



State of Conservation Report (2023)
for
Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern
Jerusalem, Battir –
Palestine (1492)



Bethlehem, Palestine

January 2024

The State of Conservation Report (SoC) for the World Heritage Property (WHP) **Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir (1492)** was prepared by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in close cooperation with other related stakeholders.

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1. Executive Summary

The World Heritage Property, "Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, Palestine (Ref. 1492)", was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014 under emergency nomination due to the imminent threats posed by socio-cultural and geo-political transformations, particularly the construction of an Israeli Separation Wall. The property was immediately placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The landscape faced potentially irreversible damage, endangering its authenticity and integrity, notably by isolating local farmers from fields cultivated for centuries.

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), as per Decision 39 COM 8B.52, prompted the State of Palestine to prepare the Desired State of Conservation Report (DSOCR) and Key Corrective Measures, adopted by the World Heritage Committee (Decision 39COM7A.29). In 2016, a timeline for corrective measure implementation was adopted (Decision 41COM7A.43). The Management and Conservation Plan (MCP) was endorsed in 2019 by the World Heritage Committee and key Palestinian stakeholders, aiming to ensure the property's respect and effective safeguarding.

This State of Conservation Report responds to requests from the World Heritage Committee during its 45th Session (Decision 45 COM 7A.39). It outlines progress in achieving the DSOCR and corrective measures in 2023, with a focus on addressing the imminent threat of an Israeli plan to construct a Separation Wall adjacent to the Property and build new illegal settlements inside the WHP. While the Israeli High Court of Justice froze construction of the Wall on January 4, 2015, citing budgetary considerations, the state retains the right to resume construction in the future. Positive developments are noted, but concerns persist regarding the potential future construction of the Separation Wall.

The report highlights Israeli violations in 2023 and ongoing threats to the landscape's visual, ecological, socio-economic, and cultural aspects. The State of Palestine reaffirms its commitment to implementing corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee, emphasizing the conservation of the cultural landscape, prevention of abandonment and forestation of agricultural terraces, and engagement with local communities.

Despite notable progress, the State of Palestine advocates for **retaining the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger** due to ongoing concerns and potential Israeli Occupation threats. This stance underscores the need for sustained vigilance and protective measures to ensure the long-term preservation of the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

2. Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee (WHCom) Decision 45 COM 7A. 39.

Para. 3 Commends the State Party for its efforts to improve the state of conservation of the Property and to implement the corrective measures to achieve the desired state of conservation for the removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), and in particular the restoration and the preparation of guidelines for the drystone walls and the rehabilitation of the watchtowers;

The proposed plans to achieve the Desired State of Conservation and corrective measures for the removal of the World Heritage Property (WHP) from the List of World Heritage in Danger address the ongoing threats that led to the property's initial inscription on the danger list. The challenges affecting the WHP result from both external and internal factors, impacting its visual, ecological, socio-economic, and cultural aspects. Despite these challenges, the State of Palestine remains dedicated to implementing corrective measures, in alignment with international standards for conservation and management.

The physical condition of the WHP has deteriorated due to several factors, including the absence of adequate water and sewage networks in the village of Battir and insufficient financial resources allocated for conservation efforts. Additionally, restrictions imposed by the Israeli Occupying Power (IOP) hinder farmers from restoring agricultural terraces and watchtowers within the WHP. Despite these constraints, committed stakeholders and the local community, including MoTA, Battir Municipality, Beit Jala Municipality, Hussan Village Council, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), and the Environment Authority (EQA), collaborate to implement the WHP's Management and Conservation Plan (MCP).

The operational management system, outlined in the MCP, aims to effectively manage the entire WHP. The plan establishes key objectives, strategies, and actions for conservation and protection, along with specific measures and programs to be implemented. Conservation interventions in 2023, aligned with the corrective measures, are briefly presented in this report (see section 2. a &c).

It is crucial to note that the improvement of the WHP's physical situation and achieving an appropriate state of conservation are influenced not only by internal socio-cultural factors but also by external geo-political factors. The commitment to conservation efforts is underscored by the collaborative endeavors of various stakeholders and the local community to overcome challenges and preserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHP.

Para. 4. Also commends the State Party for having appointed a Site Manager for the property to work with the Steering and Site Management Committees, and requests the State Party to submit further detailed information on the membership, roles and tasks of these committees to the World Heritage Centre;

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) has taken a proactive approach to the management and conservation of the World Heritage Property (WHP) by appointing a dedicated Site Manager. The Site Manager's role involves close collaboration with various partners and stakeholders, with a focus on key entities, such as Battir Municipality, Beit Jala Municipality, and Hussan Village Council.

In adherence to the approved management system, the Site Manager assumes responsibilities for coordinating, supervising, and monitoring all activities and interventions related to the WHP. Steering and site management committees have played a vital role in providing support, guidance, oversight, and monitoring the implementation of the MCP. This collaborative endeavor is still in progress. Numerous meetings and workshops have been organized through 2023 to assist with the continuous evaluation, revision, and monitoring of the Management and Conservation Plan (MCP).

The Steering Committee, led by MoTA, consists of representatives from various partners, including EQA, MoA, MoLG, Battir Municipality, Beit Jala Municipality, and Hussan Village Council. Its primary responsibility is to make crucial decisions and oversee the implementation of the MCP at the local level in alignment with the commitments and responsibilities outlined in the MCP's Action Plan.

The Site Management Committee (Technical Committee), comprised of technical representatives from the Steering Committee entities, as well as individuals actively involved in day-to-day WHP activities, such as representatives from the local community, private sector, and technical experts, is tasked with executing the MCP's objectives, strategies, and actions. This committee plays a pivotal role in developing various cultural activities to promote and interpret the WHP, contributing to enhancing the socio-economic status of the local community.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the roles and tasks of these committees, please refer to Annex 1.

The Site Manager plays a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of projects and activities within the Property, ensuring they align with the objectives outlined in the MCP, he actively monitors and reports on any violations occurring within the WHP and its boundaries, providing regular monthly updates. Moreover, the Site Manager is actively engaged in national and international capacity-building activities and workshops, for instance, he participated in the Fifth World Heritage Site Managers Forum, convened

in al-Riyadh in September 2023. This forum serves as a pivotal networking platform for site managers involved in natural, cultural, and mixed World Heritage properties. Its primary objectives are to empower participants, facilitate the exchange of knowledge, and expand networks and experiences on an international scale.

This proactive approach reflects a commitment to the effective management and conservation of the WHP, emphasizing the importance of coordination, supervision, and timely reporting to address ongoing challenges and protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the site.

Para. 5. Encourages the State Party to continue seeking the required funds to undertake the development of a sufficient sewage system as a priority;

The State Party is actively prioritizing the implementation of corrective measures aimed at achieving the Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. A major environmental concern in the World Heritage Property (WHP) is the absence of a sewage system, leading to water and soil pollution. To address this issue, a project proposal with an estimated budget of US\$25 million has been prepared. This project aims to establish a comprehensive sewage system for the Bethlehem Western Villages, covering extensive portions of the WHP. However, the project is currently facing delays due to its substantial costs.

In the interim, the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WSSA), Battir Municipality, Hussan Village Council, Ministry of Local Government, and the Joint Service Council are actively working on temporary mechanisms to mitigate the sewage problem until the necessary funds are secured. These interim measures include the prohibition of new house constructions without sealed septic tanks by the Municipal Councils. Additionally, inhabitants are provided with low-cost sewage tanks, and they are required to empty collected sewage water every few weeks at nearby sewage stations in Bethlehem.

Furthermore, the Water and Sewage Unit in the Joint Service Council is managing sewage water in the Bethlehem Western Villages and imposing penalties on homes without sealed septic tanks. These efforts underscore the commitment to finding practical solutions to urgent environmental challenges and ensuring the sustainable conservation of the WHP while awaiting the availability of funds for the larger-scale sewage system project

Para. 6. Encourages the State Party to develop a land-use plan and related bylaws to avoid uncontrolled urban growth within the Property and its buffer zone, with the full involvement of the municipalities and local communities.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), in collaboration with relevant authorities and local communities, has undertaken a crucial initiative to manage urban growth within the Property and its buffer zone. Specifically, a comprehensive land-use plan and associated regulations were developed to prevent uncontrolled urban expansion. A significant milestone in this effort was the completion of a project dedicated to formulating a detailed urban plan and special building regulations for specific areas within the buffer zone of the World Heritage Property (WHP).

This project was funded and supervised by the UNESCO Ramallah Office through its regular budget. The implementation was carried out by the Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) and the Planning Center at An-Najah National University. The primary objective of this undertaking is to reinforce existing legislation and regulations, ensuring effective conservation and protection of the cultural landscape, the old town of Battir, archaeological remains, and the physical attributes of the WHP. This approach aligns with the endorsed Management and Conservation Plan for the Property.

