



MISSION REPORT

Participants: Franca Miglioli, WHC/ARB
Maria Gropas, WHC/ARB

Dates of mission: 21 – 31 January 2009

Type of travel: Technical Assistance to State Party

WH Sites: Old Walled City of Shibam
Historic Town of Zabid
Old City of Sana'a

Budget code n°: 534GLO4000 and 817GLO4000

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PURPOSE OF THE MISSION

This mission was requested by the State Party in order to:

In Shibam: visit the World Heritage Site and be informed, on-site, of the challenges posed as a consequence of the recent disastrous floods in November 2008;

In Zabid: assess the progress made in the implementation of the urgent actions set out by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session.

In Sana'a: discuss the preparation of the Conservation Plan for the Old City.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The World Heritage Centre wishes to express its gratitude to the following people:

- H.E. Mr Mr Khaled Ismail Al-Akwa'a, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Yemen to UNESCO, for kindly assisting in the organization of the mission;
- Dr. Abdullah Zaid Ayssa, Chairman of GOPCHY, for his ongoing co-operation with the World Heritage Centre and Mr Nabil A. Monassar, DG of GOPHCY-Zabid, for his professionalism and enthusiasm.;
- The German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) staff and in particular Mr Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, Team leader, and Mr Hadi Saliba, Senior Advisor, for their precious support, time and great hospitality;

1. Old Walled City of Shibam

The main purpose of the mission to Shibam was to visit the World Heritage Site and be informed, on-site, of the challenges posed as a consequence of the disastrous floods in November 2008. In parallel, it was an opportunity for the World Heritage Centre to visit the rehabilitation work carried out within the framework of the “Development of Historical Cities in Yemen” project implemented in partnership between by the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and the Social Fund for Development (SFD) over the past decade.

The overall impression was extremely favourable as a great deal of conservation and restoration works have been carried out throughout the city. Indeed, 65% of the buildings have been restored. However, there are some slight technical concerns which ought to be addressed; namely the mounting of pipes running along the walls (both the front and back walls) of the buildings. Moreover, a pilot paving project is currently underway, for which, on the basis of the first results, the GTZ consultant suggests that additional tests be carried out both from a technical and an aesthetic point of view, before deciding on extending the paving to the rest of the city.

Moreover, the mission observed with great concern the extent of the damage of the Hadramawt valley and noted the effect of the floods on the World Heritage Site.

The following issues were identified and discussed in detail:

- The city wall and the water diverting systems: while the first assessment made by GOPHCY had concluded that the World Heritage Site had suffered no immediate damage, the damages are, however, beginning to manifest themselves, mainly through apparent serious problems in the city wall. An analysis of the extent of the damage and its consequences has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre by an independent ICOMOS expert (see annex 3). This report will be discussed during a workshop at the WHC in February to identify the subsequent actions required, in view of possible funding by international donors. Despite the fact that the city has survived the advent of the flood, we view with great concern the extent of the damage that took place to the flood protection mechanisms of Shibam and the fact that the city is now exposed to future floods.
- Mosque of Qabub: construction work is currently being carried out on the Mosque of Qabub, situated to the west of the city wall, and included as part of the World Heritage Site. This work is being funded privately and aims to increase the height of the external wall leading to the entry of the courtyard. This important increase in height causes both a visual impact on the Mosque as well as a change in the architectural layout. GOPHCY and GTZ



informed the mission that this work is being carried out without any previous communication to them. The mission was told that this unfortunate lack of communication is recurrent as previous work, of a much larger scale and impact on the Mosque, has taken place in the past. The mission is concerned about this and would like to see a more stringent control applied.

- Shugaia: the GTZ team informed the mission that a new settlement situated approximately 500m east of the city walls and in the middle of the wadi Hadramawt, is developing at an alarming rate. This development is both planned and permitted by the local authorities who, we were told, are issuing land rights and construction permits. At present, this settlement project counts approximately 120 housing units, with a clear view for them to reach 2,500. Based on the information obtained and on a visit to the area, the mission maintains that the settlement should be immediately halted and relocated for two reasons. First, the Shugaia settlement is located within the rural landscape which forms an integral part of the World Heritage Site. As a result, there is a severe impact on the sight, thereby compromising its visual integrity. Second, houses are being built in the flood-prone area of the wadi, thereby creating a sort of dam which could have devastating effects for both the site and the population in the event of a flood. Indeed, this was the case in the recent floods where concrete wall constructions delineating a parcel acted as a dam which impeded the natural flow of water and redirecting it towards the neighbouring houses and the site.



