



JAMES K. SEBENIUS
KIMBERLYN LEARY
JOSHUA N. WEISS

Negotiating the Path of Abraham

The Abraham Path Initiative (“API”) envisions uncovering and revitalizing a route of cultural tourism that follows the path of Abraham and his family some 4000 years ago across the Middle East. It begins in the ancient ruins of Harran, in modern-day Turkey, where Abraham first heard the call to “go forth.” It passes through some of the world’s most revered cultural, historical, and holy sites, ending in the city of Hebron/Al-Khalil at the tomb of Abraham. With Abraham as a venerated patriarchal figure for Islam, Judaism, and Christianity—monotheistic religions whose adherents have so often clashed—the potential unifying power of this conception has attracted a remarkable range of supporters from around the world.

From an intriguing notion crystallized at Harvard in 2004, William Ury and his colleagues have negotiated this idea into a concrete reality involving high-level official support and active country organizations in Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine (the name we will use throughout for what are variously called the “Palestinian Territories,” the “West Bank and Gaza,” the “Occupied Territories”), and Israel. If completed, it would eventually extend to encompass Abraham’s travels to and from Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. With the endorsement of the U.N.’s Alliance of Civilizations, over three hundred kilometers of the Path have now been opened to a growing number of travelers ranging from student study groups to international leaders all walking stretches of the Path. Reflections on these journeys have captured the popular imagination in publications like *The Guardian* and in *Time* magazine¹

¹ See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2010/sep/04/palestine-walking-middle-east> and

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With an annual budget of nearly \$800,000 in 2008 prior to the economic downturn, its major financial contributors hail from diverse faiths and 20 nations. As it takes fuller shape, the Abraham Path variously serves as a catalyst for sustainable tourism and economic development, a platform for the energy and idealism of young people, a beacon for pilgrims and peace builders, as well as a focus for seemingly endless media inquiries from reporters, producers, documentary film-makers, and writers keen on telling its story to audiences worldwide. (For a good example, see a very popular TED talk by API Founder William Ury.²)

As the project evolved, it faced numerous challenges, both on the ground as well as with some of its own organizational structures and finances. Inevitably perhaps, the job required to move the API from idea to implementation took more than one leadership team. The API had three Executive Directors from 2008 to 2011 as the effort took shape, events intervened, and its strategy evolved. By summer 2011, much of the path-building momentum in several countries had stalled and API faced a striking budget shortfall. Jerry White, the founder of Survivor Corps and the International Campaign to ban landmines, assumed a leadership position as Board Co-Chair and *de facto* Executive Director. White proposed some new and creative long-term ideas for study (such as the development of the Path through “Campaigns”), while putting forth concrete strategic recommendations for the organization for 2012. The API Board of Directors would soon meet at Harvard University in November 2011 to discuss and potentially adopt a version of this plan.

1. The Inspiration: Stories of Abraham

The name Abraham translates variously to “father of many nations” or “high father.” Although there is no definitive historical or archaeological evidence that Abraham actually lived, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish traditions all recognize the story of Abraham and claim it as a canonical text. Abraham’s story is also a part of numerous folktales, village traditions and local mythology. The Path links the places where Abraham is remembered to have passed and thus is based, as Ury puts it, “on

<http://www.time.com/time/travel/article/0,31542,2081879,00.html>, respectively.

² See http://www.ted.com/talks/william_ury.html.

anthropological reality” or “cultural memory.” Even the casual visitor following the route of Abraham’s legendary pilgrimage, will find a disproportionate number of men and boys named “Ibrahim” and “Abraham” in his honor. Hospitality to the stranger is often prefaced by the expression, “in the name of Father Abraham/Ibrahim.” The story of Abraham is, in anthropological terms, one of the world’s most widely shared origin stories, shared by over half of humanity. Many versions of the story exist, the most widely recognized of which are in the Book of Genesis/Bereshit and in the Koran.



In the (Jewish) Torah/(Christian) Old Testament, for example, the story of Abraham begins in the city of Ur--the ruins of which are located in contemporary Iraq--where he was known as “Abram.” In these texts, God calls upon Abram to leave his father’s house and go to a place “which I will show you” (or, in an alternative translation, “where I will show you yourself.”).

Although already an old man, Abram’s reply is to gather his household together, demonstrating his trust in God by embarking upon an exploration into the unknown. In doing so, Abram became, in the biblical record, the first pilgrim. The

journey of Abram and his family took them to Harran where they first decamped and then traveled to the land of Canaan. As a shepherd, it is likely that Abram would have traveled with livestock along the Path, probably following water sources. To escape famine, he moved again to Egypt, Be'er-Sheva, and then to the area of Hebron where he is believed to have died.

In Hebron, Abram received a second and more definitive call from God. This time God directed him to found a nation, recognizing only a single deity. Abram entered into a covenant with God who promised Abram and his wife, Sarai, innumerable progeny. As Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear him children, she persuaded Abram to impregnate her servant, Hagar, whose children Sarai would then regard as her own. Ishmael was born of Hagar and assumed to be the fulfillment of God's promise.

When Ishmael was born, Abram and all the males of his household marked their devotion to God, by undergoing circumcision. As a further symbol of his pledge, God changed Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah. Later, visiting strangers to Abraham's encampment – revealed to be angels of the Lord – renewed God's promise to provide Abraham with a son born of Sarah. Thus, when Abraham was a hundred years old, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, in what was the second fulfillment of God's promise. Sarah, however, jealous of Hagar, fearing Ishmael's competing claim to Abraham, persuaded Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael into exile. In a final test of Abraham's faith, God called Abraham to a fearsome task – this time to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice on Mount Moriah, only to stay his hand at the last moment, and then replenish anew his promise to Abraham's descendants.

Islam's story of Ibrahim differs from the Jewish and Christian version in several important respects although the narratives of Ibrahim's travels are roughly commensurate with those ascribed to Abraham. Muslims venerate Ibrahim as one of the four most important prophets – indeed, with the exception of Moses; no prophet is more referenced in the Koran. In the Koran, Ibrahim honors Allah with his devotion. In one particularly important story, also told in the Jewish tradition, Abraham is thrown into a fire by King Nimrod for challenging the King's belief in idols, only to be rescued by an angel sent by God. God does not stop there, but also turns the fire into water and the logs of the fire into fish. This ancient story is geographically depicted in the central park in the city of Urfa, in present-day southeastern Turkey. In the park there are two pillars that sit atop the hill

overlooking the city. These two pillars are said to be the place where Nimrod catapulted Abraham toward the fire below. In addition to Abraham's birth cave that lies in the park itself, two long reflecting pools, teeming with sacred carp, complete the heroic story.

The Koran does not specify which son Allah asked Ibrahim to sacrifice. Some Muslim scholars have determined that Ibrahim put his knife to Ishmael's neck. As such, the Koran celebrates Ibrahim as the first man to submit, joyfully, to the will of God.

Thus, Jews and Christians trace their ancestry to Abraham through Isaac, while Muslims lay claim to Ibrahim through Ishmael. The story of God's test of Abraham/Ibrahim's faith bears testament to this division. Importantly, the story of Abraham/Ibrahim also embodies a vision of transcendence. The Biblical text, for example, suggests that Isaac and Ishmael had a rapprochement, coming together when Abraham died to mourn at his grave.

Ury was moved by this ancient story and, with his colleagues, decided to experiment with its potential for healing. For Ury, their father's legacy lies in this account of reconciliation. The Abraham Path Initiative was founded in the belief that the activity of walking side-by-side could create opportunities for collaboration and communication that had eluded other efforts in the Middle East. Ury believed that the symbolic act of walking in Abraham's footsteps could be a step towards a reunion of the often-warring members of the patriarch's modern, three-branched family. While so many issues bitterly divided the region, the Path of Abraham held the promise of physically representing common, even sacred, ground.

2. Origins and Early Stages of the Abraham Path Initiative

One summer evening in August 2003, a group of old friends gathered for an informal dinner in Boulder, Colorado to discuss the Middle East. All the dinner guests were engaged in professional work promoting peace and intercultural understanding. Elias Amidon and his wife Rabia Roberts had just returned from the Middle East, where they had been organizing interfaith pilgrimages. William Ury, co-founder of the Harvard Negotiation Project and co-author of the best selling negotiation handbook, *Getting to Yes* was also at the dinner. At the time, he had been working as a third party in a bitter dispute between President Hugo Chavez and his political opponents in Venezuela that threatened to turn into civil war, as well as an advisor to a peace process in Indonesia aimed at ending a 26-year-old civil war that had killed over 10,000 people.

The dinner guests were alarmed by political developments in the Middle East. In March 2003, the United States had invaded Iraq and violence had escalated in the region. Reflecting on unresolved conflicts and escalating tensions between the West and the Muslim world, the friends met to consider what they might do as concerned citizens with professional expertise working in conflicts at the people-to-people level.

Some twenty-five years before, Ury's negotiation career had started in the Middle East. In the late seventies, while Ury was a graduate student at Harvard studying anthropology, he had worked with Roger Fisher to formulate negotiation process advice used by the American mediators in the 1978 Camp David peace process. Ury later spent several months in the region interviewing Palestinians and Israelis. He used these stories to contribute to a guide for negotiators to the intricate issue of Jerusalem, laying out the interests and options of the various stakeholders, and their competing claims to the city.

With Roger Fisher as the senior figure and his contemporary, Bruce Patton, Ury helped to found the Harvard Negotiation Project, later to become a core element of the Program on Negotiation, a Harvard-based, interuniversity consortium. Soon after, Ury's professional work turned from the Middle East and towards reducing nuclear tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Like others working in the region, Ury believed that a different future for the Middle East was a precondition to a sustainable world. Along with colleagues, Ury had been exploring the role of the "Third Side" in places like Aceh, Indonesia, and Venezuela as a means of mobilizing communities within and surrounding conflict regions to transform

deadly conflict into constructive conflict and collaboration in which many different constituencies have a voice in their future.

For Ury, the prospect for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East seemed to founder on the basic issue of identity. As a social anthropologist, he had long been interested in the issue of identity and the importance of symbols. Behind the conflict over land and power was a struggle over what Ury called “story.” Muslims, Jews, and Christians each held distinct and conflicting stories about the land and the history that defined their identities. At the center of each of these accounts lie the common experience of exclusion, trauma, and the desire of a people not to be further humiliated. From a conflict resolution viewpoint, these stories highlighted the interests out of which perceptions and positions had calcified. Ury thought that if identity stories underlay suffering, perhaps a story that engaged identity in a concrete and practical fashion might over time be powerful enough to create a new opening for reconciliation.

During the Boulder dinner, Ury observed that the current war was being staged in the ancient land of Mesopotamia, where Abraham, the common forefather of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, heeded a call from God to go forth and found a new nation. Ury asked: Why not try to inspire the re-creation of the route that would retrace the journey of Abraham? What if a permanent pilgrimage route could be revived based on a commonality of cultures, rather than the conflict among them?

Conceivably, Ury speculated, the Abraham Path could become part of the emerging sector of responsible tourism, which creates collaboration that gives back to local communities and benefits the local population from the business generated by tourists. The Path could also draw from the wider tradition of meditative excursions like the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, a collection of medieval pilgrimage routes across Europe, beginning for many at St. Jean Pied de Port in France and culminating in the city of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Indeed, concerted regional and European efforts took place to revive the Camino in recent years, especially in Spain, with correspondingly positive economic impacts along its route. In recent years, the Camino saw a dramatic increase in pilgrims and other travelers – with tens of thousands of people walking, biking, or otherwise traveling up to 800km on this pilgrimage annually.

Perhaps the nascent Abraham Path might find inspiration as well in the vision of Benton MacKaye who in 1921 conceived what is now known as

Appalachian Trail. Only fully realized a half-century later, generations of its backers negotiated innumerable challenges and setbacks to piece its various sections together on a permanent basis by 1971. The Appalachian Trail now spans some 3500km from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine (and continues into Canada as the International Appalachian Trail). Some thirty clubs and multiple partnerships have been forged to maintain the trail for the stream of hikers that annually make some or all of the trek.

Very long-term negotiations had also been required to advance the vision of the European Union. From the post-World War II conception of Jean Monnet, union had fitfully proceeded from the European Coal and Steel Community, Euratom, the Common Market, and so toward monetary and, increasingly, effective political union. Was the formation of the E.U.—involving decades of public and private negotiations, energized by a vision of unity—an instructive, if grandiose, analogy for the Abraham Path?

In short, could the concept of the Abraham Path, if articulated persuasively, prove compelling enough as a “focal idea,” perhaps like the modern revitalization of the medieval El Camino de Santiago de Compostela, the creation of the Appalachian Trail, or the formation of the European Union? Could the idea of uncovering the steps of Abraham and his family millennia ago serve to animate and organize the countless efforts and decades of negotiations that would be necessary to overcome the barriers to its realization?

After the Boulder dinner and increasingly inspired by the potential of the concept, Ury asked Elias Amidon and Rabia Roberts to raise the idea of the Abraham Path with their Syrian and Jordanian friends and colleagues during their next trip to the region. Ury also emailed Susan Collin Marks, Executive Vice President of Search for Common Ground, an expert in conflict management in South Africa and a long-time friend, asking what she thought of the idea. He also pitched the Abraham Path to his long-time colleague Joshua Weiss, who holds a Ph.D. in conflict studies from George Mason University. Both were affiliated with the Program on Negotiation, an inter-university consortium of Harvard University, Tufts University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Simmons College School of Management.

Weiss remembers when Ury first mentioned the Abraham Path to him as they walked through the Rocky Mountains during one of Weiss’s tri-annual visits to

Boulder where Ury lives. Weiss recalled: “The initial thing I remember is that I saw it as a huge endeavor and challenge but one that was worth taking on for the potential impact. I also recall thinking that while most efforts in the Middle East skirt the notion of religion, this was attempting to go to the heart of the matter and embrace it in a unique, affirming, manner. We would later learn how difficult and powerful that was.”

