



IJHub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Impact Report

April to September 2023



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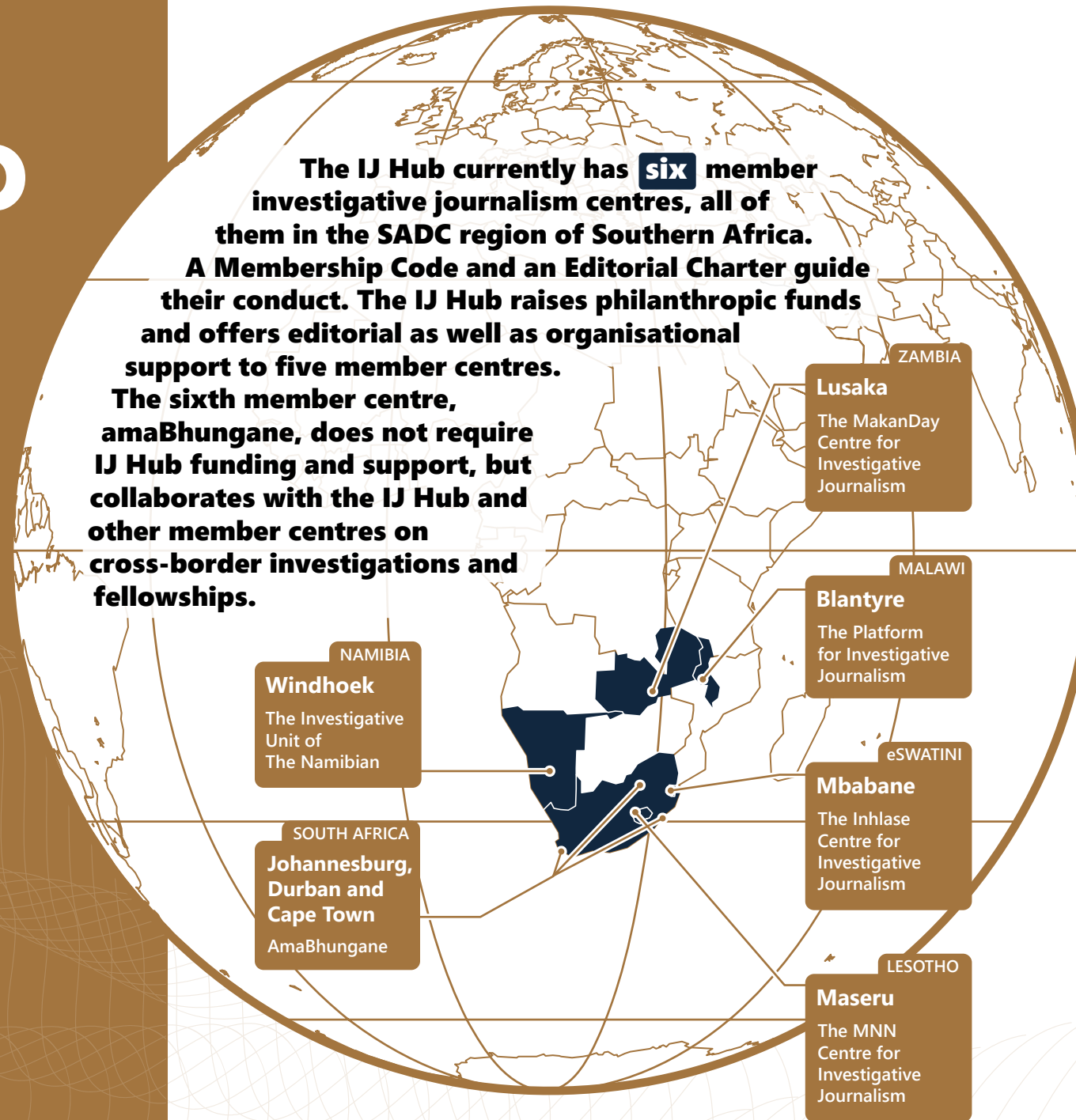
Who we are and why we do what we do

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 from April to September 2023. It also highlights the punch they pack above their weight.

The IJ Hub currently has **six** 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 sixth member centre, amaBhungane, does not require IJ Hub funding and support, but collaborates with the IJ Hub and other member centres on cross-border investigations and fellowships.



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

21 Journalists

16 Contributors



BLANTYRE
MALAWI

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.

