JORDAN'S FAITH TOURISM OFFERING

The management of the Baptism Site Commission (BSC) approached USAID and requested support to improve services and amenities at the site to enhance the visitor/pilgrim experience. In mid-2020, BEST assessed the Baptism Site's offerings, visitor experience, and levels of services to identify collaboration priorities, including general site and services enhancement, improvement of visitor experience, supporting the operational management organization framework and structure, and developing the training and upskilling of the tour guides. Following the assessment, BEST developed five documents for the Baptism Site Management to adopt:

1. Visitor Services, Assessment, and SOPs
2. Training and Upskilling Tour Guides ("local" guides and licensed faith tourism guides)
3. Tour Guiding Narrative and Facts on Baptism Site
4. Tour Guide Code of Ethics and Practices
5. Health and Safety Guidelines (COVID-19 safe practice guidelines/standards)

BEST then supported the BSC to revise and upgrade the Baptism Site operational management organization framework, structure, process, and procedures. This work entailed evaluating the current organization and management structure, analyzing functions and competencies of all management positions, preparing critical path guidelines for a new strategic direction and future positioning and operation of the site, and preparing a revised organizational and management structure in line with the new positioning. These will help ensure a sustainable management structure for the future development of the site as a leading tourism destination and faith tourism experience. BEST drafted SOPs based on an assessment of services and amenities at the Baptism Site and trained managers, team leaders, supervisors, and local tour guides on development

and implementation of SOPs. The new SOPs describe how environment, safety, and guest courtesy standards are to be implemented and will ensure that visitors to the Baptism Site have a pleasant, comfortable, and safe experience. The SOPs service current operations but must be updated once construction work at the Baptism Site concludes and new and renovated facilities become available. BEST also supported the development of new health and safety guidelines for the Baptism Site in consultation with government bodies and Baptism Site management and aligned with Ministry of Health regulation, WHO, and the World Tourism Organization. BEST trained the Baptism Site management, staff, and tour guides to employ the new guidelines and procedures, adapt and enhance health and hygiene standards, adopt best practices for COVID-19 prevention, and implement monitoring and support systems. This will ensure the site is operated in accordance with best practice health and safety guidelines.

In February 2021, the BSC, with BEST support, awarded certificates of completion to Baptism Site management, supervisors, and tour guides for successfully completing three training programs. The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, among other stakeholder dignitaries, attended the ceremony. The training helped strengthen employee skills and knowledge, improved team motivation, ensured COVID-19 protocols are followed, and will help improve the services provided to visitors.

BEST and the BSC also developed a training program for faith-specialized tour guides to enhance the knowledge and skills of licensed guides, which will improve the visitor experience at the Baptism Site. The training program includes modules on guiding techniques, guest courtesy, the Tour Guide Code of Ethics, handling complaints, and storytelling. BEST conducted the training in cooperation with the Jordan Tour Guide Association and JTOA for 58 licensed tour guides and 11 site guides.



“ With the help of USAID BEST, we now have the road maps for improving key heritage and religious sites in Jordan, enhancing the visitor journey through them, and linking them with nearby attractions to create a holistic experience. We worked on Makawir, Um Ar-Rasas and Shobak. These sites are really significant in terms of religious history; they offer the visitor a fascinating insight into the origins and development of Christianity, and a bit of Crusader history. For Makawir the implementation process is already underway with the goal of having a significant part of the experience ready by the end of 2021. ”

H.E. Dr. Emad Hijazeen

Secretary General for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

UPDATE SITE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES TO IMPROVE EXPERIENCES AT HERITAGE AND BIBLICAL SITES

BEST worked with the MoTA to revise and update the SOPs and Guidelines Manual for cultural heritage sites to incorporate new health and safety measures addressing COVID-19 protocols and guidelines. BEST had developed the manual under the main project. The updates address health and safety measures needed following the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on sanitation and cleaning measures for physical spaces and artefacts, and access and circulation protocols to be followed at sites. They also address the establishment of a proper Preparedness and Emergency Plans and formation of a COVID-19 crisis team to operate throughout the period of the declared state of emergency. BEST also supported MoTA in its urban planning efforts, conducted technical assessments, and provided recommendations for enhancing the visitor experience and services at a number of sites. This included technical support to MoTA to enhance the tourism experience at heritage and religious sites in and around Shobak Castle, Aqaba Fort, Mukawir, and Um Ar-Rasas. Following a series of site assessment visits and stakeholder meetings in collaboration with MoTA and DoA technical teams, Makawir and Shobak Castle were identified as the priority sites.