Amidon soon emailed from Syria, saying that the concept of a journey in the footsteps of Abraham had captured the imagination of those with whom he had spoken. A prominent sheik, he reported, called it, “the idea of the century.” Ury spoke with Jewish and Christian religious leaders who also encouraged him to take the idea forward. As Ury and his colleagues held consultative meetings with civil society representatives, religious leaders, and at universities, in the United States and abroad, Joshua Weiss recalls that their intention was to listen to the response the project received as a kind of litmus test for moving forward. Along with enthusiastic reactions, Ury understood the skepticism they often encountered: “I had a similar reaction at first. And I thought, this is fine for other people to do, but it’s not my line of work. As I reflected on the potential of the idea and started to get bits of resonant feedback from others, the idea grew on me. It made me think maybe there is something here. The question for me, still, was discerning whether this was mine to do – or not. That wasn’t easy. What did this have to do with negotiation? I soon came to appreciate that it had everything to do with it.”

Ury and his colleagues came to see in Abraham/Ibrahim’s story a kind of “source code” that was uniquely sensitive to the hopes and dreads of those living in the region. Ury believes that the twin wounds at the heart of conflict in the Middle East are exclusion and scarcity: “Ishmael feels excluded. Hagar feels excluded. Sarah felt excluded. Isaac probably felt excluded. It’s the story of the human family. The Palestinians feel excluded. The Israelis feel excluded. Muslims feel excluded, Christians feel excluded, and Jews feel excluded.” Ury recognized that the innovation he wanted to sponsor was to redefine the strife among nations as one of a family conflict. The Abraham Path, Ury thought, could be seen as an attempt to put a physical frame around the conflict. Within this frame, the story of Abraham could serve as a kind of antidote, redefining the parties as kin, and function as a symbol of respect and hospitality stretching across boundaries and borders, focusing on common interests, and giving value to the other. If realized, the Path could literally be common ground in the region, a vessel for hope, a vehicle for mutual encounter, and an engine of economic development at the village level.

"I've always admired Gandhi," Ury says with the smile that some consider to be his trademark. "[Gandhi] was a master of strategic symbolic action. What would Gandhi do in this situation? So many of the negotiations in this region founder on the whole issue of identity. The Abraham Path allowed us a way to take identity into account at the heart of what we were doing." For Ury, walking the Path of Abraham makes the traveler a part of the story in the Middle East: "People learn through the stories that move them, so if one could re-enter an old story, and re-tell it in a way that is relevant for today and tomorrow, it might be possible to begin heal the old wounds."

Drawing on his negotiation background, Ury saw the conflict in the Middle East as very much stuck in a zero-sum trap. "If one side gives the other land, it would have less land. What is needed are 'game-changers,' and the Abraham Path might over time become just that." For the Path has the potential to add positive-sum elements to the mix. "If I give you respect, I don't have less respect. In fact, you're more likely to give me respect," as Ury puts it. And if cultural tourism along the Abraham Path succeeds in one country, it is likely to increase the number of tourists in the other countries as well.

The Abraham Path Initiative itself began to take shape in 2004 as Ury, with a cooperative of scholars, religious leaders and negotiation specialists, began to study the possibility of the Path and how it might come into being. Harvard University provided key institutional support. The Global Negotiation Project at the Program for Negotiation at Harvard Law School served as the Abraham Path's organizational home for the study process in the early years. The Global Negotiation Project provided early funding along with a grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and with time, office space, and materials from the Program on Negotiation.

For some time, Ury and Weiss had studied various uses of the "Third Side" through the Global Negotiation Initiative. The Third Side, as they defined it, was a form of conflict transformation directed at empowering communities to appreciate that they have a say in the violence within their borders, and voice with which to combat it. Ury and Weiss began, at first, to conceptualize the Abraham Path as a type of Third Side activity. Weiss described the Abraham Path as a "non-political tool to get countries and people working together. It's the interaction of many sectors of society that can help to build relationships and break down stereotypes." Ury saw Abraham as the symbolic "Third Side" of the conflict in the Middle East,

the reminder of a larger whole. Ury also viewed the Abraham Path as a cultural memory project and as such, it made sense that it should come out of a university, a place of ideas.

In 2004, the API commissioned a study at Harvard to look at the feasibility of such a project and to examine the concept of Abraham as a potential unifying figure. Two Harvard Divinity School students, Rachel Milner and Stephanie Saldana, undertook it; the latter would become the first in-country coordinator in Palestine. The two students produced a 60-page report on many potential aspects of the project, including scriptural references, places of crossover between the text, and the possibility of Abraham becoming a rallying figure. In addition, Joshua Weiss and Kimberlyn Leary, a PON-linked faculty member at Harvard Medical School, organized a small group of students interested in Third Side Initiatives, including the Abraham Path Initiative. The students' work culminated in a small conference and a monograph on research on the Third Side. Enthusiasm for the concept slowly grew a wider circle of involved people.

Of course, skeptics and geopolitical barriers loomed large. Susan Collin Marks thought the project had genuine resonance and spoke to the longing to find a way through the conflict among Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Yet after consultations with a number of people in the region where she had spent years on various initiatives, she reported considerable doubt to Ury: "I was working in the West Bank and Gaza with both Israelis and Palestinians. Their concern at a minimum was how this could be doable when one could not even cross many borders in the area."

Ury admits that working in the Middle East carried the attraction of "by reputation, the deepest, darkest conflict" and offers the chances "to dive into the sea of intractability and perceived impossibility to see what just might be possible." Ury was not unmindful of the concerns expressed by Marks and others, but for him, this only underscored the need for an out-of-the box project. Perhaps only an unexpected, paradoxical intervention – gathering people to take a walk – could gain traction in the Middle East, which had grown weary of the multitude of peace projects brought from the outside. But Ury had come to believe in the gifts the Middle East has to give to the world – for example, in the face of all these challenges people there maintain an unyielding commitment to hospitality, a sacred obligation to the stranger, a tradition that is associated with Abraham. "The Path could become a way for people from around the world to come pay their respects and express their

gratitude to the villagers living in the Middle East who have maintained over the centuries the heritage of Abraham of treating the stranger as sacred guest, an inspiration that the world very much needs today.”

3. Overcoming Barriers on the Way to the API's Current Status.

Early on, Ury and his colleagues highlighted three obstacles—among many others—to developing the Path, beyond the evident challenge of building an effective organization and raising substantial resources. First, strife-torn communities were wary of new international interventions, after so many others had failed. The story of Abraham as a unifying figure himself had already been incorporated into a number of dialogue and reconciliation initiatives, particular in inter-faith contexts. How would the Abraham Path Initiative be different?

Second, even if the Abraham Path were appropriately framed and accepted as a viable means to enhanced collaboration, there was no consensus that pilgrimages of this sort would be possible in the region. This barrier lay in establishing the feasibility of the Path's vision, specifically the belief that pilgrims could safely undertake Abraham's journey and that such journeys could spark real economic development. Abraham's ancient trek crosses the sovereign soil of at least six, possibly as many as ten, nation-states, some of which do not formally recognize one another. Checkpoints, travel restrictions, and the threat of terrorism further impede movement. Local communities, national governments, as well as international visitors need to see the Path's vision as feasible and credible, not merely appealing.

To its proponents, the Abraham Path rests on the assumption that effective kinship in the Middle East requires a context of prosperity. Ury feels that “until economic development expands the pie, it will be difficult to divide up the pie in equitable ways.” To develop prosperity, Ury believes, those in the region need to be able to activate an inclusive umbrella identity. He thought that “responsible tourism” was a promising vehicle through which to do so. Former API Executive Director Tyler Norris notes, that in the Middle East, “safety is judged by my village. You hand off the traveler to the next person's village, and that's how the traveler moves through. We have a stake in each other's well being, because if my hand-off doesn't go well, neither does yours.” Establishing the credibility of these beliefs, however, among key players was a challenge.

Finally, from its inception the Abraham Path Initiative had to contend with the lack of trust that characterized many people the region. Conspiracy theories tend to run rampant in the Middle East. The most innocent of initiatives can easily be made into a scrim onto which stakeholders can project their own fears and dark imaginings. With the United States at war in Afghanistan and in Iraq, in addition to its role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, work projects with any kind of American brand were likely to be suspect.

Ury and his colleagues decided that for the Abraham Path to emerge, they needed to demonstrate that these obstacles could be addressed and even overcome. Given the widespread skepticism about the feasibility and safety of crossing borders, Ury and several colleagues who had continued to travel to the region, determined that the time was ripe to take along a group to show the Abraham Path could indeed be traveled. In November 2006, a group of 25 people from ten different countries undertook a two-week bus journey on the Path. They traveled from Urfa in Turkey (where many believe Abraham to have been born) to Harran (where he is believed to have heard the call to go forth) as well as to Aleppo, Damascus, Amman, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. Finally they reached Hebron/Al-Khalil, where Abraham is believed to be buried. The purpose of the trip was to introduce the idea of the Abraham Path to the places along it, test it out with a variety of stakeholders, and explore possible partnerships. In four countries along the way, Ury and his colleagues convened broad consultative meetings with government leaders, religious figures and local officials simply to present the concept and to listen and learn from those who were already living on Abraham's ancient Path.

From this set of experiences, the API grew, with a vision of a prosperous and peaceful Middle East, connected through the hospitality and respect widely associated with Abraham. To its founders and supporters, API is a non-political, non-sectarian organization open to and honoring all cultures and faiths. Its mission is not mainly seen as creating a new Path, but rather helping people to rediscover an ancient Path. "We are simply dusting off the footsteps," Ury likes to say. "Keep in mind," Weiss emphasizes, that "the *Abraham Path* itself is distinct from the *Abraham Path Initiative*."

The Abraham Path Initiative was formalized as a non-governmental organization and granted US non-profit status in 2007. It has a number of offices worldwide, including Amman, Bethlehem, Cambridge (USA), Jerusalem, London,

Sanliurfa, and Sao Paulo. Its academic activities are centered at Harvard University. It has established international support teams, in-country organizations, and community-based planning processes in a collective effort to build the Path in the Middle East region and to build awareness of the Path at the global level. The API continues to flatten its structure, moving towards a decentralized and networked way of working with partners in the region and from around the world.

[See Exhibit 1 for a description of API's Board and major financial donors. For those with a special interest in some key challenges and dynamics of building and growing the API as an organization, Exhibit 2 offers a more detailed account of its development over time.]

Its partners include, among others, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Harvard Negotiation Project, Engineers without Borders International, Outward Bound International, the United Nations World Tourism Organization, and Bethlehem University, Sabanci University, and Ben Gurion University. Key Middle East leaders as well as Nobel laureates have endorsed the API while donors to the organization have come from eighteen nations. Many millions of people worldwide had been exposed to the Abraham Path through various positive media events, including international media stories, television programs, and the web.

Weiss believes that the Abraham Path Initiative's affiliation and academic partnership with Harvard's Program on Negotiation played a critical role in its early growth and credibility, particularly in the Middle East. Former API Executive Director, Tyler Norris describes Harvard University as providing the "good housekeeping seal of approval" for the project, especially in a region where suspicions abound about efforts the API was undertaking. Without it, he believes that Abraham Path might have engendered even more distrust: "As one of the best known academic institutions in the world, with perhaps the greatest brand, it buys credibility in a no man's land. It creates operating room and time so that we can be known and help build an accurate portrayal of what we are trying to do."

By the fall of 2011, four major travelable segments of the Path had opened, totaling 310 kilometers. The API has sponsored study tours and walks, for example, between the ancient Turkish cities of Harran and Sanliurfa (40 km). Until the Syrian conflict of 2011, several dozen intrepid Path travelers had walked an 80 km route, the development of which was supported by API staff and referred to as the Syrian Cultural Walking Trail from Deir Mar Musa to Damascus. A 30KM section of the

trail was developed between the Jordanian municipalities of al-Ayoun and Ajloun, with an additional section of trail mapped to Mount Nebo but not yet available to walkers. The largest portion of the Path has been opened throughout much of Palestine from Nablus to Hebron/Al Khalil (170KM). Finally, there is a segment (60 km) from Be'er-Sheva to the city of Arad in the Negev desert in Israel. Several successful youth exchanges have been held in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel.

So far, many dozens of tours and walks along parts of the Path have taken place by groups from the Kellogg Fellows to local university students to international student exchanges. In 2008, approximately 250 people walked the Path. Between 2009 and the first half of 2011, over 1500 persons walked on routes that the Abraham Path has either opened or played a role in creating. The long-term goal is that a 5000km Path will be travelable in all the places where Abraham is believed to have journeyed, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon.

4. Negotiating and Developing the Path

From the start, Abraham Path Initiative staff members have been careful to cultivate the understanding that the Path was already in existence, as it has been for thousands of years. Consequently, the work of the Abraham Path Initiative lay in working with its partners to ready the ancient Path for travelers. Opening segments of the Abraham Path involves a process of community organizing, village by village, engaging local leaders, tourism officials, and governments in the idea of the Path, to determine if the Abraham Path is right for their community. "We had to relinquish any sense of control or ownership from the beginning," says Ury, "Our goal is capturing the human imagination with the possibility for mutual respect."

For example, Raed Saadeh, Vice-President and former President of the Palestinian Hotel Association, CEO of the Jerusalem Hotel, and API board member, described the fairly elaborate process of rooting the Path in a number of Palestinian villages. "First, the Palestinian team needed to identify key stakeholders, such as the village council, the leadership of the municipality, women's groups (who might offer hospitality services and handicrafts), and local small businesses that would serve Path walkers. In a low-key manner, we introduced and explained the concept of Abraham's Path to these groups and helped them see the potential advantages. We thought of ourselves as forming an umbrella entity with these stakeholders on behalf of the Path. We also identified other influential people in the village or municipality, including elders in important village families or clans. It was vital to

ensure their familiarity with our plans and to address their concerns as we sought to develop the Path. On a continual basis we engaged in multiple conversations with these key people and other stakeholders...a process that inevitably takes time.”

