



UNESCO

Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in JORDAN



Disaster risk reduction planning - Petra (2017) © UNESCO/M. Santana

Development of an emergency preparedness plan for the world heritage property of “Petra” (2019-2020)

The World Heritage property of Petra is located at the downstream end of the Wadi Musa Catchment Basin and has been highly exposed to floods risk since antiquity. During 2018, two flash floods struck the World Heritage Site; a situation that imposed serious risks to the site and endangered the lives of tourists. In 2019, in response to a request of the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) and with the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, UNESCO engaged in the development of an integrated hydrologic-hydraulic model of the Wadi Musa watershed based on a thorough hydrological and hydraulic study of the area and the collection of available baseline data. The work has represented the first-ever comprehensive assessment of the information available at PDTRA and other Jordanian institutions in relation to meteorological, topographic and climatic data leading to the definition of a baseline data set that would represent a useful input to any other study and/or project related to the same topic for the protection of Petra. The project concluded in 2020 with the provision of a set of preliminary designs for structural flash-flood risk-mitigation interventions that will provide PDTRA with a roadmap to plan the next steps.

Training to counter antiquities trafficking in the Mashreq (2018)

To counter the phenomenon of illicit trafficking of antiquities and to protect cultural heritage, UNESCO organized the training workshop “Countering Antiquities Trafficking in the Mashreq – A training programme for specialists working to deter cultural property theft and the illicit trafficking of antiquities”, from 16 to 20 April 2018, in Beirut (Lebanon). With the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, the programme aimed at providing governmental authorities, art professionals, academics and decision-makers who work in fragile countries affected by cultural property theft and illicit trafficking of antiquities, with professional skills to counter such phenomena. 31 professionals from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey, including 11 women, benefitted from the training. The 5-day training, animated by experts from the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), INTERPOL, the International Council Of Museums (ICOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA), was structured around four modules, each designed to address issues of common concern in affected source and transit countries.

Disaster risk reduction planning for the World Heritage property of Petra (2017)

In the light of its specific geomorphology, the World Heritage property “Petra” (Jordan) is exposed to a number of natural hazards, including floods, landslides and earthquakes, which represent a major threat to the site and visitors alike. The development of a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Plan for the World Heritage property thus represents an urgent protection tool and an essential component of the Integrated Management Plan for the Petra Archaeological Park. The Heritage Emergency Fund supported, between September 2017 and January 2018, the organization of workshops and site visits to mobilize key experts and stakeholders – including the Jordan Civil Defense, tourism police, park rangers, DRR experts, and local authorities – in order to conduct a series of preliminary activities necessary for the development of a comprehensive DRR Plan for the property. These included the translation from Arabic into English of initial policy recommendations drafted by the Jordan Civil Defence on reducing disaster risk at the property; an analysis of the documentation available; an assessment of the DRR situation at the property and identification of key needs and priorities; and the identification of emergency rescue areas within the site that would not have an impact on the integrity of the archaeological park and the surrounding communities. A key outcome of the Heritage Emergency Fund’s support was the establishment of a committee dedicated to carrying out further work on the elaboration of the DRR Plan for the World Heritage property “Petra”.