



Twinning JO/12/ENP/OT/20

*"Strengthen the institutional tourism system in Jordan by enhancing the capacities of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Jordan"*

## Umm ar-Rasas (Kastron Mefa'a). A Basis Towards the Public Use Plan



Ministero  
dei beni e delle  
attività culturali  
e del turismo

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The present document has been released on January 2015 within the EC-funded assignment "Strengthen the institutional tourism system in Jordan by enhancing the capacities of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Jordan" (ref. no. JO/12/ENO/OT/20). More precisely, it was produced within the activity #2.2, devoted to "Designing a pilot project led by MoTA, DoA and UNESCO focused on a joint and coordinated site management of the cultural heritage of the site Umm ar-Rasas".

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## Framework

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Within the EC-funded assignment “Strengthen the institutional tourism system in Jordan by enhancing the capacities of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Jordan” (ref. no. JO/12/ENO/OT/20), the activity 2.2 is devoted to “Designing a pilot project led by MoTA, DoA and UNESCO focused on a joint and coordinated site management of the cultural heritage of the site Umm ar-Rasas”. The objective of such activity is the development of an Action Plan for the UNESCO site of Umm ar-Rasas, taking into account the already developed Management Plan, focused on, inter alia, *Tourism*, to ensure sustainability to the economic advantages deriving from tourism, and the potential threats to the site, if not adequately oriented.

With Decision no. 37 COM 7B.51 on 2013, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee urged the responsible institutions of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to complete the Management Plan of Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a) including a comprehensive conservation plan as well as an archaeological research policy and a public use plan, also requesting the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015, a progress report on the implementation of the above for the examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 39<sup>th</sup> session in 2015.

In order to fulfil the duties deriving by the EC assignment, we here provide a draft document that could be used as a base to assist the responsible institutions of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in order to better perform the Public Use Plan for the site of Umm ar-Rasas as requested by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. In order to do so, two different missions, carried out by Short Term Experts (STEs)<sup>1</sup> with the involvement of the UNESCO Office in Amman, have shared with the Jordanian Institutions devoted to the issue (MoTA, and DoA) the implementation of the present document.

The present document is composed by the following chapters:

- an Introduction to the Public Use Plan, in which some key concepts, useful for carrying out an effective Public Use Plan – such as “Sustainable Tourism for World Heritage Sites”, and “Local Community Development”, are outlined;
- the Jordanian UNESCO Sites, in which the four Jordanian sites inscribed within the UNESCO World Heritage List – Petra, Quseir Amra, Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a), Wadi Rum Protected Area – are briefly described;
- an analysis of Umm ar-Rasas, where the viewpoints of the stakeholders (UNESCO / ICOMOS, the local community, the visitors, the EC Twinning experts) are outlined, and the current state of the site is analysed;
- The Action Plan, dividing the detected necessary actions into three priorities according to short (1 year), medium (3 years), and long (5 years) terms.

A sequence of photos of the site, taken by the EC experts, and some images useful for the design of informative materials, complete the document.

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<sup>1</sup> Coming from the Italian Ministry for Cultural heritage and Tourism (MIBACT), the Municipality of Florence / Department for the UNESCO Historic Centre Site Management, and Confservizi CISPEL Toscana.

## An Introduction to the Public Use Plan. Key Concepts

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### What is a Public Use plan?

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As already mentioned above, the aim of the present document is to assist authorities in providing some suggestions, concepts, and practical ideas to allow them develop by themselves an overall tourism strategy for Umm ar-Rasas, by identifying key issues, barriers and how to try and avoid them, for balancing conservation and development in the area, and for promoting solutions and activity to address these issues. This strategy should be developed in parallel with the site management plan and should involve the same set of key stakeholders throughout all processes.

Such a tourism strategy, that is traduced in the Public Use Plan, has its own conceptual basis and point of departure in the requirements fixed in "The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention", that time by time is revised by the World Heritage Committee to reflect new concepts, knowledge or experiences.

In order to do so, some assumptions have to be taken into account: the initial assumption is that tourism should be promoted as "sustainable", according to the internationally shared concepts that in the following pages are outlined. The second milestone for an effective Public Use Plan is that it will not yield fruit if the community of Umm ar-Rasas itself do not acquire the capacity to create and implement its own plans. In the following chapters both key concepts are better deployed.

### Key concept #1: Sustainable Tourism for World Heritage Sites

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Tourism is globally experiencing a significant increase in recent times, affirming itself as a strong sector and a big source of income for several countries, being able to create new job opportunities and local businesses.

On the other hand, with the increasing influence of globalization, forms of uncontrolled tourism have been developed, bringing sizeable problems in terms of heritage conservation, quality of tourists' experience and local people's life.

This issue has brought to develop a stronger awareness and sensitivity towards a more responsible and sustainable tourism, which aims at providing a quality cultural offer, based on the respect towards heritage and its values (UNESCO, n.d.).

#### *What is sustainable tourism?*

Sustainable tourism can be defined as that kind of "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNEP, 2005) Thus, in a simpler way, it can be outlined as "tourism that respects both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment" (UNESCO, n.d.).

#### *Which are the actions of UNESCO in sustainable tourism field?*

Bearing in mind the long involvement of UNESCO in conserving and enhancing the heritage of humankind, UNESCO promotes a sustainable type of tourism, based on social and environmental equity, awareness and participation of all stakeholders.

The World Heritage Centre has in recent years provided guidelines, giving an answer to the increasing effects that globalization has been creating on our heritage. In 2011 the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme has been created. This is an inclusive programme whose *raison d'être* resides in the creation of a shared responsibility among World Heritage and tourism stakeholders "for conservation of our common cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value and for sustainable development through appropriate tourism management." (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.)

Through this Programme a new and sustainable approach has been offered in raising awareness, dialogue and balanced cooperation among all the stakeholders, key assets for helping the management of sustainable tourism in World Heritage sites. The programme creates a cooperation among multiple sectors, aiming at the coexistence between conservation and development, at the preservation of heritage and the creation of wealth and its equal spread among all actors.

#### *How can we reach sustainable tourism?*

Sustainable tourism is one of the key assets around which a World Heritage management plan should revolve, having as aim the application of a long-term equilibrium between the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. This balance can be reached by:

- ✓ interpreting and implementing World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines in the local context;
- ✓ creating and applying national, regional and local policies which consider sustainable tourism as essential means for the management of the territory and consequently of its heritage;
- ✓ fostering in local communities a sense of interest, identification, attachment and responsibility towards the property (e.g. through the promotion of quality tourism products and services), enabling in this way their empowerment and the consequent control and conservation of the property;
- ✓ respecting the authenticity of the local communities, conserving their values, traditions and living habits;
- ✓ fostering awareness and a broad engagement of stakeholders in the sustainable development, making sure all stakeholder have the appropriate skills and tools to manage tourism in a efficient, sustainable way;
- ✓ making tourism industry recognize the role and the value of World Heritage and develop responsible activities, allowing both the conservation of the property and the socio-economic development;
- ✓ optimizing the use of environment's resources, respecting and conserving the natural heritage of the territory;
- ✓ enhancing economic actions whose profits should be distributed equally among all the stakeholders, thus reducing poverty;
- ✓ being able to transmit to visitors the values of the property, aiming at their understanding, appreciation and consequent responsible behaviour (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.; UNEP, 2005).

#### **Key concept #2: Local Community Development**

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##### *What does community development mean?*

As defined by the UN, Community Development is "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems."<sup>2</sup> Such a broad term comprehends the search of empowering groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change within their communities, allowing everyone to take part in the issues that affect their lives, and based on the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals.

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2 UNTERM, n.d., "Community development". Available at: <http://unterm.un.org/DGAACS/unterm.nsf/8fa942046ff7601c85256983007ca4d8/526c2eaba978f007852569fd00036819?OpenDocument> [Accessed 15/10/2014].

*How can community development be reached in Umm ar-Rasas?*

The Community of Umm ar-Rasas has to be supported in order to let them achieve a community economic development – by using local resources in a way that enhances economic outcomes while improving social conditions and, on the other hand, seeking to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social development and environmental protection outcomes.

There is the need to provide the community with a capacity building training, aimed to help it in better understanding the owned assets and to make it aware on the outstanding value of the archaeological site – i.e. it was visited by the Prophet; the treasure is not underground but is the site itself; how make tourists feel comfortable, etc. – and how to reach (or strengthen) and maintain the ability to set and achieve their own development objectives.



## The Jordanian UNESCO Sites

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Currently, the following four Jordanian sites are inscribed within the UNESCO World Heritage List:

- ✓ Petra (1985);
- ✓ Quseir Amra (1985);
- ✓ Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a) (2004);
- ✓ Wadi Rum Protected Area (2011).

A brief description of that site is provided below.

**Petra.** Inhabited since prehistoric times, this Nabataean caravan-city, situated between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, was an important crossroads between Arabia, Egypt and Syria-Phoenicia. Petra is half-built, half-carved into the rock, and is surrounded by mountains riddled with passages and gorges. It is one of the world's most famous archaeological sites, where ancient Eastern traditions blend with Hellenistic architecture.

