



**USAWA INC.  
END OF PROJECT REPORT  
AUDIBLE AFRICAN WOMEN- KENYAN ELECTION SERIES PROJECT  
AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2022**



## List of acronyms

<b>CBO</b>	<b>Community Based Organization</b>
<b>CIDP</b>	<b>County Intergrated Development Plan</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil Society Organization</b>
<b>DANIDA</b>	<b>Embassy of Denmark in Kenya</b>
<b>ERSGBV</b>	<b>Election Related Gender Based Violence</b>
<b>FGD</b>	<b>Focus Group Discussion</b>
<b>GBV</b>	<b>Gender Based Violence</b>
<b>KII</b>	<b>Key Informant Interview</b>
<b>SGBV</b>	<b>Sexual Gender Based Violence</b>

## Introduction

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The Kenyan election cycle has for years been characterized by electoral violence and, to a large extent, election-related sexual gender-based violence (ERSGBV). As such, Kenyans typically associate violence with elections. Women experience GBV during the election period, and for those who participate in elections either as aspirants or mobilizers, their experience is much worse. In recent years, with the digital age, women have continuously been victims of online bullying whenever they advertise their candidacy online or when they are carrying out their campaigns. Young women in politics in particular continue to face various forms of GBV, such as physical assault, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and online bullying.

Usawa Inc., in partnership with Act! and supported by the Embassy of Denmark in Kenya (DANIDA), implemented a project that sought to center the agency of young women in Kenya as critical to voter mobilization and the prevention of electoral violence and processes. This was done through various interventions that sought to deconstruct the myths of young women as victims or passive actors during election cycles in the period before and after the 2022 general elections. The project was implemented in two informal areas in Nairobi County, i.e., Mathare and Kangemi.

The project sought to achieve the following objectives:

- to center young women's political autonomy in democratic processes by deconstructing the myths of young Kenyan women as victims during election cycles.
- To center digital storytelling as a voter mobilization and electoral violence prevention tool
- to explore how new media, arts, and culture can be used to make these processes more accessible and centered for young women.

### **Key activities conducted before implementation**

#### **1. Baseline Survey**

Usawa Inc. carried out a baseline survey in August 2022. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out in Kangemi and Mathare with a total of 19 respondents who were young women leaders in those localities.

In addition, four key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out with two respondents: a young woman leader as well as a young female journalist. The survey revealed that communities still perceive young women as passive actors when it comes to political participation; they are seen to be "useful" undervalued mobilizers during the election period and entertainers during political campaigns.

Further, the survey confirmed that young women face election-related gender-based violence (ERGBV) even as they work as mobilizers for political parties; they frequently face physical abuse and sexual harassment during campaigns. The society does not take young female aspirants seriously and dismisses them due to their age; instead, mature women are preferred for political representation.

Lastly, the survey revealed that indeed there is voter apathy among young women voters, especially first-time voters, as they do not see the value of voting. This is partly due to their mistrust of the electoral process in Kenya and the stakeholders therein.

Below is a summary of **key perceptions** of young women's participation in the electoral process as per the findings of the baseline survey.

### **Key perceptions of young women's political participation**

- ❖ Young women are typically viewed as flower girls and entertainers during elections.
- ❖ Society still perceives young women as inexperienced and unqualified to vie for political office. The few who are “qualified” will need to demonstrate that they are married in order to be taken seriously by the electorate.
- ❖ Young women aspirants lack adequate finances to navigate the electoral system in Kenya and as such their quest for leadership is rarely successful
- ❖ During the election period, young women involved in politics either as mobiliser or aspirants face various forms of violence such as verbal abuse, physical violence as well as sexual harassment.

The data was analyzed, and the findings generated a report that was utilized to inform the design and implementation of activities during the project period.

#### **1. Partnerships**

Prior to implementation of the activities, Usawa Inc. reached out to its existing partners to collaborate on the project. Namely:

1. **Sema Box Africa** is a pan-African digital media incubator program that hosts the Dada Podcast, an intergenerational program that features African women storytellers using new media. Through this partnership, four collaborative coaching and in-person skill-sharing sessions with young women storytellers were conducted.
2. **Baraza Media Lab** is a collective of journalists and digital storytellers. Through this partnership, training for community journalists on gendered misinformation was carried out.

