



PROJECT FACTSHEET

January 2016

FORGING A COMMON 'NILE CULTURE' THROUGH MUSIC AND ACADEMIC TRAINING



Through music, the Nile Project aims to inspire citizens to contribute to the sustainability of their shared ecosystem. © Peter Stanley

Country

Egypt

Thematic focus

Agriculture, Water, Food security

Duration

January 2013 – June 2016

Budget

CHF 450'000

ethnomusicologist Mina Girgis and Ethiopian-American singer Meklit Hadero founded the Nile Project in 2011. Supported by the SDC since 2013, the initiative carries out activities in the fields of music and education. Through these, Nile citizens obtain information, inspiration and empowerment to work together to foster the sustainability of their ecosystem and understand each other's cultures and needs.

To make the Nile Basin a common ground and shared ecosystem for the inhabitants of the eleven countries through which the Nile River flows, the SDC supports the innovative musical and educational Nile Project. The project brings together artists, students and concerned citizens. A series of acclaimed concerts has taken place since 2013; at the same time, students are developing initiatives to foster a better use of water resources.

From Uganda to Egypt, 11 countries along the Nile Basin rely on the use of Nile water for their national development plans. Although some 437 million people live in the river basin, no shared vision for the development of the common ecosystem has really emerged to date. While formal, government-led initiatives have made some progress towards cooperation, civil society and NGOs in the countries concerned are often isolated and inhibited by a lack of platforms for exchange.

It was precisely with the aim of creating channels for dialogue and exchange among Nile Basin citizens, local communities, artists and students that Egyptian

Musical residencies

The project promotes regular residencies with musicians from Nile Basin countries, as well as workshops and concerts. A residency is a space for musicians to learn about other musicians and musical traditions. The artists compose and record new music that results in a performance-ready set.

With the support of the SDC, a first Nile Gathering occurred in January 2013 in Aswan, in Upper Egypt. The encounter led to the production of an acclaimed CD ('Aswan'), two subsequent residencies in Jinja (Uganda) and Minya (Egypt), an Africa tour in five countries with the participation of 14 musicians from seven countries and, in 2015, a tour in the United States. During the US tour, the project combined musical performances and academic activities in a dozen renowned universities. A fourth Nile Gathering is planned for 2016.

In parallel, a Nile choir composed of Egyptian citizens and Nile Basin residents, in particular refugees, will be created in Cairo. The choir's performances will be video-recorded and uploaded to the Nile Project's website to make it available around the world, and all song lyrics will be translated into Amharic, Arabic, English and Swahili as a contribution to intercultural dialogue.

Fellowships for students

In addition to this, plans are currently under way to implement the Nile Project in four partner universities in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania as well as in a number of Egyptian universities. A group of 24 selected student leaders will benefit from fellowships that will provide them with learning opportunities across several fields: music, community development, leadership, conflict transformation and the Nile Basin environmental sustainability.

The students will learn about food-related challenges and other factors that have an impact on the Nile ecosystem, including climate change, the use of energy and local agricultural practices. In chapters established in their university campuses, the students will develop a set of creative activities to sensitize citizens to the pressing environmental challenges facing the Nile and promote the responsible use of water resources. Photography and singing will be part of various artistic forms of expression. The chapters will simultaneously be linked to an international platform for students to network and engage in peer learning.

Nile Project Clubs

The project ultimately also aims to promote behavioural changes and a better livelihood for local communities along the Nile. In Egypt, for instance, the students involved in the project have established 'Nile Project Clubs' in Cairo and Aswan to channel youth interest in the sustainable management of river resources. In addition to clubs in these two Egyptian cities, clubs in other countries will partner with residents and farmers to set up development projects that address their needs.



The first Nile Project concert organised in January 2013 in Cairo attracted a large audience. © Matjaz Kacicnik

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