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# THE **URBAN REHABILITATION OF MEDINAS**

The World Bank Experience in the  
Middle East and North Africa



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# THE URBAN REHABILITATION OF MEDINAS

The World Bank Experience in the  
Middle East and North Africa

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# Urban Development Series

Produced by the World Bank's Urban Development and Local Government Unit of the Sustainable Development Network, the **Urban Development Series** discusses the challenge of urbanization and what it will mean for developing countries in the decades ahead. The Series aims to explore and delve more substantively into the core issues framed by the World Bank's 2009 Urban Strategy **Systems of Cities: Harnessing Urbanization for Growth and Poverty Alleviation**. Across the five domains of the Urban Strategy, the Series provides a focal point for publications that seek to foster a better understanding of (i) the core elements of the city system, (ii) pro-poor policies, (iii) city economies, (iv) urban land and housing markets, (v) sustainable urban environment, and other urban issues germane to the urban development agenda for sustainable cities and communities.

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The photo on the cover depicts the medina of Sousse (Tunisia) and its kasbah, or fortified town.



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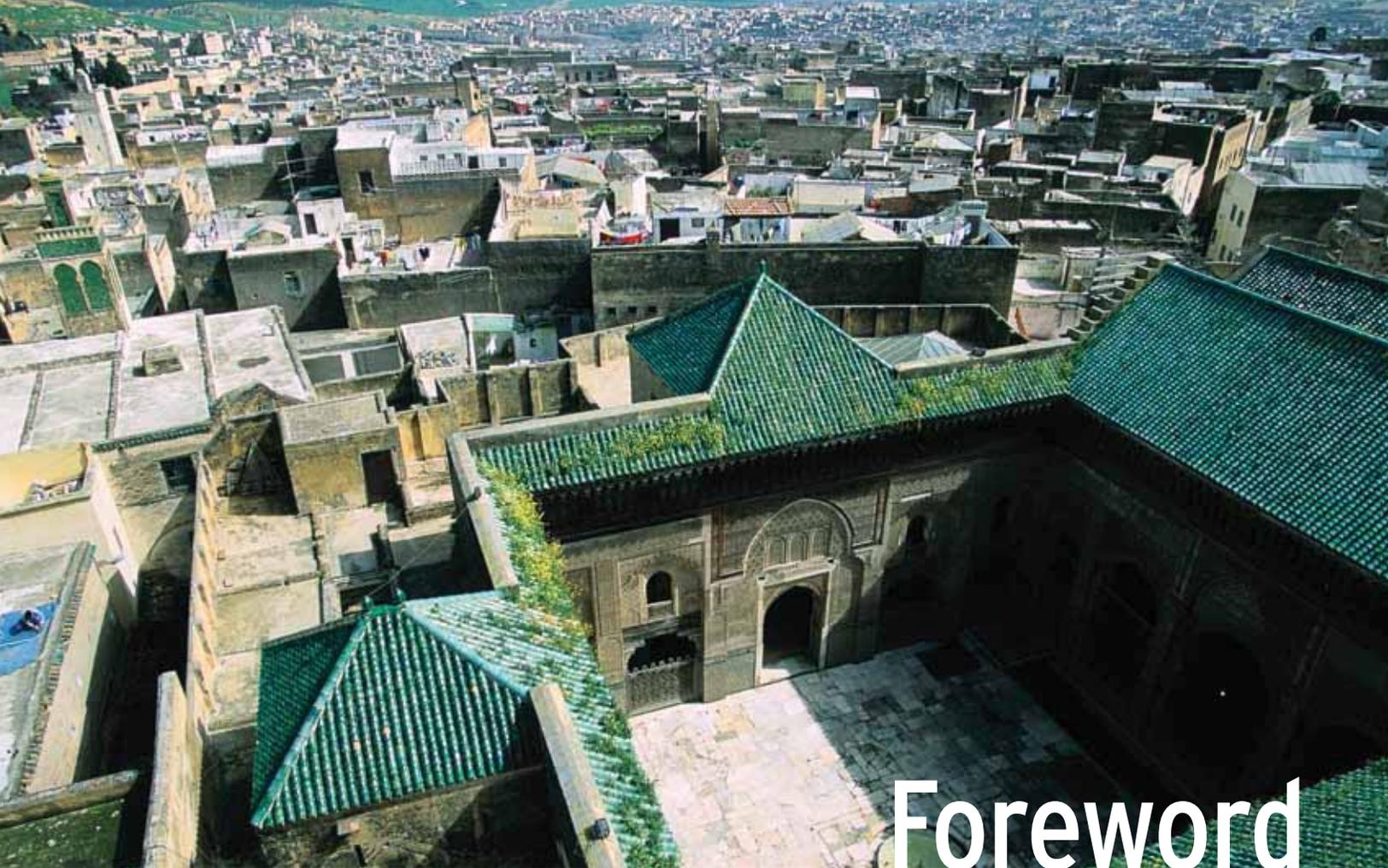
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# Foreword

**How can cultural heritage support economic development? This monograph—under the Urban Development Series—examines the role of cultural heritage in creating livelihoods, in reviving communities, and in establishing identities. It focuses on the Middle East and North Africa and on the benefits gained from historic centers—or medinas—being revitalized and rehabilitated.**

What exactly does such rehabilitation involve? In short, it means the preservation of cultural heritage, and its adaptive reuse in support of poverty reduction and economic growth. Several examples of World Bank-financed projects show that investing in the cultural heritage of poor and marginal social groups can bring profound change in their self-reliance and energies, which can then be supplemented by assisting them in finding innovative ways to improve their livelihoods. In these projects, cultural heritage assets have strengthened national

and local economies, provided incentives for job creation, improved the urban environment, and the quality of public spaces. Revitalized cultural heritage sites can meanwhile increase property values and tax revenues, thus making available additional resources to support local institutions and public service delivery.

Since the 1970s, the World Bank has financed 241 projects (208 lending and 33 non-lending) that feature investments in cultural heritage, to a total of US\$4 billion. There are currently 117 such operations under implementation (100 lending and 17 non-lending), with an outstanding commitment of US\$2 billion. Cultural heritage projects need comprehensive studies and careful preparation, in order to analyze the characteristics and conservation state of cultural assets, and to design strategic interventions that properly engage with local communities and economies. Such operations will normally need also to address legal frameworks

**▲ FIG. 2** Major cultural heritage assets and historic urban neighborhoods are present in Fez (Morocco)

and institutional capacity, not just physical investments.<sup>1</sup>

In 2001, the World Bank's Middle East and North Africa region became the first region to produce a dedicated regional strategy, published under the title *Cultural Heritage and Development: A Framework for Action in the Middle East and North Africa*. The strategy spelled out how cultural heritage was relevant to economic development, significant for community and national identities, and carried opportunities for social development. The strategy also recognized the special significance of historic cities, which are an essential repository of the history, traditions and memories of the region.

Now, one decade later, this monograph draws together the lessons from a generation of projects and investments aimed at the urban rehabilitation of medinas in Middle East and North Africa. The projects all share two assumptions: (i) even in countries that are rapidly urbanizing and modernizing, historic cities continue to play a key role in hosting cultural, spiritual and religious legacies, in sustaining the continuity of traditional arts and crafts, and as the locations for a unique density of small-scale economic activities; and (ii) historic cities are meanwhile assuming new roles as central cores of larger agglomerations, and can become assets for cultural tourism—both national and international—while providing housing and urban services to local populations.

To conclude, as countries modernize and transform, historic cities can provide a crucial element of continuity and stability: the legacy of the past can support development into the future. That is, if several conditions are met. The experience of these projects demonstrates the importance of a favorable

legal framework, supportive institutional capacity, a degree of social consensus, and sensitivity to different stakeholder groups—all are needed to achieve the goals of cultural heritage rehabilitation. The World Bank is proud to support national and local governments in this developmental process, in collaboration also with bilateral and multilateral development organizations, international networks, civil society organizations, and private foundations. We stand ready to continue this important work.

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<sup>1</sup> The Italian Government has, since 2000, financed a World Bank-managed Trust Fund for cultural heritage project preparation, capacity building, and knowledge dissemination, which has disbursed over forty grants in support of such operations. In 2010, the Indian Government joined the financing of this Trust Fund, thus significantly broadening the support of developing countries for cultural heritage investments. We are very grateful to these governments for facilitating the activities of the World Bank in this important area.

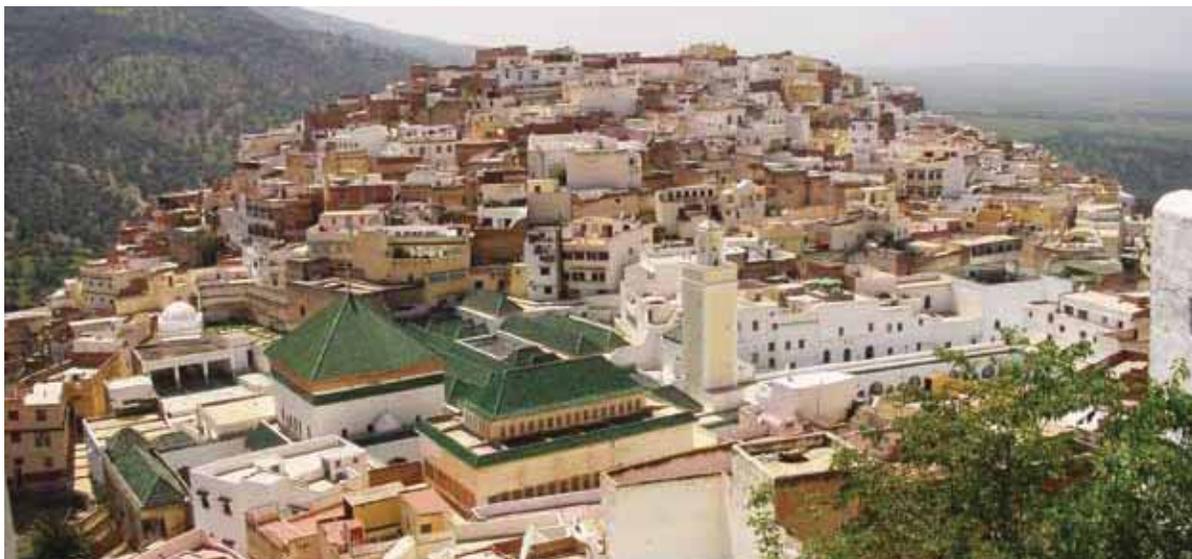
# 1 Summary

The paper presents the key objectives for the rehabilitation of historic centers—or medinas—in the Middle East and North Africa as elaborated by the World Bank on the basis of twenty years of past and present lending and technical assistance operations to the governments of the region. These are: (i) the conservation of the urban and cultural heritage; (ii) the local economic development of the historic city; and (iii) the improvement of the living conditions of the resident population. Such objectives must be reached simultaneously for the projects to be considered successful. The paper presents some innovative ways to classify the contemporary users of the medinas into different categories, which then become the market segments to reach via the rehabilitation initiatives, given the radically changed present role of historic cities as urban cores of much larger urban agglomerations.