### Criteria of selection

(i): the dramatic Nabataean/Hellenistic rock-cut temple/tombs approached via a natural winding rocky cleft (the Siq), which is the main entrance from the east to a once extensive trading city, represent a unique artistic achievement. They are masterpieces of a lost city that has fascinated visitors since the early 19th century. The entrance approach and the settlement itself were made possible by the creative genius of the extensive water distribution and storage system.

(iii): the serried rows of numerous rock-cut tombs reflecting architectural influences from the Assyrians through to monumental Hellenistic; the sacrificial and other religious high places including on Jebels Madbah, M'eisrah, Khubtha, Habis and Al Madras; the remains of the extensive water engineering system, city walls and freestanding temples; garden terraces; funerary stelae and inscriptions together with the outlying caravan staging posts on the approaches from the north (Barid or Little Petra) and south (Sabra) also containing tombs, temples, water cisterns and reservoirs are an outstanding testament to the now lost Nabataean civilization of the fourth century BC to the first century AD.

Remains of the Neolithic settlement at Beidha, the Iron Age settlement on Umm al Biyara, the Chalcolithic mining sites at Umm al Amad, the remains of Graeco-Roman civic planning including the colonnaded street, triple-arched entrance gate, theatre, Nymphaeum and baths; Byzantine remains including the triple-apses basilica church and the church created in the Urn Tomb; the remnant Crusader fortresses of Habis and Wueira; and the foundation of the mosque on Jebel Haroun, traditionally the burial place of the Prophet Aaron, all bear exceptional testimony to past civilizations in the Petra area.

(iv): the architectural ensemble comprising the so-called "royal tombs" in Petra (including the Khasneh, the Urn Tomb, the Palace Tomb and the Corinthian Tomb), and the Deir ("monastery") demonstrate an outstanding fusion of Hellenistic architecture with Eastern tradition, marking a significant meeting of East and West at the turn of the first millennium of our era.

The Umm al Amad copper mines and underground galleries are an outstanding example of mining structures dating from the fourth millennium BC.

The remnants of the diversion dam, Muthlim tunnel, water channels, aqueducts, reservoirs and cisterns are an outstanding example of water engineering dating from the first centuries BC to AD<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d., *Petra* [online]. Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/326>> [Accessed 16/12/2014].

**Quseir Amra.** This desert establishment, built in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, was both a fortress with a garrison and a residence of the Umayyad caliphs and had the purpose of interacting with the tribal region of the Wadi Butum. The most outstanding features of this particular type of architectural ensemble are the reception hall and the hammam, both richly decorated with figurative murals that reflect the secular art of the time and whose frescos are unique for Islamic architecture of the Umayyad period, showing influences from classical pagan themes.

#### Criteria of selection

(i): the Quseir Amra paintings constitute a unique artistic achievement in the Umayyad Period. The extensive fresco paintings of the reception hall and bath building, in creating a place of relaxation for the Prince away from earthly cares, provides new insight to early Islamic art and its derivation from classical and Byzantine precedents. The zodiac dome, human portraits and depictions of animals and birds in the hunting scenes are found only in this early period of Islamic art.

(iii): Quseir Amra bears exceptional testimony to the Umayyad civilization which was imbued with a pre-Islamic secular culture and whose austere religious environment left little trace in the visual arts.

(iv): together with the remains of the fort/garrison buildings several hundred metres to the north and traces of agricultural water catchment works, the fresco-painted bath building with its reception hall and adjacent well, tank and water-lifting hydraulic system, drainage pipes and cesspool represent an outstanding example of an Umayyad desert establishment.

In view of the fact that the relief decorations of the monumental frontal façade of Qasr el Mushatta were sent to the Berlin Museum and that the ruins of Qasr al Khayr al-Sharqui and Qasr al-Khayr al-Gharbi contain few decorative elements, Quseir Amra remains, together with Qasr Hisham and its mosaics, the best preserved of the decorated Umayyad palaces and castles in Jordan and Syria<sup>4</sup>.

Only the site of Quseir Amra owns a complete Site Management Plan. It has been developed by a joint cooperation between the DoA and the World Monument Fund, and in collaboration with the Italian *Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il restauro* (ISCR), and presented in Rome at the ISCR premises on 22-23 October 2014.

**Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a).** The archaeological site of Umm ar-Rasas, which started as a Roman military camp and grew to become a town from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, has not been excavated for a large part yet. It contains remains from the Roman, Byzantine and Early Muslim (Umayyad) periods (end of 3rd to 9th centuries AD), a fortified Roman military camp and 16 churches with well-preserved mosaic floors. Particularly significant is the mosaic floor of the Church of Saint Stephen with its representation of towns in the region. A 14 meter high square tower is probably the only remains of the practice of the stylites (ascetic monks who spent time in isolation atop a column or tower). Umm ar-Rasas is surrounded by, and dotted with, remains of ancient agricultural cultivation in an arid area. Moreover, the archaeology testifies the spread of monotheistic beliefs in the region and the tolerance towards monastic Christianity during the Islamic period of the VII and VIII centuries.

#### Criteria of selection

(i): Umm ar-Rasas is a masterpiece of human creative genius given the artistic and technical qualities of the mosaic floor of St Stephen's church.

(iv): Umm ar-Rasas presents a unique and complete (therefore outstanding) example of stylite tower.

(vi): Umm ar-Rasas is strongly associated with monasticism and with the spread of monotheism in the whole region, including Islam<sup>5</sup>.

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4 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d., *Quseir Amra* [online]. Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/327>> [Accessed 16/12/2014].

5 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d., *Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a)* [online]. Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1377>> [Accessed 16/12/2014].

**Wadi Rum Protected Area.** Natural and cultural site situated in southern Jordan, it represents a varied desert landscape consisting of narrow gorges, natural arches, towering cliffs, ramps, massive landslides and caverns, result of lithology, tectonic activities and surface processes. Petroglyphs, inscriptions and archaeological remains in the site testify to 12,000 years of human occupation and interaction with the natural environment, illustrating the evolution of pastoral, agricultural and urban human activity in the region. Moreover, the combination of 25,000 rock carvings with 20,000 inscriptions trace the evolution of human thought and the early development of the alphabet.

Criteria of selection

(iii): The rock art, inscriptions and archaeological evidence in WRPA can be considered an exceptional testimony of the cultural traditions of its early inhabitants. The combination of 25,000 petroglyphs, 20,000 inscriptions, and 154 archaeological sites provides evidence to continuity of habitation and land-use over a period of at least 12,000 years. The petroglyphs, representing human and animal figures, are engraved on boulders, stones, and cliff faces. They provide evidence of long-term patterns of pastoral, agricultural and urban human activity in the property. Engravings indicate an elaborate sense of aesthetics in a pictorial culture, and the archaeological findings span all eras from the Neolithic to the Nabataean. Thamudic, Nabataean and numerous Arabic inscriptions in four different scripts testify to the widespread literacy among its pastoral societies.

(v): The variety of landforms at WRPA has played an essential role in fostering human settlement. The rock art, inscriptions and water catchment systems document the settlements of successive communities, which developed in areas of mobile animal husbandry and agriculture and form part of a wider context of human interaction with the semi-arid eastern desert environment of the Arabian Peninsula. WRPA assists the understanding of the continuum of settled and mobile lifestyles in a desert landscape illustrating the adaptability and ingenuity of human communities who have made the most of scarce resources to sustain continuous presence after the climate became dryer in the Bronze Age (III millennium BC).

(vii): WRPA is recognised globally as an iconic desert landscape, renowned for its spectacular series of sandstone mountains and valleys, natural arches, and the range of narrow gorges, towering cliffs, massive landslides, and dramatic cavernous weathering forms displayed. Key attributes of the aesthetic values of the property include the diversity and sheer size of its landforms, together with the mosaic of colours, vistas into both narrow canyons and very large wadis, and the scale of the cliffs. The property displays, in a protected setting, an exceptional combination of landforms resulting from drainage incision, severe weathering by salt, biological and other processes, and the undermining of steep sandstone cliffs by these weathering processes, together with the world's most spectacular networks of honeycomb weathering features. Its associations with the writings of T.E. Lawrence, stressed strongly in the nomination, have ensured a high profile for the property and have reinforced its reputation of the area as a classic desert landscape both globally and within the Arab States<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d., *Wadi Rum Protected Area* [online]. Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1377>> [Accessed 16/12/2014].

## An Analysis of Umm ar-Rasas

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### The Stakeholders' viewpoints

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#### The viewpoint of UNESCO / ICOMOS

This paragraph is the summary of the material provided by the World Heritage Centre in its website at the section regarding the State of Conservation of the site of Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a)<sup>7</sup>. The conservation aspects, delineated in the mission reports and in the other documents, won't be assessed in the following paragraph, being the visitor and the public use the main focus of this Plan.

Until 2013, ICOMOS have led five missions in the World Heritage site of Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a):

- ✓ July 2003: ICOMOS mission;
- ✓ March-April 2005: first ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission;
- ✓ November 2006: Joint World Heritage Centre/ ICOMOS mission;
- ✓ March 2008: Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission;
- ✓ July 2008: World Heritage Centre expert mission for the Stylite Tower.

