

# The Revolution.

## Blue Kitabu July 2010 Newsletter

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**The first ever African Festival of Boston: See page 2 for details!**

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Join the Education Revolution

Blue Kitabu.

### Local Outreach: Arts & Crafts at Dragon Boat and EarthFest

Cultural festivals are popular summer events in the Boston Area, and Blue Kitabu will be heading to many this year (see page 4 for a schedule!). Our first festival of the summer was a huge success: on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, thousands of people gathered at one of Boston's landmarks, the Hatch Shell, to listen to great music, eat delicious food and check out environmentally friendly exhibits and local non-profit organizations. This year was the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Earthfest, sponsored by local radio station 92.9 and Whole Foods Markets. The musical performances featured bands such as Marcy Playground and The Gin Blossoms. There was also a Kids Planet, which was a combination of music, entertainment, environmental activities and educational displays.



The BK tree decorated with ornaments made by kids at the Dragon Boat Festival

We had the privilege of spending some time at Earthfest, advertising and encouraging participants to learn a little bit more about educational development in the areas that we work. We had a great set of activities for kids, including a handmade tree which they could decorate with cardboard ornaments.

We used recycled cardboard, which we cut

into fun, interactive shapes such as books, people and flowers. The kids decorated the ornaments with glitter, stickers, recycled fabric scraps, crayons, and more. It was an enjoyable, educational and environmentally friendly way for us to get out into the Boston community and continue to spread the word about Blue Kitabu, as well as learn about other organizations and soak up some much-needed sun.

Last weekend we participated in our second event of the summer: the Boston Dragon Boat Festival. The Dragon Boat Festival is held every year along the Charles River, complete with boat races, amazing Asian ethnic food, entertainment and arts and crafts booths. We brought our fantastic Blue Kitabu tree again and had ornaments for kids to decorate. The kids loved decorating the ornaments, especially with glitter!

The idea for this project came from the art curriculum used in Blue Kitabu's projects, which focuses on sustainable and recycled art projects. It was nice to have an opportunity to connect our community in Boston to schools in Africa by doing the same project here. This allowed the children to see what art projects are like there as well as learn about sustainability- and of course to have fun!



Children decorated their ornaments before making a wish for the Earth and hanging them on the BK tree



## Celebrating 50 years of African Independence



©The Shalupe Foundation

In 1960, 31 African countries gained their independence. Now, 50 years later, the Shalupe Foundation is inviting all of Boston to celebrate their independence together in the first ever African Festival of Boston.

The Shalupe Foundation is a non profit working in both the United States and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They help people who are suffering from the aftermath of war, both in these areas and refugees in area of asylum. Shalupe means lifeboat, and the Foundation works like a lifeboat to help deprived people from the Democratic Republic of Congo with whatever they need to survive. The

Foundation's goal is to help deprived women and children to become self-sustainable and able to manage their own welfare by providing them with assistance such as shelter, education, and training.

The Shalupe Foundation hopes that this festival will be an opportunity to celebrate Africa, but also a chance to turn away from "50 years of negativity and inform the community about all the resources and tools this great continent has to offer to the future." They envision the festival also as a platform that will allow Africa to shine and share its rich and beautiful cultures with the rest of the world.

The festival, which will take place at Boston City Plaza, will be held on Saturday, July 17<sup>th</sup>. The festival will include representatives of 31 countries, celebrating their heritages through

dance, food, and music-and you better believe Blue Kitabu will be there! Rwanda and Kenya, both countries in which we have projects, will be celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence during the festival. We will be having an information table to spread the word about Blue Kitabu as well as our merchandise and of course the Blue Kitabu tree and ornaments for kids to decorate! Join us to celebrate this important time in history for Africa and have a great time with us!



