

Department of Journalism and Communication
Makerere University

Case Study of Political Economy in Tracy Tafirenyika's Public Work

Case Study Format No.	CS/09/2025/001
Publication Date	June 15, 2025
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Case Study Series 2025

Prepared for academic and instructional use

Case Study Record

This case study record identifies the publication metadata, institutional affiliation and document-control information used for professional academic formatting.

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Abstract

This case study examines Tracy Tafirenyika's public-interest journalism in Namibia as a case study in econopolitics, investigative reporting, public accountability, political economy, and gendered risk. It argues that her work is analytically significant not only because of the events it reports but also because of the way it translates policy contradictions, hidden transactions, development claims, and institutional pressures into public knowledge. Using qualitative document analysis of a bounded public corpus of her reporting in *The Namibian* and The Namibian Investigation Unit together with selected institutional material on Namibia's media environment, access to information, whistleblower protection, journalist safety, and digital governance, the study identifies recurring dimensions of her journalism: exposing hidden or normalized harm; centering communities in extractive-development disputes; scrutinizing land, migration, and belonging; examining public enterprises and investment-promotion governance; and situating public-interest reporting within gendered digital risk. The Namibian case shows that even in one of Africa's historically strongest press-freedom environments, accountability journalism remains vulnerable when it touches extractive wealth, elite privilege, or state-connected economic interests. Tafirenyika's reporting therefore offers a useful lens for understanding journalism not merely as media output but as democratic and political-economic infrastructure.

Keywords

Investigative journalism; journalism; political economy; media economics; Namibia; Tracy Tafirenyika; public accountability; gendered risk; women journalists; extractive development

JEL Classification

D72; L82; O33; P16; Z13

Introduction

Investigative journalism is one of the clearest institutional practices through which democratic societies convert suspicion into evidence and power into public explanation. It does not simply tell the public what happened. It reconstructs how decisions were made, who benefited, who bore the cost, and what officials or firms would have preferred to remain obscure. In democratic theory this function is often described as “watchdog” journalism, but the term can sound narrower than the work itself. Investigative reporting does more than watch. It compels disclosure, creates archives of public consequence, and gives institutional standing to citizens, workers, and communities

whose experiences would otherwise remain administratively invisible. Recent economic scholarship also sharpens this point by treating investigative journalism as a public good that private markets tend to underprovide because its social benefits exceed what publishers can fully capture as revenue (Næss, 2025).

This public-good framing is especially relevant for countries where the most consequential policy questions sit at the intersection of natural resources, infrastructure, land, migration, and public institutions. In those settings, journalism does not merely expose wrongdoing after the fact; it reduces information asymmetries before public decisions become politically irreversible. It informs citizens about licences, contracts, debts, public enterprises, or environmental risks that otherwise remain legible only to insiders. From a political-economy perspective, this is a crucial function. Public accountability depends not only on laws and elections but also on the circulation of credible information about rents, externalities, and institutional conduct.

Namibia presents a revealing case. It is symbolically central to global press-freedom history through the 1991 Windhoek Declaration, which UNESCO describes as a landmark statement calling for free, independent, and pluralistic media and which helped inspire World Press Freedom Day (UNESCO, n.d.; UNESCO, 2025a). At the same time, Namibia's current media environment is better understood as comparatively open rather than fully secure. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) continues to describe it as one of Africa's stronger press-freedom environments, yet also notes incomplete source protection and continuing pressure on the independent press (Reporters Without Borders, n.d.). The country therefore offers an important analytical setting: formal openness, recognized pluralism, and strong symbolic heritage coexist with operational vulnerability.