The specific goals of the project include:

1. Develop a detailed urban plan (DUP) and urban bylaws for designated areas within the WHP, promoting compatibility and homogeneity with the overall context of the towns and conservation objectives.
2. Regulate interventions within Battir Old Town, specifying areas where construction of new buildings or small additions is permitted or prohibited.
3. Seek approval for the developed bylaws as part of a detailed urban plan from relevant authorities, including the Higher Planning Council in Palestine.
4. Equip Battir Municipality and Hussan Village Council with well-defined management tools to effectively address urban transformations in the WHP.

The project has been successfully concluded, and the bylaws await endorsement after approval by the Ministry of Local Government. This initiative reflects a proactive approach to managing urban development within the WHP, contributing to the broader objectives of its conservation and protection.

Para. 7. Takes note with concern of the reports of ongoing illegal constructions and other developments within the property and its buffer zone;

The Site Manager and the Site Management Committee play a crucial role in monitoring and addressing various illegal activities, constructions, and developments within the World Heritage Property (WHP) and its buffer zone. This includes a keen focus on Israeli Occupation violations, such as the bulldozing of agricultural lands and roads within the WHP boundaries, continuous attacks by Israeli settlers, attempts to establish illegal

settlement outposts, and the planned industrial zone within the buffer zone, as previously reported in State of Conservation (SoC) reports.

The State Party expresses its strong condemnation of the ongoing threats and violations by the Israeli Occupying Power, emphasizing their harmful impact on the authenticity and integrity of the WHP. These actions are deemed non-conformant with the provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, particularly the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Detailed information on these violations is provided in sections 2. a and b of this report.

This reaffirms the commitment of the State Party to safeguard the WHP against external threats, working diligently to address and rectify any actions that compromise its Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, or integrity. The monitoring efforts, in collaboration with the Site Management Committee, reflect a proactive stance to protect and preserve the cultural landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, in the face of ongoing challenges.

Para. 8. the State Party to submit the project documentation for the proposed bus parking lot and visitor interpretation centre to the World Heritage Centre before any final decision is taken and to continue to inform the World Heritage Centre of any proposed plans for major restoration or new construction projects that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse

This section of the report emphasizes the proactive approach and commitment of the State Party toward the visitors' interpretation center and bus parking lot project. Key points include:

1. **Funding Initiative:** The State Party is actively engaged in seeking funding for the visitors' interpretation center and bus parking projects. The identification of a suitable funder is crucial for the progression of these initiatives.
2. **Documentation Submission:** Upon securing suitable funding, the State Party commits to submitting the necessary documents and proposals for the visitors' interpretation center and bus parking lot projects to the World Heritage Center. This aligns with the transparency and collaboration required for such conservation efforts.
3. **Role of Site Manager:** The Site Manager, in collaboration with the WHP's Management Committee, plays a central role in overseeing, monitoring, and managing all actions, projects, and activities within the Property. This ensures that projects are in line with the objectives and strategies outlined in the WHP's Management and Conservation Plan (MCP).

4. **Heritage Impact Assessments:** Adhering to the new law for Tangible Cultural Heritage (No. 11, 2018), the State Party commits to conducting appropriate Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) and/or Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) before implementing significant interventions or proposed developments within the WHP.
5. **Commitment to Informing WHC:** In the case of future major interventions or new construction projects that might impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Property, the State Party is dedicated to informing the World Heritage Committee (WHC). This commitment reflects the State Party's dedication to transparency and adherence to international guidelines for heritage conservation.

2. a and c: Progress achieved in implementing the Desired State of Conservation and Corrective Measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee

- **DSOCR #1: Dismissal of plans to build a “Wall” along the Property, or within its surroundings.**

CM 1.1 Agreement to dismiss plans to build a “Wall” along the Property, or within its surroundings,

On July 9, 2004, the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion, declared that the construction of the “Wall” by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime, is contrary to international law. The Court emphasized that the term “Wall” encompasses any barrier, whether physical or a fence, and deemed the construction illegal.

A definitive, binding decision is still needed per Article 6, Section 3, of the World Heritage Convention (1972). This article obliges each State Party not to take deliberate measures that might directly or indirectly damage the cultural and natural heritage of other States Parties. The geopolitical context surrounding the Property, particularly the direct and indirect impacts of the illegal construction of settlements on surrounding hills and the proposed illegal construction of the Separation Wall, remains the most significant threat to the authenticity and integrity of the Property.

On January 4, 2015, the Israeli High Court of Justice halted plans for the construction of the “Wall” adjacent to the Property, concluding a three-year legal battle initiated by the village of Battir, supported by the State of Palestine and Friends of the Earth Middle East (EcoPeace). The decision followed the Israeli government's choice not to re-authorize a 2006 plan for a three-kilometer stretch of the “Wall”, revealing that it was not a high-security or budgetary priority. Although a positive step, threats from the “Wall” construction persist until Israel adopts a binding decision ensuring that no “Wall” will be constructed in or around the site, securing its long-term protection.

Additionally, the illegal construction of settlements on surrounding hills adversely affects the visual and ecological quality of the landscape. These actions, primarily by the Israeli Occupation Authorities, are linked to the direct annexation of both the territorial area and the inhabitants of Battir. Such acts pose a severe threat to the integrity of the World Heritage Property's landscape, and its ecological and environmental balance. It also hinders the local community from maintaining their agricultural lands in areas close to the settlements.

Main Israeli Occupying Power Violations in 2023

Israeli occupation violations persisted within the World Heritage Property (WHP) during 2023, with several illegal actions affecting its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as well as its physical attributes, authenticity, and integrity:

1. Construction of New Tunnel and Bypass Road (2019-2023)

Since 2019, a new tunnel and a bypass road (Road 60) have been constructed for Israeli settlers in the eastern part of the WHP near Beit Jala. This construction resulted in the destruction of significant parts of the WHP landscape, including agricultural terraces, watchtowers, water springs, and olive oil presses, impacting the WHP's OUV, integrity, and authenticity (see Figure 1).

2. Expansion of Illegal Settlement Outposts (2020-2023)

On November 17, 2020, illegal Israeli settlers established a new outpost in the Wadi al-Makhroun area within the WHP. In 2023, the settlers expanded this settlement, causing further destruction of agricultural lands and adversely affecting the OUV, authenticity, and integrity of the WHP (see Figure 2).

3. "Communications and Warnings" in Al-Qusayr and Al-Khammar Areas (January 25, 2023)

On January 25, 2023, the Israeli occupation placed "communications and warnings" on land in the Al-Qusayr and Al-Khammar areas, removing planted olive seedlings and preventing future reclamation. This settlement escalation in Battir threatens the WHP's integrity and authenticity (see Figure 6).

4. Arson by Israeli Settlers (July 21, 2023)

On July 21, 2023, Israeli settlers set fire to agricultural land in the "Ain Amdan and Qalat al-Kuliya" areas, causing extensive damage to forest and olive trees. This repeated action throughout the year poses a significant threat to the WHP's ecological balance (see Figure 5).

5. Bulldozing of Al-Dabaa Area (August 3, 2023)

On August 3, 2023, the Israeli occupation bulldozed the Al-Dabaa area, an agricultural land of approximately 4 dunums, uprooting dozens of olive seedlings owned by Mazen Abu Nimah. The ongoing settlement attack in this area poses a severe threat to the WHP's integrity and authenticity (see Figure 7).

6. Expulsion of Palestinian Farmers from the Al-Gharbi Area (October 18, 2023):

On October 18, 2023, the Israeli occupation expelled Palestinian farmers from their land near the train railway in the Al-Gharbi area, declaring it a closed military zone. The affected land covers approximately 40 dunums, raising concerns about the WHP's integrity and authenticity (see Figure 4).

7. Settler Incursion in "Ain Bardamo" Area (December 24, 2023)

A group of settlers, protected by occupation forces, entered the "Ain Bardamo" area, east of Battir. They bulldozed, paved roads, and erected a large tent, threatening landowners who attempted to confront them. This action impacted over 23 dunums of land and posed a threat to the WHP's integrity and authenticity (see Figure 3).

- **DSOCR #2: Adequate conservation of the agricultural terraces and their associated components, including watchtowers and dry-stone walls throughout the Property.**

CM 2.1 Implementation of projects to restore an appropriate state of conservation for the agricultural terraces and their components, including the watchtowers and dry-stone walls throughout the Property.

The State of Palestine, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, acknowledges its crucial role in achieving an appropriate state of conservation for the various components of the Property, including agricultural terraces and their elements. Diligent efforts have been invested in the implementation of numerous projects to address and rectify these conservation challenges. During 2023, Palestine has succeeded in getting a three-year project of “Sustainable Tourism through Safeguarding, Rehabilitation, and Promotion of the Agro-Cultural Landscape in Battir,” which will be implemented by the Ramallah UNESCO Office and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in close cooperation with MoTA and the WHP’s management system, this project is funded by the Italian government through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). The project aims to promote agro-cultural tourism for economic and social development, and conserving and promoting the WHP as an attractive tourism destination. The project activities are in line with the Conservation and Management Plan and will contribute to achieving some of the Corrective Measures and Desired State of Conservation set for the WHP. (For more details, kindly refer to Annex 2).