3. **Ghetto Radio** is a local radio station that focuses on community issues and whose target audience lives in lower-income areas such as Mathare and Kangemi. Through this partnership, two radio shows were conducted focusing on election issues, young women’s participation in politics, and GBV during elections.

## RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Below is a summary of the results achieved by the project.

<b>Outcome 2: Centering Narratives on young women’s political autonomy in democratic processes by deconstructing the myths of young Kenyan women as victims during election cycles.</b>
<b>Output 2.1</b> Status of young women experiencing violence monitored and documented
<b>Indicator</b> Number of SGBV election related incidences documented – featured on community radios

<b>Target: 8</b>	<b>Actual:40</b>
<b>Output 2.2</b> Young women as political influencers and mobilizers	
<b>Indicator</b> Number of Podcasts produced	
<b>Target: 20</b>	<b>Actual:11</b>
<b>Outcome 3: Gender sensitive reporting by mainstream and community journalists during the election period.</b>	
<b>Output 3.1</b> Community journalists and women story tellers trained on gender sensitive reporting	
<b>Indicator</b> Number of community journalists trained on gender sensitive reporting	
<b>Target: 20</b>	<b>Actual: 20</b>
<b>Output 3.2</b> Members of the public reached with narratives centering young women’s agency in Kenyan elections	
<b>Target: 20,000</b>	<b>Actual: 50,600</b>

During the duration of the project, Usawa Inc. carried out various activities, all of which positively contributed to the overall goal of the project.

**Outcome 1: Improved voting patterns by young women, especially first-time voters; increased public trust of the IEBC and other election stakeholders by the target group to vote in the 2022 elections.**

**1. Training of young women on the electoral process and electoral violence protection**

A total of 40 young women underwent training on various subthemes surrounding the electoral process in Kenya. The participants gained knowledge on the following elements:

1. Political and voter mobilization
2. The President, Governor, Senator, Member of Parliament, Women Representative, and Member of County Assembly are the six elective positions.
3. Post-election mental health
4. Mechanisms and tools of public participation
5. GBV Reporting

Through interactive sessions, the participants were able to question the realities surrounding politics in Kenya, and at the end of the training, it was agreed that the victim narrative about young women needed to be changed. It was a consensus that first-time female voters needed to be informed on the importance of exercising their civic duty.

***Usawa Inc took us through how we can bargain for leadership positions for ourselves whether we are educated or not, we can still bargain for leadership positions.”***

***\*Community leader, Mathare***

The training was successful in empowering participants who were mobilizers for political parties to be strategic in their work. They agreed that they needed to assert themselves while ensuring that they secured opportunities in political parties even after elections. They were exposed to various leadership roles they could undertake after elections, such as a woman leader or an official within the political party holding the office of an elected official, which they were previously unaware of.

***“The training was important for us because we did not know the role of an MCA, we thought they can help us pay medical bills, fees etc. Now we know what they can do according to the Constitution.”***

***Woman leader, Kangemi***

During the training, discussions around election-related GBV were held. Participants agreed that within their households they should be wise when discussing politics. This is because their political choices may lead to domestic violence between spouses. Referral pathways for GBV cases were also discussed, and as a result, various GBV cases were forwarded to Usawa, Inc., during the project period.





*Young women listening in during the training*

## **2. Mobilization of young women to vote**

The baseline survey confirmed the high levels of voter apathy among young women, especially those who were first-time voters. In response to this, Usawa Inc. was able to work with women community leaders as well as community-based organizations in Kangemi and Mathare to get young women to vote.

Various strategies were implemented towards this goal; one was sensitization during the young women's training, and two was utilizing the young women's leaders and influencers to convince the young women to vote.

By the time of the elections, a total of 215 young women had been mobilized to vote, i.e., 150 young women in Mathare and 65 in Kangemi.

