



ORGANIZATION FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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# WELCOME TO KENYA HANDBOOK



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*Connecting lives, sharing cultures*

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**Dear AFS Participant,**

OFIE would like to extend a warm welcome! As an AFS Participant you will have time to learn about Kenya and its people, and you will see there is a lot to learn for those who are interested in a new way of life.

This booklet includes practical information about Kenya, safety advice along with ideas about what to bring, a list of your activities during the year, plus an introduction to OFIE and the rules you must follow as an AFS Participant in Kenya. Read all this carefully! Bring this handbook with you to Kenya; it will be useful if you have doubts about anything.

We hope you will enjoy the reading and look forward to meeting you when you come.

We welcome you into the worldwide AFS family and express our hope that you may have a rewarding and challenging AFS experience.

Warm regards,

**AFS KENYA Staff and Management**

## KENYA

### People and Population in Kenya

There are many groups of people who live in Kenya today. These people are grouped according to the language they speak. Africans are the majority in Kenya. They are divided into three main languages namely; Bantu speakers, Nilotic speakers and Cushitic speakers. Other groups found in Kenya are; Asians, Arabs, Europeans and Americans.

According to the population census taken in 2009, the population of Kenya is about 41,000,000. The population of Kenya is made up of Africans, Asians, Europeans, Americans and Arabs. Africans make up the largest group. Kenya's population is not evenly spread out. Some areas have large numbers of people while other areas have very few. Areas with large concentrations of people are the Central Highlands, Lake Victoria basin

and a few areas along the coast. Large areas of the Nyika plateau and the Rift Valley are sparsely populated. People tend to settle in areas that receive enough rainfall to allow them to grow crops and keep livestock. In areas of large concentration of people, they receive rainfall above 750mm per year.



### National Symbols:

Each country has things that are unique and can be used to differentiate it from other countries. In Kenya

we have;

1. **National Flag:** Kenya's National flag has four colours;
  - Black which represents the colour of the black people of Kenya
  - Red which represents the blood that was shed by the freedom fighters as they fought for independence
  - Green which represents the green colour of the countryside
  - White which represents peace.
2. **National Anthem:** This song expresses the hopes and wishes of Kenyans.
3. **Loyalty Pledge:** This verse expresses one's loyalty and faithfulness to the country.

4. **National Currency:** The Kenyan shillings are unique because we can only use it for buying and selling goods in our country.

5. **National Holidays:** This is when we come together to celebrate our country's achievements and remember special events. Our National Holidays are:

- May 1<sup>st</sup> – Labour Day                      Workers celebrate their contributions to the economy
- June 1<sup>st</sup> – Madaraka Day                      Kenya attained self governance
- October 20<sup>th</sup> – Mashujaa Day                      Here we celebrate Kenyan political heroes who fought for independence
- December 12<sup>th</sup> – Jamhuri Day                      Kenya attained full Independence

6. **The Coat of Arms:** This is the badge for national identity. It has a shield, two lions, two spears, a cockerel holding an axe, a mountain, agricultural crops and the motto Harambee.

### **Kenyans in General**

People are socially oriented in a way that you can make friends in five minutes. Kenyans when they meet they hug, shake hands close to each other. It's not easy to get privacy since people are always getting together talking and chatting. When you stay away from others you will be seen as rude. Time or planning is not in Kenyan mind, what is there at the present time is what people think of. Disagreement with others is seen as sign of disrespect especially with elders. People don't shout or speak with high tone. Often clarification of attitudes may be necessary, and here, again, the advice of people you have come to know and trust is very valuable.

Knowledge about the people you socialize with is important, and this is best acquired through increasing knowledge of the culture. In societies where some young people are sexually active, there are also many who are not; you should not compromise your own personal values and beliefs regarding sexual behavior. Remember that it is forbidden to use illegal drugs and substances. Violation of this rule is reason for early return to your home country. Similarly, excessive abuse of alcohol is also reason for early return to your home country.