The paper elaborates on the roles of the public and of the private sector, as well as of the non-profit or third sector, which need to be called upon to participate actively to the urban rehabilitation process, and defines the specific activities that should be carried out by each, drawing from examples of rehabilita-

tion projects in Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and West Bank & Gaza. An analysis of winners and losers resulting from some case studies is also presented, proving that medina rehabilitation, like all urban transformations, inevitably distributes benefits unevenly. The paper argues that the intelligent management of the rehabilitation process by the public sector remains the primary key for success, as it is the only actor that can embrace all of the objectives stated above, and harness the contributions of the other actors accordingly.

Finally, the paper reviews the financial and fiscal instruments that can be used to mobilize the necessary resources, including the roles of scaled up private sector investments and of international development financing in support of national and local governments. As sustainable cultural tourism is put forth as the main economic rationale for investment of financial resources in medina rehabilitation, the paper also presents an innovative multi-criteria index to determine the tourism potential of historic cities in the region, which has been recently used in the case of Morocco for a national strategy for the rehabilitation of its historic cities.



**< FIG. 3**  
The thriving medina of Moulay Driss Zerhoun (Morocco), attracting pilgrims to its sanctuary

## 2 Significance and decay of medinas in the Arab world



**▲ FIG. 4** Medinas are endowed with a rich and diverse cultural heritage; however, in the last fifty years they have suffered a steady decay across the Middle East and North Africa.

Traditional neighborhoods in Sana'a (Yemen), showing very compact and ornate residential buildings

Many cities in North Africa and the Middle East feature historic cores that are at the heart of Arab civilization and generally date their origin back to medieval times. These historic settlements are the repository of formidable cultural assets, remarkable religious and secular buildings, harmonious urban patterns, attractive streets and public spaces, traditional productive and commercial activities, and social interactions that characterize them as unique urban locations. Yet, for the past fifty years, they have been experiencing rapid physical and social decay due to a combination of abandonment by part of their original population and rapid urban growth of modern neighborhoods. Contemporary economic, cultural, and social activities have found their urban location elsewhere, turning their back on the medinas.

As the wealthy and middle-income population moved out of the medinas, a social equilibrium that had existed for centuries came to an end, with consequences on the physical state of the building stock and the local communities. Medinas got pauperized by the influx of poorer segments of the population, both urban and rural, which found refuge and cheap accommodation where wealthier families had previously lived. The occupancy status of the housing stock reflects the numerical relevance of tenants, sub-tenants, and squatters as part of the medina population, and the related impact on the lack of physical maintenance. Well-meaning rent control laws, as well as titling complexities, worsen the chances for rehabilitation in many countries.

As governments concentrate their efforts on managing urban growth, providing infrastructure and services to agglomerations that have often doubled or tripled in size in the course of a few decades, they cater to the demand of social groups living in modern neighborhoods, and medinas lag behind in terms of access to services and basic infrastructure. The nature of their urban fabric, where vehicular circulation is most of the time excluded, is perceived as a stumbling block for their servicing.

**Notwithstanding their decay, the medinas carry a unique significance for the countries of the region and the world, but such significance is not always reflected in urban policies.**

Medinas are the physical representation of social and cultural identities that are at the origin of the Arab world. As such, their significance for local, national, and international identities in the context of a globalizing world would seem very high, and their survival, which is threatened by the current trends of decay, would seem equally important. However, governments in the region have rarely been able to formulate and to implement national public policies aimed



at ensuring their rehabilitation. This can be explained in many ways: as a reflection of the tension between tradition and modernization present within Arab societies, which is also at the origin of some radical conflicts; as an inability to develop the complex institutional, financial, and technical tools needed for the conservation and rehabilitation of such patrimony; or as a combination of all of the above.

While this ambiguity remains palpable in many countries of the region, the international notoriety of the medinas is undisputed, and their attractiveness is demonstrated by the volume of visitors they attract on an annual basis, providing sources of foreign revenues, cultural linkages, opportunities for employment

and job creation, sustainable tourism, and exports of handicrafts. Many of this unique set of historic cities have found their international recognition with their inclusion in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Table 1 features the list of medinas that thanks to their pre-eminence, to the interest of the international community, and to the support of the national governments, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. As the criteria for the definition of medinas are not universally established, each government in the region maintains its own list and is responsible for the classification as well as for the conservation of the historic cities on its territory. The total number of medinas in the Middle East and North Africa region is likely to be over a hundred.

**▲ FIG. 5**  
Very high urban density is to be found in the neighborhoods of the medina of Damascus (Syria)

Country	Cultural World Heritage Sites	Of which medinas	Medinas classified as WHS
Algeria	6	2	M'Zab valley (five medinas), Kasbah of Algiers
Egypt	6	1	Old Cairo
Iran	10	2	Esfahan, Bam
Israel	6	1	Acre
Lebanon	5	3	Baalbek, Byblos, and Tyre
Libya	5	1	Ghadamès
Morocco	8	6	Fez, Marrakesh, Meknes, Tétouan, Essaouira, and El Djadida
Syria	5	3	Damascus, Bosra, and Aleppo
Tunisia	7	3	Tunis, Kairouan, and Sousse
Yemen	3	3	Shibam, Sana'a, and Zabid
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>25</b>	

**TABLE 1**  
Medinas inscribed on the World Heritage List in North Africa and the Middle East

# 3 Defining contemporary medina users

**Historic medinas have evolved from self-sufficient cities to becoming central urban cores of much larger urban agglomerations. This has transformed the profile of medina users.**

Since their foundation many centuries ago, and until very recently, most medinas existed as complete cities, as their Arabic name implies, generally encircled by defensive walls, and as self-contained urban universes complete with all the institutional, economic, and social activities which characterized them. They were mostly surrounded by the countryside, over which they were exerting their power and influence. This

has dramatically changed in a few decades as, with the exception of the most isolated medinas, the important ones have become the urban cores of much larger urban agglomerations, of which they represent a small portion. In Morocco, for instance, the population of the medinas of Tangiers and of Casablanca represents only 2 percent of the agglomeration, while in the case of Fez, one of the most-populated medinas, the percentage is of only 12 percent.

Having gone from being complete and self-contained cities to being cores of much larger cities, the question of the functional linkages between the medinas and the surrounding urban areas becomes

**TABLE 2**  
Attractiveness of medina economic activities and services to different user groups

Activities	Products and services	Medina residents	Residents of other neighborhoods	National visitors	International tourists
Educational	Medersas, schools	High	None	None	None
Health-care	Health-care centers	High	None	None	None
Commercial	Basic products	High	None	None	None
	Specialized products	High	High	Moderate	None
	Handicrafts	High	High	Moderate	High
	Fashion products	None	Moderate	High	Moderate
Hospitality	Souvenirs	None	None	High	High
	Cafes	High	None	High	High
	Restaurants	Moderate	None	Moderate	High
Entertainment	Boutique hotels	Moderate	None	Moderate	High
	Theatres and cinemas	High	None	None	None
	Gaming halls	High	None	None	None
Cultural	Community centers	High	None	None	None
	Museums	None	Moderate	Moderate	High
	Art galleries	None	Moderate	Moderate	High
Religious	Cultural centers	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
	Mosques	High	None	Moderate	None
Attractiveness		Nil	Low	Moderate	High

crucial. What are the roles of the medina in a modern, evolving, and growing Arab city? Who are its users? Addressing such questions is relevant for the purpose of defining the rationale and the objectives of the rehabilitation processes, given that different groups contribute in different ways to the economy of the medina, and reviving the economic basis of these urban areas must be an essential part of the rehabilitation. Its success therefore will depend largely on understanding an reinforcing such economic dynamics.