In March 2021, BEST submitted the visitor journey and site improvement plan for Mukawir to MoTA. The plan provides a road map for upgrading the tourism offering and visitor experience at Mukawir and linking it to other attractions in the vicinity. BEST engaged a multi-disciplinary team of local and international experts in

conservation planning and tourism management, among other topics, to develop the plan. The team assessed the current conditions and proposed administrative measures and physical improvements through immediate-, short-, and long-term site interventions needed for a visitor-friendly experience. The plan includes conceptual and detailed drawings that MoTA and DoA can use during the execution phase.

BEST also worked with a multi-disciplinary team of local and international experts to deliver a plan to enhance the Al Shobak visitor experience. The plan focused on interventions required to keep the site open to visitors until a holistic site restoration plan is in place and implemented. BEST proposed expanding the visitor route, which will include additional site features/monuments. This would be introduced in phases. BEST also proposed site work and interventions needed to maintain an enriched experience and ensure visitor safety. BEST submitted the plan to MoTA and the DoA in May 2021.

For Karak, BEST developed a comprehensive report with recommendations to consider once MoTA decides to move forward with the project. The report recommends that the ministry develop the entire tourism product in Karak, not only the Visitor Center. In May 2021, BEST submitted a general tourism roadmap for preparation and presentation of the Um Ar-Rasas World Heritage Site. BEST also reviewed DoA restoration work at Aqaba Castle and proposed immediate stabilization work and follow-on site conservation works to MoTA.



SUPPORT TO
RE-ENGAGE
WITH KEY
SOURCE
MARKETS



RE-ENGAGING THE MARKET IN COVID-19 RECOVERY PHASE TO SHOWCASE JORDAN AS A SAFE AND VIABLE DESTINATION

BEST and JTB discussed project support to help destination management organizations re-engage with target markets. BEST reached out to international marketing experts to suggest how to approach this and received a proposal to implement a three-phase model for destinations to re-engage with key source markets. BEST contracted these experts as consultants for this activity, and work began in December 2020. They began with research to evaluate Jordan’s vulnerabilities for recovery and potential marketing opportunities and held structured focus groups in January 2021 with key tourism stakeholders. The feedback and observations from these focus groups were incorporated into the revised JTB marketing strategy and the strategy provided recommendations on the key markets and product niches that should be targeted as tourism and visitor arrivals begin to rebound.

JTB 2020 – 2021 MARKETING STRATEGY UPDATED TO ADDRESS COVID-19 RESPONSE

BEST updated the JTB marketing strategy in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. BEST and the JTB interviewed several stakeholders and experts to understand source markets, marketing channels, and target audiences. BEST spoke with JHA, JRA, ASEZA, JTOA, PDTRA, JTB, and representatives of the faith, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions), adventure, medical and wellness, and community development segments of the tourism sector to learn their perception of what markets and segments are likely to be the first to return visitors to Jordan, ascertain their readiness to receive tourists, and understand the needs of the sectors. BEST conducted a “digital audit” in parallel to set a baseline of Jordan’s position in the marketplace and scenario planning (best, worst, most expected) to help determine what segments and markets have the most promise for attracting tourism back to Jordan. The input fed into the revised JTB marketing strategy that was delivered in April 2021. The strategy provides Jordan with an action plan for JTB to reengage with markets (including new markets) based on tactical engagement.

IMPROVED TOUR OPERATOR CAPACITY FOR DIGITAL MARKETING AND OUTREACH TO ENSURE JORDAN IS A VIABLE TOURISM OPTION

BEST supported JTOA to host a series of capacity-building events for their members to enhance customer service and standards to enable faster recovery when tourism picks up, including guest communications and B2B customer journey management. This has been detailed in a previous section.

BEST also helped Jordan Tourism Board North America (JTBNA) to re-engage with trade by helping them to upgrade their Jordan Travel Agent Academy. BEST funded the continued operation of the platform and worked with JTBNA to upgrade the general information on Jordan as well as update the Christian faith tourism module. JTBNA reported that 74 travel agents graduated. The courses focused on general information about Jordan, as well as faith tourism and adventure tourism.



