

## **USAID supports Jordan's Stone and Marble Sector to Attract Gulf Buyers and Raise Exports to Exceptional Levels...**



### **Challenges:**

Jordan's once successful stone and marble sector experienced a significant drop in export services as a result of the global economic downturn, causing it to take a fresh look at potential markets. Traditionally, Jordan has had a difficult time penetrating the Gulf market even though the construction there was booming. However, with the slowdown in the region, Jordan's Stone and Marble Association (Jostone) decided to see if the downturn would provide them with another chance to penetrate this market. However, market research showed that the Gulf buyers did not believe Jordan's stone and marble was of acceptable quality.

To correct this view, Jostone turned to USAID's Jordan Economic Development program (SABEQ). Together, the Association and the Program decided on an inward trade mission to invite buyers from the Gulf to Jordan to see first hand the quality of Jordan's product and level of processing.

### **Initiatives:**

Jostone invited 15 buyers from three Gulf countries – United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar to Jordan for a two day conference and exhibition to meet with the Association's 88 members. The Association through a grant from the USAID program covered the cost of airfares and per diem for these buyers who represented the construction and architecture industries, as well as exporters and property developers.

On the first day, the Jordanian stone and marble firms welcomed the buyers to an exhibition where firms exhibited their products and answered questions about market conditions. On the second day, Jostone members organized and accompanied buyers on tours around quarries and many plants to see first hand the quality of the Jordanian products including decorative stone.

### **Results:**

The buyers' response exceeded all expectations; they were very impressed by the Jordanian products, comparing them favorably with European products. As a result, one Jordanian firm signed a contract to export 21,000 m<sup>2</sup> of stone products worth US\$ 400,000, while another signed a deal worth US\$120,000 monthly for 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of stone. Three additional companies are currently in advanced negotiations to export and/or sign agency contracts.

In addition to the direct increase in sales, the event raised the profile of Jostone as an active representative of the Jordanian stone and marble sector. In the week following the event, Jostone received 5 new membership applications from companies who had heard about the success of the forum. Jostone is planning to hold an outward trade mission to Saudi Arabia and Qatar early 2010.