## **Social Interaction among Kenyan Communities**

Members of a community occasionally meet and interact by celebrating or doing some work together. These interactions are in form of festivals, ceremonies, games and sports. These occasions are important. They bring people with common interests together and create an opportunity for people to enjoy themselves as they sing, dance, eat and drink together. Some of these ceremonies and festivals are: Religious ceremonies, birth and naming of a baby, weddings, birthdays, trade, education and games, sports and dance.

## **Safety in your Local Community**

In general Kenya is a safe country. However with the current insecurity situation in some parts of the country participants are advised to always seek the office advice whenever they plan to undertake independent travels. Like any other country, you should be cautious and take necessary precaution when in public places use common sense. The office offers monthly and sometime spontaneous security advice to all participants hosted in Kenya. There may be places in the local community that you should avoid going to; please consult and take advice from your host-family and local contact volunteer (if need be also the office) as they know better about their community and best placed to give advice. Do not hesitate to ask your host family what they recommend to help you feel more secured.

In general you should try to avoid being out late at night unless in company of responsible people. If walking alone late at night or early morning you should try to walk along main streets that have people walking in them or take a taxi. Avoid going to places where people use drugs.

Public transportation in Kenya is safe to use. You just have to make sure that you know the name of the places you are going. In Kenyan traffic keeps to the left, remember this when you cross the street or ride a bicycle.

## **Religion**

There are three major religious groups in Kenya. These are indigenous ethnic religious traditions, extended missionary religions and foreign ethnic religions.

Indigenous ethnic religious traditions are as diverse as the ethnic communities in Kenya.

These ethnic communities have been clustered into linguistic groups but have not made people's religious experiences and languages homogeneous. People who have lived and

interacted in a given area for a long time tend to have a lot in common in terms of religious beliefs and practices.

Among the extended missionary religions are Islam and Christianity. Islam reached Kenya many years before Christianity. It came to Kenya through Arabia, its homeland. Arabs have had a lot of contact with the East Coast of Africa through trade in such items as gold, skins, spices and slaves. Through these contacts some Arabs came to settle in the Coastal region of Kenya.

The dominant missionary religion in Kenya is Christianity. Christianity first came to the coastal region of Kenya through the Portuguese traders and employers. The common sects are; Roman Catholics, Protestant, Orthodox, Methodist, Anglican.

The last group of religious traditions in Kenya is the foreign ethnic traditions. This group includes Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Judaism. These are religious traditions from particular ethnicities and are not propagated to other peoples, particularly to Africans.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Each one of you will have a different experience in Kenya. Some of you will live in or near cities, but most of you will live in small towns or in the villages. For many of you this will be a new experience that you can learn from, because you will meet new activities from the assigned organization, ideas, challenges, and new ways of day-to-day life.

The first step towards learning about a country and its people is to let go of the “tourist” attitude, which means that you only move on the surface of a culture. A tourist type is the taking and watching type. A non-tourist type does not think of her/him as the center of attention. The “non- tourist” is the giving and receiving type and is therefore able to know the culture and the traditions of the country on a deeper level. All this might sound obvious but it is not that simple. By participating you may find out that you possess a creativity you did not know you had, or that you are more mature than you thought. If you come to Kenya with an open mind and participate while you are here, your AFS year could very well be the best year of your life!

## Arrival Orientation

Upon your arrival you will take part in an orientation which lasts for about 1 -5 days and takes place before you go to your host family. The AFS Kenya volunteers will take the participants through expectations of the Program as the starting point for their teaching about Kenya and Kenyan culture. The objective of the camp is to prepare you for meeting your host family, your projects and community at large. Further, we recommend learning some basic Swahili language for ease of communication along the street and at host family. Language materials are provided for self-tuition and for you to practice your Swahili with



your host family.