2004. ICOMOS Evaluation of the nomination (March 2004) of the World Heritage site of Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a) had stressed the following issues:

- a) no management and conservation plans,
- b) lack of security due to open trenches and unstable structures.

2005. The report of the first ICOMOS monitoring mission (2005) raised the following issues:

- a) the site is not protected against exterior potential threats;
- b) the general state of conservation of the site is not good;
- c) most of the restoration works already conducted at the site were not adequate, notably due to the absence of a homogenous restoration approach and methodology;
- d) the site does not receive visitors in appropriate conditions both in terms of security and for the protection of the archaeological remains.

The mission reported some details concerning a European Commission Project which aims at providing the Jordanian authorities with assistance in view of the tourism promotion of the sites of Umm ar-Rasas and Lehun, through a preservation programme.

2006. From the Joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission (November 2006) the following problems were identified:

- a) ground transport infrastructure;
- b) impacts of tourism / visitor / recreation;
- c) interpretative and visitation facilities;
- d) management systems / management plan;
- e) lack of security and risk of collapse due to open trenches and unstable structures.

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<sup>7</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d., *State of Conservation (SOC) Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a)* [online]. Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/1895>> [Accessed 16/12/2014].

Eight priority measures, which should constitute the first elements for the elaboration of the management plan, were developed:

- 1) to clearly identify the boundaries of the area(s) to be protected and fenced if necessary, even temporarily;
- 2) **to address the security issues, notably by prohibiting access of visitors to potential dangerous areas and carrying out the necessary works to cover the trenches and archaeological soundings;**
- 3) **to isolate and preserve the most endangered and damaged archaeological and architectural components by establishing a temporary restricted plan of visit paths;**
- 4) to preserve the mosaics with adequate temporary and protective materials (special geo-textile layers and draining sand layers);
- 5) to consolidate the most endangered architectural elements using temporary but secure structures;
- 6) to stop restoration works and reconstruction of collapsed elements;
- 7) to resolve, when possible, using simple and temporary solutions, the humidity problems, notably for the mosaic floor of the sheltered St. Stephen Church;
- 8) **to define the future management structure and financial system which will be adopted in the management plan for the site.**

During the Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission the following assessment of the implementation of these measures were identified:

About points 2) and 3)

- ✓ No security measures have yet been taken to safeguard workers and tourists (no physical barriers, specific paths, trenches and soundings are not re-filled).
- ✓ Dangerous areas have expanded because of illegal diggings and excavations and because of general degradation of structures' stability.
- ✓ Lack of an adequate guardian system lead visitors to walk freely around the site and climb upon very fragile structures of the archaeological site.

About point 8)

- ✓ A first draft of a Management Plan for Umm ar-Rasas was prepared by a team within the Department of Antiquities. However, despite the efforts, constraints led to a delay in its submission to the World Heritage Centre, because of the lack of funds and human resources.

2008. The State Party submitted a state of conservation report on 24 January 2008, which noted that the European Commission funded project "Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage in Jordan" could be completed by April 2008, including a visitors' centre, visitors' pathways, a new shelter for the St. Stephen's complex and protective fencing. The report also noted that an NGO to promote awareness in the community had been established in partnership between the local community and the Department of Antiquities. A Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS was led in March 2008, underlining the following issues:

- ✓ The European Commission funded project, conceived to promote tourism, has been substantially modified to give weight to conservation concerns (the elimination of the road initially planned between two archaeological areas and the replacement of the former St. Stephens shelter with a new shelter).
- ✓ Dangerous trenches have been marked, covered and/or refilled to prevent harm to visitors. This work of signage could be continued and improved.
- ✓ The installation of clearly delineated and visually integrated pathways, whose signage system improvements could be achieved.

- ✓ The State Party has put in place a new management structure, which notes the importance of an annual operations budget to complement the State budget for site management.
- ✓ The report notes substantial progress in re-orienting the site's management plan from tourism to conservation aided by policy shifts which have given the Department of Antiquities full responsibility for developing management plans.
- ✓ The mission report also recommends that the State Party submit a "technical document" to the World Heritage Centre which would include detailed documentation on many of recent initiatives including a technical description of all security measures undertaken, the completion and initial operations of the Visitor Centre, the definitive organization of the pathway system, thus the new visitor pathways and the cancellation of the road linking the two archaeological areas.
- ✓ As well, the mission report recommends that the State Party be encouraged to develop a financial system with a minimum annual operations budget, all linked to a timeframe for expected implementation.
- ✓ At its 32<sup>nd</sup> session (Quebec City, 2008), the World Heritage Committee congratulated the State Party for the conservation measures undertaken since the reactive monitoring mission of November 2006, and noted the steps being taken by the State Party to address the threat of loss of Outstanding Universal Value, and sustaining the property's authenticity and integrity; the World Heritage Committee considered that there was no need to include the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

2009. The State Party submitted a state of conservation report (31 March 2009), which, concerning management, only detailed numbers of new staff appointed, and mentioned installation of a new electronic security system.

A state of conservation summary included information on new fencing for the entire site, new works carried out on the St. Stephane complex including its shelter, new organization and completion of the pathway system (including extension of a road from the visitor's centre to the St. Stephane complex, and beyond to the Stylite tower), completion of the visitor's centre (now partly in use for tourist police but not yet offering visitor's services), and acquisition of parcels of land to strengthen the integrity of the property.

The State Party report noted that a solid financial system that would permit the functioning of the Visitor's Centre, provide for a permanent operations budget for the property and permit for implementation of short and long term corrective measures, was not yet in place.

It is also important to note that the State Party's report does not provide the new information concerning progress in developing either the conservation plan or the management plan for the property. The State Party has also not provided the technical report documenting all initiatives described in its 2008 report.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies are concerned however that most of the progress described in the State Party report concerns expenditure made under the European Commission project, and that the needed efforts from the State Party to develop and implement urgently the management plan and fully supportive financial system have not progressed.

The World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS are also concerned with the State Party report references to building and completing roads on site, given the strong objections raised by the World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS mission of March 2008 to roads running from the site entrance to the church complex, and the earlier decision of the State Party to abandon road-building within the sensitive archaeological site, following the 2006 mission.

2011. The State Party submitted a state of conservation report on 1 February 2011. Some of the provided information are pointed:

- ✓ Road system: the State Party reiterates the need for the road that has been built between the Stylite tower and St Stephan Complex for maintenance and monitoring activities.
- ✓ Management plan and structure: the report indicates that a team is working on the development of the management plan and that it should be finalized by the end of 2011. Nevertheless, activities are already carried out within its framework, such as conservation and presentation activities.
- ✓ Administrative structure: the Umm ar-Rasas Office employs three specialists and six guards and is responsible for conservation, preparation of the management plan, monitoring, cleaning and preparing lectures and workshops for local communities. The Tourism Office's three employees provide information to visitors.
- ✓ Awareness-raising activities: the Umm ar-Rasas Women's society runs cultural activities, produces handicrafts and sells them at the Visitor Centre to benefit the local community. On the other hand, the Umm ar-Rasas Society for Conservation raises awareness on the values of the site. In addition a Post Office, a Health Centre and a Tourism Police Office have been established within the property. The close-by Municipality regulates building construction in the buffer zone.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies note that no progress has been made on the elaboration of a comprehensive management plan, which should include a conservation plan, an archaeological research policy and provisions for public use.

2013. Factors affecting the property:

- a) Unstable structures and lack of security;
- b) Lack of a comprehensive conservation plan;
- c) Lack of management structure and plan;
- d) Important tourism development project with new constructions; major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure.

The State Party submitted another state of conservation report on 4 February 2013. Some of the covered aspects are indicated in the following lines:

- ✓ Management Plan: the State Party considers that a new management plan must be developed for the property due to a number of changes resulting from the opening of the visitor centre and the planned modification of the property's boundaries in order to include a new component. It is not clear whether the management plan which seems to have been developed during the last years, but has not yet been finalized and submitted, will be adapted or abandoned. The State Party declares that it obtained financial support from the European Commission to develop a new management plan over an 18-month period, starting from the day of signature of the agreement (foreseen in March 2013).
- ✓ Public access and use: the Visitor Centre, inaugurated in 2012, seems to play an important orientation and interpretation role. The State Party declares its intention to involve the local community in the elaboration of the management plan of the property.

The State Party has started a new physical condition assessment of all the components of the property. The results of this assessment, which have not been provided in the State Party's report, were expected to be evaluated in June 2013 and would lead to the definition of conservation measures.

The excavation works had been stopped at the property until proper regulations were set and the management plan is complete. The DoA issued new regulations that year for archaeological surveys and excavations. A specific article (no. 17) concerning the World Heritage sites in Jordan was included in the "Regulations for archaeological excavations and surveys in Jordan".

In the framework of the Retrospective Inventory, the State Party submitted a map displaying the original boundaries of the property at the same time as a proposal for boundary modification in order to establish a buffer zone. However, these maps still need some adjustments and would be presented at the next session of the World Heritage Committee.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies took note of the information provided by the State Party but noted as well that several issues had not been addressed yet.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies recalled that the management plan, either a thoroughly new one or building on the existing draft, should include a conservation plan, an archaeological research policy and provisions for public use.