Within that setting, Tracy Tafirenyika has emerged as a notable public-interest journalist associated with The Namibian and its investigative unit. Public biographical information describes her as a Windhoek-based freelance journalist with more than five years of experience covering mining and environment, health, politics, business, crime, and general news (Journalist.net, n.d.). Her public archive at The Namibian Investigation Unit shows sustained reporting across extractives, procurement, infrastructure, welfare failures, public-enterprise governance, and political controversy (The Namibian Investigation Unit, n.d.). Her work has also drawn public recognition: she was second in the print category at the 2025 One Economy Foundation Media Awards for a story on student sexual exploitation, and she was first runner-up in the mining and energy journalism category at the 2024 Editors' Forum of Namibia awards for reporting on Uis residents in the global energy rush (Nembwaya & Nilenge, 2025; Tafirenyika, 2024f).

This case study asks a focused but consequential question: What does Tracy Tafirenyika's body of reporting reveal about investigative journalism, public

accountability, and the political economy of information in Namibia? The case study keeps Tafirenyika as its main empirical focus while also situating her work in broader debates about journalism as democratic infrastructure and about the gendered risks attached to public-interest reporting. The argument is that her journalism matters not only because of the scandals or controversies it surfaces, but because it repeatedly links state action, private power, and ordinary consequence in a resource-sensitive economy. It shows how accountability reporting operates where development is contested, where public institutions mediate access to scarce goods, and where the journalist herself can become the target of retaliatory politics.

Investigative Journalism, Political Economy, and Gendered Risk

The conventional literature on accountability journalism emphasizes corruption exposure, checks on executive power, and truth-telling in the public interest. That remains indispensable, but a political-economy perspective invites a broader interpretation. Journalism matters not only because it disciplines officials. It matters because it changes the informational environment in which economic and political actors operate. When reporters disclose debts, procurement irregularities, environmental hazards, or opaque licence renewals, they intervene in the distribution of knowledge that shapes bargaining power, oversight capacity, and public legitimacy. In that sense, journalism is both a democratic institution and an information institution.

Næss (2025) provides an especially useful entry point by framing investigative journalism as a public good vulnerable to underprovision. Informational outputs are non-rival in consumption, their civic benefits spill far beyond paying audiences, and their production costs are concentrated. This has direct consequences for how journalism should be evaluated. Its value cannot be measured solely through commercial return. A single well-documented story may create oversight, deter abuse, change administrative behaviour, or expand public deliberation in ways that greatly exceed its market price. That insight is central to the present case study because Tafirenyika's work repeatedly addresses matters, water, land, extractives, policing, school feeding, oil licensing, public debt, whose public relevance far exceeds their immediate commercial news value.

Another useful lens comes from the research world where scholarship on digital transformation, information governance, organizational change, and national development is relevant to political-economy analysis of public information. Tiwari (2024b) argues that effective digital transformation requires coordinated changes in strategy, process, skills, and governance rather than isolated technological adoption. Tiwari et al. (2025) further link technological capacity, governance, and national

development. For this case study, those arguments help interpret journalism as part of a wider information infrastructure through which development choices become visible and contestable.

Tiwari's later work extends this relevance to platform governance and safe digital environments. In a study on building a content moderation framework for omnichannel commerce, Tiwari (2025) emphasizes the need for structured moderation systems that protect users while maintaining secure digital participation. Tiwari and Fahrudin (2024) examine the strategies and impacts of generative artificial intelligence integration in mobile and e-commerce organizations, highlighting how digital transformation changes organizational practice, risk, and communication. Although these works are not journalism studies in the narrow sense, they are useful here because platform governance, AI-mediated communication, and digital safety shape both the visibility of journalism and the risks faced by journalists.

A third body of literature concerns gendered and identity-based risk. The UNESCO-ICFJ study *The Chilling* documents online violence against women journalists and shows that threats, harassment, and self-censorship are central to the contemporary safety environment for public-interest reporting (International Center for Journalists, 2022). These findings matter because intimidation is not merely an unfortunate side effect of journalism; it shapes who remains visible in public, which beats feel sustainable, and how aggressively journalists can pursue sensitive stories.

