



NARRATIVE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 23 SEPTEMBER 2023 TO 4 MARCH 2025.

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

The IJ Hub NPC is a South African non-profit and public benefit organisation. We support investigative journalism in the SADC region of Southern Africa in the service of a free, capable media and open, accountable democracy.

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ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

The IJ Hub NPC was born of a realisation that, although investigative journalists in the SADC region 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. That is what the Hub has set out to do.

The Hub's objective is to *support investigative journalism in the SADC region in the service of a free, capable media and open, accountable democracy*. It pursues this mandate by raising and de-risking philanthropic funding for member investigative journalism centres; by supporting and building organisational capacity at member centres; and by supporting and building investigative capacity among journalists at member centres and beyond.

MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism (Lesotho)

The centre has been proactive in seeking alternative funding following the restructuring and subsequent decision by OSF Africa to stop funding media in the region. MNN's OSF Africa tie-off (top-up) grant expired in October 2023. While Hub support to MNN returned to former levels after a period of budget cuts, the Hub continues to help MNN and other centres in applying for alternative funding sources.

Despite the funding difficulties, MNN continues to produce strong investigations and remains a significant contributor to the Hub's syndication offering.

The Investigative Unit of The Namibian (Namibia)

The improved funding situation of the IJ Hub allowed it to resume support to this centre in November 2023, after six months without funding. The centre maintains a steady output of stories on its website, and its journalists



dominated the Editor's Forum of Namibia Awards in October 2023, winning five major awards. In November 2023, the investigative unit's editor, Shinovene Immanuel, was promoted to deputy editor of the main newspaper, *The Namibian*. The process of appointing a new head for the investigative unit is ongoing. Meanwhile, Shinovene continues to manage and coordinate operations there.

MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism (Zambia)

MakanDay remains proactive in looking for alternative funding sources. In January 2025, the centre's NED funding was abruptly stopped following President Trump's executive order freezing all US government development funding.

The centre has formed a partnership with BBC Media Action, through which it will provide training and editorial guidance to other media groups collaborating with the BBC.

The centre continues to produce solid investigative stories and remains a regular contributor to the IJ Hub's syndication offering. In addition to investigating corruption in Zambia, MakanDay is committed to giving back. It partners with the highly regarded Evelyn Hone College to provide training to journalism students. Furthermore, it has launched the annual Eminent Journalist Awards to honour outstanding investigative journalists who have contributed to promoting an open and just democracy by holding leaders accountable.

Platform for Investigative Journalism (Malawi)

PIJ continues to be a leading investigative unit in the network, exposing corruption in Malawi. It produces high-quality investigations that attract attention from investigative journalism outlets and publications outside Africa. One significant story during the review period was a follow-up to its original exposé on Zuneth Sattar, a businessman who secured significant influence over Malawi's state tender system. This investigation implicated top military officials, leading to threats against journalist Gregory Gondwe. Gregory was forced to hide for two weeks in Malawi and eventually had to leave the country for several weeks. This experience underscored the need for a regional prevention and crisis response plan that can act quickly in such situations.

The additional funding raised by PIJ through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has been stopped as part of the US ban placed on development funding.

Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism (eSwatini)

The IJ Hub grant funding to Inhlase was withheld for nearly a year, pending improvements in its corporate governance structures. IJ Hub funding resumed at the end of 2023. While the IJ Hub continues to support Inhlase on editorial and organizational matters, the centre is also working closely with its board to strengthen operations and output.

AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism (South Africa)

AmaBhungane continues to collaborate with the IJ Hub on some stories, training, and fellowships. However, it has not yet resumed its role of hosting IJ Hub fellows. While the IJ Hub has found an alternative host for cross-border fellows, AmaBhungane remains a valuable partner in collaborative work.

Oxpeckers Environmental Investigative Journalism (South Africa)

Oxpeckers officially joined the IJ Hub network as a member centre following a decision at the AGM in December 2023. Like amaBhungane, it does not yet receive funding from the Hub.

Oxpeckers continues to play an integral role in driving cross-border collaboration, particularly in environmental investigations. It also contributes regularly to the IJ Hub syndication system.

Oxpeckers is developing advanced tools, particularly for tracking environmental crimes, which have proven invaluable for investigations and have enhanced the Hub's reputation in the environmental journalism sector. One such tool is the #WildEye Europe tracking tool, the first of its kind, enabling users to track environmental crimes with constantly updated data from the team.



