ITP 2025 Final Report
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Forbidden love:

Despite the greatness of the United Kingdom and its attractiveness that attracts every visitor, I had a strong motivation to return to my country and implement what I had learned. This was due to the profound impact this training had on me, both personally and intellectually. It gave me the motivation to share everything.

I had learned with my colleagues and friends, and to tell my family about British culture and customs, as well as the cultures and customs of my fellows in the programme. The information I received was very useful. Some of it I already use in my work, and some of it I will try to develop to suit the current situation in my museum.

Transitioning from curator to planner, designer, and leader:

For me, I gained new experiences and began to look at things in a completely different way, especially in specific museum contexts such as museum exhibitions. I thought carefully about how I would proceed and whether I would keep pace with global developments in the field of museums through the newly acquired skills. It may not be easy at all, but if we work as an integrated team, despite the difficulties and challenges, we will improve the painful reality of Syrian antiquities.

Here, I am reflecting on the moments I experienced at the Caribbean Community in Britain exhibition and the ability of Caribbean workers at Transport for London to bring about radical change in their lives. However, the issue does not depend solely on the team; rather, it requires the adoption of this work by the management of my new government institution.

I will do my utmost to bring about a radical change in the reality of Syrian museums, and I will utilize all the experience and skills I have learned. Willpower and ambition will be the hallmarks of the next phase, especially as my country faces numerous difficulties and challenges at the political level in general, and the cultural and

human levels in particular. Our fundamental challenge is human development after fourteen years of war.

Difficulties and challenges:

I must present to you some of the difficulties I face, which are the lack of human resources in the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria and the lack of a financial budget for the Directorate of Antiquities. This sits alongside the existence of challenges in the administrative processes.

The most prominent challenges I face are that the focus of attention at the present time is on the country's economic and foreign affairs more than other aspects. The biggest challenge is creating hope for a bright future for Syrian antiquities after a period of frustration and decline.

Big surprise:

Being in this training had a great impact on me as I thought that I would develop my skills in the field of museums, the field that I love, and in the greatest place in this field, the British Museum, the institution that the greatest museums in the world compete with to take the title of fame from it. Like the Louvre Museum in Paris, for example, but when I was told by the ITP that I was the first person from Syria to participate in the international training programme, I felt an indescribable feeling. I did not know that my country had not previously participated in this programme since its establishment. Here, I felt an indescribable feeling of pride, honour, and double responsibility to represent my country in the best way.

Moments to stop at:

Many things caught my attention during the training period, and I thought about them carefully when I saw them. I was very surprised that they were related to future planning for antiquities and heritage and paving the way for future generations to continue the mission of preserving heritage. Like visiting the ethnographic storerooms in the Middle East Department of the British Museum and seeing a collection of different modern objects and classifying them according to their use in special drawers and writing the origin of each drawer on it. When we expressed a state of surprise that the pieces were modern and not ancient, the astonishment was greater when we learned that they were related to planning for the future. In the near future, it will become a form of heritage, and if we come across similar objects later, we will learn about their use and culture. I also noted the interest in planning for the future, including visiting the Archaeological Research Centre (ARC) and creating huge, currently empty storages.

The second family in London:

When I came to London to attend the International Training Programme, I did not have any friends among the programme fellows, nor did I have any personal acquaintances or prior meetings at any conferences or training programmes. When the ITP sent me the biographies of the programme fellows, I felt that I was far removed from them, their living conditions, and the culture of their country. But after my arrival on the first day, I decided to create bonds of love and respect in order to strengthen my social relations with them.

I had colleagues from Iran, Turkey, New Zealand, and Ukraine in the same apartment. We tried to create together the spirit of one family. The interesting thing

is that all the reactions and reflections were wonderful, which indicates that each one of us has the same way of thinking, which is to create the nucleus of a real family connected by daily life and not just training moments. What helped to grow the social bonds between the programme colleagues was the existence of small projects and workshops shared between us. Each time, the members were different.

At one of the summer parties at the British Museum, I got to know other colleagues in depth, and we shared moments of fun, dancing, and singing together.

As for the *Object in focus project*, there were moments of seriousness, work, and challenges to make our exhibition a success, and I shared them with my team. Despite the competition with other groups, there was a sense of humour and cooperation between us. And in the Museum Project Day – at the London Transport Museum - certain feelings we experienced with the people of the Caribbean connected us together, and we tried to bring out everything inside us to express ourselves with that blog.

One day I tried to put the names of my colleagues on a piece of paper and wrote next to each name what connected me to him or her. I was surprised to find names of colleagues who had never had an event happen between us. So, I decided to create that event, for example, by sitting next to one of them and exchanging food together, while creating a state of friendliness and love between us. It was a wonderful idea.

The dream has become reality:

The experience at the partner museum was a story in itself. We lived moments of joy, movement, and coexistence together, with a sense of brotherhood. We went shopping and ate together, and we planned the days to come together.

The partner museum experience was also of particular importance in terms of training and skill acquisition. When I started my training tours there, I saw a different scene from the British Museum. Despite the small size of its museums, they have a high-level cultural organization and tourist context, and the process of linking academic research and studies with museums. Museum work in Syria is similar to that of partner museums in terms of organization and planning, but there are some future issues I want to work on in terms of tourism promotion, which was wonderful when I visited Nottingham Castle and Lincoln Castle.

In addition to the way of thinking and analysing archaeological excavation sites and the way of presenting them to visitors, most importantly, we plan for the future as a network. How will we continue to communicate and how will we work together within the ITP network? I told my fellow programme colleagues about the obstacles that might stand in my way and make things more difficult. We started thinking together about solutions to be effective together. We agreed to send all invitations and links to conferences and activities to each other, as well as the latest publications related to the latest studies, so that each of us in his or her place can spread this information and culture to the local community to encourage it to become part of the global network of ITP.

Although the relationships with the programme colleagues were fun and entertaining, they were also very useful, as we were always talking about the culture of our countries and different societies in general.

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