New construction in Shugaia with Shibam in the background



Damages caused as a result of the flood in a house situated in the wadi

- The mission would like to reiterate that, at the time of inscription on the World Heritage List, ICOMOS and the Bureau recommended that the World Heritage site should be extended to include this area of the wadi Hadramawt. In line with this recommendation, the conservation plan which is currently being prepared includes the extension of the Site to the Shugaia area. The mission's deep concern of the settlements at Shugaia, as well as the inappropriate location of a new police station on the western end of the buffer of the city, was discussed with the Minister of Culture.

2. Historic Town of Zabid

2.1 Background

The previous ICOMOS/WHC mission (January 2007) had noted that the degradation was on-going and with evidence of accelerated loss of heritage assets. Until then, the limited international efforts for the safeguard of Zabid (including missions of experts funded by the World Heritage Fund) had not been supported by a public local and regional enhancement strategy and State Party technical and financial investments. The conservation and rehabilitation problems of Zabid did not appear to be high on the agenda of several governmental ministries.

A package of undertakings was recommended, later adopted by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in July 2007 (Dec. **31 COM 7A.19**) for onward promotion to the State Party for immediate agreement, commitment, funding and action.

Therefore the Yemeni Government was urged to:

a) Provide an adequate legal and institutional framework set up including:

- *Re-issuance of Cabinet Decree No.425 – 2006; Government provision to GOPHCY in Sana'a and Zabid of adequate budget to stabilise the degradation of the World Heritage property;*
- *Completion of heritage protection laws;*
- *Completion of the draft Conservation Plan, with translation into Arabic. Provision of short version for wide dissemination.*

b) Stop immediately the physical degradation and reversed the process within two years:

- *Stopping of poor new construction and further degradation of protected heritage assets,*
- *Approval of contractors and individual specialists for carrying out emergency conservation works,*
- *Appropriate house improvement design – bathrooms and kitchens, infrastructure and air conditioning,*

- *Good designs for new houses within Zabid,*
- *Starting demolition of the concrete walls on the streets and other public spaces and replacing with brick walls,*
- *Planned, costed and programmed schedule of medium and long-term actions,*
- *Prescription rules and regulations to be followed by inhabitants and owners,*
 - *Adoption of Zabid Urban Development Plan.*

2.2 Findings of the mission

The mission had the opportunity to ascertain that several very positive changes have occurred since January 2007, thereby opening a new chapter for the site. In particular:

- a strong commitment at the highest political level for the preservation of the city;
- the project agreement with the GTZ and its co-operation with the SFD to provide Zabid with 9 years of assistance, replicating the successful experience of rehabilitation programme implemented in Shibam.

The mission's main interlocutors in Zabid were both GOPHCY and the GTZ which kindly hosted the WHC mission in its guest house. The coinciding of the WHC mission and the two GTZ experts' mission (Daniele Pini and Cristina Iamandi) was extremely fruitful as it allowed for an interactive collaboration.

Below is a summary of the main findings of the mission:

- **At the governmental level,** the Law Concerning the Preservation of Historical Cities and Architectural Cultural Heritage has been finalised after several year of gestation and is currently awaiting Presidential signature. All the people met are confident that the law will be issued shortly. Its endorsement will finally clarify an at present ambiguous legal framework for the Yemeni cultural heritage preservation and, in particular, should give a clear mandate and power to GOPHCY, establish the punishment for illegal activities, and define incentives for residents in historical cities.

In November 2007, the Decree 437/2007 put Zabid on the list of the most urgent national priorities and a Higher Ministerial Coordination Committee for Zabid was set up. Recently, a Presidential letter instructing the newly appointed Governor of Hodeidah to stop the violations taking place in Zabid and to monitor closely the issue of the preservation of Zabid confirms the political will to preserve the town.

