



AEF MORINGA COUPLE FULFILLS DREAM TO SUPPORT EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The African Education Fund Moringa was established in 2013 as a donor-advised fund with KBFUS. Set up by an Italian-American couple living in Europe, the Fund promotes education in Africa, especially for girls. It also provides job skills and training for girls and for young men at risk, and helps register African infants who risk having no legal identity.

Although their roots are in the United States and Europe, Antonio and Patricia Costa have always felt a strong draw to Africa. “When we were first married we imagined selling all our stuff, getting a Landrover and driving across Africa,” says Patricia. But as often happens with youthful dreams, life, including three children, happily intervened.

“That long trip never materialized,” Patricia says. “But Africa has stayed in our hearts all these years. We have a daughter who is Ethiopian, now the proud mother of an Ethiopian-French lovely little girl. We promised ourselves that if we were going to do anything philanthropically, it would be in Africa.”



Lifelong promise comes to fruition

Chicago native Patricia and Italian-born Antonio met in the United States, married, and moved to Europe in 1983, where they now divide their time between Italy and Belgium. Antonio held positions in several multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Commission of the EU, until retiring in 2010. Patricia taught at Vesalius College, an American-style liberal arts college in Brussels from 1989 until 2013.

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“As associate dean at the college, one of my tasks was institutional development, which included fundraising,” she says. That role introduced Patricia to KBFUS. The meeting, it turned out, came at the right time not only for her work, but for the fulfillment of the dream she and her husband had been holding fast to for so many years.

“When Antonio and I decided in 2012 to start our Fund we naturally turned to KBFUS for advice and assistance,” says Patricia. “We were familiar with their experience in donor-sponsored fund management. And we knew it was a natural fit.”

Before starting the Fund, they had long discussions about where their support would best be placed. “I’ve been involved in education all my life, and Antonio has as well, including as a teacher in his earlier years in New York City,” she says. “Education is very important to both of us. I attended a progressive women’s college in Chicago. So education in general was an obvious choice, but women are also a pretty big focus for us.”



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A tree inspires hope

When the Costas traveled to Ivory Coast in 2012, they were inspired by the ‘Moringa oleifera’, a fast-growing tree found across Africa. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘miracle tree’ because of its dozens of nutritional and medicinal uses, and its value as a crop to poor people across the tropics.

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“We wanted to include something in the name of the Fund that would resonate with people in Africa,” says Patricia. “That’s how we decided on the African Education Fund *Moringa*. One of the things we are talking about now is starting to grow moringa commercially as a social enterprise at one of our project sites in Ivory Coast. There’s already land there that can be used to grow it and restaurants that can buy it. Our discussions are still at the very preliminary stages but we want to do something with moringa that is more than metaphorical.”

Foundations built on personal relationships

Through Antonio's international work, the Costas met people who have long had philanthropic interests in Africa. They chose their partner organizations by tapping those contacts and travelling to the countries where they want to develop projects.

"Our journey has been characterized by personal relationships above all," Patricia says. "We deliberately sought contacts we could trust and used their advice to move forward. We also trusted our own judgment of people and always knew we wanted not to just give money, however much or little, but to create relationships and sustain them. Our efforts have so far been small but in our modest way, we hope we have succeeded. And we are thinking about where to go in the future."



Patricia adds that she and Antonio haven't done much fundraising for AEF *Moringa* as they don't have experience in that area. "Of course it would be nice to receive money to support our own projects," she says. "But I think it's just important for people to give to causes in all parts of the world where people have fewer opportunities than we do."

Partnering with KBFUS

The Costas were impressed by the focus KBFUS places on Africa. Patricia says that KBFUS staff was helpful and insightful about their goals.

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"When we first approached them, they suggested a number of projects for us to support in the area of women and education. We wanted a personal experience so we seized the opportunity to go to Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. We also support a project in Kenya and we may expand to other countries. We'll see how things evolve."

Find more information about KBFUS at www.kbfus.org and the African Education Fund *Moringa* at <http://aef-moringa.org>.

AEF *Moringa* currently supports five projects in Africa:

The Giraffe Project, Nairobi, Kenya: The Giraffe Project offers educational opportunities for children and young people from extremely deprived areas of Nairobi. It works closely with three schools in and around the slums, and provides support for teenagers to finish their studies in boarding schools outside. All the schools are managed and run by local residents.

Foyer Notre-Dame, Adzopé, Ivory Coast: The Servantes de Marie, a French religious order founded in 1852 to shelter homeless girls and young prostitutes, has worked in Ivory Coast since 1964. Its various activities include the Foyer Notre-Dame, a boarding school for girls in the provincial town of Adzopé.

Diocese of Kaya, Burkina Faso: A very high proportion of girls drop out of school very early in Burkina Faso, which is a serious threat to the country's development. The project's goal is to increase retention of female students by equipping dressmaking training centers for impoverished girls and women. After training, it helps them set up businesses so they can become financially independent.

Community of Sant'Egidio, Project BRAVO, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso: The Community of Sant'Egidio launched 'Birth Registration for All Versus Oblivion (BRAVO)' to address the growing issue of unregistered children, which is fueling conflicts and leading to instability. Sant'Egidio works with governments to open registration centers in health facilities and build the capacity of civil registration systems.

Gruppo Abele, Espace Mère-Enfant, Côte d'Ivoire: Gruppo Abele, an Italian NGO, supports the 'Espace Mère-Enfant', a safe space for homeless women in Abidjan, especially those with young children. It offers them immediate shelter and helps them find more permanent housing. It also operates a farm outside the capital for boys who are at risk of going to prison but are too young to be sent. Gruppo Abele teaches husbandry, farming and woodworking to these youths and helps them obtain work certificates when they leave.

Donor-advised funds at KBFUS - A flexible tool to make recurring donations overseas

A donor-advised fund at KBFUS is a flexible tool for individuals, families or corporate donors who wish to support European or African nonprofit organizations on a regular basis.

You can make contributions to your fund whenever it suits you, claim an immediate tax deduction for these contributions, and recommend grants to your favorite nonprofits at a later date. If you don't have a favorite organization in mind, we can help you identify premier nonprofit initiatives in the country, region or field of your interest.

Because KBFUS is a Section 501(c)(3) public charity, donors may claim the maximum tax benefits allowed by U.S. tax law for their contributions.

The King Baudouin Foundation United States (KBFUS) is the leading resource for philanthropic giving to Europe and Africa - a trusted advisor for American donors seeking to support their favorite causes and non-profits overseas.

Please contact us to learn more about our [donor-advised funds](#), [legacy funds](#), and [KBFUS ART](#).



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