



# IJHub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

## Impact Report

Oct 2021 to March 2022





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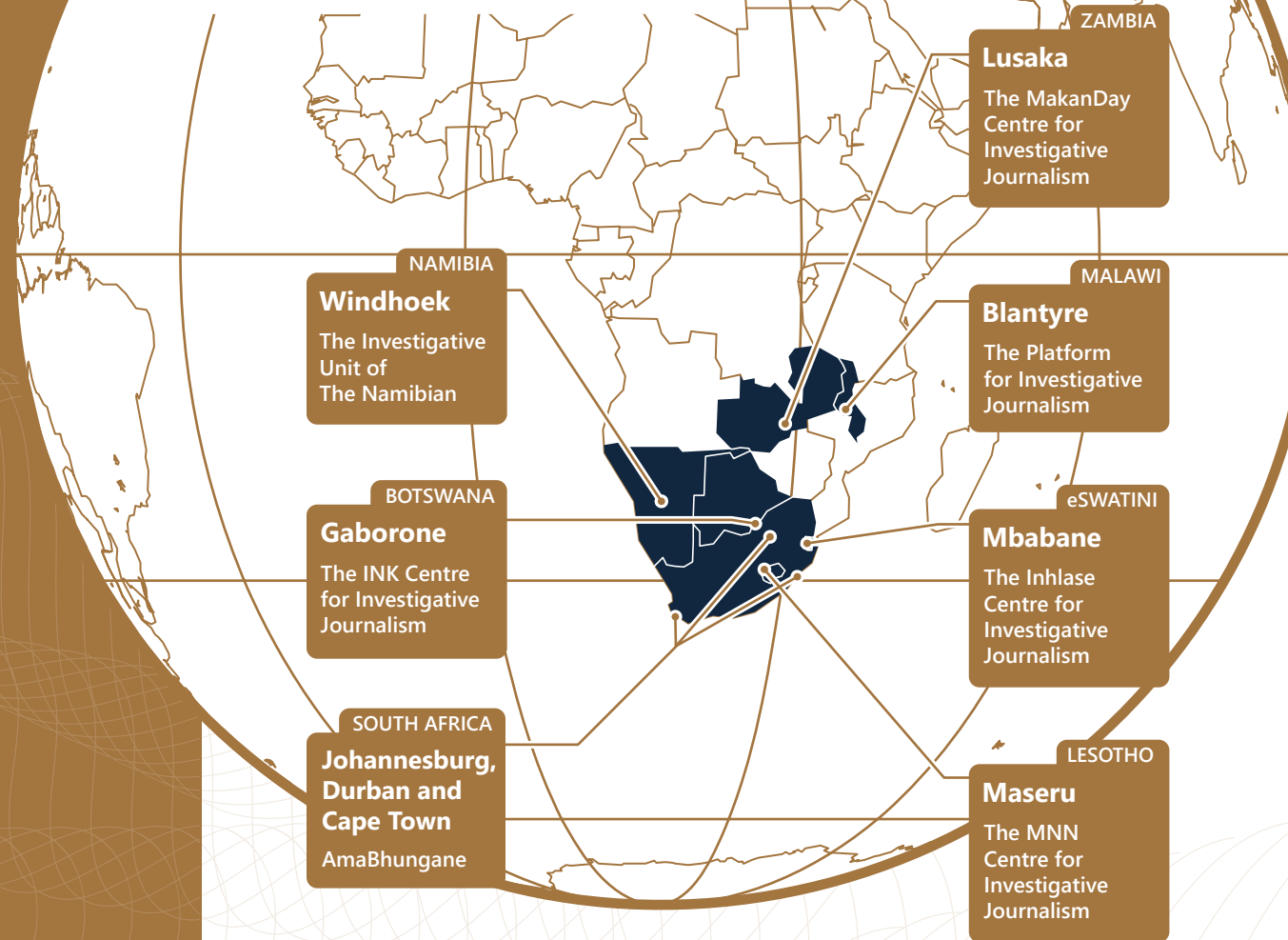
## Who we are and why we do what we do

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 to the end of March 2022. It also highlights the punch they pack above their weight.