**Medina users in the contemporary setting can be classified into four distinct groups.**

These are (i) medina residents; (ii) residents of other urban neighborhoods; (iii) national visitors; and (iv) international tourists. Each group uses the medina in a different manner, and access a different set of services. Table 2 presents the services sought by the different user groups. The residents of the medina primarily seek basic services, such as health and education, shop at the local markets and grocery stores, and congregate at the local mosques and related facilities. Cafés are their place for social interaction, where men will sit and converse sipping coffee or tea. Cinemas, theatres, gaming halls, and community centers are of lesser interest to the resident



**FIG. 6**  
Heritage-related products displayed in the medina of Essaouira (Morocco)

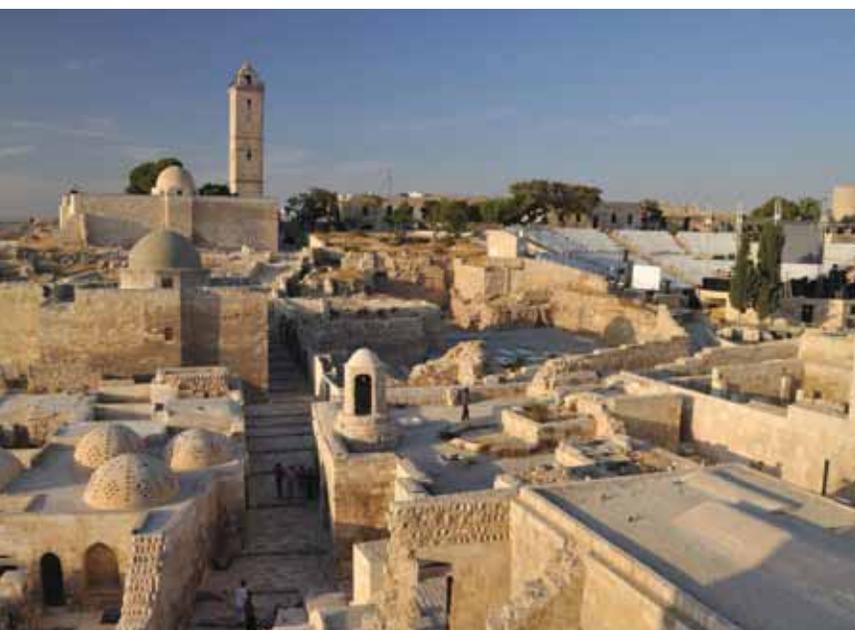
population, although sought after by the younger generation. At the other extreme, international tourists seek different services and goods. Their interests include museums, art galleries, and cultural centers, especially at the time of cultural events or festivals. They seek the opportunity to stay overnight in the medinas, if boutique hotels are available, to lunch and dine at local upscale cafés and restaurants, and shop for local handicrafts, souvenirs, local fashion items, and specialized products that can only be found locally, produced in traditional workshops.



Residents of the urban agglomeration and national visitors visit the medina for different purposes. The former, as certain traditional foodstuffs and handicraft products that are still part of their daily or periodical consumption are best found in the medina's commercial areas. The latter, as they approach the cultural heritage of their nation with some interest, visiting sites and acquiring local products to bring back home. Such different usages of the urban space are important when analyzing the local economy in an attempt to unlock its potential. The much higher consumption potential by international tourists makes activities aimed at that user group clearly the most lucrative ones for local businesses.

**FIG. 7**  
Informal commercial activities in the historic city of Meknes (Morocco)

## 4 Objectives of medina rehabilitation



**▲ FIG. 8**  
The citadel is one of Aleppo's (Syria) most ancient monumental areas

The World Bank has given active support to governments in medina rehabilitation, as part of its world-wide support to cultural heritage and sustainable tourism development.

Since the 1970s, the World Bank has financed 241 operations (208 lending and 33 non-lending) entirely devoted to or having components in cultural heritage conservation and promotion of sustainable tourism, for an investment of US\$4 billion across the developing world. There are currently 117 operations under implementation (100 lending and 17 non-lending), for an overall investment of US\$2 billion. In the Middle East and North Africa region, the World Bank has been active since the early '80, with both lending operations and advisory work in medina rehabilitation. The relevant operations are presented in Table 3, and are referenced in boxes throughout the paper, as they provide useful examples and lessons learned.

**TABLE 3**  
World Bank projects for the rehabilitation of medinas in the Middle East and North Africa

Project name	P#	Country	Duration	Project costs US\$ m	WB lending US\$ million	Of which for rehabilitation
Third Urban Development	P005652	Tunisia	1982-1993	25.00	25.00	25.00
Fez Medina Rehabilitation	P005524	Morocco	1998-2005	27.60	9.60	9.60
Bethlehem 2000	P053985	West Bank & Gaza	1998-2003	28.41	28.33	28.33
First Social Fund for Development	P041199	Yemen	1997-2003	85.00	29.30	0.92
Second Tourism Development	P035997	Jordan	1997-2005	44.00	29.22	29.22
Second Social Fund for Development	P068830	Yemen	2000-2006	175.00	76.24	8.81
Cultural Heritage	P048825	Tunisia	2001-ongoing	23.79	17.00	17.00
Cultural Heritage and Urban Development	P050529	Lebanon	2003- ongoing	61.89	31.50	31.50
Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Urban Development	P081823	Jordan	2007-ongoing	71.08	56.00	56.00
Total				541.77	298.86	203.05

**Most World Bank-financed operations pursue three objectives for medina rehabilitation: (i) ensuring the conservation of key cultural heritage assets; (ii) fostering local economic development; and (iii) addressing the basic needs of the resident population.**

The **first objective** entails ensuring the preservation of the existing patrimony, through policies and measures extended to monuments, key public spaces, private buildings, and physical and intangible cultural assets of the historic towns, according to internationally recognized standards.

The **second objective** pursues the development of the economic potential of medinas, so that they may contribute to economic growth through the promotion of handicrafts, cultural activities,

and the hospitality industry related to cultural tourism.

The **third objective** is to address the basic needs of the resident population, through investment strategies that are centered on the improvement of housing conditions, access to basic infrastructure and public services, and job creation, so as to reduce the social isolation and poverty of the residents.

In the experience of the World Bank, such objectives should be pursued in parallel, and the policies and approaches applied to medina rehabilitation should be equally sensitive to each one of them. Failure in the achievement any of these three objectives can result in an unsustainable process of urban transformation and will ultimately undermine the process of medina rehabilitation as a whole.



**FIG. 9**  
Traditional multi-story earthen buildings create the unique architecture of Sana'a (Yemen)

## Project Development Objectives of urban medina rehabilitation

The **Tunisia Third Urban Development Project** aimed at (i) helping the local authorities design and implement better shelter and improved urban services for low-income people living in the medinas; (ii) enhancing housing policy to increase housing accessibility; (iii) strengthening the institutional framework of agencies involved in urban and housing development; and (iv) promoting the implementation of a national approach to housing planning in inner cities. This project provided funding for the rehabilitation of the Hafsia neighborhood in the Tunis medina.

The **Morocco Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project** provided resources for (i) improving vehicular network; (ii) protecting the environment by relocating polluting industries and regrouping productive activities to facilitate deliveries; (iii) creating public spaces to reduce the density of residential neighborhoods; (iv) improving solid waste management; (v) preserving key monuments, dilapidated structures, construction of community facilities, and urban landscaping; (vi) facilitating private investment in the rehabilitation of the built environment; (vii) setting up tourist circuits; (viii) alleviating poverty by generating employment opportunities; and (ix) reinforcing the institutional framework. The project funded these activities in the historic inner city of Fez.

The **Bethlehem 2000 Project** aimed at (i) supporting local economic development by creating job opportunities; (ii) enhancing infrastructure in historic inner cities for the benefit of the local communities; (iii) strengthening the local institutions in cultural heritage preservation and management. The project focused on the historic inner cities of Bethlehem and other four neighboring municipalities.

The **First and Second Yemen Social Development Funds** included a broad initiative to support poverty reduction by (i) improving living conditions in historic cities and (ii) providing income generation opportunities to the poor. Inter alia, it supported cultural heritage conservation, mostly in small villages and towns,

which has included sites preservation, training of young masons, and capacity building of organizations and individuals to document, restore, rehabilitate, and protect Yemen's cultural assets by using local materials and traditional building techniques.

The **Jordan Second Tourism Development Project** is making available funding for (i) developing sustainable tourism; (ii) generating tourism related employment; (iii) enhancing infrastructure; (iv) developing environmental conservation; and (v) providing technical assistance to improve the institutional framework. Focuses of the project are the historic cities and sites of Petra, Wadi Run, Jerash, and Karak.

The **Tunisia Cultural Heritage Project** provides financial resources for (i) preserving cultural heritage sites and improving museum management; (ii) promoting policies for market development, handicraft production, and training; (iii) designing communication programs involving local governments, NGOs, and local communities; and (iv) strengthening local institutions in cultural heritage management. The project supports the Bardo Museum extension, rehabilitation works in the Kairouan and Sousse medinas, including museum upgrading, and preservation initiatives in the archaeological site of Carthage.

The **Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project** aims at (i) supporting local economic development and enhancing the quality of life of local communities; (ii) preserving and improving management of cultural heritage; (iii) rehabilitating public spaces and infrastructure; (iv) enforcing land use and traffic regulations in and around the sites, including the protection and landscaping of coastal and green areas; (v) developing studies for urban redevelopment adjacent to the sites; and (vi) enhancing the institutional framework through technical assistance and capacity building. The project funds civil works in the historic cities and sites of Baalbeck, Byblos, Saida, Tripoli, and Tyre.

The **Jordan Cultural Heritage Tourism and Urban Development Project** provides resources for (i) supporting local economic development by preserving cultural heritage; (ii) consolidating the sustainable tourism industry; (iii) rehabilitating the housing stock in medinas and improving urban infrastructure; (iv) ensuring financial and technical supports to the local entrepreneurs and community groups; (v) encouraging small and medium enterprises in the medinas; and (vi) providing assistance for capacity building of local institutions. The project focuses on Jerash, Karak, Madaba, Salt, Ajloun, and Petra, where the construction of a new visitor center is being financed.

**FIG. 10**  
The great mosque of Damascus (Syria) hosts religious functions and provides a safe place for social interactions ▼



## 5 Winners and losers in medina rehabilitation

**Medina rehabilitation, like all urban transformations, will distribute benefits unevenly. Winners and losers will emerge, and the rehabilitation process must mitigate the losses.**

The physical and social decay of medinas over the past decades, which has been briefly described earlier on, can be measured through the differential between the value of the real-estate assets intra muros and extra muros, which is generally very significant. As the real estate values of properties in the medina drop, this constitutes a further disincentive to invest in maintenance and rehabilitation of the building stock, pushing further the process of decay into a vicious circle. Conversely, one can argue that the overall success of a rehabilitation process can be measured by the decreasing differential of real-estate values within the medina and beyond its boundaries. Rehabilitation policies will strive to revitalize those urban areas so that real-estate values will increase, and by doing so will create the economic incentives for private sector operators—families and firms, specialized operators—to invest in maintenance and rehabilitation.