Despite the efforts of Usawa Inc. and other civil society organizations (CSOs), there was still a lack of adequate civic and voter education in the country. Unlike previous years, where sustained voter education campaigns had been carried out, during the pre-election period this was not the case.

## **Outcome 2: Centering narratives on young women’s political autonomy in democratic processes by deconstructing the myths of young Kenyan women as victims during election cycles**

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Gender norms in Kenyan society have normalized the role of young women in politics as victims as well as passive actors in the electoral process. Society dismisses the aspirations of young women in politics, stating that they are inexperienced. As a result, young women tend to shy away from active politics, not just because of gender norms but also due to the violence associated with campaigns, i.e., physical abuse, verbal abuse, as well as sexual harassment.

***“During election period, young women as used as ‘flower girls’, entertainers and bloggers for political aspirants. Their main role is to campaign for politicians and sometimes they are not compensated equally as their male counterparts.”***

*Community leader, Mathare*

In order to change this narrative, Usawa Inc. carried out the following interventions:

### **a) Radio shows on Ghetto Radio**

Usawa Inc. held two radio shows on Ghetto Radio in conjunction with community journalists who had been trained on gender responsive reporting. The radio shows focused on two major topics: one, the experiences of young women in elections, and the other, on mental health issues in respect to the general elections. Listeners were able to share their experiences, which revealed that while young women came out to contest in the elections, they faced various challenges, key among them being ERSGBV. They indicated that they had faced revenge assaults from rival political groups as well as verbal abuse. Consequently, Usawa Inc. received a total of 40 election-related GBV cases, which were forwarded to the appropriate referral systems.

The second major theme of the shows was the general mental health of the community in relation to elections. Emphasis was placed on the need to seek counselling services to deal with any issues arising from the election results. This radio show was conducted on World Mental Health Day and sought to explain the correct manner in which the society should deal with mental health issues arising from the elections.

The show concluded by giving direction on young women's participation in governance in the post-election period. Emphasis was placed on the need for young women to be active in public participation at ward, subcounty and county levels as this was the only way they would ensure their needs as young women are integrated into county development processes.

See link <https://bit.ly/3iXqyUK>

#### **b) Podcast series – The Audible African Woman- 2022 Kenyan Election Series**

Patriarchal gender norms have consistently portrayed young women in politics in Kenya as victims or passive actors in the electoral process, at best. Their attempts to participate, whether as aspirants or solid campaign managers, are usually met with ridicule from the general public.

This is true of the digital media space, where young women who attempt to use media as a tool of participation often face ridicule through cyberbullying. In response to this, Usawa Inc. developed a 10-part podcast series on their Swaiba podcast platform dubbed *The Audible African Woman – Kenya Election Series*.

The series was a huge success because it managed to feature young women in politics the podcast contributors ranged from young women leaders in communities, gender and governance experts, to young women political influencers. The topics covered ranged from: experiences of young women in politics, mobilization of young voters, misinformation and cyberbullying; voter apathy, and technology for democracy, climate justice governance among others.

The series has garnered over 50,600 views in the four months of the project and continues to be a reference tool for the post-election , youth and women engagement strategies.



Lilian Awour- a political mobiliser during a podcast recording

link to the series... <https://youtu.be/Nlo8gzblQPo>

### **Outcome 3: Gender sensitive reporting by mainstream and community journalists during the election period.**

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#### **a) Training of community journalists and storytellers on gender sensitive reporting**

Media remains a powerful tool for not only providing information but also shaping narratives in society. Usawa Inc. carried out a training for 20 community journalists and storytellers on gender-sensitive reporting in Mathare.

The training covered four types of information anomalies that usually occur in journalism, especially during the election period. Trainees gained skills on how to identify these anomalies and how to address them.



*A section of journalists and storytellers listening in during the training.*

### **b) Community sensitization forum on gender responsive reporting**

Members of the public are usually on the receiving end of information anomalies, especially during the election period and more specifically when the news is focusing on women's political participation.