The IJ Hub currently has **seven** member investigative journalism centres based in the SADC region of Southern Africa. A Membership Code and an Editorial Charter guide their conduct.



## 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.

**7**  
Countries

**14**  
Contributors

**32**  
Editorial staff



JOHANNESBURG,  
DURBAN AND CAPE TOWN,  
SOUTH AFRICA

### 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.

● Editorial Staff: 8



WINDHOEK  
NAMIBIA

### The Investigative Unit of The Namibian

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.

● Editorial Staff: 10 / Contributors: 3



BLANTYRE  
MALAWI

### The Platform for Investigative Journalism

Founded in 2020, the Platform is the youngest IJ Hub member centre. It has quickly established itself as the country's pre-eminent investigative outfit, walking away with the Overall Winner, Investigative Story of the Year, and Electronic Media House of the Year prizes at the 2022 Misa Malawi awards.

● Editorial Staff: 2 / Contributors: 5



GABORONE  
BOTSWANA

### The INK Centre for Investigative Journalism

INK was registered as a non-profit in 2015, seeking to "address the underdevelopment of in-depth investigative journalism". The founders formerly edited mainstream newspapers in Botswana.

● Editorial Staff: 2 / Contributors: 2



MBABANE  
eSWATINI

### The Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism

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, it has been hard at work uncovering corruption and making it public. It aims to ignite positive change in the country.

● Editorial Staff: 2 / Contributors: 2



LUSAKA  
ZAMBIA

### The MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism

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.

● Editorial Staff: 3 / Contributors: 2



MASERU  
LESOTHO

### The MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism

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.

● Editorial Staff: 5

# Journalism

Journalists at the 7 centres produce a multitude of impactful stories.

On the right is a selection of 21 standout stories published from October 2021 to March 2022.

## 21 Stories triggered

- 7 Government investigations or reviews
- 3 Rehab or replacement for failing state system
- 2 Officials ordered to repay money
- 1 Businessman jailed for tender fraud (and 1 journalist arrested in an attempt to get him to reveal sources)
- 1 Official suspended
- 1 Government apology

### Capturing Malawi

[Platform for Investigative Journalism]

An award-winning series that uncovered how Malawian born, Zuneth Sattar, secured enough influence over state tender processes to win inflated and irregular government contracts. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#) | [Read More 3.](#) | [Read More 4.](#)

**Consequences:** The Malawi government placed Sattar under investigation. It also announced that his contracts would be terminated and that he had been barred from bidding for public contracts. But, behind the scenes, government arranged to pay Sattar and the country's attorney general approved.

When the Platform wrote about this development, the police raided its office. They arrested the Platform's managing director, Gregory Gondwe, and seized his computer and phone in an attempt to discover the source of leaked documents he published.

The arrest attracted global attention and organisations like the Committee to Protect Journalists were quick to mobilise their networks. Gondwe was released and the attorney general apologised. Two weeks later the Platform's website was hacked.

### Toxic smoke

[AmaBhungane]

This is the latest instalment in a series which came joint first in SA's most prestigious investigative journalism award, Taco Kuiper. When riots rocked kwaZulu-Natal province in mid-2021, the Durban premises of an Indian-owned pesticide company went up in flames. Highly toxic chemicals spilled into the environment, imperilling poor communities and riverine systems. Those responsible withheld information about the threat. [Read More 1.](#)

### Congo-holdup

[The Namibian Investigative Unit]

This cross border collaboration involving 19 media outlets gave insight into corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Among other things, bank records linked the DRC's former president, Joseph Kabila, to a Namibian fishing company that received N\$516 million from a frozen food company in his country. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#)

**Consequence:** Kabila is threatening to sue The Namibian for defamation over two articles published in the newspaper.

### Miners and their widows unable to access benefits

[Inhlase]

This is an ongoing series about mineworkers who are unable to access pension and other benefits when they retire from South African mines and return home to another SADC country. Many die without receiving their money. Widows and families are left to live in abject poverty while they continue fighting to access their money. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#) | [Read More 3.](#) | [Read More 4.](#)

**Consequences:** The Sunday Observer (eSwatini) co-published the first two stories.

The investigation prompted Southern Africa Resource Watch to convene a meeting in Johannesburg aimed at finding solutions. Attendees included SADC governments, the International Labour Organisation, mining consultancy TEBA, Ubank, fund managers, pension scheme administrators, widows of miners from eSwatini, and Inhlase.

