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The Nile Project launches with its first major event, the Nile Gathering, in Aswan, Egypt, from 10 – 29 January 2013

The Nile Project was founded in August 2011 by Egyptian ethnomusicologist **Mina Girgis** and Ethiopian-American singer **Meklit Hadero** to address the Nile basin's cultural and environmental challenges using an innovative approach that combines music, education and an enterprise platform. The world's longest river runs through 11 countries (**Congo DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Sudan and Egypt**) and touches the lives of 400 million people. The Project's mission is to connect the people of the Nile basin through a cultural dialogue that evokes Africa's iconic river as a shared ecosystem.

Initial crowd funding was secured by Mina and Meklit to embark on their reconnaissance journey across East Africa in May 2012, where they have engaged with musicians, development organizations and cultural institutions to take part in the Project and help shape its various programs. The first of these programs, the **Nile Gathering**, takes place at Fekra Cultural Centre in Aswan, Egypt, between 10 – 29 January 2013. The Gathering encompasses a four-day strategic planning workshop (10 – 14 January) that builds on the Project's vision, followed by a two-week music residency (15 – 29 January) to develop music that can generate empathy and inspire cultural and environmental curiosity.

The workshop will bring together expertise in fields of environment, culture, agriculture, finance, education, development, nonviolent communication, cross-cultural dialogue, conflict resolution and intercultural learning. A team of Art of Hosting (see notes to editors) facilitators will engage participants in conversations that integrate their respective disciplinary and cultural perspectives and contribute to a common understanding of Nile issues. The outcomes will serve as blueprints for intercultural dialogues integral to the Project's programs and activities.

During the residency, musicians from the 11 Nile basin countries will collaborate to translate this intercultural dialogue into a new body of songs, drawn from the rich and diverse genres, traditions and instruments found in East Africa. Under the musical direction of **Miles Jay** (see notes to editors), the music residency will provide a space for the musicians to learn about one another and compose and record new music to be performed in Africa and around the world.

Nile Project programs

Nile Tour: using a boat made of recycled water bottles, a collective of Nile Project musicians and environmental educators will sail down the river, from the Mediterranean to Aswan in 35 days, performing concerts complemented by participatory workshops where local audiences learn about the Nile's cultural and environmental fabric.

Nile Stories: complementing the Nile Tour, this will be a web-based dialogue platform where Nile citizens can share their perspectives on the river through live conversations as well as short-format videos.

Nile Camps: annual summer camps for young musicians from the 11 Nile basin countries. During the day, they explore local ecosystems and in the evening, they express their learning through music.

Nile Curriculum: an educational initiative that offers a holistic approach to Nile river ecology and its inhabitants with a multidisciplinary curriculum exploring history, geography, cultures and ecosystems of the Nile basin.

TEDxNile: a conference featuring scientists, thinkers and artists with Nile-related ideas worth spreading.

Nile Enterprise Platform / Nile Fellowship Program: this platform will channel newly acquired cultural and environmental understanding towards concrete action. Partnering with social enterprise organizations such as Ashoka, the project will train and empower East African youth to develop innovative solutions that address social, cultural, environmental and economic challenges relevant to the Nile.

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Notes to editors

Mina Girgis / Executive Director

Mina is an Egyptian ethnomusicologist and arts entrepreneur living between San Francisco, CA and Cairo, Egypt. He has participated in organizing many multicultural events such as the Smithsonian Silk Road Festival in Washington DC and Farah El Bahr Euro-Mediterranean Festival in Alexandria, Egypt. He is the founder and the Executive Director of the Nile Project and the Zambaleta Institute.

Meklit Hadero / Cofounder

Meklit is a critically acclaimed Ethiopian-American singer, musician and cultural activist based in San Francisco, CA. She has been an artist-in-residence at NYU, has completed musical commissions for the Fund for Artists, the Brava Theater, and the De Young Museum, and was recently awarded the 2012 TED Senior Fellowship with the Nile Project as her main focus. She is also co-founder of the Arba Minch Collective.

Miles Jay / Musical Director

Miles has extensive performance experience in the musical traditions of the Middle East, making him one of the most uniquely qualified double bassists in the World Music scene today. Performances have taken him to Cairo, Oslo, Dubai, Dakar, Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. Musical credits include Youssou N'Dour, Fathy Salama, Naser Shama, the Cairo Symphony Orchestra, Ross Daly (Greece), Trygve Seim (Norway), Omar Faruk Tekbilek, and 'Weird' Al Yankovic. Active in various production roles, in 2005 he was the Associate Musical Director / Contractor / Bassist for Youssou N'Dour's U.S. tour. In 2006, while in Cairo, Miles co-founded, co-produced, and recorded two unique original music ensembles called Bakash and Masar.