The project activities aim to achieve the following:

1. The components of the cultural landscape of the Battir area, including drystone walls, boundary walls, vernacular structures, springs, and traditional architecture are rehabilitated, conserved, and promoted. All interventions will be based on and correspond to the recommendations of management and conservation plans developed for the WHP.
2. The aesthetic value, usability, and accessibility of the cultural landscape of Battir, for tourism purposes, with a focus on agro-tourism services, is enhanced. Tourism trails upgraded, service spots established and local gastronomy promoted;
3. Endangered agriculture livelihoods supported through market-oriented agricultural interventions, while economically reactivating traditional agricultural practices and organic food products.

Other conservation activities carried out in 2023 are categorized into two sections: (i) conservation interventions of the cultural landscape elements and (ii) enhancements of the physical situation within and around the Property.

i. Conservation Interventions of the Cultural Landscape

The following activities collectively contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir.

Projects and Activities	Date	Budget	Lead Partner(s)	Brief Description
Maintenance Work in the Dry-Stone Walls (see Figure 8)	April 2023	US \$20,000	Battir Municipality and Agricultural Relief	Conducted maintenance work on sections of the dry stone walls damaged by weather conditions. Constructed new sections, totaling 1,200 square meters, in multiple areas like "Karam Hadidoun," "Al-Houra," "Bab Al-Zaqaq," and "Al-Jinan area."
Restoration of the Rainwater Drainage Channel in the "Al-Jarn" area	March 2023	US \$5,500	Municipality of Battir and the Municipal Lending Fund	Restoration of the rainwater drainage channel in the "Al-Jarn" area.
Improving the Cultivation of Battiri Eggplants	May 2023	US \$10,000	Battir Municipality	Encouraged farmers to plant more than 15,000 eggplants during the last season. The municipality purchased improved seedlings, selling them to farmers at half price. Most crops were sold to WHP's visitors.
Organize Tourist Traffic in the WHP	January 2023	N/A	Battir Municipality	The municipality appointed an employee to organize tourist traffic coming to the town of Battir.
Olive Seedlings Activity	February 2023	N/A	The Jerusalem Zakat Committee	Distributed over 1000 olive trees to farmers within the WHP to strengthen their steadfastness in their lands.
World Heritage Volunteers Activity in Battir (see Figure 9)	July and August 2023	N/A	International Palestinian Youth League (IPYL), Battir Municipality	A group of World Heritage volunteers engaged in cleaning activities at various points within the World Heritage property over 5 days under the supervision of the Battir Municipality and the Site Manager.

Projects and Activities	Date	Budget	Lead Partner(s)	Brief Description
Open and operate the new Tourist Information Center through the visit of the German Mayor of Brühl (see Figure 10)	March 2023	US \$16,000	Engagement Global	The German Mayor of Brühl visited Battir, accompanied by the MoTA's team and the municipal council, and discussed the Tourist Information Center project, heritage site management, and maintenance plan.
Enhancing local community engagement through “Sports Program for All” (see Figure 11)	2020-2024	7,200 euros	Valle de Saint-Brieuc – France / Battir Municipality	The “Sports for All “program targets all age groups in Battir, offering training in various sports such as football, volleyball, and athletics, encouraging locals to better conservation and management of the WHP.

ii. Enhancing the Physical Situation in and around the WHP

As outlined in previous State of Conservation reports, stakeholders have actively pursued efforts to enhance the physical situation within and around the WHP since its inscription on the World Heritage List. These interventions encompass the rehabilitation of abandoned traditional buildings in the historic center of Battir for community or tourist purposes, the improvement of the local community's socio-economic status, and enhancements to infrastructure, including road networks, water supply networks, and solid waste management. The following table provides details on the projects and activities undertaken in 2023 to further enhance the physical situation of the WHP:

Projects and Activities	Date	Brief Description
Rehabilitation of an Agricultural Road "Iraq Jamma" (see Figure 12)	February 2023	Rehabilitation of an agricultural road in the “Ain Jamma” area, funded by the Municipality of Battir.
Rehabilitation of an Agricultural Road in the “Waar Abu More” area (see Figure 12)	February 2023	Rehabilitation of an agricultural road in the “Waar Abu More” area, funded by the Municipality of Battir.
Expanding the Main Street and Building Retaining Walls in the “Al-Hereik” area (see figure 13)	March 2023	Expanding the main street and building retaining walls in the “Al-Hereik” area, funded by the Municipality of Battir and the Municipal Lending Fund (US \$27,000).
Installing a Canopy for the Yard of Battir Girls Basic	May 2023	Installing a canopy for the yard of Battir Girls Basic School and making the schoolyard with an

Projects and Activities	Date	Brief Description
School.		area of 300 square meters, funded by the Battir Municipality and contributions from the local community.
Construction of Public Bathrooms for Women in the Al 'Ain Square area	July 2023	Construction of public bathrooms for women in the Al Ain Square area, funded by the Municipality of Battir.
Rehabilitation of the cemetery road	December 2023	Rehabilitation of the 350-meter-long cemetery road, funded by the Municipality of Battir and the local community.
Construction of a Retaining Wall on Montazah Road	June 2023	Construction of a retaining wall of Montazah Road, funded by the Municipality of Battir.
Maintenance of the Electricity Network	April 2023	Maintenance of the “high voltage” electricity network, funded by the Jerusalem Electricity Company.

These initiatives demonstrate a concerted effort to further develop and sustain the physical infrastructure and surroundings of the WHP, contributing to its overall well-being and resilience.

- **DSOCR #3: Adequate restoration of the irrigation system and the development of a sufficient sewage system to protect water quality on the Property.**

CM 3.1: Implementation of a project to restore traditional irrigation systems

CM 3.2: Implementation of a project to put in place an adequate sewage system to protect water quality on the Property

In 2023, no significant achievements were realized due to constrained financial resources. Recognizing the crucial need for progress, additional efforts will be undertaken to secure the necessary funds. The primary focus will be on establishing a comprehensive sewage system, and corrective measures are targeted to be implemented in the coming years. The commitment to securing adequate financial support underscores the determination to overcome current challenges and advance the conservation and enhancement objectives for the World Heritage Property.

- **DSOCR #4 :Protection methods in place for the Property and its buffer zone**

CM4.1 :Preparation, approval, and implementation of an MCP for the Property

CM4.2: Development and implementation of an active system of management that involves local communities and stakeholders

The Management and Conservation Plan (MCP) for the Property was formulated and officially endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) along with all relevant partners in 2019. In 2020, a dedicated Site Manager for the World Heritage Property (WHP) was appointed. This individual holds the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating all activities, modifications, and concerns within the WHP. Their focus lies particularly on aspects related to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), attributes, integrity, and authenticity of the property. The Site Manager ensures that all projects and activities align with the MCP and its action plan.

In alignment with previous SoC reports, MoTA has instituted a new organizational framework that introduces a "General Directorate for the World Heritage." This structure aims to establish a comprehensive management system for all inscribed world cultural heritage sites in Palestine. The primary functions of this Directorate encompass the conservation, management, valorization, and promotion of inscribed World Heritage Properties. Furthermore, it assumes responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of their respective MCP.

Crucially, the Directorate is tasked with formulating and executing the Operational Management Systems for the WHPs. This involves active participation from key stakeholders, local communities, and the private sector, all under the guidance of Site Managers and Steering and Site Management Committees. This collaborative approach is designed to facilitate effective governance, management, and sustainable development of the World Heritage Properties in Palestine.

- **DSOCR #5: Adoption of a management plan and monitoring system, and a sustainable management structure in place**

CM5.1: Preparation of a set of indicators for monitoring the Property and implementation of a monitoring system.

- The State of Palestine completed the preparation of a set of indicators for monitoring the World Heritage Property.
- Implementation of a monitoring system was carried out in line with the established indicators.
- This corrective measure was achieved as scheduled in 2021.

CM5.2: Development of protection methods for the Property and its buffer zone.

- The second corrective measure, involving the development of protection methods for the Property and its buffer zone, was achieved as planned in 2023.
- The project related to the land-use plan and its bylaws has been finalized, and the endorsement process by relevant authorities is underway.

These accomplishments indicate the State Party's commitment to the goals outlined in the Desired State of Conservation for Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR #5). The timely completion of both corrective measures reflects positive progress in the conservation and sustainable management of the World Heritage Property.