Saadah continued, “To coordinate efforts and identify projects to enhance the Path (e.g., mapping, rest areas, trail clearing and marking) we relied on a planning group. The members of the planning group included the following partners: Bethlehem University, the Palestine Wildlife Society, the Siraj Center (a cultural tourism organization), and Rozana (a cultural heritage society). To ensure concrete action from the planning group process, we also formed an implementation group that was tasked with implementing an identified project. The implementation team is a virtual structure that includes locally based contractors and organizations as well as staff with proven records of performance. We’ve worked to come up with a business model that gives continual incentives to stakeholders to support the Path; for example, we’ve tried to define appropriate division of fees for guided walks on Path segments among the guides, hotels, and other stakeholders. Thus far, the Palestinian team has carried out this kind of process in several villages or municipalities, including Awarta and Duma. It takes a long time, with many difficulties along the way, but these villages now feel that they ‘own’ their piece of the Path and have a real stake in its overall success.”

[Note: Section 6 summarizes the development of the Path in different countries, while Exhibit 3 offers a detailed account of each country’s experience, included lessons learned in the process.]

At the heart of the Abraham Path is the experience of walking, just as Abraham and his family did. The Path is being mapped so that those who wished to travel by motor coach, car, camel, donkey, or bicycle may do so as well. Small teams of local surveyors have used Global Information Systems (GIS) – accessed by Global Positioning Systems (GPS) -- to locate old trails and dust them off. Beginning in 2008, Google Earth software has made it possible for travelers to do a virtual “flyover” of key sites along the Abraham Path, making a cyber version of the Path accessible to anyone with an Internet connection.³ Plans were in the works to geotag significant Abrahamic sites along the virtual Path, for interested parties to research

³ See <http://www.abrahamPath.org/virtual.php>.

and describe, constituting a sort of virtual guidebook that could grow over time as different people contributed to the lore.

As host committees and organizations have emerged in different cities and countries in the Middle East, so too have groups of “friends of the Abraham Path” in different cities and countries around the world. A chapter has been initiated in England and there are fledgling chapters forming in the Netherlands, France, Spain, and Germany. Perhaps the most important of these chapters is the one that formed in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the middle of 2006. The Brazilian friends of the Path, organized with an office and staff, have sponsored Brazilian scholars and youth to travel the Abraham Path. In July 2009, they organized a 6K race through the city center of Sao Paulo as a “virtual” Abraham Path, in which more than 2000 runners participated with major streets and tunnels blocked off, the Mayor (of Lebanese descent) and other dignitaries walking past a series of Abraham Path Initiative billboards (with pictures of Urfa, Aleppo, Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Hebron/Al-Khalil) along the route, the presidents and staff of the Hospital Sirio-Libanes and Hospital Albert Einstein walking together, all with live helicopter and media coverage, etc. Brazilian chapter members have built important diplomatic connections, offered critical financial support, and garnered significant media to bring attention to the Path. Notably, together with the United Nations endorsements, the close involvement of the Brazilians has helped to shift perceptions of the Initiative from an American-supported effort to a global one. This global vantage point was one the Initiative organizers had always felt strongly about and desired to cultivate given the nature and scope of the task.

Another kind of Brazilian contribution offers more granular insight into how the groundwork for potential future expansion of the Path is being laid. In a May 28, 2009 email to Board members, William Ury described some useful steps by Salim Schahin, a Brazilian Board member, on a recent trip to the region:

Friends,

We had some good news today from our friend and board member Salim Schahin! As you may know, he has recently been elected President of the Brazil-Arab Chamber of Commerce and has, in this role, proved an extraordinary ambassador for Abraham’s Path. A few highlights from his recent trip to the Middle East:

- *Salim met with the Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Saudi Arabia, who was very positive about the idea of Abraham’s Path -- one*

good step towards winning the blessing of the King. He mentioned that there is an ancient trail in Saudi Arabia that goes up to Syria, something worth investigating.

- *He also met with Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League, who some time ago, thanks to Salim, gave us a letter expressing a positive attitude towards Abraham's Path. Mr. Moussa continued to express positive sentiments, while remaining concerned about the political situation, particularly the settlements in Palestine.*

- *Salim also met with the Syrian Minister for Expatriate Affairs and gave him materials about Abraham's Path. The Minister suggested he meet with Mr. Kuzbari, our friend in Vienna, who is a good friend of the Minister.*

- *In Cairo, Salim also talked about the Path with the Egyptian Ministers of Commerce and Petroleum, who are interested in promoting tourism.*

- *Finally, Salim got a call from his friend, the Jordanian ambassador to Brazil, remembering that Salim had given some materials about Abraham's Path to King Abdullah on his visit some months ago to Brazil. The Ambassador said that King Abdullah has given his blessing to Abraham's Path, and that the King would like to meet with Salim. This is promising news indeed!*

So deep gratitude to our friend Salim!

William

In a number of U.S. communities as well, including Cincinnati, Austin, Dallas, and Santa Barbara, groups of Abraham Path supporters have emerged and organized "Abraham walks," often traveling by foot together from a local church to a mosque and to a synagogue. In September of 2011 Abraham's Path led a worldwide effort to commemorate the tenth anniversary of 9/11. This sparked 85 walks around the world. The board is contemplating such walks in the future – called Walks for Humankind -- to commemorate various worldwide events.

These walks not only build awareness of the Abraham Path, but also enable people to participate who would not otherwise have the opportunity to travel to the Middle East. In this sense, Abraham Path Initiative staff regards their creation as

“omni-local.” In these communities, Abraham Path events have served, for example, to build bridges and break down walls of misunderstanding and misperception between different faith communities.

In a very real way, the Path does not exist “out there.” It is constituted by the act of walking along routes with deep cultural and historical meaning and through the collaborations relating to hospitality that are made possible. This distinction is a crucial one to Ury and his colleagues. For even though the physical trails lie within the sovereign territory of many nations, the Path itself cannot truly be “owned” by any government, constituency, and certainly, not by the Abraham Path Initiative. The Path’s real stakeholders, in Ury’s view, are the villagers through which the Path goes as well as those who journey on it.

5. Experiences of the Path.

API staff and those who have walked segments of the Path often describe singular experiences. Visitors on the Abraham Path are able to engage with local traditions – food, music, and handicrafts – and experience the hospitality for which the Middle East is legendary. By virtue of allowing time and a venue for these exchanges, “the Path offers the opportunity for small successes, and breakthrough moments,” says Essrea Cherin, API’s former board coordinator, who spent four years on a pilgrimage around the world herself before joining the API (starting in Los Angeles and ending in Hiroshima). Tyler Norris, now a senior advisor to the Abraham Path Initiative, is a partisan of walking trails: “We do encourage going by foot, if possible, because it slows people down, so that they can experience the people and the landscape and the culture.” Ury himself has always been drawn to walking, which he sees as inherently collaborative: “There’s something about having a conversation side-by-side, actually physically moving in a common direction.”

Essrea Cherin notes that the Abraham Path invokes the ritual of host and guest. By definition, these engagements require collaboration: “Too many times we sit down and say ‘We need to collaborate.’ The Abraham Path offers the opportunity for people to collaborate and that makes it different.” In creating the conditions for what Ury terms, “transformative hospitality,” travelers on the Path can change the way they experience the Middle East.

For those living in the Middle East, the experience may be of a different type. Stephanie Saldana is an American scholar who served as a researcher in the Path’s

earliest incubation stage at Harvard, who later spent a year on a Fulbright fellowship in Syria, became the coordinator for the Path in Palestine, and now serves as a senior adviser in Palestine and Professor at the Bard College program at Al Quds University in Jerusalem. Saldana is particularly attuned to the importance of building credibility. She notes that in Palestine, for example, the Path already belongs to the community and is a way of telling their story: "Abraham is familiar. They are reclaiming the story of Abraham that has been taken away by the conflict. The Path is a way of showing the world, and themselves, that Abraham was a Bedouin who wandered as their ancestors wandered. For the Palestinian, walking the Path, in a situation where there are checkpoints everywhere, the Path is a symbol of freedom."

Saldana also notes that for those not living in the Middle East: "The Path is the chance to discover your own calling when you move outside of your comfort zone as a traveler, and put yourself at the mercy of others in this land of hospitality. It is a way of becoming vulnerable and somehow being born anew. In the Bible, Abraham receives a new name and that's a way of losing yourself to begin as a new person with greater understanding." In this way, Tyler Norris underscores that the Abraham Path is an opportunity to create a more accurate story about the Middle East in a post 9/11 world where "fear and concern push away the other and render music and culture into symbols of the enemy rather than emblems of a rich civilization."

6. Negotiating and Developing the Path in Different Countries

Imagine for the moment the task of actually negotiating a segment of the Path in one of its potential host countries. What would it take to move from vague concept to physical and social reality in that country? Sustained success would require a triple feat: building international recognition and credibility, earning official governmental approval (generally from the Ministry of Tourism), and finally on-the-ground village commitment. How should these three processes be undertaken and related to one another?

At a regional level, should negotiations be opened in many countries simultaneously? Or should the API leadership decide which country would be most promising for its initial focus? Once there, who should be consulted, on what basis, seeking what specific commitments, over what time period? What moves should be made to prepare the ground and deal with inevitable challenges or setbacks?

To be more specific, what would be the elements of the best approach in a country like Syria? When API staff began to wrestle with this question, Syria was ruled autocratically and with suspicious security forces monitoring Syrians and, especially, outsiders with possibly sinister intentions (such as opening up a Path that might be walked by “Zionists” or that could lead to a surreptitious link to Israel)? Yet if Syria could be persuaded to become an official Path supporter, would that result help negotiations in other skeptical Arab countries through which the historical Path passed? Of course, by 2011, Syria had become engulfed in conflict and this specific question of negotiating sequence receded into the background. By contrast, at official and unofficial levels, the Israelis initially seemed to be keen on quickly developing the Path in Israel and had deeply knowledgeable experts committed to the concept, especially Avner Goren, one of the country’s most experienced archaeologists. But would an early emphasis on Israel make it harder or easier to proceed with other countries? How about Turkey? Jordan? Palestine?

Such questions had engaged the board and staff as they began to take action in the region. And, of course, there were longer-run issues. Geopolitics had dictated at least quasi-autonomous in-country entities that would work on their part of the Path and take it forward into the future. However, should these in-country organizations be structured to enable a more or less regional, integrated whole? A very brief summary of the development of the Path in each country the Path traverses is provided below. (See Exhibit 3 for a much fuller description of Path development in each country.)

The Path in Turkey. The first section of the Abraham Path to be officially launched was in Sanliurfa, Turkey (Southeastern Anatolian region). This area is where Abraham heard the call to go forth from God and symbolizes his commitment to faith. From 2007 to 2011 the Path has vacillated between progress, particularly in terms of media coverage, and setbacks, in the lack of development and small numbers of travelers. While a local committee was formed at the end of 2007 and has hosted a few hundred travelers over the years, the Path has not reached its potential and disappointed many in the local community who felt their expectations has been raised and dashed. In the summer of 2011, the local committee decided to stop developing the physical Path, but remains willing to continue to host travelers. The international team has since found a Briton, Alison Tanik, who has been living in the area for six years. She had set up a successful homestay program in her husband’s village of Yuvacali, 60 km from the city of

Sanliurfa, bringing over a thousand people to this remote area. Ms. Tanik is committed to set up such a homestay program with the API throughout the Sanliurfa region. A number of challenges remain, including negotiating with the former local committee to keep them supportive of the project and to begin the community outreach process for the homestay program.

The Path in Syria. In 2006 the initial foray of Abraham's Path into Syria began with Dan Adamson, Director of Path Development, trying to meet with officials and map the Path. Syria is filled with extraordinary historical and cultural sites and the then-Syrian leadership possessed a strong desire for the rest of the world to visit their country to see these sites and correct perceptions commonly held about this ancient land. On the surface, the Path seemed like a good fit with Syrian interests. However, the API was quick to learn that controversy cloaked the Path from the start, with many suspicious abounding as to what this Path and underlying project was really all about. As time passed, the Syrians came to appreciate the concept of a cultural route and walking Path across their country. They took steps to make this happen as an alternative to Abraham's Path, but with an eye toward allowing travelers to make their way down this route through Syria. What the future held was unclear, but even as their own cultural route became conceptualized it ran into further problems. The Path lay fallow for a year while the organizers of the Path tried to help support it in any way possible. Since that time, and into 2011, virtually all work has stopped in Syria with the emergence of the Arab Spring.

The Path in Jordan. The highlands of Northern Jordan are an idyllic place for Abraham's Path to meander. From early in 2007, the Path in Jordan has taken some twists and turns that mirror the hilly landscape of the Jordan Valley. A 120 km segment was mapped from 2007 to 2008 with a 30 km portion taking hold in the region of Ajloun. Many travelers have visited the Path in Ajloun with the local community there taking a strong leadership role. The local community went so far as to create a Community Based Organization and have developed a strong homestay program. However, at the national level, the project ran into challenges with the Ministry of Tourism and has become stalled in terms of further Path development. People continue to traverse the Path in the Ajloun region regularly.

The Path in Palestine. Palestine has the most known Abrahamic sites of any of the Path countries. When Abraham's Path began in 2004 the organizers heard from people in and out of the region that they might succeed in developing the Path across the Middle East, but not in Palestine with the conflict and security issues that

would deter travelers. However, as of 2011 Palestine has developed more kilometers (170km in total) than anywhere else on the Path. The local leadership that has emerged in Palestine to lead the effort has taken the form of a series of NGOs working together to bring the Path to life. In addition, numerous homestay opportunities and cultural immersion experiences have been developed for the hundreds of travelers traversing this part of the Path annually.