As such, a community sensitization forum was conducted in Kangemi with local community leaders. Trainees gained skills on how to identify anomalies in information, this knowledge would be useful to help them discern false information during elections.

#### Areas of focus for Young Women and Governance Post Election

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### **1. Gains and challenges for women in the 2022 General Elections**

A record-breaking 7 women were elected as governors in different counties. Others were elected as Members of Parliament, Senators and Members of County Assemblies (MCAs).

However, peace and security of women during the election period remained to be a challenge and a deterrent to women's political participation, [Rachel Mwikali](#), a Gender, Youth and Human Rights Advocate, shared that there were instances of men hiding identity cards (IDs) of their wives or female relatives in order to prevent them from voting. These incidents were echoed

in Kangemi during the post-election debriefing where women reported cases of intimate partner violence from their husbands and cases GBV against of young women and girls as revenge for political betrayal were reported.

### **Young Women as Political Leaders and Voters;**

The experiences of young women in the political processes continue to be hampered by existing patriarchal norms which still profile them as passive actors in the electoral process. For young women aspirants, they face several layers of discrimination due to their age, marital and financial status.

Women who contended for political office and who expressed their desire to address the needs of their community by putting in place policies to tackle poverty, improve infrastructure, and increase access to water, education, and healthcare. Most of these women had served as political mobilisers, social workers, community health volunteers. These women aspirants stated that they want to be the voice of women and youth and seek to improve the lives of these underrepresented groups, all while supporting their participation in governance.

While the August 2022 elections in Kenya passed without significant disruption, addressing community tensions after the campaigns and resolving long-standing concerns in areas identified as hot spots requires continuous support and community mediation.

Usawa Inc worked with local administration in Mathare and Kangemi-among them were *Nyumba Kumi* representatives- among the concerns that came up is the need for stakeholders to look out for increased criminal behaviour as a result of the increasing economic vulnerabilities but also see how crime intersects with GBV.

#### a) Women as Voters:

International and regional standards protect all citizens' right to vote and call on states to ensure freedom to express one's will at the ballot box, secrecy of the ballot, and personal security for all voters.<sup>1</sup>

Most women who participated in the discussions were registered voters. Some recognized that this was, was their right and because they wanted to vote for their preferred candidate while in some instances, because they were offered financial incentives. Some participants reported registered because politicians paid them. A lower number of women

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Human-Rights-and-Elections.pdf>

reported that they did not register because of a lack of understanding of the importance or value of voting.

In the election debrief some baraza participants reported that husbands influence women voters in some areas; and in some cases, men dictate whom their wives and family should support. Participants said that the secrecy of the ballot was sometimes violated in areas in proxy to assisted in voting.

#### b) Women as Aspirants.

Women aspirants said that they rarely benefit from political party financial resources to conduct their campaigns. When parties did provide support, most participants reported that it was usually only after the party primaries. For the general elections, some parties provided women candidates a platform to speak to the electorate during the campaign period. Some political parties waived nomination fees for women and youth candidates. Others provided campaign materials such as tshirts, hats, and posters. Nonetheless, aspirants said that political parties are primarily focused on increasing party support and funding through aspirant nomination fees during the nominations process which largely excludes women and youth.

#### Key Experiences for women as Aspirants

- i. Some young women aspirants chose to contest as independent party candidates, unfortunately electorate in these areas are yet to understand the concept of independent party candidates. As such they voted in candidates who contest under political parties.
- ii. Political parties continued to work with (young) women as mobilizers during the election period. This is because women are viewed as trustworthy and dependable when it comes to delivering votes.
- iii. Gender norms in these societies continue to dictate that aspiring women leaders must be married in order to be trusted to be able to go into political leadership. In this regard many young women who are unmarried were considered unsuitable for political office.
- iv. Overall, (young and mature) women voter turnout is affected by their domestic roles in the household, many were unable to turn out to vote as they needed to seek out economic opportunities on election day.
- v. Some political parties were able to embrace young women aspirants as candidates and also in party structures

## 2. Gatekeeping and Tokenisation of women from low income areas .

The dynamics between young women’s capabilities and ambitions on the one hand, and the political will and political power of the ‘gatekeepers’ of the political parties on the other, determine the extent to which young women can participate in political parties and local politics. The gatekeepers are, in this case, influential women within the parties who can influence the decisions as to which party members should occupy contested positions at the local, regional, and even national level known in sheng’ as *Sangwenyas*. They determine who will be elected or nominated to ‘women’ positions within the party, and they are influential in determining who will stand for the party’s ticket for general elections.