Collaboration with individual journalists in countries without official IJ Hub centres

Over the past year, the IJ Hub has been identifying, engaging, and collaborating with investigative journalists in countries where the Hub does not yet have a presence, particularly in Zimbabwe, Angola, and Botswana. This strategy helps us build relationships, share expertise, and lay the foundation for future network growth. A key success of this approach is our collaboration with NewsHawks, an independent news outlet in Zimbabwe. Partnering with NewsHawks' award-winning investigative journalist Owen Gagare, we investigated the forced relocation of villagers for a lithium mine controlled by a politically connected company. The story was syndicated within our network and Daily Maverick. The IJ Hub is working with Owen on another exciting investigation, which is complete and being prepared for publication.

FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL UPDATE

In October 2024, the Hub received official notice that its largest funder since its inception in 2019, the Open Society Foundations (OSF), would be closing its media funding program. This shift aligns with a broader trend of reduced philanthropic funding for public interest media in the region. In light of this change and the emerging opportunities presented by government funders—particularly USAID—the IJ Hub board authorized management to explore funding sources beyond those traditionally offered by philanthropic donors.

During 2024, management pursued two promising grant opportunities: one with USAID and another as part of a coalition applying for EU funding. The details of these efforts are as follows:

Towards the end of 2023, USAID announced a major funding opportunity—USD 8 million over five years—for investigative journalism in the region. With board permission to bid, the Hub successfully passed the pre-qualification rounds, was selected as one of three preferred bidders, and was invited to Pretoria for a co-creation workshop with the other finalists and the USAID team. The Hub submitted an official application with Daily Maverick as a sub-awardee and also participated in Daily Maverick's bid as its sub-awardee.

The Hub's bid with Daily Maverick as the sub-awardee emerged as the preferred bidder, leading to a review and vetting of our application for this grant, which had now increased to USD 12 million over five years. After a thorough vetting process with USAID teams, management was informed in mid-December 2024 that the review had gone well and that we were moving on to the final stage of the grant process.

However, just weeks later, newly elected U.S. President Donald Trump signed several executive orders, one of which led to the closure of USAID and, ultimately, the cancellation of the grant opportunity.

In 2024, the IJ Hub also joined a coalition led by Professor Anton Harber's Henry Nxumalo Foundation, including Viewfinder, Oxpeckers, and Botswana's INK Centre for Investigative Journalism, which bid for EU funding last year. This EU bid, by what is now called the SA | AJP (Southern Africa Accountability Journalism Project), was successful. When the contract was signed at the end of 2024, the IJ Hub agreed to delay finalizing its scope of work under the EU grant until January 2025, hoping to receive news about the USAID grant. This delay made sense given the potential workload of the USAID grant, as well as the Henry Nxumalo Foundation's role in our USAID bid.

Once it became clear that the USAID bid was no longer an option, management met with Anton to discuss the IJ Hub's potential role in the SA | AJP coalition. During our meeting, Anton explained that, due to funding constraints, there was no funded role for the IJ Hub within the EU grant. The IJ Hub withdrew from the coalition to focus on its own sustainability and pursue funding. The IJ Hub will continue to collaborate with the SA | AJP wherever possible on future work, and IJ Hub member centre are still welcome to apply for SA | AJP grants. If successful, these grants will not be included as part of the IJ Hub's funding or editorial support.



While these developments have been challenging, the IJ Hub remains committed to providing grant-making, organizational, and editorial support to our member centres. Carina and I have started a focused fundraising drive and hope to have good news to report soon.

Existing IJ Hub Funders over the period under review

- **OSF**
 - A USD 400 000 tie-off grant was paid in two equal tranches in July 2023 and July 2024.
- **Joffe Charitable Trust**
 - The Hub's application for a new GBP 200 000 Legacy Grant has been successful.
 - We have received the first payment of four, which will be made annually in January until 2028.
- **Oppenheimer Memorial Trust**
 - The Hub's two-year R1 million grant will end in August 2025.
- **Millennium Trust**
 - A multi-year agreement, worth R1 000 000 a year ran from 2021 to 2024. The final payment was made in March 2024.
 - Management met with the Millennium Trust in early February to discuss a new application and has submitted one.
 - There is a requirement for a 12-month sabbatical that must be taken before 2027.

