I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an upper middle-income country with a population of 6 million and a per-capita Gross National Income (GNI) of US$3,730. The population is 80 percent urban and 38 percent under the age of 14. Services account for more than 70 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and more than 75 percent of jobs. The economy is well integrated with the rest of the region through trade, remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI), and tourism and has especially strong links to the Arab Gulf economies. Jordanian policymakers seek to use the demographic opportunity of a well educated, young population to build a dynamic, knowledge-based economy. Jordan's climate varies from dry sub-humid Mediterranean in the north-west of the country with rainfall of about 630 mm to desert conditions with less than 50 mm over distance of only 100 km. More than 80 percent of the country's area is arid and receives less than 200 mm annual rainfall, with precipitation pattern being latitude, longitude and altitude- dependent. Rainfall decreases from north to south, west to east and from higher to lower altitudes.

The farther inland from the western highlands forms a considerable part of the country known as the "Badia", an Arabic word describing the land where Bedouins live and practice seasonal browsing. This area includes all lands receiving annual rainfall of 50 to 200 mm annually and has general characteristics of seasonal contrasts in temperature with high variations in rainfall within and among years. The Jordan Badia comprises 80 percent of the country's territory where some 6.5 percent of the population lives. The southern and northern Badia represent around 50 percent and 33 percent of the total Badia area respectively, and are the source of livelihood for about 350,000 Jordanians comprising several Bedouin tribes and settled village communities who largely depend on raising livestock for a living. Women compose 37 percent of the Badia's population, while youth below 15 years of age compose 41 percent of Badia inhabitants (Department of Statistics). Approximately 40-45 percent of the northern Badia and 20-30 percent of the southern Badia are used as rangelands. The Badia also contains significant specialized habitats of global importance and supports many endangered species. During the last twenty years, anthropogenic pressures, mainly overgrazing and speculative agricultural and mining initiatives, as well as climate change impacts have severely degraded the land and the Badia's unique biodiversity.

Though overall poverty incidence has been reduced from around 20 percent in the late 1990s to 12.5 percent in 2008, higher poverty incidence occurs in rural areas. Both the northern and southern Badia are regarded as some of the most impoverished areas in Jordan, containing several "poverty pockets" (11 in the northern Badia and 3 in the southern Badia), as identified in the 2010 Poverty Report from the Department of Statistics (DOS). Poverty prevalence averages 45 percent in both the northern and southern Badia, with peaks at 73 percent in Ar Ruwayshid sub-district (Mafraq governorate in northern Badia) and 47 percent in Al Husseineh sub-district (Ma'an governorate in southern Badia) respectively. Poverty pockets are defined as sub-districts where the percentage of individuals below the absolute poverty line exceeds 25 percent of the total population of the sub-district. The absolute poverty line (food and non-food poverty) was calculated as JD.680 per individual per year in constant prices at the Kingdom level (Poverty Report, 2008, Department of Statistics). Poverty in the Badia can be largely attributed to a relatively large family size (7 in the Badia compared to the Kingdom's average of 5.7), scattered settlement patterns, high rate of illiteracy (21 percent in the Badia as a whole, 28 percent in parts of the southern Badia, and 39 percent amongst women), and limited income sources. Jordan also lags behind in female employability in nonagricultural sectors: unemployment is highest among young graduates, and particularly among young women. Although women are at least as educated as men, their participation in the labor force is among the lowest in
About 40 to 45 percent of the Badia is rangeland; however, during the last twenty years, anthropogenic and natural factors as well as climate change, have severely degraded the land and the Badia's unique agro/bio-diversity. Fodder productivity in the Badia decreased from 80 kg DM/ha (DM=dry matter) in 1990 to 40 kg DM/ha in 2006 (Ministry of Environment/MoE - Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Country Environmental Analysis, World Bank, 2009), resulting in the loss of JOD3.5 million annually according to the Jordan Country Environmental Analysis (August 2009). As a result, most of the ecosystem services have impoverished, impacting negatively on the environment and on Bedouins' livelihoods. About one third of the country's livestock - 800,000 to 900,000 heads, mainly sheep - are raised in the Badia (Department of Statistics data projections from the 2007 Census). The livestock population is considered to have halved during the last twenty years primarily due to the gradual lifting of feed subsidies in 1990s following the recommendation of the IMF to cut down and gradually remove subsidies on some goods, including fodder. The hike in feed prices since 2007 has further compounded this situation. Although this has relieved the pressure on the rangelands and theoretically should have been beneficial to the resource base, small flock size with very low productivity parameters have severely affected the Bedouins' income, resulting in outmigration from the Badia to the cities. The lack of concerted remedial actions and the de facto state of abandonment of the Badia has raged an even more opportunistic use of the resource base by the remaining dwellers and has also allowed exploitative practices by outsiders (such as mining, hunting and over-harvesting of valuable plants species).