2.b: Timeframe for Implementation of the Corrective Measures

As highlighted in the preceding State of Conservation (SoC) report, upon a meticulous review of the established timeframe, the principal stakeholders of the World Heritage Property (WHP) unanimously recommend retaining the initially defined schedule. This collective decision stems from the acknowledgment of a significant shortfall in the allocation of adequate funds and resources for the implementation of the Property's conservation plan.

It is crucial to emphasize that the initially formulated timeframe intricately aligns with the objectives, strategies, and action plans outlined in the Management and Conservation Plan (MCP). This alignment is deemed vital for the effective execution of the designated measures. However, recognizing the dynamic nature of conservation efforts and the evolving landscape of available resources, there is a conscientious call for a nuanced revision at this juncture.

This highlights the inherent challenge posed by limited financial resources and underscores the necessity for periodic reviews to ensure the continued viability and success of the conservation initiatives outlined within the MCP.

3. Future Issues Identified by the State Party

Under paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, the following table outlines future potential major projects intended to be implemented within the Property, buffer zone, and/or corridors or other areas, with careful consideration for their impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property (WHP):

Projects and Activities	Date	Brief Description
Implementation of the Management and Conservation Plan	More efforts will be made to continue implementing projects and activities in 2024	The site manager, in collaboration with the Steering and Site Management Committees, oversees the MCP's implementation and strives to secure the necessary funds for its action plan.

Projects and Activities	Date	Brief Description
Bus Parking Lot and Visitor Interpretation Centre	2024	Subject to available funding, this proposed project aims to establish a bus stop, and visitor interpretation center, and enhance WHP Visitor Service.

These planned initiatives reflect a commitment to the continued conservation, enhancement, and sustainable development of the World Heritage Property, with due diligence to preserve its Outstanding Universal Value.

4. Public access to the State of Conservation Report

The State Party concurs that the full State of Conservation Report can be made publicly available through the World Heritage Center's Information System.

5. Conclusion

The State of Palestine, in collaboration with stakeholders and partners, has persistently worked throughout 2023 to safeguard and sustainably develop the World Heritage Property (WHP) and its Outstanding Universal Value. The overarching goal is to attain the desired state of conservation and fulfill specific corrective measures to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. However, the primary threats emanating from the plans of Israel, the Occupying Power, continue to pose significant risks to the WHP and its Outstanding Universal Value.

These threats encompass the construction of a Separation Wall along the property, the establishment of new illegal settlements on or around the property, the planned industrial zone, and the development of new bypass roads. These challenges persist until a binding decision, as stipulated in Article 6.3 of the World Heritage Convention (1972), is issued by the relevant Israeli occupation authorities. Neutralizing these threats through decisive actions is imperative for the long-term stability, integrity, and validity of the WHP.

Despite commendable achievements and positive efforts by various stakeholders to enhance the conservation status of the WHP and its environs, the State of Palestine expresses the necessity to keep the property, "Palestine: Land of Olives and Vineyards – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir," on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The determination to retain this status underscores the ongoing challenges and the critical importance of addressing the prevailing threats to ensure the sustained protection and significance of the World Heritage Property.

6. Signature of the Authority

This State of Conservation Report for the World Heritage Property "Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir (1492)" was meticulously compiled by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, working in close collaboration with various stakeholders and partners. The report serves as a comprehensive assessment of the current status, conservation efforts, achievements, and challenges faced by the property. Through joint efforts and cooperation, the State of Palestine aims to ensure the sustainable development and preservation of the WHP and its Outstanding Universal Value.

Dr. Ahmed Rjoob
Director General of the World Heritage
Focal Point of the World Heritage Convention

7. Figures



Figure 1: Photos showing the new tunnel and new bypass road (Road 60)



Figure 2: Photos showing the expansion of the colonial Israeli settlement at the al-Makhroun Area inside the WHP 2022, 2023



Figure 3: A map and photos showing the location of the Israeli occupation violations in December 2023 within the boundaries of the WHP.



Figure 4.a: The Israeli occupation expels Palestinian farmers from their land, which is located next to the train railway (AL-Gharbi area). The farmers and landowners were informed that it is a closed military zone in which it is forbidden to be present.



Figure 4.b: The Israeli occupation expels Palestinian farmers from their land, which is located next to the train railway (AL-Gharbi area). The farmers and landowners were informed that it is a closed military zone in which it is forbidden to be present.



Figure 5: Israeli settlers set fire to large areas of agricultural land in the area of "Ain Amdan and Qal'at al-Kuliya



Figure 6: The Israeli occupation placed “communications and warnings” on land in the “Al-Qusayr” and “Al-Khammar” areas, found by the owners of these lands, including the removal of all olive seedlings that had been planted on an area estimated at (10 dunams) belonging to the Awaina family, as well as preventing them from reclaiming it in the future.



Figure 7: The Israeli occupation bulldozed the “Al-Dabaa” area east of the town, a piece of agricultural land with an area of about 4 dunams, and uprooted dozens of olive seedlings from it, which belonged to the citizen Mazen Abu Nimah



Figure 8: Maintenance work in the dry-stone wall “Karam Hadidoun, Al-Houra, Bab Al-Zaqq, Al-Jinan area.”



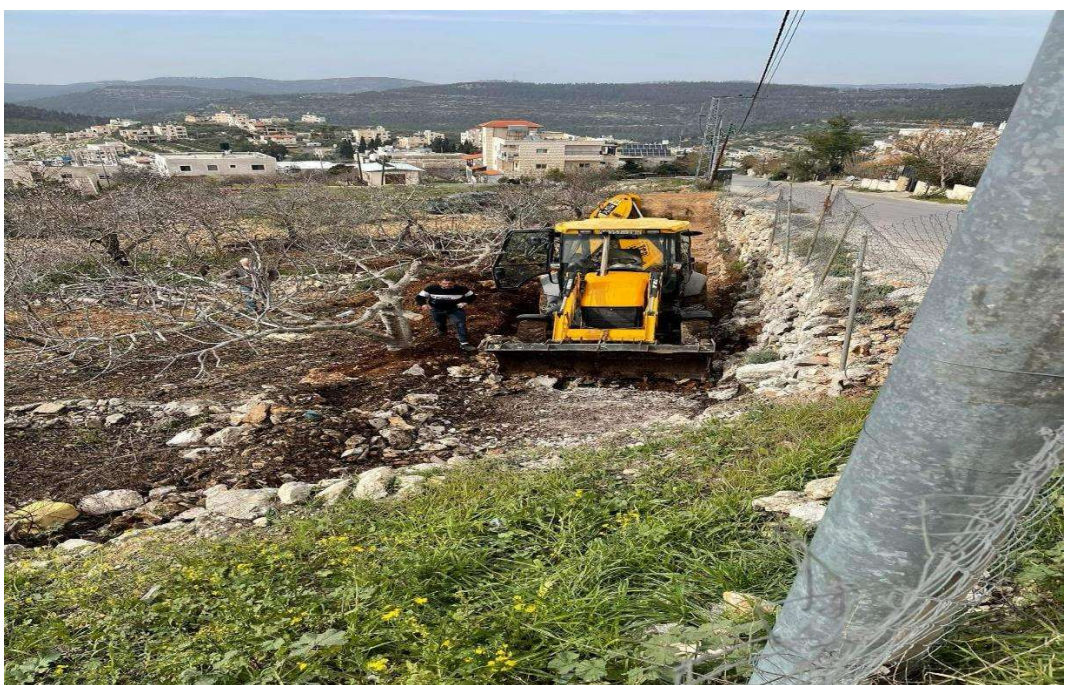
Figure 9: World Heritage Volunteers team activity in Battir



Figure 10: Visit of the German Mayor of Brühl to Battir within the Tourist Information Center project in Battir



Figure 11: Sports program for all



*Figure 12: Rehabilitation of an agricultural road "Iraq Jamma and
"Waar Abu More" area*



Figure 13: Expanding the main street and building retaining walls in the “Al-Hereik” area

Annex One

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE MCP

6.1 The Operational Management System

6.1.1 MoTA Proposed Structure

It is important to note that the objectives outlined in the previous chapter are not the responsibility of one single institution, but is a duty that is jointly shared and committed to by all partners involved in the management of the WHP. These include the individual landowners in the WHP all the way to national government parties. Thus, it is very important to establish a clear Operational Management System for the WHP that organizes and oversees the implementation of this MCP.

This management system meets the requirements of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as the legal entity responsible for all of the World Heritage Sites in Palestine, which is committed to the obligations of international conventions, notably the 1972 World Heritage Convention. As several public institutions have different stakes on the property, the main role of MoTA is to ensure a common management approach for the WHP, including coordination, communication, giving opinions on projects and interventions, promoting understanding of the duties of all stakeholders in their respective fields of responsibilities, and applying the management system.

