

## **Empowering Art: Kenya's Creative Voices**

### **Open Artistic Competition for Kenyan Creatives on gender equality and women empowerment**

#### **Guidelines**

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Nairobi and the Italian Cultural Institute in Nairobi, under the guidance of the Embassy of Italy in Nairobi, are pleased to launch the artistic competition “Empowering Art: Kenya’s Creative Voices”. This contest aims to engage and inspire the creative community in Kenya to create compelling graphics and illustrations that, after having been selected by a jury, will be showcased in the occasion of the global campaign of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, held annually from the 25th of November to the 10th of December. The objective is to promote the Kenyan artistic community to conceptualize and create compelling graphics to activate change.

If you are a Kenyan creative eager to showcase your talent while making a meaningful impact, we encourage you to participate in this competition!

#### **Art. 1 – Target Groups**

The competition is open to all Kenyan creatives of any gender, with a strong encouragement for girls and women to participate. Kenyan citizenship is a requirement for participation, with proof of documentation requested as part of the competition<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Art. 2 – Themes**

The artistic submissions should be relevant with one or more of the following topics:

- **Women in Leadership:** Women leaders in politics, business, education, and community development play a vital role in shaping societies, yet they still face barriers to achieving equal representation. This theme encourages artists to celebrate the strength, resilience, and achievements of women leaders while advocating for more inclusive leadership spaces.
- **Women and climate change:** Women are disproportionately affected by climate change, yet they are also at the forefront of climate action—leading sustainable solutions, protecting natural resources, and advocating for environmental justice. Artists are invited to portray the intersection of gender and climate justice, emphasizing the role of women in creating a sustainable future.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the organizers can only reimburse travel expenses for selected participants **traveling within Kenya** to attend the final ceremony.

- **Online violence:** The internet has become a crucial space for self-expression, but it has also given rise to online harassment, cyberbullying, and digital abuse, especially targeting women and marginalized groups. This theme invites artists to explore the impact of online violence and to advocate for digital spaces that are safe, respectful, and empowering for all.
- **Gender Based Violence and Femicide:** Gender-Based Violence (GBV) includes physical, emotional, sexual, and economic harm inflicted on individuals due to their gender. Femicide is the most extreme form of GBV. Artists are encouraged to highlight the impacts of GBV and femicide while envisioning a society free from violence and discrimination.
- **Male Allyship:** Men and boys have a crucial role in ending gender-based violence by challenging harmful norms, speaking out against injustice, and actively supporting gender equality. Artists are encouraged to illustrate positive examples of male allyship, depicting men as advocates, mentors, and allies in the fight for women's rights.
- **Intersectional forms of discrimination:** Women who belong to marginalized groups—such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, and those from ethnic minority communities—often face multiple layers of discrimination. This theme challenges artists to highlight the struggles and resilience of women facing intersecting oppressions and to call for a more inclusive and equitable society.

### Art. 3 – Formats and Categories

Artistic submissions must be in one of the following formats and fall within one of the following formats: 1. Digital Artwork; 2. Traditional Art;

#### **1. Digital Artwork (Online Submission)**

Artists can submit high-quality digital designs, including posters, illustrations, or any other digital artwork that aligns with at least one the themes outlined in Art. 2. Please note that photographs and videos are not eligible for this competition.

Submission Format:

High-resolution files in JPG, PNG, or PDF format (if selected, the Commission might ask a .pdf e .svg format)

Minimum resolution of 300 dpi for print-quality output.

Suggested dimensions: Submissions should be in A4 size (21 x 29.7 cm or 8.27 x 11.69 inches). Selected works might be scaled up to A2 or larger for exhibition or publication purposes, so artists

should prioritize clear, bold visuals and avoid fine details that may be lost when enlarged. Both portrait and landscape orientations are accepted. Files should be submitted through the online application form. Larger files may be submitted via a downloadable link (e.g. Google Drive or WeTransfer), by sending the link to the email address [press.nairobi@aics.gov.it](mailto:press.nairobi@aics.gov.it)

Within the digital submissions, participants should pick one of the following categories:

#### A. Young Champions (Beginners Category)

This category is specifically designed to encourage youth involvement and recognize the creativity of the younger generation in Kenya.

##### **Who can apply?**

If you are between 18 and 25 years old and passionate about creative expression and the themes outlined in Article 2, this category is for you. The following criteria can help assess whether you qualify:

- General youth with an interest in art and activism, even without formal training.
- Students enrolled in art, design, or graphics schools who are still honing their skills.
- Young graduates who have recently completed studies in a creative field but have limited or no professional experience (max 2 years of professional experience).
- Self-taught artists and hobbyists who are passionate about visual storytelling but have not yet worked professionally in the creative industry.