### Pandora Paper trails

[MakanDay]

MakanDay collaborated with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists to access the Pandora Papers and trace Zambians named in them, including former government official Charles Sipanje and his Atlantic Investment Commodities Ltd company. [Read More](#)

**Consequences:** The story appeared on the front page of the country's leading newspaper, the Daily Mail. Lawyers representing Sipanje threatened to sue MakanDay – but did not.

### Blacklisted but still winning tenders

[INK]

The World Bank blacklisted Chinese construction company UNIK construction for fraud in 2013. The firm, however, continued to win huge state tenders in Botswana. [Read More](#)

**Consequences:** The published story generated outrage on social media and during a discussion on a call-in program on Gabz FM.

UNIK tried to use its influence in government to stop the story from being published and tried to discredit the journalist investigating the matter.

### Water politics and profits

[Inhlase]

This series on climate change looked into eSwatini's state-owned water utility and its questionable management of what was supposed to be a reliable, shared water scheme for rural communities. Residents went for months without a drop of water and yet the utility continued to demand monthly payments from them. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#)

# Journalism

...continued

*“The safety of journalists and media workers continues to be a huge challenge, with increasing reports of attacks such as arbitrary arrest and detention, jailing, physical assault, crippling fines, the introduction of laws that are inimical to freedom of expression, and even killings.”*

~ The State of Press Freedom in Southern Africa, 2019–2020, a UNESCO-backed report by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

... continued

**Consequences:** Newspapers and state broadcasters did follow up stories. Legislators took the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy to task and got the water supply restored.

## Questionable co-operative

[MakanDay]

Police in Zambia are obligated to contribute monthly to what is billed as a savings cooperative, Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society Ltd. But when members try to access their savings, they are told that the co-operative has insufficient funds. MakanDay investigated what the money is spent on and who benefits. [Read More](#)

**Consequences:** Police reacted by running their own PR documentary to showcase the cooperative’s supposed achievements.

## Who is hiding what in the British Virgin Islands?

[INK]

INK collaborated with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists to lift the lid on offshore funds hidden by businessman Ram Ottapathu, who set up a shell company in the British Virgin Islands tax haven. [Read More.](#)

**Consequences:** The interest that this story generated among local journalists led to INK hosting a two-hour webinar on ways to carry our complex, data-driven stories.

## Joburg’s R280m “crime scene”

[AmaBhungane]

This was a three-part series about a group of politically-connected companies who were favoured and cashed in on a prime real estate contract handed out by the City of Johannesburg. Those involved included a relative of the mayor and others close to the ruling party. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#) | [Read More 3.](#)

## Cross border heists

[INK]

Investigations into a spike in cash in transit heists revealed that they were being planned and co-ordinated by ‘Bomber’ Gaopatwe from his South African prison cell. [Read More](#)

## Co-operative for the rich

[MakanDay]

The investigation unpacks how the Zambia Cooperative Federation has been hijacked by private interests, including wealthy members of the Zambian elite and non-Zambians. [Read More](#)

**Consequences:** The story was picked up by local radio stations. Government is investigating the matter.

## Cattle thieves

[Inhlase]

The investigation unpacked extensive cross-border cattle theft between eSwatini, Mozambique and South Africa, which increased in spite of military border patrols. Stock losses are crippling for farmers in the region. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#)

**Consequences:** This story was co-published by Eswatini Farming and was featured in the best African investigative stories published by Wits School of Journalism during the Investigative Journalism Conference.

