



IJHub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT 2019/20

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The IJ Hub NPC is a shared services centre which supports and builds investigative journalism in the SADC region.

This is our narrative report for the 10 months from incorporation to financial year-end on 31 March 2020.

Published July 2020.

ABOUT US

The IJ Hub NPC was born of a realisation that though 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 amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism NPC, the South African investigative non-profit, spun off the Hub following consultations with investigative journalists regionally and potential grant-makers.

The Hub was incorporated in June 2019 as a non-profit company domiciled in South Africa, with this objective:

To support investigative journalism in the SADC region in the service of a free, capable media and open, accountable democracy. This object shall be achieved by, inter alia –

Raising and de-risking philanthropic funding for investigative journalism in the SADC region;

Supporting and building the capacity of organisations practising investigative journalism in the SADC region, at administrative and organisational levels; and

Supporting and building the capacity of organisations and journalists practising investigative journalism in the SADC region, at an editorial level.

The Hub currently has seven investigative centre members:

[MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) (Lesotho)

[The investigative unit of The Namibian](#) (Namibia)

[Platform for Investigative Journalism Malawi](#)

[Inhlase Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) (Swaziland)

[INK Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) (Botswana)

[Makanday Media Centre](#) (Zambia)

[AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) (South Africa)

AmaBhungane is incubating the Hub with an administrative sunset currently envisaged at 31 March 2021.

PEOPLE AND GOVERNANCE

The Hub currently has two staff positions. **Drew Forrest**, formerly investigations support coordinator at amaBhungane, assumed the position of managing partner: editorial in July 2019. **Charmeela Bhagowat** fulfilled the role of managing partner: organisational from inception to March 2020. Charmeela kindly volunteered her services during the initial months, helping to conceptualise and set up the Hub.

The Hub hopes imminently to announce the appointment of a permanent managing partner: organisational.

As incubator, amaBhungane has supported the Hub administratively. AmaBhungane operating coordinator **Lizel Shepherd** has been a stalwart in this regard.

At inception, the Hub was served by an interim board consisting of Bhagowat, Shepherd and amaBhungane joint managing partner Stefaans Brümmer.

Member centres elected a full board during a first AGM held in November 2019. The new board, installed in February 2020, comprises:

Stefaans Brümmer, who was elected by dint of amaBhungane's incubation role, with a limited one-year term. Others serve two-year terms. Stefaans acted as chair during a short handover period.

Prof Dumisani Moyo, vice dean: academic at the University of Johannesburg, holds a doctorate in media and communication studies and previously worked as regional programme manager, media and access to information, at the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa. He was elected chair of the Hub shortly after the review period.

Mantoe Phakathi, a journalist and communications consultant in eSwatini.

Steven Budlender, South African senior counsel who specialises in media and constitutional rights litigation.

Drew Forrest formally joined the board in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity, as provided for in the memorandum of incorporation, shortly after the review period.

ORGANISATIONAL MILESTONES

Organisation-building steps have included:

June 2019: The Hub is incorporated as a not-for-profit company under the interim name “SSC for IJ”, domiciled in South Africa.

July 2019: The Hub submits a tax exemption application to the SA Revenue Service.

September 2019: The Hub operationalises by facilitating and funding two three-month regional fellowships, placing both fellows at amaBhungane.

It hosts an inaugural consultative meeting with representatives from seven member centres in Johannesburg, which i.a. finalises the membership and governance model and adopts a membership code and editorial charter.

It formally changes its name to “IJ Hub” and adopts a new memorandum of incorporation reflecting the model adopted at the consultative meeting.

It makes its first grant, on an emergency basis, to a member centre.



Representatives of the IJ Hub's founding member centres meet in Johannesburg.

October 2019: The Hub approves a second member centre grant. It gets snagged by forex control regulations, putting an end to grant payments to member centres outside of the Rand monetary area pending a full SA Reserve Bank exemption application.

November 2019: Member centres elect a full board during the board's first AGM, held electronically.

December 2019: The Hub is the implementing partner in an Open Society for Southern Africa intervention bringing together Zimbabwean journalists for a strategy session on media independence in that country.

