



## NARRATIVE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 04 MARCH TO 10 DECEMBER 2025.

### SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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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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#### 1. ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

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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 but, like most IJ Hub member centres, still relies heavily on IJ Hub support, a reliance made more acute after OSF Africa withdrew from media funding in the region.

It has secured small grants over the last 12 months, including a small grant in the period under review from FORUS International.



MNN continues to produce a steady stream of impactful investigations that feature regularly in our syndication offering. Recent stories include an exposé about a diamond-prospecting licence linked to the wife of the Lesotho Defence Force commander. The story reveals how the initial boundaries for the license were secretly amended and now encroach on communal land. Another investigation found that Defence Force members injured during a SADC deployment were not compensated as they were promised and as set out in agreements with SADC.

### **The Investigative Unit of The Namibian (Namibia)**

The investigative unit is part of The Namibian newspaper and is also supported by NMT funds. IJ Hub grant funding is routed through the non-profit NMT Media Foundation to ensure grant money is ring-fenced exclusively for the unit and for public interest journalism.

Shinovene Immanuel, deputy editor of The Namibian, continues to oversee the unit, while a dedicated editor is being onboarded and mentored to lead its work.

The unit consistently produces high-quality, award-winning investigations that hold power to account, expose the misuse of public resources, and provide citizens with the information they need to demand better governance. For example, one recent story revealed that the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) spent N\$2.1 million on travel allowances in a single year. Nearly half of it was paid to the agency's CEO. In another investigation, Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) board members were exposed for having claimed about N\$2 million in travel allowances over five months.

### **MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism (Zambia)**

MakanDay also continues to actively seek other funding sources outside of the IJ Hub. In January 2025, the centre's NED funding was temporarily halted following President Donald Trump's executive order freezing all US government development support. Funding in the region has since resumed.

The centre is committed to giving back and training the next generation of journalists at the respected Evelyn Hone College. It has also partnered with BBC Media Action, providing training and editorial guidance to other media groups working with the BBC.

MakanDay's annual Eminent Journalist Awards continues to recognise investigative journalists who advance an open and just democracy by holding leaders accountable.

On the editorial front, MakanDay is prolific in the production of impactful stories and these are well received when syndicated across Southern African and elsewhere.

Their reporting during the period under review includes investigations that highlight ongoing concerns about oversight and enforcement in Zambia's extractive sector. For example, the "Blood on the Copper" series exposed hazardous working conditions and child labour at Sensele Mine. Part II of the series revealed, through interviews and site observations, that unsafe activities continued despite a High Court



injunction. The investigation also found that senior political figures and business intermediaries are involved by facilitating access to the site.

MakanDay also exposed how a gold rush in Kikonge, northwestern Zambia, which drew thousands of prospectors, escalated into violent clashes and gang control that authorities are unable to manage. The story documented deaths, torture, and alleged corruption which all contribute to the dangers of unregulated mining and the broader social and political risks in Zambia's resource-rich regions.

### **Platform for Investigative Journalism (Malawi)**

PIJ also continues to explore ways to supplement IJ Hub funding. Its NED grant, which had been temporarily halted earlier in the year, has now been reinstated.

The PIJ team continues to expose corruption in Malawi through high-quality, award-winning investigations that attract attention from investigative journalism outlets both in Africa and internationally.

After three years of investigation, PIJ's investigations into UK-based businessman Zuneth Sattar have produced hopeful results. Sattar, whose tender corruption in Malawi involved senior military officials and government top brass, is now facing 18 counts of corruption and bribery in the UK. He made his first court appearance in June 2025.

In other reporting during the period under review, PIJ exposed a human trafficking network operating from Dzaleka Refugee Camp. The investigation traces the way in which migrants fall victim to the system, and details how some government officials facilitate and benefit from these operations.

In its investigation *The Shadow Fleet*, PIJ reveals how Malawi's civil aviation registry has been used to register "ghost" aircraft. These are jets flagged under a Malawi tail code but operating mainly outside the country, sometimes linked to sanctions-evasion networks. Four large Airbus A340s registered to a little-known airline were grounded by the regulator, but a court reinstated their licence, highlighting weaknesses in Malawi's aviation oversight.

### **Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism (eSwatini)**

Inhlase has not been successful in expanding its grant income and relies on IJ Hub funding. The IJ Hub also continues to support Inhlase on editorial and organizational and, during the period under review, has been working more closely with the team and other experts to improve its operations and story output.

During the period under review, Inhlase produced several stories, including a report on the sudden withdrawal of USAID funding, which left key populations such as sex workers without vital health services and pushed vulnerable communities further into crisis.



Another story exposed the Ministry of Health's secret appointment of a new administrator for the Phalala Medical Referral Fund. This process bypassed proper hiring procedures, leaving hundreds of patients without timely access to critical referrals.