Also World Heritage Committee at its 35<sup>th</sup> session requested the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015, a progress report on the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 39<sup>th</sup> session in 2015.

### The viewpoint of the local community

Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2015 a meeting took place between the local community of Umm ar-Rasas, the Italian twinning experts and the Department of Antiquities represented by Bassem Mahameid (DoA Director of Directorate in Madaba).

The meeting was led by the twinning expert, Carlo Francini, with the support of Ma'moun Ba'ra, language assistant of the Twinning Project, who was in charge of consecutive translation.

The meeting had the aim of helping better understand the local community, what value they give to the site of Umm ar-Rasas, what they expect from the valorisation of this site and which kind of effort and role they are ready to lead for protecting and conserving the cultural heritage they own. Moreover, this meeting meant to raise the awareness among the community regarding the importance of improving visitors reception and the involvement of local community in this process.

The meeting was attended by around 30 people from the local community. The turnout was exclusively male. Indeed, the women local community unfortunately did not show up during the meeting.

The interventions of some people belonging to the local community are listed below with the aim of understanding their point of view, as well as their interpretation of the site.

Mr. Nazaz Abziz Almoor, born and grown in Umm ar-Rasas and member of the municipal staff, was the first to intervene during the meeting, opening the discussion by pointing out the lack of coordination between MoTA, the municipality of Umm ar-Rasas and the local community is one of the biggest issues which influences the limited tourist promotion.

"We have been used to welcoming tourists from the 50s, it is not something strange for us" emphasized Mr. Nazaz, who explained that communication with the highest levels of management of Umm ar-Rasas is impossible for the community, who therefore have great difficulties in achieving what they want and to meet their needs. Mr. Nazaz also highlighted further problems such as:

- ✓ insufficient maintenance related to roads leading to Umm ar-Rasas, including that one connecting the site to the city of Madaba;
- ✓ lack of water supply in the toilettes within the site;
- ✓ lack of a land phone line;
- ✓ lack of a consistent and full-scale electricity supply for the whole village and the site.

Other locals, by the names of Mr. Tarek Almoor and Mr. Mohammed, confirmed the problems related to water supply, providing practical solutions. They also highlighted the problem of expropriation of private lands within the site, which sees the landowners not adequately paid for their loss. In particular, a rise in visitors and in the number of valorisation projects related to the site was promised, with consequent future employment prospects for the local community, however this was only partially realized. Mr. Tarek



emphasized also the lack of facilities located outside the site and related to the visitors' reception (e.g. restaurants, hotels) and of an adequate cultural training of the local community for a better tourist reception. Mohammed highlighted problems referred to the conservation of the site, including the lack of a canal system for a proper management of the rainwater on the St Stephen's shelter and the presence of grazing animals within the perimeter of the site. Related to the same issue of expropriation, Mr. Nafer explained that some landowners had not yet been paid by MoTA yet for the sale of their lands, for this reason they let their sheep graze in the site during aridity times.

Mr. Mohammed expressed that the perimeter of the churches should be fenced to prevent the access of animals. In addition he confirmed the problems related to the humidity within the St. Stephen mosaics, problems due to the lack of rainwater channelling, and the need for maintenance of the shelter and of the parapets within the church.

Mr. Duas Vair, being part of MoTA staff, highlights the following aspects:

- ✓ the lack of technical personnel for the maintenance of the Visitor Centre (plumbers, electricians) and the presence of one cleaner only. According to Mr. Duas the presence of at least four people for an adequate cleaning of the complex is necessary;
- ✓ the community's willingness to form a team of skilled workers, able to act quickly in situations of emergency related to conservation;
- ✓ confirmation related to the shortage of water resources;
- ✓ the need for better and more signs within the site.

Mr. Raleb expressed the importance of considering tourists' opinion and understanding what they would like to develop in the site of Umm ar-Rasas.

Mr. Hamed Uader added that currently tourists do not pay for accessing to the site, since an entrance ticket has not been activated by the MoTA administration. Also Mr. Hamad Hassan, a member of the municipality of Umm ar-Rasas, considered necessary the donation to the community of Umm ar-Rasas of a percentage of the entrance ticket revenue, as already implemented in the case of Petra. Furthermore, the proposal made by Mr. Ahmed, Mayor of Umm ar-Rasas, is to give 50% of the revenue to MoTA and the other 50% to the Municipality, which in turn will take the duty of providing all adequate services to the site. The police captain of Umm ar-Rasas, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of introducing the entrance ticket, of proposing to several tour operators the entrance of Umm ar-Rasas in their tourist routes, the introduction of exciting activities such as camel tours within the site, the reactivation of surveillance cameras operative 24 hours a day and of the lighting within the site.

Mr. Mahameid emphasised the importance for the community and for a good tourism reception of developing a research on local crafts.

Mr. Awad, a local from Umm ar-Rasas, underlined the problem related to the poverty of Umm ar-Rasas, its high-rate unemployment and the need to create more jobs. The Mayor pointed out how MoTA and DoA do not give any kind of role to the municipality in the management of the site. His hope is that Umm ar-Rasas will become a famous place related to spirituality.

In conclusion, the community of Umm ar-Rasas has shown a good awareness about the value of the UNESCO site and therefore they ask for a greater involvement within the management of the site.

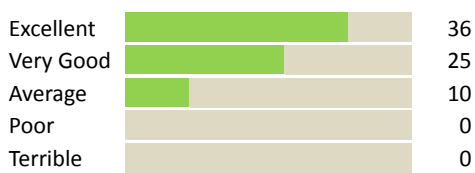
### The viewpoint of visitors

The statistics of the incoming and outgoing visitors at Umm ar-Rasas (<http://www.mota.gov.jo/Contents/Statistics.aspx>) are not calculated by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. So, it is not possible to know how many tourists reach the site, neither the country of provenience.

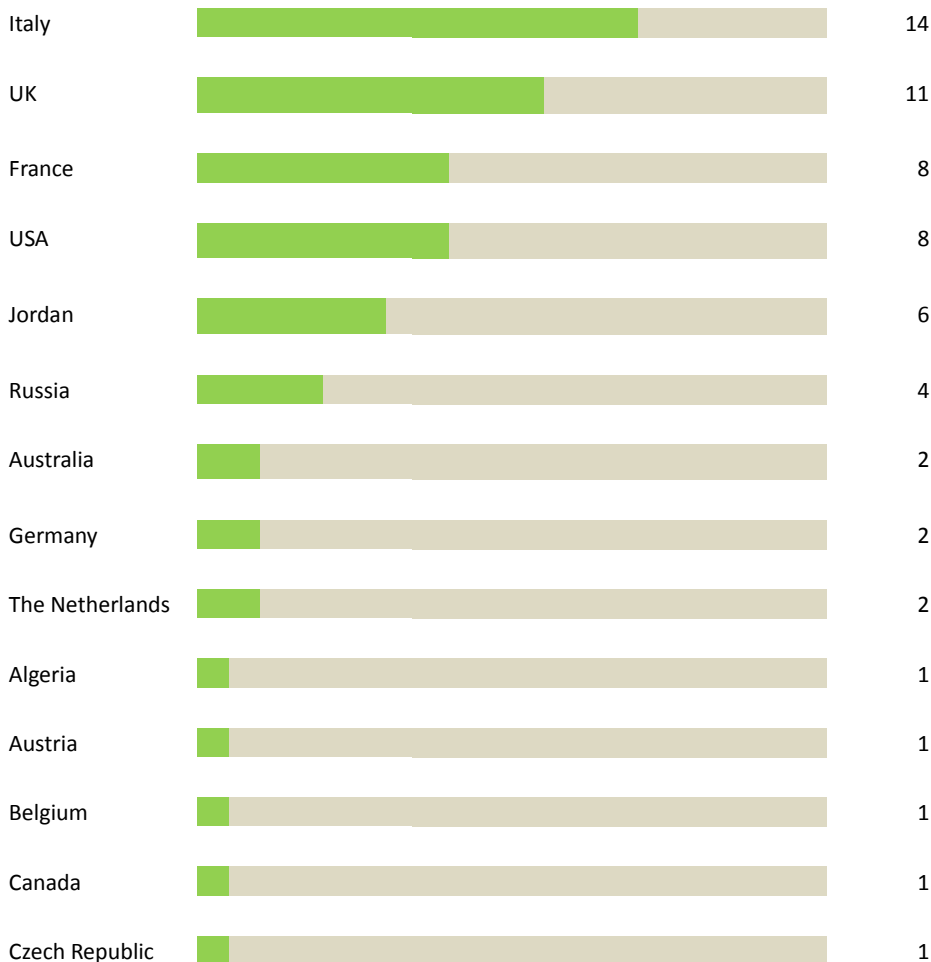
In order to know more about the tourists coming to Umm ar-Rasas (i.e. the country of provenience), and to better understand what they think about the site, we have investigated *TripAdvisor*, one of the best representative tourist social networks that, even though it is not an exact indicator, could represent a specimen of the tourist "sentiment" towards the site.

At the date of 27 December 2014, the "TripAdvisor" website ([www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)) reports 71 reviews, coming from 16 July 2010 up to 12 December 2014.


