OVERVIEW ON HOSTING ORGANIZATION

- Kenya Voluntary Development Association (KVDA) is an indigenous, non-political and membership organization which is non-sectarian and non-profit making started in 1962 as a work camp organization registered under the Societies’ Act. In 1993, KVDA was registered as a Non-Governmental organization by the establishment of the NGOs Coordination Act.
- KVDA has since inception hosted over 50,000 international volunteers to its community service development projects that have left indelible mark to efforts to enhance sustainable development.

PROJECT BACKGROUND
This project is a joint effort involving Kenya Voluntary Development Association, Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS), UNESCO Paris, Shimba Hills Forest Guide and Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests.

KVDA is among the projects approved by CCIVS under the umbrella of UNESCO World Heritage program and successfully implemented the July 2014 World Heritage Volunteers program that hosted 15 international volunteers from Kenya, Russia and Japan.

MIJKENDA ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
Agriculture is the main economic activity of the Mijikenda people. Their most important cash crop is the coconut palms, whose products include oil extracts and palm wine. Its fronds are also used for roofing and as material for making baskets, mats, brooms and other weaved products. Other important cash crops include cashew nuts, oranges and mangos. Where favorable weather conditions allow, some Mijikenda people also grow annual crops such as maize, sorghum, millet, and beans.

Fishing is another important economic activity for the Mijikenda people. Mijikenda’s actively fish in the neighboring Indian Ocean, where their "daily catch" forms part of the seafood supplied to Kenya's coastal hotels and residents.

MIJKENDA FOOD
The Mijikenda, and more particularly the Digo, are considered some of the best cooks among the Kenyan tribes. Wali, a popular Kenyan food, is also a staple of the Mijikenda
tribe. Wali is rice prepared with coconut milk, giving it a sweet taste. Fish and other seafood are also common in Mijikenda cuisine.

**COMMUNITY:**
The Mijikenda community is composed of 9 different tribes who live along the coast of Kenya. They are closely related but distinct people—the Kauma, Chonyi, Jibana, Giriama, Kamabe, Ribe, Rabai, Duruma and Digo. They share a common linguistic and cultural heritage. Traditionally, each group lives in its own hilltop village (kaya) on the ridge along the Kenya coast, between the towns of Kilili and Vanga.

In the past, the Mijikenda tribe was also referred to as the Nyika tribe, a near-derogatory term implying bush people. "Mijikenda" literally means **nine homes or nine homesteads (in Swahili)**, referring to the common ancestry of the Mijikenda people. The nine Mijikenda sub-tribes are believed to be nine different homes of the same tribe. Each sub-tribe speaks its own dialect of the **Mijikenda language**.

**Mijikenda Origin and History**
Mijikenda oral history traces the origin of the tribe to the southern regions of Somalia. It is believed that the Mijikenda people escaped constant attacks from the Oromo and other Cushitic tribes, and settled in the coastal ridges that were easier to defend.

Historically, the Mijikenda have had close interactions with the Persian, Arab, and Portuguese traders who frequented their homelands. This interaction and subsequent **intermarriage with the Arabs gave birth to the Swahili culture and language**. As a result, the Swahili language - Kiswahili - bears a close lexical similarity with all dialects of the Mijikenda people.

The Mijikenda culture revolves around **clans** and **age-sets**. A Mijikenda clan consists of several family groups with a common patriarchal ancestor. Traditionally, each clan lived in one fortified village built in a cleared area of the forested ridges. A person's age-set determined their role and social standing within the clan and elaborate rituals were often held for members graduating from one age-set to another.

Each Mijikenda clan had their own sacred place known as kaya, a shrine for prayer, sacrifices and other religious rituals. These Kayas were located deep in the forests and it was considered taboo to cut the trees and vegetation around them. The Kaya elders, often members of the oldest age-set, were deemed to possess supernatural powers including the ability to make rain. Like other Kenyan tribes today, Mijikenda people have assimilated to modern cultural practices, resulting in the disappearance of many of their traditional customs. Most **Mijikenda people are now either Christians or Muslims**; however, some still practice their traditional culture or a mixture of Christianity or Islam with their traditional religion. Islam is more widespread among the Digo than in the other Mijikenda sub-tribes.

**Volunteers will have the opportunity for excursions:**
• **The Nature Trail:** A walk through the Nature Trail will leave you from sable “bandas” and the clear dropping waters of the Shed-Rick Falls leaves everyone with a satisfied and tranquil feeling of being at peace with nature.

• **National Heritage:** Kenya is a home of the 8 wonders of the world synonymous with the unique phenomenon that happens once a year with the migration of the wild beast from Serengeti National Park in Tanzania through the Mara River in to Maasai Mara from July to September. Likewise, Shimba Hills National Reserve offers variety of wild animals that include Giraffes, Impala, Warthog, Baboons, Sykes monkeys, Sable Antelope, Elephants e.t.c.

• **Drive to the Mombasa South Coast** for Beach relaxation. Visit Digo community origins of the Mijikenda: campfire with the kaya elders, Traditional dances with women, Traditional food mostly made of coconut milk.

• **Visit Mombasa Old Town,** with Historical buildings dating from the 14th century, beautifully carved doors. Also, visit Fort Jesus, built and used by the Portuguese as a fortress in 1593.