The camp is often highly intensive, and requires YOUR FULL COOPERATION AND ENERGY. The camp will hopefully be an unforgettable experience. Depending on the programme you are in, some camps will give you an opportunity to make friends from all over the world and

there will definitely be lots of games and energizers. In other words, IT WILL BE GREAT FUN!

After the Arrival Orientation, you will meet your host family. They will either pick you up or you have to take a bus to where your host family lives. Local volunteers will help with this; your host family will then pick you up at a chosen station.

## Mid - Stay

During this time the participants organizes a camp away from the area of work to give you



the opportunity to see a different part of Kenya. All participants, mentors plus the participants meet and do different activities.

The mid-stay allows the participants to share information on the projects,

experiences and challenges they have faced, some test and more practice on the language. The mid-stay will last for approximately 5 days.

### **End of Stay**

Towards the end of your programme you will leave your host family and participate in a Farewell Camp before your departure. Here you will be prepared for your return to your home country and your own family and filling some forms. Furthermore, you will hear about the challenges you should be prepared to face as you leave your new country to return to your old one.



### **Important Note about Camp**

**Participation in all the camps and orientations is mandatory for the YP participants. However for short stay program of less than six months do not have the Midstay Camp. While Arrival and End stay camp may just be for some hours or a day activity!**

### **FAMILY LIFE**

Your Kenyan family will be like all other families. They will have times of joy, times of conflict and times of just being together. Be alert to the way your family does things, and try to learn the way they conduct their lives.

Use your eyes and ears to observe how things are done in your host family. Accept that you will have to fit in with a life style of a family different from your own. It may be hard at first, but it is an essential part of your programme. Be open and honest in relation to your family. Ask the family to be honest with you. Your family may be hesitant to do so at first, because they are afraid of hurting



your feelings or embarrassing you, but it is important that you cross that barrier and talk straight and honestly together.

### **Take responsibility**

- ❖ If there is something you do not understand, talk to your host family straight away. Let them know how you feel if something is bothering you. Try to be as open as you can and involve your host family; they will be more than happy to help you solve the issue.
- ❖ Usually Kenyan family are flexible they do not make plans, anything can be decided at anytime. They do not have spare time activities most of the time its either they are at work or at home. You will need to learn to take initiative and plan your own spare time activities. This will help avoid misunderstandings and problems in the host family...
- ❖ Your host family wants to know what you are doing and where you are. Always tell your host family of your plans in advance and obtain their permission before going anywhere. Don't say "yes" to a friend's invitation without confirming it first with your host family. This will make them feel you are a part of their life and they a part of yours.
- ❖ Whenever you make plans it would be a good idea to inform your family what you intend to do if your plan falls through. This means you have to think about alternative plans before you leave the house.
- ❖ Try to focus on your new life in Kenya, rather than holding on to your life at home. You could ask your natural parents at home for advice, but their advice may be cultural inappropriate. Instead you should rely on yourself as well as your host family, friends and local AFS-participants to help you adjust to your new life.

Calling home once a month is recommended. Keep phone calls to a minimum - it is expensive. Be aware of the costs of calling from your **mobile phone** or receiving calls on it from abroad. Most Kenyans teenage do have mobile phone; ask for advice from your family so that you can have one of your own. They are very cheap.

## House Chores

In Kenya the house chores are traditionally done by women though also sometimes men try to help in the house but it's not very common. Some common chores you may have to do are: cleaning the house, washing and drying the dishes, washing your own clothes and helping in preparing food for the three meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner).

Doing the house chores together is also a good way to spend time with and get to know your host family. In general you are expected to make your own bed each morning and see to it that your room is tidy. If you are unsure about how to do any household tasks, ask your host family.

- ❖ Most Kenyans use their hands when doing house work they don't use machines so when you want to wash your clothes ask your host family to show you how.
- ❖ Some host family use gas for cooking but most of the families use charcoals gas is very expensive so be careful on how to use it.
- ❖ Kenyans usually shower twice or thrice a day especially for those who live in hot areas. There is shortage of water in most of the areas, do not misuse it. Kenyan bathrooms some have showers but cannot use because of the little water they get so instead they use basin and their hands.

