

Radio Documentary Award

THE WINNER: Crossing Continents: Uganda

The judges could not fault this programme and it was the unanimous winner. It combined strong journalism with personal testimony in an atmospheric radio soundscape. It was an important story to tell and, because of the unprecedented access, underpinned with first class journalism, it was told brilliantly and movingly.

The programme was compelling and shocking from the arresting opening onwards and never lost momentum. The reporter Tim Whewell always trod a careful and expert line through the material, resisting judgement, sensationalism or sentimentality while never failing to ask the right questions. The programme's access to the range of interviewees and stories was impressive and the editing was sharp. At every turn another new and disturbing story was revealed and this brought a real understanding of the cultural minefield of the new Ugandan society.

The interview with the former witch doctor who admitted he'd killed 70 children including his own son was extraordinary, as was the heartbreaking story of the boy whose penis had been severed.

The programme managed to touch on important themes including family, religion, society, and politics in Uganda without ever seeming crowded. It also had a real sense of ambition for global impact with the accompanying online report and Newsnight feature.

RUNNER UP 1. Dying To Give Birth, BBC World Service

This report conveyed the sheer horror of the difficulties of giving birth in modern day Pakistan bringing surprising and fresh thought to a subject some of the judges felt they knew about. It was a shocking listen and was crafted so expertly as to give the impression of actually standing in the delivery room with those mothers.

The judges felt that it was told in a clear, crisp and accessible style doing a fantastic job of covering all the angles of the story while never becoming sentimental. There was strong journalistic structure throughout the programme and a sense of journey as the presenter Jill McGivering travelled to inaccessible parts of the country. The power of the story lay in the truly appalling human stories and attitudes in contrast to what we might expect from today's Pakistan.

Access to the hospitals and births was very impressive and the central interviewee – Doctor Shah – was a real find. Following her work and hearing her views gave broad insight into the issues and practicalities of the situation. Particular moments stood out – the description of the baby born limb by limb, the interview with the father holding his dead son insisting they would carry on until they had a son, and the moment the presenter asked the mother whose hand she'd held through a birth, what her name was. These moments gave the programme great humanity and heart.

RUNNER UP 2: Journey of a Lifetime, BBC Radio 4

A totally different approach to this category which was a breath of fresh air. The story, although contained within the Carteret Islands, had a global resonance. The judges were caught up in the atmosphere and humanity of this programme. It had none of the traditional journalism that we'd heard in other entries and this was not its aim, but told a story that was compelling and unforgettable. The presenter, Dan Box was young and fresh and his obvious passion shone through his work. His original idea was an impressive one and there was a sense of seeing that dream through, which was engaging. Made with first class, creative production techniques, the programme painted a picture of a community at a turning point. It didn't attempt to always give answers, but managed to open questions in the listeners' minds about the wider context of the story and all our futures.

The programme had a great sense of journey in it, and the presenter really managed to build a rapport with the people he interviewed and spent time with, sometimes in difficult circumstances. The varying qualities of the sound recording added to the charm of the programme and the sounds of the sea, rain, singing etc, were all beautifully woven into the whole to give a sense of place. This is a programme that touches on a human and emotional level and it lives on well after it has been heard.

Jury panel:

CHAIR: Laura Parfitt, Director, White Pebble Media

Neil Thorns, Head of Advocacy, CAFOD

Sharon Banoff, Editor, Weekly Magazine Programmes, BBC Audio & Music

Tamara Abood, Editor, News & Current Affairs, Channel 4