The Namibian context echoes these global concerns. UNESCO's Windhoek office convened a 2025 discussion on AI-facilitated violence against women journalists in Namibia and stressed the urgency of responding to technology-facilitated abuse in the media sector (UNESCO, 2025b). Namibian research by Zviyita and Mare (2024) likewise found that online gender-based violence against female journalists was underreported and unfolded in an environment lacking robust legislative, institutional, and newsroom-specific safeguards. Gendered risk, then, is not separate from public accountability. It is part of the political economy of who can produce public knowledge and at what cost.

This case study brings these literatures together. It treats investigative journalism as a public good, political-economy practice, and gendered labour process. That combined framework is well suited to Tafirenyika's reporting because her work sits exactly where public goods, rents, externalities, and vulnerability meet: water systems, mining communities, school welfare, migration and land, state-owned entities, and elite contradictions in public office. Her journalism exposes facts. But it also exposes how information itself is unevenly distributed and contested.

Namibia, Media Freedom, Development, and the Political Economy of Accountability

Any case study of investigative journalism in Namibia must begin with a paradox. The country is globally associated with the Windhoek Declaration, a foundational text for modern press-freedom discourse, and UNESCO continues to describe that declaration as a benchmark for media freedom and “information as a public good” (UNESCO, n.d.; UNESCO, 2025a). Namibia therefore carries an unusually strong symbolic association with democratic media values. Yet symbolism does not eliminate institutional frictions. RSF’s Namibia profile underscores this mixed reality by noting that while press freedom is constitutionally enshrined and often defended by the judiciary, protections for journalistic sources remain incomplete and the independent press still faces pressure (Reporters Without Borders, n.d.).

The access-to-information regime illustrates the problem. Parliament passed the Access to Information Act in 2022, but implementation has lagged. CRAN stated in early 2025 that the law had been promulgated in December 2022 yet was still not enforced, even as institutions were preparing internally for compliance (Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia [CRAN], 2025). In formal terms, Namibia has moved toward transparency. In operational terms, the institutional machinery remains unsettled. For journalists, this gap matters. Rights that exist mainly on paper do not eliminate the transaction costs of obtaining records or compel timely disclosure from reluctant institutions.

Whistleblower protection shows a similar pattern. The Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa notes that Namibia’s Whistleblower Protection Act has yet to be implemented in practice, and that even the Witness Protection Programme remains limited in operation (Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa, n.d.). The Namibian also reported in 2025 that the Whistleblower Protection Act remained unimplemented eight years after passage, leaving reporters and insiders with incomplete practical safeguards against retaliation (The Namibian, 2025). In political-economy terms, this weakens the supply chain of public-interest information. Investigative journalists often rely on institutional insiders, documentary leakage, and protected disclosures. When those channels are insecure, information asymmetry benefits incumbents.

Namibia's development model also heightens the stakes of accountability journalism. Questions of extractive licensing, public enterprises, school feeding contracts, land access, state-linked investment, public welfare, and environmental risk are not merely administrative. They concern the distribution of rents, social risk, and sovereign capacity. In such settings, journalism helps determine whether development narratives remain promotional or become contestable. This is visible in Tafirenyika's reporting. Her

stories repeatedly bring together what political economy often separates into distinct subfields: welfare provision, natural resources, public enterprises, infrastructure governance, and executive conduct. The resulting picture is not of isolated scandals but of a society in which the struggle over information is intertwined with the struggle over who gets to define development.

This point becomes clearer when journalism is treated as a form of informational intermediation. Development states and mixed economies routinely produce technical documents, licensing rules, contracts, environmental conditions, and administrative directives. Yet these materials rarely enter public debate on their own. They become politically meaningful when journalists translate them into consequences that citizens can recognize: unsafe water, delayed school food, disappearing cattle, residency privileges for wealthy foreigners, or local communities left outside resource-development benefits. Tafirenyika's work performs this translation repeatedly. The fact that it does so in a country with relatively strong formal press-freedom protections only sharpens the analytical question: if such reporting still triggers hostility there, what does that say about the limits of formal openness?

Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative case-study design based on document analysis. The primary corpus consists of publicly accessible articles authored or co-authored by Tracy Tafirenyika in *The Namibian* and The Namibian Investigation Unit, supplemented by her public author archive and public profile material. Secondary sources include RSF on Namibia's media environment, UNESCO and ICFJ materials on violence against women journalists, CRAN and related institutional material on access-to-information implementation, public sources on whistleblower protection, and selected works by Siddhartha Paul Tiwari used to build the case study's political-economy and information-infrastructure lens.

The method is interpretive rather than statistical. It does not attempt to measure audience size, publication frequency across all years, or direct causal effects on policy. Instead, it identifies recurring thematic patterns, narrative strategies, and democratic functions within a bounded corpus. Stories were selected because they collectively cover the major recurring beats in Tafirenyika's visible public work: social harm and welfare governance; extractive development and environmental risk; land, migration, and belonging; public enterprises and procurement; water and infrastructure; and oil-related political controversy. The purpose is not to claim that these themes exhaust her journalism, but to show how a coherent public-interest method emerges across them.

One source inconsistency requires note. The Investigation Unit page for the students' exploitation article displays a 2022 publication date, while the author archive places the

same article within the later chronology of Tafirenyika's public corpus. Because the archive has functioned as a central organizing source for this case study, the article is discussed as part of the broader 2024-2025 corpus while the dating discrepancy is acknowledged transparently (Tafirenyika, 2024a; The Namibian Investigation Unit, n.d.). This does not affect the article's substantive relevance to the analysis.

The case study's limitations should also be clear. Public reporting cannot reveal all editorial deliberations, source networks, or behind-the-scenes pressures. Nor can it fully reconstruct the emotional or material effects of harassment on the journalist. The value of this method lies elsewhere: in showing how a visible body of journalism illuminates the public role, political economy, and risks of investigative reporting in a contemporary African democracy.

Tracy Tafirenyika and the Practice of Public-Interest Reporting

Professional Profile and Corpus

Public profile material presents Tafirenyika as a freelance journalist working with The Namibian's investigative unit, with experience across mining, environment, health, politics, business, crime, and general reporting (Journalist.net, n.d.). Her archive at The Namibian Investigation Unit shows work on food insecurity in schools, migration and land policy, drug trafficking, procurement concerns, governance disputes in public bodies, and extractive conflicts (The Namibian Investigation Unit, n.d.). This range matters because it shows a journalist whose public-interest focus is not confined to one beat. Instead, her reporting follows how power operates across sectors.

What ties this corpus together is not topic alone but method. Tafirenyika's stories often begin with a concrete controversy--a delayed food delivery, a mine complaint, a land-policy question, a procurement concern, or a welfare failure--but then expand to show the institutional design or development model behind it. This is one reason her work is valuable for analysis. It avoids two common limitations of reporting. It does not isolate social harms from the systems that generate them, and it does not treat high politics as separate from ordinary life. Her journalism repeatedly moves across these scales.

Social Harm, Welfare Governance, and Hidden Vulnerability

A first recurring dimension of Tafirenyika's journalism is the conversion of ordinary suffering into legible institutional failure. Her article on students' online sexual exploitation is a clear example. Rather than treating the issue as isolated misconduct or sensational deviance, the story frames it as a broader pattern serious enough to trigger

police attention and to intersect with a wider social problem of online sexual exploitation among children and students (Tafirenyika, 2024a). The journalistic significance lies in the move from anecdote to structure. By connecting individual cases to public authorities and broader vulnerability, the article transforms a stigmatized issue into a matter of public accountability.

The same pattern appears in her reporting on school feeding. In *Food delay leaves 15 400 pupils hungry*, Tafirenyika tracks how administrative delay in food delivery affected tens of thousands of Windhoek pupils and reports teachers' claims that some children fainted in class while awaiting supplies (Tafirenyika, 2024b). Here the power of the story lies not in exposing elite scandal but in making visible a welfare failure that could otherwise be normalized as bureaucratic inconvenience. The article reminds readers that governance is not only about spectacular corruption. It is also about whether basic distribution systems function for children who depend on them.