In most cases women from the low income areas such as Mathare and Kangemi are seen as lacking in leadership qualities and only fit for mobilisation as “ Waremba na Fulani” for campaign trails.

Young women especially in the informal settlements, they have no specified role in the political parties in elections they are just campaigners and mobilizers.  
An FDG participant in Kangemi

*Faith Kasina*, human rights defender and who was an MCA aspirant, Matopeni Ward shared that while the youth were receptive of her candidature, the older generation constantly questioned her candidacy even stating that as a young unmarried woman she had no chance in success. Older persons also suffer from a lot of misinformation that ultimately negatively affects young women aspirant.

## 3. Gendered Misinformation and Election Based Gender Based Violence

Research shows more and more people use the Internet as a key source of information on politics and governance, it’s critical to analyse the role social media outlets are playing, consciously or unconsciously, in the promotion of more gender inclusive and participatory democracies yet the intersection of gender, democracy, disinformation, and information technology remains understudied.<sup>2</sup>

According to *Wanjiru Nguhi* who is the project Manager of *Fumbua* – a collaborative media project aimed at unravelling and investigation of suspicious information about

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/gendered-disinformation-is-a-national-security-problem/>



public policies and governance processes such as elections and a trainer for the community journalists' component- female politicians are increasingly turning to social media as a way to overcome marginalization and connect with their constituencies. As a counter attack there is overwhelming evidence that female politicians and political activists are often targets of online threats, harassment and graphic sexual taunts aimed at delegitimizing, depersonalizing, and ultimately dissuading them from being politically active. As an expert in political misinformation, she encouraged women to stay digitally and politically active as the digital platforms remain a key component in young women's political mobilisation.

#### **4. Gendered Exclusion in Public Participation Processes .**

Kenya's 2010 constitution introduced provisions to its constitutional and legal framework to support the increased participation of youth and women. Importantly, it mandated that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies should be of the same gender." The constitution also dedicated seats for women at the county level and a youth seat in the senate. Though multiple mechanisms exist to support and strengthen youth and women's political participation, much still needs to be done to increase their engagement. Public participation is the bedrock of governance in that it is a central instrument through which national policies and programmes are shaped. Public participation should therefore be representative of society and serve as a model where women and men equally participate and lead, including in decision-making and in policy making and national and county budget allocation.

Lack of inclusivity in public participation and social accountability has led to lower-level inputs into policies and programmes that focus on gender equality and women's empowerment . By 2018, only 2% of local budgets had allocations towards GEWE<sup>3</sup>. According to *Lillian Aduor, Political activist and Human Rights Defender* the barrier of women's public participation have is timing and the location of such forums and limited access to the information they need to engage. Usawa Inc is keen to continue breaking down this type of information through the podcast but also collaborate with community radios, organizations and journalists to ensure that the aforementioned barriers are overcome .

#### **5. Young Women's Economic absence in National Plans- Beyond Election Manifestos.**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2022/05/from-talk-shop-to-community-action-in-kenyas-local-government>

The African Union estimates that almost 75% of Africa's population is under the age of 35 years. The youth are an essential component of the nation's development plans; Vision 2030, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>4</sup> Recognizing the burgeoning youth population that dominates Kenya's demographics, it is clear that the country cannot achieve the development, peace and integration vision that it has set for itself without the active participation and leadership of its young people, including young women.

Young women are a critical part of the continent's labor force; they are students, teachers, professionals, industrial workers and laborer. Yet, despite their enormous contributions to their communities and the continent, young women generally remain under-represented in the political institutions, policy and decision-making processes. The political manifestos had incentivized youth and women on representation and allocation of affirmative action funds and women and youth, especially those in SMEs and the informal sectors are skeptical about the accessibility of these funds given that previous funds were marred by corruption.