The Path in Israel. Israel contains a number of sites related to Abraham, known as the father of the Jewish people. Sites include the well in Be'er Sheva, the ancient area known as Garar, the area around Dan, and--in the Judeo-Christian narrative--Mount Moriah in Jerusalem where Abraham almost sacrificed his son, Isaac. The segment of the Path that has been developed in the Negev Desert is approximately 60km in length and is unique in many ways, including the diversity of the peoples that live along the Path. From Falahin (Arab farmers) to Bedouins to Jewish immigrants from Russia, Ethiopia, and Morocco, the Path touches many unique cultures and peoples in a short stretch of land.

[Note: the Path's negotiation and development to date in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel is detailed in Exhibit 3 of this case. There is no better way to really "get" the reality, opportunities, and challenges associated with the Path's development than to carefully peruse these remarkably different accounts of actions by Abraham Path Initiative staff in each of these contexts.]

7. Some Challenges: Negotiating Leadership Transitions and Strategic Decisions

From its inception, the organizational culture of the Abraham Path Initiative has been improvisational. Working in one of the most socially dynamic landscapes in the world. William Ury likens the API to a kind of laboratory that encourages a lot of experimentation, mindful it must adapt to changes such as the financial crises of 2008-9 and the Arab Spring. Ury observes that for the API, experimentation takes the form of transitions, including in the strategic direction of the organization and its leadership.

In July 2007, the Abraham Path Initiative was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) entity in Massachusetts and organized as an international non-governmental organization whose purpose is to support the development of the Abraham Path. This shift in the organization's status marked an important turning point. Although it remained affiliated with Harvard's Program on Negotiation which provided

academic direction, the Abraham Path Initiative was positioned to develop its own footprint. Tyler Norris became the organization's first full time Executive Director. He brought a master's degree in theology, an extensive resumé in social entrepreneurship, and a portfolio of considerable international experience. Ury agreed to become Chair of a four-person Board. In the span of two years, the Abraham Path Initiative had grown in size and scope, from an initial budget of \$400,000 to almost \$800,000 dollars by 2008. The API had opened offices in Turkey, Palestine and other cities along the Path and hired in-country coordinators who were in dialogue with officials and local partners about opening up Path segments in these countries.

During the first months of Norris' tenure, he traveled extensively to the Middle East and succeeded in building bridges between field operations and the international organization. Some in the Abraham Path Initiative admired Norris for his strong start and aggressive approach to Path expansion. Others were concerned about the rapid pace of growth, and expressed reservations about the organization's capacity to meet the promises Norris was making. In December 2008, by mutual agreement, Norris transitioned to the role of Senior Advisor. Joshua Weiss, API's Managing Director and Associate Director of Harvard's Global Negotiation Initiative, became the Interim Director.

Two Key Board Decisions: Search for a New Executive Director and Shift of API's Locus to the Region. As Weiss saw it, the API stood at a crossroads, facing new questions about its ability to sustain itself financially, especially in the wake of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. Additionally, the API needed to decide how best to carry its work forward, and what kind of leadership it needed in the future. A series of important Board decisions began to be taken at this point. In January of 2009 the Board of Directors commenced a new Executive Director search. This was followed by a decision at a subsequent Board meeting, in December of 2009, to shift the locus of API's activities from North America to the Middle East (including the new Executive Director who would be based in the region). Although the Board strongly supported relocating its headquarters to the region, this move raised new questions. The API consisted of three emerging organizational entities: the international "center," the regional in-country operational entities, and adjunct organizations in countries like Brazil and the UK ("Friends of the Abraham Path"). The Board wondered how best to support entities at each level. As a shift to the region occurred, what would the right role be, if any, for the API itself? How best should a transition be managed?

Plans to scale down the API, including closing the Boulder office, coincided with the 2008 economic downturn. As financial contributions slowed, the API was forced to become increasingly fiscally conservative as its operating budget contracted, first to \$600,000 in 2009, then to \$500,000 in 2010, and finally to \$375,000 at the beginning of 2011.

With uncertain finances from year to year and many related questions, the API deliberated how its increasingly limited resources should best be deployed. Should its funds be focused on one country showing clear progress, such as Palestine or Jordan? How could the Initiative stimulate and channel the keen interest of the many people in and out of the region who wish to contribute to the Path's development in different ways (e.g., from donating money, to working physically on a segment of the Path, to researching an Abrahamic site)? The API has relied heavily on large individual donors and some medium size grants from different foundations, with some smaller donors and online initiatives. At various times, supporters wondered whether the API should shift its emphasis and try to depend more on revenues from walkers, licensing fees, royalties from potential strategic partners, or something else. Of course, even if API decided to do so, it wasn't possible to predict how long it would take for such Path-related revenue to emerge and become a meaningful and sustainable revenue stream.

From the start, it had always been the intention of Ury and Weiss for the future of the Path to genuinely reside with the communities it traversed. Both men wanted local and regional communities to see the Path as an outgrowth of their own agency and come to regard the API as a partner. Ury believes that it is critical that Abraham's Path be configured as a series of local projects, arising out of a community's intrinsic interests, rather than as something imposed in any way by outsiders. He was prepared for the fact that the API's idea of what a Path might look like or how it might work would be superseded by the local community's direction or inspiration.

Tyler Norris had expressed some discomfort with the idea that in-country operations could become wholly independent of the international NGO. He supported Ury's notion of shared leadership, but believes that it would be beneficial if key values of local partners were aligned with those of the international organization, if local groups wished to be affiliated with the Abraham Path

Initiative. Norris was concerned that local groups might choose actions that contradicted the spirit of the Path (e.g., to restrict walkers of certain religions).

In September 2009, Weiss asked API staffer Branwen Cale to visit the region and canvass the country teams about their perspectives on the Path and what they wanted most from the international team. When Ms. Cale returned, she emphasized that the in-country teams wanted fund-raising workshops and to learn the skills of organizational capacity-building to pave the way for such a transition. In conjunction with the decision to shift the locus of the organization to the Middle East in December 2009, Ms. Cale and another staffer, Cate Malek, moved to Jerusalem in January 2010 to carry out such training and to assist the groups on the ground with their needs and development. They planned to stay for the foreseeable future to further help root the organization in the region.

After a lengthy search, the Board appointed Dr. Yunus Sola as Executive Director on February 22, 2010. The API focused its search on someone deeply engaged in the Middle East region who had a network already in place that would enable the new director to work the political and diplomatic challenges necessary for the API to sustain itself. For his part, Ury wanted an Executive Director with whom he could partner and someone skilled in fundraising, so that Ury could step back into the role of Board Chair, providing visionary leadership.

Sola had contacted the API, years before, after hearing about its work. He considered himself a pilgrim in spirit. Sola, a Muslim from India who grew up in the United Kingdom, had been the headmaster at a number of elite schools in the Middle East, including in Oman and the International Amman Academy established by Jordan's Queen Raina. Sola seemed to have a degree of gravitas and his Abrahamic spirit impressed Ury. Although Sola didn't have extensive fundraising experience, he was personable (which Ury thought central to fundraising), and had an excellent network in the region (including, not least, Jordan's royal family). Ury believed Sola could steward the API as it transitioned from being U.S.-based to functioning as a decentralized global and Middle East network, managed by local partners.

Weiss, however, wondered if the teams on the ground were ready for such a transition given how fledgling they were in their development and how fragile the Path was after only a few years of modest operation. Moreover, Sola faced significant organizational challenges, including stringent budget limits and

numerous staffing issues. Sola made the decision to pare down the API's payroll and reduce positions in keeping with a reduced budget and the goal of developing more of a network. Although the decisions were not unanticipated, the in-country teams began to lose momentum -- and sense of community -- that the API had cultivated up to this point. Sola worked with the Board to identify ways to restore the organizations workings as it scaled itself back and shifted to a network. One of these was the API's relationship with Harvard University. The API began to conceive of a Harvard-based conference that would bring together many of the Path's stakeholders from around the world and which would enrich the network out of which the Path would develop in the future.

Two More Key Board Decisions: De-emphasize Countries Relative to the Overall Path and Shift Toward a More Catalytic Role. In August 2010, at its meeting in Chicago, the Board made two further important decisions. The first was to de-emphasize the centrality of countries and borders in API's thinking and external presentation. The ongoing emphasis on countries and country teams, while empowering from an identity perspective, had inadvertently but destructively begun to reinforce the political conflicts in the region. Instead, while national legal and regulatory considerations obviously had to be managed, the Board sought to elevate API's focus on cities and the ancient Path of Abraham.

The second decision the Board took in Chicago was for the API to transition from itself taking Path-building actions to playing more of a catalytic role, enabling and supporting the activities of others, including key partners. The rationale was twofold. First, the API was and would always be too small to develop the Path itself; hence, its only real choice, at least over time, was a catalytic or "smart network" strategy. Second, such a stance strongly supported the shifts to region and local empowerment. This catalytic ideal appealed to both Ury and Weiss who very much liked the idea of enhancing the API's partnerships. They both felt that the API's future role should be that of a catalyst. Even as the idea of a smart network engaged the Board, however, Weiss wondered about the 'how' of exactly bringing one into being. Even under conditions of considerable goodwill, partnerships had proven to be complex and time-consuming as collaborators had their own agendas, trajectories, and constituencies that may be hard to discern up front and that may differ from those of API.

In line with local autonomy and more of a catalytic role, the question arose of the extent to which API should embody an "open source" model like Wikipedia,

Burning Man, or software projects such as Mozilla (Firefox). Was it actually feasible to have a “center” that heavily stimulates and coordinates efforts that are mainly undertaken by others, especially those outside the existing organizational elements of the API?

The end of 2010 brought mixed reviews of the organization’s performance under Sola’s leadership. He had pared the organization down and steadied it during rough times. Some funding had come in, but a gap emerged between Sola’s vision of how to develop the Path and the views of key staff and some board members who did not understand or agree with the strategy. Sola had proposed an “All-Path expedition” as a means to re-engage the organization and bring new attention to the Path and its local supporters. Specifically, he proposed to walk the entire length of the Path himself. Weiss and other staff were prepared to support Sola’s project but remained uncertain about how an “All-Path expedition” could be strategically leveraged. And while Sola was walking the Path, who would have the responsibility for fundraising and other aspects of the Executive Director’s job? Furthermore, economic resources were continuing to dwindle with little prospect for a dramatic turn around. All in all, the situation did not seem sustainable and it was unclear if the Path would survive the planned transition to a network.

In April 2011, the API held its board meeting in Bethlehem. Jerry White, founder of Survivor Corps, joined the Board at Ury’s invitation.⁴ Survivor Corps played a leading role in the coalition the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. This work led to the Mine Ban Treaty of 1997 and earned the coalition the Nobel Peace Prize. Ury had met White three years before and felt an “instant resonance” with him and his spirit. White grew up in a Catholic family in Boston. While a student at Brown, where he studied early Christianity, White traveled to Jerusalem as an exchange student. One weekend, he went camping with friends in the Golan Heights and stepped on a landmine, losing his leg. After convalescing in Israeli hospital for most of a year, White created a network of landmine survivors. They offered one another peer support and worked together with other organizations and with Britain’s Princess Diana to change public policy, culminating in the historic ban against the use of landmines. Like Ury, White was the founder of a successful NGO, but had concluded that his organization had fulfilled its mission. Thus, he made plans to bring Survivor Corps to a close, and transition its remaining work to a

⁴ See <http://www.survivorcorps.org/>.

network of affiliated partners, initiating a trajectory not unlike what Ury and Weiss ultimately envisioned for the API.

Although Sola continued to enjoy Ury's support, he resigned shortly after the April 2011 board meeting, citing personal family reasons that had begun to surface months before. Ury asked White if he would step in. White was appointed to be co-Chair of the Board and agreed to be the Executive Director on a temporary basis.

Under White's leadership, the API's began to improve financially within months. White, who had raised many millions of dollars for Survivor Corps introduced his network to the API, and secured new funding -- more than doubling the 2011 budget in six months. White began to lay the groundwork for a new leadership team consisting of Weiss as Managing Director, Bart Campolo as Outreach Director to develop networks and chapters in support of the Path, and a Middle East Coordinator of operations to be based in the region. Bart Campolo, an old friend of White's, for many years liked to be described as "a veteran urban minister from Philadelphia who ... speaks, writes, and loves his neighbors in the Walnut Hills section of Cincinnati."⁵ Under Campolo, and working closely with board member Anisa Mehdi and Ury, the API was able to expand its portfolio to include for example, "9/11 walks" held in honor of the tenth anniversary (of 9/11) undertaken as an expression of healing. In his brief tenure, Jerry White has explored the idea of pointing the API in new directions. For example, White floated the idea of developing the Path through a series of specifically targeted 'campaigns.' One such campaign, suggested for study and initial exploration, involved revitalizing the Jordan River Valley, by dramatically reducing pollution in and around this historic waterway, significantly demilitarizing the region while, putting it on track for more productive development.

As White has stepped forward, Ury has been able to step back and return to the role of strategic visionary. For Ury, White's leadership is providing the API with return to first principles: "When Jerry came on board, he began grilling me. What's the essence of what your doing? What's your theory of change? What are you trying to affect? If cultural tourism is a means, what is the relevant outcome? These talks crystallized my sense that the Path is a kind of 'third side' such as I described in my TED talk. We need to strengthen the immune system and to contain conflict as the

⁵ Information for Mr. Campolo was taken from http://www.bartcampolo.com/blog/?page_id=3.

world comes together. The Path can be that container and crucible where the lead of destructive conflict can be transformed to positive conflict and collaboration. The Path is a community-based methodology within which conflicts can then be transformed." Ury notes that, while he had never let go of these values, he felt that White is returning the API to its roots and to its origins: "It's like water and rock. Ultimately water is stronger than rock. It's the nature of a Path is to go around. Paths don't go directly from point A to point B, that's the highway! Paths follow contours. They always come back to where we are supposed to be going."

As the Board prepared to gather in Cambridge for its November 2011 meeting, its members pondered the most important strategic and tactical questions facing the Abraham's Path Initiative. Past meetings had engaged many such questions, making key decisions on some of them (as described above). Other strategic issues remained unresolved; for several examples, see Exhibit 4. The board was presented with a document recommending the strategic emphases for the year (See Exhibit 5). Should the board endorse these recommendations or explore yet other ways forward?