In 2018, MoTA proposed a new institutional structure that includes a “General Directorate for Site Management and World Heritage Sites in Palestine,” which aims to provide a comprehensive management system for all cultural heritage sites in Palestine. The responsibilities of this proposed directorate are to conserve, manage, valorize, and promote the cultural heritage sites and the inscribed World Heritage Sites, submit new sites to the WHC on the Tentative List, and regularly monitor and report on Palestinian WHPs for the WHCom.

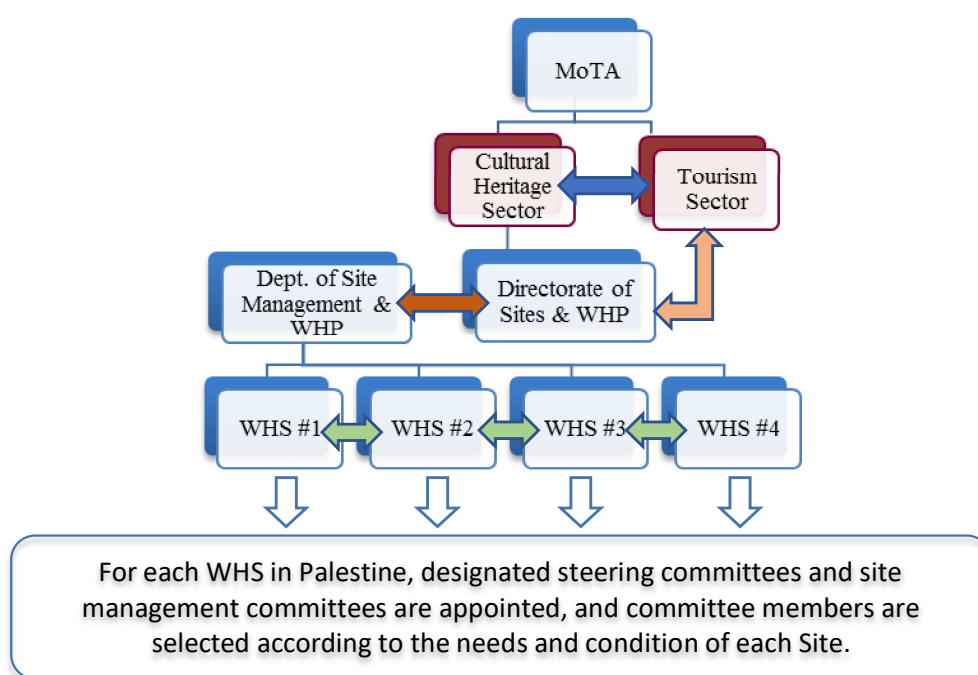


Figure 6.1 MoTA Proposed New Structure

The proposed World Heritage Department has the following strategic objectives:

1. Manage the World Heritage Properties and conserve their OUV, authenticity and integrity.
2. Promote a participatory management approach based on engagement of all related stakeholders to run World Heritage Properties, especially for complex sites, e.g. landscape and historic cities.
3. Strengthen the international partnership to improve the management and conservation capacity of the World Heritage Properties.
4. Identify and promote the World Heritage Properties.
5. Build capacity for Palestinian professionals, site managers, engineers, conservers, and other individuals involved with WHPs.
6. Strengthen community participation and public awareness.

The proposed World Heritage Department has the following responsibilities:

1. Supervise the preparation of nomination files for heritage sites on the Tentative List to be inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.
2. Supervise the preparation of the Management and Conservation Plans for inscribed and nominated sites on the list, in cooperation with other stakeholders.
3. Oversee and monitor Palestinian sites in the Tentative List, updating and developing the list, adding new sites or removing existing ones that do not meet the OUV.
4. Conduct all required periodic technical reports and studies to the World Heritage Committee.
5. Contribute to removing the inscribed sites from the List of World Heritage in Danger by achieving the DSOCR and Corrective Measures.
6. Oversee and monitor the activities and projects that take place in the WHPs and affect their OUV.
7. Prevent the activities that have a significant adverse affect on the OUV.
8. Monitor the implementation of the ratified MCP with the cooperation of the related national and international stakeholders.
9. Develop mechanisms to seek funds to implement the MCP's actions.
10. Implement awareness campaigns and workshops for the local community in the WHPs.
11. Promote and interpret the World Heritage Sites at a national and international level.

In addition to the responsibilities of MoTA's *World Heritage Department*, it is also important to develop successful mechanisms for coordination between other stakeholders that have statutory or management responsibilities in the WHP. The proposed management system will include the following two main entities:

1. The MCP's Steering Committee
2. The Site Management Committee

These two committees will play an essential role in encouraging, guiding, overseeing and monitoring progress, as well as reviewing and updating the Management and Conservation Plan.

6.1.2 The MCP's Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC), which participated in the preparation of this MCP, will continue its efforts after the final MCP is developed, ratified, and implemented. This SC, which is headed by MoTA and comprised of representatives from other partners including the EQA, MoA, MoLG, Battir Municipality, Beit Jala Municipality, and Hussan Village Council, will continue to make key decisions and to monitor the implementation of the MCP at a local level according to the commitments and responsibilities set in the MCP's Action Plan. Regular coordinating meetings between steering committee representatives shall be held three to four times annually.

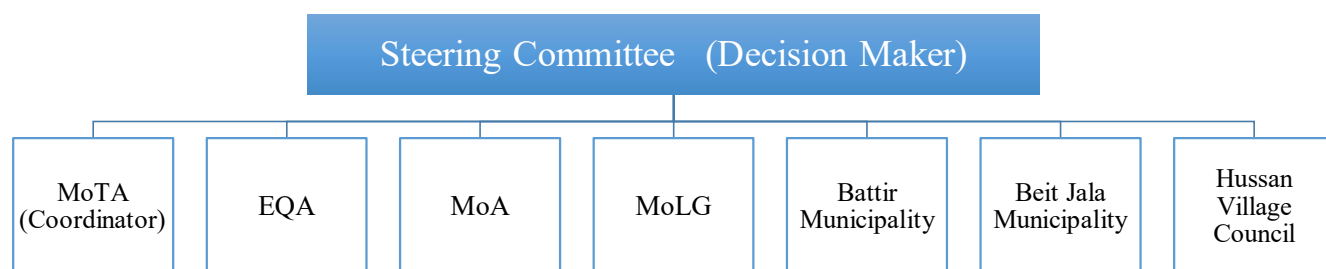


Figure 6.2 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee has the following responsibilities:

1. Monitor the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the MCP each year.
2. Regularly review the MCP's relevant objectives, strategies, and action plans, and, if needed, propose modifications and/or additions.
3. Identify priorities relevant to their specific role for the annual action plan and report these as part of the ongoing MCP review and revision process.
4. Ensure that all necessary legal frameworks for the protection of the WHP are in place.
5. Seek funds for the implementation of the MCP's action plan.
6. Make decisions regarding new and future key management issues that will affect the OUV.

As previously mentioned, the steering committee is a decision making and advisory entity that is responsible for seeking funds, managing and monitoring the implementation of the MCP, and MoTA is the coordinator of this committee.

6.1.3 The Site Management Committee

In addition to the Steering Committee, it is essential to form a technical committee that will include technical representatives from the above Steering Committee, in addition to those who take part in day-to-day activities related to the WHP, such as representatives of the local community, private sector, and technical experts. The Site Management Committee (SMC) shall follow the mandate of the World Heritage Department in MoTA, and a Site Manager from MoTA shall be appointed to lead this committee. The partnership between the Site Manager (MoTA) and other SMC members is a vital and important factor in achieving comprehensive management and conservation of the property based on the MCP's objectives and out of the MoTA mandate.

In the case of the Battir WHP, the SMC will include a Site Manager from MoTA, technical representatives from EQA, MoA, MoLG, CCHP, the Battir Municipality (BM), Beit Jala Municipality (BJM), Hussan Village Council (HVC), representatives of the local community (RoLC), representatives of the private sector (RoPS), and other technical staff will be appointed as needed.

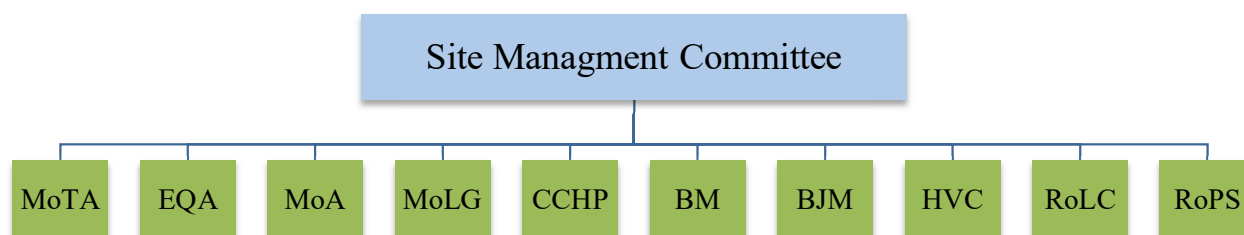


Figure 6.3 Site Management Committee

The SMC members shall hold regular monthly meetings based on needs and the current activities being executed in the WHP, while the site manager shall have a permanent office in the site and coordinate and manage day-to-day activities taken place within the property.