The visitor rating, that sees Umm ar-Rasas in the second position over 11 in the area of Madaba<sup>8</sup>, provides the following score:



The visitors come from the following countries:



<sup>8</sup> After the Church of St. John the Baptist: TripAdvisor, 2014, *Must see if in Madaba*. Available at: [http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g293989-d2366698-r233866174-Church\\_of\\_St\\_John\\_the\\_Baptist-Madaba\\_Madaba\\_Governorate.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g293989-d2366698-r233866174-Church_of_St_John_the_Baptist-Madaba_Madaba_Governorate.html) [Accessed 29/12/2014].

Spain		1
Greece		1
Kazakhstan		1
Kuwait		1
Norway		1
Saudi Arabia		1
South Africa		1
Sweden		1
Switzerland		1
Taiwan		1

The show offered by Umm ar-Rasas is remarkable according to reviewers: "Breathless" (Omran B, Amman, and MorganaZ, Udine); "Amazing" (Maenaddassi, Amman); "A real surprise!" (John P, Melbourne, Australia); a "Fabulous place" (MandSManchester, Manchester); "Really well worth a detour" (MandSManchester, Manchester, and Keri P, Alstead, New Hampshire). In conclusion, the place "Is a must" (mkchicago1, Chicago, Illinois), "A hidden gem" (MandSManchester, Manchester, and Hamish K, Edinburgh), "Totally worth the experience" (Ilya G, Binghamton, New York), one of the "Most exciting things to see after Petra" (Petra1970, Trelleborg, Sweden.)

Although the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List for the Stylite Tower, the latter is mentioned only few times: mecorton7, Salmiyah, Kuwait states: "Approximately 1/2 mile west of the site on the main road, you will see the turn off to view the probably only existing Stylite Pillar in the world." Ilya G, Binghamton, New York, says: "Unique example of an ancient Christian ascetic practice: nearby the main site, there is a Stylite column still standing." Ithaca35, Athens, spends more words for the tower:

"1 km away from the site and visible from it is a rather unique architectural structure: a fully restored Stylite tower! This is something that probably only exists here: A high (15m), very narrow stone tower, which looks more like a lone pillar standing in the open space, with an opening at ground level and small windows at the top, and lots of chirrupy birds flying to and fro. It was probably inhabited by Stylites, Christian hermits who spent their lives on top of such towers. Most interestingly, you can see this tower featured on one of the mosaics in St. Stephen's church (the depiction of Kastron Mefa'a - you'd have to look out for it while inside the church and then go outside and see the real thing)."

Trip2Jordan, Amman, offers a comprehensive dimension of that World Heritage site:

"This site is quite amazing to see if your interest is religion since it was like the first theology center in the world and that's where the importance of it comes from."

But the most appreciated by tourists are the mosaics. For Laurent M, Paris, Ile-de-France, France, Umm ar-Rasas is

"Un lieu isolé, à l'écart de la route des Rois en partant de Madaba, où vous admirerez - entre autres - des mosaïques plus belles et mieux conservées que celles de Madaba, dans un cadre superbe et loin de la foule des touristes. Ça vaut largement le petit détour. Et c'est gratuit (pour l'instant)."<sup>9</sup>

In particular, the mosaics within the Church of St Stephen are most focused; "Beautiful mosaics you'll probably see by yourself!", Poopyscoop, Brighton, entitles his review, and adds:

"Don't miss them - they are really very good and intact, with really good colour. We saw a lot of mosaics in Jordan but these really are some of the best."

The mosaics are seen as impressive: "You haven't seen Jordan's mosaics until you visit the Church of St. Stephen" (mecorton7, Salmiyah, Kuwait); "Probably the most impressive we saw while in Jordan" (GracyInVienna, Richmond, Virginia); "There is an amazing collection of mosaics" (John P, Melbourne, Australia); "The mosaics are breathtaking" (MandSManchester, Manchester). But not everyone agrees; according to FoodieOswestry, Oswestry, "The most important discovery on the site was the mosaic floor of the Church of St Stephen" (thus forgetting the Stylite Tower), and the conclusion is "Perhaps not worth a special trip to see unless you are into mosaics as there are some really good ones in the church ruins."

The site "is seemingly in the middle of nowhere" (mecorton7, Salmiyah, Kuwait), it "... is poorly presented and the labelling is appalling (vbm6, London), and it needs to be better organized in its explication to the public"; Patricia S, London, United Kingdom, states:

"This site is very much a work in progress for the visitor. Apart from the Church of St Stephen, which is wonderful, the rest of the sight is a jumble of confusing ruins."

Within it, there are very few visitors (Lutchmee, South Africa); "We only saw 3 other people there when we visited", or the tourist is the only one during his/her visit (GracyInVienna, Richmond, Virginia, and

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<sup>9</sup> "An isolated place, away from the road of Kings starting from Madaba, where you can admire - among others - the most beautiful mosaics and better preserved than those of Madaba, in a beautiful setting and away from the tourist crowds. It is well worth the detour. And it's free (for now)."

MorganaZ, Udine); "Yet the site is all but deserted" (MandSManchester, Manchester), or "We were completely alone (except one fox and the tourist police)" (Christian..., Erfurt), and "Unfortunately there is no guide!" (Petra1970, Trelleborg, Sweden.) "The site doesn't have a proper media coverage" (Maenaddassi, Amman). "The visit was for free" (GracyInVienna, Richmond, Virginia), and "strangely abandoned" (Ostnak, Brno, Czech Republic.) Monnus, Worthing, although he defines Umm ar-Rasas "Extraordinary!", states: "It's a World Heritage Site that UNESCO, and everyone else, seems to have forgotten", and also "Had it to ourselves, which was great, but the site deserves more visitors".

The site is quite dangerous: "There are cisterns all over the place and not all clearly marked so watch your step!" (GracyInVienna, Richmond, Virginia), and it not guarded; pinoc1833, Rome, Italy, states that "Tessere di antichi mosaici potrebbero tranquillamente essere asportati senza che nessuno se ne possa accorgere".<sup>10</sup>

The visitor centre is good (Omran B, Amman) and has a good size (GracyInVienna, Richmond, Virginia). According to Ithaca35, Athens, "The site's visitor centre is very decent, it is low-rising and does not distract." "The gift shop carries authentic hand-crafted local items. Next to the gift shop is a coffee shop that stocks snacks and drinks and will give you a chance to rest out of the sun. Clean restrooms available." (mecorton7, Salmiyah, Kuwait.) On the other hand, the visitor centre needs maintenance; the toilets do not have any running water (Ilya G, Binghamton, New York, and vbm6, London), and it has to be more used; according to Peachgone, Speers Point, Australia, the "Visitor's Centre ... is pretty much empty!"

The signs are few. According to Paola M, "Mancano cartelli che spieghino le varie costruzioni"<sup>11</sup>, and for luca\_perr..., Turin, "... all'interno non esiste guida o pannelli esplicativi."<sup>12</sup>

Another website considered in the analysis is *World Heritage Sites* (<http://www.worldheritagesite.org/index.php>), managed by Els Slots, that defines herself as "a global traveller based in The Netherlands". Graduated in Modern and Social Economic History from Leiden University, The Netherlands, she has the goal to visit all the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

In the page devoted to Umm ar-Rasas (<http://www.worldheritagesite.org/sites/umerrasas.html>), Els Slots writes about her visit carried out on October 2012:

"The visitor center still seems to be closed, even on a Friday (first day of the weekend for the Jordanians). ... one family entered with me. We all did so without paying an entrance fee, as the ticket office was as closed as the restaurant, the souvenir shop and the museum. "

The website contains also six reviews, released by people all coming from different nations: Italy; Malta; Switzerland; USA; Poland; Sweden. According to Walter (Switzerland, Date posted: November 2011),

"We arrived in the late afternoon. They (sic!) is quite a big visitors' center, but only the tourist police station was open. The ticket office was closed, so we entered for free. We were the only persons on the site."

Anthony Sun (USA, Date posted: April 2010) reports:

"So I was in Jordan in March ... and hired a driver ... The driver was a tour guide and he is out with tourists every day but he confessed that he has not been to this site in the last four years as no one wants to visit it!"

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10 "Pieces of ancient mosaics could easily be removed without anyone could ever know it".

11 "Signs explaining the various constructions are missing."

12 "No guide or explicating panels exist inside."

### The viewpoint of the EC Twinning experts

In the dates 29<sup>th</sup> June 2014 – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014 (first mission) 11<sup>st</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014 (second mission), 15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014 (third mission) three missions were led by the experts in charge of the development of the 2.2 activity of the Twinning Project.

During the missions, particularly during the meetings with the representatives of MoTA, DoA and the UNESCO Office of Amman and the *in situ* visits, it was possible to plan the actions related to the development of the Public Use Plan in accordance with the UNESCO World Heritage vision. Moreover, the following weak points came up: lack of coordination, at least up to recent times, between DoA and MoTA; lack of awareness by the local community; lack of deep knowledge related to laws; lack of funds for restoration work; lack of interventions in management, tourism development and marketing; lack of public awareness towards the site.

