

# what

## What is ATHAR?

ATHAR IS A TEN-YEAR PROGRAMME to protect and promote the cultural heritage of the Arab region, and to broaden access, appreciation and understanding of its past. It focuses on heritage places – the sites and monuments of a rich and varied past – and on the professional development of those institutions and individuals whose task is to look after this heritage. Through a series of local and regional educational, training, and field activities, ATHAR primarily aims to enhance the capacity of official heritage institutions to manage heritage sites on a sustainable basis.

# who

## Who we are

ATHAR IS A PROGRAMME OF ICCROM, an intergovernmental organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage worldwide. ICCROM has over 50 years' experience in training and building capacity in the field of conservation of cultural heritage. Our regional programmes have made major contributions to the management and cross-sectoral utilisation of cultural heritage resources. All our programmes are carried out in partnership with institutions and individuals at national, regional and international levels (see back panel).



# partners

## ATHAR List of Partners

### MAIN PARTNERS/SPONSORS

Directorate General of Development Co-operation, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (as of 2003)

The Government of Sharjah, U.A.E. (as of 2008)

ALECSO (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization)

### Patronage:

H.H. Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

### PARTNERS IN PAST ATHAR ACTIVITIES\*

#### Organizations:

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

- UNESCO - Regional Office in Beirut
- UNESCO - Amman
- UNESCO - Iraq

OWHC (Organization of World Heritage Cities, Regional Secretariat for Africa and the Middle East)

#### National Governments:

DGA General Directorate of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture, Lebanon

DGAM General Directorate of Antiquities & Museums, Ministry of Culture, Syria

Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, Jordan

Centre de Conservation et Restauration, Université Libanaise, Lebanon

The Government of Sharjah, U.A.E., through:

- His Highness the Ruler's of Sharjah Office
- Department of Information and Culture
- Sharjah Museums Department
- American University of Sharjah
- University of Sharjah

\* last update 2008



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE  
PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY



# ATHAR Programme

CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE  
IN THE ARAB REGION (2004-2014)



# why

## Why ATHAR?

THE ARAB REGION CONTAINS AN EXTRAORDINARY WEALTH of monuments and archaeological sites from the human past. These range from traces of some of the earliest settled communities in the world, such as 10,000 year old Neolithic Jericho, to the physical remains of the towns and cities of the great civilizations of Egypt, Sumer, and Babylonia (5000 BCE onwards), to the monuments of the Nabataeans at Palmyra and Petra (late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE); and to the secular and religious buildings and historic cities of the Islamic period.

The economic and social developments in the region over the last decades have inevitably led to increased pressure on resources, including cultural ones. Demand for land for housing and infrastructure projects, a massive increase in leisure tourism, as well as regional conflicts, have all combined to place an extraordinary burden on the people whose job it is to manage and protect this heritage. Such professionals require an increasingly wide range of skills to function effectively. They must be able to understand the scientific principles behind the application of conservation measures, to work both at an interdisciplinary level with architects, archaeologists, museologists, engineers and so on, and intersectorally with professionals from other areas of government such as tourism, housing, industry and education; and to be experts at promoting cultural heritage to diverse audiences, many of whom may be initially sceptical of the value of the past.

The most pressing obstacles to heritage preservation in the region include a lack of trained and qualified staff and inadequate public support for the work of official heritage institutions. The ATHAR programme seeks to address directly these shortcomings.



# programme

## Our Programme

THE ATHAR PROGRAMME has three main components, each focused on different audiences and carried out with an appropriate range of partners.

**Capacity building in management of heritage places, including documentation, and cultural tourism.** Heritage conservation strategies and interventions will be integrated within social and economic development planning processes; inventories and listing procedures used efficiently to manage heritage; and knowledge and understanding about sustainable heritage development projects improved.

**Professional development in conservation methodologies and techniques.** Enhanced professional qualifications will be established; a regional network of conservation professionals and training institutions developed; and conservation professionals will be involved in the management of heritage projects and in the decision-making process.

**Public support and outreach.** General public involvement in heritage will improve; an increased sense of ownership and responsibility will foster more support for preservation; and provision of information on cultural heritage matters to policy-makers will better inform their decision-making.



# activities

## Our Activities

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2004, the ATHAR programme has undertaken a wide range of activities in the region in support of its overall goal. These have included among others: courses on heritage site management, on conservation of archaeological and heritage sites, and on world heritage; workshops for

professionals from the education and culture sectors; and the production of Arabic-language conservation materials. In addition, field activities and special training initiatives have been conducted in some countries in the region (e.g. Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Jerusalem). Tangible benefits of the programme are now beginning to appear in the region (see below).

Forthcoming activities for the period 2008-11 include: courses on the conservation of earthen architecture and stone masonry buildings and sites, the conservation of decorative surfaces (mosaics), and on the World Heritage process; a workshop on strategies for inclusion of heritage education in school curricula; a meeting for professionals, training

institutions and universities on the future of conservation professionals and on the establishment of a professional network; and production of additional Arabic-language conservation published materials.

## To find out more

If you would like to know more about the ATHAR Programme or are interested in supporting our work, please contact:

ATHAR Programme, ICCROM, Via di San Michele, 13, 00153 Rome, Italy  
Email: [athar@iccrom.org](mailto:athar@iccrom.org)

The first course of the ATHAR programme was held at Bosra in Syria. This is a major tourist site where remains from the Roman to Ottoman periods are still inhabited. Guidelines and recommendations for the management of Bosra were produced at the end of the course. These have now been officially adopted by the Government of Syria. As a result, improvements to the infrastructure of Bosra such as roads, tourism signage and buffer zones have been implemented in consultation with the inhabitants and according to conservation best practice.