*Exhibit 1: API's Board, Major Donors, and Financial Summary***Board of Directors**

- **William L. Ury**, Founder, Board Co-Chair and Co-Founder of the Harvard Negotiation Project, USA
- **Jerry White**, Board Co-Chair, Former Founder and Executive Director of Survivor Corps, UK
- **Susan Collin Marks**, Board Vice Chair, Senior Vice President, Search for Common Ground, South Africa
- **Alex Chade**, President, Ascet Investimento, Brazil
- **Paul Gray**, Co-Director, Richard Gray Gallery, USA
- **Jamil Mahuad**, Fellow Harvard Negotiation Project and Harvard Kennedy School, Former President, Ecuador
- **Raed Saadeh**, Vice-President and former President of the Palestinian Hotel Association and CEO of Jerusalem Hotel, Palestine
- **Salim Schahin**, Owner, Grupo Schahin and President Arab Chamber of Commerce, Brazil
- **James K. Sebenius**, Professor, Harvard Business School; Director Harvard Negotiation Project, USA
- **Deena Shakir**, Harvard University valedictorian 2008, Georgetown Graduate student, Iraq/USA
- **Anisa Mehdi**, Media Consultant and Award Winning Documentary Filmmaker, USA

Note: **bold type** denotes member of the Executive Committee

Major Financial Donors:

Financial contributions at many levels have come from over donors in 20 countries; major contributors who have given in excess of \$50,000 include:

- The Annenberg Foundation (US)
- The Feffer Family (Brazil)
- The Flora Foundation (US)
- German Development Fund "GIZ" (Germany)
- The Harvard Negotiation Project at Harvard University (US)
- Kingdom Foundation (Saudi Arabia)
- Mr. David Rockefeller (US)

- The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (US)
- Mr. Salim Schahin (Brazil)
- Mr. Lionel Sauvage (France)
- The Sir Halley Stewart Trust (UK)
- Wellspring Advisors (US)
- William and Lizanne Ury (US)
- Mr. John Whitehead (US)

In kind contributions have come from the public, private and not for profit sectors in each nation of the Path as well as many other countries around the world.

Financial Summary

Year	Projected Budget	Actual Expenditure at years end
2007	686,000	600,000
2008	791,800	587,500
2009	699,300	560,000
2010	536,000	501,000
2011	359,500	764,440

Exhibit 2: Key Aspects of API's Organizational Evolution

Early on, the Abraham Path Initiative also partnered with the Association of Global New Thought, an organization devoted to spiritually minded activism. Barbara Fields, the Executive Director of that organization was a member of the early study group. Other members included Elias Amidon and Rabia Roberts, Bruce Allyn (Ury's old Harvard colleague from work in the Soviet Union), Emran Akhtar (a friend of Ury's from Pakistan), Jim Kenney who ran an interfaith network in Chicago, Brother Wayne Teasdale, a long-time practitioner of interfaith dialogue from De Paul University, and researchers based at Harvard.

At the start, the Abraham Path Initiative functioned as a grass-root entity, operating more-or-less by consensus. William Ury's leadership, however, is mentioned frequently as a key factor in the ethic of responsiveness that is described

as being “baked into” the organization. Ury’s colleagues universally acknowledge the important role he has in holding the vision for the organization and in mobilizing the talents of others. Arzu Yilmaz, in-country coordinator for Turkey, notes that Ury’s capacity for deep listening is at the heart of his ability to be effective. Elias Amidon notes that Ury’s talent includes acknowledging everyone who is at the table, and ensuring that they are indeed heard.

Ury is deeply intuitive and improvisational in his approach to his work. He is willing to change in mind. With that flexibility, course corrections are frequent. Colleagues have sometimes had the experiences of implementing one of Ury’s ideas only to have to backtrack, when they realize he had only been musing or brainstorming and hadn’t really settled on a particular trajectory. In general, there is little criticism of Ury. People know what he does for the project and they consider him to be an extraordinary figure. His optimism is infectious. Colleagues describe their connection to him as coming from the heart.

Like all organizations scaling up, the Abraham Path Initiative had its share of growing pains. One very challenging factor was the virtual working structure of the project – with people spread literally around the globe. As a result, it was not uncommon for staff members to exchange upwards of 60 emails a day partly because the desire to retain a model of decision-making by consensus required everyone to be kept in the loop. Staff struggled to accommodate to growth but also recognized this problem came with the nature and scope of what they were doing. As Weiss explained:

“Doing this work is messy. These kinds of projects are messy. People struggle with that. They would like it to be more orderly. But we often have to be reactive because the circumstances around us are changing constantly and we have little control over a lot of it. It’s messy on the inside because it is messy on the outside. We’re constantly trying to bring a bit more order to the chaos we are managing. But the messiness mirrors what we are doing.”

Ury’s Executive Administrator, Essrea Cherin values Ury’s patience and the way in which he “keeps the doors of the tent open,” allowing people whose talent can’t be utilized by the organization to realize this themselves, and “fall away naturally.” Other of Ury’s colleagues, no less appreciative of his special talent with people, note that this same tendency complicates organizational efficiency:

“Sometimes we have just needed to let people go. Sometimes Bill is being magnanimous and courteous and he leaves the door open. But when Bill Ury says, ‘in the future, there will be another role for you,’ people think there’s a real opportunity, when there is really not.” Over time this has improved and people who have moved away still see themselves as friends of the Path.

In June of 2006, the Abraham Path Initiative was ready to make changes to its organizational structure. Martha Gilliland was brought into the organization to do fund-raising. Weiss and Gilliland were to share the role of managing the organization so that Ury’s time could be available for strategic direction. Gilliland had been a university president and was well versed in development and comfortable with fundraising. Both Weiss and Ury hoped that Gilliland might be able to manage fundraising independently. Gilliland, for her part, tried to educate the Abraham Path Initiative about how fund-raising typically works, including how indispensable Ury would be to the process and the long-time frame required to cultivate high wealth individuals as donors. She admired her new colleagues although was surprised that the organizational infrastructure was not yet in place to pursue a capital drive of any real magnitude. Ury’s colleagues were aware that fund raising of this type held little personal appeal for Ury, although he recognized its importance. It was Gilliland who first approached Ury with the recommendation that the Abraham Path hire a single Executive Director. To ensure that the organization understood her motives, Gilliland told Ury she would not accept the position of Executive Director herself.

During the summer of 2006, as the organization prepared to grow, Weiss initiated the steps for the Abraham Path Initiative to incorporate as a nonprofit organization.

Securing the tax exemptions that come with nonprofit status would be a crucial component for fund-raising. Part of the logic for seeking this status was to protect the relationship with Harvard so that the activities not traditionally associated with a university could be separated out and handled by the NGO. That left the Global Negotiation Project to focus on more academically appropriate work related to the Initiative such as student exchanges, research, and conferences. In July 2007, the Abraham Path Initiative became a 501c3 entity in Massachusetts and organized as an international non-governmental organization whose purpose is to support the development of the Abraham Path. This shift in the organization’s status was an important turning point. Although it remained affiliated with

Harvard's Program on Negotiation, the Abraham Path Initiative would now develop its own footprint. In the span of two years, the Abraham Path Initiative had grown in size and scope, from a budget \$400,000 to approximately one million dollars. Much of the early fund-raising had been done by Ury and came from different sources including individuals and some foundations that had already been familiar with Ury's work. The Abraham Path Initiative now had developed small offices in Turkey, Palestine, Jordan and Israel and hired in-country coordinators who were in dialogue with officials and local partners about opening up Path segments in these countries.

In May 2007, Tyler Norris was appointed to be the organization's new Executive Director. He brought with him an extensive resume in social entrepreneurship and building organizations, and a portfolio of considerable international experience, including helping to initiate a national park system in Tajikistan. Ury agreed to become the Chairman of a four person Board.

During the first months of Norris' tenure, he traveled extensively to the Middle East and succeeded in building bridges between field operations and the international organization. Some in the Abraham Path Initiative admired Norris for his strong start. Others were concerned about the pace of growth, expressing reservations about the organization's capacity to meet the promises Norris was making. Norris and Ury continued to work out the boundaries of their professional roles, with Ury exploring what kind of presence he wished to have as the Board's chairman.

The Abraham Path Initiative looked to be at the start of a significant growth trajectory when the global economic downturn upset plans. The organization then faced acute financial challenges and was forced to reconfigure itself in light of the changed funding environment. Weiss reports that the Abraham Path Initiative's operating budget contracted by nearly \$400,000. In December of 2008, by mutual agreement, Norris transitioned to the voluntary role of Senior Advisor.

By mid-2009 the Board decided to hire a new Executive Director and base this person in the Middle East. Toward the end of 2009, the Board also made the decision to shift the locus of the organization to the Middle East, sending two staff to the region to assist with the training of the country teams so that they could begin to fundraise and help develop the fledgling organizations on the ground. In February of 2010 the API hired Dr. Yunus Sola as its new Executive Director. Dr. Sola was

based in Amman, Jordan and set out to learn the organization. As Sola became more and more integrated he came to feel that the organization was too staff heavy and more could be done with less if it were done more effectively. Sola began to reduce staff and preach a new ethos in the organization – one where partnerships would be the way the work would get done.

As 2010 wore on and soon became 2011, fundraising efforts had still not borne significant fruit and the organization was really struggling to find a new strategic direction in this slimmed down reality. Various ideas were put forth for how to proceed and help the Path become self-sufficient. In April of 2011, citing personal problems, Sola resigned as Executive Director. At that time, a new board member, Jerry White, had simultaneously emerged. Ury asked White if he would serve as an interim Executive Director and help to get the API on solid footing. White agreed to take on such a task and has since stabilized the organization through successful fundraising (i.e. doubling of the budget in 6 months) and has proposed new plans for the development of the Path and the organization.

Exhibit 3. The Development of the Path in Each Major Country in More Detail

Negotiating and Developing the Path in Turkey. The first section of the Abraham Path to be officially launched was in Turkey. Turkey is a secular democratic republic located in the southwestern corner of Europe. It was established after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of World War I. Its culture and traditions are a unique blend of East and West, with the Bosphorus Strait demarcating its European and Asian parts. Turkey has become increasingly aligned with the West, although it retains close cultural, political, and economic ties with the East. Turkey itself is in an internal struggle for its identity -- between the secular governing principles Kemal Ataturk, the father of the nation, espoused, and a more religious Muslim populace that is challenging the nature of the republic. This secular/religious issue is at the heart of many issues in present day Turkish society and would play an important role in the introduction of the Abraham Path to the country.

In December 2004, Bruce Allyn (Ury's old Harvard colleague from their earlier joint work in the Soviet Union), Emran Akhtar (a friend of Ury's from Pakistan), and William Ury made an early visit to Urfa and Harran to consult and explore the possibility of reviving the ancient route of Abraham. (Allyn and Ury

continued across the border into Syria where together with Elias Amidon, they explored the possibility with Syrian experts from across the civil society spectrum.

How to frame their intentions posed a challenge. Of course, much of the original impetus for the Abraham Path Initiative had emerged from the concerned parties desire to foster a just peace during a time of war and heightened international conflict. Since many in the Middle East were wary of new social interventions, would tourism and economic development offer a better point of entry and better suit the needs of those in the region? These questions came to life for Ury and his colleagues as they moved forward.

During this December 2004 trip, Ury and his friends decided to organize a small meeting of interested parties in Urfa and Harran in the fall of 2005 in order to initiate the process of reviving the ancient route. In addition to discussing the practical matters of organization, the friends of the Path planned to take a symbolic short walk from the ancient arch in Harran, from which Abraham is believed to have set forth on his journey. Out of respect to the Islamic tradition, Emran Akhtar proposed that this initiating meeting and ceremony take place at the time of Quranic Night of Power, one of the most auspicious moments in the Islamic calendar. Akhtar hoped the event would set the right tone for the re-awakening of this ancient Path.

The meeting was held in Urfa and Harran in October 2005 and involved about fifteen to twenty people from Turkey, Syria, the United States, and Brazil. While the meeting was very productive and the walk and prayer were deeply moving, one small incident that took place underscored the sensitivities. After one dinner hosted in a local person's home in the small village, some members of the group began an invocation of gratitude and honor to Ibrahim in Arabic. The owner of the home, who happened to be the mayor of Harran's brother, grew alarmed because he did not understand the ritual and was afraid he might be held responsible for the strange behavior of foreigners. Arzu Yilmaz, a Turkish Ph.D. candidate at Ankara University from Ankara who first met Ury through her university mentor during one of his first visits to Turkey provided crucial reassurance to the mayor's brother by explaining the intention behind the event. It was an indication that smoothing the Path to mutual understanding, not only between different cultures, but between city and country, might take some work.

In November 2006, Ury returned with the first study tour consisting a delegation of some 25 people from 10 different countries, to retrace the footsteps of Abraham from Urfa and Harran to Hebron, from Abraham's remembered birth cave to his death cave, from 'womb to tomb' as Ury put it. In nearby Urfa, Ury and his colleagues met with the Mayor of Harran and learned that a torrential flood had just occurred, leaving several hundred people without drinking water and significantly affecting his community. When the traveling group asked if and how they could help, the Mayor indicated that drinking water would be most welcome. Ury decided on the spot to help, using private funds to purchase a truckload of bottled water: "how could we not, being there as we were at that moment. There was no quid pro quo expected or anything like that. It just seemed like the right thing to do since the very place we had come to honor was in dire need at that moment." Because of flooding in the region, the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey came to Urfa to view the damage. Upon learning about the consultations and Harvard's involvement, he came to the meeting and endorsed it with a quote that opened the door to further conversation ("We're interested to learn more.").

