

Report No: ACS18813

# West Bank and Gaza

## Changing the Face of Tourism

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GSU05

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



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# Final Summary Report: Changing the Face of Tourism

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## Summary

The training was divided into two parts: Practice and Theory. The theoretical part was divided into trainings on four different topics: 1) Flora and Fauna , 2) First Aid , 3) Leadership, 4) History and Geopolitics. The practical part involved five hiking trips where participants walked across the Ibrahim Path and applied what they learned in the theoretical part.

## Evaluation Method

This activity requires short-term and long-term evaluation. For the short-term, our team conducted 1) written questionnaire with all participants to assess motivation and views at the outset; 2) one-on-one interviews; 3) focus group with families; and 4) open group discussion.

The long- term evaluation will be conducted in 4-6 months through emails and Skype interviews to examine the long-term impact on the participants.

## Impact

### Outputs:

4 trainings courses  
5 hiking trips  
10 participants (5 female, 5 male)

### Outcomes:

#### *On project level:*

As a pilot, this activity provided an opportunity for engaging youth from refugee camps in building up their knowledge and capacity in the area of tourism and to build their interest in opportunities offered in the tourism sector. Although the number of participants was small - 10 divided equally between men and women - some are being selected to participate as tour assistants in the well-established Ibrahim Path tours thereby increasing their marketability in the industry. Of equal importance was to offer MIAK - the implementing agency - with the opportunity and the means to employ youth from refugee camps with the likelihood that may start training and employing youth from refugee camps as one of the modes of delivery of tours. More broadly, disseminating knowledge about this small initiative will raise awareness on opportunities that may exist for employment of refugees in countries hosting large numbers of them including Jordan and Lebanon.

This Pilot project allows for integration of lessons learned on two important dimensions into the WB lending project Abraham Path Initiative; 1) opportunities through involving refugees to

enhance social cohesion within the Palestinian community and 2) ways to increase female engagement.

### ***On participant level:***

- Participants reported better understanding of community and landscape.
- Participants reported higher appreciation for local tourism opportunities. Participants reported increased interest and better chances to enter tourism job market.
- Participants have been exposed to local tourism sector through courses, hikes as well a job market with other employers in the area.
- A number of participants will participate as tour guide assistants in Ibrahim Path tours thereby further increasing their marketability in tourism industry.
- Participants will be considered for the six months -long tourism course at Bethlehem University sponsored by the “Abraham Path Initiative” World Bank IPF project.

### ***On community level:***

Small group setting with participants from two refugee camps, Dahaisha and Aida, allowed for high female participation due to strong community connection, paving the way for potentially higher female engagement in tourism sector in the long term (for example in the WB Project Abraham Path Initiative).

Youths were connected with their surroundings and across two different refugee camps.

## **What worked well**

Our team joined the participants on a number of their hiking trips and courses. Observations on best practices to be applied for potential future trainings and follow up include:

- Natural activities in fragile setting are a good venue for bringing young people together across different groups. For many of the participants, taking such walks was done for the first time but they all enjoyed the opportunity to be able to experience their surroundings in a new way. It connected them with their landscape and community while providing an opportunity to explore a new career path.
- The division of training into alternating theoretical and practical portions was highly beneficial for knowledge capture and retention. Being able to apply on a hike in nature what participants had learned previously in the classroom helped build a real foundation for becoming active tour guides.
- The trainers’ interpersonal skills had a big impact on how engaged participants were in the activity and feedback they provided for it.
- The relationships built within the group were very positive. Having two small groups from two refugee camps helped to create enough familiarity on the one hand to allow participants to engage freely as well as to connect with youths from a different camp openly. The sense of community created great dynamics within the group that helped in making the experience and the learning much better. Feedback provided by families suggests that at least some of the female participants were only allowed to attend because the family knew other participants and organizers. This is a very important lesson for future walks to be replicated.
- There was a great alignment with other existing World Bank projects including linking this activity to the Abraham Path project, and coordinating with its team. This offers a

good example of linkages between projects to allow sustainability and better opportunities for follow ups.