Medina rehabilitation must however be designed and implemented with a clear understanding of the ownership of the medina properties on one hand, and of the occupancy status of its inhabitants on the other, in order to ensure that while the real-estate market regains momentum, the needs of the weakest segments of the resident population are taken into account. These apparently conflicting objectives must be reconciled, so that the process of rehabilitation may distribute its benefits as evenly as possible.

The increase in real estate values resulting from public investment in public spaces and urban infrastructure will certainly benefit the owners of medina properties, who will recognize the op-



portunity of investing in new economic activities and of rehabilitating the housing stock, as there will be an increased demand for their assets and return on their investments. However, those residents who are currently renting, sub-letting or otherwise occupying premises they do not own, risk losing their occupancy status and being expelled from the medina. Local economic development geared to the wealthier international tourists and national visitors will generate jobs and create opportunities for new activities in hospitality, cultural activities and entertainment, which in turn can revitalize dormant economies. However, such innovations can also engender a displacement of services for the local residents, such as local grocery shops replaced by souvenir stores, and alter the fabric of the traditional neighborhoods, with their distinction between residential and commercial areas, when guesthouses and boutique hotels are set up.

**▲ FIG. 11**  
Highly labor-intensive local products on sale in the medina of Marrakesh (Morocco)

## BOX 2

## The rehabilitation of the medina of Marrakesh - winners and losers

**Marrakesh, one of Morocco's imperial cities, has been described as a tourism phenomenon.** It is a magnet for large numbers of national and international visitors and symbolizes the allure of Morocco. With the adoption of an open skies policy about ten years ago, Marrakesh has become a mainstream destination, just a short direct flight from Europe. The medina of Marrakesh, the largest in Morocco, lies at the heart of the city and of the region.

Its public spaces, whether the great Jemaa el-Fna Square or the narrow passageways of the souk, provide the stage in which commerce, social interaction, and entertainment take place for locals and visitors alike. In contrast to other historic cities in which the original functions of public spaces have become obsolete or displaced, the medina of Marrakesh retains its polar position in the life of the city.



**Handicrafts, tourism, agribusiness and commerce have become the basis of Marrakesh's economy.**

Marrakesh is indeed endowed with (i) a highly diversified and dynamic artisan sector including metalwork, jewelry, textiles, ceramics, leatherwork, woodwork, furniture making, lighting fixtures, candles, and many other crafts; (ii) tourism, including some 600 boutique hotels, restaurants and other tourist services such as guides, and shipping services; (iii) construction activities, rental and sale of holiday and secondary homes, including units in the medina, residential apartments and villa complexes in the Palmeraie and the outskirts of Marrakesh; (iv) transport services related to tourism as well as to local needs; (v) service industries such as banking and telecommunications, including the Con-

ference Center, as well as higher education; and (vi) agricultural production and processing, namely of citrus, olives, and vegetables.

**The Medina of Marrakesh has showed considerable transformations in the last decade.** According to the 2004 census, medina's residents were 182,637, or 22 percent of the total urban population of Marrakesh.

There is an overall trend of de-densification recorded by the last two censuses, and the demographic weight of the medina in respect of the town as a whole has fallen from 51 percent in 1982 to 31.5 percent in 1994, to 22 percent in 2004. This process leads to housing stock degradation in the medina, to the change from residential to commercial use of numerous housing properties, including the opening of boutique hotels, as well as to the overall urban expansion that has been occurring at very fast pace on account of the economic boom the city is experiencing.

**The late 1990s saw increased investments in conservation and rehabilitation of the historic built environment and improvement of municipal infrastructure.**

A number of heritage preservation projects have been completed or are underway in the medina. These include the restoration and rehabilitation of the Palais de la Bahia; the Saadien tombs and the creation of a site museum at the Palais Badia, all carried out by the Inspection des Monuments Historiques et Sites (begun in 1999); the restoration of the Medersa Ben Youssef and the Qoubba Almoravide, with the Foundation Omar Benjelloun and the World Heritage Center; and the restoration of the Chrob Ou Chouf fountain with the ARCH Foundation. The municipality has made a remarkable effort in improving public spaces by ensuring the cleanliness of streets, carrying out a program of greening of major roadways and parks, and improving street lighting.

**Winners and losers.** The benefits of the rapid economic growth of Marrakesh, centered on the medina, have not been equally distributed. Within the medina, there are winners and losers as well.

Among the winners: residents in general who have witnessed an improvement in the servicing and maintenance of the medina; home-owners that have benefited from a significant appreciation of the real estate value of their properties; artisans who have access to a much larger set of customers for their goods and who participate in the rehabilitation and decoration of homes and boutique hotels; service companies that conduct real estate transactions; and other tourism related operations.

Among the losers: renters (37.2 percent in 2004) who are faced with greater difficulties in finding accommodations; inhabitants of the degraded housing and housing threatening collapse who have remained unattended; and residents of those neighborhoods where commercial and hospitality activities have taken over, and where traditional shops catering for local needs have been replaced by tourist-serving establishments.

**▲ FIG. 12** Heritage preservation works ongoing in the medina of Marrakesh (Morocco)

## 6 Roles of the public, private, and non-profit sectors

**Medina rehabilitation will require a primary role to be played by the public sector, but important actions should be carried out by the private and the non-profit or third sectors.**

Public policy will be needed to affirm the collective importance of medina rehabilitation as a public good. This will need to translate itself first and foremost in strengthening the institutional framework and providing the appropriate level of urban management of the medinas, as precondition for the rehabilitation process to take place. In addition the public sector, whether via the central or the local institutions, will also need to provide (i) urban planning and property titling; (ii) conservation of key cultural assets, improvement of public space and infrastructure; (iii) pro-poor housing and welfare programs; and (iv) fiscal and financial instruments to promote private investments, in addition to the resources to be invested by the public sector itself.

The private sector's role is to respond to the opportunities and to the incentives created by supportive public policies by investing again in the medina's real estate market and economic activities. Private actors will include the residents themselves and local firms, as well as external economic actors that will seek gains from opening businesses, investing in the hospitality business, handicrafts, and commerce. Often forgotten, but equally important, is the role of the non-profit sector in contributing to medina rehabilitation. Community associations, created around cultural or social interests, often provide the social capital and the political pressure leading to public initiatives in favor of medina rehabilitation and of its residents. They are also at the origin of festivals, cultural events, and public entertainment opportunities which increase the attractiveness of medinas to residents and visitors alike.



**FIG. 13**  
Income-generating activities associated with heritage: a rug store in the medina of Tunis (Tunisia)

## 7 Institutional framework and urban management

**Despite their special features, most of the medinas of the Middle East and North Africa do not have dedicated institutions to handle their needs and manage the urban activities.**

The rehabilitation of the medinas cannot be achieved if the governments do not recognize the potential of these historic centers and do not protect them sufficiently. Identifying key monuments and significant buildings as cultural heritage components, and ensuring their legal protection should be amongst the most important functions of governments. However, in many medinas, only a few assets are listed as heritage sites and most of these registrations were made decades ago, when the concept of medina preservation and rehabilitation was not as developed as it is now.

Furthermore, most of the protected sites belong to the public sector, whereas the private properties of cultural significance are listed very rarely and the legal framework to protect them is very weak. The situation is slightly better in the medinas of outstanding universal value protected by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites, as the governments have to define a specific management plan to keep the sites on the list.

**Comprehensive rehabilitation can only be achieved by reinforcing the institutional framework of the medinas, which involves both municipalities and national governments.**

Councils for the protection and enhancement of the medinas, with the responsibility of analyzing the specific problems of historic centers, planning interventions, and coordinating the existing institutions, should be established. These councils would not be new authorities, but coordinating committees made of representatives of existing public institutions. In promoting rehabilitation, these institutions should also design and implement urban strategies, monitor rehabilitation processes, and enforce proper mitigating measures to ensure a balanced ratio of winners and losers of the rehabilitation process.

Depending on the size and complexity of the medinas, the governments should also set up specific dedicated units in urban development agencies and municipalities. These units would be in charge of designing preservation and enhancement plans, producing technical specifications, and monitoring the state of the medinas through appropriate means, notably Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

**FIG. 14 >**  
Badghirs, or traditional Persian wind-towers, used to cool down buildings in Yazd (Iran)



## Strengthening institutional frameworks for historic cities management

The **Tunisia Third Urban Development Project** was the first operation attempting to enhance the institutional framework in the rehabilitation of medinas. The project featured the creation of the Agency for Urban Rehabilitation and Renovation (ARRU), as the Project Implementation Unit, which developed high technical expertise to manage projects in areas where the property tenure pattern is extremely fragmented. Moreover, this dedicated agency ensured the involvement of multiple owners and agreements between owners and tenants. In this project, the World Bank learned that medina rehabilitation needs longer implementation period than the timeframe of any conventional upgrading projects on the urban fringe.

In the **Morocco Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project** a dedicated agency (ADER-Fez) was already in place before the World Bank project. However, this agency was understaffed and its technical expertise was limited. The World Bank supported the agency to commission comprehensive strategic studies on its mission. Moreover, the management and technical capacities of the agency were reinforced with training programs, its GIS system was updated, and the acquisition of management information systems and equipment was accomplished. The project also funded the establishment of a heritage center in a historic building. The experience gained during the implementation of this World Bank project helped the central government test an approach that could be applied to other historic cities across the country. As a result, after the project completion, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning was provided with a significant budget line to carry out investments in medina rehabilitation in other Moroccan cities.