The Art of Hosting

The Art of Hosting and Convening Conversations for Social Transformation is both a collection of social technology practices and an international network of its practitioners. While the majority Art of Hosting events are training grounds to new "hosts," this Nile Project workshop will not provide training to participants. Rather, the workshop will be organized by experienced hosts to lead the participants through a variety of group facilitation techniques (such as the Circle, Appreciative Inquiry, Dragon Dream Planning, the World Café, Open Space Technology, Collective Mind-Map and the Pro Action Café) to best serve the purpose of the Nile Gathering.

Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM)

An Egyptian not-for-profit, non-governmental organization (NPO/NGO) registered with the Ministry of Social Solidarity. Since its founding in 2003, NM has endeavored to create an ecosystem fostering social entrepreneurship and supporting the advancement, development, and scaling-up of social enterprises in Egypt. NM's flagship program, the Incubator of Innovative Social Enterprises, empowers high-potential social entrepreneurs to act as drivers of social innovation by providing social entrepreneurs with capacity-building, technical support, access to networks, and seed funding. The incubator model is meant to help social entrepreneurs build successful, scalable, and sustainable models addressing social issues in Egypt. The Nile Project operates with support from NM's incubator program.

Fekra

The Fekra Cultural Center organizes traditional and contemporary music and dance events, poetry evenings, lectures and film screenings. FEKRA also offers courses and workshops with local and international artists and facilitates an international cultural exchange. The center is located on 40'000 sqm of land next to the Nile coves and opposite the island of the Philae Temple, in Southern Egypt. It is situated next to Aswan in the El Shallal region, which borders the red granite rock desert and lies beneath Lake Nasser, the gateway to the Sudan.

Ashoka

Ashoka is the global association of the world's leading social entrepreneurs — men and women with system changing solutions for the world's most urgent social problems. Since 1981, Ashoka has elected almost 3,000 leading social entrepreneurs as Ashoka Fellows, providing them with living stipends, professional support, and access to a global network of peers in 70 countries. Ashoka Fellows

inspire others to adopt and spread their innovations —demonstrating to all citizens that they too have the potential to be powerful change makers and make a positive difference in their communities. By unleashing the same innovative and entrepreneurial mindset, which has driven business sector growth over the last two centuries, Ashoka is leading a dramatic transformation in society, fueling the citizen sector's unprecedented growth.

The Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI)

DEDI is an independent institution established in Cairo in 2004 as a project under the "Danish-Arabic Partnership Program" with funding from the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA). The strategic aim of the Institute is to enhance political life in Egypt and Denmark, and in Europe and the Arab World at large, and to improve mutual understanding and dialogue between communities living in these areas. The Institute is funded by grants from the Danish development agency, DANIDA. The first DANIDA grant was spent in the period from late 2004 to early 2008. The Nile Gathering is made possible with support from DEDI.

Wolff Olins

The Nile Project logo and brand identity was developed in collaboration with Wolff Olins, a global brand consultancy that is ambitious for clients and optimistic for the world. Its clients are leaders in all categories including technology, culture, media, retail, industry, and non-profit organizations. Wolff Olins helps clients create game-changing work by developing unique brand experiences, products that drive demand, and creatively-led business strategies. (RED), GE, Mercedes-Benz, New York City, London 2012, Tate, Unilever, Target, Hero MotoCorp, Tata Docomo and AOL are all examples of the positive impact of Wolff Olins' work. For further information, please visit: <http://www.wolffolins.com>. Wolff Olins is a part of Diversified Agency Services, a division of Omnicom Group Inc.

Wafaa El Nil

To produce the Nile Gathering, The Nile Project is partnering with Wafaa El Nil, a local NGO devoted to promoting Nile sustainability through cultural events and environmental awareness campaigns.

Nile Project timeline

2013

January / Nile Gathering 1 (Aswan, Egypt)

July / US performance (commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts for Target Free Thursdays at the David Rubenstein Atrium)

October / Africa Tour (first tour to Africa's major cities)

November / Nile Project Album 1 (first recording by Nile Project musicians)

2014

January / Nile Gathering 2 (at the source of the White Nile in Jinja, Uganda)

February / US Tour (university tour with performances, workshops, lectures and community outreach)

March / Europe Tour (concerts and workshops across Europe)

June / Nile Camp 1 (Jinja, Uganda)

September / Nile Curriculum launch

October / Nile Tour (from the Mediterranean to Aswan)

December / TEDxNile

2015

January / Nile Gathering 3 (at the source of the Blue Nile in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia)

April / Nile Fellowship Program

June / Nile Camp 2 (Bahir Dar, Ethiopia)

October / Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (series of traditional music recordings produced by Smithsonian Folkways label)

November / Nile Stories

2016

January / Nile Gathering 4 (at the meeting of the Blue Nile and White Nile in Khartoum, Sudan)

June / Smithsonian Nile Festival (two-week festival on US National Mall, programmed with Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage)

July / Nile Camp 3 (Aswan, Egypt)

December / Nile Project Film (feature-length documentary film following story of Nile Project from inception to implementation)

ENDS