SUPPORT DOMESTIC
INVESTMENT FOR
COVID-19 RECOVERY

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND BENEFICIARIES ASSESSED TO DETERMINE COVID-19 ACCESS TO FINANCE NEEDS

In August 2020, BEST carried out a rapid assessment of financial institutions and beneficiaries to identify the most crucial credit needs of tourism businesses and professions, the challenges they are facing in accessing finance, ways to improve access to the government's soft loans program, and what technical support is most needed by tourism businesses for survival and recovery. BEST interviewed finance and tourism stakeholders and obtained input from 751 tourism businesses and professionals through an online survey. Based on this data collection, BEST produced a "Tourism SME [Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise] Finance Needs for Business Survival and Recovery Post COVID-19 Assessment Report" for the MoTA, tourism stakeholders, and industry representatives, including tourism business associations, partner banks, CBJ and the Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation (JLGC). The assessment report equipped tourism business associations with the data to lobby the government for their urgent needs for business survival and recovery. It also provided MoTA with objective content that was integrated into the ministry's recovery plan and informed their decision-making.

INCREASE SME ACCESS TO SPECIALIZED LENDING INSTRUMENTS TO RESPOND TO A LACK OF FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES WORSENER BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBJ, in coordination with the government, took several actions to afford more liquidity to businesses, including tourism. This included launching a new JD 500 million "COVID-19 recovery" finance program targeting professions and SMEs unable to meet key financial commitments, reducing the financing requirements for their subsidized loan program for all sectors, and launching a JD 3 million new lending program for tour guides and artisans. According to the CBJ, JD 35.5 million in lending was approved from their COVID-19 recovery program between April and August 2020 for 353 tourism enterprises. This number accounts for 8.3 percent of total approved lending from the recovery program. Meanwhile, JD 24.8 million was approved from their subsidized loan program for all sectors between March and August 2020 for 30 tourism enterprises. This number accounts for 13.1 percent of all approved lending from the subsidized loan program.

In 2019, BEST partnered with Microfund for Women (MFW) and SPARK to provide business planning and other related skills training to tourism SMEs and selected four of them to access interest-free financing from MFW, in partnership with the SDC. Selected entrepreneurs were asked to pitch their business ideas in March 2020. However, this deadline was postponed to July 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The winners were announced in July 2020 and included two former BEST-grantees: Beit Aziz received a loan of JD 9,000 and Balqees Henna received a loan of JD 3,000. Balqees was able to use the proceeds to expand her art workshop. Beit Aziz has suffered from a significant drop in visitors, and was unable to implement the new activities they had planned; however, the funds helped sustain the business and its employees.

SUPPORT THE JORDAN INVESTMENT COMMISSION TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

The Jordan Investment Commission (JIC) requested BEST support to develop a promotional video to raise the profile of Jordan's tourism sector to attract new investments and help prepare the tourism sector for a post-pandemic return to growth. BEST developed the video in coordination with JIC, JTB, and MoTA. The video was submitted to JIC in March 2021. JIC will use the video to communicate a positive message about the contribution of tourism to Jordan's economy, highlight their incentives and facilitation services, and promote their tourism investment opportunities.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

UNIFIED CAMP CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS

Over 2018 and 2019, the number of campsites that offer tourist accommodation doubled, particularly within and surrounding the Wadi Rum Protected Area (WRPA). At least half of these campsites are unlicensed and unregulated by the authorities. In November 2020, BEST convened a Technical Committee, with representation from MoTA, ASEZA/WRPA, PDTRA, and RSCN, to review and unify campsite standards across the country to address this issue. The committee developed new unified campsite standards, which outline the process for obtaining a campsite license, prerequisite criteria, and the minimum international standards to be met for security, safety, hygiene, and comfort. The standards include specific regulations for PDTRA and ASEZA/WRPA campsites. In May 2021, the National Tourism Committee approved the unified campsite standards. They will be adopted as regulations for campsites across Jordan, including the regional authorities of ASEZA, PDTRA, and WRPA. The standards will ensure that all camps meet minimum international campsite standards (security, safety, hygiene, and comfort) for better guest satisfaction. The standards will also enable authorities to enforce compliance with the minimum international standards for licensing and operation of campsites.