The Hub facilitates and funds two more regional fellowships, placing one fellow with amaBhungane and one with the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism.

February 2020: The Hub's new board holds its inaugural meeting in Johannesburg.

March 2020: The Hub facilitates two more regional fellowships. After the coronavirus outbreak one fellow returns home, while the other spends her time under lockdown in Johannesburg, served remotely by the Hub and by the Daily Maverick, where she was placed.

After the review period: In April and May, the Hub approves six more member centre grants and finally obtains SA Reserve Bank approval to disburse these to member centres outside of the Rand monetary area. In July, the SA Revenue Service grants it tax exemption as a public benefit organisation.

EDITORIAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

To March 2019, the Hub facilitated and completed four three-month fellowships in South Africa for regional journalists. The fifth and sixth fellows began their three-month stints in March 2020 but owing to the coronavirus outbreak, only one completed her fellowship, at the end of May.

The Hub has also organised or supported five training workshops at various venues in the region, all in collaboration with member centres.

The Hub edited and/or provided mentorship for 25 stories for publication – some produced by journalists on Hub fellowships and others by journalists based with member centres. All the stories were published in the regional journalists' home countries. Where appropriate, they were also pitched for publication in South Africa. The main South African publishing platforms have included the Daily Maverick, amaBhungane and the Mail & Guardian.

In future, the Hub hopes to facilitate collaborative regional investigations and syndication of stories between member centres.

Fellowships: The approach with fellowships is to offer in-service training and support for fellows while they work on real stories, generally relevant to their home countries, intended for publication.

Some "classroom" elements are included in the programme:

- An introductory tutorial on the nature and typical pitfalls of investigative journalism;

- A tutorial on media law, with particular reference to the law of defamation;

- Exercises requiring the fellows to analyse flawed stories to drive home the need for focus and legal-proofing; and

- A power-point presentation compiled by a Swedish investigative television channel on investigative method.

The fellowship programme commenced on 1 September 2019 with the arrival of **Ryder Gabathuse**, a senior journalist from Mmegi newspaper in Botswana, and **Okeri Ngutjinazo**, a member of The Namibian's investigative unit. Both were placed with amaBhungane.

Gabathuse, who had been pressing for the opportunity for a fellowship for some years, was endorsed by INK, the hub's member centre in Botswana. Ryder's main investigative project was an exposé of a highly questionable water pipeline contract awarded to controversial Malawian businessman Simbi Phiri, allegedly in return for generous donations to the ruling party's election coffers in advance of Botswana's presidential election. On his return home, Ryder offered an investigative story about corruption in a major rural development trust, which IJ Hub edited and was prominently published in Mmegi.

Ngutjinazo was selected by the head of The Namibian's investigative unit, Shinovene Immanuel, and The Namibian's editor, Tangeni Amuphadi. She produced two major investigative stories, both of which were published by the Daily Maverick, amaBhungane and The Namibian. The first concerned government procurement failures that had resulted in a shortage of life-saving drugs at Namibia's two largest hospitals. The second focused on the rise of gender-based violence in Namibia and government attempts – widely condemned as irrelevant – to rein it in by toughening sentences for gender based violence offences.

The second set of fellows – both from Lesotho, started their three-month fellowships on 1 December 2020.

Sechaba Mokhethi, of the MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, was placed at amaBhungane, while **Pascalinah Kabi**, chief reporter from the Lesotho Times, was placed with the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism.

Mokhethi's first investigative story revolved around a large election T-shirt contract signed by the Alliance for Democracy (AD) – the second largest party in Lesotho's governing coalition – which a controversial expat businessman had agreed to fund. The businessman enjoys numerous government contracts, some of them for ministries controlled by the AD.

His second project was a series of three stories about a R2-billion stadium contract that had been awarded to a number of local businessmen with links to government or criminal records, without an open and competitive tender process. In this series, Sechaba worked closely with amaBhungane's managing partner, Sam Sole. All his stories were published by amaBhungane and Daily Maverick, and on MNN's website in Lesotho.

