



The house in Makindye where Dr Gift wanted to perform the abortion

ABORTION ADVERT LURES GIRLS

Sunday Vision stumbled on an ad in the city announcing 'Legal Abortion' and dispatched an undercover journalist to investigate how abortion can be legal in Uganda. What happened later reveals how vulnerable unsuspecting girls can easily be taken advantage of.

This ad by the roadside at Shell in the city centre was bold. First, it referred to the abortion as legal, which is intriguing. And two, it dared to place a phone contact on an announcement of abortion without fear of arrest. The number is 0788454014. It smelled like a good story.

I tried to find out the registered owner of the phone by sending Mobile Money but I got a message: Resource not found: Call 122 for assistance. When I called 122, an MTN customer care person who identified herself as Belinda explained that the number "is specially registered" and said she was not allowed to reveal the owner's name. When I explained that I was failing to send money to the number, she said the owner has not yet activated the account to receive Mobile Money.

So, I used a google application called True Caller and found it registered in the name of Legal Abortion!

THE INVESTIGATION STARTS
I placed a call and a man answered speaking in an Indian accent. He identified himself as Dr Gift and assured me that I could get safe abortion in 45 minutes. He told me to link up with him on WhatsApp for details.

Five minutes later, we were chatting about the options for the deadly

procedure. Using pills, he explained, would cost me sh166,000 and last 45 minutes. The injection would cost sh184,500 and take 35 minutes. The Vacuum system would cost sh215,000 and take 15 minutes. The cost covered all the other services, including cleaning except he advised me to carry sanitary pads.

We agreed to meet the following day at 10:00am at his clinic in Nakasero, Kampala near Hardware City on Plaza Building, room T15 on the second floor.

MEETING GIFT
At exactly 10:00am, I was at Hardware City. I called Dr Gift to direct me to his office. He told me he was in Makindye attending to a patient, but that he would send a colleague to receive me. About 20 minutes later, a tiny, dark skinned short man with red lips showed up. He spotted a goatee with sideburns and did not look like a medic at all.

He was clad in faded jeans with a black shirt and African sandals and carried with him a travel bag. He seemed to scan the place to see whether I was with someone and he missed my photographer, who also doubled as my guard in case anything went wrong. He asked me the last time I saw my periods and I told him that I could not recall.



The advert promoting abortion services



Opendi said the Police should follow up the case

He wanted the money and I asked if I could see his clinic first. He pointed at Capital House that houses Capital Shoppers in Nakasero. I asked him to take me there so that when I return

the next day, I locate the place with less difficulty. He walked me to Nakasero Medical Centre, but, as we were about to enter, he told me wait for him in

the corridors. Four minutes later, he returned and dismissed me, saying I should come back the following day with money. "Do not worry. We are said in Luganda."

I asked him if it was a painful procedure and he assured me I would not feel a thing. While escorting me down the stairs, he insisted that I call him first before coming to the clinic.

IN A RAPIST DEN
Later that evening, I received a call from Dr Gift apologising for not attending to me, but promising a perfect job. However, this time, he did not sound like an Indian.

We agreed to meet in Nakasero. At 8:00am, Dr Gift called saying we must be at Calendar Gardens in Makindye there. At 11:00am, I was at Calendar Gardens. I was expecting to see the real Dr. Gift, not his colleague. To my surprise, the colleague who showed up was called Dr Mushereme George. My photographer kept in the shadows, following us in a safe camouflage as Dr Mushereme took me to his 'clinic'. From Calendar Gardens, we sloped down and a few minutes later, branched off into a small motorable track. There was an old house by the road in a fence but without a gate. Behind it, it was a boys quarter of four single rooms in a ghetto-like environment. There was a lady washing clothes in front of the first room and my host led me to the second.

There was nothing clinical about the room. There was a mattress, table, charcoal stove, some timber, dining chairs, a basin and hoes. He told me that he rented the place for abortion purposes. He tried to convince me not to use pills because I would get headache, stomachache, fever, diarrhoea and nausea. He advised



The clinic near Uganda Hardware City on Plaza Building is owned by someone else

INTO RAPE DEN

me to use the injection, whose drugs he pulled out. He also got gloves and ordered me to either lie on the shabby mattress or sit on the chair and spread my legs.

I asked him what kind of drugs he was going to give me.

He responded: "Madam omalla obudde! Kiki kyonyanya?" (Madam, you are wasting my time; what exactly do you want?).

He ordered me to remove my bra, I refused. He said he needed to feel my breasts to ascertain how old the pregnancy was and what kind of medicine to give me. I resisted. He asked me to lie down so that he can insert the tablet. I told him I was not comfortable. I said I preferred a clinic environment.

He lost his cool and tried to force me on the bed. I fought him off and made for the door. He grabbed me to pull me back and I shouted for help. He cowed and started asking me whether I had another mission. What baffled me was the woman in the neighbourhood was not bothered by what was going on and continued with her washing of clothes.

