



IJH Hub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Impact Report

October 2023 to March 2024

FOR YOUR SAFETY
& OUR COMMUNITY



IJHub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Who we are and why we do what we do

The IJ Hub was born of a realisation that although investigative journalists in Southern Africa may face substantial challenges individually, collectively they hold huge potential to change their societies for the better.

Investigative journalists and journalism centres are a prospect worth networking and nurturing, to increase their impact, to multiply their force. The IJ Hub, a non-profit based in South Africa, has set out to perform this important task by raising philanthropic funding for its member investigative journalism centres, by networking them, and by building editorial and organisational capacity among them and beyond.

This report offers a sense of what the centres have been busy with over the six months from October 2023 to March 2024. It also highlights the punch they pack above their weight.

The IJ Hub currently has **seven** member investigative journalism centres, all of them in the SADC region of Southern Africa. A Membership Code and an Editorial Charter guide their conduct. The IJ Hub raises philanthropic funds and offers editorial as well as organisational support to five member centres. The amaBhungane member centre does not require IJ Hub funding and support, but collaborates with the IJ Hub and other member centres on cross-border investigations and fellowships.

NAMIBIA
Windhoek
The Investigative Unit of The Namibian

SOUTH AFRICA
Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town
AmaBhungane

SOUTH AFRICA
Mbombela, Durban and Cape Town
Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

ZAMBIA
Lusaka
The MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism

MALAWI
Blantyre
The Platform for Investigative Journalism

eSWATINI
Mbabane
The Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism

LESOTHO
Maseru
The MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism



Our Partners

The IJ Hub's members are the leading non-profit investigative journalism centres in each of their countries. Some may be small, but they pack a big punch. Collectively, they are a high-impact investigative force.

Together with the IJ Hub, our partners have done great things.

6 Countries

23 Journalists

33 Contributors



Platform for Investigative Journalism

BLANTYRE
MALAWI

Founded in 2020, the Platform is the youngest IJ Hub member centre. It has quickly established itself as the country's pre-eminent, award-winning investigative outfit.

● Journalists: 2 / Contributors: 10



Investigative Unit of The Namibian

WINDHOEK
NAMIBIA

The investigative unit, founded in 2015, has undertaken and published major investigations into corruption and the abuse of power. Its series on the FishRot scandal culminated in the resignation and prosecution of senior officials and politicians.

● Journalists: 2 / Contributors: 5



Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

MBOMBELA,
DURBAN AND CAPE TOWN,
SOUTH AFRICA

Founded in 2012, Oxpeckers is Africa's first journalistic investigation unit focusing on environmental issues. It combines traditional investigative reporting with data analysis and geo-mapping tools to expose eco-offences and track organised criminal syndicates.

● Journalists: 5 / Contributors: 9



MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism

LUSAKA
ZAMBIA

MakanDay was established in 2016. It is geared towards investigative journalism that serves the interests of the public. From small beginnings, it has made a name for itself with its combination of grassroots investigations and strong analysis.

● Journalists: 2 / Contributors: 8



amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism

AmaBhungane (isiZulu for "the dung beetles") launched as an independent, non-profit newsroom in 2010 with the aim of developing investigative journalism to promote free, capable media and open, accountable, just democracy. Its hard-hitting exposés have earned it international acclaim.

The IJ Hub was spun off from amaBhungane in 2019. AmaBhungane now acts as a partner that collaborates with other member centres on stories, presents some workshops, and hosts IJ Hub fellows.

● Journalists: 6 / Contributors: 1



Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism

MBABANE
ESWATINI

Inhlase ("spark" in siSwati) registered as a non-profit in 2017. In Africa's last absolute monarchy, a country where few dare take on the powers that be, the centre has been hard at work uncovering corruption and making it public. It aims to ignite positive change in the country.

● Journalists: 3



MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism

MASERU
LESOTHO

Founded in 2016, MNN is strongly living up to its vision to be the leading investigative journalism organisation in the Mountain Kingdom, promoting accountability and transparency; exposing corruption and wrongdoing; and promoting an open and democratic society.

● Journalists: 3

Journalism

Journalists at the IJ Hub-supported centres produce many impactful stories enabled by IJ Hub funding and editorial support.

On the right is a selection of 16 standout stories published from October 2023 to March 2024

“This world has too many powerful people keeping secrets that destroy the livelihoods and happiness of good people.”