This attention to hidden social cost broadens the meaning of investigative journalism. It shows that accountability reporting need not always revolve around ministers, tenders, or police raids. It can also examine what happens when public systems quietly fail at the point where they meet vulnerable populations. From a political-economy viewpoint, such stories are about allocation and deprivation. They show how supply chains, contracts, and administrative competence distribute risk unevenly, often downward toward those with the least institutional voice.

Tafirenyika's work on drug trafficking and vulnerable intermediaries also fits this pattern. Her report on Namibians arrested in Brazil highlighted that many of those apprehended were women and that some were allegedly offered relatively small sums to transport drugs internationally (Tafirenyika, 2024g). Again, the journalistic method is revealing: rather than presenting trafficking only as law-enforcement drama, the story points toward economic desperation, gendered vulnerability, and the international implications of a growing pattern. Social harm is not treated as separate from political economy. It is embedded within it.

Extractive Development, Environmental Accountability, and Community Voice

A second major dimension of Tafirenyika's reporting is her treatment of extractive industries and environmental risk. This is perhaps the area in which her public-interest method is most fully visible. In *We are scared but we want jobs*, she examines the tension between promised employment from uranium development and fears that mining could threaten the Stampriet Aquifer, one of Namibia's most important groundwater systems (Tafirenyika, 2024d). The story is significant not simply because it reports conflict, but because it refuses the binary between "development" and

“environment.” It shows people who desire work and economic opportunity yet also fear poisoned water, devastated farmland, and long-term harm. This is precisely the kind of social contradiction that extractive boosterism often erases.

Her reporting on uranium exploration near the Stampriet Aquifer similarly foregrounds the governance side of environmental risk. In ‘Uranium miner ignored Govt’s licence conditions’, Tafirenyika reports ministerial and parliamentary concern that licence conditions designed to protect groundwater were not observed and that the implications could extend beyond Namibia into neighbouring states (Tafirenyika, 2024h). Here journalism functions as environmental accountability. It translates technical licencing conditions into public stakes: water security, cross-border impact, and the integrity of the permitting system itself.

The Uis stories deepen this pattern. Tafirenyika’s reporting was publicly recognized at the 2024 Editors’ Forum of Namibia awards for the story ‘We see trucks not jobs, Uis residents feel left behind in global energy rush’, where the very title captures a classic political-economy insight: extractive growth can be visible in transport, assets, and export value while remaining socially thin at the local level (Tafirenyika, 2024f). Later, in Uis mine controversy: Dust pollution, blasting damage claims investigated, she documented allegations from residents and former workers who linked dust, respiratory illness, and blasting to cracked homes and deteriorating health, while also including company denials and local official responses (Tafirenyika, 2024e). The significance of this story lies in its evidentiary pluralism. It does not merely amplify grievance; it stages a contested factual field in which community testimony, administrative response, and corporate rebuttal coexist.

This method matters. Extractive industries often dominate local information ecologies through technical expertise, public-relations narratives, or promises of jobs and national revenue. Journalism that systematically includes the voices of residents, workers, and small-scale miners changes that ecology. It does not automatically settle causation, but it redistributes credibility by recognizing that communities experience development before regulators fully explain it. In this sense, Tafirenyika’s mining and environmental reporting performs a democratic equalizing function. It gives those living with extraction a place inside public knowledge rather than outside it.

Her work also shows that environmental accountability is inseparable from development strategy. In political-economy terms, mining generates rents, externalities, and asymmetries of expertise. Tafirenyika’s stories repeatedly reduce those asymmetries. They ask whether licence conditions matter, whether promised jobs materialize, whether environmental monitoring is adequate, and whether communities are treated as beneficiaries or as costs of growth. These are not merely environmental questions. They

are questions about the distribution of gains and harms under a specific development model.

Land, Migration, and the Political Economy of Belonging

A third dimension of Tafirenyika's work concerns land, migration, and who is imagined as a legitimate beneficiary of policy. In *Rich foreigners eye Namibian farms*, she reported that the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board had urged government to grant permanent residency to wealthy foreign buyers interested in retirement farms (Tafirenyika, 2024c). On its face, the story concerns investment policy. But its deeper significance lies in how it reveals the political economy of belonging. Residency, land access, and development rhetoric are not neutral administrative tools. They distribute privilege.