The Site Manager's responsibilities are as follows:

1. Oversee and monitor the implementation of the MCP's objectives and actions.
2. Ensure implementation of the actions and activities of the MCP, and achievements of its pursued objectives, ensuring that they are implemented in conformity with the law.
3. Coordinate the implementation of the MCP's objectives and actions between related stakeholders according to their commitments and roles.
4. Organize regular meetings for all involved stakeholders and SMC, propose the meeting's agenda, and record meeting minutes.
5. Facilitate and seek funds for the implementation of the MCP's Action Plan.
6. Build up a comprehensive sustainable database for the WHP in cooperation with all related stakeholders.

7. Review the feedback of the MCP's implementation and update it regularly, and as necessary, in close coordination with the SMC and the SC.
8. Write regular technical reports about the progress of the implementation of the MCP, State of Conservation reports, and technical and financial proposals for the annual Action Plan.
9. Identify ways to increase public awareness and engagement of the local community in close coordination with the SMC.
10. Supervise the future activities that take place in the WHP and propose new management solutions or mechanisms to reduce adverse effects.
11. Prepare all required reports for MoTA and the WHP in cooperation with SMC.

The members of the Site Management Committee have the following responsibilities:

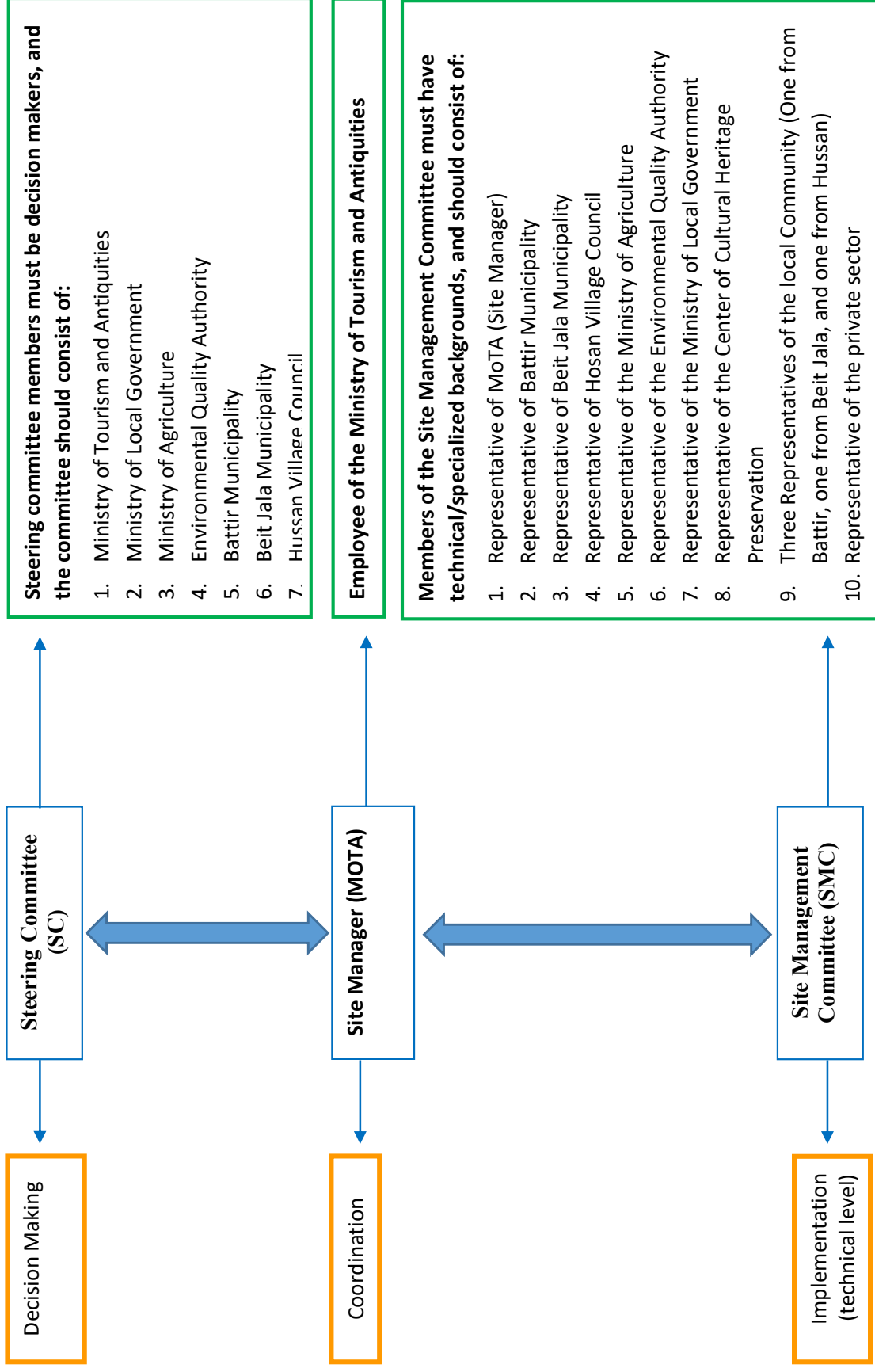
1. Implement the objectives, strategies and actions of the MCP with the aim of reaching comprehensive management, conservation, and valorisation of the WHP.
2. Contribute to developing several cultural activities to promote and interpret the WHP.
3. Contribute to improving the socioeconomic status of the local community, and the public-private partnership.
4. Contribute to developing a comprehensive sustainable database for the WHP, and be able to use the database when desired.

After developing the Operational Management System, which includes the SC and the SMC under the direct guidance of the MoTA, it is important to define the priorities for the MCP's actions. This is a joint responsibility between the SC and SMC members, in response to the real needs of the property, focusing mainly on safeguarding the WHP's OUV, integrity, and authenticity.

The SMC, in close collaboration with the SC, defines an annual Action Plan that includes a set of activities or projects that parallel the MCP's objectives, to be undertaken in the WHP each year. This annual Action Plan shall cover the five themes established in the MCP, and shall be compatible with WHP's vision, as well as fit current priorities.

These actions shall be defined in collaboration with the different involved bodies, and in consultation with concerned national and international stakeholders.

The following chart summarizes the WHP site management unit, which includes the Steering Committee, Site Manager, and Site Management Committee:



The following table summarizes the roles of the WHP site manager, steering committee, and site management committee:

Theme	Site Manager (MOTA)	Site Management Committee (SMC)	Steering Committee (SC)
Supervising the implementation of the MCP and actions	Supervise the management of the WHP and implement the MCP recommendations with both general and specific strategies.		Supervise the implementation of the MCP.
Coordination, cooperation, and communication	Coordinate the implementation of actions and activities with the SMC and all other concerned parties.	Each member of the SMC is a representative of their institution and a link between the committee and their institution. Each member is also responsible for coordinating the implementation of projects within their institution.	Mainstream the MCP and its main objectives and strategies within the national and local strategic and development planning framework.
	Coordinate between the SC on the decision-making level and the SMC on the technical level and ensure that all the MCP's actions are implemented in conformity with the law.	Coordinate with the site manager to carry out actions, activities, events and projects in order to avoid repetition and overlapping.	Ensure that all legal frameworks are effective and work to conserve and enhance the WHP.
	Arrange and invite stakeholders to meetings, and take minutes at the meetings.	Ensure maximum communication and collaboration with stakeholders and other involved parties to implement the MCP.	

	Ensure close cooperation among all stakeholders involved in the management of the WHP.	Take advantage of all opportunities and skills to enhance the conservation and the promotion of the WHP.	
Financial support	Help the SC in raising funds to enhance site management.	Recruit the necessary funds to implement the MCP, each member acts according to their specialization and authorities.	Secure the financial support needed for the management, conservation, and enhancement of the WHP.
Revising and updating the plan	Review the outcomes and recommendations of the MCP and update it periodically and as needed, with the cooperation of the SMC. Endorse the updates by the SC.	Work with the Site Manager to periodically review and update the outcomes and recommendations of the MCP.	Approve updates to the outcomes and recommendations of the MCP and approve the Site Manager's proposals for adding or changing the members of the SMC.
Local community engagement	Enhance community public awareness and engagement in coordination with the SMC and all other concerned parties.	Enhance the socioeconomic situation for the local community and strengthen the partnership between the public and private sector. Implement planned actions to improve local community engagement.	
Annual Action Plan	Work with SMC to prepare the annual Action Plan according to the MCP and to the priorities. Endorse the annual Action Plan by the SC.	Work with the Site Manager to prepare the annual Action Plan.	Approve the Annual Action Plan.
Monitoring and maintenance	Monitor the site and discuss the appropriate actions needed to deal with any possible threats to the site's OUV.	Monitoring and maintenance of the WHP and submitting reports periodically to the Site Manager.	Decide on significant interventions.
Reporting	Writing and submitting the required reports to the World	Provide the Site Manager with all information and reports needed for preparing the reports required	Approve the periodic reports.