It was worth to highlight the importance of focusing on UNESCO Outstanding Universal Values which should always be the centre and the point of reference for any actions. A particular attention should be dedicated also to the protection of the integrity and authenticity of the site, local communities and stakeholders involvement and participation, economic development and sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, the experts underlined the necessity to improve Umm ar-Rasas as a tourist destination in the Jordanian territory through the following suggested actions:

- ✓ to create a route which can gather all the Jordanian World Heritage sites: Petra (1985), Quseiyir Amra (1985), Umm ar-Rasas (Kastron Mefa'a) (2004), Wadi Rum Protected Area (2011);
- ✓ to improve the gift shop and the cafeteria in the Visitor Centre;
- ✓ to address the ordinary and extraordinary management of the Visitor Centre (outside and internal cleaning – parking place );
- ✓ to complete the creation of the itineraries which have already been started in the past and to provide them with adequate signage with the aim of controlling and regulating the flow of tourists within the site, avoiding damages to cultural heritage;
- ✓ to study solutions congruous with the requirements of ICOMOS / UNESCO aimed at reaching the Stylite Tower;
- ✓ to build a refreshment station which should be located close to the St Stephen church, near to the already existing toilet block. This station, which is essential in order to continue the visit to the tower, must be compatible with the landscape;
- ✓ to create appropriate materials (brochures, multimedia materials) which should be shown inside the Visitor Centre with the aim of communicating effectively the site to tourists;
- ✓ to involve – in addition to scholars – the local community, keeper of the oral traditions regarding the site history and its interpretation. This should have the aim of producing part of the contents for the brochures and multimedia materials;
- ✓ to strengthen the product development and cultural offer, which has to see the direct involvement of the local community, particularly in the field of handicraft products, linked to local materials and traditions, and typical culinary products of the place;
- ✓ to widen the promotion of the site, including it in the tourist route to Petra (the Kings' road);
- ✓ to introduce the site within the tourist itineraries related to the themes of mosaics, spirituality and proximity.

### Analysis on the current state of the site

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At the light of the above listed viewpoints, we have chosen to focus on the following three main elements:

- ✓ Visitor Centre,
- ✓ Inner footpaths, and
- ✓ Potential thematic itineraries for tourists.

All three elements need special improvements for being able to attract a higher number of visitors and to meet the following main objectives:

- ✓ to raise awareness on the importance of World Heritage and the value of Umm ar-Rasas among visitors and local community;
- ✓ to establish a cosy and easily accessible environment able to attract and welcome visitors adequately, meeting their needs and interests;
- ✓ to involve local community, providing them with a fair employment, strengthening their social welfare and education needs.

In the next section a SWOT Analysis focused on such elements is provided.

### SWOT Analysis

In the following lines, a SWOT Analysis will shed the light on the current situation related to the above indicated elements, underlining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, thus the internal and external variables which can positively and negatively affect the structure:

**SWOT Analysis**

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ production of local traditional products;</li> <li>✓ pleasant and collaborative staff;</li> <li>✓ presence of the "Umm ar-Rasas women's cooperative society" who runs the gift shop and the cafeteria in the Visitor Centre;</li> <li>✓ presence of spaces used as directorial and facilities offices;</li> <li>✓ presence of important mosaics floors and Roman <i>castrum</i> ruins within the site;</li> <li>✓ uniqueness related to the Stylite Tower;</li> <li>✓ Umm ar-Rasas is a World Heritage;</li> <li>✓ the local community is well disposed to collaborate and participate in the management of the site.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ lack of coordination between MoTA, DoA and the municipality;</li> <li>✓ very partial use of the Visitor Centre;</li> <li>✓ the public baths, the cafeteria, the souvenirs shop, the tourist police office and the post office appear quite modest for the reception of a larger public;</li> <li>✓ lack of English or other foreign languages speaking staff;</li> <li>✓ the two multimedia equipped rooms, one dedicated to the exhibition and the other one functioning as a conference space, are not accessible to the public;</li> <li>✓ lack of tour guide service (in different languages);</li> <li>✓ incomplete footpaths within the site;</li> <li>✓ damaged and incomplete signage within and leading to the site;</li> <li>✓ lack of funds;</li> <li>✓ lack of tourism development, marketing and communication related to the Visitor Centre and itineraries;</li> <li>✓ lack of an attractive offer related to tourism itineraries;</li> <li>✓ lack of awareness by the local community;</li> <li>✓ lack of a management plan;</li> <li>✓ lack of an action plan related to the Visitor Centre and to the site;</li> <li>✓ lack of a budget for assisting in the implementation of an action plan which covers all the Visitor Centre's costs;</li> <li>✓ lack of an effective and easily walkable pathway from the St Stephen complex to the Tower.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ large size structure of the Visitor Centre which allows to develop interactive and entertaining devices for communicating effectively the value of the site;</li> <li>✓ the fountain at the centre of the complex and the shadow effect system created by the staging posts, which can contribute in creating a more attractive and cosy environment;</li> <li>✓ the involvement of the local community which can contribute to community empowerment, social inclusion and poverty reduction, in maintaining the authenticity of the site and in raising awareness about its value;</li> <li>✓ to strengthen the product development and cultural offer, which has to see the direct involvement of the local community, particularly in the field of handicraft products, linked to local materials and traditions, and typical culinary products of the place;</li> <li>✓ the established presence of public baths, cafeteria, souvenirs shop, whose improvement would better the reception of the public;</li> <li>✓ the already established presence of footpaths system, which have to be completed;</li> <li>✓ the opportunity of strengthening the itineraries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ deterioration of the geo-political regional situation;</li> <li>✓ enduring lack of funds;</li> <li>✓ enduring lack of an appropriate Management Plan, monitoring and function evaluation;</li> <li>✓ natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes);</li> <li>✓ degeneration of the relationship with the local community;</li> <li>✓ local community leave from the site</li> <li>✓ the removal of Umm ar-Rasas from the tourist routes.</li> </ul>



<p>related to the spirituality, mosaics and proximity themes, thus to the site of Madaba;</p> <p>✓ the opportunity of strengthening the coordination between MoTA, DoA and the municipality.</p>	
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**Focus on the players' role**

Taking into account and as good practice the Italian Cultural Heritage policy, it is necessary to consider a general division of responsibilities within the Management Plan of the site of Umm ar-Rasas:

- - DoA: specific role related to the conservation and research on the site;
- - MoTA: specific role related to the promotion and valorisation of the site;
- - Municipality of Umm ar-Rasas: specific role related to the tourist reception, maintenance services and local community involvement.

These are only general tasks, since too much delineated boundaries could not exist in a holistic approach to the management: all three players should contribute in enhancing and conserving the outstanding universal value of Umm ar-Rasas.

**1) The Visitor Centre**

The Visitor Centre of Umm ar-Rasas with its large parking area was built thanks to EC funds provided in 2006 within the project “Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage in Jordan” – which also included the construction of visitors’ pathways, a new shelter for the St Stephen’s complex and protective fencing – and opened in 2012.

Following the SWOT Analysis provided above, the Visitor Centre requires an extra-ordinary refreshment and maintenance. For this reason, it is necessary to create a concept for it, which has a strong appeal and resonance. Our suggestion is to turn the Visitor Centre into a World Heritage, a benchmark for all the UNESCO Jordanian properties, in which the value of each site will be communicated effectively with the aim of raising public awareness. A particular focus will be devoted to the site of Umm ar-Rasas, stressing the importance of folk stories and the cultural meaning attributed to the site by the local community.

Having as focus the topic of World Heritage, a particular priority will be given to the following themes:

- ✓ “What is the World Heritage?”. This section should provide information about what it means to be a World Heritage Site, thus the inscription on the World Heritage List, the Criteria and OUVs, Tangible and Intangible, the World Heritage in Danger.<sup>13</sup>
- ✓ “The Jordan UNESCO World Heritage sites”. This part will be dedicated to the explanation of the currently four Jordanian sites (Petra, Quseir Amra, Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a), Wadi Rum Protected Area) which are inscribed under the UNESCO World Heritage List. Particular emphasis will be given to the site of Umm ar-Rasas, what makes this site significant to UNESCO and the humankind, and what the visitor can see and do in the site.
- ✓ “Storytelling on Umm ar-Rasas”. This theme area will be devoted to the interpretation of the site of Umm ar-Rasas by the local community (in addition to scholars), i.e. their oral traditions. The meetings with local community, organized by DoA officials, seeks the active involvement of local population in the interpretation of the site. These meetings should have the aim of producing part of the contents for the brochures and multimedia materials which will be exposed in the Visitor Centre and provided to the visitors.

<sup>13</sup> In order to elaborate the contents, it is necessary to pay attention to the updates related to the legal implications of the Convention and of the List (e.g. the change in the number of States Parties ratifying the Convention and the number of properties inscribed in the list).

**What is a Visitor Centre?**

A Visitor Centre has the goal of interpreting the value of a place and being able to communicate it in an effective way to the visitor, who will gain an overview of the site.

A Visitor Centre differs from museums since “there are no scholarly inventories, no collections, no objects on loan or in exchange with other museums, and there is no academic staff” (Dumas, A., Hauer, S., Ripp, M., n.d.) and it does not have as main aim that of conserving artefacts. As a matter of fact, the main focus of a Visitor Centre is the visitor.