MEMBER CENTRE GRANTS

Grant Disbursements to Member Centres

IJ Hub NPC

For the period 1 April 2019 to present

Date	Member Centre	Amount
		ZAR
26 Sep 2019	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	117 850
19 Apr 2020	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	304 610
30 Apr 2020	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	396 000
07 May 2020	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	261 122
08 May 2020	INK Centre for Investigative Journalism, Botswana	352 088
08 May 2020	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	238 407
08 May 2020	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	81 000
19 Aug 2020	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	37 614
20 Oct 2020	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	98 500
18 Dec 2020	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	300 000
18 Dec 2020	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	245 642
23 Dec 2020	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	215 188
29 Dec 2020	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	114 797
27 Jan 2021	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	281 203
01 Apr 2021	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	2 000
15 Apr 2021	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	400 000
13 Jul 2021	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	314 138
23 Jul 2021	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	272 628
12 Aug 2021	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	371 866
17 Aug 2021	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	320 000
08 Nov 2021	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	400 000
15 Dec 2021	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	399 661
28 Feb 2022	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	284 578
22 Mar 2022	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	335 200
23 Mar 2022	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	375 000
03 May 2022	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho (net repayment on underspend)	(10 125)
09 May 2022	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	400 000
09 Jun 2022	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	393 053
26 Aug 2022	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	127 975
05 Sep 2022	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	155 954
31 Oct 2022	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	375 000
02 Dec 2022	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	400 000
20 Dec 2022	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	447 734
20 Dec 2022	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	173 333
01 Apr 2023	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	300 000
01 May 2023	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	300 000
01 Jun 2023	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	280 452
01 Nov 2023	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	350 000
01 Nov 2023	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	460 000
01 Nov 2023	Namibia Media Trust for The Namibian Investigative Unit, Namibia	375 000
01 Dec 2023	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	369 200
01 May 2024	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	350 000
01 May 2024	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	450 000
01 Apr 2024	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	400 233
01 Jun 2024	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	491 774
01 Nov 2024	MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, Lesotho	450 000
01 Jan 2025	Platform for Investigative Journalism, Malawi	368 243
01 Jan 2025	MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, Zambia	513 926
01 Jan 2025	Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism, eSwatini	350 000
Total		14 790 845

PEOPLE AND GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Hub is staffed by two managing partners. Until October 2024, this team included Troye Lund (editorial) and Sebenzile Nkambule (organisational). Sebenzile resigned and left the IJ Hub in October 2024.

At the end of October 2024, the IJ Hub board confirmed the appointment of Carina Pillay as the new managing partner (organisational). Carina comes highly recommended after 12 years at the Southern African Legal Information Institute (SAFLII). As SAFLII's executive director, Carina successfully led the organisation through a funding crisis that nearly led to its closure, and she played a key role in the successful restructuring and transition to an NPC. Her expertise in strategic leadership, organisational management and sustainability makes her a perfect fit for the Hub. Carina hit the ground running, diving into all aspects of the IJ Hub's operations and navigating the administrative steps of getting set up on our banking and other platforms.

New non-executive director on IJ Hub board

The IJ Hub board meeting on 26 September 2023 led to one change. At the AGM that month, non-executive director Stefaans Brümmer completed his third and final term and stepped down.

The Hub's MOI stipulates that the board must consist of three to five non-executive directors elected by member centres, as well as up to two ex-officio, non-voting executive directors. At least one third of the elected directors rotate annually, though they may be re-elected.

Lionel Faull, who joined the board in 2023, has been a valuable addition. A seasoned investigative journalist, Lionel specializes in tracing cross-border money flows tied to corruption and exploitation. He previously worked with Finance Uncovered in the UK and the amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism in South Africa.

The board plays an active role in appointments, compliance, and major financial decisions. During the review period, it included:

Prof Dumisani Moyo, dean of humanities at North-West University – non-executive director and chair (serving third and final term 2023-2025).

Mantoe Phakathi, communications practitioner in eSwatini – non-executive director (serving third and final term (2022-2024)).

Steven Budlender, senior counsel specialising in constitutional and media law – non-executive director (serving third and final term 2022-2024).

Lionel Faull, investigative journalist, trainer and mentor – a non-executive director (serving first term 2023-2025).

Troye Lund, Hub managing partner (editorial) – ex-officio executive director appointed 1 March 2022.

Carina Pillay, Hub managing partner (organisational) – ex-officio executive director appointed 1 November 2024

Sebenzile Nkambule, Hub managing partner (organisational) – ex-officio executive director was appointed in August 2022 and left on 1 October 2024.



The March 2025 AGM will mark the end of the third and final term on the IJ Hub board for Mantoe Phakathi and Steven Budlender.