The **Bethlehem 2000 Project** provided resources to strengthen institutional capacity in municipal investment, joint services programming, and municipal project management. Moreover, the project supported the development of a new law for cultural heritage preservation and management.

In the **Jordan Second Tourism Development Project** the World Bank reinforced the institutional framework of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. This institution undertook a number of significant reforms during project implementation. First, the legal framework to protect heritage sites and medinas was amended in order to allow for greater private sector participation, to recognize the importance of natural and urban landscapes, and to protect significant elements of the recently built environment. Second, the ministry consolidated its project formulation and management capacities by creating a technical department. The World Bank project also helped introduce e-gov-



ernment services, significantly simplifying industry access to licensing services. Furthermore, the World Bank project helped the local authorities assess the development potential of the medinas and investigate various options to control adverse and haphazard development.

The **Tunisia Cultural Heritage Project** includes a component to assist the government implement a new law for heritage preservation. The project is also providing support for the creation of a museum policy and for strengthening the local authorities in cultural heritage conservation, management, and promotion.

The **Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project** features innovative mechanism to strengthen the national institutional framework. The World Bank is helping the establishment of more effective private-public partnerships, aiming at involving local businesses in the maintenance of the refurbished public spaces, conserved historical buildings, and additional investments to improve urban maintenance operations. The resources provided through this project are assisting the municipalities in setting up dedicated units and acquiring the administrative and technical abilities to manage the rehabilitation of their medinas.

Administrative and financial provisions are envisaged to integrate these units in their technical services organization and create permanent bureaus that will last beyond project completion, given that the rehabilitation of the medinas is expected to continue over a significant time horizon. Furthermore, the project is providing funds for the enhancement of the General Directorate of Urban Planning, and support the establishment of special planning and building regulations for the medinas at national level. Therefore, the examples and practice of such tools in the project cities will be applied in other Lebanese cities as well. Lastly, the project supports a revision of the current legislation governing the management of built cultural heritage.

**▲ FIG. 15**  
Archaeological area and modern city coexist side by side in Jerash (Jordan)



▲ **FIG. 16**  
The coppersmiths' square in the central part of the medina of Fez (Morocco)

Another important task of the public sector is the involvement of local communities in the rehabilitation process, which should be accompanied by building up the capacity to maintain key buildings, housing, public space, and infrastructure. Regular maintenance was a traditional practice in the medinas, but it ended when social changes disrupted the long-standing links between families and dwellings. The governments and the local authorities should therefore promote educational programs to build up a culture of permanent maintenance of buildings and infrastructure among the residents of the medinas, and involve proactively the local communities in the rehabilitation process, including inhabitants, entrepreneurs, and any other stakeholders living or doing business in the medinas.

**Suitable information, communication, and education campaigns can promote a generalized**

**consensus on the importance of rehabilitating the cultural heritage of the medinas.**

Economic analysis of successful rehabilitation projects demonstrates the positive impact that such projects can have for the improvement of the living conditions of the residents, for the local economy, as well as for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the value of cultural assets of national and international importance. Such impacts should be communicated to the general public. The engagement of the public sector should not be limited to the physical preservation and maintenance of the urban environment, but go much beyond it. Governments and local authorities should also for instance provide security to the local communities, as medinas are often experiencing high levels of criminality, particularly in the poorest neighborhoods.

## 8 Urban planning and property titling

**Governments and local institutions have legal prerogatives to regulate and authorize interventions in the medinas, starting with the establishment of urban conservation plans.**

Governments are in charge of regulating the scale of rehabilitation, approving building permits, releasing maintenance or rehabilitation authorizations, and issuing permits to allow handicraft and commercial activities. These regulations should be clear and included in the conservation and rehabilitation plans that balance protection and incentives to achieve local economic development. They should describe any permissible works that can be executed on the housing stock, notably reconstruction, conservation, or maintenance, in order to prevent the medinas from being compromised by poorly regulated rehabilitation initiatives. Additional land use mechanisms include the revision and updating of regulations and maps used to list, protect, and locate cultural heritage sites. These mechanisms are often neither in line with the current definitions of cultural heritage nor implementable due to urban growth, to the point that they are no longer useful nor enforceable for protection purposes. Inventorying, registering, and classifying heritage sites should be accompanied by use of state-of-the-art technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and periodic surveys based on satellite photos.

**Besides regulating land use and heritage preservation, the public sector should address property rights, which are among the major obstacles to the rehabilitation process.**

Overall, the medinas suffer from a confused situation of property titles, due to out-of-date property registration systems. Ownership is often not sanctioned by formal titles, but regulated by traditional property titles. This uncertainty complicates property transactions with parties who require formal



**< FIG. 17**  
The Aleppo (Syria) medina skyline combines traditional and modern features, with a show of contrasts

titles, such as real estate investors and foreign buyers, and inhibits access to credit to maintain or upgrade the housing stock. The public sector should also address ownership fragmentation, which makes acquisitions very slow and complicated, and enforce policies to support ownership incorporations. Furthermore, the public sector should provide mechanisms to solve unclear easements among properties, which constitute a cause of tension and add further uncertainty to real estate values, whenever owners engage in the rehabilitation of their properties or want to sell them to external buyers. The public sector can solve these legal issues by setting up suitable procedures, including awarding modern titles to properties located in the medinas. These mechanisms can include block titling and formal recognition of traditional titles or other documents proving ownership. In either case, the objective should be to provide owners with formal titles that can support the request of credit to finance rehabilitation, give legal security to the real estate market, and allow owners to apply for rehabilitation permits.

## Regulating land use and property rights

Within the **Tunisia Third Urban Development Project**, innovative land use planning and simplification of procedures were introduced, in order to boost the economic activities and maximize the development potential of the project. Serviced sites were developed by the local authorities and then sold to private developers. In addition, infilling of vacant parcels by their owners was authorized, allowing vertical expansion of one-story structures. These land use mechanisms generated a relevant flow of private investments to purchase serviced parcels and premises from the public sector and the government could cover all project costs, including rehousing of displaced people and subsidization of housing for low-income residents. According to a study that assessed the project after its completion, in addition to the constructions financed directly, the land use mechanisms set up by the government with the support of the World Bank resulted in the construction of 73,560 square meters of floor area. The new land use mechanisms were left in place even once the project implementation was over.

In the **Morocco Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project**, land use regulation focused on vehicular traffic. Significant improvements to the circulation around the medina were accomplished, including physical improvement of the road network and circulation management. The regional authorities realized the construction of bus terminals close to the main medina gates and the project featured the rehabilitation of an important square within the city walls, which then became the major pedestrian public space of the historic city, and is now intensively used for public events, recreation and cultural activities.

Within the **Jordan Second Tourism Development Project**, the government was supported to enforce land use regulations and conservation measures in several new sites, including cultural and natural features. The local authorities also inventoried the physical and biological assets of these newly protected areas, demarcated their boundaries, and prepared conservation plans including suitable conservation management regulations. In 2001, the government listed the Dara and the Wadi Musa-Taybeh Scenic Road as a protected park and completed the necessary accompanying land use code in December 2002. The government moved expeditiously to purchase the Dara area adjacent to the park, ensuring its protection while diffusing tensions among local landowners who felt that their rights to use their land as they wished were being curtailed. Both actions were major steps towards protecting the park and its environs for posterity.



▲ FIG. 18

Well preserved urban fabric in the medina of Sidi Bou Said (Tunisia), a prized tourist destination

In the **Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project**, land use mechanisms regulate construction activity within the historical city centers. These works are limited to the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing buildings, and to infill operations where collapsed structures or infrastructure projects have created fringe areas and open spaces that constitute negative urban voids. These land use mechanisms aim at providing incentives for private investments in commercial and residential activities, and regulating rising real estate values. The regulations enforced within the project ensure that private investments will respect the tight urban regulations, which are coherent with the characteristics of the historical urban fabric, and with the significance of the architectural and archaeological highlights present in or around the medinas.

For this purpose, a detailed zoning regulation and a clearly determined perimeter defining the historic city have been developed. The official approval of these mechanisms by the Directorate General of Urban Planning and the municipalities was considered a condition for project negotiation with the World Bank. These codes specify acceptable building heights, volumes, setbacks, styles, characteristics of elevations, openings, overhangs, doors, windows, colors, and details to be respected for both rehabilitation and new construction. The municipalities involved in the project have internalized these regulations and systems for the approval of rehabilitation and construction permits have been put in place.

In the **Jordan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Urban Development Project**, which is currently under implementation, specific land use mechanisms have been designed to address ownership fragmentation. Data indicated that approximately 50 percent of properties ownership in Jerash and 30 percent in Karak are categorized as multiple-ownership. Kinship ties are prevailing among most cases and the Land Acquisition Law recognized the rights of all owners. Accordingly, owners will be entitled to compensation corresponding to their shares stated in the property deeds.

## 9 Cultural preservation, public space, and infrastructure upgrading

**Preserving key monuments and improving the state of public spaces and of urban infrastructure are essential components of medina rehabilitation.**

First and foremost, public stakeholders should initiate the physical rehabilitation of the medinas by undertaking the preservation of key monuments, leveraging heritage sites as main visitor attractions, improving roads and parking facilities, setting up public lighting and signage, rehabilitating public spaces and passageways, designing evacuation routes, and installing street-level furnishing. These interventions make the medinas more livable for the local communities, and more attractive for the local and international tourists, and ultimately contribute to raise the value of the housing stock.

Furthermore, the public sector should promote initiatives to improve services. Expansion and upgrad-

ing of water, sewage, drainage, electricity networks, collection and removal of trash have a great impact on the life quality of local communities and the attractiveness of the medinas. When the public sector provides such services, these constitute an important incentive for owners and residents to rehabilitate their dwellings as well as productive or commercial spaces.

