

Exhibition

'What if I didn't Vote?' explores politics through fine arts

Art in its many forms has been used to portray what takes place in the society. So was 35-year-old Gadi Ramadhani's, a decorated visual artist whose recent paintings exhibition *What if I didn't Vote?* carried a political theme, specifically, last October's election in Tanzania.

The exhibition in Toyota salute in Dar es Salaam looks at how politicians, clerics, men and women are affected when choosing their next president.

"*What if I didn't Vote?* is all

about polls and what you gain or lose by not voting," says Ramadhani who first cast a ballot at 35 years in October last year.

"In 2015 I was an artist in residency in UK, and in 2010, an artist in residency in Kenya, while in 2005 I was schooling in South Africa so this is the first time for me to be in the country during an election period and the first time I voted," he adds.

No conversation starters

The colour theme was blue and yellow. Blue representing the ink drop on the finger of

the person than voted yellow clearly representing the reigning political party and if that's not enough of a statement blue mixed with yellow makes green, representing the party in power.

At the exhibition was Jesse Gerard an art curator and visual arts programme manager of Nafasi Art Space.

Mr Gerard says: "It takes time for a person to understand visual arts because most of it isn't commercial. It tells stories people don't want to talk about. Stories that are valuable and are from peoples' points of view

as well as their history."

Unfortunately, these kinds of values don't sell and people produce art for sale, rather than as conversation starters.

For two months Ramadhani took residency in the Artists Residency of Kigamboni commonly known as the ARK.

He took his time with the project in order to provide the best narrative of what was going on in the country.

Needless to say, the *What if I didn't Vote?* sold out all its pieces.

■ ISMAIL SABUNI



A painting at the exhibition.
Pic: Ismail Sabuni

What's On

Feature on Kenyan slum project premiers

Daraja film tells climate adaptation summit in The Netherlands the story of Kirika, a local weather hero with candid discussions on challenges of extreme weather changes in Africa's largest slum

James Kahongeh
Special Correspondent

Kenyan feature film, *The story of Daraja and James*, premiered this week at the two-day inaugural Climate Adaptation Summit hosted virtually by The Netherlands.

Created by award-winning Kenyan filmmaker Stephen Okoth, better known as Ondivow (slang for 'on the go'), the film tells the story of James Kirika, a community leader and weather mtaani champion of Daraja Climate Ambition, an urban weather forecasting and early warning system.

It is narrated in a blend of English and Kiswahili, and was co-produced by Resurgence and its Kenyan partner, Kounkuey Design Initiative.

It follows Kirika's excursions through Kibera, and visits to the Kenya Meteorological Department, which provides the forecasts. *The Story of Daraja and James* also captures him at community forums where he teach-

es locals on weather preparedness.

He aid: "We receive daily and weekly weather forecasts from the weather department and distribute the information to residents in simplified language."

Alongside other community leaders, they convert often technical weather charts into simple text messages that slum dwellers can understand, including use of Sheng.

"We send text messages to family, friends and neighbours who then share with others," Kirika explained, adding that they also use community radio stations such as *Pamoja FM*, and local artists to create public awareness on weather.

The film features candid discussions on challenges of extreme weather changes in Africa's largest slum.

Mark Harvey, who co-founded Daraja, Kiswahili for bridge, says the initiative was developed "to address lack of access of urban poor to accurate, accessible and actionable weather, climate and early warning information."

As climate change contin-



Martin Ndereba and James Kirika are community leaders in Kibera and members of Daraja Climate Ambition initiative providing information on weather forecasts. Picture: Lucy Wanjiru

As we seek to mitigate climate change, priority shifts to local innovations on action such as Daraja

ues to devastate most parts of the world, urban centres and cities have been at the receiving end of its effects.

Consequently, millions of inhabitants of informal settlements are finding themselves more exposed to these changes, risking displacement, loss of property and even life.

Over the last ten years, the weather in Nairobi, for instance, has undergone drastic changes, becoming warmer, with longer droughts. The

city also occasionally experiences heavier than usual rain.

Where encroachment of river valleys is rampant and drainage poor due to haphazard planning, rainfall wreaks havoc, sweeping residents' belongings downstream, flooding homes and even destroying shacks and taking lives.

Vulnerable populations

Harvey says Daraja Ambition aims to improve climate resilience of these vulnera-

ble populations "by building bridges between communities and weather and climate information providers?"

Findings of a local survey show that 98 percent of Kibera residents use this weather information to take necessary action, including moving to higher grounds, evacuating their households and unclogging drainage systems.

Organisers of Daraja hope to reach more than 250 million residents of informal settlements in 30 cities across the globe. Besides Nairobi, Daraja has already been rolled out in Dar es Salaam.

During the global summit held on Monday and Tuesday, the film was introduced by Patricia Nying'uro, a climate scientist and chief meteorologist at Kenya Meteorological Department.

IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva noted that climate resilience is a key priority for the fund as the world tackles the Covid-19 pandemic.

British High Commissioner to Kenya Jane Marriott described the summit as "a key stepping point towards the COP26 climate negotiations".

Some of the dignitaries at the forums were German chancellor Angela Merkel, French president Emmanuel Macron, British PM Boris Johnson, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Dutch PM Mark Rutte.