Kabi's work at Bhekisisa centred on a failing hospital, based on a public-private partnership between the Lesotho government and South Africa healthcare giant Netcare, which is currently consuming a third of Lesotho's health budget. She followed this up with a feature about a child with leukemia forced to travel to a facility in South Africa because the Maseru hospital does not offer the necessary treatment. Both stories were published by Bhekisisa.

Sipilisiwe Ncube from News Diggers in Zambia and **Golden Matonga** from the Nation in Malawi started their fellowships in March. Ncube was placed at the Daily Maverick and Matonga at the Mail & Guardian, with half of the latter's fellowship cost generously pledged by the Swiss-based NGO International Centre for Asset Recovery, which runs an anti-corruption programme in Malawi.

Their fellowships were however the early programmatic casualties of the pandemic and resultant lockdowns. Ncube stayed in Johannesburg with family and completed her fellowship working from home receiving remote support from the Hub and the Daily Maverick. Matonga left for Malawi before the commencement of lockdown.

Both published while here: Ncube, in the Daily Maverick, on politics undermining the fight against Covid-19 in some African countries and Matonga, in the M&G, on Malawi's prioritisation of its political crisis rather than Covid-19.

Workshops: During the review period, the Hub facilitated and sponsored five one-day training workshops:

The Hub's Drew Forrest conducted two workshops, one in **Maseru, Lesotho** and another in **Mbabane, Swaziland**. They focused on writing investigative stories.

Africa Check conducted one in **Lilongwe, Malawi**, on fake news, fact-checking and verification of stories.

The INK Centre for Investigative Journalism conducted a workshop in **Gaborone, Botswana**, on digital security.

AmaBhungane's Susan Comrie conducted a workshop in **Windhoek, Namibia**, on the #Guptaleaks exposés, the various techniques used by the Guptas to launder money, and tracing illicit financial flows.



*February 2020:
amaBhungane's
Susan Comrie with
participant
journalists at a
training in
Windhoek.*

Story editing: Twenty-five investigative stories were completed by Hub fellows or benefited from Hub editing/mentoring. This represents an important form of supplementary training, as it involves a consultative, two-way exchange, sometimes over several weeks. The stories were:

[Namibian hospitals in ICU over shortage of essentials](#) by Okeri Ngutjinazo, November 3 2019.

[75 years and counting](#) by Mathias Haufiku and Tileni Monghudi, November 21 2019.

[Govt top official axed to force through Khato deal](#) by Ryder Gabathuse, in Mmegi on November 22 2019. Not published online.

[Phiri's serial controversies](#) by Ryder Gabathuse, in Mmegi on November 22 2019. Not published online.

[Wool and mohair farmers in limbo – despite victory](#) by Billy Ntaote, on November 22 2019.

[Government and corporates suck LEC dry](#) by Keiso Mohloboli and Mantsali Phakoana, December 6 2019.

[UB rot sparks row](#) by Joel Konopo and Calistus Bosaletswe, December 13 2019.

[Lesotho groans under hefty data price rises](#) by Tumisang Serame, December 13 2019.

[John embroiled in T-shirts brawl](#) by Sechaba Mokhethi, December 20 2019.

[Journalism needs to rethink ethics](#) by Joel Konopo, January 21 2020.

[Bid to overturn dubious M380-m 'Chinese' tender](#) by Billy Ntaote, January 24 2020.

[Namibian govt to tighten laws on gender-based violence](#) by Okeri Ngutjinazo, February 4 2020.

[Why one hospital takes up almost 30% of this country's entire health budget](#) by Pascalinah Kabi, February 6 2020.

[Netcare accused of siphoning M320-m from Tsepong](#) by Pascalinah Kabi, February 7 2020.

[Questions over contractors in Lesotho's R2.4-billion stadium deal](#) by Sechaba Mokhethi, February 10 2020.

[Lesotho cancels 'irregular' multibillion-rand guarantees for AU games stadium](#) by Sechaba Mokhethi, February 10 2020.

[Grissag behind Lesotho's R2.4-billion loan guarantee rumpus](#) by Sechaba Mokhethi, February 10 2020.

[Corruption allegations hit Palapye community trust](#) by Ryder Gabathuse, February 24 2020.

[Villagers on the warpath](#) by Ryder Gabathuse, February 24 2020.

