

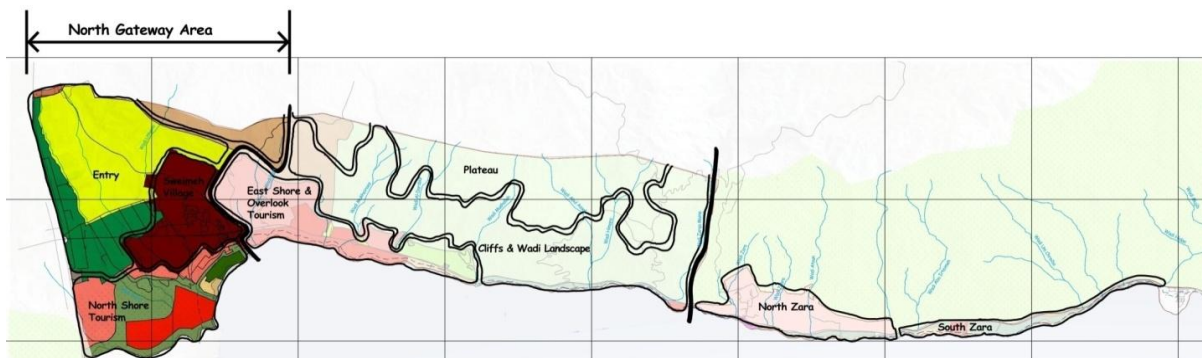
USAID designs a Land Use Plan and Guidelines to transform the lowest point on earth

Challenges:

Jordan is home to many distinctive religious, archeological and environmental sites. The Government of Jordan recognized the importance of these sites in attracting tourism and the economic benefits to Jordan that could stem from increased tourism. One of the most promising and diverse sites in Jordan is the area surrounding the Dead Sea Basin – the lowest point on earth, a natural health and wellness spot, with places of major religious and historic significance, but with a fragile ecological system.



The challenge facing the Government was to find a way to capitalize on this diverse area in a way that responsibly protects its environment. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation asked USAID's support through its Economic Development Program (SABEQ) in preparing a detailed land use plan and development guidelines for a 42Km long area stretching between the village of Sweimeh and Wadi Mujeb. The plan needed not only to guide investment in tourism projects, but also to protect the environment and to improve the quality of life for the local population.



The Plan is a balanced framework, accommodating growth while protecting this important environment

Initiatives:

At the start of the nine-month long initiative USAID's project team undertook a major consultative process to get views from all stakeholders, including regional government agencies, the local communities, the Central Government, the private sector, and environmental NGOs.

The team then developed a plan that called for a balance in the use of the land and developed guidelines for specific parts of the area from traditional up-scale tourist hotels to ecotourism camp sites, calling for additional public beaches and leaving some sites as nature reserves. The detailed plan utilized high tech satellite imagery, and architectural drawings and sketches to ensure the protection of the Dead Sea Basin environment.

Results:

The result was a plan highly regarded for its professionalism and balance, it formed the basis for His Majesty King Abdullah's declaration of the Dead Sea as a Special Development Area at the World Economic Forum in May 2009. Following the declaration, the Government has established a development company to solicit expressions of interest from potential investors to implement projects in line with the master plan.