At the study tour meeting in Urfa, further issues – one in particular -- emerged that would cause the project significant challenges. In preparation for the meeting, some of the Initiative's early partners in Istanbul, via Amidon's previous relationships, suggested that the Armenian Patriarch, a Turkish citizen resident in Istanbul who enjoyed good relations with the Turkish state, should be invited. After all, the Abraham Path was about inclusion and healing of old wounds. Unfortunately, the presence of the Patriarch in Sanliurfa caused some significant concern among many citizens as to the true nature and intention of the project. Relations between Turks and Armenians in Sanliurfa were still sensitive and not nearly as well-developed and positive as those in Istanbul. Rumors abounded: was the secret purpose of the API here to work on Turkish-Armenian relations? The study tour left an uneasy city with many unanswered questions and significant concerns.

The in-country coordinator for Turkey, Arzu Yilmaz, commented how occasions like these became important learning moments for Abraham Path Initiative. She noted, for example, that in Istanbul the Armenian Patriarch's presence might have been more readily accepted, but not in smaller more traditional communities where there had once been a significant Armenian community (and where she felt that the presence of Armenian clergy on the street might be seen as a signal Armenians intend to pursue reparations). "One of the challenges is to realize

the boundaries are not just between countries, between the West and the Middle East, but within countries, often along the lines of modernization.”

Yilmaz helped the API staff to appreciate that in the Middle East when a project is described as “international,” it is often understood to mean it is American: “You are undertaking an American project in the Middle East while the United States is at war with Iraq.” She also said, “it might have been normal for the Abraham Path to get in touch with religious groups, but Turkey is a secular country, and when anyone gets in touch with a religious group, it can be viewed as a provocation, and the government may get angry.”

Weiss candidly acknowledged the complexities of the Patriarch’s visit. It was the host committee of Turkish colleagues that had suggested inviting the Armenian cleric, but they were from Istanbul...not from Sanliurfa. As had become evident, those two Turkish places had very different worldviews. API staff simply had not realized just how sensitive the situation still was in the southeastern part of the country. Weiss commented: “The early implementation phase was not done nearly as well as it could have been. In the end, this was our responsibility and we made it very challenging for locals to support the project in that phase.” Although the Abraham Path had created a host committee in Turkey prior to the Sanliurfa event, there was no one from Sanliurfa itself on the committee. Despite these missteps, the Initiative continued to make progress in Turkey. This experience speaks the staying power of the project: “We’ve endured some challenging blows due to our mistakes and yet the project is still standing.”

Later, Ury, Weiss, and Yilmaz realized they needed to engage the community in Sanliurfa quickly. Yilmaz suggested she go and met with the mayor and governor. She did and carried the message back to the Abraham Path that if they wanted their project to work, they would have to do a better job of listening to the local leaders. Weiss described the Initiative’s collective response as: “OK we understand, tell us what we need to do. The Mayor and Governor explained the importance of tourism to the area and suggested that framing in these terms be used going forward because the people in Sanliurfa would understand it. Emphasize that the tourist angle and show it to be true, they explained, and you will gain the people’s trust and confidence.”

In May of 2007, Weiss, Yilmaz, and Daniel Adamson, Director of Path Development, went to Sanliurfa for a key meeting with representatives of the

Governor, Mayor, and civil society representatives. At that meeting the three expressed regret for the way things had transpired and that they were really here to listen to them and to have them take the lead with the Initiative supporting them. Yilmaz explained that this was a key moment for the project in Sanliurfa but certainly not the end of the concerns.

In November 2007, the Abraham Path sponsored a tourism conference and trek in Sanliurfa and Harran, Turkey. Weiss attributes the success of this event to Yilmaz's efforts on behalf of the Path:

"A lot of the credit for that goes to Arzu. She gained their trust and she's a city girl, you know, a Kurd again in a realm where there's tenuous relationships. She was magical in terms of getting the trust of the governor and the vice governor. Things had been fluid. One minute they were right behind us and the next minute, they couldn't support us. In 2007 in November, we had 170 people come to the tourism conference. 100 people did the trek. We'd also planned a concert but we cancelled because a few days before, some Turkish soldiers were killed and the local hosts thought that it would not be a time to celebrate and so we did not that out of respect. Part of the purpose was to try to change the image of the project there. We got tremendous publicity. The Ministry of Tourism paid for eight international journalists to come. There were seven national stories written, 25 local stories, TV spots, and thanks to our Brazilian colleagues we had a Brazilian TV company called Globo come and air a 4 minute segment on Fantastico (the equivalent of 60 Minutes in the United States) on Christmas Eve in Brazil which was watched by close to 40 million people. And so we got a tremendous amount of publicity. I was surprised that we succeeded at reformulating the project. We had made so many mistakes."

In digesting this set of experiences, API staff were learning how to work effectively with their partners across the political and religious spectrums. Ury believes that the paramount issue is one of trust. The Abraham Path, he notes, as been labeled by some as an American conspiracy, a British conspiracy, a Kurdish conspiracy, an Armenian conspiracy, and even a Puritan conspiracy after a local journalist in Sanliurfa discovered that the Puritans had founded Harvard University.

Prior to the Sanliurfa tourism conference, the Abraham Path Initiative had been the subject of threats from a small group of locals who opposed the initiative. Part of this opposition was due to the geopolitical situation at the time, which saw the United States and Turkey at odds over the handling of the Kurdish issue in northern Iraq. Furthermore, the US House of Representatives had just passed a non-binding resolution stating they believed that the situation in the early twentieth century between the Armenians and Turks should indeed be labeled a genocide. Anti-American sentiment simmered among some in the local population. Threatening emails were sent to members of the Abraham Path Initiative staff. In the face of continuing conflict about the Initiative presence in the area, Weiss conferred with Ury about how they should proceed. Ury asked for Weiss's opinion. Weiss reported that Yilmaz told him that the governor and mayor had acknowledged that there were threats but promised to do their best to provide security. Weiss recalled telling him: "We have to trust our partners. We've sought partnerships, saying we would take the lead from them." And Bill said, "fair enough." Weiss continues, "So we went and while there were some small protests, everything went off without a hitch despite there being some tension in the air. It was good lesson that you have to put your money where you put your mouth."

To illustrate: On the first night in Sanliurfa, the in-country staff became worried when an unknown young man showed up at Ury's hotel, asking for his whereabouts. Amazingly, the hotel front desk clerk gave the man Ury's hotel room number. As a precaution, the staff changed Ury's room in the hotel. Later that night Ury returned to his room to discover a mysterious unmarked cardboard box in his room -- only to find out that the box contained a gift from the Governor of Sanliurfa.

Moving to the present and the summer of 2011, the local committee decided to stop developing the physical Path, but remained willing to continue to host travelers. The international team has since found a British woman, Alison Tanik, who had lived in the area for six years. She has set up a successful homestay program in her husband's village of Yuvacali, 60 km from the city of Sanliurfa, bringing over a thousand people to this remote area. Ms. Tanik is committed to set up such a program with the API throughout the Sanliurfa region. A number of challenges remain, including negotiating with the former local committee to keep them supportive of the project and to begin the community outreach process for the homestay program.

Negotiating and Developing the Path in Syria. Framing the objective of Abraham Path also proved critical in Syria, an Arab country that attained independence, via French mandate in 1946. Since independence, several attempts had been made to overthrow the government, resulting in a state that has been controlled by Emergency Law since 1962. The country's current president is Bashar al-Assad who succeeded his father in 2000. Syria's population is ninety percent Arab, mainly Sunni Muslim, although the military is under the control al-Assad's minority Alawite sect.

As in Turkey, as the Abraham Path Initiative was developing its vision and establishing networks on the ground, it expected that one of its first natural constituencies would be faith communities. This focus, again, was largely due to Elias Amidon's connections as a Sufi Pir who had led pilgrimages to Syria for many years. During a visit to Syria in 2004, Amidon had expected that religious groups would welcome the Abraham Path Initiative, which they initially did. As the idea of Abraham's Path seemed to be gaining more traction, however, unexpected problems arose. Amidon explained: "The dominance of religion in the region has created a turf battle. Any engagement inevitably provokes questions and illuminates social hierarchies. Who's dominant? Who is recognized? Who is in charge? We found a project like ours was a wonderful juicy bone. Everyone wanted a bit and was upset if the other got it." In Syria, for example, early conversations about the Abraham Path became unwittingly entangled in a pre-existing feud between two rival Imams who also happened to be brothers. Amidon remembered: "At first we thought we could make nice and say to everybody 'we can belong to all of you.'" However, the Imams were allied with rival factions within the Syrian parliament, which proceeded to take sides. Amidon acknowledged that the Abraham Path Initiative's effort at a balanced approach reflected a Western, American bias that didn't take into account the prevailing culture.

Daniel Adamson was a hiking guide working for a private company in England when he met Elias Amidon at the Deir Mar Musa monastery in the desert some 50KM from Damascus. Adamson, who done considerable work in the region, had developed a deep affection for Syria. Amidon invited him to become part of the project and Adamson was charged with exploring the possibility of opening the Path in Syria. Working out of a hotel in Damascus, Adamson adopted what he believed would be a "low key approach" to capacity-building, engaging in informal conversation with a range of local influentials about what would be required on the ground to build support for the Abraham Path.

Adamson's low key and seemingly innocent, exploratory conversations with Syrian colleagues nonetheless attracted the attention of the Syrian authorities, who expressed concern about his efforts and intentions. Suspicion was such that in 2005, Adamson arrived in Damascus and was denied re-entry into the country. He received clearance to re-enter Syria in November 2006 to participate in the Abraham Initiative's first study tour and by 2008 was given visas once again.⁶ He believes that this is an indication of very conscious API efforts at trust building and an outcome of the affirmative diplomacy that has transpired since those early incidents.

In Syria, the Abraham Path Initiative has ended up with a model that reflects the realities of the political milieu. As in other partner countries, the Abraham Path initiative functions as a catalyst and convener, raising money and bringing in staff at the invitation of local hosts to open Path segments in each country, and arrange for positive media when travelers begin to walk. The goal of the organization is enable Path development in countries in the region and then allow country partners to shape the Path to suit local needs. In Syria, it has taken time for these efforts to bear fruit.

Weiss notes that after Adamson's experience in Syria, it became apparent to a number of people in the Abraham Path Initiative that, without President Assad's approval, the project would languish. How might this approval be gained?

For much of 2007, Weiss acknowledges that "we were stuck" until David Lesch, an American scholar of Syrian politics, on the faculty of Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, interceded on their behalf. Lesch's involvement came by an unlikely series of events. One day in Jerusalem Weiss was talking with then-Palestinian Coordinator Stephanie Saldana who suggested that Weiss acquire a copy of Lesch's book *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Assad and Modern Syria*. Lesch's book was one of few Western-authored books about Assad available in Damascus, which Weiss realized meant that it had received President Assad's approval. Weiss read the book with interest and for clues on how to break the logjam.

⁶ Diplomatic efforts by the Brazilians were significantly helpful in altering the perceptions of the project in Syria and with the Arab League.

After finishing the book Weiss decided to call Lesch, explain the initiative, and ask for his help. Weiss sensed that Lesch saw the value of the project. After a few calls, Weiss asked the scholar if he would be willing to discuss the Abraham Path during his next meeting with the Syrian president. Lesch agreed. In May 2007, Lesch spoke with President Assad again and mentioned the project to him. Assad liked the idea and recalled previous internal conversations about enhancing tourism in Syria and the possibility of creating a Syrian Cultural Walking Trail. In November 2007, during another meeting between Lesch and the president, Assad indicated that he would welcome advice from the Abraham Path Initiative about how to create such a walking trail. Assad tasked the Ministry of Tourism to work with the Abraham Path Initiative. In December of 2008, President Assad and former US President Jimmy Carter unofficially inaugurated the Syrian Cultural Walking Trail by walking a short segment together. At this point, the Syrian government has indicated their intention for the trail to remain a stand-alone project.

The Abraham Path nonetheless considers the opening of a Syrian route an important development. Weiss notes: “[we knew that the Syrian trail] wasn’t designed to connect with anything anywhere else. At some point, maybe, it will connect to the Abraham Path, but that isn’t ours to say.” “We will have done our job, says Tyler Norris, “when we are out of a job. I hope one day my daughter can say, ‘I’m going to Syria’ and there’s a Lonely Planet guide to the Abraham Path, and she can make her own trip.”

William Ury views gaining credibility as one of the most significant challenges in development work of this kind. Reflecting on the Turkish and Syrian experiences, he indicated that

“We’ve been told that we were being too ambitious, that the project is not safe, and that we would never be accepted by the governments in the region. ‘Are you crazy? You’re going to get tourists to come to a war zone? Even if it is a good idea, it’s not doable. But we arranged a study tour [in November 2006]] showing it was possible because after all we did it. We have now have letters of support from almost every government in the region. We have validation from the United Nations [Alliance of Civilization]. It’s still such a small innocent project, in its infancy, but it’s taken seriously enough now that it has even been the subject of a cabinet meeting in Syria where the Syrians discussed what their position should be on the Abraham Path.”

But trusting local partners and gaining credibility has also meant reconfiguring relationship with other partners. Although not an interfaith initiative per se, the Abraham Path began with the intention of engaging faith communities as part of their approach. After sponsoring programs in Turkey and Syria, it became clear that the Abraham Path could gain far greater traction by focusing its efforts on cross-cultural exchange, tourism, and economic development – the aspects of the project the people in the region desired. Weiss believes that governments in the region are eager for tourism. The Abraham Path's potential to deliver travelers to their countries is a major factor behind their support for the initiative.

With the advent of the Arab Spring in 2010, the Path in Syria has become completely frozen. The situation in the country is in turmoil and not safe for travel. Depending on how the revolution unfolds the future of Path in Syria is very uncertain.

Negotiating and Developing the Path in Jordan. Jordan, an Arab country in southwest Asia, shares its borders with Syria (to the north), with Iraq (to the northwest), Palestine and Israel (to the west) and with Saudi Arabia (to the east and south). It is ruled by a constitutional monarchy with a representative government. The Hashemite royal family traces its ancestry to the family of the Prophet. The current, King Abdullah II, is Western-educated. Since assuming the throne in 1999 after the death of his father, he has consistently has steered his country to closer relations with the West, despite pressure from within the country by proponents of Arab nationalism.