The Visitor Centre should interpret historical and cultural facts with the aim of letting the visitor develop a first impression of the property they will visit. Indeed, the Visitor Centre should not fully explain the site, but stimulate curiosity in the visitor who will gain a deeper knowledge during the visit, by experiencing directly the site.

Thus, the Visitor Centre should be as clear and effective as possible to explain the value of the property and should encourage and stimulate the visitor’s curiosity in exploring the immediate site. Consequently it is necessary to develop innovative and enjoyable communication and learning methods (i.e. interactive, visual, auditory media devices) able to meet the different human senses, motivating in this way the visitor to gain easily and quickly “a deeper understanding” (Dumas, A., Hauer, S., Ripp, M., n.d.) of the property.

**Comparison between Visitor Centres and Museums**

Specifications	Visitor Centre	Museum
<b>Content</b>	Selected, greatly reduced, exemplary, mainly medially communicated	Comprehensive, representative, communication based on originals and media
<b>Scope</b>	Provides an overview	Provides an overview and details
<b>Location</b>	Immediate to main artery of visitors Immediate to Cultural and Natural Heritage	Defined by other parameters
<b>Definition / Mission</b>	A visitor centre is a public facility with exhibition character that has a direct relation to a local attraction or the immediate environment. As such it provides an overview and first point of contact to tourists and citizens as well as a central meeting and starting point for guided tours or for individual exploration of the site. Visitor centres are usually connected directly to the cultural or natural heritage sites. Information is usually communicated in an integrated permanent exhibition either in analogic or digital form as well as verbally	A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly (Vienna, Austria, 24 August 2007)
<b>Communication</b>	Designed for fast perception; textual and medial brevity; interactive elements; limited possibility for in depth study	In depth study possible
<b>Scientific Work</b>	Not a permanent feature of the basic design, nor, in special activities, such as lectures, special exhibitions, guided tours	Conceptually a permanent feature of collections, inventory, research, and more ...
<b>Target Group</b>	Visitors, citizens, public experts	Special interest groups with an affinity to presented themes
<b>Cross-linkage</b>	On-site cultural landscape features and possibly other cultural assets.	Other museums and cultural assets, i.e. loans, joint exhibitions and projects
<b>Additional Services</b>	Tourist information, possible shop, restaurant catering	Possible shop, restaurant catering
<b>Primary Motivation of Visitors</b>	Gain an overview or information on services, structure, and properties of the cultural or natural heritage site; the visitor centre is not the primary aim of a trip; visit special exhibitions	Specific themes of interest; familiarize oneself with a collection; see original

Table: Dumas, A., Hauer, S., Ripp, M., n.d.

## 2) Inner Footpaths

The works led in 2004 have already delineated the footpaths and the signage within the site. However, the lack of their maintenance hinders their perception. For this reason, the following steps are necessary:

- ✓ confirmation related to the footpaths indicated in the plan "Visitor circuits footpath layout", dated March 2005;
- ✓ valorisation of the area of the Roman *castrum* also through the reconstruction - within the Visitor Centre - of historical happenings from the Roman era till the Umayyad dynasty;
- ✓ to lead extraordinary maintenance, including the completion of what has been already planned, but not yet implemented;
- ✓ restoration and maintenance – with local materials - of the footpaths, with the aim of making them immediately identifiable;
- ✓ renovation of traditional signage, and addition of digital devices support.

## 3) Potential thematic itineraries for tourists

Starting from above-stated points, it is well understandable that Umm ar-Rasas is by all means a site potentially attracting tourists. Consequently, in the lines below three possible thematic itineraries to be developed and submitted to tourist operators are proposed. Such an initiative will be able to:

- ✓ increase world-wide attractiveness and appeal of the Jordanian territory;
- ✓ increase the popularity and the public awareness related to the theme of World Heritage and UNESCO;
- ✓ guarantee a rapid economic growth through sustainable tourism;
- ✓ foster integrated and collaborative relationships among different stakeholders such as institutions, tourism marketing organisations, organisations in charge of the World Heritage sites and an array of sponsors;
- ✓ present a different and alternative tourist offer, focusing particularly on the promotion of the area around Madaba;
- ✓ guarantee high-quality and authentic experiences for tourists.

### a. Jordanian UNESCO World Heritage sites itineraries

Currently, Jordan owns 4 properties listed on the UNESCO World Heritage list and 15<sup>14</sup> on the Tentative List, the "inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.e). The variety of Jordanian World Heritage sites – cultural, natural and mixed properties – constitutes a value which should be highlighted.

Bearing this in mind, it is advisable to devote a particular emphasis to the development of special tourist itineraries which focus exclusively on World Heritage sites.

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14 Abila City (Modern Qweilbeh) (18/06/2001); Al Qastal (Settlement) (18/06/2001); Azraq (11/05/2007); Dana Biosphere Reserve; Gadara (Modern Um Qeis or Qays) (18/06/2001); Jerash Archaeological City (Ancient Meeting Place of East and West); Mujib Nature Reserve (11/05/2007); Old City of Salt (13/01/2004); Pella (Modern Tabaqat Fahil) (18/06/2001); Qasr Al-Mushatta (18/06/2001); Qasr Bshir (a Roman Castellum) (18/06/2001); Shaubak Castle (Montreal) (18/06/2001); The Baptismal Site (Bethany beyond the Jordan) (18/06/2001); The Sanctuary of Agios Lot, At Deir 'Ain 'Abata (18/06/2001); Um el-Jimal (City) (18/06/2001) (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.a).

*b. The Spiritual Route*

From the analysis related to the religious itineraries for tourists, which have as main protagonists several Jordanian cultural sites, it is clear that in the vast majority of the spiritual and religious itineraries, the site of Umm ar-Rasas is not considered as a place to visit. Thus, it is highly recommended that the site of Umm ar-Rasas will start being promoted as a tourism destination among the itineraries related to Mount Nebo and Madaba area. On the other hand, we have to consider that such working hypothesis has been raised since years; indeed, the USAID/Jordan Tourism Development Project, funded in the central years of last decade, already explicitly stated the need to insert Umm ar-Rasas within the so-called "Madaba cluster". The fact that visitors do not stop at the mosaic floor of the Church of St Stephen and at the Stylite Tower does not allow to fully appreciate the richness of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Kingdom of Jordan.

*c. The Topographic 'Holy Land Route'*

The mosaics of the Church of St Stephen, also depicting hunting and fishing scenes, illustrate 15 cities on both the Jordan shores: *Neapolis-Nablus*, *Sebastis-Samaria*, actual *Sebastiya*, *Kesaria-Caesarea*, *Diospolis-Lyddā*, *Eleutheropolis- Beit Gibrin*, *Askalon*, *Gaza*, *Kastron Mephaa* in two scenes, *Philadelphia- 'Ammān*, *Midaba-Madaba*, *Esbous-Ḥesbān*, *Belemounta- Ma'in*, *Areopolis-Rabba*, *Charakmoba-el-Kerak*. As a consequence, anyone compare such a representation with the one of Madaba.

The so-called Madaba Map, found in 1896 within the Church of St George, is a historic-geographic document of high value. Within a surface of 15.70x5.60 m, it represents a great portion of the Holy Land in the VI century A.C., according to the Christian theological and geographic canons of the Byzantine period. The boundaries of the Biblical lands, with the city of Jerusalem at the center, are Phoenicia at North, the Mediterranean shore at West, the city of al-Kerak at East, and Egypt at South. The Map is very detailed, with around 150 names, most of them founded in biblical texts or in the "Onomasticon", written in the IV century by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, that can be reputed as the "guidelines" for its composition.

Indeed, the mosaics of Madaba and of St. Stephen actually are the only ones to show a topographic representation of the Holy Land at the turn between the late Byzantine era and the early Christian one.

*d. The Proximity Route*

To ensure visitors stay for a longer period in the proximity of the area of Mount Nebo and in particular that of Umm ar-Rasas, it could be interesting to strengthen the cultural and logistic connections with other sites such as Lahun, Umm al-Walid al-Qanatir, Mukawir and Ma'in, which present archaeological and landscape features of great interest (from Palaeolithic to Ottoman civilization) and which could be an important opportunity for the development of tourism.

## The Action Plan

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Bearing in mind the above, the creation of an action plan is needed, to provide a basis for the management and monitoring of the elements previously analysed. An action plan is a tool to limit challenges and a waste of time and money, by indicating the actions (short, medium and long term) that the various actors will be called upon to fulfil; the actors and the means through which such actions will be achieved; the indicators that measure the effectiveness of the undertaken activities; timescale and budget, as well as the funding sources. Consequently, in the following sections some suggested actions are shown.