Heritage Centre and/or its advisory committees.	by the World Heritage Centre and/or its advisory bodies.
Reporting on the implementation progress to the SC.	Follow up on daily issues related to the WHP.
Develop a comprehensive database for the WHP's attributes and features.	Contribute to developing a comprehensive and sustainable database for the WHP, and have access to it.

Table 9 The Roles of the WHP Management System Unit

Annex TWO

Support sustainable tourism through safeguarding, rehabilitation and promotion of the Agro-Cultural Landscape in Battir

Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):	Palestine
Duration (in months):	36 months
UNESCO Contacts	<p>Noha Bawazir Head of Office and UNESCO Representative in Palestine Email: n.bawazir@unesco.org</p> <p>Giovanni Scepi, Programme Specialist and Head of Culture Unit E-mail: g.scepi@unesco.org</p>
FAO Contacts	<p>Dr. Ciro Fiorillo Head of Office, FAO, West Bank and Gaza Strip Email: Ciro.Fiorillo@fao.org</p> <p>Dr. Azzam Saleh Head of Programme, FAO, West Bank and Gaza Strip.</p>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as a partner/ project lead and main beneficiary • The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) • The Municipality of Battir
Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies)	Country: Palestine
Total estimated budget in EURO	3 million

Rationale and overall purpose

Battir area is located a few kilometres south-west of Jerusalem with a significant part of its land being located in Area C of the West Bank where Israel retains full control over planning and construction. This area is home to a major Palestinian agro-cultural landscape which includes ancient dry wall terraces for agricultural use and a complex and unique irrigation system that harnesses the natural water supply (see Figure 1 below). According to archaeological evidence, these terraces have been utilized for at least 4000 years and were the basis for a strong presence of agriculture through the cultivation of olives and vegetables. The unique water distribution system currently used by the Battir families is a testament to an ancient egalitarian distribution system that delivered water to the terraces, based on a simple mathematical calculation and a clear time-managed rotation scheme.



Figure. 1: A view of the Landscape agricultural terraces, and a map of the West Bank that shows the location of the Southern Jerusalem Terraces.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the population of Battir village in 2017 reached 4,696 inhabitants and the total population of the surrounding area reached up to 35,000. The local economy is currently dependent on the Israeli labour market, which absorbs 65% of the village's labour force. The remaining workforce is employed in the Government and Private Sectors; unemployment rate in Battir is roughly at 20%.

Historically speaking and due to their central location, Battir and the surrounding villages were a vital component of the main trade route that connected Jerusalem with Egypt, the Jaffa port and towards Syria. Battir, along with its unique and renowned "Battiri" eggplant variety, was well known by Palestinians as "*the vegetable basket*" for its agricultural production, which was the main economic activity and source of income. After 1948, these villages were progressively

disconnected from Jerusalem, especially after the closure of the railway station in Battir, which constituted a fundamental split between these villages and the rest of the Palestinian Territory.

After 1967, and in particular over the past two decades, this area witnessed the progressive establishment of the so-called “Etzion Block” (see Figure 2 below). This includes several new settlements and their connecting infrastructure (i.e. roads, public service outputs), leading to the ‘enclavisation’ of the Battir area and surrounding villages and a new complex mobility system resulting from the separation of roads. Also, the recently constructed Separation Barrier that surrounds the Bethlehem urban area further isolates the Western Bethlehem Villages from the West Bank, the city of Bethlehem and even from each other. This situation has triggered a socio-economic crisis in the area characterized by agricultural livelihood decline (due to increasing transaction costs, poor market access for local products and expropriation of agricultural land), as well as reduced fresh water availability.

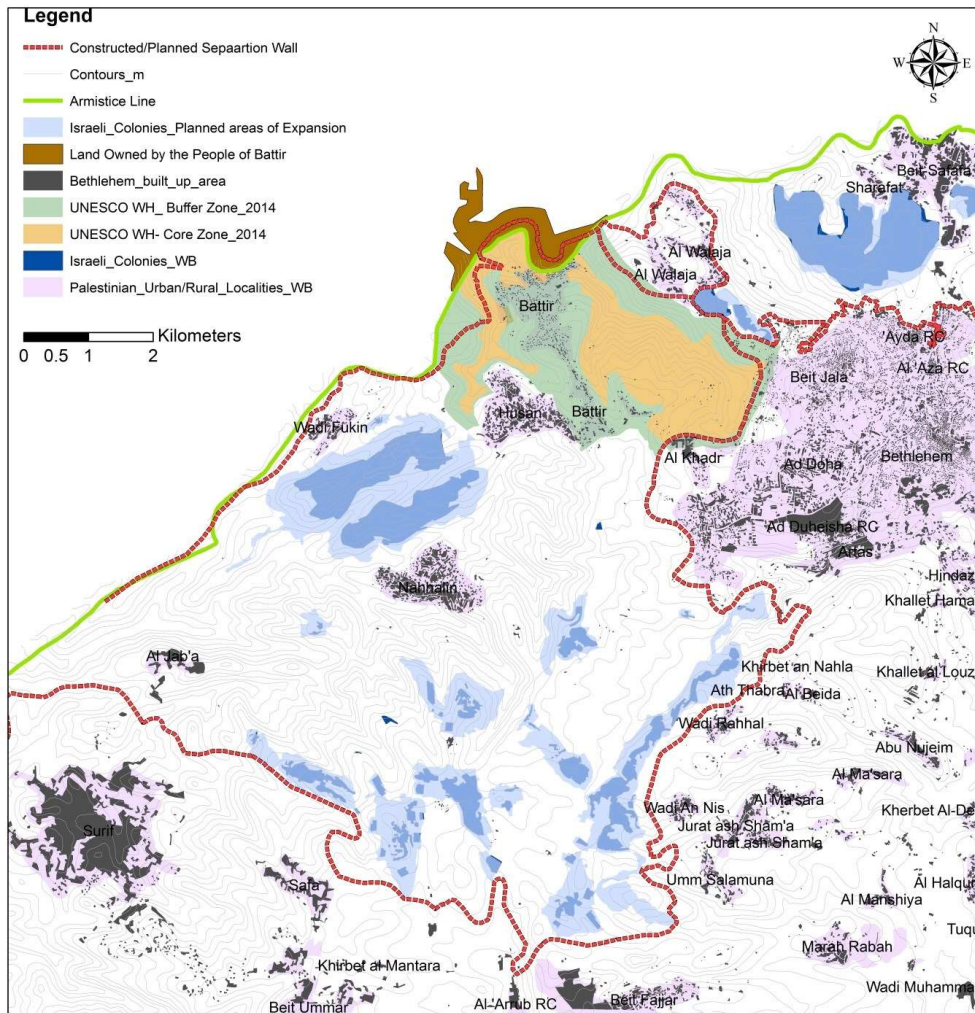


Figure. 2: Map of the “Etzion Block” and the UNESCO World Heritage Site *Palestine Land of Olives and Vines - Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir*¹.

In 2010, Battir’s outstanding cultural landscape was awarded the UNESCO-Melina Mercouri prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes (UNESCO-Greece). Moreover, after the recognition in 2011 of Palestine as a full UNESCO Member State, in June

¹ Source: Battir conservation and management project implemented by UNESCO 2009-2010.

2014 the site of '[Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir](#)' was inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger simultaneously by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th session (Decisions 38 COM 8B.4 and 38 COM 8C.1 - Doha, 2014).

In January 2015, Israel's High Court ruled to freeze plans to build part of the Separation Barrier directly through Battir, in what was a resounding success by the residents of Battir lobbying against the barrier. Yet any future plans to continue the barrier along the same route, which is still possible, would cause irreversible damage to the cultural landscape containing the dry-stone terraces, ancient aqueducts, agricultural systems and traditional species of cultivation characterizing the territory for thousands of years. Thus, effective legal and operational measures are necessary to protect, restore and conserve the vulnerable landscape from external forces and internal infringements caused by informal urban expansion.

The inscription of Battir's agro-cultural landscape on UNESCO's World Heritage List has given universal recognition to the outstanding value of Battir's agro-cultural terraces and ancient system of irrigation, which until recent decades represented a main source of livelihood for inhabitants in the local villages. Yet, according to the evaluation report by the World Heritage Committee's Advisory Body, the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), significant threats to this landscape still exist: *"the main potential threats to cultural value of this new World Heritage property are the construction of a fence, the abandonment of terraces and spread of afforestation and a wide range of socio-economic factors and political constraints. The reversal of the conditions that support these negative changes will only be achieved through sustained interventions at a local level, through an active management plan and with the full engagement of local communities, and local and national authorities"*.