## What can be improved

- It is essential to have the right timing for implementation. Almost all participants and the client organization MIAK stressed that the timing could have been better. These walks are best to be done in March/ early April as it was getting too hot, but also the participants would have been able to see more variety of the Flora and Fauna.
- The implementation should have been stretched out over a longer period of time. The days were long and tiring mainly and participants reported that theory trainings were long. Participants agreed that having these trainings stretch over a longer period of months but with less hours would have been more beneficial.
- Participants thought they should have been provided with walking shoes, hats, etc. Many of them didn't have the right shoes for such walks.
- There seems to be issue with commitment from participants with the activity. Some participants were not able to come to all the training sections. Reasons included:
  - The short amount of time we had to select the participants which didn't provide us with a chance to ensure their commitment to the activity and physical fitness for such walks.
  - The lack of a professional certificate at the end of the course, which would have been a motivation for continued commitment.
  - The intensity of the program being implemented in only one month.

## Lessons Learned

1) It was very beneficial to have a project member who was able to visit and take part in some of the activities. Due to her own background, she was able to create a great connection with participants. This created a sense of community with the World Bank team which provided a basis for an open discussion on motivations, positive and negative feedback as well as an exchange of ideas for follow up. Especially for a small pilot activity such as this one it is essential to gain in-depth knowledge of the participants motivations and plans. Most of the observations gathered are to be attributed to the group and their families welcoming the team member as one of them, enabling an open dialogue, rather than an outsider coming to implement yet another development activity.

2) Pilot activities can increase female participation. From the one-on-one interviews and discussions with participants' families, it became clear that families and especially heads of households were only comfortable with letting their daughters participate because they i) knew the training organizers, ii) knew some of the other participants, and iii) were able to get accustomed to letting their daughters leave on hikes by starting with relatively short lengths trips. Female participants and their families are now more likely to consider the longer tourism course at Bethlehem University as an option due to their previous positive experience through this pilot. Therefore, shorter pilots might help provide a socializing environment for female participants and

their families to become comfortable with tourism as a career option even when it takes them away from home for longer periods of time.

3) Another area for exploration for the community tourism industry is fostering local demand. Much of the marketing of hiking along the Abraham Path has been targeted at international tourists who visit the West Bank. However, with ever present and once again increasing security concerns international tourism continues to be instable, leaving the tourism sector vulnerable to upsets. There might be an untapped opportunity in marketing the hikes to the local population. For many Palestinians, hiking the Abraham Path provides an interesting leisure activity which at the same time allows them to connect with their land and their history in a different way without the limitation of security restrictions.

4) Ensuring that there is a clear path after these activities is important for the commitment from participants. There are many activities and projects in the refugee camps and to ensure dedication and commitment, it is essential to have a clear vision what participation in a project will lead to eventually. In this pilot activity which was designed as a one-off on purpose a path for continued engagement has been identified through i) connecting participants with existing tour guide companies for opportunities and ii) providing a path to the WB-funded Bethlehem University one-year tourism course.

5) Participants asked for opportunities to express themselves and talk about their experience with local tourism. Their walks have been well-documented and there already is a Facebook group connecting the participants with each other for further exchange. However, in the coming months, the project team will follow up with participants in order to provide forums for participants to tell their story more in depth.

## Next Steps

As mentioned in the previous sections, there are three areas for next steps: 1) support for current participants, 2) knowledge dissemination within the World Bank and beyond, and 3) integration of lessons learned into future projects.

### 1) Support for current participants:

As mentioned above, participants of the pilot activity are being provided with different ways of pursuing community tourism as a career option. First, through a small tourism fair they were exposed to other local businesses in the tourism sector which provides them with a better sense of opportunities. Second, they are also being considered as tour guide assistants for hikes on the Abraham Path. Third, they have the opportunity to be considered for the Bethlehem University 6 months-year tourism course. Finally, if more funds are made available for continuation of this pilot or under a larger lending project, participants could be provided with a follow up course which would have more of an internship quality and with a 'train-the-trainer' component.

### 2) Knowledge dissemination with the World Bank and beyond

An important contribution of this pilot activity was to create lessons in the area of social cohesion and gender balance for larger tourism project. Further, there are lessons for the Youth Innovation

Fund community which sponsored this activity from the outset. For both knowledge dissemination purposes there are activities planned to share face-to-face, such as through a BBL, and through stories to be published internally and externally.

### 3) Integration of lessons learned into future projects

Most importantly, this pilot activity should lead to actionable lessons for the WB Abraham Path Initiative. For this purpose, the team has been in close contact with the Abraham Path Initiative's task team in order to tailor the project ideally and extract valuable lessons. This exchange will continue in order to inform the lending project through what could be learned by engaging youths from refugee camps.