For more information on the Shalupe Foundation or the upcoming festival, check out [www.shalupe.org](http://www.shalupe.org)

## Ghana Update: The Summer Fellowship has Begun!

**"They have been welcomed with open arms by the community of Asebu and have experienced great success in their research"**

The 2010 summer fellowship and teacher training session is officially underway! Fellows and Blue Kitabu staff left in early June to undertake a two-month expedition in Ghana. Currently, three fellows are researching issues in girls education, organic farming and health curriculum in schools. They have been welcomed with open arms by the community of Asebu and have experienced great success in their research.

Teachers from here in the U.S. joined up with the fellows and Blue Kitabu staff on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June to begin the training session. The



Alex, the fellowship project manager, with students in Asebu

training has shifted slightly to accommodate setbacks in building times as well as financial constraints. The trainers will be training staff from the Ministry of Education in

the Central Region, who will then train the new teachers when the school is ready to open in late September or early October. This new plan ensures the sustainability of the training, as the local trainers will be able to hold trainings when they see fit and will also have the opportunity to introduce the teachers to current training methods. We are certain that this is a fantastic alternative to

training our own teachers directly.

The fellowship and training will wrap up at the end of July and we look forward to welcoming our teachers and fellows home so that they can share their experiences with us and with our supporters. The period will certainly be a period of growth and learning for the trainers, fellows, our staff, and the Central Region of Ghana.



A student in Asebu

## Summer Events Schedule

Event	Location	Date	Time
<b>Lowell African Festival</b>	Sampas Pavillion- Lowell, MA	June 26	11 a.m.– 7 p.m.
<b>African Festival of Boston</b>	City Hall Plaza- Boston, MA	July 17	9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
<b>Kids for Kenya!</b>	Boston Common playground– Boston, MA	August 14	1 p.m.—5 p.m.
<b>Boston GreenFest</b>	City Hall Plaza- Boston, MA	August 19-21	10 a.m.—10 p.m.

## Join us at the Boston GreenFest!

**“This year’s event will feature over 200 exhibitors, more than 50 live performances, a Green Film Fest, an EcoFashion show, and many other fun and environmentally friendly activities!”**

Blue Kitabu will be participating in the Boston GreenFest this year! Keep reading to learn more about the exciting activities planned for this event.

GreenFest will be held the weekend of August 20 at City Hall Plaza right in the heart of downtown Boston. The event is organized by the Foundation for a Green Future, Inc, which is a Boston-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing a series of environmentally focused programs to the Greater Boston area throughout the year. Foundation for a Green Future, Inc has been involved with local community centers, schools, and neighborhoods in the city of Boston since its establishment in 2008. In addition to the many events that it organizes, this foundation also focuses on community outreach, education programs, green job training, and research and development.

This year’s event will feature

over 200 exhibitors, more than 50 live performances, a Green Film Fest, an EcoFashion show, and many other fun and environmentally friendly activities. Even our mayor, Thomas Menino, is scheduled to make an appearance! Live music at the event will feature performances by a variety of

bands, including The Dreaming Tree, Mamadou and Incus. This will be our first time participating in GreenFest and we look forward to meeting other local non-profit organizations and checking out all of the fun activities that are planned for the weekend!



## Country Profiles: Learn more about the status of education in the countries where we work!

“There is a strong bias against schools located in rural areas; these schools are often grossly understaffed and underfunded”

Ghana’s educational system is highly centralized, and the Ministry of Education and its agencies are responsible for maintaining the entire system. The Education Act of 1960 promised universal free and compulsory education; however, due to difficulties with economic development, the goals of that act have not been fully realized.

There are currently over six hundred public senior secondary schools in Ghana that graduated a total of 90,000 students. While 99 percent of these secondary schools are