The Battir Landscape Conservation and Management Plan, implemented by UNESCO in 2010, highlights the potential of the natural and cultural heritage values within the targeted area. The area enjoys a well-articulated system of values that constitute an integral part of the Palestinian cultural diversity and identity, as well as a source for economic, social and cultural valorization. Such features include an extensive presence of a traditional terracing system, called *senasel*, (554 kilometers of dry-stone masonries within 11.5 sqkm in the area of Battir only), upon which a system of vegetable gardens within irrigated terraces are situated. Additionally, irrigation channels and pools in the proximity of springs, a variety of rain fed cultivations (fruit and olive trees, field crops) including multi-centenary monumental trees, wild flora and fauna enrich the context, along with watchtowers or dry-stone structures, called *qusur*, in addition to historical core and archeological sites that are distributed in the landscape. See Figures 3 and 4 below.

Links with 2030 Agenda

The project aims at promoting agro-cultural tourism as a driver for economic and social development. In particular, it aims at safeguarding and promoting Battir as a World Heritage Site that would attract tourism investment and benefit the local community. The touristic offer of the entire region can be diversified thanks to agro-tourism as well and could be considered as a complement and integration to the religious touristic route that leads thousands of tourists to Bethlehem and the other World Heritage Site of the [Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem](#).

Summary of outcomes, outputs and activities

Outcome N°1 Sustainable tourism promoted through environmental resources and cultural landscape rehabilitation, safeguarding, development and utilization
Output N°1: The components of the cultural landscape of Battir area, including dry stonewalls, boundary walls, vernacular structures, springs and traditional architecture are rehabilitated, conserved and promoted. All interventions will be based on and correspond to the recommendations of management and conservation plans developed for the site.
Activity 1: Assessment and rehabilitation of traditional buildings, agricultural watchtowers and limekiln existing in the site through adaptive reuse. Attention to be given to watchtowers situated along the traditional pathways leading to the terraces. <i>Action 19 in the 2018 Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) ².</i>
Activity 2: Rehabilitate and improve accessibility to agricultural terraces, and enhance traditional pathways and tourism trails in the World Heritage property. Works to include providing rest areas and different stations along the routes. <i>Strategies 8.5 and 19.1, and actions 30 and 66 in the 2018 CMP.</i>
Output N°2: The aesthetic value, usability and accessibility of the cultural landscape of Battir, for tourism purposes, with a focus on agro-tourism services, is enhanced. Tourism trails upgraded, service spots established and local gastronomy promoted
Activity 1: Soft components including a tourism assessment study, environmental protection plan, and a conservation manual. <i>Objectives 13 and 20, strategies 13.1, 13.2, 14.2 and 20.2, and actions 12, 13, 56 and 57 in the 2017 CMP.</i>
Outcome N°2 Sustainable and economically feasible agro-ecological production in Battir is protected and enhanced
Output N°1: Endangered agriculture livelihoods supported through market-oriented agricultural interventions, while economically reactivating traditional agricultural practices and organic food products.
Activity 1: A comprehensive marketing strategy for 'Battiri' agriculture and food products is developed and promoted and food produce within the boundaries of the World Heritage Zone of Battir area is branded and promoted.
Activity 2: Expand and optimize value chains through local food processing, packaging and labelling. This will include providing technical and in-kind support to women and women associations, in addition to agro-tourism and organic alternatives within the site.
Activity 3: Capacity development of local institutions and local value chain actors, and creating new local and international market linkages to increase the market access of local food products.

Implementation Strategy

Through joint planning, research, management, monitoring and evaluation, UNESCO will assume the overall coordination of the project and will guarantee a successful project implementation based on its comparative advantage and fields of expertise. Effective management, combined with a viable development approach to promote Battir area intrinsic heritage values and to empower the associated communities will ensure attaining the project

² 2018 Management plan: <https://whc.unesco.org/document/185240>

outcomes set out above. By safeguarding, reactivating and enhancing local production practices, and by effectively managing and conserving its heritage values, the proposed project will support the development of a network of small-scale farmers and artisan producers thus ensuring sustainable local production, and will contribute to the sustainable tourism and the socio-economic development in Battir area.

Stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners

The direct beneficiaries are the people of Battir and the surrounding villages, which include Hussan, Beit Jala and Wadi Fukin, and indirect beneficiaries are Palestinian people as a whole. In addition, the project will benefit local and governmental institutions, which are responsible for the implementation of the recently prepared conservation and management of the World Heritage site, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The principal stakeholders are the farming families and the local businesses of Battir and several governing organizations and ministries including: the Municipality of Battir, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry Tourism and Antiquities. The Food and Agriculture Organization will coordinate the activities related to Outcome 2 above and ensure the contribution to the overarching goals of the project. Moreover, a project Steering Committee will be established representing the various stakeholders to directly supervise and ensure efficient implementation of activities, as well as the timely and satisfactory achievement of the outputs.

Risk analysis, sustainability and exit strategy

Key Risks	Impact	Probability	Mitigation Strategy
Environmental risk factors			
The expansion of irrigated agricultural land will overload the natural spring water supply in Battir.	Degradation of the water supply/demand balance leading to increased burden on domestic water consumption.	<u>Moderately probable:</u> Most irrigated crops are water demanding; conventional, low efficiency, irrigation practices still prevail.	Formulation of a natural resource management plan focusing on the sustainable use of the spring water for agriculture; provision of on-farm technical training on climate-smart, water use efficient methods for agriculture
Plant pests and diseases outbreak	Outbreaks of plant diseases will reduce crop yields leading to reduced productivity and profitability	<u>Moderately/highly probable:</u> Insufficient Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary regulatory frameworks and capacities coupled with the absence of effective border inspection, significantly increase the likelihood of transmission of trans-boundary diseases.	Provision of extensive training on Integrated Disease and Pest Management focusing on agro-ecological solutions such as natural pest control, soil bio-diversity and other eco-system services for plant protection
Financial/Economic risk factors			

Instability of fresh product supply and demand at local, regional and international markets	Local and export market volatility may lead to reduced profitability	<u>Moderately/highly probable:</u> Export markets are highly fickle as clearly indicated by Palestinian export companies; local markets tend to be more resilient	Provision of training/capacity building to local institutions on marketing and local value chain analysis to identify and develop multiple functions of "Battiri" agriculture for local and export markets, thus enabling more sustainable marketing strategies
Unpredictable price changes of production inputs and construction materials	As the project will provide inputs, price increases will impact quantities delivered to beneficiaries	<u>Moderately probable:</u> Increase in prices is probable. The magnitude of any increase is a subject to raw material price volatility at global markets	Whenever possible and efficient, FAO will depend on the provision of services from local suppliers thus mitigate the risk of severe shocks in prices
Minimal acceptance and/or ownership by the targeted communities and local institutions	Poor local participation and ownership will jeopardize the sustainability of project results post-intervention	<u>Moderately Probable:</u> Local stakeholders will quickly lose interest if they don't have adequate agency or influence on project planning and implementation	Adoption of inclusive and participatory approaches involving the communities and institutions throughout the project cycle. Inclusive and transparent project governance will ensure continued ownership and sustainability of results.
Political risk factors			
A major part of the targeted project area lies in area C	Being in Area C, the site is subject to restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities, which may hamper work plan activities.	<u>Highly probable:</u> Any intervention that requires municipal work could be impeded by the Israeli authorities.	Devising measures and designing activities in consultation with the relevant authorities.
Further expansion of the separation barrier (meaning a reversal of a decision by the Israeli Court on the 4th January 2015 to freeze construction of the barrier).	Irreversible damage to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage site leading to negative socio-economic and visual impacts on Battir.	<u>Moderately Probable:</u> Alternative plans to build the barrier across the site could be submitted in the future	Through the rehabilitation of the agricultural terraces and revitalization of the local economy, a significant amount of land previously out of use would be productive thus deterring any future expansion of the separation barrier
Technical risk factors			

Fragmentation of land and other properties due to inheritance issues/procedures	Fragmentation of properties affecting leasing agreements for the rehabilitation of agricultural land and historic buildings	<u>Highly Probable:</u> Fragmentation of properties may generate lengthy legal issues/procedures	Encouraging business models for production and marketing of local goods thus providing incentives for owners to allow rehabilitation and reuse of their properties.
Shortage of local skilled labour, especially for the rehabilitation of historic buildings and dry-stone walls	If supply of local labour is limited, importing labour will be necessary, missing out on the opportunity to support local skilled labour	<u>Low Probability:</u> Traditional knowhow is available but limited and disappearing	Support skills development and job creation opportunities for the local population in the fields of heritage conservation, agro-ecological farming, management of natural and cultural assets and sustainable tourism.