

P R O J E C T
proposal

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**DEVELOPMENT OF
WORLD HERITAGE
INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT
CAPACITY IN THE
ARAB STATES**

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DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CAPACITY IN THE ARAB STATES

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Project implementation: *World Heritage Centre (UNESCO Culture Sector)*

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INTRODUCTION :

During its 24th session, in December 2000, the World Heritage Committee received the results of the Periodic Reporting in the Arab States. The main objective of these reports was to provide the Committee with information in order to assess ***'the legislative and administrative provisions they have adopted and other actions which they (the State Parties) have taken for the application of the Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on its territories'*** (Extract of paragraph II.B.69 of the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*).

The Periodic Reports demonstrated the difficulties that the State Parties are facing in implementing the World Heritage Convention and managing the World heritage Sites. These reports revealed, among other problems, that ***'the territorial boundaries and buffer zones of the sites are often disputed and are not well defined, which prevents control of the deterioration factors of the sites (urban expansion, road systems, agriculture etc.)***. ***Hardly any site has coherent and on-going documentation and monitoring systems'*** (Extract of

Figure 1: al-Baleed archaeological site, Sultanate of Oman, Author 1999.



paragraph 1.4. *Management and conservation of the World Heritage Sites – Document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.20A : Regional Program for the Arab States*) and that **‘Information management includes the collection and processing of documents and information enabling better implementation of the Convention and the effective management of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List... The nomination dossiers prior to 1997 rarely contain up-to-date topographical maps, geographic coordinates, photos, recent bibliographies, etc., provided by the Conservation Services and the sites. With rare exceptions, the sites have not produced appropriate maps or measurements defining the boundaries and buffer zones. This lack of information is very detrimental to the conservation of heritage properties, because it prevents the establishment of a coherent system of legal protection, monitoring and maintenance.’** (Extract of paragraph 1.6. *Information management - Document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.20A : Regional Program for the Arab States*).

In summary :

1 - ‘the main problems concerning the management and conservation of the World Heritage sites are :

- Lack of an appropriate and long term methodology for the management and conservation of the sites (identification of values, planning, continuous maintenance, presentation, monitoring, evaluations, etc.)**
- Lack of capacities in conservation techniques and monitoring activities’**

(Extract of paragraph 1.4. *Management and conservation of the World Heritage Sites – Document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.20A : Regional Program for the Arab States*).

2 - The weak points are:

- Lack of adequate documentation at the sites;
- Lack of World Heritage management and information exchange capacities;

(Extract of paragraph 1.6. *Information management* - Document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.20A : *Regional Program for the Arab States*).

Taking these observations into account, a project financed by the Flemish authorities was elaborated for the '***Development of a World Heritage information management capacity in the Arab States***'.

PROJECT PRESENTATION:

Objectives:

The objectives of the project are:

- 1) To make available updated information relative to the Convention to World Heritage site managers in the Arab region and the general public; and
- 2) To assist in capacity building on World Heritage information management within the Arab States, including data collection, production of maps and production of monitoring systems, in order to improve the management and the conservation of World Heritage Sites in the region.

Implementation:

The project will consist of four main activities:

- 1 - The creation and the development of an Arabic language web site on the World Heritage in the Arab Region, in cooperation with the a regional partner (possibly the Al Ain Authority, from the United Arab Emirates);
- 2 - The development of, through pilot workshops in the field, of four training modules for the reinforcement of capacity in World Heritage information management;
- 3 – The development of a human and scientific resources network (database, list of experts, responsible institutions, bibliography, etc.)
- 4 - The organization of a regional workshop in order to present the results of these activities to regional partners, collect their comments and define follows up action.

Figure 2: Roman theatre of Jableh, Syria. Photo: T. al-Murri. 1999.



1 - Creation and development of a web site in Arabic:

This web site will have an important role in spreading the principles of the World Heritage Convention by keeping the responsible institutions informed of about the World Heritage Sites and activities of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee worldwide and particularly in the Arab Region. It will not be an Arabic translation of the existing World Heritage web site. The objective is to provide useful web pages according to the needs that have been identified.

The web site in Arabic should contain:

- 1- the official documents relating to the World Heritage Convention in Arabic.
- 2- a human and scientific resources network.
- 3- a discussion forum (for site managers, national institutions, the World Heritage Centre, international experts and advisory bodies).
- 4- a news page in Arabic containing information concerning Arab World Heritage sites (news items updated provided by the World Heritage Centre).
- 5- a page containing reports, training kits and other materials of interest to site managers, schools and the general public.

Other topics can be added during the realisation of this web site.

The World Heritage Centre has already started implementing the following points:

- 1- The official documents relating to the World Heritage Convention in Arabic: materials and texts to build up the content of these web pages are being assembled and translated.

2- A human and scientific resources network

In the future, in order to ensure the regular up dating of the information, the web site could be maintained in cooperation with the Al-Ain Authority, United Arab Emirates.

2 - Training modules:

Please consult a detailed explanation in **Document nr. 2 (Proposal)**.

3 - Development of a human and scientific resources network (database, list of experts, responsible institutions, bibliography, etc.)

This issue will be implemented by the Arab States Unit at the World Heritage Centre. A letter has been sent to each State Party with information sheets (in Arabic and English or French), concerning all of the World Heritage sites, to be completed and returned to the Centre. These sheets will identify the person responsible for relations with the World Heritage Centre and implementation of the World Heritage Convention as well as the person responsible for site management.

4 - Regional Workshop

The web site and training modules will be presented to concerned institutions and individuals from the Arab Region through a Regional Workshop, to be organized in Al Aïn (UAE) in cooperation with the Al Aïn Authority, at the end of 2003. The Workshop will constitute an occasion for exchanges among site managers, international heritage management experts and IT partners from the region.

This workshop will also be an opportunity for all the participants to get more information on the HEREIN system. The training module corresponding to the course on the HEREIN system will be presented in order to increase the interest of the states parties.

This workshop seeks to be the catalyst for the development of agreements on the implementation of training modules (kits) for all sites in the region. State parties can support such agreements by requesting training assistance from the WH fund, which will be in charge of the implementation of all the activities relating to the project, in close collaboration with the identified partners.