[Lesotho turns to own coffers to fund AU games](#) by Sechaba Mokhehi, February 25 2020.

[Shades of SAA as new Zambia Airways prepares for take-off](#) by Charles Mafa and John Mukela, March 13 2020.

[Ignoring coronavirus fears, Malawi concentrates on its own political crisis](#) by Golden Matonga, March 18 2020.

[Threats to Kasanka National Park: Chief Chitambo and Lake Petroleum](#) by Charles Mafa and John Mukela, in The Mast (Zambia), March 19 2020. Not published online.

[Botswana is failing its children, activists say](#) by Kago Komane, March 20 2020.

[Botswana declares state of emergency, goes on lockdown](#) by Kago Komane, March 31 2020.

GRANTS AND ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

The Hub has begun the critical work of providing core financial support through its own grant-making to member centres. Two awards were made during the review period, although the second could not be disbursed due to forex control issues.

The Hub has been on a sharp learning curve. It has developed application, due diligence, approval, contracting and grant-management processes. After the review period, in early May 2020, it finally obtained clearance from the SA Reserve Bank to disburse grants outside of the Rand monetary area.

Direct financial grants aside, the Hub has also agreed terms of legal, accounting and website support with a number of centres – important to create an appropriate compliance and publication environment for the expenditure of grant funds.

Here are grants approved. For completeness we include grants after the review period:

Applicant	Date final application submitted	Date board approved	Date contracted	Date paid	Grant start date	Amount original currency	Amount ZAR	Direct organisational assistance
MNN	25 September 2019	26 September 2019	26 September 2019	26 September 2019	01 August 2019	R 117 850.00	R 117 850.00	-
MAKANDAY	10 October 2019	11 October 2019	15 October 2019		15 October 2019	\$3 690.00	R70 110.00	-
MNN	04 April 2020	09 April 2020	19 April 2020	20 April 2020	01 April 2020	R 304 860.46	R 304 860.46	-
INK	07 April 2020	09 April 2020	19 April 2020	08 May 2020	01 April 2020	R 352 087.70	R 352 087.70	Xero setup, training for 1 Aug fiscal transition
NAMIBIAN	07 April 2020	09 April 2020	19 April 2020	30 April 2020	01 May 2020	R 396 000.00	R 396 000.00	-
PIJ	06 April 2020	09 April 2020	21 April 2020	08 May 2020	01 May 2020	R 81 000.00	R 81 000.00	Xero setup, training, ongoing
MALAWI								
INHLASE	22 April 2020	05 May 2020	06 May 2020	08 May 2020	01 May 2020	R 261 122.48	R 261 122.48	Xero setup, training, ongoing; corporate lawyer for compliance assistance
MAKANDAY	06 April 2020	09 April 2020	19 April 2020	08 May 2020	01 May 2020	\$12 830.00	R 238 407.06	Website upgrade, maintenance; Xero setup, training, ongoing

SPECIAL PROJECTS

In November 2019, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (Osisa) funded the Hub to bring together a small group of Zimbabwean journalists to strategise the creation of a new independent media entity in their country.

Osisa wanted the group of six senior journalists to hear from others in the region who had created successful non-profit and commercial news outlets. On 2 and 3 December 2019, representatives from News Diggers in Zambia, Daily Maverick and amaBhungane in South Africa and the INK Centre for Investigative Journalism in Botswana met the Zimbabweans in Johannesburg. The participants shared experiences and brainstormed ideas. The Zimbabweans returned home with an implementation plan.

OUR SUPPORTERS

The formation and work of the Hub was made possible by charitable foundations.

We acknowledge these grants with much gratitude:¹

Program on Independent Journalism/Foundation Open Society Institute: R248 476 (May to Sep 2019)

Millennium Trust: R2 000 000 (Sep 2019 to Aug 2020)

Program on Independent Journalism/Foundation to Promote Open Society: R3 012 610 (Sep 2019 to Dec 2020)²

Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa: R150 278 (Nov 2019 to Feb 2020)

¹ The ZAR amount received, net of any funds unspent and returned, is indicated.

² Part of this grant was received after the review period.