The Higher Ministerial Committee has already met four times in Hodeida, the last meeting having taken place immediately prior to the arrival of the mission. The role of the various governmental and local authorities is clearly defined and their commitment is mainly illustrated in the allocation of an important budget sum for Zabid. In certain cases this is for the first time (i.e.: the Ministry of Waqf for the restoration of its properties). However, the wider economic situation which is obliging the Government to reduce its budget by 50%, is contributing to a generalized feeling of fear that promises made by the government will not be upheld.

- For the first time, **GOPHCY – Zabid** has gained considerable presence in the town. This has been largely thanks to the tripling of resources by the Ministry of Culture and the appointment of a new director from GOPHCY-Sana'a since September 2008. Moreover, funds for additional staff salaries and equipment are provided by the GTZ. As a result, the GOPHCY office counts a total of 28 people and a new efficient bureau. It should be underlined that payment of these additional costs by the GTZ in order to cover office needs and requirements raises an issue of sustainability in the medium and long-term.

The absence of clear rules and regulations defining what is permitted and what constitutes a violation has been, until now, at the very core of the challenges facing the preservation and the development of the town of Zabid. Until a Conservation Plan for the town of Zabid is finalised, GOPHCY is in need of temporary regulations which will allow GOPHCY to issue permits (or refuse them) based on sets of logically formulated regulations, rather than in an arbitrary fashion. An architectural survey of the plots of the historic town, carried out in early 2008 by master-degree students from a French University and co-financed by GTZ and the World Heritage Fund (in Danger sites), now offers a classification of plots according to their heritage value. On the basis of this, during the mission the GTZ expert, Daniele Pini, discussed actual requests of building permits with GOPCHY and GTZ staff, suggesting how to identify possible types of interventions. His previous report of December 2008 makes an interesting analysis of the present situation and proposes a practical conservation strategy for Zabid, which is being adopted by the local team (see annex 4).

In the meanwhile, illegal interventions have not stopped and GOPHCY is finding itself in an increasingly difficult predicament. An inventory of the violations has been carried out for the first time, and the procedure for the demolition of four illegal buildings has been launched by the Director of Gophcy-Zabid. The need of a stronger support from the authorities, in particular from the police, is absolutely crucial, in order to diffuse tension directed solely towards GOPHCY staff.

- The studies for the Storm Water Drainage and Street Paving Project have been completed and a pilot segment is under implementation. While the project is noteworthy and necessary, the members of the mission (both WHC and GTZ) remained unconvinced of the implementation of the pilot segment which appears to not correspond to the original plan proposed, namely regarding the dimension of the stones used, the degree of inclination, etc



Pavement pilot project in Zabid.

- The GTZ presented the UNESCO mission with the array of activities they are actively involved in Zabid, during in the first phase of the **SFD/GTZ project**. These include:
 - A housing programme, which foresees to subsidy the restoration of 200 houses in the first phase and has already implemented 48 works;
 - A souk rehabilitation subsidy scheme, under which the first five reconstruction contracts with shops in the souk have already been signed, and a further 15 shopkeepers have submitted applications to GTZ for consideration;

- A sort of subsidy scheme for the production of bricks, guaranteeing their purchase in case of not sale, which has engendered the creation of a competitive market and the decrease of the price of the bricks ;
- A community development project in association with civil society;
- A collaboration with the Waqf for restoring mosques;
- A wood conservation laboratory as part of the conservation project, set up after having carried out a training programme for young women;

It was highlighted that the SFD/GTZ project mandate is to improve social capacity and economic development for poverty alleviation, and that they support the conservation of cultural heritage if it becomes a basis for development and economic gain for the local population. The GTZ informed the mission of the situation 'on the ground,' stressing that the launching of the project had been much more difficult than expected, mainly due to the general resistance of both the inhabitants and the religious institutions. For this reason, they had decided to not undertake a visibility campaign before obtaining the first results from the project. However, despite the difficulties many indicators have been achieved faster than in Shibam and now they are organising awareness campaigns at different levels. Moreover, the cooperation with local imams in restoring some mosques is helping to reduce the opposition.