Public spaces are the key locations for social interaction and for cultural and entertainment activities that medinas can offer to residents and visitors alike. Across the region a flourishing of cultural events and festivals is making the most of rehabilitated public spaces, some resulting from the adaptive reuse of ancient archaeological sites. Such events in turn increase the attractiveness of medinas and the opportunities for local economic development.



**< FIG. 19**  
The old city gate, part of the medina's walls, is a key urban landmark in Tunis (Tunisia)

## Preserving cultural assets and upgrading urban spaces

The **Morocco Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project** featured effective conservation of key historic buildings along tourism itineraries, which were undertaken by public entities with the financial backing of national foundations and international donors. With the support of the World Bank, the government was able to attract international donors and convince them to sponsor rehabilitation initiatives. Innovative approaches yielded highly appreciated and cost-effective results for the conservation of some key public spaces and pedestrian streets. These efforts had a significant impact on the attractiveness of the medina to cultural tourism visitors. In liaison with these community organizations, the project enabled the rehabilitation of 26 pedestrian streets serving 547 buildings.

Furthermore, the project featured the creation of six tourism circuits across the medina enabling visitors to find their way to major and minor cultural sites and other areas of interest in the medina, including extensive public space rehabilitation in 2 key areas, the restoration of 3 historic gardens, a mapping system, 700 panels that were installed throughout the medina, and a related tourism guide that was published in 4 languages.

The **Bethlehem 2000 Project** provided resources to improve roads and water delivery in the medinas of five municipalities including Bethlehem. The project also supported the rehabilitation of 5 schools and 9 public buildings, all located in historic city centers. In addition, the project supported the establishment of a cultural heritage preservation center in Bethlehem, with the mandate of maintaining the sites preserved within the World Bank-financed project.

The **Jordan Second Tourism Development Project** featured the accomplishment of several upgrading initiatives in eight medinas and sites having a high potential of tourism development, including urban infrastructure, access roads, traffic management and parking, street lighting, and landscaping enhancements. Signage and interpretation were improved, trails were developed, important remedial works were implemented; and water and waste management were improved. The main accesses to the medinas and archaeological sites were widened, realigned, and resurfaced.

The medinas became more functional, environmentally efficient, and more attractive than before. The positive accomplishments included the construction of drainage channels, retaining walls, and check dams in the environs of Wadi Musa and Siq, which have significantly reduced, if not eliminated, seasonal flooding.

Further development was accomplished through the creation of riding trails, which expanded the recreational options available to visitors and locals. In Wadi Rum a new visitor center, a new craft-training center, and a new police station were constructed. Pilot preservation initiatives were carried out in Karak and Jerash. The interventions have significantly benefited the local population through better services, as well as the tourists through enhanced facilities and site experiences.

The **Tunisia Cultural Heritage Project** aims at preserving key sites and buildings, rehabilitating the housing stock, improving access, enhancing tourist facilities, and increasing security in six selected heritage sites.

**FIG. 20 >**  
Mushrabiyyas, or traditional wooden screens, protecting the privacy of homes in the medina of Tunis (Tunisia)



In Carthage, the project features various measures to protect the site and make it more accessible to the visitors. At the Bardo Museum, the project improves visitor information and collection presentation. In the medina of Kairouan, the project aims at building the local capacity, creating a heritage visitor center in the medina, developing tourist circuits, and strengthening relations with private partners and professional organizations.

In Sousse, the focus is on the improvement of an archaeological museum, creation of tourist circuits in the nearby medina, and tourist information and communication in collaboration with tour operators and hotels. In the Djerba Island, the project supports the preservation of the local museum and increased communication between visitors and inhabitants. Further interventions are planned in Oudhna, a site that is still being excavated and not yet equipped for visitors. In this site, the project will provide amenities through adaptive reuse of existing buildings and structures found under the Roman temple, baths, and amphitheater.

The **Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project** focuses on five medinas and includes preservation of several key monuments and heritage sites. The project features interventions in Baalbeck, Byblos, Saida, Tripoli, and Tyre, including two of the main archaeological sites of Lebanon, both inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In order to attain the rehabilitation of these medinas and heritage sites, the project provides resources to upgrade the public spaces, preserve and adaptively reuse monuments and historic buildings, support cultural heritage related productive and commercial activities, rehabilitate the housing stock, enforce city center zoning regulations, enhance traffic and parking, protect coastal and green areas, and undertake studies for further urban redevelopment. Project activities feature street paving, street lighting, reconstruction of public stairs, and consolidation of buildings where they cross over streets.

In addition, renovation of the facades of buildings and of the store fronts are carried out in the main commercial areas, and public squares are redesigned and provided with paving, lighting, urban furniture, and landscaping. Electric and telephone lines are reorganized to minimize their physical and visual impact in the streets and squares of the city centers. Semi-public spaces are upgraded with necessary basic repairs as a first step towards the rehabilitation of the housing clusters. Many of these activities are carried out after the improvements to the storm drainage, wa-



**< FIG. 21**  
Fountain in the medina of Rabat (Morocco), displaying the intricate technique of zellij, or cut-out ceramic tiles

ter supply, and sanitation networks. Furthermore, the project activities include the conservation of several classified monuments and historic buildings.

The **Jordan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Urban Development Project** includes substantial physical rehabilitation of five medinas including upgrading of street networks and public spaces; rehabilitation and cleaning of building facades; renovation and preservation of selected heritage buildings through their adaptive reuse; rehabilitation and upgrading of pivotal urban spaces; construction and rehabilitation of essential municipal facilities; implementation of traffic and parking management plans; and protection, rehabilitation and improvement of cultural landscapes.

Furthermore, the project includes the development and consolidation of the tourism industry in Petra, Jordan's premier tourism destination and a World Heritage Site. This initiative represents the completion of works that were begun under a previous World Bank project, but not completed due to time constraints. The project has been designed to help improve living and working conditions, preserve endangered historic assets, and catalyze the local economy through tourism development.

# 10 Pro-poor housing and welfare programs

**Medinas are among the poorest settlements in the urban agglomerations, and rehabilitation should include specific actions to improve the housing conditions of the residents and their access to welfare. The involvement of communities is a condition for success.**

As already argued, there cannot be any successful rehabilitation without addressing the housing needs of the resident population, and providing the resources and instruments for the socially marginalized segments of the local community to connect to the process of rehabilitation as a whole. The regain of real-estate values resulting from investing in the conservation of cultural assets, in the rehabilitation of urban spaces and infrastructure will not provide housing solutions for the urban poor, most of whom do not own the premises they occupy. In fact, a revival of the real-estate market is likely to worsen their plight, unless it is accompanied by targeted public

programs. Governments should provide incentives to maintain the residential housing stock, keep it habitable, and prevent it from falling into ruin.

One approach to address this issue consists of per-unit subsidies, equivalent at least to the grants allocated to the construction of social housing units or to the rehabilitation of slum settlements. However, as a vast proportion of medina residents are tenants, subtenants, or squatters, such incentives will only be attractive to the residents who still live in the houses they own. It is unlikely that an absentee landlord will invest in the rehabilitation of housing stock occupied by tenants.

Another possible approach consists in implementing programs for the rehabilitation of the common parts of the buildings (e.g., roof, stairs, lobbies, water piping, drainage, and sewerage) which are occupied by tenants and squatters. To facilitate the rehabilitation, technical specifications can be developed, and

**FIG. 22 >**  
Bedroom access from the domestic patio is typical in the medina of Fez (Morocco)



technical support can be provided for supervising the works. Such programs generally work when there is a good level of participation by neighborhood associations and by the residents themselves, who can be called upon to contribute unskilled labor to the civil works. Other incentives can be provided to occupants in form of small grants or microcredit aiming at carrying out periodic maintenance works, which are less costly than those required when the decay reaches the point of threatening the stability of the buildings.

**The public sector should also undertake comprehensive social housing programs by acquiring the ownership of dilapidated buildings, rehabilitating them into decent dwellings and selling the housing units to low-income households under social housing provisions.**

A precondition for these initiatives is the establishment of the right of designated public agencies to expropriate unmaintained and dilapidated buildings. Transferring the ownership of dilapidated housing units to these agencies allows solving the issue of property rights, conducting the necessary rehabilitation with government subsidies, and selling the units by giving priority to the residents that live in substandard conditions in the medina. Special credit incentives can be introduced to facilitate the inclusion of the poorest in this process of acquisition. The ownership of the rehabilitated units can represent the collateral guarantee to make the financing possible. Furthermore, credit and guarantee mechanisms that are usually accorded to families in the informal sector who purchase a new low-cost dwelling can be used as a model.

Governments can also set up innovative partnerships with the private sector, through establishing housing rehabilitation corporations aiming at obtaining the ownership of buildings that threaten collapse, which could be then rehabilitated and finally sold to resident

households. Whether such housing rehabilitation operations are carried out by public or private entities, they entail the need for provisional housing so that residents of degraded buildings may find accommodation while their future housing units are refurbished.

Furthermore, the civil works required for the conservation of cultural sites and buildings, for the upgrading of urban spaces and infrastructure, represent important opportunities for the employment of low-skilled labor within the medina communities themselves. Medina rehabilitation can if properly managed provide important welfare opportunities, employment and revenues, in addition to improving the living conditions of the poor. Such programs however need to be properly designed and managed to achieve results.

**The involvement of community groups such as NGOs, neighborhood and cultural associations, makes the rehabilitation an inclusive process with greater chances of reaching its objectives.**

Community groups can be very active in social protection, and they can manage vocational training centers to enhance the skills of the local residents and therefore their ability to start and sustain productive activities, which will be in greater demand if local economic development picks up. Such stakeholders should receive great attention by the governments and they should be supported adequately with grants, credit facilities, and fiscal incentives. Nonprofit private stakeholders can also support the rehabilitation of medinas by organizing events to attract national and international visitors. Their initiatives can range from the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings for cultural activities, to the promotion of handicraft, to the organization of fairs and festivals, to organizing cultural events, and undertaking promotional campaigns at national and international levels. These initiatives can have a large impact on the local economy and to the success of the rehabilitation.

