

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to nominate Louise Donovan and Nasibo Kabale for the Anthony Shadid Award for Journalism Ethics. Her reporting is sensitive, impactful, and meets the highest ethical standards.

The idea for this story surfaced following a two-month investigation by The Nation (Kenya's largest newspaper) in August 2019 into Nairobi's polluted river, titled Toxic Flow. The series touched on the dumped fetuses in one sentence, yet didn't expand further on why it might be happening. Donovan, in collaboration with a Kenyan journalist Kabale, looked into how restricted access to prenatal care, contraception and reproductive services is leaving women in increasingly desperate situations.

A link to the story is here: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/women-and-girls/dumped-babies-just-tip-iceberg-deadly-consequences-curbing-reproductive/?WT.mc_id=tmg_share_tw

By highlighting the issue of dumped babies, the reporting risked exposing the women behind the dumping. What they are doing is technically illegal - 'unauthorized' abortions carry a 14-year prison sentence, while infanticide is even higher - yet the situation is more complicated than that. Abortion is still highly stigmatized in Kenya, and women can be ostracized from their families for going through the procedure (let alone abandoning a newborn). There was a risk readers would place the blame on the women, as well as open them up to criminal proceedings from the police/government.

The above issues were discussed at length amongst the reporter and senior editors. Donovan, Kabale, and their colleagues considered various scenarios in which Kenyan women could potentially be blamed, and whether the reporting reinforced this in anyway. Was the story nuanced enough? Did it leave room to be twisted in anyway?

This story already required sensitivity in talking to women who were fearful of speaking out. Many did not want to use their full names. Donovan and Kabale felt this gave the story - and those in it - protection and served to highlight the problem as something systemic (thus removing the opportunity for any legal action). The issue was openly discussed by women who weren't at risk of being arrested for their actions - campaigners, lawyers, NGO workers.

What's more, there is often a lot of support for women who dump their babies, particularly from certain sections of the government. For balance, we ensured the reporting highlighted this sentiment (social services, for example, will often work with a mother to reconnect her with her child).

The reporters' aim was to highlight the government's repeated failure when it comes to women's healthcare, not shame or blame individual women.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jillian Keenan

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My relationship to the story is that the reporter and I both work for the Fuller Project for International Reporting. However, I did not contribute to this story or participate in it at all.

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