In addition to his work in Syria, Daniel Adamson had been charged with developing the Abraham Path in Jordan. Adamson went to Jordan after Syria because the organizers felt Path development should pose the fewest challenges in the current climate. The thought was that Adamson and his colleague, Mahmoud Twassi, could begin the painstaking mapping process on the ground. The two had considerable success doing this. After a year or so of working on the Path they had conducted a landscape survey on 120 KM and detailed mapping on 30 KM. This early work in Jordan did indeed seem promising to all involved.

Adamson and his colleagues were also working in Jordan to build partnerships at the local level and with institutions in Jordan, universities and government departments. In 2008, the Abraham Path was able to sponsor a study

tour with students from Leeds Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom with students from Jordan's University of Yarmouk. The Abraham Path brought the students to the northern highlands where they stayed two weeks in a local village hosted by local people. The visit culminated with a festival celebrating the landscape and cultural heritage of Jordan. The festival generated a considerable amount of positive media, including a front-page story in the *Jordan Times*.

This youth exchange demonstrated a kind of tourism in which the local people, rather than being service providers, assumed the role of hosts and guides – showing the students the landscape, welcoming them into their homes, teaching them about the traditions and stories of the area. Designed and led by the local friends of the Abraham Path in the host villages, this exchange demonstrated potential economic benefits of tourism, introduced the new concept of cultural tourism based on community interaction and rural life, and contributed towards building support for the project at local level. For the students who joined the exchange, it was an experience of walking together, sharing, and learning about another culture which, Adamson observed, had a profound and positive impact on their understanding of the world and their future lives. The event also helped to establish the importance of youth exchanges and volunteer service projects to the opening of the Abraham Path

The festival at the end of this exchange also attracted unwanted controversy in the form of protests by the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups who thought that the Abraham Path might be a political or religious project connected in some way with Israel. (These groups also pointedly challenged the Path in political forums.) This was an obstacle which caused real concern to the organizers of the festival, but local governmental authorities supported the event and made sure that it passed off without any disturbance.

The real challenge raised by this incident is the fact that support for the Abraham Path – at every level, from the governmental to the local – is vulnerable to rumor and misunderstanding, and can be threatened by ill-informed, vocal, influential opposition to the project. In such a highly sensitive area of the world, the conditions create a background of fear and insecurity that make trust-building central to the success of the project. API staff and friends have had to strive hard to counteract these suspicions at local level but, despite these challenges, believe that they have established broad and enthusiastic support among key community leaders, local officials, and families in the area. Interestingly, some members of the

Muslim Brotherhood changed their negative perceptions after they visited the villages, spoke with residents, and heard their positive views about the Path.

Follow-up assessment of students from Leeds and Yarmouk Universities participating in the student exchange activities rated their engagement extremely favorably. Student comments included: "I've become more confident. In the past, I wouldn't talk with anyone who I thought was even a little different from me. Now I talk to all kinds of different people;" "The experience made me a global citizen – it makes you feel the Otherness that we have in us."

To date the Path in Jordan has yet to overcome all of these political challenges at national level, and is still lacking a clear governmental endorsement of the project. However, the Minister, which the API had a conflict with has since left, opening the door for a renewed diplomatic effort. At local level, the Path continues to be flourishing in the local communities.⁷ Many travelers have visited the Path in Ajloun with the local community there taking a strong leadership role. The local community went so far as to create a Community Based Organization and have developed a strong homestay program. Over the past few years, over one thousand people have walked the Path in Jordan with 20 local families registered as host (for home stays and meals) and earning income. People continue to traverse the Path in the Ajloun region regularly and some private companies have begun to offer trips to the Path on their own.

Negotiating and Developing the Path in Palestine. "Palestine" is the name known since the time of Rome to land that sits between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. In contemporary usage, the "Palestinian Territories" refer to two discontinuous regions, the West Bank and Gaza Strip that have been ruled by the Palestinian Authority since the Oslo Accords of 2003 and by the Hamas or the Islamic Resistance Movement, since their surprise victory in 2006 elections. The West Bank and Gaza Strip are home to some four million people, many of whom consider themselves to have been displaced with the creation of Israel.

In this context, gaining trust has been at the forefront of opening the Abraham Path in Palestine. Although those working on Abraham Path Initiatives in the region

⁷ To counteract negative impressions fostered by potential enemies of the Path, different actors have interceded on the Initiative's behalf to varying degrees of success including the Brazilians and members of the other Abraham Path country teams.

must always choose how to sequence their activities due to the sensitivities of other countries pertaining to, for example, the role of Israel, these concerns are especially paramount in Palestine. Stephanie Saldana, now a Senior Advisor in Palestine, described the difficult choices she faced, when she was in-country coordinator, in trying to mobilize Path development in a way that is true to the work at hand:

“There were issues when we had the first study tour [in 2006]. There was a meeting in Bethlehem, with interfaith groups and very political leaders who were members of Hamas and Fatah. It was very difficult, very tense, and I was very confused... I didn’t think there was anyone in the room could help us to build a Path. I thought there was disconnect from the real nuts and bolts of doing the job. So I decided to scrap everyone who was in the room and start from scratch. Since I didn’t know anything about building a Path of any kind, I went out and looked for people who did. We put together a group of partners involved with wildlife, tourism and cultural history. At the end of seven or eight months, we had the Palestinian team.”

Saldana believed that the project’s success depended on cultivating the leadership of Palestinian partners. Rather than have the outsider or foreigner (in this case, Saldana herself) function as director, she considered herself only the project’s coordinator, obliging all decisions would need to be made by the Palestinians themselves. This required the partners to grapple with the tensions existing among them. Saldana described:

“For example, partners told me that people don’t want to share work because they are very territorial, because they are worried about their own area of expertise will be taken away. There were also tensions about including partners from different areas because the different clans from different villages wanted to have control and were reluctant to give up control to people from other cities. There were also political tensions with Fatah who wanted to include the ministry of tourism and those who didn’t want to work with the ministry of tourism. The political context became manifest in the day-to-day workings of the team. The team became a microcosm of the conflict itself.”

Saldana noted that her husband, Frederic Masson, the in-country coordinator for

Palestine that followed her tenure, was especially gifted at working with Palestinian colleagues:

“He gives all the partners the feeling of really being recognized. Unconsciously, outsiders tend to favor the partners who most resemble us, the ones who speak English very well, who can write good English reports, who work at English-speaking universities. In community outreach, the people who are likely to be effective will be the exact opposites, the people who don’t speak English very well, who seem normal, pedestrian because that will be very easily received and respected and understood by the local population. He had a real gift for finding local people and going to them constantly with decisions to make sure they fit in the culture.”

Saldana believes that Masson’s was successful because he saw failing as inevitable part of learning and he was willing to take risks others shun. As an example, Saldana remembered that when mapping the Path in Palestine, she gravitated to experts who advised that the route go through cities, rather than directly from the north to the south along Abraham’s original trajectory, because the mapping process it would be too difficult. Masson reached out to his Palestinian colleagues, sought their counsel and followed their advice. Led by his Palestinian colleagues, he went to the villages, met with the important people there and then asked, “How do we get to the next village?” The result is a 50-kilometer Path offering access to communities along the way. (Their village-level approach was described in more detail above.)

Susan Collin Marks sees this same ingenuity and creative facility distributed throughout the Abraham Path. She observes that those associated with the Path on the ground are extremely sensitive. Joshua Weiss thinks that time and readiness play a crucial role in this project and that is for the teams in each place to decide the point at which a particular action is warranted. In other words, the situation has to ripen naturally. For that to happen, those on the ground, not outsiders, need to decide that they are ready. Weiss believes that before people whose identities have been challenged may be brought together, it is necessary for them to shore up their own identities so that they are strong enough to face the other, rather than retreat to default settings based on history and stereotype. The Abraham Path in-country teams are willing to underwrite the time necessary for this to happen and to let a natural approach, devoid of pressure, emerge in a functional manner.

In Palestine, Stephanie Saldana has wrestled with such challenges. She has recognized that the leadership challenge for her lay in acknowledging hard truths that sometimes seemed at odds with the original conception of the Path:

“There was a very early moment when well-intentioned friends of the Path Initiative came to Israel, and they were meeting with Israelis, and they told me -- ‘Oh, you should meet this woman. She’s very interesting. She’s worked with Palestinians in the past and she could help the project progress.’ I basically had to say, ‘I have friends who are Israeli in my private life, but that has nothing to do with the Abraham Path. I will not bring Israelis into the discussion of the Abraham Path. If the Palestinians ever want to meet with Israelis, then they can bring that up themselves and I’m happy to coordinate that, but I will not have a situation in which we have Israelis waiting on the wayside in case the Palestinians are ready.’ I thought there was a tension in which Palestinians were being made to feel that they were working on a tourism project but the international organization was still keeping the feeling that they were working on a peace initiative. And I had to draw a line very clearly which is that there will not be a double standard. We’re working on tourism initiative, and if the Palestinians should ever want to develop this into a peace initiative, then I’m happy to help them with that.”

Tourism in Palestine was beginning to gather greater momentum after a downturn during the 2007 war between Israel and Hezbollah. In July 2008, Palestine hosted the first international youth walk in the newly opened 50km section of the Path through the heart of the West Bank. Masson and his colleagues forged relationships with key influential partners, including those from the Ministry of Tourism. The Palestinian team has sponsored local walks for people of all ages and had hundreds of people on the Path in 2009 and 2010. As of 2011 Palestine has developed more kilometers (170km in total) than anywhere else on the Path. The local leadership that has emerged in Palestine to lead the effort has taken the form of a series of NGOs working together to bring the Path to life. In addition, numerous homestay opportunities and cultural immersion experiences have been developed for the almost 1000 people who have traversed this part of the Path.

Negotiating and Developing the Path in Israel. With a number of sites related to Abraham, including the well in Be'er Sheva, the ancient area known as Garar, and the area around Dan, Israel has much to honor when it comes to Abraham, the person known as the father of the Jewish people. This, coupled with the prominent and central story of Abraham in the Torah as well as other local traditions in Israel, including the Bedouin--who also hold the tradition that Abraham is their forefather--makes the Path a potentially powerful concept in this country.

With unofficial support from the Ministry of Tourism, the Municipality in Be'er Sheva, and Ben Gurion University, the Path in Israel is slowly coming to life. And like the other places, the Path in Israel has seen its share of challenges. The primary issue confronting the Path comes from the geopolitical context: how quickly and prominently can the Path in Israel develop while also keeping all the other countries on board, given the broader atmosphere of distrust and strained relationships.

The Israeli Path's slower pace of development is also partly due to a lack of resources, actions on the part of the Director and his team, and disputes over how best to root the project in a manner that reflects and honors the diverse nature of the communities in Israel--Jews, Christians, Muslims, Bedouins, and Arabs--in their relationship to Abraham/Ibrahim.

Early on in the project, during the study tour, the Initiative received the advice from a former diplomat to begin work away from the Green Line. The strategic thinking behind this approach was to build something tangible and concrete that the Initiative could have as proof of concept before moving to the more sensitive areas of the region. So, logically, the Initiative began in the Negev due to the importance of Abraham in Be'er Sheva --where he is believed to have settled and dug a well--and its proximity to Hebron where he was laid to rest.

In early 2007, the Initiative engaged renowned Israeli archeologist and guide Avner Goren to lead the effort. Goren was made famous by his work with Bruce Feiler in the PBS special "Walking the Bible," which was based on Feiler's bestselling book of the same name, and for which he also heavily depended on Goren's encyclopedic knowledge in Israel and throughout the region. Goren's resonance with the project and his understanding of the strategy being used has been invaluable to the overall success of the project.

Since that time, Goren and a colleague have delineated a 60 km trail from Be'er Sheva to the city of Arad. The Path winds through the city of Be'er Sheva, passes the famous archeological site of Tel Sheva and Bedouin and Falahin (Arab farmers) villages. The first full Israeli walk was planned for the fall of 2009. This walk transpired but things lay fallow there for some time. In 2011, there is a renewed energy on the part of the Israeli team and they plan to have a travelable Path segment by the end of the year.

Exhibit 4: Some Strategic Questions Faced by the API Board

Over time, API Board members had considered, and in some cases resolved, a number of strategic themes and questions, including:

- The right organization and governance? There are at least three emerging organizational entities: the international "center," the in-country operational entities, and the supporting organizations in countries like Brazil and the UK ("Friends of the Abraham Path"). What should be the right structure and governance among these entities? With an eye toward its likely evolution, should the API be thought of as the headquarters with country branches? As a holding company with national subsidiaries? As a franchisor whose franchisees have more or less autonomy? As a loosely coupled collection of strategic partner entities in North America and the Middle East? In the right organizational structure, what functions are best centralized? Devolved? Where should decision rights for various classes of choices best be lodged?
- Parallel v. sequential emphasis? Especially in times with a sharp retrenchment in funding and varying progress in different countries, were the organization's resources spread too thinly over too many in-country organizations? While the long-term goal of a comprehensive Path throughout the region was unshakeable, should scarce resources be heavily focused on one country such as Palestine or Jordan? Were actual results on the ground—a successful "demonstration" project—the most potent "selling" tool for to get the rest of the Path up and running?
- Scope and nature of API actions to create the AP? So far, the Initiative has mainly acted to enable the creation of the Path in countries of the region, but has not sought to become, for example, a tour owner/operator. Are there clear lines between activities the API will itself undertake and those it will leave to others, but perhaps catalyze? Where and on what terms should it partner with other entities?
- "Open source" v. hierarchy to create the AP? With sharply limited resources when measured against the challenge of creating the Path, how could the Initiative stimulate and channel the keen interest of the many people in and

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out of the region who may wish to contribute to the Path's development in different ways (e.g., from cash contribution, to working physically on a segment, to researching a site)? How could eager volunteers contribute without over-burdening the already stretched international and in-country staffs? To what extent should an "open source" model—like Wikipedia, Burning Man, or software projects such as Mozilla (Firefox)—be pursued in which a center heavily stimulates and coordinate efforts of others?