## BOX 6

## Providing housing for the poor and welfare programs

The **Tunisia Third Urban Development Project** featured the construction of 400 new housing units and the renovation of 65,000 square meters of existing ones, the rehabilitation of 5,350 square meters of retail space, hotels, of 4,150 square meters of offices, and of 6,130 square meters of community facilities, namely a public bath, a kindergarten, a club for young workers, a covered parking, as well and 3,000 meters of streets. The project benefited the poorest through significant job creation during implementation. The project accomplished the construction of the new housing units emulating traditional structures while the renovation of existing housing units respected the architectural features of the medina.

Furthermore, 12,000 square meters of serviced land were sold to private developers to build new market-rate housing to cross-subsidize the project and diversify the socioeconomic characteristics of the Hafsia neighborhood. The employment generated by the project was estimated at 2,200 jobs grouped in five main categories: formal construction, construction support service, small enterprises, and jobs induced by second round expenditures on goods and services. About 44 percent of the jobs were in occupations requiring lower skill levels. Additional benefits to the poorest included mitigation measures to compensate

their displacement. All occupants in the buildings affected by the project, no matter their legal status of occupancy, were entitled to receive a relocation payment, or a compensation option that included housing accommodation.

In the **Morocco Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project**, 132 individual buildings were rehabilitated, both private residences and productive workshops, and 107 interventions were carried out to the common parts of private buildings sheltering an average of 3 families each, based on the labor contributions of the residents and the active support of 16 neighborhood associations. 15 derelict sites resulting from collapsed houses and 1 major solid waste stock accumulation were evacuated, and resulted in de facto public spaces that have been generally appropriated by neighborhood associations.

56 housing units threatening collapse have been consolidated, and two important historic public spaces were rehabilitated. These works resulted in generating 1,000 person-years of employment of low-skilled local laborers. A number of local NGOs and foundations took part in the development of the project, which led to a direct contribution in the project design and highlighted the expectations of the resident popula-

**FIG. 23 >**  
Traditional heritage  
house in the medina of  
Aleppo (Syria)



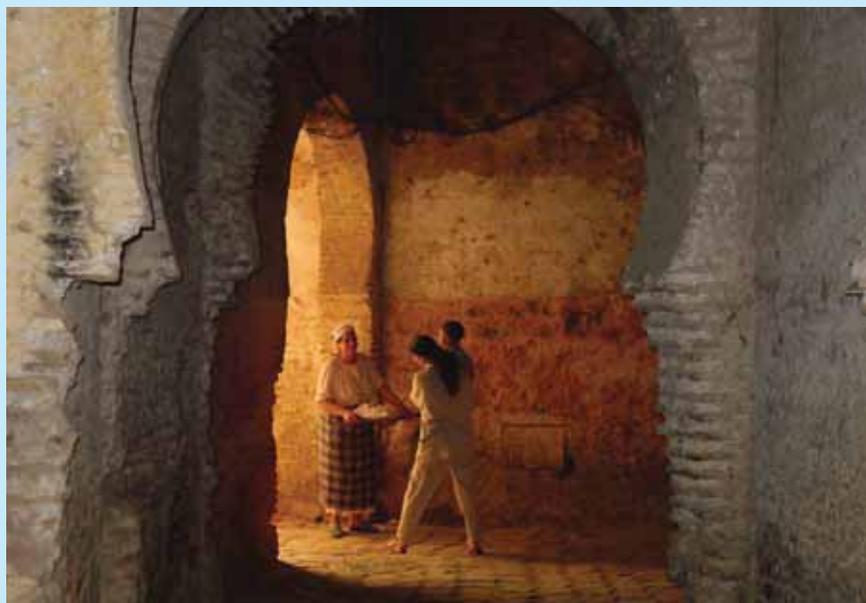
tion for poverty-alleviation activities, which were then incorporated over the cultural heritage rehabilitation aspects. Moreover, nonprofit organizations were very proactive in the promotion of physical rehabilitation initiatives and training programs. Nonprofit organizations preserved 2 major classified monuments and 10 public fountains of historical and architectural importance.

The **Bethlehem 2000 Project** supported the poor by financing the rehabilitation of more than 400 traditional houses in medinas, and intensive job creation (25,000 person-days) through civil works in road and sanitation maintenance and upgrading.

Within the **Jordan Second Tourism Development Project** job creation for the poorest was achieved through the establishment of a handicraft center for women, who were therefore trained to operate machines and produce various crafts. Recognized handicraft products started being developed, and craft outlet shops were successfully established nearby various heritage sites. The initiative demonstrated that meaningful employment could be created for local women, particularly young women, with all the related benefits in terms of poverty alleviation and reduction of gender inequalities. The project also demonstrated that, under the right circumstances, traditional conservative male-dominated Bedouin communities can be receptive to the idea of female productive employment, and that the cultural assets can be mobilized for local economic and social development.

The **Tunisia Cultural Heritage Project in Tunisia** has been designed to stimulate local development through job creation in heritage site management and preservation. Jobs facilitated by the projects are restorers, guides, translators, guardians, and cash counters. These initiatives have a significant impact on the livelihoods of surrounding communities through improved and diversified tourism activities and seasonal job creation. A major problem in the project areas is the high level of unemployment and the local communities view this project not only as a source of direct employment, but also as the only concrete hope for new business opportunities derived from tourism. The broad involvement of civil society in the management of cultural assets takes the shape of skill development and vocational training in the production and sale of handicraft products, tourism services, cultural history, foreign languages for the guides, hospitality, and transportation.

In the **Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project**, collaboration amongst local authori-



ties and the organized ownership of clusters or blocks, including residential and commercial units, has been established. It should lead to a comprehensive rehabilitation of the communal parts of the buildings where poor people live, avoid the risks of gentrification and ensure that low-income residents benefit from the rehabilitation.

**▲ FIG. 24**  
Women talking in the labyrinthine streets of the historic city of Meknes (Morocco)

Great care is taken to ensure that the living standards of the poor are protected, that they are enabled to remain in the improved areas that should develop a mixed socio-economic character, and that those who are displaced temporarily (while improvements are being conducted) or permanently have acceptable alternatives. The project is providing support to the poorest, in terms of administrative and legal assistance required to prepare the rehabilitation works, in the preparation of architectural and engineering studies, and in the form of financial contribution towards the rehabilitation costs of up to 30 percent.

In the ongoing **Jordan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Urban Development Project**, groups particularly vulnerable to adverse project impacts are being assisted. All renters affected by the project, including non-Jordanian with a legally valid tenancy, are entitled to compensation. The project also features support to less affluent, less influential, or less educated people, who may be at a disadvantage in a system where the process of estimation of compensation is dominated by official representation. Before the project, there were no clear guidelines, procedures or timetable for negotiations, particularly in light of the threat of demolition, and a time-consuming and expensive judicial process was only really available to those who could afford it.

# 11 Financial and fiscal mechanisms to promote private investments

**Private investments are a key element to ensure sustainable medina rehabilitation, and will multiply in the presence of a well-defined regulatory framework and incentives.**

Private interventions can contribute considerably to the rehabilitation of medinas, especially when the public sector is committed to establish a clear regulatory framework, and promote suitable incentives. Private stakeholders that can be investing in medina rehabilitation include: (i) local home-owners, artisans, shopkeepers and traders, builders and developers; (ii) national and international small-scale operators, primarily investing in the hospitality business, retail stores and trade enterprises; and (iii) foundations and charities supported by private businesses. The three groups listed above can each play a role in the rehabilitation of the medina, but need the right set of incentives and facilitations. Local homeowners, artisans, shop-keepers, traders, builders, and developers will invest in the medinas, as opposed to other parts of the urban agglomeration, on condition of getting better access to credit, fiscal incentives, and simplified administrative procedures.

National and international small-scale operators will invest in the hospitality business, retail stores and trade enterprises providing that there is a sufficiently accountable mechanism to access permits, access to credit, and that there are no restrictions on the movements of goods and of financial resources, and that the business environment is kept favorable. Foundations and charities, finally, will need to be attracted with public recognition and visibility for their donations and contributions, as well as with local support and facilitations to implement the projects they sponsor. While medinas require special public sector interventions, on account of their special nature, urban fabric, and assets, they also offer special opportunities for lucrative investments aimed at the cultural tourism market, which is growing

significantly across the region. Sustainable cultural tourism therefore constitutes the main economic rationale for the majority of the private sector investments, with the exception of local home-owners who eventually invest in the renovation of their family premises.

**To mobilize private sector investments, the public sector will need to first invest in cultural assets, urban upgrading and infrastructure, and provide the necessary incentives.**

Governments should investigate several options to provide enough resources for medina rehabilitation and, in presence of clear national development strategies, can access international development funding. These funds can originate from bilateral development agencies, which can make available resources through donations, and international financial institutions, which can provide grants, credits, and loans. These funds can be used for capital expenditures, to finance rehabilitation works, and to generate economic and cultural activities in the medinas.

Moreover, these resources can be used to set up specialized funds for the promotion of real estate investments, which can play an important role in ensuring that the housing stock is preserved and adaptively re-used for residential, institutional, commercial, and tourism purposes. Such funds can support real estate investors and other private entrepreneurs, who can eventually make available additional resources. International development funds can be obtained only for specific projects, and once their implementation is over, it is responsibility of the governments to make the rehabilitation sustainable. The mechanisms to ensure sustainability are various and can be grouped in those aiming at increasing the budget of public institutions (i.e., increasing public expenditures), and those aiming at providing incentives to the private sector.