All participants in this category must be between 18 and 25 years old at the time of the submission deadline (meaning they should have turned 18 before the competition deadline and not turn 26 before the competition deadline). They should also not have a significant professional portfolio or previous work commissioned by major clients.

This category provides an opportunity for young creatives to gain exposure and contribute to an important cause while developing their artistic skills.

#### B. Professional and Seasoned Creatives (Advanced Category)

This category is for experienced artists and designers who have established themselves in the creative industry and possess a portfolio.

##### **Who can apply?**

- Graphic designers, illustrators, and visual artists with professional experience working on commissioned projects (3+ years).

- Creatives who have had their work published, exhibited, or used in commercial, editorial, or advocacy campaigns.
- Artists who have previously won awards or competitions in the visual arts field.

Applicants in this category are expected to submit high-quality and impactful work that aligns with the competition themes.

## **2. Traditional Art (Offline Submission)**

We invite submissions of traditional art such as drawings or paintings that aligns with the competition's themes. Please note that photographs are not eligible for this competition.

Submission Format:

The artwork in its physical form should be minimum in A4 format (21 x 29.7 cm). Selected works might be professionally scanned for digital use up to A2 or larger for exhibition or publication on billboard purposes, so artists should prioritize clear, bold visuals and avoid fine details that may be lost when enlarged. Both portrait and landscape orientations are accepted. For details on where to deliver the artwork, please refer to Art. 5 of this call.

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- Artists who have previously won awards or competitions in the visual arts field.

Applicants in this category are expected to submit high-quality, conceptually strong, and impactful work that aligns with the competition themes.

#### **Art. 3 - Submission Instructions and Attachments**

1. Each applicant can submit one piece of artwork.
2. The piece of artwork **must be** the participants' original work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and submitting any artwork that does not belong to the artist will result in an immediate disqualification from the competition.
3. The piece of artwork should not contain any offensive, illegal, or abusive content. Such entries will be invalid.
4. Any request for information should be addressed to the email address [press.nairobi@aics.gov.it](mailto:press.nairobi@aics.gov.it) with the subject: 'Application to Artistic Competition – INFO REQUEST'.
5. Each submission should accompany a brief, half-page description in English explaining the inspiration and message behind the artwork, which should be coherent with one or more of the themes detailed in Art. 2, together with a brief bio of the participant. Both pieces of information can be entered in the dedicated section of the application form.

6. FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS ONLY: Electronic submissions should comply with the criteria detailed in Art. 3. The Jury might request the versions of the native file for printing in the final publication of the initiative.
7. FOR PAPER SUBMISSIONS ONLY: Paper submissions should comply with the criteria detailed in Art. 3.

#### **Art. 4 - Submission Deadline**

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 14:00 Nairobi time. Failure to meet this deadline will result in exclusion from the competition.

#### **Art. 5 – Submission Methods**

Each application (either online or offline) should contain the following:

1. The artwork file or document.
2. A copy of your Kenyan identity document (ex. ID or passport).
3. A duly filled Application form in English.

No costs incurred by the participants in preparing and submitting the tender are reimbursable. The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation does not charge or ask any money for the submission or during the selection process.

#### Electronic submissions

1. Participants must include the documents detailed below and apply through the following web page: <https://nairobi.aics.gov.it/art-contest/>
2. Alternatively, participants can send them by e-mail specifying in the subject line their names and surnames preceded by the wording: Application to Artistic Competition – [Your Name] – Category A or B (example: ‘Application to Artistic Competition – James Mwangi – Category A). The email should be sent to the following email address:

press.nairobi@aics.gov.it

The email must be received before May 8th, 2025, 14:00 Nairobi time.

If you are submitting your files via a downloadable link (e.g., Google Drive or WeTransfer), please send an email to [press.nairobi@aics.gov.it](mailto:press.nairobi@aics.gov.it) with the subject line indicated above and include the link to your file in the email text.

### Paper submissions

Participants must include the documents detailed below in a sealed envelope which must be clearly labelled as follows: "Application to Artistic Competition – [Your Name] – Category A or B" (Example: 'Application to Artistic Competition – James Mwangi – Category A'). Submissions must be delivered to the following address:

Italian Agency for Development Cooperation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – Eaton Place  
United Nations Crescent, Gigiri, Muthaiga  
Nairobi

Please note that Office's opening times are: 08:00 – 16:00 from Monday to Thursday; 08:00 to 14:00 on Fridays.

Paper submissions must be received no later than May 8th, 2025, at 14:00 Nairobi time. In case of submission via courier, the postmark date will be considered as proof of dispatch.

### **Art. 6 Evaluation Procedure**

The evaluation process will be structured as follows:

#### First Phase: Admission Criteria Verification

In this phase, submissions will be reviewed to verify that applicants meet the eligibility criteria, all required documents are submitted and completed with all the specific information as requested. Only those who meet these criteria will proceed to the next phase.