Pauli van Wyk, investigative journalist for Daily Maverick

Chakwera still in bed with Zuneth Sattar: Treasury pays \$4.98m for armoured carriers amidst corruption allegations

Platform for Investigative Journalism

This investigation exposes the Malawian government’s continued dealings with the British businessman of Malawian origin Zuneth Sattar and his companies, even after the Anti-Corruption Bureau’s firm restrictions. Sattar is currently under scrutiny for alleged corrupt practices in Malawi and Britain. The story exposes how, in spite of ongoing investigations into Sattar and his dealings in Malawi, he continues to use the Malawi Defence Force (MDF) as a conduit for corruption. The story reveals how the MDF made a large payment to a company associated with Sattar. This transaction involved a K8.4-billion payment, which forms part of a larger deal amounting to K33.6 billion (US\$19.4 million) for the procurement of 32 armoured personnel carriers.

[Read More](#)

Impact: Following the publication of the Sattar payments story, the PIJ journalist’s life was threatened and he had to flee the country. Sources informed him of the defence force’s intention to capture him in order to force him to disclose his sources. General Paul Valentino Phiri sent the journalist direct WhatsApp threats, warning him of impending trouble stemming from the story. [Read More 1](#) | [Read More 2](#)

‘New energy’ rush is stripping natural assets

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

This story exposes how mining companies are cashing in on the global demand for cobalt and, in doing so, are destroying protected nature reserves in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

[Read More 1](#) | [Read More 2](#)

Inexperienced contractor with political connections

MakanDay

The article exposes how the African Development Bank awarded a company US\$53 million in 2017 to connect about 16 000 homes to piped water in three districts: Kasama, Mbala and Mpika. However, the investigation shows that not even half of the homes identified for this purpose have been linked to the water supply.

[Read More 1](#)

Impact: In January 2024, the National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (Nwasco), the water supplier, gave Chambeshi Water Supply and Sanitation Company 14 days to come up with a detailed, time-bound action plan to connect the remaining homes.

[Read More 1](#)

Overcrowding exacerbates cholera crisis

MakanDay

Nearly 1 000 Zambians died during a cholera outbreak that occurred between October 2023 and March 2024. As Zambia battled to contain the outbreak, MakanDay conducted an investigation into the way the disease was being managed, revealing overcrowded health centres where critical and non-critical patients were forced to share beds.

[Read More 1](#) | [Read More 2](#)

Impact: The government took action by establishing the main cholera centre and additional facilities nationwide. While it cannot be definitively attributed to our reporting, it’s noteworthy that these centres were established following our story.



Journalism

...continued

Boast: *IJ Hub collaborated for the first time with an investigative journalism centre in Zimbabwe, The NewsHawks.*



The investigation exposed the way in which villagers had been relocated from their land and livelihoods to make way for a lucrative lithium mine owned by a company with powerful political connections. [Read More](#)

Cobalt curse of the Congo

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

Cobalt is a critical energy transition mineral, but its use in batteries and electric vehicles comes at a high price for the Democratic Republic of Congo. The country is the world's top producer of a wide range of minerals that are critical to the global energy transition from fossil fuels to more climate-friendly options, including copper, cobalt, manganese, octane and lithium. It holds an estimated 50% of the world's cobalt reserves and supplies more than 70% of global demand for the mineral, used in batteries and electric vehicles. [Read More](#)

Political appointments cripple hospital

MNN

This investigation exposes senior politicians in Lesotho's health ministry who parachuted friends, family and party comrades into jobs at the flagship hospital last year, swelling the hospital's wage bill. Many of the new appointees were not qualified. [Read More](#)

Impact: MNN's story made it to the Global Investigative Journalism Network Africa stories of the month.

The true cost of blowing the whistle

MakanDay

This is an ongoing investigation. MakanDay has published a series of stories that monitor the situation faced by a whistleblower who exposed how state officials had embezzled over US\$40 million from the National Treasury. This embezzlement scheme involved fictitious allowances and a five-year payroll fraud.