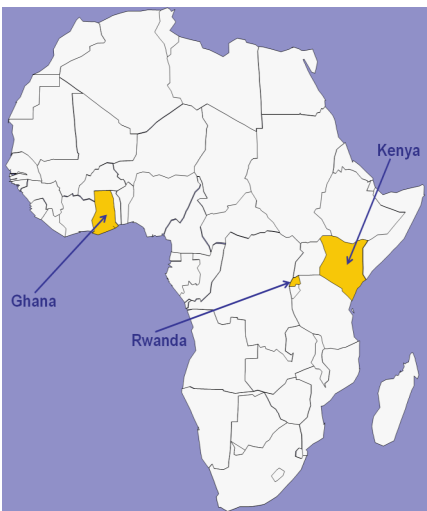
publicly operated, the quality of education among them is very inconsistent. Ghana is still struggling to provide enough teachers to accommodate the number of students and access to each level of education remains limited due to the lack of appropriate facilities. According to the Human Development Report in 2009, the combined gross enrollment ration was only 56.5 percent. There is also a strong bias against schools located in rural areas; these schools are often grossly understaffed and underfunded.



neglected. The Asebu Free School will serve over 200 HIV/AIDS orphans and street children in the area. The school, the first of its kind, will be a completely self-sustained entrepreneurial school so that it does not depend on government or foreign assistance for survival.

Check out our website, blog, or other media sites to learn more about the Asebu Free School project!

Blue Kitabu’s school in Asebu, Ghana is working to meet the needs of a rural community that the government has largely



We will be working in the eastern region of Kenya, which is home to the Maasai tribe. The Maasai have historically had an aversion to Western

education, believing that this style of education will strip them of their culture, language, and traditions. During the period of British imperialism, many English schools were developed in Kenya and the Maasai were forced to attend. This disrupted their

traditional lifestyle and caused great animosity between the British and the Maasai.

As a result of this historical feud, very few Maasai felt the need to pursue a Western education after Kenya gained its independence. They chose instead to follow their traditional system of education and to practice their unique cultural ceremonies. Even after the government of Kenya instituted mandatory primary education for all, very few Maasai attended schools.



Blue Kitabu is planning to build a schoolhouse for 50 children in a very remote Maasai community located in the Loita Hills of Kenya, where the children who are able to attend school have to walk 10 miles to get there.

After gaining independence in 1962, there was an expansion of education programs throughout Rwanda. However, the system was greatly impacted by the genocide that occurred in 1994, during which Hutu extremists attempted to eliminate the entire Tutsi population and their supporters. It is estimated that over 800,000 people were killed over the course of a mere few months. Many of the gains made in education prior to the genocide were destroyed.

Education is now compulsory and free for all children ages 7 to 13, but the law is not widely enforced. For example, the

combined gross enrollment ratio was 52.2% in 2009. Current public spending per student for primary school education is 109 U.S. dollars, 19 percent of total government expenditure. However, a shortfall in financing is a major inhibitor to these efforts, as are other barriers, such as the cost of school uniforms and learning materials.

Post-primary education, equivalent to junior secondary, provides students with a common-core syllabus, which consists of French and English language classes, integrated science, mathematics and social studies, ensuring that anyone who leaves school after nine years will have acquired



academic, technical and life skills. Student can then proceed on to high school or one-year professional training for fields such as mechanics or carpentry.

Blue Kitabu helped to sustain Rebero Bakery and orphanage located in Rwanda. We helped them to make their bakery, their means of financial support, meet health standards so that it could re-open and support the orphanage.

“A shortfall in financing is a major inhibitor to efforts to increase enrollment, as are other barriers such as the cost of school uniforms and learning materials”

## Connect with us!

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Blue Kitabu is excited to announce that we are now connected to the world of social networking! We have joined many social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. We also have new pictures and videos on Vimeo, YouTube, and Flickr, as well as a link to our fundraising page on Firstgiving. If you use any of these sites or want to join, click the buttons below to follow us and hear about what we're doing! We also have links to our blog and the website, so check them out below!



## About Blue Kitabu



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Blue Kitabu believes that education is one of the most basic human rights. We work to ensure that children everywhere are able to attend schools that are well equipped to provide intellectual sustenance and empowerment. It is through education that children are able to realize their full potential and raise their prospects for the future. Blue Kitabu aims to pursue its goal of global educational advocacy by training teachers, providing schools with the basic materials they need, and building school infrastructure in areas that desperately need it.