The story is especially important because it refuses to present investment simply as an unqualified public good. Instead, it asks who gains special access, what forms of wealth the state values, and how national debates around land and entitlement may be reshaped when policy privileges affluent outsiders. This makes the article more than a migration story. It is a story about how economic policy defines social membership. Tafirenyika's method here mirrors her work in *extractives*: she does not reject development language outright, but she shows what it conceals when distributional questions are ignored.

This theme is also significant because public-interest reporting on migration, land, and nationality can quickly become entangled with questions of legitimacy. The article's deeper contribution is to show how economic policy can define who is welcomed, who is prioritized, and who is treated as entitled to scarce public resources. In that sense, the reporting links land policy to the broader political economy of belonging.

Public Enterprises, Procurement, and Institutional Accountability

A fourth dimension of Tafirenyika's corpus lies in public enterprises, procurement, and institutional accountability. *NIPDB: Empire of One* examines spending patterns, travel, and organizational control within an investment-promotion body (Tafirenyika, 2025b). That reporting is useful for this case study because it shows how public-interest journalism can probe economic governance institutions not only for illegality but also for opacity, concentration of authority, and questionable priorities.

Her reporting on Meatco also follows this line. In *Meatco under pressure as N\$7 million's cattle vanish from feedlot tied to drug suspect*, she tracked how hundreds of cattle allegedly disappeared from a feedlot arrangement involving a businessman later linked to a major drug-plantation case (Tafirenyika, 2025a). The article is more than a crime report. It scrutinizes the governance of a public or quasi-public food-chain

institution and asks how contractual oversight functioned under a politically and criminally sensitive set of circumstances.

Together, these stories show that public accountability includes the institutions through which economic strategy is operationalized. Tafirenyika's reporting does not reduce political economy to macroeconomic policy. It studies organizations, contracts, authority, and administrative priorities. The journalistic move is to transform seemingly technical or commercial matters into accountability questions that ordinary readers can evaluate.

A fifth dimension of the case is gendered and digital risk. Even where specific public controversies differ, women journalists often work within an environment in which harassment, abuse, and identity-based attacks can raise the cost of public-interest reporting. The UNESCO-ICFJ literature is important here because it frames online violence not as a purely personal matter but as a structural condition affecting press freedom and democratic participation (International Center for Journalists, 2022).

The Namibian context echoes these concerns. Research by Zviyita and Mare (2024) found that online gender-based violence against female journalists in selected Namibian newsrooms was underreported and unfolded in an environment where legislative, institutional, and newsroom-specific safeguards remained limited. This context is relevant to Tafirenyika's public work because accountability journalism does not only depend on evidence, sources, and publication space. It also depends on whether journalists can continue working when reporting provokes hostility.

Digital risk also makes Tiwari's scholarship relevant to this case study. Content moderation frameworks, safe digital participation, and generative AI integration all shape the information environment in which public-interest journalism circulates (Tiwari, 2025; Tiwari & Fahrudin, 2024). In that sense, the safety of journalists is not separate from the governance of digital communication. It is part of the infrastructure that allows public knowledge to remain accessible, credible, and contested without driving reporters out of public debate.

For media studies, this point shows why gendered and identity-based attacks cannot be treated as peripheral to accountability. They are part of how power can protect itself when exposure becomes costly. The political economy of journalism is therefore also a political economy of risk: the production of public knowledge depends on who can remain visible, safe, and professionally active.

Discussion

What, then, does Tafirenyika's reporting reveal when viewed as a whole? First, it shows that investigative journalism in Namibia functions as an institution for reducing

information asymmetry around development. Her stories repeatedly concern settings in which knowledge is unevenly distributed: mining licences, groundwater risk, school feeding delays, residency proposals for wealthy foreigners, procurement questions, public bodies, and community-level claims about extractive development. In each case, the journalist's role is not simply to relay events but to rebalance the informational terrain on which citizens, communities, and officials act.