- **At the local level**, the mission met with the Mudhir Mudiriya (Chairman of the Local Council) and the Secretary General of the Local Council of the Hodeidah Governorate / Deputy Governor. It was noted that the general attitude of Zabidis is shifting following a series of efforts which have been undertaken by both international cooperation and the central government. They noted that the historical reality has been that Zabidis have never really benefited from the WH Listing; quite the contrary, it has brought many hindrances. It was stressed that in order for any initiative to bear local approval, it ought to be accompanied by economic development and job creation.
- The mission met with several associations which are collaborating with GTZ.

One of the more active is the Association for the Revitalisation of the Souk, which was established in 2008 in an effort to bring into a collective the concerns of the people of the souk and to facilitate the international work being undertaken. The mission was invited to participate in the launching of the restoration work of the first shop in the souk, financed by the GTZ subsidy scheme.



World Heritage Centre staff invited to launch the restoration of a shop in the souk by removing the first concrete block.

A project, co-financed by UNESCO Cairo and GTZ, to improve the quality of the goods for sale in the souk will be implemented. The souk association noted that by retaining the Historic Town of Zabid on the WH List in danger will help maintain the central government's ongoing commitment to address the town's challenges.

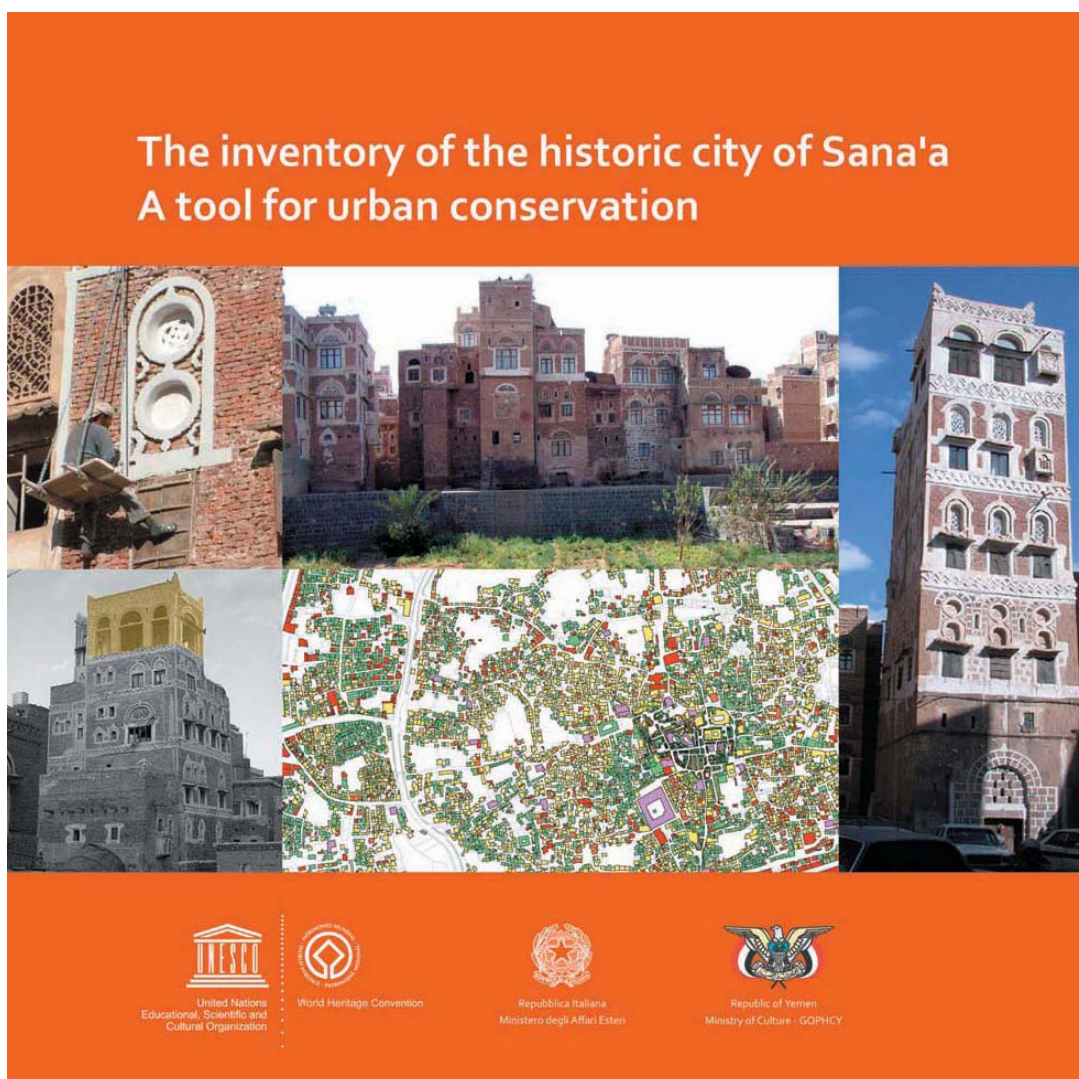
Many women's associations, where marginalized women gather to work with silver, leather, and crafts, are being supported through 'on the job' training activities, with a view to expand the training to notions of management, and marketing.