SUPPORT TO HABIBI VALTIBERINA ASSOCIATION (HVA) TO BUILD ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY TO OVERSEE THEIR GRANT

BEST provided technical and operational support to the HVA to implement its USAID grant to develop a cheese-making facility in Ader, Karak, which employs women from vulnerable communities. BEST supported HVA to obtain the necessary documents from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Customs Department, and the Ministry of Transport to procure a new vehicle and assisted in the selection of suitable insurance. The vehicle was delivered in July 2020. With guidance from BEST, HVA contracted technical support to advise on grant administration. BEST also advised the association on USAID Branding and Marking requirements and revised milestone budgets were approved. HVA completed packaging and promotion collaterals, a chief of party was assigned, and the System for Award Management registration was transferred to HVA. Training on point-of-sale systems and cost control was completed in December 2020. The facility was officially opened in March 2021.

SUPPORT GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN TO ESTABLISH A CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR ADVENTURE TOUR GUIDES TO RESPOND TO SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH CONCERNS, INCLUDING COVID-19 GUIDELINES

BEST, MoTA, and JITOA discussed the possibility of securing Jordanian tour guide licensing for graduates of the Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme's (ENSA) training program. ENSA is a French adventure tourism institution specializing in adventure guide training. The program in Jordan was funded by the European Union (specifically, France) and trained 40 qualified adventure tour guides at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature Training Academy in Ajloun. BEST proposed to align the ENSA program with the Jordan Tour Guide Licensing Program (under MoTA) so that the guides trained through the ENSA program could receive ministry certification. This activity was delayed given the various operational and legal issues pertaining to certification of the program that need to be addressed by MoTA. BEST proposed several approaches to MoTA to engage in resolving the challenges associated with licensing the guides as "adventure tour guides." By project-end, MoTA had declared that the process of licensing "adventure tour guides" is on hold until the necessary bylaws are modified to allow for licensing of adventure tour guides.

NEW TOURISM RESEARCH
CENTER ESTABLISHED IN PETRA
FOR IMPROVED PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT

**RESEARCH
CENTER
TO SHARE
AND TRACK
VALUABLE DATA
IN PETRA**

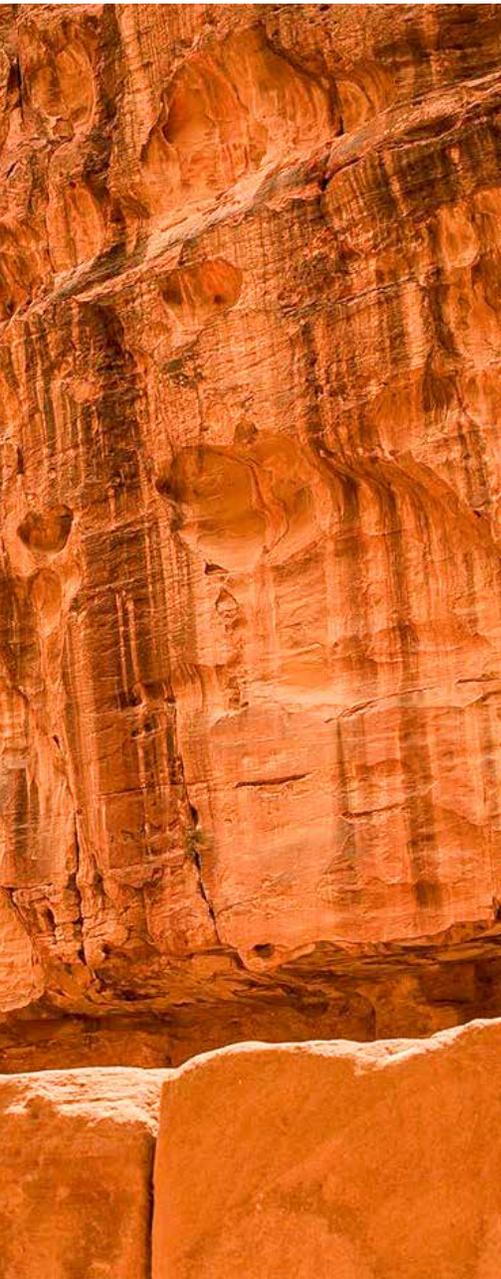
SUCCESS STORY



Photo credit: Ahmad Qaisieh

The ancient Nabatean capital of Petra is Jordan's premier archaeological and tourism site.