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

**Rangeland rehabilitation**

During the 1980s the Jordanian government in cooperation with Bedouin herders made important strides in grazing management by establishing grazing reserves and managing the access to them. This has been accompanied by a number of programs to conserve biodiversity and range resources, mainly supported by international agencies. Importantly, the concept of rangeland community-based reserves is being introduced by the Badia Research and Development Center (BRDC) in conjunction and coordination with the Government. Cooperative Rangeland Management is based on the premise that resource users (e.g., livestock owners) and resource managers can find a common solution which produces gains for both of them in the long term. Resource users wish to have access to rangeland vegetation in order to lower the costs of raising their livestock, while resource managers often have broader social objectives, including preservation of the ecological health of rangeland resources. A cooperative management program brings the interested parties together to collaborate in establishing agreed management objectives and practices. This model is a promising solution to Jordan's rangeland in the Badia as it address issues of livestock needs, resources depletion and land tenure.

The Jordan Badia Ecosystem and Livelihoods Program (BELP) will seek to introduce cooperative rangeland management in areas with conducive conditions, such as in the south Badia.

**Eco-tourism**

Tourism is Jordan's largest export sector. The recently launched 2011-2015 National Tourism Strategy (NTS) looks to position Jordan as a high quality destination and raise industry competitiveness to the level required to underpin long-term sustainable growth. Travel and tourism account for about 20.5 percent of GDP and provide both direct and indirect employment opportunities, including in some of the poorer parts of the country. Many of Jordan's most significant cultural and historic assets are located in secondary cities. The NTS is meant to be private sector-led with public sector partnerships. Defined implementation activities and growth targets have been agreed on, and the crosscutting themes of competitiveness and sustainability are integrated to maximize the contribution tourism can make to economic and social development in Jordan, while contributing to business success and sustaining the country's natural and cultural assets. Eco-tourism is one of 12 promising market segments identified by the NTS.

The Jordan BELP will seek to tap into Jordan's high tourism potential by expanding existing tourism centers further into the north Badia, where attractive landscapes, biodiversity and archeological sites are available through partnerships with relevant private and public entities. In this context, tourism is seen as a means to enhance local development benefits on one hand, and reduce rangeland degradation by providing herding communities with alternative income sources on the other hand. The project will promote ecotourism in specific, in order to minimize the impact of economic activities on the environment while contributing to the well being of local people to the extent possible.

Lessons learned from the Local Economic Development program (LED) will be applied to the project as appropriate. LED is a US $1 million program developed to support the Cultural Heritage and Urban Tourism Development Project (CHTUDP, also known as the Third Tourism Project). CHTUDP and LED are funded by the World Bank and the Government of Jordan. Source: Third Tourism Project/CHTUDP Local Economic Development Program Management Guide, 2011 (draft).

**Badia restoration**

In June 2005, the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) awarded Jordan USD160 million for the rehabilitation and restoration of the Badia's terrestrial ecosystem in the aftermath of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. The Badia Restoration Program (BRP), housed in the Ministry of Environment, was initiated to implement this grant. The BRP will be implemented in the Northern Badia where the great majority of Bedouins live by investing in water harvesting, improvement of
vegetation cover and productivity, socio-economic activities and M&E, targeting 2,000-2,300 Bedouin households and about 30 to 40 percent of the livestock population. By gradually protecting and improving rangeland productivity, the program will attempt to eventually cover an overall area of 200,000 ha in 5 years. The BRP also has established a Database and Information Unit (DBIU), hosted at the Hashemite Fund for Development of Jordan Badia (HFDB), which is tasked to compile and store data, base maps, GIS layers and other information coming out of baseline studies in the course of the BRP implementation, and provide training in data management. A website (www.Badiarp.gov.jo) is available in Arabic and English which includes all information about the BRP, implementing institutions, demonstration sites, data and results from baseline surveys and GIS maps.

There is ample scope for a complementary project which addresses issues of livelihoods, biodiversity loss and rangeland degradation, which would be capable of enhancing the program's local, national and global potential impact. There is also the chance to introduce innovative or insufficiently up scaled resource-saving technologies to be used by the Badia people and increase the scope and depth of the Badia database with information from additional regions and sectors.