- ✓ PRIORITY 1 – short term (in 1 year)
- ✓ PRIORITY 2 – medium term (in 3 years)
- ✓ PRIORITY 3 – long term (in 5 years)

### **PRIORITY 1 – short term (in 1 year)**

- ✓ to establish a financial budget which covers all the costs and expenditures for an appropriate development of the Visitor Centre, footpaths and itineraries;
- ✓ to ensure a constant and coordinated cooperation among all stakeholders;
- ✓ to establish an equal signage system within all Jordanian World Heritage sites, which should be clearly and conveniently signposted - also through WH emblem signs - along tourist routes (e.g. the Kings' highway), indicating the presence and the road to Umm ar-Rasas making it easily accessible to visitors;
- ✓ to establish a new, aesthetically pleasant, easily recognizable and identifiable signage within the site, the World Heritage Visitor Centre, the buffer zone and beyond. It should relate to the various attractions, places and functions, and new signage with indications of pathways, historical explanations and illustrations of the focal places, taking care of view-points and signs location also related to the general view on the site. Special care should be paid to the area of the quarries and to the Stylite Tower. Moreover, a directional signage for orientation and regulatory signage which bring rules and risks to the attention of visitors are mandatory. In addition, it is essential that the chosen signage does not physically or visually peril the heritage features;
- ✓ to ensure the presence of a staff that can be suitable for the functions performed in the World Heritage Visitor Centre (e.g. the person responsible for the ticket office should speak English);
- ✓ to equip adequately the offices and provide the staff with all the essential materials for supporting and exercising their work professionally, guaranteeing the maintenance of the structure and the promotion of the site;
- ✓ to ensure a constant and coordinated opening of the ticket office, the exhibition hall, cafeteria and souvenir shop, as well as the tourist police office;
- ✓ to ensure the opening and regular functioning of the toilets within the site;
- ✓ to ensure a constant maintenance, both planned and extraordinary;
- ✓ to ensure a continuous surveillance and security, reception, maintenance and cleaning;
- ✓ to establish an alarm monitoring centre;
- ✓ to provide quality information materials in different languages, giving the priority to English and Arabic (i.e. informative panels, brochures<sup>15</sup>, maps);
- ✓ to provide an adequate system of communication and publicity in different languages (through a close collaboration with the Jordan Tourism Board, media and the press), with the aim of making the site and the World Heritage Visitor Centre known to a wider audience;
- ✓ to strengthen the work collaboration with the local community, encourage and promote quality local production, particularly handicraft and culinary products, linked to local traditions and materials;
- ✓ to establish an appropriate tourists reception, strengthening the management within the cafeteria and the courtyard (providing local food and beverage, brochures and a site map);
- ✓ to provide the exhibition hall of an adequate system of communication (panels, maps and brochure related to the theme of World Heritage and Umm ar-Rasas);
- ✓ to equip the World Heritage Visitor Centre with Wi-Fi facility and an adequate coverage in the entire structure;
- ✓ to offer regular guided walking tours. Tour guides should be adequately trained and efficiently coordinated in the World Heritage and local community interpretation concept, thus a particular ability in storytelling related to folk traditions and to the outstanding value of the site will be required. Tour guides' performance has to be assessed to support customer satisfaction. Moreover, diverse tours could be planned to address the various interests and needs of different visitors (e.g. tours for school groups, senior traveller groups);
- ✓ to contact the largest travel agencies related to religious tourism (e.g. *Custodia Terrae Sanctae*; *Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi*) and invite them to include Umm ar-Rasas as a destination within the proposed routes;
- ✓ particular attention should be paid to the footpath towards St Stephen's Church, establishing the South- West entrance as main access to the church;

15 Brochures, besides explaining the value of the site, should be able to provide information on the World Heritage Visitor Centre, its activities and facilities (souvenir shop, cafeteria, future bookshop etc.), opening hours, how to reach the site, thus transport connections (by road and air), maps, footpaths and itineraries.

✓ in every Jordanian World Heritage site, it will be necessary to guarantee the constant presence of tourist guide tours, available in different languages and at fixed hours of the day, which will be focused on the theme of World Heritage.

### **PRIORITY 2 – medium term (in 3 years)**

- ✓ to provide and ensure the creation and distribution of promotional and information materials (e.g. informative panels, printed brochures, books, photos, maps, increasing the number of languages available, and - if necessary - updating the contents of the information materials) related to the Visitor Centre, footpaths, itineraries, the various attractions and facilities available in each site;
- ✓ to provide an adequate system of communication and publicity (e.g. through a close collaboration with media and press; the creation of a website in English which gathers all the Jordan World Heritage sites, providing information about their values, possible itineraries, opening hours (also holiday-related closures), contacts and facilities within the properties; the development of a social media campaign referred to Umm ar-Rasas and its World Heritage Visitor Centre);
- ✓ to ensure within the World Heritage Visitor Centre a clear representation of the proposed footpaths;
- ✓ to improve organisational practices, increasing accountability, reliance and transparency, establishing an effective and appropriate monitoring and function evaluation (e.g. list of fulfilled activities, amount of allocated funds for each function and activity etc.);
- ✓ to provide the exhibition hall of an adequate system of communication (panels and brochures provided with texts, maps, graphics, photographs, paintings, drawings; computer stationing; audio-visual facilities (videos, audio-recordings));
- ✓ to establish parking management;
- ✓ to improve the management of the cafeteria, developing a suitable cafeteria service (e.g. menu, English speaking personnel);
- ✓ to improve the management of the souvenirs shop and its product display (e.g. selection of quality local products to sell; create a list of products - with their prices- which can be sold in the shop; strengthen the involvement of local women in the production and in the sale);
- ✓ to improve the aesthetic appearance of the structure (e.g. setting the courtyard fountain into motion, providing it with a water recycling plant);
- ✓ to establish a well-provided bookshop, able to strengthen the knowledge visitors can acquire during their visit to the site;
- ✓ tour guides working within the site should attend courses offered by the site administration, which will be particularly focused on the history of Umm ar-Rasas, on local folk stories and on its values as a World Heritage site. For the employment as a site tour guide, a certificate awarded at the completion of the courses should be required;
- ✓ particular attention should be paid to the area between the complex of St Stephen's Church and the path to the Stylite Tower: the toilets block and the parking area should be repaired, using local materials; the reclamation of improper signage should be undertaken;
- ✓ to establish an inner sustainable transportation means between the St Stephen complex and the Stylite Tower (around 1.5 km distance) not in contrast with local uses; possible transport examples could be animal-drawn carts and/or electric transportation<sup>16</sup>;
- ✓ to ensure an appropriate training to local and national guides about the topic.

16 Considering the current conditions, the visitor transport to the Tower should stop at the quarries; from that point people should be invited to reach the Tower by walking. In addition, it is advisable to delineate a new path to the areas of the Tower and the quarries/water reservoirs.



### **PRIORITY 3 – long term (in 5 years)**

- ✓ to constantly update (taking into account the inclusion of Braille language both in English and Arabic) and create new information materials, introducing digital and technological devices and interactive facilities based on computer software (e.g. touch screens, personal computers) in the exhibition spaces and resting areas and innovative communication methods (i.e. visual, auditory, interactive, etc.) able to stimulate curiosity in the visitors and to communicate effectively the value of the site (e.g. multimedia hall with video projections, virtual visit of the site through devices based on augmented reality);
- ✓ to encourage and sponsor publications (e.g. books, reports, brochures, newsletters);
- ✓ to update the itinerary offer and the related informative materials according to possible new inscriptions of Jordanian sites in the WH List;
- ✓ to provide an adequate system of communication and publicity in different languages (through media and press; through tourism industry (tourism information points, travel agencies, tourism commercials); through the development of a social media campaign with Jordan Tourism Board; through the creation of a website, an app and digital devices within the World Heritage Visitor Centre of Umm ar-Rasas, available in different languages, which gather all the Jordanian World Heritage sites and provide information and suggestions about the itinerary, how to experience and enjoy Jordanian sites, their values, contacts, facilities within the properties, opening hours, transportation information, accommodation, upcoming events organized within the sites, eventual packages and souvenirs related to the Jordanian World Heritage properties);
- ✓ to strengthen parking management;
- ✓ to develop and strengthen partnerships with international organisations and establish an interdisciplinary collaborations with international experts specializing in particular themes related to World Heritage, tourism and community involvement;
- ✓ to create and schedule activities – workshops for local community, courses, concerts, talks, special exhibits, plays and other forthcoming events (e.g. in close collaboration with Jordan Tourism Board and other organizations) – able to involve both visitors and local community and to meet different targets and interests;
- ✓ to improve the souvenirs shop (e.g. invention and creation of new quality products which combine modern style with traditional materials and methods of production; souvenir production through the establishment of a laboratory hall in the WHVC in which the production activities could be visible to visitors, strengthen and improve the involvement of local women in the production and in the sale);
- ✓ to develop an appropriate restaurant service within the cafeteria (e.g. restaurant menu, English speaking personnel, waiting service within the restaurant and the courtyard area);
- ✓ to involve the local community in all the activities of the World Heritage Visitor Centre;
- ✓ to establish a public library and archive related to Umm ar-Rasas, which will add to a better understanding of the heritage;
- ✓ to increase the number of languages in which the tourist guide tours are available, enhance the quality and diversify the tour offer, meeting the needs and interests of different targets and age groups and providing them with high-quality and authentic experiences;
- ✓ to develop facilities (e.g. audio guides for visually impaired visitors) and guided tours which could be available for people with handicaps and disabilities, training tour guides to assist visitors with physical challenges;
- ✓ to create QR-codes and their arrangement in the different focal points of the paths;
- ✓ to organize clear pathways which connect the different site areas (The Roman *castrum*, the mosaic churches and the Stylite Tower).

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