

PICHA MTAANI

NEWSLETTER

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Launch of 'Heal the Nation' Film

Public event marks beginning of nationwide distribution of video

[23 OCTOBER 2011, NAIROBI, KENYA]

AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND ATTENTIVE crowd of thousands of Kenyans participated in the official launch of the 'Heal the Nation' documentary on Sunday, October 23, outside at City Hall Wall, Nairobi.

The independent film chronicles Picha Mtaani, a street photography exhibition of the 2007-2008 post-election violence that reached over 700,000 Kenyans over the past three years. Through eyewitness accounts and personal stories, victims and perpetrators meet together as they narrate their stories on Kenya's worst political and tribal conflict that left over 1,500 dead and nearly 500,000 people internally displaced.

At the public event, the crowd joined prominent speakers and diverse performers in reflecting upon the post-election violence and calling for nationwide healing, unity, and peace. The film questions, what will happen if we don't reconcile before 2012 elections?

"Go out there and preach peace," declared Laban Otuma, a victim of the post-election violence and the event's special guest from Nakuru.

Businessman Aly-Khan Satchu praised Heal the Nation and highlighted everyone's role in creating a better political and economic system: "We are not passengers; we are the stakeholders."

Swiss Ambassador Jacques Pitteloud echoed their call for personal responsibility: "Next time someone gives you money and a panga (machete), take the money; it's probably yours. Give him back the panga. Ask him to go fight."

Kenya's MPs will have an opportunity to view the film at a special screening to mark International Human Rights Day on December 10.



As 1000 people watch the Heal the Nation film, candles commemorate post-election violence victims, flickering in front of the Picha Mtaani (street photo) exhibition. Photo: Brian Inganga

The public film screening followed a day-long series of activities. Thousands of passersby viewed the original traveling photography exhibition and signed pledges committing themselves to peace around the 2012 elections. At dusk, a candlelight vigil marked the 1,133 victims killed in the post-election violence. Creative artist performances featured young spoken word poets, actors, and musicians, including award-winning hip-hop artist Juliani.

To bring the story to millions more, film creator Mtaani Initiative plans for broad nationwide film distribution. At the event, the public took home 1000 copies on DVD, pledging to share, copy, and distribute the film to others. Another 6000 copies are currently in production.

Kenya's Members of Parliament will have an opportunity to view the film at a special screening to mark International Human Rights Day on December 10, in response to a public call from film viewers to have their elected representatives to screen the film.

The Heal the Nation film is one initiative of the organization, which implements innovative and independently volunteer-organized projects to involve ordinary citizens and visual artists in a process of healing, reconciliation, and civic engagement.

Launch in Numbers

On the ground on October 23:

- **1000** full event participants
- **5000** exhibition viewers
- **1096** peace pledges signed
- **1000** film DVDs distributed
- **6000** more DVDs printed
- **220** MPs invited for next screening

Online:

- **3000** viewers online in first 3 days
- **3000+** tweets
- **500,000** Twitter audience
- **1.8** million impressions in first 3 days
- **3000+** Facebook fans

>>For an online video of the film, photographs from the event, and more information, please visit www.pichamtaani.org.



Dandora residents watch the 'Heal the Nation' documentary at Mau Mau Camp, where hip-hop was born in Kenya. It was the first of many forums, setting the pace for youth engagement in peace and reconciliation in slums across the country.

Interactive Youth Meeting Held in Dandora Slum

Emmanuel Jal, Juliani and Boniface Mwangi Lead Youth Dialogue in Dandora, Nairobi

In a collective effort to engage and empower youth across Kenya, Emmanuel Jal, world renowned artist, actor, author and activist, Juliani, Kenya's most inspiring lyricist, and award-winning photo-activist Boniface Mwangi, [held] a special youth meeting in the country's hip-hop capital of Dandora, on Sunday, 4 September 2011.

Dedicated to positive social change, Emmanuel Jal's 'We Want Peace' campaign, Juliani's 'Kama Si Sisi' initiative and Boniface Mwangi's 'Picha Mtaani' organisation [came] together on this momentous move of inspiration to engage, discuss and enlighten on the holistic elements of peace, reconciliation and development in Kenya.