Finally, there is association work focused on awareness-raising among Zabidis on their culture (both tangible and intangible) and its preservation.

3. Old City of Sana'a

3.1 The Conservation Plan for the Old City

From 2003 to 2006 studies were undertaken by the World Heritage Centre and GOPHCY to establish appropriate conservation measures for the Old City of Sana'a. The studies, funded through the UNESCO/Italian Funds-in-Trust Cooperation, included an assessment of the state of conservation of the Old City, a detailed inventory of its building and open spaces, and a proposed work plan to set up a Conservation Plan Unit. A publication of the results of these activities was prepared by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in December 2008; the mission presented it to the Yemeni Authorities and the Italian Ambassador.



The local component of the Conservation Plan Unit should have been funded by national sources, whereas the international expertise should have been supported by UNESCO, through the Netherland-Funds-in-Trust. However, given that the setting up of the Conservation Plan Unit took more time than foreseen, the donor decided to reallocate the funds.

The issue of the Conservation Plan was discussed with the Chairman of GOPHCY and the Minister of Planning (also Director of the Social Fund and Deputy Prime Minister). At the local level, a Project Unit has now been established and the Yemeni Authorities are looking for international co-operation to support the technical expertise.

Ms Miglioli and Mr Pini (previous UNESCO consultant for the inventory of the buildings) presented the results of the inventory project in a meeting with the Italian Ambassador in Yemen, asking the Italian Cooperation to continue supporting the conservation of the Old City; this time on a bilateral basis. The Italian Ambassador expressed his deep interest and asked for an official request from the Yemeni Government. A letter was immediately drafted with GOPHCY and sent by the Minister of Culture.

Finally, while waiting for the preparation of a Conservation Plan, it is crucial to note that recent constructions such as that depicted below ought to be avoided at all costs.



Source: P. Jerome

3.2 The state of conservation of the open spaces

During its short visit of the Old City, the mission had the opportunity to observe a severe state of decay of several open spaces.

A project to renovate these open areas had been implemented in the last years, and the gardens have been revitalized. Indeed, the previous mission (January 2007) observed that the majority of them were well cultivated.

In contrast, this time many of the *bustans* (gardens) are in a poor state, suffering from the lack of cultivation. The mission was told that this is largely due to a water scarcity faced by the city of Sana'a. It should be noted that previously, the irrigation of the *bustans* was linked to the re-cycling of the grey water coming from the mosques. This, however, is no longer the case as the water used for ritual ablutions, far from being reduced, is now canalized to the sewage system rather than being redirected to the *bustans*.

The mission expressed its deep concern for this matter with the local authorities. This concern is centred on three main points. First, the *bustans* represent one of the most important features of the historic fabric. Second, the abandoning of the gardens can lead to a general decay of the buildings surrounding the open spaces. Third, this abandonment could lead to a possible construction of buildings within these open spaces. Beside a strong legislation to protect these open areas, efforts have to be done to re-establish the traditional irrigation system.

4. Other issues

The mission had a telephone conversation with the Minister of Environment in relation to **Socotra** and its management. It was informed that there is an ongoing debate with international donors to co-ordinate several different projects, but the Government's decision is to create a Socotra National Authority, under which all the activities in the island will be managed. This would replace the Socotra Conservation and Development Programme (SCDP), until now managed by UNDP.

In addition, it was convened that the Netherlands-Funds-in-Trust will provide funding for experts to train local staff on heritage related issues, including the drafting of required Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for the three World Heritage Sites. Indeed, it was noted with the Director of GOPHCY that the Statements of Outstanding Universal Value will be sent to the World Heritage Centre by 31 July 2009.

Finally, the mission was told that the Yemeni government would like to nominate al-Hajarain for

inscription on the World Heritage List. This was subsequently discussed with the Yemeni Ambassador to UNESCO, H.E. Mr Al-Akwa'a, where the World Heritage Centre recommended that the Yemeni government gives, rather, high priority to preserving the unique cultural landscape of the Wadi Hadramawt with its subsidiary valleys, in particular Wadi Daoan, as it constitutes a unique situation and a last example of a desert cultural landscape. Indeed, according to expert opinion conveyed to the World Heritage Centre, Wadi Do'an is one of the only surviving traditional Arabian oasis cultural landscapes and lifestyles that is still intact. Although there is no doubt that the setting of al-Hajarain in the beginning of the Wadi is impressive, the unusual typology of tower houses and decorative details is richer and much more developed in the remoter regions of the Wadi Do'an in both its right and left branches. Villages such as Sif, Budha, Hudun, al-Garain, Khoreiba, and Rabat Ba'isheen in the right branch retain remarkable integrity, as do towns in the left branch including Dhari, Hosn Basad, Kheufa and Tolibah. The cultural landscape includes dry stone walls that divert flood waters to the palm groves, beekeeping as well as other agricultural activities, sheep and camel herding. Because the Wadi Do'an is relatively narrow, the tower houses are clustered on steep embankments as hill towns crowned by citadels. The vast majority of the buildings are of mud brick construction (there has been a 2% incursion of concrete buildings since the road was asphalted two years ago and every village now has a concrete mosque). From any town, the view across the Wadi reveals yet another town blending in with the landscape of sheer cliff walls, a carpet of green palm trees in between following the course of the dry river bed. Moreover, it should be noted that cultural landscapes are an under-represented category on the World Heritage List. For the above reasons, it was conveyed to the Ambassador that such a cultural landscape nomination would be more advisable than yet another nomination of a historical city in Yemen.

5. Main outcomes and recommendations

5.1 -For the Old walled city of Shibam

- To urgently undertake the necessary measures for the stability of the city's wall with the assistance of international co-operation;
- To immediately halt the expansion of the settlement in Shugaia;
- To consider the extension of the World Heritage Site to include the wadi Hadramawt surrounding area.

5.2 Historic town of Zabid

- The mission noted that for the first time since Danger Listing, the situation in Zabid appears to be improving, and activities seem to be carrying the city towards the right direction. As a

result, the mission concluded that danger listing should remain for a probationary period of two more years (i.e. until 2011) in order to provide enough time for the results to surface.

- It is imperative that the Law Concerning the Preservation of Historical Cities and Architectural Cultural Heritage be approved.
- It is crucial to make the temporary GOPHCY staff permanent, given its heavy workload as well as the demanding nature of the work. Moreover, it is strongly recommended that GOPHCY's work is supported and complemented tangibly by the police forces when intervention is required in the violation cases.
- It is now necessary that the central government continues supporting the conservation and development activities in Zabid and ensures that promises are upheld, despite the current precarious economic situation. This is crucial in order to ensure that the work done thus far is not lost.

5.3 Old City of Sana'a

- Prepare the Conservation Plan and, in the meantime, reinforce the stringent construction measures in order to control the building activities in the Old City:
- Identify measures in order to revitalise the *bustans* of the Old City.