Eswatini’s government has taken the matter up with the high commissions and police of neighbouring countries

## Tender trouble

[Platform for Investigative Journalism]

Karim Abdul Batatawala scored huge government contracts with the assistance of army officers. He overpriced goods, delivered goods a decade after a purchase order was given to him and changed prices after goods had been delivered. The Malawi Defence Force claims that Batatawala managed to do this by tricking a deputy commander into writing a letter to the Malawi Revenue Authority indicating that Batatawala was a supplier to various government departments. [Read More.](#)

**Consequences:** The attorney general launched an investigation and suspended dealings with Batatawala’s companies.

In December 2021, the Anti-Corruption Bureau arrested him on charges of money laundering and conspiracy to defraud government.

## Debt-ridden road

[MNN]

In a bid to win the 2017 elections, former prime minister Pakalitha Mosisili ordered the ministry of finance to disregard due process and take a M1.3-billion Chinese loan to build a 91km road in his home constituency. [Read More](#)

**Consequences:** Mosisili’s party, the Democratic Congress, used social media to slander and threaten MNN journalists.

# Journalism

...continued

*“Southern Africa is a vast region, roughly the size of India with more than 130 million people. Weak and underperforming economies have crippled funding opportunities for newsrooms across the region and the pandemic has only deepened the resource problem”*

~ Global Investigative Journalism Network



## Money hideaway

[Platform for Investigative Journalism]

This collaboration with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists exposed how Malawi’s tax evaders, corruption suspects and money launderers use tax havens to hide their wealth. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#)

**Consequences:** The attorney general promised a review of laws governing the financial sector.

## Deadly dumpsite

[MNN]

Infectious medical waste was illegally dumped on an unfenced dumpsite in the Berea district. Two children died after eating items from this site. [Read More.](#)

**Consequences:** After the Berea Hospital investigated the matter, it contacted the Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation, which agreed to build a new incinerator for medical waste by June 2022.

## Drilling and destruction

[The Namibian Investigative Unit]

The investigation focused on a Canadian oil exploration company, ReconAfrica, which is drilling for oil in Namibia’s Kavango region – an area which supports the livelihoods of about one million people. The Namibian Investigations Unit partnered with National Geographic for this investigation, which included co-publication of a story about how the drilling for oil could affect the sensitive Okavango Delta. [Read More 1.](#) [Read More 2.](#) | [Read More 3.](#) | [Read More 4.](#)

**Consequences:** Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, warned against irreversible economic and environmental damage that could be caused by ongoing oil drilling in the Kavango.

Namibia’s government warned ReconAfrica that it would not be issued future drilling licenses if it continued to break laws.

## Diverting money for politics

[MNN]

This story unpacked how the executive of a non-profit organisation, Survivors of Lesotho Dams (SOLD), used the organisation’s funds to start his own political party. [Read More.](#)

**Consequences:** Two weeks after MNN published this story, the implicated NGO boss threatened to sue unless a retraction was published. MNN refused. The SOLD board has suspended him while it investigates. This is one of two stories that MNN believes could be the reason hackers tried to access MNN emails in March 2022.

## Double Dipping?

[The Namibian Investigative Unit]

Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy Kornelia Shilunga and Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform executive director Percy Misika are two high ranking government officials who were already benefitting from lucrative government housing allowances. Yet, they also somehow appeared on another state housing list of 640 beneficiaries. This scheme was geared to help junior government officials to buy houses on favourable terms. [Read More.](#)

**Consequence:** The Anti-Corruption Commission found that the pair had unduly benefitted and instructed them repay government.

## Tax scam

[AmaBhungane]

This was a three-part investigation into how South African bank Investec cashed in on a dividend withholding tax scam that has cost European tax authorities billions of euros. [Read More 1.](#) | [Read More 2.](#) | [Read More 3.](#)



**Left:** The MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism team

# Transferring Skills

Member centres do more than investigative journalism. They also plough back via workshops and fellowships to strengthen the field of investigative journalism in the region.

# 3

Workshops

# 133

Participants

## Workshops

### MakanDay

3 FEB 2022

(50 participants)

#### Investigative journalism class

Attended by: Third year students at Evelyn Hone College of Applied Arts. MakanDay provided trainer. Some students have requested to join MakanDay as interns.