Additional national policies

The Jordan BELP would also be aligned with a number of other national policies namely: (i) Jordan's Water Strategy 2008-2022 (Water for Life) in particular its goal of maximizing the use of alternative water sources namely rainwater harvesting for irrigation, including the setting up of incentive structures; (ii) the National Strategy for Agricultural Development 2000-2010 and its emphasis on rainfed agriculture as well as sustainable livestock and rangeland management; (iii) the National Agenda 21, which emphasizes, among other priority areas, increasing the productivity and improving the management of rangelands on a sustainable basis; (iv) the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2002) and its key themes in terms of the sustainable use of biological resources, the promotion of integrated land use planning and water resources development within the existing land tenure system, and working towards a biodiversity-oriented society; (v) the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (2002) and its measures to increase employment opportunities in rural areas and secondary towns as well as sustainable microfinance in particular; and (vi) the National Strategy for Women (2006) and its emphasis on women's economic empowerment.

Relationship to CAS

The Bank and the IFC are developing the FY12-FY15 Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Jordan. The CPS is designed to help Jordan laying a foundation for inclusive growth and job creation through a three-pronged approach: (i) strengthen fiscal space to and increase the capacity to cope with shocks; (ii) strengthen the foundation for growth with a focus on competitiveness; and (iii) enhance social protection mechanisms and pursue local development. Under the latter, the Bank intends to help strengthen the capacity of local communities, and build local economic and social assets through community-based approaches in order to reduce poverty pockets and empower communities. The Jordan BELP is aligned with the CPS and will contribute to achieving this objective by working directly with communities in the poverty pockets of Ar Ruwaished in the northern Badia (Mafraq Governorate); and Al Jafr and Al Husseinieh in the southern Badia (Ma'an Governorates), building their capacity to engage in various non-herding income generating activities and empowering them to better their livelihoods by providing them with basic amenities such as low-cost solar panels and wastewater treatment facilities, as well as services. The CPS also identifies the BELP as an instrument to achieve better conservation and harnessing of values from natural ecosystems under Results Area 2.2.2: Support selected priority infrastructure Environment/Waste Management.

The Jordan Badia Ecosystem and Livelihoods Project (BELP) is one of four projects under the regional MENA Desert Ecosystems and Livelihoods Program (MENA-Delp), currently under development as a GEF and World Bank partnership. The goal of the program is to capture and harness the value of desert ecosystems in order to optimize the flow of goods and services for environmentally and socially sound development of deserts. A final Program Framework Document was submitted to the GEF on October 17, 2011, identifying country projects in Algeria, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco, all focusing on investments to optimize the provision of desert goods and services for enhanced livelihoods. The Jordan-BELP is a response to the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation H.E. Dr. Jafar Hassan's letter of interest to the World Bank from January 2011, expressing Jordan's interest in participating in the program. This interest was further confirmed by an endorsement letter from the GEF Operational Focal Point and Secretary General of MoPIC during September 2011.

II. Proposed Global Environmental Objective(s)

Proposed Global Environmental Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to sustain livelihoods by enhancing ecosystem services in three poverty pockets of the Jordan Badia.

Key Results

The project will lead to the following key results:
1. Number of new sustainable ecotourism related jobs along the Al Azraq/Shaumari-Burqu’ corridor
2. Acreage of rangelands managed by communities in a sustainable manner in Al Jafr and Al Husseinieh
3. Number of men and women benefiting from project capacity building in Ar Ruwaished, Al Jafr and Al Husseinieh poverty pockets.

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description
The Bedouins in Jordan are the main custodians of desert ecosystem services and also the main resource users. Therefore, restoration and preservation of degraded services need to go hand in hand with improvements in their livelihoods. Land degradation processes can be mitigated through rangeland management, with particular attention to animal carrying capacity and community ownership. Associated enhancement of rangeland productivity and biodiversity can be achieved through careful watershed management and re-vegetation practices, namely ecosystem-appropriate soil and water conservation works and planting of locally adapted drought resistant species, respectively. The promotion of alternative income generating activities would diversify the Bedouins' income base. In this regard, the eco-tourism potential of the area is considered very high and the successful experiences gained in the Badia itself (Wadi Rum) and elsewhere in Jordan may be emulated. This integrated approach would allow Badia communities to improve their livelihoods and increase their resilience to a changing environment, while reinforcing their capacity to manage and sustainably use the ecosystem services that are available to them. The project will aim to restore the Badia services through a dual approach of sustainable rangeland rehabilitation on one hand, and the promotion of alternative income generating activities, such as eco-tourism, to selected communities in three poverty pockets in the Jordan Badia, namely Ar Ruwaished (Northern Badia), and Al Jaf and Al Husseinieh (Southern Badia) during the years 2012-2016. The following is a description of the three components:

Component 1: Community-Centered Eco-Tourism in the Northern Badia

The project proposes to expand eco-tourism into the northeast Badia by using the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)-managed Al Azraq and Shaumari reserves and attached facilities as a starting point, from which a 250 km eco-tourism corridor will be developed reaching the Burq' Reserve and soon to be declared Protected Area (PA) in the northeast as an end point. The corridor will be developed around a concept of "low volume, high value" community-centered eco-tourism looking to attract tourists interested in archeology, geology, and other environment-centered experiences while engaging local communities in the operation of the route, and by minimizing the impact of all activities on the environment according to internationally accepted eco-tourism standards. Itineraries along the corridor will be carefully designed to offer authentic Bedouin experiences with high level of service and co-management with local communities.

This component will be implemented by the RSCN given its mandate to establish and manage protected areas in Jordan (through government by-laws), its record in eco-tourism development and management, and its capacity to engage effectively with local communities in preparing and implementing programs. RSCN's role in managing the Al Azraq, Shaumari and Burq' sites will facilitate these sites' engagement in the planned project as important touristic attractions.

This component is organized around two sub-components: 1.1 Establishment of an Al Azraq/Shaumari-Burq' Eco-Tourism Corridor; and 1.2 community engagement.

Sub-component 1.1: Establishment of an Al Azraq/Shaumari-Burq' Eco-Tourism Corridor. This sub-component will begin with the development of an Eco-tourism Management Plan (ETMP) laying out the vision of the corridor, exact siting, intervention points and products development. The ETMP is also expected to provide economically-feasible options for the local population and the private sector for developing ecotourism services and products. This sub-component will provide necessary visitor management infrastructure and human resources in identified locations along the corridor and enable the proper management of the increase in the number of visitors in these areas. Investments will begin in itineraries close to the Azraq/Shaumari starting point gradually extending toward the Burq' end point. This approach is expected to allow the testing of established sites and the build-up of interest amongst Jordanian and international visitors. A strong marketing initiative for the corridor will be carried out applying the business and marketing approaches developed under RSCN's Wild Jordan division, using a variety of vehicles with the aim of reaching local and international markets, by engaging the Tourism Board, tourism operators, websites, social media and RSCN's tourism networks.

Sub-component 1.2: Community engagement. Sub-component 1.2 will work to ensure that communities living in Ar Ruwaished and other smaller villages close to Burq' as well some along the corridor are fully engaged in, and directly benefit from, the ecotourism activities. This will involve consulting with, and engaging, these communities early in the planning and development of the proposed ecotourism activities. Attention will be paid to raising the awareness of the population about the fragility of the local environmental resources, the need to support and finance protective measures, and the benefits (financial and other) that can accrue to the community from well-formulated and implemented ecotourism activities. The roles communities could play in the supply chain for ecotourists will be stressed, including new job creation opportunities such as reserve rangers, guides, service provision, camp and ecoclodge operation, etc. The significant opportunities that could be provided for women and youth will be highlighted. The provision of training opportunities and the possibility for new IGAs (leather goods production, camel tours, local herb and medicinal plant sales, basket weaving, indigenous performances, etc.) associated with ecotourism will also be stressed. Experience from the Dana reserve will help validate the potential opportunities for the communities. The project will continue through its lifespan to actively engage the communities in the eco-tourism activities and ensure that they directly benefit from it.

This component will be implemented by RSCN given its mandate to establish and manage protected areas in Jordan (through government by-laws), its record in ecotourism development and management, and its capacity to engage effectively with local communities in preparing and implementing programs.

Main Beneficiaries: Ar Ruwayshid, Al Azraq and Burq’ communities (Mafraq governorate).

Component 2: Sustainable rangeland management and livelihoods support in the southern Badia

The purpose of the component is to support the development of a more sustainable natural resource base for local communities. Livestock rearing (principally sheep, but also goats) is the core livelihood and an important source of income for a majority of the population in the Badia. Improved grazing management within the context of the project and a more resilient ecosystem are anticipated to improve the quality of life for families in the Badia. The project will promote sustainable rangeland management and provide alternative income generating opportunities.

The component is organized around three sub-components: 2.1 Water harvesting; 2.2 Rangeland rehabilitation; and 2.3 Livelihoods maintenance and support.
IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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