#### Second Phase: Art Quality Evaluation

In this phase, the evaluators will assess the quality of the submitted artwork according to the criteria detailed in Art. 7 and identify the winners and the special mentions. The commission operating the evaluation will be composed by a multifaceted panel, featuring experts in gender-related issues and experts with solid artistic background. The diverse composition of the commission ensures a holistic

and well-informed evaluation of the proposed artwork, taking into account both the artistic merits and the alignment with gender-related considerations.

### **Art. 7 - Evaluation Criteria**

The submissions will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation committee based on the following criteria:

1. Consistency with the Theme (Scored from 0 to 20)
  - The submission must clearly align with the competition theme “Empowering Art: Kenya’s Creative Voices” reflecting the campaign’s focus on women empowerment.
2. Effectiveness of the Message (Scored from 0 to 25)
  - The artwork should effectively communicate a powerful and meaningful message that resonates with the audience and stimulates action towards gender equality and empowerment. The impact of the message in raising awareness on these critical issues is key.
3. Originality of the Idea (Scored from 0 to 25)
  - The submission should demonstrate creativity and originality in conceptualizing the artwork. The project idea must stand out with a fresh and innovative approach that captures attention and inspires positive change.
4. Cultural Inclusivity (Scored from 0 to 10)
  - The artwork should reflect cultural inclusivity, showcasing diverse representations of women and communities. It should celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Kenya and be respectful of all backgrounds, fostering unity and diversity.
5. Artistic Appeal (Scored from 0 to 20)
  - The submission will be assessed based on its visual appeal, clarity, and technical execution. This includes the overall craftsmanship, use of colour, composition, and the overall aesthetic quality of the design.

### **Art. 7 - Prizes and Announcement of Winners**

Winners will be announced between July and August 2025, and will then be awarded in a public forum to be held in Nairobi during the global campaign of activism against GBV (25<sup>th</sup> of November – 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2025), in a location to be announced. The event will also present the opportunity to inaugurate the artistic exhibition showcasing some of the best artworks received.



The winners or their representatives must be present during the award ceremony. Transport and accommodation will be provided, but please note we can only cover expenses related to travel within Kenya (we can not reimburse travel from outside Kenya).

Among the best works selected by the Jury Commission, the projects with the highest rankings in each of the categories will be awarded the following prizes:

Category	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place
<b>Traditional Art (Offline Submission)</b> <b>Category:</b> <b>Young (Beginners)</b>	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€ 400) + Artistic Exhibition feature + Artistic residency	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€300) + Artistic Exhibition feature + Artistic residency	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€200) + Artistic Exhibition feature + Artistic residency
<b>Traditional Art (Offline Submission)</b> <b>Category:</b> <b>Professional (Advanced)</b>	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€ 800) + Artistic Exhibition feature	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€700) + Artistic Exhibition feature	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€600) + Artistic Exhibition feature
<b>Digital Artwork and Graphic Design (Online Submission)</b> <b>Category:</b> <b>Young (Beginners)</b>	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€ 400) + Artistic Exhibition feature + Artistic residency	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€300) + Artistic Exhibition feature + Artistic residency	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€200) + Artistic Exhibition feature + Artistic residency
<b>Digital Artwork (Online Submission)</b> <b>Category:</b> <b>Professional (Advanced)</b>	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€ 800) + Artistic Exhibition feature	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€700) + Artistic Exhibition feature	Cash/Voucher for art supplies (€600) + Artistic Exhibition feature

Please note that the artistic residency will be held within the month of September 2025.

In addition to the above, and depending on the quantity and quality of submissions, AICS and IIC tentatively aim to publish all artworks that pass the Admission Criteria Verification in a dedicated publication showcasing creative talent and perspectives on the themes outlined in Art. 2. Furthermore, some of the digital artworks submitted may be screened and/or displayed on advertisement billboards during the global campaign of activism against GBV (25<sup>th</sup> of November – 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2025), accompanied by sensitization messages related to the campaign themes and with due recognition of the artist's name and contribution.

## Art. 8 - Intellectual Property Rights

The artwork will be subject to Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. The copyright of the artwork remains with the artist/artists. By submitting their artwork, participants agree to allow the organisers to use their artwork for 24 months after the exhibition, in campaigns to promote public awareness on gender issues; to use and display the artwork on their websites, social media, subsequent publications and others, without any restrictions and without requiring additional authorizations from the participants beyond the release form submitted at the time of registration. When doing so, the organisers agree to provide attribution to the original author or creator of the work, according to the regulation of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

The artists retain the right to sell their artwork to third parties without any restrictions from the organisers, while the organisers will continue to have the right to use and display the artwork while providing attribution to the original author or creator of the work.

Place and date

Signature