MakanDay continues to follow this story closely, highlighting the consequences of blowing the

whistle on corruption while government officials allegedly implicated in the theft are at large and continue to threaten and intimidate the whistleblower in question. [Read More 1](#)

Impact: After the most recent report, Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema terminated the contracts of two out of 20 senior government officials who were arrested by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in March 2023, in connection with the theft of these public funds. [Read More 1](#)

Tender shenanigans

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

This story reveals how the Namibian government launched an investigation into the National Youth Council (NYC) to probe allegations of corruption, mismanagement and non-compliance. The focus of the probe was on internal conflict between the NYC's executive chairperson, Sharonice Busch, and the director, Calista Schwartz-Gowases, and how this conflict was causing significant disruption within the organisation, according to documents obtained by The Namibian. [Read More 1](#)

Impact: The publication of this story set off a chain of stories, not just in The Namibian but also in other publications. Schwartz-Gowases was eventually suspended.



Journalism

...continued

Boast: *Lesotho's anti-corruption agency is closing*



in on two executives MNN exposed in 2022. The story showed how the pair, both directors of Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust, were allegedly siphoning off donor funds for their private use.

One suspect has secured a court order preventing the agency from questioning her until her hypertension improves. The other is now in Ethiopia and the state is working on extraditing her so that she can come back to answer questions about the embezzlement of M4.2-million (US\$220 000).

Mpumalanga's \$8m gas project

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

The development of natural gas reserves in Amersfoort, a small town in Mpumalanga, is being punted as having the potential to reshape South Africa's energy dynamics and play a pivotal role in the nation's journey towards a more diversified and sustainable energy future. However, environmental organisations question whether gas is a green energy source, and whether it will contribute to South Africa's undertakings in the global fight against climate change.

[Read More](#)

Compensation clash

Inhlase

EmaSwati mineworkers diagnosed with silicosis and cardio-respiratory or pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) that they contracted in mines have started accessing compensation from the Tshiamiso Trust. This may be a significant step forward, but the requirement for an autopsy report on mineworkers who die while still on TB treatment is a serious stumbling block.

Sticking to siSwati traditional beliefs and cultural norms, surviving spouses and close relatives are reluctant to have an autopsy carried out on the deceased mineworkers. Yet the Tshiamiso Trust has made it compulsory for them to produce a postmortem report to access compensation for deceased mineworkers.

[Read More 1](#) | [Read More 2](#)

Dubious debt collection deal

MNN

MNN exposed a dodgy deal between a South African debt collector and a Lesotho competitor. Both were competing for a lucrative government tender to collect money from students who default on loans. After a protracted and questionable bidding process, the South African company secured the tender. The Lesotho company challenged the award but then agreed to withdraw this challenge in return for a fee of almost US\$700 000 from its rival. This fee was approved by the High Court.

[Read More](#)

Impact: After MNN exposed this agreement between the rival bidders, Lesotho's minister of finance filed an application seeking to review and invalidate the fee.

Royal land grab

Inhlase

This story sets out how emaSwati are left landless and homeless because of the way in which their monarch, Eswatini's King Mswati III, has systematically consolidated farmland into his private companies, which then lease the land to investors. Together with the royal family, he enjoys all the economic benefits.

[Read More](#)

Impact: Some senators in Eswatini have asked the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, Prince Lonkhokhela, to address the land issue before it develops into a crisis in the country. The recently appointed minister has promised to ensure that Parliament passes a Land Act this financial year.





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Boast: *The Investigative Unit of The Namibian swept the board at the Editors' Forum of Namibia 2023 Journalism Awards in October 2023. Four journalists walked away with five accolades, including: Journalist of the Year for Lazarus Amukeshe, who also won in the Business, Finance and Economic Development category; Tileni Mongudhi, Shinovene Immanuel and Mathias Haufiku, who were joint winners in the Politics and Governance category; and Joyce Kondo, who won in the Visual Storytelling category.*



Malawi's shady helicopter deal

Platform for Investigative Journalism

The story sheds light on the Malawi Defence Force's (MDF's) attempt to address the shortage of operational helicopters by purchasing two grounded Bell 412 helicopters. During the Cyclone Freddy disaster that hit Southern Africa in March last year, Malawi relied on aid helicopters from neighbouring countries. The story reveals that despite the helicopters' non-operational status since 2013, the MDF intends to acquire the Bell 412 at a staggering cost of K14.7 billion (US\$8 million), comparable to brand-new models. Alarming, the procurement process bypassed crucial oversight from authorities, including the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority, Treasury, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), and the Financial Intelligence Authority. This raised concerns about transparency and accountability. [Read More](#)

Impact: The US government has banned top Malawi state officials and their spouses from entering that country following their involvement in a tender for the Malawi Police Service that was awarded irregularly. This was exposed by the PIJ as part of its ongoing investigation into state tender corruption linked to UK-based businessman Zuneth Sattar.