“Whatever we do at the level of Petra will be a reflection on the level of Jordan in general, because almost 70% of the tourists who come to Jordan visit Petra.”



Travel and tourism play an important role in Jordan's economy; in 2019 tourism contributed almost 6.8% percent of the country's GDP and employed more than 50,000 people. Following the global pandemic, tourism recovery is vital to help boost economic growth, drive employment, and generate income. Regular and accurate data is vital to planning and decision-making for tourism development. This issue is especially important for the Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority (PDTRA), an autonomous body responsible for managing the Petra tourism region. The ancient Nabatean city of Petra is Jordan's premier visitor attraction, drawing in 1.13 million visitors in 2019. Despite this value, the authority has insufficient data and limited access to research and insights regarding the tourism sector in Petra, which impedes its ability to make informed decisions when planning, marketing, promotion, monitoring, and policy making. To address this, USAID BEST helped the PDTRA to establish an 'Archaeological Documentation and Tourism Research Center' at the Petra Archaeological Park.

"The idea of the center came around because we found the information, research, studies and data we possess are dispersed and not categorized, with no way to use or reference it by the PDTRA, Jordan or outside parties," said Ismaiel Abuamoud, Commissioner of Petra Archaeological Park and tourism at the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority.

A clear impetus existed to develop a dedicated unit to manage and generate data, consumer behavior and satisfaction research and studies related to the tourism sector in Petra faster, more accurately, and to make such information them more readily available. USAID BEST developed organization charts and operational plans that were adopted for use and assessed the staff and IT needs of the new center to help introduce effective document management systems for archeology archives and tourism statistics.

"Petra is the tourism compass in Jordan and attracts tourists from all over the world," said Ismaiel. "Whatever we do at the level of Petra will be a reflection on the level of Jordan in general, because almost 70% of the tourists who come to Jordan visit Petra. Our hope is that the center offers data and information on Petra as an archaeological reserve, and possibly the whole of the south of Jordan in the future."

Through the center, PDTRA collects data on visitor demographics, visitor satisfaction, track tourism establishments in the region, occupancy rates and availabilities, marketing data, purchasing data, consumer demand data, pre-visit surveys, post-visit surveys, and more. The data will be made more accessible to stakeholders. This information can aid decision-making among businesses and policymakers and help enhance competitiveness by identifying opportunities for improvement in Petra. Also, existing archaeological research and other data that is stored in hard copy will be digitized and made available for academic and scientific reference.