He followed me outside and said he had agreed that he would find me a comfortable place. But I just wanted to close the adventure because I had reasonable conviction that the guy wanted to rape me. I told him I had changed my mind and wanted to keep the pregnancy and left as he tried to persuade me to abort.

SMIFFING OUT EVIDENCE
Together with my photographer and guard, we returned to the house and asked neighbours whether they knew him and if he was a doctor. Everyone confirmed that he had never been a doctor. They knew him as Baker and he was a Senior Four dropout in the school, assured me he was not a doctor.

Article 22(2) of the Constitution states: "No person has the right to terminate the life of an unborn child except as may be authorised by law."

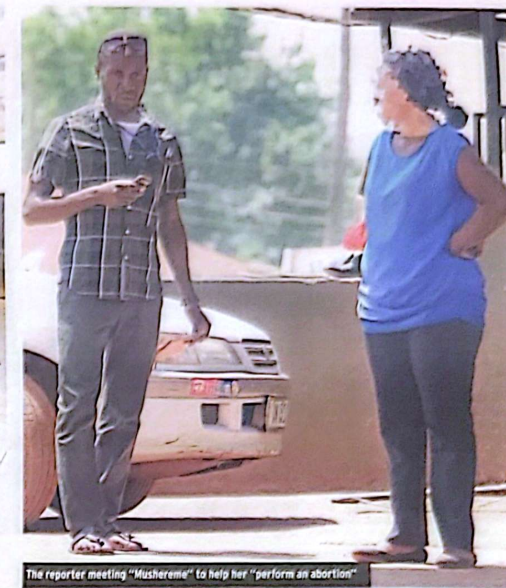
"But ever since he came back from South Africa, he always brings young girls here. But I have never really bothered to ask what he does," he said.

A lady who runs a shop nearby also said she was not a doctor.

"But I heard that he helps girls to abort. In fact some people here call him doctor," he said.

"A lady who runs a shop nearby also said she was not a doctor.

"Maybe he is a witch doctor, we can't know. Those are boys who are making ends meet. They have grown up from here. Their house he took you to is his father's house. That is where they used to stay," she said.



The reporter meeting "Mushereme" to help her "perform an abortion"

Abortion facts

Although abortion is illegal in Uganda, a 2013 brief by the Guttmacher Institute states that abortion rates are the highest in East Africa. Over 775,000 women in Uganda become pregnant unintentionally every year. Over 297,000 illegal abortions are carried out in Uganda annually. Over 150,000 women in Uganda suffer from abortion-related complications annually.

Many fear to go to hospital fearing they may be arrested. Because of all the controversy surrounding abortion, many women suffer silently with post-abortion complications.

Every day Mulago Hospital receives 10-15 women suffering from abortion-related complications. Others are spending a huge chunk of their meagre income on abortion and post-abortion care. It is estimated that over 25% of the maternal death in Uganda are a result of illegal abortions which go wrong. According to a study conducted by Reproductive Health Uganda, providing information, training service providers and providing services in a clean and compassionate environment can all take an immediate first step in reducing maternal mortality.

are common in town who are using their clinic to hoodwink the public. My major focus is cancer. It is sad and heart breaking," said Dr Luwagga, whose business card shows he is consultant at Uganda Cancer Institute. I called MTN again and told them my ordeal. The customer care girl there advised me to go to the Police.

AUTHORITY SPEAKS OUT
Dr Sarah Opendi, the state minister for health in charge of general duties, said the Police should be contacted to investigate because abortion is generally illegal.

"Let the Police start from there. Abortion is only permissible if the mother's life is in danger. Doctors only do it to save a mother's life. You cannot start putting up notice to encourage people to come and abort. It is wrong. We have enough contraceptives in the country, which is free of charge. We are encouraging those who are sexually active to

use these contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Please forward us the details so that we can investigate," she said.

Robert Kalumba, the spokesperson of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), says we should not blame KCCA for everything bad in town. "That is the work of the Police to look for this person pinning unlawful notices," he said. "We are not the ones to handle such issues. Call the Police," Kalumba said.

Police spokesperson, Emilian Kayima, called it unfortunate and unlawful. "We condemn it. But condemnation is not enough. We are going to investigate this issue as soon as possible. We are calling on all girls who have been led to, to come forward and furnish us with evidence. It is regrettable that many, are falling prey to this," he said.

WAY FORWARD
The Ugandan law only allows abortion for health purposes only. Article 22(2) states: "No person has the right to terminate the life of an unborn child except as may be authorised by law." Jackson Chekwoko, the executive director of Reproductive Health Uganda said that according to the guidelines from the Ministry of Health, legal abortion is supposed to be carried out under the supervision of a senior physician.

"That person who is doing it now while hiding is just endangering the lives of Ugandan women. He should be arrested," he said.

Chekwoko noted that many girls are desperate for such services because of unwanted pregnancies. "But we should embrace the position of government until such a time that the law is reviewed. All women who are not in position to look after their unplanned babies should either abstain from sex or use family planning methods," he advised.