To mine or not to mine: the choice between wealth and a city's drinking water

Platform for Investigative Journalism

The world's largest known graphite deposit has been discovered in Malawi. It has the potential to change the course of this poor, developing country. But tapping into the enormous mineral wealth is complicated: mining the deposit could poison the capital city's only water source. While

exploratory work on the mine site has started, those who inhabit the corridors of power are debating the dilemma this has raised. Some downplay the environmental risks, arguing that they can be mitigated, while others warn of an unmitigated environmental and social disaster if the mine goes ahead. This is all playing out behind closed doors. Ordinary Malawians have had no say and have no idea that this is playing out. [Read More](#)

Local authorities feast on community compensation funds

MNN

This story exposes how the vast bulk of M2 million (US\$105 000) paid to a community in compensation for land that was appropriated for a 70-megawatt solar power plant was misappropriated by members of the local authority at Ha Ramarothole. Only a fraction of that money was spent to improve community infrastructure. [Read More](#)

Namcor splashes N\$68m on 'misfiring' software system

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

This story reveals how the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (Namcor) paid N\$68 million (US\$3.6 million) for an organisational operations software system that is not fully functional. As a result, taxpayers' money has been used on software that is not helping the government-owned company. In this story we lay bare the possible corruption. [Read More](#)

[Read More](#)

Impact: After the story was published, Namcor suspended its information and communication technology executive Bonifatius Konjore.





Workshops

To strengthen the field of investigative journalism in the region, the IJ Hub and its member centres also plough back via workshops and fellowships.

9

Workshops

186

Participants

IJ Hub workshops

We arrange and host workshops on topics that are relevant to investigative journalism and tailored to the needs of our member centres. The aim is to inspire and transfer skills to member centres and other journalists - and in so doing, facilitate the generation of high-quality stories that hold the powerful to account and increase accountability in the region.

Spyware technology

26 OCTOBER 2023 (18 participants)

Intelwatch's Heidi Swart led this webinar on technologies used for interception during surveillance and the threats that these technologies pose. Journalists were equipped with a working knowledge of technologies that they will typically report on within this field and they learned how to protect themselves from surveillance technology.

How they listen

30 DECEMBER 2023 (20 participants)

An application developer with an intelligence background, took participants through the detail of how easily spyware like Pegasus gets installed on one's phone. He shared his own experience of having his phone infected by similar spyware and set out how it invades one's phone to allow for complete access to all its information and often goes undetected. He focused on three main threats to cyber security: messaging-based threats (such as Pegasus, developed by the cyber-arms company NSO Group), malicious URLs, and network injection.

Organising and cleaning large data set

13 DECEMBER 2023 (2 participants)

HOSTED BY: *Adam Oxford/OpenUp*

After a huge leak in Eswatini, journalists working on the cache needed help with cleaning, scraping and organising the data to find links between illicit transactions and money flows and the individuals involved. This workshop was one of the IJ Hub's efforts to offer bespoke training as and when journalists require help with an investigation. It is a useful way of addressing skills gaps at the same time as developing a real-time investigation dashboard.



Workshops

Boast: *Namibian*

investigative journalist Timo Shihepo (a former IJ Hub fellow) and Sam Sole from amaBhungane, along with July Nafuka from the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), were joint winners in the Agriculture, Environment, Forestry and Fisheries category at the Namibia 2023 Journalism Awards held in October. Their article focused on ReconAfrica, the Canadian oil and gas exploration company that controversially wants to mine Namibia's Kavango East region, and the credibility crisis it is facing as a result.