## Increasing financial and fiscal resources

1. **Set up tailored development funds** to channel private and public investments, provide guarantees, loans, and grants. These can be national in scope or dedicated to a specific medina, and could result of a combination of budgetary resources and international financing.
2. **Raise funds from national and international private foundations and individual donors** as partners to finance programs for the preservation and enhancement of the medinas. Such resources would be dedicated to highly valuable and visible interventions.
3. **Solicit private donations** from local individuals and companies interested in boosting their image and visibility by supporting the rehabilitation of key monuments, public spaces, and public facilities in the medinas; these donations would be recognized via public signage.
4. **Facilitate investments by the private sector**, by creating a favorable climate, facilitating the creation and operation of businesses related to local production, commerce, hospitality, and real estate, and reducing the fiscal burden on their operations for the first number of years.
5. **Promote Transferable Development Rights (TDR)**, applied to privately-owned historic buildings within the medinas, whereby the owners would forgo the option of demolishing and reconstructing in return for additional surface they would be authorized to build elsewhere.
6. **Facilitate access to microcredit** to promote small-scale housing rehabilitation by poor residents, and support small and medium enterprises in the heritage sector (construction, handicraft, and accommodation industry).
7. **Establish national lotteries** (following the British and Italian models) whose proceeds would be used to finance conservation and rehabilitation of the medina cultural and urban heritage; this would be accompanied by a public communication campaign on the value of heritage.
8. **Raise admission tickets to museums and other cultural institutions**, by setting different rates for nationals and foreigners, and earmark these funds to finance conservation and rehabilitation works, within the budget of the Ministry of Culture or Department of Antiquities.
9. **Earmark a fixed percentage of the Value Added Tax (VAT)** to dedicated institutions for investments in the preservation of key monuments, museums, infrastructure, networks, roads, parking, public spaces, signage systems, and street-level furnishings.
10. **Introduce a VAT exemption** for all construction works involving rehabilitation of the housing stocks in the medinas as well as income tax reductions for the amounts invested in rehabilitation, including furnishings, decorations and operating equipment of firms located in the medinas.
11. **Improve the efficiency of regular tax collection** and earmark a percentage of the additional local taxation revenues to medina rehabilitation. This is relevant where tax collection is insufficient as it provides incentives to municipalities for greater collection performance.
12. **Accrue additional tax revenues**, as rehabilitation raises property values and therefore makes available additional fiscal resources to local institutions, and earmark those revenues towards rehabilitation and urban maintenance actions on the part of the municipalities.
13. **Improve the collection of regular taxes applied to hotel and guesthouse visitors**, and earmark the additional revenues for medina investments, or introduce a Medina Rehabilitation Tax, to charge to foreign tourists as a person-per-night levy on hotels and guesthouses

# BOX 7

**FIG. 25**  
Vibrant urban landscape of the historic city of Byblos (Lebanon), seen from the Crusader's Castle ▼



## BOX 8

## Promoting private sector investments

In the **Tunisia Third Urban Development Project**, a home improvement credit line was granted jointly to owners and tenants as co-signatories to undertake improvements of the housing stock. Loan application procedures were streamlined and access to credit was opened up to the medina as a whole, including its traditional suburbs, but the bulk of rehabilitation expenditures were undertaken by property owners and did not draw on credit mechanisms.

A prime source of private financing was the sale of occupancy rights in addition to existing structures. The project also generated a steady increase in tax revenues, as the property values increased dramatically once the project was completed. The benefits were even higher than originally anticipated. The long history of private disinvestment in the medina, as well as its subsequent deterioration and pauperization was successfully reversed through selective clearance, infrastructure improvements, and the construction of community facilities. Public improvements led to a one-time jump in price that doubled property values in two to three years, followed by a progressive increase at a rate higher than in unimproved areas (12 percent per annum between 1983 to 1993 versus 8 percent on the urban fringe) because of the sustained demand for improved sites in the medina, which therefore became a strategic location. Given the opportunity to develop vacant parcels, build additional floors, rehabilitate and sell deteriorated premises, private sector investments increased property values, generating higher tax revenues. Overall, project leveraging of additional investments was at a ratio of 1 to 3.4.

In the **Morocco Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project**, private stakeholders preserved 33 historic buildings and adaptively reused them as boutique hotels. The project enabled the government to accelerate the rehabilitation of the medina, helped attract other economic resources, and eventually the public sector made available additional resources to continue the rehabilitation beyond the project completion. The Ministry of Housing planned the rehabilitation of houses threatening collapse (US\$10.1 million) and other public stakeholders undertook the rehabilitation of community facilities, city walls, and the expansion of tourism circuits (US\$18.3 million).

The private sector also boosted its involvement beyond the project completion and undertook the construction of eight hotels and major historic building (US\$29.7 million). National foundations and international donors engaged themselves in further rehabilitation of historic buildings and sites (US\$3.3 million). During the years of project implementation, parallel investments in the rehabilitation of the medina



▲ FIG. 26  
A covered souk, or traditional commercial district, occupies ancient buildings in Tripoli (Lebanon)

(US\$42.9 million) had a cumulative value three times larger than the project itself.

The **Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project** facilitates investments of private owners in the renewal of the building stock and provide resources in form of grants and microcredit. These financial incentives support the rehabilitation of building elevations, including doors, windows, overhangs, signage, utility lines, and surface treatment in some crucial commercial and residential streets that are in the vicinity of, or connecting, major public spaces and monuments

The **Jordan Second Tourism Development Project** includes an interesting mechanism that was set up by the government to ensure financial sustainability of the investment funded by the World Bank. The government earmarked a percentage of the revenue generated by tourism for conservation initiatives. A share of the revenue generated by tourism (25 percent of the gate receipts at Petra and 100 percent at Wadi Rum) has been earmarked by the government for managing and maintaining the assets. These revenues would be invested in conservation works, additional improvements in infrastructure, further tourism product development, improvements in marketing, promotion, and site management.

# 12 Cultural tourism and the Medina Tourism Potential Index

**Medinas can play a significant role in expanding tourism revenues by attracting international cultural tourism, and their rehabilitation can incorporate this objective.**

Tourism affects growth through several channels beyond the direct revenues from receipts. Directly or indirectly, this industry employs more than 215 million people worldwide, and generates approximately 10.4 percent of the world total economic activity. In addition, tourism is the principal source of foreign currency revenue for 83 percent of developing countries and the primary source of foreign exchange in the 49 least developed countries.

Furthermore, the foreign direct investment associated with tourism can bring managerial skills and technology with benefits to many other sectors. Empirical studies that investigated the impact of tourism on growth found a positive correlation between tourism receipts and growth rate, especially in poor countries and when tourism is linked to the rehabilitation of world heritage sites of outstanding value. A recent study published by the International Monetary Fund

demonstrated a positive relationship between tourism receipts (as a share of exports) and growth.

**The World Bank's Medina Tourism Potential Index.** The World Bank pursues multiple objectives for medina rehabilitation, including the conservation of key cultural assets, local economic development, and addressing the needs of the residents. In terms of local economic development, cultural tourism is the most promising market segment. Not all medinas however have the required characteristics to tap into that market segment, and governments should carefully consider which are the characteristics required for a medina to be considered a promising cultural tourism destination, and design consequently the rehabilitation process.

While all medinas, by definition, deserve rehabilitation, not all of them can claim a trajectory of sustainable local development via cultural tourism. For the purpose of identifying the required characteristics, the World Bank proposes the Medina Tourism Potential Index, as a useful operational check-list.



**FIG. 27**  
One of the main pedestrian and commercial arteries of the medina of Fez (Morocco)

## The Medina Tourism Potential Index (MTPI)

The World Bank has recently elaborated an index with the objective of analyzing and ranking those medinas in which blending urban rehabilitation and tourism development can lead to economic growth. The index is made up of the following eight criteria:

1. **Significance of cultural heritage assets:** this criterion measures the overall quality of the medinas, their presentation state, and the number of heritage sites listed and effectively protected by the governments.
2. **Classification on the UNESCO World Heritage List:** the international visibility ensured by this registration has an impact on the local economy, helps international marketing, and boosts the tourism industry.
3. **Proximity to the coast, major natural features, or other cultural heritage sites:** this criterion assesses the potential to combine recreational tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism.
4. **Proximity to existing tourism destinations:** medinas that are close to existing tourism destinations can be more successful in achieving tourism development, on account of the nearby demand.
5. **Accessibility:** availability of major infrastructure to reach the medinas, because closeness to airports, ports, and highway facilitates tourism-based development.
6. **Accommodation facilities:** presence of hotels and guesthouses of adequate standard is essential to attract visitors, in particular if located within the medinas themselves.
7. **Organization of cultural events:** this criterion measures the presence of cultural activities that can enhance the visibility of the medinas and attract more visitors.
8. **High-level handcraft industry:** presence of locally hand-made and local products with high artistic or cultural contents which are essential to attract tourists to medinas.

The first four criteria are related to the cultural and geographical features of the medinas and they refer to features that cannot be modified, whereas the remaining criteria can be influenced by governments through suitable policies and development projects.

In this respect, the MTPI also allows governments to focus on the selection of those investments that will improve the rating of the medina according to these criteria. It is important to note that while improving accessibility will be primarily the result of public sector investments, the organization of cultural events will likely happen only if there is interest from the local NGOs and associations to generate them. Finally, the growth in quantity and quality of accommodation facilities and of a high-level handcraft industry will be the result of primarily private-sector investments, which will come as a result of public policies and incentives.

The MTPI might be of primary use to governments not only in reviewing the individual medinas on the



▲ FIG. 28  
The temple of Jupiter is one of the main cultural heritage attractions present in Baalbeck (Lebanon)

national territory, but also in establishing a nationwide ranking that may assist them in determining priorities, regional circuits, clusters of tourism interest, and the related investment plans. The MTPI has been so far applied in Morocco in the preparation of a national strategy for the rehabilitation of its 31 medinas.

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