USAID SUPPORTS THE
JORDAN TRAIL ASSOCIATION
TO RECOVER FROM THE
PANDEMIC

**COVID-19
PREVENTION
MEASURES
INTRODUCED
ALONG THE
TRAIL, SERVICES,
GUIDING
IMPROVED**

SUCCESS STORY

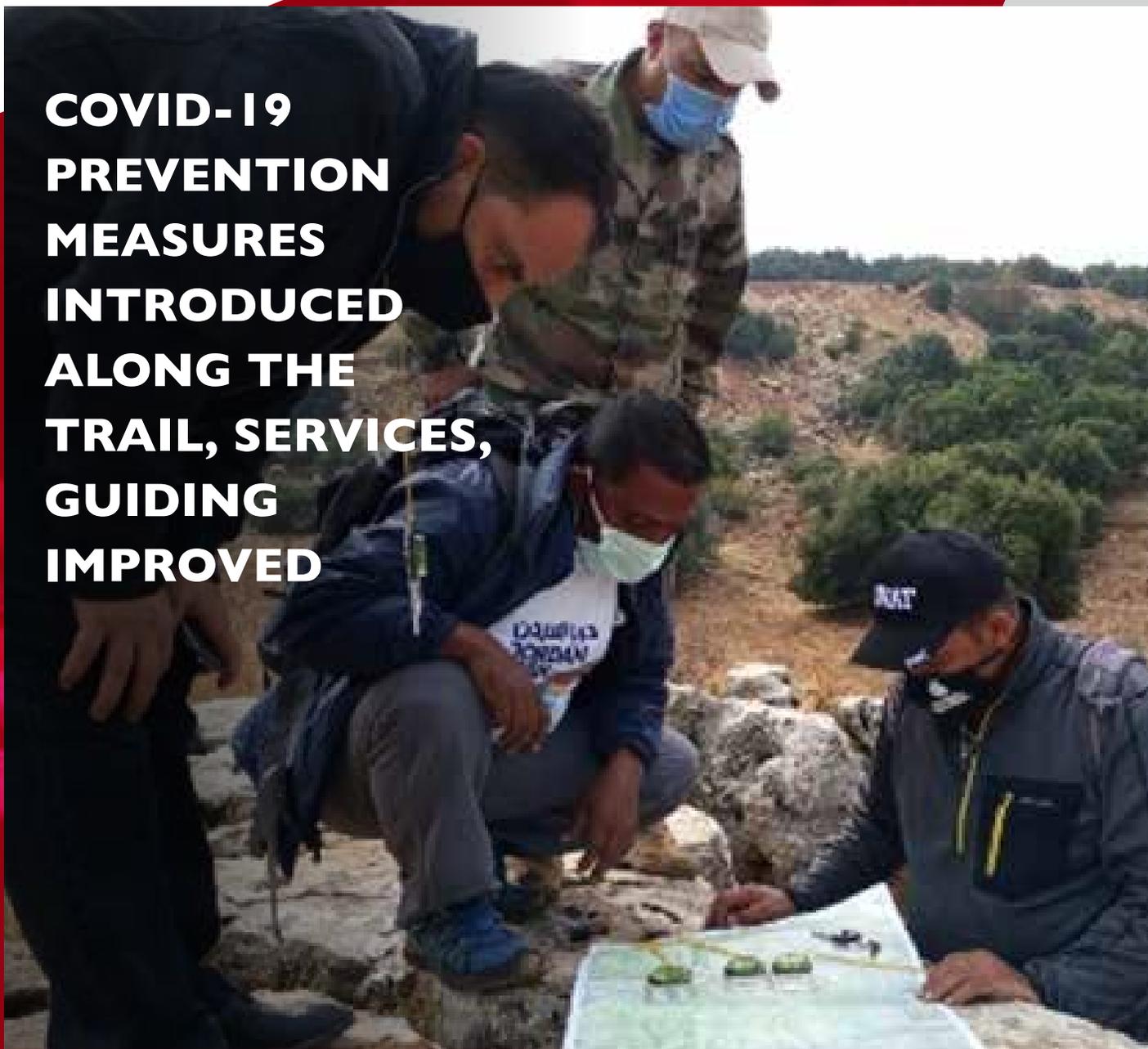


Photo credit: Jordan Trail Association, November 2020

Local guides read a map during a practical training exercise along the trail.

“The Jordan Trail is an area that was not previously covered much, and it opens up a new field of work for guides and local communities.”

Ahmad Issa, veteran Jordanian tour guide.

The 650-kilometer Jordan Trail had been growing in popularity with adventure travelers and attracting an increasing number of foreign hikers, until global travel restrictions were imposed in early 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The trail passes through more than 50 local villages and had created jobs for more than 500 Jordanians, including guides and service providers in local communities across the country.

To recover from the loss of tourism and prepare for the return of visitors, the USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism (BEST) Project supported the Jordan Trail Association (JTA), which manages the trail, to put in place needed COVID-19 prevention measures, enhance the capacity of service providers and guides, fundraise for trail maintenance, and attract the domestic market.

Through USAID BEST support, JTA trained 21 trail service providers in safe food handling and hygiene, hospitality, housekeeping, and COVID-19 prevention guidelines to ensure service standards and experiences along the trail meet visitor expectations. JTA also trained 31 licensed tour guides who wanted to develop their outdoor and trail guiding skills on map reading, compass navigation, leave-no-trace hiking, and World Trail Network COVID-19 prevention guidelines. These guides successfully were accredited by JTA to guide on the Jordan Trail.

Tour guide Ahmad Issa, a tour guide since 1995, attended the course. He said, “If I knew about the trail before this, I would be one of the first to join. This is an area that was not previously covered much, and it opens up a new field of work for guides and local communities.”