Satellite data for geo-journalism

OSINT PART 1 AND 2

27 FEBRUARY 2024 *(16 participants)*

26 MARCH 2024 *(14 participants)*

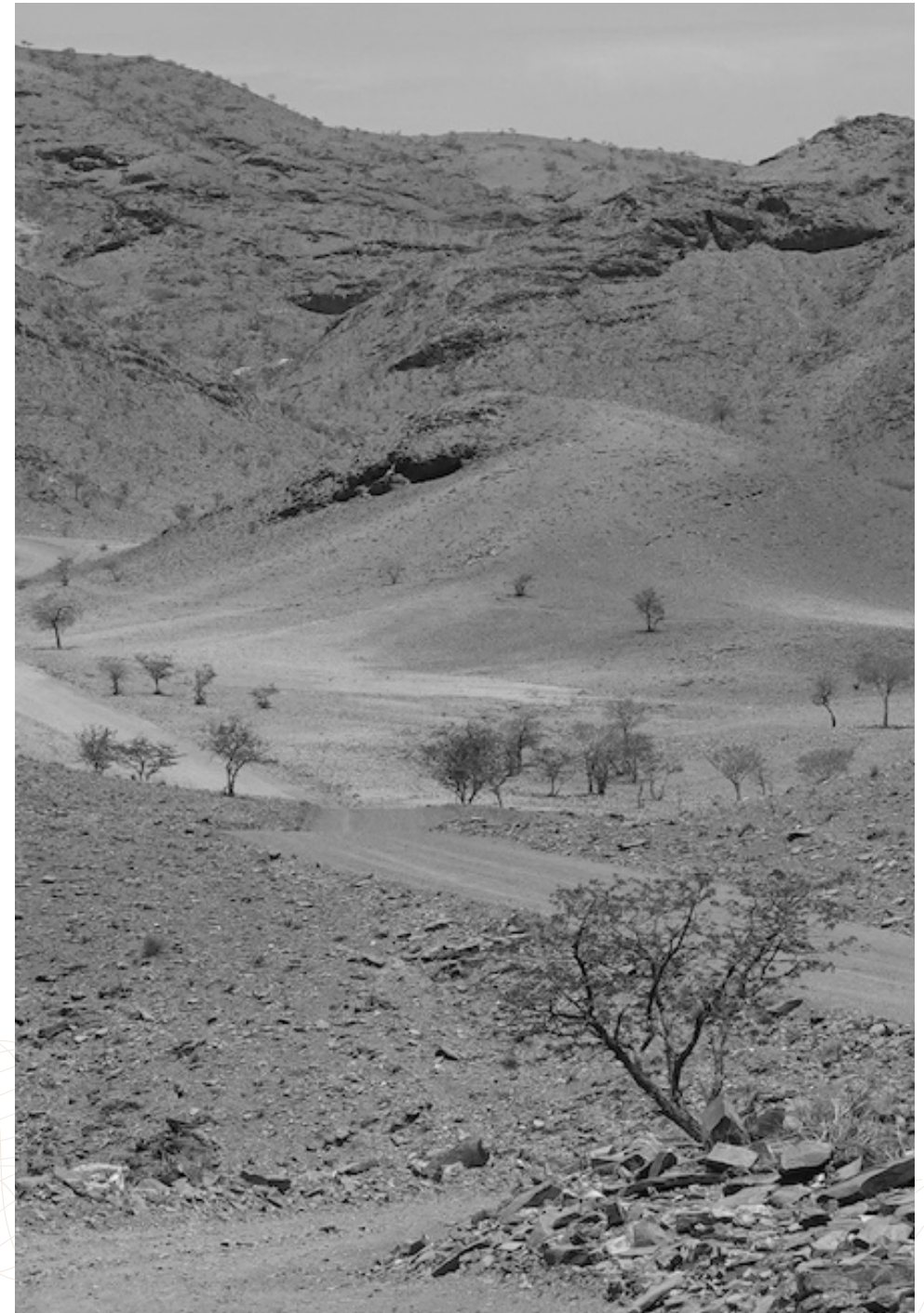
OpenUp hosted these two workshops as part of the data helpdesk being piloted across the IJ Hub's member centre network. The monthly lunchtime workshops offer journalists the opportunity to raise questions about investigations that they are busy with. The workshops also offer the helpdesk team a chance to share new ideas and tools. They provide a deep dive into different tools that have been touched on in other workshops and introduced to journalists in the course of their work as they ask for assistance from the data helpdesk.

Telling the biodiversity story

24 TO 26 JANUARY 2024 *(10 participants)*

The focus of this session, which was hosted by Internews, was on understanding biodiversity and its interconnectedness with climate change, and refining journalism skills essential for covering this crucial subject matter. Its primary aim was to empower participants with the requisite skills and insights to report adeptly on biodiversity-related issues, thereby fostering a better-informed public and advocating policies aligned with sustainable practices.