### **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, which officially joined the IJ Hub network as a member centre in December 2023, does not yet receive funding from the Hub. It collaborates with member centres, supports the IJ Hub's work in the region and is a regular contributor to the Hub's syndicated stories.

Oxpeckers' combines traditional investigative reporting with data analysis, geo-mapping, and digital tools to expose environmental crimes, track energy and mining projects, and uncover corruption and weak oversight. Some of their innovative tools include #PowerTracker, which maps energy and mining projects across Southern Africa, and #WildEye, which monitors wildlife crimes like rhino poaching and cross-border smuggling.

Examples of this work over the last ten months include a story that documents critical mineral mining applications and small harbour developments that pose risks to coastal ecosystems and local communities in KwaZulu Natal.

Oxpeckers wildlife crime investigations across Southern Africa have also recently exposed how cross-border rhino poaching networks are facilitated by corrupt officials and weak enforcement.

### **Collaboration with individual journalists in countries without official IJ Hub centres**

Over the past year, the IJ Hub has been 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 is aimed at building relationships, sharing expertise, and laying the foundation for future network growth.

A key success of this approach is our collaboration with an award-winning investigative journalist in Zimbabwe with whom, we have published three investigations this year. All of these were syndicated across our network and then re-syndicated to a broader network by GroundUp News.

## 2. FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL UPDATE

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Following the withdrawal of USAID funding, the IJ Hub's managing partners worked together to secure new commitments that will sustain the organisation over the next three years. This has provided much-needed stability and ensures that the IJ Hub can continue delivering support to its member centres. While the Hub is therefore in a relatively sound financial position for the medium term, it is important to remain mindful that the broader philanthropic funding landscape is shrinking.

We recently met with the Joffe Trust, which has committed £50,000 over the next three years. However, as the Trust is in the process of closing, this support will come to an end after 2027. We have also successfully renewed the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust's funding for the next two years, and the Millennium Trust, our largest donor, providing substantial support to the Hub's work over a three-year period.

In addition, we were fortunate to secure an ad-hoc grant of US\$50,000 from Humanity United, a US-based donor. We hope to continue developing this relationship, and the Humanity United team has already facilitated an introduction to the MacArthur Foundation. The Foundation's Journalism and Media programme aligns strongly with the IJ Hub's mission to promote just, inclusive and community-rooted narratives across the region. Our conversations with the MacArthur Foundation to date have been positive, and they have expressed interest in engaging further with the IJ Hub and its work.

Below is a breakdown of funds received this year:

### **Financial Overview: Jan - 1 Dec 2025**

#### **Donations received since Jan 2025**

Millenium Trust	R2,500,000.00
Joffe Trust	R1,141,385.00
Humanity United	R877,695.93
Millenium Trust - September 2025 (guaranteed)	R2,500,000.00
<b>Total donations received</b>	<b>R7,019,080.93</b>

#### **Donations expected**

Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (approved for 2025 and 2026)	R500,000.00
	<b>R7,519,080.93</b>

### 3. MEMBER CENTRE GRANTS

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Since its inception in September 2019, the IJ Hub has disbursed a total of R16,278,014. In line with its commitment to supporting member centres, the Hub has continued to provide core financial grants as well as fellowship grants, which enable centres to recruit, develop and retain key talent.

The summary below outlines the funds allocated to the five member centres, with the NMT grant added from October 2025. Although the IJ Hub's financial year ends in March 2026, member centre funding follows a calendar year cycle. We still have one remaining grant to process in December, which will place us slightly over the initial budget; however, this will be fully covered by the additional support received from Humanity United this year.

<b>Disbursements since Jan 2025</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Unspent</b>
<b>Member centre Grants</b>		
<b>Total grants (x 8)</b>	<b>R2,705,412.40</b>	<b>R3,000,000.00</b>
One further grant application being processed for 2025		<b>R294,587.60</b>
<b>Fellowships</b>		
<b>Total fellowships (x 5)</b>	<b>R288,000.00</b>	<b>R350,000.00</b>
<b>Total disbursements thus far</b>	<b>R2,993,412.40</b>	

### 4. PEOPLE AND GOVERNANCE UPDATE

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The Hub is staffed by two managing partners. Troye Lund (editorial) and Carina Pillay (organisational).

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, chairs the board which 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 former chair ( third and final term ends in 2025 at AGM).



**Mantoe Phakathi**, communications practitioner in eSwatini – non-executive director ( third and final term officially ended at AGM held on 4 March 2025, but she agreed to stay on until suitable replacements had been selected and elected)

**Steven Budlender**, senior counsel specialising in constitutional and media law – non-executive director (third and final term officially ended at AGM held on 4 March 2025. Steven agreed to stay on until suitable replacements had been selected and elected)

**Lionel Faull**, investigative journalist, trainer and mentor – a non-executive director (first term from 2023-2025 ends at December 2025 AGM).