24 NOVEMBER 2021

(8 participants)

#### The Pandora papers explained

Attended by: Eight Investigative journalism students from two universities in Gaborone. INK hosted and facilitated.

**Noteworthy:** International Consortium of Investigative Journalists head of investigations, Will Fitzgibbon, shared his techniques for carrying out an open source intelligence investigation and working with large and complex data.

### AmaBhungane

21 OCTOBER 2021

(75 participants)

#### Masterclass on forensic financial journalism

Attended by: Delegates at the African Investigative Journalism Conference. AmaBhungane provided a trainer.

## Fellowships



### Christopher Bazilio Banda

March 2022 – May 2022

Hosted by MakanDay



### Mathatisi Sebusi

Oct 2021 – Dec 2021

Hosted by MNN



### Pascalinah Kabi

Jan 2022 – Dec 2022

Hosted by MNN



### Mehafo Amunyela

Dec 2021 to March 2022

Hosted by the Namibian Investigative Unit



### Viktoria Mvula

Sept 2021 – March 2022.

Hosted by the Namibian Investigative Unit



### Eino Vatileni

Sep 2021 to March 2022

Hosted by the Namibian Investigative Unit



### Maureen Kawilama

Jan 2021 to Oct 2021

Hosted by Platform for Investigative Journalism



### Sebe Buthelezi

Jan 2022 to June 2022.

Hosted by amaBhungane



### Keketso Mohalenyane Phakela

April 2022 to June 2022

Hosted by amaBhungane

# Advocacy

Member centres have worked to secure the information rights — access to info and the right to publish — that are the lifeblood of our field.

*“We believe it is the job of journalists to arm the public with information, to empower citizens to strengthen democratic institutions and democracy itself. We believe that the truth is society’s best weapon against corruption, injustice and inequality ”*

~ The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

## Inhlese

### Challenging internet shutdown:

Inhlese joined Lawyers for Human Rights of eSwatini in challenging government shutting down the internet during the June 2021 unrest.

**Outcome:** Government backed off and opened the internet immediately after the organisations filed court papers.

## MNN

### Strengthening partnerships:

The Lesotho Council of NGOs issued a statement attacking the media sector over its coverage of issues facing the country’s Transformation Resource Centre. MNN believed these to be unfair and organised a meeting where the media’s position was explained, and the issues debated. [Read More.](#)

**Outcome:** Civil society leaders admitted that they jumped the gun by issuing their statement before engaging the media sector. They committed to more dialogue and collaboration with the media to promote transparency and accountability.

## AmaBhungane

### Light on campaign funding:

Leaked bank statements showing donations to President Cyril Ramaphosa’s CR17 campaign highlighted how the Executive Member’s Ethics Code offered politicians a way of keeping donations secret. AmaBhungane asked the court to rule that the code is unconstitutional as it doesn’t require disclosure of internal party contest funding. [Read More.](#)

**Outcome:** The high court agreed and declared the ethics code unlawful and unconstitutional.

### Tax Secrecy:

In a bid to get the South African Revenue Service to hand over former President Jacob Zuma’s tax records, amaBhungane joined a legal application to challenge the taxman’s blanket secrecy around all personal tax information. [Read More.](#)

**Outcome:** The high court ordered the revenue service to hand over Zuma’s records highlighting how requests for personal tax records should also take the public interest into account. The matter has been referred to the Constitutional Court for confirmation.

### New era of company transparency:

AmaBhungane has lobbied hard to ensure maximum transparency of corporate information to the media and public, including beneficial ownership data. [Read More.](#)

**Outcome:** AmaBhungane’s ongoing input has helped authorities, business and labour to refine aspects of the draft Companies Amendment Bill, published in October 2022. Encouragingly, it included many of amaBhungane’s proposed changes.



## 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 IJHub for disbursement or to the centres directly.

To find out more, contact the IJ Hub’s managing partner (editorial), Troye Lund: [troye\\_ijhub@icloud.com](mailto:troye_ijhub@icloud.com)



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[www.ijhub.org](http://www.ijhub.org)



THE NAMIBIAN  
INVESTIGATIVE UNIT