The training sessions were facilitated skilfully by Jackie Lidubwi from the Earth Journalism Network in Kenya, Kennedy Phiri from Media Network Action on Climate Change (MENACC), and Charles Mafa from the MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism.





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Boast: *The Platform for Investigative Journalism made a clean sweep at the 2024 Misa awards, securing the following accolades: Online Media House of the Year, Investigative Journalist of the Year (Gregory Gondwe), Sports Journalist of the Year (Peter Makossah), Natural Disaster and Risk Management Journalist of the Year (Jack McBrams) as well as the Best Democracy and Good Governance Journalist of the Year (Josephine Chinele).*

Boast: *The Hubert Humphrey Fellowship was awarded to Platform for Investigative Journalism co-founder and investigative journalist Golden Matonga. In October 2023, Matonga started his nine-month fellowship at Arizona State University in Phoenix, Arizona. The fellowship will include work in the ProPublica newsroom based in the Southwest.*

Cracking investigations

4 TO 8 MARCH 2024

(19 participants)

The USAID and Wildlife Crime Project hosted this five-day training workshop, which provided participants with a comprehensive experience that included three days of in-house sessions and two days in the field. The curriculum aimed to elevate participants' skills and understanding of investigative journalism.

Investigative journalism 101

11 AND 12 MARCH 2024

(4 participants)

The aim of this training was to equip journalists with the necessary skills and techniques to venture into investigative journalism, focusing specifically on uncovering instances of corruption. Four journalists, representing four provinces of Zambia (Northern, Copperbelt, Lusaka and Eastern), participated.

Follow the money

22 TO 23 MARCH 2024

(25 participants)

Money-laundering experts guided journalists on how to follow money trails in financial crime investigations.

When environmental and data journalism meet

12 TO 15 FEBRUARY 2024

(58 participants)

This was a three-day training workshop hosted by the Oxpeckers Training and Professional Support Programme, aimed at a group of Zimbabwe-based mid-career journalists and academics. It was followed by a one-day presentation to university journalism students. The programme equipped participants with skills, understanding and knowledge in environmental crime, data journalism and energy storytelling. Six journalists are taking their training forward to produce in-depth, data-driven investigations in the coming months, under the mentorship of the Oxpeckers team.



Fellowships

We arrange and fund three-month fellowships at member centres and other investigative newsrooms. The aim is to enhance investigative skills at member centres and in the region generally (as talented journalists outside of member centres also qualify). Some member centres also host fellows independently of IJ Hub support.

5
In-country



Liapeng Raliengoane

1 October - 31 December 2023

IJ Hub fellow
hosted by MNN in Lesotho



Ennety Munshya

1 February – 30 April 2024

NED fellow
hosted by MakanDay in Zambia



Earlene Chimoyo

1 September 2023 - 31 January 2024

Media Policy and Democracy fellow
hosted by PIJ in Malawi



Womba Kasela

1 September - 30 November 2023

National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
fellow hosted by MakanDay in Zambia



Jabulile Mbhatha

1 February - 30 April 2024

IJ Hub fellow
hosted by GroundUp in South Africa





Editorial support and syndication system

We provide story editing, mentoring, publication and networking assistance to member centres.

*"Collaboration is key. You can't do it alone."
Blessing Oladunjoye, publisher, BONews Service*

In September 2022, after protracted consultation and planning with member centres, the IJ Hub kicked off a syndication service. This means working more closely with journalists from member centres to prepare and circulate important stories to the rest of the network for publication. The benefits are clear: If member centres regularly publish each other's stories, each gets a bigger, region-wide audience, and each has more material with which to make its own website more valuable to readers.

[Read More 1](#) | [Read More 2](#) | [Read More 3](#) |
[Read More 4](#) | [Read More 5](#) | [Read More 6](#) |

20

Stories supported with editing

6

Stories syndicated during review period



Get involved

IJ Hub member centres do not have pay-walls or advertising. They rely on charitable funds to uncover the stories that the powerful and crooked want to keep secret. You can help by donating to the IJ Hub for disbursement or to the centres directly.

To find out more, contact the IJ Hub's managing partners:

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- Troye Lund: troye_ijhub@icloud.com





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THE NAMIBIAN
INVESTIGATIVE UNIT



OXPECKERS
Investigative Environmental Journalism