• **A visit** to the Indian Ocean:

**Volunteer tasks**

• To actively participate in conservation of the Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forest and sensitize the local community on its significance.

• Promote volunteering and work ethnic among the local peace as a strategy to combat the high unemployment levels in the area.

• Environmental conservation in the wake of depletion of forest cover courtesy of population pressure, commerce and industry.

• Preservation of national heritage, cultural diversity, bio-diversity and sensitivity to nature.

• Tree planting

• Submit Project Report to KVDA

**EXPECTED RESULTS ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE SACRED MIJKENDA KAYA FOREST**

• Environmental best practices.

• Environmental clubs strengthened in at least 5 primary schools in the area with the potential to become role models in the region.

• Raise the profile of the Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forest and initiate regular exchange of volunteers motivated to render support to ecological projects.

• Encourage local communities to inculcate volunteering in their day-to-day activities; as an avenue for socio-economic emancipation of the majority youths who are out of school and cannot be accommodated in the mainstream of conventional economy and this will stifle the culture of dependence and put the people on the pedestal of knowledge on the exploitation of local resources to spur socio-economic development.

**PROJECT START DATES**
Volunteers are accepted to join this project at any time of the year and should arrive in Kenya on 20th day of the month. The duration of placement is flexible depending on the availability of the volunteer.

2-day orientation seminar will be done on the 21st and 22nd of every month.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION
- The project participation fees is **Euro 200 per month paid upfront on arrival** to the cover costs stipulated the entire duration of the project. Monthly payment of participation fees is not allowed for conventional purposes.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE PARTICIPATION FEE?
- Return transfers from the airport
- Full board at the project (Accommodation and meals provided at the project)
- Orientation, evaluation and monitoring
- Volunteer mentorship

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PARTICIPATION FEE?
- Travel to and from the project. The volunteer will be required to pay for the bus tickets
- Refreshments outside the project
- Air ticket and excursion
- Visa and Insurance
- Local travel
- Personal effects

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS
- Home stay and the volunteer is entitled to private room but will share other amenities and meals with the host family. It is convenient for the volunteer to carry sleeping bag, mat and personal effects. KVDA has a memorandum of understanding with the host project regarding the project costs with appropriate procedures, checks and balances.

Terminal
- Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi is the port of arrival and KVDA will designate a driver for the airport pick up. We strongly advice volunteers against getting taxis on their own without reference to KVDA due to the obvious risks and in case of any challenges on arrival kindly contact KVDA via mobile telephone 0721650357

KVDA RESIDENCE
- Volunteers will be driven to the KVDA Residence situated in Karen suburb in Nairobi approximately 25 Kilometers away from the airport and that is where the volunteers will be accommodated ahead of their placement to the project. The residence is situated in the serene environment with amble space for recreation and spectacular setting as the inauguration of volunteering to make a difference in the world.

Leisure time
Kenya is replete with a lot of interesting and natural spectacular sites of interest that would capture the imagination of volunteers. From the tour to the renowned Maasai Mara Game Reserve to visits to local community beholding sights, the volunteers have the previledge to make choices that would fundamentally make the difference. The project also offers a perfect opportunity for people who enjoy being close to nature and are interested in the spectacular setting that traditional way of living in the heartland of the African culture would enrich your cultural heritage

**Laundry and water:**

- Water is available at the hosting house from springs and it is important to preserve water at all times due to its scarcity and cooperation with the hosts will be highly appreciated
- There are no washing machines in the institution and the volunteer will be guided on how to wash clothes

**Medical:**

- Volunteers are expected to have their own medical insurance and other personal expenses and it is important to carry your own medical and travel insurances.

**Mentoring:**

- **Mentor for the volunteer from the hosting organisation:** KVDA will designate its staff to play the role of mentoring and this is the vital link between the volunteer and the organization. The Mentor has the responsibility to enable the volunteer to efficiently execute their tasks with diligence.
- **Function of mentor:** advise, educate, be a role model to the volunteers; providing problem solving, collaborative support, positive and non-evaluative feedback and emotional support for volunteers; to provide comfort, exposure, visibility and challenging assignments which directly support the volunteer’s personal and professional development; to provide counselling and friendship to support the volunteer’s self-image and competence and thus to listen, guide, advice, teach and offer professional support to the volunteers
- **The mentor** will be available for the volunteer as a constant supporting person. However, he/she should not be directly involved in the daily work of the volunteer.
- **Mentor’s Experience with international volunteers:** More than 3 years’ experience with international volunteers

**Project participants:** Maximum 10 volunteers from different nationalities recruited through KVDA partner organizations

**What to carry:** This is outlined in the detailed info sheet and includes, sleeping bag and mat, toiletries, torch, flashlight, sandals, mosquito net, national flag from your country, among others

**Donation and Gifts:** These are usually symbolic gestures to enhance the solidarity of volunteers and the hosting community. Kindly contact KVDA for details in
case you are willing to support a worthy cause in the community either by offering a
donation or long-term intervention on the project.

**APPLICATIONS:** Should be done at least one month in advance through KVDA partner organization in respective countries. KVDA does not accept direct applications by volunteers