According to Ms. [Mbuki Mburu](#) *Public Policy and Youth Development Advocate* and board chair with a leading SACCO in Kenya Young women have the opportunity to influence economic development plans through public participation by involving themselves as individuals or groups in public participation in County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) to ensure their priorities and those of their communities are prioritized. As it is women and youth face barriers in their efforts to participate in trade-these include challenges in accessing finance, the high cost of production and a complex taxation framework that affects profitability, making Kenya a harsh operating environment. These challenges are compounded for women-owned businesses, since most of them are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and operate in the informal sector.

## **6. Young Women are mobilizing against Climate Change and for Food Security**

Achieving food security in the face of accelerating food demand in Kenya's, increasing population, competition for depleting resources, and the failing ability of the environment is a global priority. Engaging youth in agriculture and other food systems is increasingly being recognized as a critical component and a key priority area in building a sustainable environment and creating a promising future.<sup>5</sup> Young women such as [Anita Soina](#) ( featured on the podcast) who was the youngest Mp candidate in the 2022 elections and is from a pastoralist-Maasai community play a critical role as changemakers and sustainable solutions in protecting the environment, identifying and implementing innovative solutions, and creating adaptive

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<sup>4</sup> <https://sdgcafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/sdgca-africa-2030-report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-economic-update-transforming-agricultural-productivity-to-achieve-food-security-for-all>

and/or transformative food systems to ensure food security towards building community resilience and adaptation.

Young Women in the barazas held in the communities identified climate change as an area requiring urgent action and called upon stakeholders to strengthen women's involvement in good environmental governance, and proposed recommendations for fostering women's especially their rural counterparts' engagement in decision-making processes on environmental matters in Kenya. This is largely because women are more proactive than men when it comes to using sustainable agricultural practices but are also first responders during climate change emergencies.

### **Conclusion**

Through this project, it was clear that changing the negative narratives about young women's political participation requires a multi-pronged approach, as was adopted by Usawa Inc.

Utilization of digital media to influence the wider society proved very efficient given the wide reach the podcast series managed. Through this platform, Usawa Inc has tapped to an even wider African audience to discuss the positive aspects of young women's political participation.

Direct interactions with young women in politics in Mathare and Kangemi proved extremely useful in motivating first time young female voters to participate in the electoral process. The sharing of experiences during the training helped them debunk any myths they had about their political participation.

Utilization of women leaders in Mathare and Kangemi as mobilizers of young women voters also proved effective, as these women leaders were quickly able to identify the young women and convince them about the importance of exercising their civic duty.

The civic education initiatives carried out through the various activities in the project proved useful in disseminating information about the electoral and governance processes. This complemented other existing civic education initiatives in the two project areas.

### **Recommendations**

1. Political party law reforms and other institutional reform initiatives need to be implemented by political parties. Good practice across parties can be learned from (e.g. political party quotas for candidates as well as internal executive structures) and adapted as appropriate. Political parties need to more proactively reach out to young

women and give them opportunities to engage. Violence by political parties and their supporters also needs to be addressed;

2. Supporting young women and their local movements: there have been numerous capacity building and training opportunities to develop women’s campaigning and advocacy skills, in which a handful targeted directly at young women. These existing initiatives implemented at different levels can be learned from and adapted, as appropriate, to develop young women’s leadership skills, self-confidence and networks, so that they have the skills to succeed if and when they choose to engage in politics. There is also an emerging trend across the region of more young women-led civil society organizations dedicated to mobilizing and supporting young women in politics; these can also be harnessed and strengthened, including through support for national and regional young women’s networks.
3. Investing in social norm change: Social norm change requires broad engagement across a range of stakeholders and sectors. Work to address social norms will often be integrated into other development activities, but the fundamental importance of supporting broad-based social norm change also requires that this work warrants prioritization in its own right.

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Report prepared by .....

Submitted on.....

