



CENTRE FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA (CHDA) HOSTS FIRST STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

The Centre for Heritage Development in Africa based in Old Town Mombasa, Kenya held its first stakeholders meeting on 11 June 2009. The Chairperson of the Board of CHDA in his opening address said that as CHDA had been based in Mombasa for the past 9 years, it was appropriate to introduce the new team under the leadership of Ms Deirdre Prins-Solani and the new vision for CHDA to the local community, which has served as hosts. Well attended by elders, women, men, youth and representatives from various media and businesses, the meeting was also aimed at listening to community issues and concerns related to heritage and the role which CHDA could play in addressing these. He believed that it was the beginning of an on-going discussion in which the mutually beneficial relationship which already exists can be deepened and enhanced.

The Director of CHDA, Ms Deirdre Prins-Solani, outlined some of the achievements of CHDA over the past nine years and explained that it was now necessary to grow and expand the work of CHDA to include active public programming and an active research

and publications program. She emphasized that it was important to begin sharing these ideas and plans in one's own backyard.

One of the new, exciting ventures which CHDA has embarked upon is to write and co-produce with Channel Africa a radio program series titled; "Our Heritage" aimed at building public awareness and generating discussion around issues of heritage and development. Interns, Precious Dama and Filex Mwake based at the Centre have begun developing the content for the Youth and Heritage component of the soon to be launched new CHDA website which includes researching the perceptions youth have of heritage and its place in their lives. This process will inform the interventions which CHDA would make with youth. A concern raised by a young Old Towner and intern at CHDA, Fuad Shirazy, is that for youth in the Old Town, drugs have overtaken their lives and there is no concern or interest in preserving or conserving their heritage. He expressed a sentiment echoed in the meeting by elders, that there is a need for greater community education on the need for heritage conservation. A role was identified by elders at the meeting for CHDA in educating and training youth in this area.

As a follow up to this meeting, CHDA shall host a series of informal "tea" meetings between women participants of the Africa 2009 11th Regional Course on Immovable Heritage and women leaders within Old Town and a similar exercise between men. This in an effort to address issues and fears raised by the community, of cultural sensitivity and respect and to use these gatherings as an opportunity for participants from the 19 countries to share their knowledge and experience with community members of Old Town.