

# Masar Ibrahim El Khalil - Palestine Abraham Path Initiative

September - October Report

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## Introduction

During those last two months, API Palestine brought further reflection on its organisational structure and its partnerships through a three-day strategic retreat and the third annual seminar.

## Outcomes summary

1. Review of strategic planning process during a three-day retreat with all API's partners
2. Completed API third annual seminar in Bethlehem University; a presentation of the new segment of the Masar from Bethlehem to Hebron was made.
3. Completed 7 autumn walks.

## Autumn walks

*2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October*

A group of 15 French persons (Group couleur sensation) walked from 'Aqraba to Duma.

*7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> October*

A six-day walk was organised for an American writer from Nablus to Taybeh

*13<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> October*

A three-day walk with Elias, Rabia Amidon and Daniel Adamson (API Board member/international staff) was organised from Nablus to Taybeh

*17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October*

A CCFD group of 13 French persons walked from Ein Samia to Taybeh.

*18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> October*

18 ASA volunteers participated to a walk from Murayam to Kufer Malek.

*23<sup>rd</sup> October*

The DED team in Palestine (5 persons) went for a one-day walk from Ein Samia to Ojah.

*23<sup>rd</sup> November*

8 German journalists walked from Kufer Malek to Ein Samia.

## Organizational development

### Strategic Planning Process

As the API project in Palestine develops and an increasing number of people are interested and visit the path, it appeared important to set up a strategic plan and define key objectives with all stakeholders involved. The strategic planning process has been launched, supported by and involving all the local partners, API International and several external advisors.

It was the main topic of the strategic retreat, which took place in Taybeh from 6 to 8<sup>th</sup> November 2009. Representatives of many villages involved in the project ('Awarta, 'Aqraba, Duma, Kufer Malek, Taybeh) and well as API local partners participated to the workshop. This workshop allowed participants to share experiences and views about the Masar Ibrahim El Khalil's vision, mission, objectives and key working areas.

The follow-up of the workshop is in process with a draft document currently reviewed by the API team. This document aims at defining a mission statement, objectives and mid-term priorities for the project in order to ensure a sustainable growth.

### API Palestine Annual Seminar

The third annual seminar took place at Bethlehem University on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009. It addressed different themes related to cultural walking in Palestine and focused on the progress of the first segment of the Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil. Participants were representatives of village councils and inhabitants of the communities on the trail, API local partners (Bethlehem University, the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies, Palestine Wildlife Society and Rozana Association) as well as students and external visitors. Around one hundred people attended to the seminar.

This year, the seminar proposed to view a virtual path exhibition presenting pictures, information and products from each city and village along the Masar. This initiative has been very much appreciated by visitors who took the opportunities to buy local products.

One of the main achievements outlined during the seminar is the creation of a new segment from Bethlehem to Al Khalil / Hebron. According to the report presented by Siraj Center, most of the new Masar will be following the ancient roman aqueduct from Solomon's Pools to Arroub area. The route will pass through the villages of Artas, Dar Al Zeir, Tequa, Mrah Rabah, and Bani Naim before reaching Hebron. The main recommendation is to start walking on the route as soon as possible as the area is quite hospitable.

A 7-minute film, about the impact of the Masar on local community, has been successfully presented during the seminar.

The report related to the content of the seminar is attached – *refer to annex 1*.

### Internal Structure

Regarding the internal structure of API Palestine, mentioned in the previous bimonthly report, it will be finalized by the end of the year.

Currently, the staff of API Palestine is comprised of:

- three project coordinators (Areej Ja'fari, Hijazi Eed and Frédéric Masson)
- an accountant Anss Halayqa (part time)
- three volunteers, one full time (Jara Schreiber) and two part time (Nizar Halloun and Nathalie Dournovo). Henning, a German volunteer, left API last month.

In December 09, a DED German expert, Catherine Ulrich, arrived in the country. From 10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2010, she will start working for API Palestine for two years.

### Search for potential partnerships

The search for organisations interested in the Masar Ibrahim Al Khalil in Palestine is in process. At present, the Church of Scotland expressed interest in the project and should encourage visitors to walk as well as different travel operators like Diwan & Travel and the Palestinian Voluntary Work Committee (PVWC).

## Coming events

1. The spring season is now being prepared with walks scheduled from February (2 groups from Brazil intend coming to Palestine). A programme for weekly walks is also in process;
2. The vocational training project for professional trekking guides should receive full support from Bethlehem University and be presented to different potential donors;
3. Thanks to DED support, we will host a new German expert from beginning of February for 2 years.

## Annex 1: report related to API third annual seminar

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