**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

## 5. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

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Making resources available to member centres is not enough. A centre’s editorial performance is optimal when its organisational base is solid and accountable. It is with this in mind that 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.

Over the past six months, management has provided hands-on monitoring and support to a member centre that has been struggling with output and resource management. Ensuring that our centres produce quality work and are accountable is essential for the IJ Hub, which must be sure it is also able to account fully and transparently to its donors for all funds received and disbursed. This is critical as core philanthropic funding grows harder to secure, and as donors favour those with strong financial management and demonstrable impact.

When member centre journalists face threats or legal challenges, it is important that the Hub can respond and support effectively, especially on rare occasions when journalists need to be moved to safety in their own country or to another country. The Hub is hoping to establish a regional support system for journalists under threat. This will require collaboration with specialist partners as well as dedicated funds which is why the plan did not progress as much as we had hoped.

During the period under review, the Hub joined the Thomson Reuters Foundation’s Legal Support for Independent Media (LSIM) programme, which provides free or low-cost legal assistance to independent newsrooms, journalists, and media-freedom organisations. Our initial experience has been somewhat

frustrating, as securing assistance has proved slow and bureaucratic. We have shared this feedback with the programme and hope that future requests for support and advice will be more responsive and effective.

In other IJ Hub updates, management conducted a review of all IJ Hub expenses, which led to changes in accountants and auditors, among other adjustments. These steps have already resulted in significant savings and improved efficiency.

As a result of this and success in securing funding for the next three years, we have been able to move ahead with a plan to review and redesign our website. This will be followed by support for member centres to review their own websites and audience-engagement tools.

## **6. EDITORIAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

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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 (March 2025 to December 2025), the IJ Hub's fellowship and workshop programmes as well as some strategic collaborations, equipped journalists with the practical skills, editorial and organisational support, and the institutional backing needed to pursue public interest reporting in often challenging environments.

### **Workshops**

Over the reporting period under review, the IJ Hub delivered six workshops attended by 200 participants, some of whom attended more than one. These sessions were designed in direct response to network needs and focused on building concrete investigative and storytelling skills. One of the Hub's key priorities in the past 18 months has been 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.

Training sessions covered land rights and renewable-energy governance, investigative techniques for uncovering corruption, fact-checking and verification ahead of elections, and advanced data-driven storytelling formats such as scrolly telling.



One standout session was a three-hour workshop the IJ Hub ran with the Fray Media Foundation, focused on the power of community-level investigations. It was a women-only space where some of the IJ Hub's strongest female journalists shared their experiences, practical tips, and techniques. They shared experiences to show how "digging where you are" often produces the most impactful stories that also often become national or global stories.

Panellists from IJ Hub member centres also stressed the importance of telling these stories in accessible, engaging ways. One IJ Hub centre journalist, for instance, described how she created an annual calendar, with each month featuring a picture and caption showing the impact of one of her team's local investigations. These calendars hung in most homes in her village. The result, she argued, has been a more informed, empowered, and engaged community that now actively follows local reporting and pays closer attention to the actions of its leaders.

### **Fellowships**

During the period under review, the IJ Hub supported 5 journalists through three-month, in-country fellowships. They were hosted and mentored by member centres in the region.

For first time the IJ Hub extended its fellowship programme to South African journalists. In partnership with the Henry Nxumalo Foundation's Our City News - a pilot newsroom in Johannesburg focused on holding municipal government to account - the IJ Hub supported a reporter on the team for the six-month pilot. The Hub's support for this project was in recognition of the urgent need to strengthen investigative journalism in South Africa, especially at local and municipal level, where corruption and abuse of power have been able to continue with little scrutiny due to shrinking newsrooms and a strong focus on national politics.

Our fellow in Zimbabwe is an investigative journalist with whom the Hub has been working for a year to produce stories, and to explore the possibility of establishing a centre in the country. The collaboration has produced strong stories, and the Hub is confident that this is the right time to begin incubating a new member centre with him and his small team.

No cross-border fellows were hosted during this period because of cost constraints and because many investigative newsrooms now operate remotely, which makes close, in-person mentoring difficult.

### **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, 24 stories benefited from Hub input and were published.

To strengthen our editorial support, we are placing more emphasis on helping member centres make long and complex investigations more engaging. Because this needs to begin early in the writing process, we are testing a system where an expert works with journalists from the outset to plan creative and interactive ways to illustrate and present their stories on websites and social media



The IJ Hub's 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, 5 stories were syndicated and these were also all re-published by GroundUp which has expressed keen interest in IJ Hub stories. An added benefit of GroundUp publishing IJ Hub member centre work is that it gets re-syndicated to a much wider audience.

The success and quality of the work that member centres are producing is shown by the stories that were included in the best investigative stories of 2024. We are hoping for stories from this year to feature in the next edition.

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