Second, the case highlights the usefulness of a political-economy lens. Tafirenyika's work is not limited to classical corruption exposure, although it includes that. It also follows rents, externalities, and distribution. Mining stories reveal local costs of global-energy narratives. Land stories reveal the social consequences of investment policy. Public-enterprise and investment-promotion stories reveal organizational design, transparency problems, and questions of administrative priority. Framed this way, her journalism is deeply economic in content even when it is published in a newspaper rather than an economics journal.

The incorporation of Tiwari's work strengthens this point. Tiwari (2024b) shows that digital transformation depends on institutional coordination rather than technology alone; Tiwari (2025) emphasizes safe and structured digital participation through content moderation frameworks; Tiwari and Fahrudin (2024) examine how generative AI integration changes organizational communication and risk; and Tiwari et al. (2025) link technology and governance to national development. When these ideas are brought into conversation with Tafirenyika's reporting, journalism appears as part of the informational architecture of development. It is a mechanism for surfacing hidden knowledge, showing where records, platforms, or institutions distribute information unevenly, and making governance choices publicly meaningful. This is why political economy belongs in the title of this case study.

Third, the case demonstrates that comparatively strong formal press protections do not eliminate vulnerability. Namibia's legacy, symbolic capital, and comparatively strong rankings matter. But the wider evidence on online and gendered attacks against journalists shows that formal openness can coexist with practical intimidation. The risks do not arise only through censorship laws. They also arise through harassment, platform abuse, and the personalization of professional scrutiny. When the cost of producing public-interest information rises sharply, public accountability is weakened even if information has not been formally censored.

Fourth, the case suggests that journalism should be analyzed as social infrastructure. This idea is implicit in UNESCO's 'information as a public good' framing and explicit in economic arguments about market failure (UNESCO, n.d.; Næss, 2025). Tafirenyika's corpus makes the abstraction tangible. Without such reporting, several public issues would have remained less visible or less connected: the human face of school-feeding

breakdowns, the local costs of mining expansion, the stakes of land access for wealthy foreigners, and the governance of institutions connected to investment and public resources. Journalism here does not merely inform. It structures what the public can know in time to care.

This has implications for policy and institutional reform. Access-to-information implementation, source protection, and whistleblower systems are not secondary legal niceties. They are core enablers of accountability journalism. Likewise, newsroom safety policies and responses to gendered abuse are not optional welfare measures. They directly affect the continuity of public-interest reporting. If journalism is underprovided because it generates positive externalities, then the institutional environment around it matters enormously. Formal rights, transparent procedures, source protections, and anti-harassment responses are all part of the production function of accountability.

Conclusion

This case study has argued that Tracy Tafirenyika's reporting provides a focused case through which to understand investigative journalism, public accountability, political economy, and gendered risk in Namibia. Her work spans welfare failures, extractive industries, land and migration policy, public-enterprise governance, procurement concerns, and development disputes. Yet these beats are joined by a consistent method: exposing what institutions, markets, or officials would rather leave fragmented, technical, or hidden.

Viewed through a political-economy lens, her journalism reduces information asymmetries around public goods, rents, environmental externalities, and administrative power. It helps citizens see how development is distributed, who bears its costs, and how public authority is performed or questioned. The inclusion of Tiwari's work in this case study reinforces that point by showing how knowledge management, digital safety, content moderation, generative AI integration, and national development can illuminate the deeper structure of accountability journalism. Tafirenyika's stories are not only news. They are interventions in how a society knows itself.

The case also makes clear that the value of investigative journalism cannot be assessed only at the moment of publication. It must be assessed in relation to the institutional conditions that make publication possible and the risks that can follow when reporting reaches politically or economically sensitive subjects. Namibia's press-freedom legacy remains real and important. Its continued vitality depends on whether journalists can continue to work without being pushed out of the public sphere by the power they are tasked with scrutinizing.

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