Jal said, "Why I'm I passionate about peace in Kenya is because I know what war can do to a country. War doesn't benefit the country it is fought in, it builds economies of other countries. We want to prevent this by launching a text line to pledge support and affirming our commitment to Kenya.

"I am passionate about peace in Kenya because I know what war can do to a country."

Emmanuel Jal, Musician

We are targeting 1 million people in calling for peace, it will also act as a petition to the leaders of Kenya saying we pledge to keep peace."

Boniface remarked, "Those leaders [who incite the youth to chaos] have money in offshore accounts and they have passports ready to leave the country, if and when it burns. That is why we need to unite as the youth and call for peace."

Juliani, whose musical roots are in Dandora, explained why the launch was at the Mau Mau camp that birthed the famous UkooFlani Mau Mau rap group.

"We want to send a message to everyone to be better than they are now by affirming as the Kenyan youth that Kenya ni yetu, we are not going anywhere."

Boniface Mwangi's 'Heal the Nation', a 30-minute moving documentary focused on the tragedy that befell Kenyans after the 2007 December elections [was] screened and We Want Peace's 'commitment to peace' pledge, via an official SMS platform and number, was launched by Emmanuel Jal and Juliani.

The event marks the first in what will be a series of youth dialogues around these issues.

Excerpts courtesy of article published in The Star

Feedback

Testimonials in Social Media from October 23 Film Launch

Emmie Kio: It's really one of a kind! Good work that teaches us in retrospection.

Midah Mutheu: Just want to say how proud I am of the Picha Mtaani Initiative. You guys are doing an amazing job. Very proud of Boniface Mwangi. He makes me want to be a better person and to impact my country more.

Jenny Odhi: Every Kenyan has a duty to make sure we do not repeat this... please help in spreading the word.

George Rambo: Peace is vital! Have seen the photos and it's sad what we went through. Never again.

Margaretta Gacheru: Your photography makes me weep, but I pray it rouses consciousness and teaches people the value of peace and reconciliation. I like the focus of this show to heal the nation rather than reminding us how Kenya was burning. We must never ever repeat that cruelty Kenyan to Kenyan. Kenyans deserve far better, and none of them should be manipulated by egotistical, power-hungry politicians.

Joseph Thiong'o: We need to heal this fractured nation as a youth; we are what we make of ourselves.

Upcoming Events for the 'Heal the Nation' Film

Official Screening for Members of Parliament

9 December 2011, in recognition of Human Rights Day

Screenings in Nairobi Slums

January 2011, Community screenings and SMS engagement campaign.

Picha Mtaani in 2 years

PICHA MTAANI IN TWO YEARS

- 10 cities and towns
- 20 additional mini exhibitions
- 700,000 participants nationwide
- 35,000 reconciliation surveys
- 61,000 peace pledges + contacts
- 10 African countries using model
- Thousands counseled
- 100 committed volunteers
- A network of 97 youth groups
- National appeal

Increasing Impact

Collaborative Hub for Social Change to Open in Nairobi

Innovative space will foster initiatives by artists, creatives, and local youth

This month, the Mtaani Initiative opens the doors to a unique social enterprise: a collaborative space for creatives and youth to achieve work of social impact. The new hub will house and catalyze community-driven creative projects, expanding Picha Mtaani's impact and bringing its efforts to scale.

The hub – named PAWA 254 as a symbol of strength and unity – will facilitate the use of visual and graphic arts, independent and citizen journalism, documentary film and photography, and digital and social media as means of civic expression and social action. To do so, the community facility and studio will bring together young entrepreneurs, photographers, creative designers, and aspiring youth.

PAWA 254 is expected to foster creative initiative similar to Picha Mtaani's original popular street exhibitions and to develop the grassroots leaders to spearhead them. In doing so, this new project will exponentially increase the reach and impact of the street photography exhibitions and their corollary projects, such as the Heal the Nation film. In this new initiative, the Mtaani Initiative is building upon its three years of experience in art-based peacebuilding and grassroots

reconciliation efforts.

The collaborative space will be the first of its kind in Africa.

PAWA 254's like-minded and active professional community will meet and work daily in its flexible co-working space. The space will also serve as an open resource for a range of collaborative youth meetings and efforts, an exhibition center for photography and other artistic endeavors, and a vector for angel investors and others seeking to support social change in Kenya.