## Family rules and regulations

These rules will differ from family to family. Your family will have rules and regulations to help everything run smoothly. Some rules, like what time you should be home at night, chores you must do around the house, or rules about your social activities are there to help you integrate better in the host family.

Some of these rules and regulations may seem silly or unreasonable to you. Remember that they have worked well for your host family for a long time before you arrived. You are probably not going to be able to change things. However, if you do not understand a rule or regulation, try talking calmly to your host parents about it. They will probably be happy to explain their reasons.

### Things you need to keep in mind:

- Spending time with your host family is more important than spending time on the Internet
- Never have long conversations on the phone.
- Tell your host family where you are going, and when you will be back before you leave the house. Ask for permission if necessary.
- Participate in the chores of the house.
- Remember to say good morning in the morning when meeting your host family and good night before going to bed.
- Do not stay alone in your room for very long period instead of being in the main room with the rest of the family members.
- Ask your host parents before taking food or drinks out of the fridge.
- Ask questions if there is something about the Kenyan culture you do not understand and remember not to criticize Kenya too much; it may be considered rude.

We know from experience that families may get upset about these things. **If you are not sure whether something annoys the family, talk to them about it!**

### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

#### Meals & Food

The meals are usually eaten during the following intervals:

Breakfast: 7:00 am - 10:00 am

Lunch: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Dinner: 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

The evening meal is usually the main meal of the day and is often a time when the whole family is together.

#### Typical meals

Breakfast: Breads (chapatti, mahandazi, mitai, kaimati & white bread), fried potatoes, egg

Lunch: Rice, Ugali, meat, fish, vegetables,

Dinner: Cassava, potatoes, rice, ugali vegetables, meat, fish,

Every time is family time, Kenyan families often sit down together in every meal for those working families they sit down for dinner in the evening; in every region people have their own style of setting when eating, some areas the whole family sit together some have 3 sets, kids, women and men are kept separately. Mostly they use their right hand when eating.

### **Seasons and Climates**

In Kenya we have three seasons and the climate varies a lot.

#### **Masika (spring)**

Spring begins in end of March – May. This season we have heavy rains. It can rain the whole day.

#### **Kipupwe (winter)**

Winter begins in June – early August. During this time the temperature drops to 20 degrees, is often characterized by windy and rainy weather

#### **Kiangazi (summer)**

The weather starts to be hot and humid in September to February, with average temperature of 32 degrees.

### **Clothing**

Clothing should be no problem, as Kenyan young people dress very casually. Boys normally wear jeans with T-shirts, light material trousers and light shirts. Girls wear long skirts to the knee, blouse at least with sleeves, long trousers. It is good for the girls to put on decent clothes this will differentiate them from the tourist around town; people will respect and will prevent the boys from the streets bothering them.

Women in Kenya during occasions like weddings, parties they wear outfits with different fashions so carry something for some special occasions which may occur during your stay.

*Note that some areas like in the Coastal regions in Kenya are very hot (30 degrees Celsius) and some areas can be very cold to 16 degrees Celsius. Before you leave your*

*country make sure you know exactly where you will be for that year so that you can prepare yourself on what clothes to carry.*

### **Gift**

Gifts are common in Kenya. Anybody moving from one area to another carries presents for those people she/he is going to meet. We have this saying **“Zawadi ni kitu chochote”** that means present can be anything.

It is very difficult to give any advice about presents, but try to bring personal gifts for your host family. For instance, you could bring something made by yourself or something that is typical of your country. Besides, a number of smaller presents from your home country may come in handy for birthdays, when you visit the homes of your Kenyan friends and for occasions throughout the year. Bring only presents that weigh little.

***Enjoy your stay in Kenya!***