



AN ANCIENT SITE IN JERICHO IS MADE MORE TOURIST-FRIENDLY **USAID and ANERA Revitalize Hisham's Palace**

In November 2008, ANERA, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), completed the rehabilitation and development of Hisham's Palace, an archeological site in Jericho.



Signs are now posted throughout the site.



New display cases were installed.



A new bridge makes the site accessible.

Visitors to the oldest city in the world now find, as they enter Jericho, a sign that leads them to Hisham's palace. The site is named after Hisham Bin Abdil Malik, an Islamic Caliph from the Omayyad dynasty who ruled over 1,300 years ago. The palace, which is located 3 kilometers north of Jericho, is regarded as the most important monument from the early Islamic period in the Palestinian Territories.

"I have been working here for years. I have never seen the site in such a good shape" says Mr. Khamis, a ticketing officer at Hisham's Palace site. "Today, I see the Palace as a bride shining in her white dress."

Khamis added, "Prior to USAID's project, the site looked gloomy and neglected. The intervention of USAID revitalized it, and made it more attractive to visitors. I used to see visitors coming here and staying for less than 10 minutes. Now, they stop and visit the site with happiness and curiosity to learn more about it."

The project created a museum that provides a unique opportunity for visitors to view ancient pieces, while preserving them in glass-covered cases. Visitor services have also been improved, including restrooms, accommodations for people with special needs, and better parking facilities.

Abu-Arafat who worked at the site 25 years ago said, "I am very happy to see the drastic change. Now visitors have a better experience at the site because there are signs with information and directions. There also are clear pathways throughout."



The restoration and construction works at Hisham's palace produced approximately 1,500 employment days, providing work in a region where jobs are very scarce.

Signs restricting access to sensitive have been installed as well.

Another component to the project focused on improving access to the site. The half-kilometer long access road was repaired and a new bridge culvert built. The bridge was modeled on the Nuw'meh Bridge that was destroyed more than 100 years ago. The design, built to current standards, gives visitors a flavor of the past.

The work was done in close cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Municipality of Jericho.

"I expect that the project will increase the number of the visitors to the site, and that will have a positive impact on the economy of the city. We are grateful for USAID's intervention," said the Mayor of Jericho.