5.4 Other

- To put in place a viable management system for the Island of Socotra;
- To give high priority to preserving the unique cultural landscape of the Wadi Hadramawt with its subsidiary valleys, in particular Wadi Daoan, as a unique example of a desert cultural landscape.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. List of People Met

In Shibam

- Mr Hadi Saliba, Senior Technical and Conservation Advisor, GTZ
- Mr Jamal Bamakhrama: Director of GOPHCY-Shibam
- Mr Ahmed Abdullahi: Team Leader GTZ
- Mr Tom Leiermann: Architect, restorer, GTZ
- Mr Fouad Abbad: Director of the Infrastructure Unit, GTZ

In Zabid / Hodeidah

- Mr. Nabil Monassar, D.G of local GOPHCY
- Col. Abdulal Al-Modwahi, Chairman of Local Council
- Mr. Najeeb Haroon, Secretary General Local Council
- Mr Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, Team leader of Project for development of Historic Cities of Yemen (PDHCY), GTZ
- Ms Zouka Karazoun, Senior Expert PDHCY Zabid, GTZ
- Ms Bahria Shamsheer Ali, Economic and Social Advisor PDHCY Zabid, GTZ
- Representatives of local NGOs (Association for the souk revitalisation, Women's.associations, Al Huseib Association.)
- Mr Hassan Ahmad Al Haige, Secretary General of the Local Council of the Hodeidah Governorate / Deputy Governor.

In Sana'a

- Mr Mohammed Abubaker Al Muflehi, Minister of Culture
- Mr Abdulkarim Al-Arhabi, Minister of Planning, Managing Director of the Social Fund for Development (SFD), Deputy Prime Minister
- Mr Abdullah Zaid Ayssa, Chairman of General Organisation for the Preservation of Historic Cities of Yemen (GOPHCY)
- Mr Mohamed A. Al-Kadasi, Secretary General of the National Commission for UNESCO
- Mr Abdullah A. Dailami, Head of Infrastructure and Cultural Units of SFD

- Mr Basheer Al-Kainae, General Manager of CATS - GOPHCY
- Ms Julia Thielebein, CIM-GTZ
- Ms Katja Schäfer, Urban Heritage Management Expert, GTZ
- Jamal Majam, International co-operation, Ministry of Culture

Annex 2. Schedule of the mission - 21/31 January 2009

Participants: Franca Miglioli (FM) and Maria Gropas (MG) for WHC
Daniele Pini (DP) + Cristina Iamandi (CI) for GTZ

Date	Day	Time	Activity	Who
21/1	Wednesday	22:30	Arrival on LH 652 flight	FM, MG
22/1	Thursday	08:00	Departure to Seyun (Yemenia flight)	FM, MG
			Visit of Shibam with GOPHCY and GTZ staff	
23/1	Friday	morning	Visit of Shibam and	
		15:30	Departure to Sanaa (Felix flight)	FM, MG
24/1	Saturday	06:00	Departure to Hodeida (Felix flight)	All
			Meeting with representatives of GOPHCY and GTZ.	
25/1	Sunday		Visit of Zabid	All
		12:00	Meeting with the Chairman of Local Council	All
26/1	Monday		Discussion on Zabid Conservation Plan. Working on the report	

27/1	Tuesday	morning	Meetings with local NGOs. Visit of the souk	FM, MG
		afternoon	Transfer to Hodeida Meeting with the Secretary general of the Local Council of the Hodeidah Governorate / Deputy Governor	All
28/1	Wednesday	07:00	Transfer to Sanaa	All
		15:00	Visit of the city	
		19:00	Meeting with the Minister of Culture	All
29/1	Thursday	10:00	Meeting with GOPHCY on Sanaa Conservation Plan	FM, DP
		11:30	Meeting with the Minister of Planning	FM, MG, CI
		15:00	Meeting with the Italian Ambassador	FM, DP
30/1	Friday	morning	Visit of the city	FM, MG
		13:30	Lunch with the Secretary General of UNESCO Nat. Com. and the Chairman of GOPHCY	FM, MG, DP
31/1	Saturday	00:05	Departure from Sana'a, LH 653	FM, MG