Regular programs and trainings will foster skill-sharing and empower a new generation of young professionals and disadvantaged youth to effect social change through tangible, innovative projects. Programmatic

"PAWA 254 is the first collaborative space in Africa bringing together artists, journalists, and community organizers, innovating to achieve social change."

focus will be on photography and visual arts, documentary and mixed media, traditional and citizen journalism, and community organizing.

Looking forward, PAWA 254 intends to reach beyond its internal community and has tangible plans to engage over 10,000 youths through trainings and outreach programs over the next year.

For motivated youth, participation is expected to lead to professional employment and sources of income generation. PAWA 254 thus seeks to improve the socioeconomic situation of youth from underprivileged backgrounds by providing the skills and resources that will enable them to pursue careers and livelihoods, particularly in journalism, media, and arts. A primary part of the project's mission will be to make the space and its resources accessible to the grassroots.

Through PAWA 254, the Mtaani Initiative hopes to inspire and enable the utilisation of visual arts and creative social projects – by youth and ordinary Kenyans – to bring about transformational social change in Kenya.

Learn more, get involved, and find directions to visit us at www.pawa254.org.



While not yet officially open, Pawa 254 hosts a discussion and sharing of work between Al-Jazeera's Soud Hyder, visiting Congo Activist Ben Kellem and Kuwener Serious Co-founder Rachel Gichinga.



Expanding Our Reach and Impact

As Kenya heads towards elections, the Mtaani Initiative enters a new phase. Building upon the original photography exhibition, the team has ambitious plans to broaden Picha Mtaani's nationwide reach, deepen engagement of supporters, and work with them to expand the range of initiatives.

Nationwide Film Distribution

Copies of 'Heal the Nation' are making its way across Kenya. As a starting point, 6000 additional DVDs are currently being printed for widespread distribution across the country. Supporters are planning community screenings across the country. Picha Mtaani is working with a wide range of partners to deepen public engagement. Immediate plans include training peace advocates at universities, holding film screenings and youth meetings in slums, and online distribution through social media campaigns for the 12 million Kenyans with access to the internet.

Kenya Ni Kwetu (Kenya is Our Home) Taking Ownership and Responsibility for Our Country

Building from the central concept that every citizen must be involved in creating a better and more peaceful country for ourselves and the next generation, the Mtaani Initiative will support and empower individuals and communities – from deep in the grassroots – to become civically engaged and take action, from the local to national level. Picha Mtaani will train eager volunteers and new leaders, initially drawing from its 60,000 peace pledge signers and supporters, in creating a robust and unified social movement: Kenya Ni Kwetu.

Interactive Online and SMS Platforms for Community Engagement

Of a population of 40 million, Kenya has 12 million Internet users, over one million Facebook users, and 26 million mobile phone users, a penetration level of 51%. To build a more cohesive online community and work together toward common goals, Picha Mtaani is working with technology experts to develop forums to amplify grassroots voices, establish alternative media, and resources for community action. They are 26 million Kenyans with mobile phone access, a unique SMS platform will allow nationwide participation, communication, and outreach. These efforts will focus on building a strong and engaged online community – SMS, unique website, social media – that will lead to offline engagement and action.

Fostering Independent Media

From citizen to professional investigative journalism, Picha Mtaani will establish innovative channels for alternative media. In the spirit of Picha Mtaani's original street exhibitions, which brought never-published images directly to ordinary citizens, this initiative will bring relevant, uncensored, and accurate information to communities where traditional Kenyan media has failed. Working collaboratively with independent professional journalists and established media outlets, Picha Mtaani will train and equip a new generation of Kenyan journalists to produce professional-quality alternative media content on issues that matter most. This independent media project will be housed at its new collaborative hub, a social enterprise dubbed Pawa 254, where it joins a wide range of creative projects of social change.



Contact Us and Get Involved

PICHA MTAANI TEAM

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For inquiries of any kind, please contact

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Support our work:

1. Inquire about becoming a partner
2. Spread the word via social media

With the upcoming election in 2012, the need for Picha Mtaani's efforts are as important as ever. And the stakes are high. As South African Judge Johann Kriegler states,

"If Kenyans don't address the need to reform, January 2008 may look like a Christmas Party in 2012."

Visit us at www.pichamtaani.org and follow us:

