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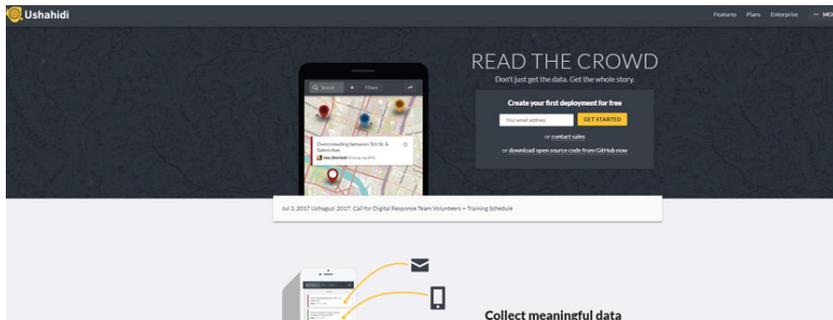
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NEWS

Sexual harassment claims rattle tech firm Ushahidi

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Ushahidi, a pioneer of Kenya's tech scene, is in the eye of a storm after an employee accused a senior manager of sexual harassment.

The firm has confirmed that it is investigating claims made by an employee who has since left the company, amid criticism of how the case has been handled.

“Investigations are still underway and once they are complete, the board will act appropriately as permitted by Law and Ushahidi policies,” the company said in a statement.

A day after the statement was released, Ushahidi co-founder Ory Okolloh, who left the company in 2010, took to self-publishing platform Medium to criticise the manner the case had been handled, deeming the response so far as “unacceptable” and suggesting that the allegations had been made “months ago”.

Although Okolloh [no longer works](#) with Ushahidi, her connections to the company suggest that she may be privy to privileged information.

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Ushahidi chief executive, Mr Daudi Were, did not respond to queries from *Business Daily* on Friday.

However, media reports indicate that the accused employee is on leave.

Stain reputation

This claim of sexual harassment is a stain on the reputation of a company that many have seen as a symbol for Kenya’s position as a regional tech hub and one which has been built on a foundation of openness in championing the needs of the marginalised.

Ushahidi was born in the 2007/08 post-election violence as a platform where Kenyans could report and map the ongoing crisis.

In the years since, Ushahidi has been used in at least 160 countries to help visualise and respond

to natural disasters; monitor elections including in the United States; and even map killings and human rights violations in the Syrian crisis.

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Ms Okolloh, in her Medium post said she would work with others in the tech community to set up forums to discuss sexual harassment and to provide victims with support.

These allegations are an unfortunate sign that the local tech scene may not be bucking against an international culture of sexual harassment in the technology sector.



Ory Okolloh, Ushahidi co-founder. She left the company in 2010. FILE PHOTO | NMG

News coming from the United States have painted the picture that Silicon Valley is rife with sexism and sexual harassment.

An employee at Uber in February wrote a now-viral account of a toxic culture of sexual harassment.

At the end of June, dozens of women told the *New York Times* stories of being subjected to sexist comments; suggestive messages and unwelcome groping from investors and bosses.

Unaddressed concerns

More often than not, their concerns went unaddressed while others were faced with threats of negative retaliation when they reported the cases.

Some of these women have named names and heads have begun to roll in the resulting outcry.

Dave McLure, the founder of a start-up incubator resigned in early July, after publicly admitting that he had been “a creep” who took advantage of his position of power to make “inappropriate” advances towards women.

Justin Caldbeck, another venture capitalist, also resigned in June after allegations of sexism and sexual harassment as investors threatened to withdraw funding commitments to his firm.

Uber CEO Travis Kalanick [resigned in the heat of the scandal](#).

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