- *The Path as platform?* As now contemplated, the Path itself is intended to enable travel and economic development. Is it best designed for these kinds of specific purposes or more as a *platform* for as-yet-unrealized activities by groups not yet envisioned? If so, how?
- *Funding?* So far, the API has relied heavily on large donors, with some smaller donors and online initiatives. It is currently focused on gaining foundation support. Is this the right financial model, especially in times of financial distress? Should the API depend more on revenues from walkers, licensing fees, royalties from potential strategic partners, or something else? How can potential funds from governments and multilateral institutions be tapped, especially for supporting cultural tourism and economic development?
- *"Air" v. "ground" activities?* More than twenty proposals for documentaries have been received by the API. The keen appetite of reporters, producers, documentary film-makers, and writers to produce programs on the Initiative and the Path could lead to a potentially disconnect: major media coverage that stimulates worldwide demand to walk the Path, while in-country organizations struggle to make the fledgling Path an on-the-ground reality. How can this tension best be managed?
- *Risk management?* What are the biggest risks to the successful development of the AP and how can they best be managed? A terrorist incident? Damaging rumors about the nature or "secret" purposes of the enterprise? Persistent efforts to frame the enterprise in terms that have not resonated with, or have even offended, the interests of local sponsors and supporters (e.g., peace, interfaith dialog) versus the framing that has mainly attracted local support (e.g., economic development, tourism, youth)? Insensitive actions by travelers (e.g., efforts to convert others)? Having the name ("Abraham Path") or other intellectual property hijacked or stolen for purposes inconsistent with the vision?
- *The Name?* Should the enterprise continue to be known as "The Abraham Path Initiative" and the route as "The Abraham Path"? Is "the" a bit exclusionary? Should it be more possessive, like "Abraham's Path"? Inclusive of Sarah and Hagar? Ought the "Initiative" suggest more of a network, like "Friends of Abraham's Path—Brazil" or "Friends of Abraham's Path—International"? Or something else?

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***Exhibit 5: Strategic Framework Recommendations to the Board of Directors,
November 2011 Board Meeting***

ABRAHAM'S PATH INITIATIVE
Reuniting the Human Family, Step by Step

Inspiration:

We believe that no matter what divides us, what unites us is far greater. This scientific and spiritual truth is heralded in humanity's most widely shared origin story, the journey of Abraham and his family four thousand years ago through the heart of the Middle East. In a place widely seen as the most divided region on earth, there is a path pointing to our greater unity—Abraham's Path. Traversing ten countries, Abraham's Path links many of the most fabled and sacred places on earth, from Damascus to the Jordan River, from Jerusalem to Mecca. In the very places most of us fear to visit lies a great secret, the gift of Abraham. That gift is the spirit of hospitality toward strangers, the spirit that unites human hearts. As we discover when we walk in his footsteps, Abraham is still very much alive in the hospitable hearts of people who live along the Path. It is this story that needs to be told and experienced to begin to awaken the hearts of the children of Abraham, four billion strong, indeed the hearts of all people everywhere, so that together we can take positive action to build a better world for our children. This is the purpose of Abraham's Path.

Vision:

Our vision is of a world where people of all cultures and faiths learn to transcend their differences, however deep, and unite to work together to make this a just, peaceful, and sustainable world for our children.

Mission:

Our mission is to offer the four-billion-strong family of Abraham a way to replace fear and hostility with courage and hospitality. We are mobilizing a new generation of Abrahamic leaders who will inspire people of all cultures and faiths to walk and work together for the common good and thereby change the face of conflict in the Middle East.

Background:

Since 2007, the Abraham's Path Initiative (API) has been developing a walking trail following the footsteps of Abraham across ten countries in the Middle East, promoting it as a unique and powerful tool for helping people of all traditions find

new hope and courage to work together for the common good. Over 250km of trail has been marked and mapped so far.

We are continuing with the Path's physical development, but with a clearer focus on its higher purpose. From the beginning, API saw cross-boundary walking and cultural tourism as a means to make the divisions and conflicts that surround the path less violent and more constructive. We are still committed to putting people on the Path, but now we also want to enlist them in becoming part of the solution of those divisions and conflicts. We will target specific leaders to walk the path, to use their platforms and constituencies to spread the message that we are indeed one family and that these divisions cannot stand if we are to have a peaceful, prosperous future. We will also organize international campaigns to bring communities together on common-benefit projects to save some of the Path's most vital and endangered natural resources

This expansion of purpose will require a targeted communications, marketing and media strategy that not only gets our message of transformation out to the wider world, but also motivates people to join us (by walking, participating in leadership workshops, or supporting Abrahamic campaigns.) Press and media outreach, combined with an interactive website and social networking, will be harnessed to amplify the Path's call to collective action.

The Story of Abraham offers a powerful narrative based on hope and connection rather than hatred and separation. Abraham inspires kindness and hospitality to strangers. Our aim is to build a movement of walkers who become doers—a new generation of change-makers who leave a legacy of unity and mutual respect in the human family.

Programmatic Goals:

Build the Path: To establish consistently high-quality cultural and educational tourism opportunities with Abrahamic content along the already walkable sections of the Path, while opening new segments in Turkey, Jordan, Israel and Palestine.

Populate the Path: To recruit individuals of all kinds, and to motivate leaders across all sectors, to walk in the footsteps of Abraham, both on the Path and in their local communities. We provide resources for community groups to organize Abrahamic walking and learning opportunities worldwide.

Transform the Path: To convene and nurture leaders and partners, helping them to design successful Abrahamic campaigns that will deliver concrete results in strategic locations along the Path.

I. Strategies for Building the Path

Goal: To establish consistently high-quality cultural and educational tourism opportunities with Abrahamic content along the already walkable sections of the Path, while opening new segments in Turkey, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. We will also provide resources for local leaders and community groups around the world to organize Abrahamic walking opportunities locally, so everyone can join the spirit of the Path and support the mission, regardless of ability to travel.

Strategy: Through our experiences, we have identified three key requirements for path-building success: (1) a local community's engagement; (2) a dedicated local coordinator with initiative; and (3) initial resources that could be leveraged into long-term sustainability of the path.

To achieve the first requirement of path-building, diplomatic work is required at the national level to gain the official approval, which enables entities at the regional, municipal, and village levels to become involved with confidence. Next comes the slow-but-steady process of community outreach to develop a genuine partnership and ownership of the Path in local communities, which is driven by the local coordinator and initially funded by API, until that particular segment of the Path becomes a self-sustaining enterprise. Our ultimate goal is for travelers and the people they meet along the Path to interact without ongoing outside intervention, apart from the seasoned and well-trained local guides, tour operators and Abrahamic content we make available.

To this end, we increasingly seek to function as a "networked nonprofit", working alongside other organizations to help build Abraham's Path into a self-sustaining ecosystem of cultural tourism. Rather than serving as a local tour operator or local service provider, API forges partnerships between and among public and private service providers and the local champions who will spearhead the development of the Path for decades to come. Such partnerships are also intended to ensure that walkers have varieties of options and itineraries to choose from, and that they can easily learn about and get onto the Path through more than one portal.

What differentiates API from these partners is our priority of using the ancient story of Abraham to help both walkers and the people they meet along the Path develop genuinely Abrahamic perspectives on the region, its peoples, and their conflicts. By producing and providing strong narrative content and transformational learning experiences for use by travelers, hosts, local guides, and partners who share our values, we connect people to more than a hiking trail; we connect them to one another, across every kind of boundary.

Our strategy to bring attention and support to our Path-building is to make our 'Abrahamic Hospitality' integral to our essence, our culture. To show through hosting of special awareness-raising events, storytelling, news profiles, social media that API is treating everyone like family, that mutual respect and kindness toward everyone is our hallmark. We take no sides in the conflicts, we trust everyone to be

a respectful participant in this journey.

Objectives:

- To upgrade walkable Path in Turkey, Israel, Jordan and Palestine, with local tour operators and guides prepared to host quality Abrahamic trips.
- To publish clear and accessible information on contacts and services available for Abrahamic travel, including potential guides, trip coordinators, tour operators, and maps with downloadable applications, information on local hospitality, homestays and hotels.
- To develop itineraries, provide logistics, and train guides for Abrahamic trips.
- To develop manuals, provide logistics, and train organizers for local Abrahamic walks.
- To publish Abrahamic story content for use on trips, local walks, and websites.

II. Strategies for Populating the Path

Goal: To recruit individuals of all kinds, and to motivate leaders across public, private, civil and religious sectors, to walk in the footsteps of Abraham, both on the Path and in their local communities, witnessing firsthand the unique value, challenges and potential for collective action, while overcoming negative stereotypes and ignorance.

Strategy: If our goal is to have the Path serve as a ‘university without walls,’ where people (leaders and everyday individuals) are inspired to study the unity of the human family and let go of stereotypes and fears, then we must have a strategy whereby they can connect with the ideas and concepts that we believe will lead to large-scale systems transformation. We will invite these cross-sector leaders and groups to join us on Middle East trips carefully designed to introduce them to Abrahamic friends with a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives, to bring to life versions of Abraham’s story which highlight our values, and to leave them with more questions than answers and more passion than pessimism for the region and its people as a whole.

Rather than compete with the myriad and sundry Middle East tour operators broadcasting transformational travel opportunities, we at API will first identify and then relationally connect with leaders and groups open to and capable of making real contributions to improve access to and revitalization of natural and cultural heritage along the Path (Jordan River, Baptism Site, Negev, Jerusalem, Hebron).

At the same time, we will build working partnerships with tour operators who share our values, utilizing their expertise to improve the quality of our trips and adding as much of our Abrahamic content as possible to theirs, in order to further expand our

network of international leaders and groups committed to the common good in the Middle East, and particularly in the lower Jordan River Valley, where so many cultural sites are located.

We will utilize local cross-boundary walks to enable motivated leaders and groups to promote our vision and values, to raise awareness of Abraham's Path as a socially responsible travel option, and to establish API itself as a resource for people committed to transforming conflict, revitalizing shared heritage, and building prosperity, both locally and in the Middle East.

Objectives:

- To organize quarterly API-sponsored trips to Abraham's Path, each involving 15-25 cross-sector leaders over 7-10 days, beginning in January of 2012.
- To provide quality Abrahamic content (guides, sites, versions of the story, relational opportunities, etc.) in the context of six trips sponsored by partner organizations.
- To help organize, encourage, and provide resources for 3-5 independent, self-sustaining local chapters, like the one already operating in Brazil, which are committed to raising Abrahamic awareness, developing the Path, and sending delegations to travel on it.
- To revamp the API webpage to serve as a resource for individuals and groups considering travel in the Middle East, highlighting Abraham's Path as an educational and socially responsible travel option.
- To transform the website and social networking strategy into an ongoing resource, enabling an increasing number of partners and local chapters to develop Abrahamic walking opportunities in their own communities.

III. Strategies for Fostering Transformation Along the Path

Goal: To convene and nurture engaged leaders and partners, helping them to design successful Abrahamic campaigns that will deliver concrete results in strategic locations along the Path, including Jerusalem and the Jordan River Valley.

Strategy: To create large-scale systems change, we must create rallying points for collective action. Having a common cause and rallying points that will bring positive change for all participants builds community and cohesion, even among groups and individuals where formerly suspicion and hostility were the norms. The challenge is to pick a common task along the Path that is truly worthy of everyone's best efforts.

The ancient story of Abraham is useful as a guidepost. Abraham was a bold innovator—a social entrepreneur in today's language—who changed the way billions of people understand Faith and Oneness. And it is not difficult to see the relevance of 'Oneness' in today's Middle East. The question is whether we help

facilitate a 'letting go' of our conflicting claims to homeland and identity in order to offer hope and prosperity to future generations.

One possible place to start is an Abrahamic campaign to save the Jordan River, one of the region's most vital and endangered natural resources, and a flashpoint for environmental and political turmoil. The river itself is dying, and its sacred sites are mired in sewage and surrounded by minefields, both literal and political. By creating a campaign that benefits all sides (Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian) we will be creating hope that the river can be a source of prosperity for all.

The questions to consider: How might the river and its surroundings be revitalized? How might we turn contentious issues and competition over land and water into unifying opportunities along the Path? How might we get leaders and everyday citizens from every sector to mobilize their resources and work together to restore their shared Abrahamic heritage?

In addition to the Jordan Valley, there are several other important opportunities to build courageous, conflict-transforming coalitions to address dangerous problems along the Path, such as Jerusalem, the Negev, Golan, and Southeast Turkey.

The key is to prioritize and design API trips and Abrahamic resources in such a way as to develop a new generation of leaders both motivated and equipped to address these issues in a balanced and effective manner. That will be our legacy to the Middle East and to the world. A group of leaders who have changed attitudes from 'me-centric' to 'we-centric'—people across Abrahamic faiths thinking again in terms of oneness and 'we' rather than separation and 'they.'

Given API's expertise in conflict transformation and campaigning, and its high-level access to influential elites, API has a real opportunity for impact. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity, we will employ a training methodology called "Learning in Action", which is specifically designed for this kinds of cross-boundary coalition development and involves semi-annual workshops focused on delivering measurable results.

Objectives:

- To organize two *Learning-in-Action* Workshops per year for leaders from various sectors.
- To connect, inspire, and engage those leaders and their organizations in the design and development of a coordinated, genuinely Abrahamic campaign to save the Jordan River.
- To lay groundwork for a campaign launch with documented research of conditions in the Jordan River Valley and outline a proposed legal framework for natural and cultural preservation.

- To conduct comprehensive outreach to local stakeholders in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, while recruiting lead coalition partners and a steering committee for campaigns.