Also, through USAID support the JTA launched an “Adopt a Trail” gateway on their website to fundraise for maintenance of the Jordan Trail. By May 2021, two out of the eight regions were fully adopted, and the JTA were in talks to finalize the adoption of two more sections. To target domestic visitors, JTA developed new trail packages and linked up with local tour operators to promote the packages, which were launched in May 2021.

“We had a thousand people in March and April 2021,” said Bashir Daoud, the General Manager of the Jordan Trail Association. “A lot of those have been local hikers in the north of Jordan, and its been difficult elsewhere where guides are more used to international visitors. Hence our focus on the packages, which will benefit service providers all along the trail. The packages target groups of five to fifteen, and offer varied cultural and wilderness experiences that will help sustain our service providers.”

Although the Jordan Trail was only established in 2016, by 2019 it had attracted more than 40,000 hikers. Communities along the trail provided services for these hikers, including accommodation, meals, guiding, hiking support, and more. Supporting the Jordan Trail Association to elevate their standards, maintain their operations and grow their market share will benefit these communities and the hikers to come.



IMPROVING OPERATIONS
AND THE VISITOR
EXPERIENCE AT THE BAPTISM
SITE IN JORDAN

**USAID
SUPPORTS
IMPROVEMENTS
AT BAPTISM
SITE**



Photo credit: visitjordan.com

The baptismal site of Jesus Christ is one of Jordan's most important tourism attractions.

SUCCESS STORY

“The Jordan Trail is an area that was not previously covered much, and it opens up a new field of work for guides and local communities.”

Ahmad Issa, veteran Jordanian tour guide.



The Baptism Site - 'Bethany Beyond the Jordan' – is one of the three holiest sites in Christian faith and history. Located in Jordan, the Baptism Site was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015. In 2019, it was Jordan's eighth most visited site, attracting more than 183,000 visitors. As Jordan works to strengthen its tourism sector in the wake of the pandemic and prepare to receive international visitors, it was important that the Baptism Site experience is up to best international practices and standards.

Between July 2020 and April 2021, the USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism (BEST) Project assisted the Baptism Site management to improve services, amenities, and management at the site to enhance the visitor and pilgrim experience.

This effort entailed updating the Baptism Site operational management organization framework, structure, process, and procedures, health and safety guidelines, and standard operating procedures for the site. USAID BEST also trained the Baptism Site management to employ the new guidelines, adapt and enhance health and hygiene standards, adopt best COVID-19 prevention practices, and implement monitoring and support systems.

“The Baptism Site is one of the most important religious sites for all of humanity. Training our staff is especially important, as we want visitors to be assured that we are correctly applying practices and procedures for their safety and security”, said Baptism Site Director General Rustom Mkhijan.

USAID BEST also helped build the capacity of Baptism Site tour guides in storytelling, customer service, and COVID-19 protocols to improve the visitor experience.

“The series of trainings that were carried out positively enriched and benefited the staff working at the Baptism Site and will only be a positive reflection on the reputation of the Baptism Site,” said Assistant Director Abdulaziz Al-Adwan.

Also, in partnership with Baptism Site Commission, USAID BEST developed a training program for MoTA-licensed tour guides specialized in faith to enhance the knowledge and skills of guides who bring visitors to the Baptism Site. In cooperation with the Jordan Tour Guide Association and Jordan Inbound Tour Operator Association, BEST trained 60 licensed tour guides in areas such as guiding techniques, guest courtesy, the tour guide code of ethics, handling complaints, and storytelling.

“Working as a guide to the Baptism Site means differences in your approach,” said Naser Abu Rizeq, a tour guide who has worked in the sector for 13 years, in reference to the training program. *“The training sessions were great, very accessible as a Zoom meeting, and passed by quickly despite their length. I was happy that colleagues who were recent graduates attended, as it was a big opportunity for them to benefit from these techniques and this training in general. I hope this training is extended further.”*

SUPPORT TO PROMOTE AS-SALT: JORDAN'S FIRST STORYTOWN



NEW GUIDELINES TO ENHANCE FOOD SAFETY WITHIN JORDAN'S HOSPITALITY SECTOR



SUCCESS STORY



BUILDING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH TOURISM PROJECT (BEST)

PROJECT EXTENSION JUNE 2020 TO MAY 2021

FINAL REPORT



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