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Making resources available to member centres is not enough. A centre's editorial performance is optimal when its organisational base is solid and accountable. We advise member centres on matters as diverse as corporate registration, compliance with non-profit requirements, accounting, auditing, funding applications, digital security, and websites.

Financial accountability is particularly important to the Hub, given that this is the standard against which investigative journalists measure others. Management is constantly engaging with member centres on financial management systems, accounting packages and audits to ensure compliance.

The Hub also provides support when centres face legal challenges and has helped evacuate one journalist from his country.

Management is discussing options to offer comprehensive website management and monitoring solutions to member centres. This will encompass audience engagement tools and tailored strategies for each centre, aimed at optimizing story readership. The plan is to align these efforts with plans to help member centres tell complex, in-depth investigative content in different digital formats across multiple platforms to enhance accessibility and impact.

EDITORIAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The final proof of our work is in the investigative stories that see the light of day. Our inputs detailed above – the grants to member centres and the organisational support – go a long way. The final push comes at the editorial coalface. The Hub is in regular contact with member centres about their editorial work and is always ready to help with networking and advice where necessary. Outside of this, we engage in three sets of measurable activities: workshops, fellowships and story editing. Fellowships and workshops are open to regional journalists regardless of whether they are from member centres.

Fellowships and workshops

During the period under review (September 2023 to October 2024), the Hub funded seven in-country fellows, which is lower than our usual target due to limited funding. For the same reason this period did not include cross-border fellows. However, the costs associated with a journalist's evacuation and accommodation in a different country for a month were treated like a fellowship. This was due to the absence of a formal budget for such work.

A unique fellowship was awarded to Jedi Ramalapa, an audio storytelling expert, who spent five months working directly with three IJ Hub member centres. Unlike the typical fellowship, which focuses on individual projects or research, this fellowship brought in an external specialist to collaborate closely with the centres, providing hands-on training and sharing expertise to build their skills in audio storytelling. Jedi guided journalists through the process of turning investigative stories into podcasts, with the aim of reaching a broader audience. The fellowship included weekly instruction on various aspects of podcasting, along with "homework" assignments that allowed the centres to begin creating and recording their stories. Each member centre turned three investigative stories into podcast formats, and the Platform for Investigative Journalism went a step further by launching its own podcast, "Justice Under Siege." This is a project and type of fellowship that the Hub would like to continue supporting as it expands benefits many journalists in the network and improves story offering across member centres.

One of the Hub's key priorities in the past year was to move away from large, generic workshops and shift toward a more flexible, tailored training model. This approach allowed us to meet the real-time needs of journalists,



especially during collaborative investigations. Cross-border collaborations provided ideal settings for this "learning by doing" model, where editors played a critical role in coordinating efforts and connecting journalists with experts as challenges arose. This hands-on training helped journalists gain new skills in real time, improving both individual and collaborative abilities.

The Hub hosted 12 workshops during the period, with a focus on delivering a bespoke offering tailored to the specific needs of our member centres. For example, three workshops were designed to address requests from centres seeking to manage websites and social media platforms better, maximising impact of stories and audience engagement.

Two "Data-crunch" workshops were crafted on the back of requests from journalists wanting to improve and practice specific skills. These sessions provided deeper dives into tools introduced in earlier sessions. There was also opportunity for one-one-one sessions for journalists who needed help with specific stories. Outside these workshops, data specialists worked directly with journalists, helping them uncover how a person they were investigating had deceived authorities in both the U.S. and Malawi by using donor funds to support a lavish lifestyle.

Editing and syndication

The Hub also continued to support member centres through its editing and syndication system. The editing process goes beyond just linguistic editing; it is often interactive and involves multiple drafts to address investigative gaps, legal risks, and other issues. During the review period, 23 stories benefited from Hub input and were published. The syndication system, launched in September 2022, allows the best work from member centres to be shared across the network. This system has been well received, as it increases the reach of stories, giving them a larger, region-wide audience. Stories that are syndicated are also more likely to be published by external outlets, as some of our stories have been. The Hub works closely with member centres to prepare stories for publication, and a sub-editor reviews the final version before release. During the review period, 21 stories were syndicated, bringing the total to 42 stories since the system's launch. These stories have been well-received by member centres and other publications, including Daily Maverick and GroundUp, which have played a major role in distributing these stories to a wider network.

The success of the syndication system highlights the strength of collaboration within the Hub and the growing reach of our investigative work.

For example, two from IJ Hub member centres were included in the GIJN list of the best investigative stories of 2024.

<https://gijn.org/stories/2025-editors-picks-investigative-stories-africa/>