● Journalists: 2 / Contributors: 10



WINDHOEK
NAMIBIA

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.

● Journalists: 2 / Contributors: 4



LUSAKA
ZAMBIA

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.

● Journalists: 4 / Contributors: 1



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.

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: 7 / Contributors: 1



MBABANE
eSWATINI

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

● Journalists: 3



MASERU
LESOTHO

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.

● Journalists: 3

Journalism

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

On the right is a selection of 15 standout stories published from April to September 2023

“The present threat to democracy is the product of 16 consecutive years of decline in global freedom. A total of 60 countries suffered declines over the past year, while only 25 improved. As of today, some 38% of the global population live in Not Free countries, the highest proportion since 1997. Only about 20% now live in Free countries.”

~ Freedom in the World report 2022

Bulldozers start clearing a pristine national park

MakanDay

This investigation exposed how a mining company had started tearing up pristine bush in the heart of the Lower Zambezi National Park to make way for a vast open-source copper mine. The company's application for a mine in this reserve had been rejected consistently since 2011. However, in May 2023, the Zambia Environmental Management Agency did an about-turn and approved the application. The approval had also been given on the back of an expired environmental impact assessment. This fuelled questions about the political leverage mine owners may have had. The investigation encountered resistance from those with vested interests and their attempts to discredit the work.

[Read More](#)

Impact: The story, which was syndicated by the IJ Hub, generated significant outrage across the globe. Zambia's government cancelled the mining licence.



Manganese miners with Parkinson's-like symptoms

MakanDay

The investigation was built around 20 manganese miners employed at Southern Africa Ferro Alloys Limited (SAFAL) in Serenje, central Zambia. They have all been diagnosed with “manganese disease”, a neurological condition thought to be linked to manganese dust and fumes. Ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the investigation demanded thorough fact-checking. It took significant time to verify all information and to visit all the affected miners at their homes, situated more than 300km from Lusaka.

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

Impact: The Workers' Compensation Fund Control Board in Zambia has initiated a compensation process.

Personal cost of blowing the whistle

MakanDay

The investigation exposes how high-ranking government officials intimidated and persecuted a government auditor after he blew the whistle on extensive embezzlement in Zambia's ministry of education which also implicated the finance ministry. The story has raised questions about Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema's promise to protect whistleblowers and crack down on corruption. Investigating this story and exposing the matter without compromising the safety of the whistleblower, who is currently living in a government-provided safe house, required patience and the utmost care.

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

Impact: The whistleblower's government salary, which was withheld without reason or warning, has been reinstated. The plan to transfer him to a town far from Lusaka has also been stopped, but he now finds himself in limbo as he waits for a crucial verdict from the Lusaka High Court which will decide if he must leave the safe house while investigations continue.

A politically inspired hospital hiring spree

MNN

Senior politicians in Lesotho's health ministry parachuted friends, family and party comrades into jobs at the flagship Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital in 2022. The first quarter of 2022 saw the highest staff intake in the hospital's history, with 248 people being hired. This sent the wage bill for January 2022 soaring to M13 million (USD689 318), which was double what it was in the previous January. While this also left the hospital with more administrative than technical staff, many new employees were not qualified for the jobs they were given.

[Read More](#)

“Practise ‘digital hygiene’ when working on an important story – it is important to leave few digital footprints. This closes gaps through which a journalist can be traced.”

~ Dr Allen Munoriyarwa, surveillance expert at the University of Botswana

Diverting donor money

MNN

This investigation reveals how a senior public servant turned a government agricultural project, which attracts millions of US dollars in donor funding, into her own get-rich-quick scheme. While this has left farmers, who were supposed to benefit from the donor money, out of pocket and unable to grow their businesses, the public servant seems to enjoy political protection and impunity.

[Read More](#)

Impact: In May, Lesotho’s Minister of Agriculture, Thabo Mafosi, stated that “if there is truth” to the MNN story, government would deal with it. In June, two officials from the ministry visited MNN saying they wanted evidence as the minister wanted to “act”. Later that day, MNN was served with a civil summons demanding M3 million (USD159 073) in defamation damages.

Sidestepping the taxman

MNN

This investigation exposes a wily scheme devised by two executives from Lesotho’s Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA) to siphon donor funds for their private use.

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

Impact: The women have been charged with 100 counts of tax evasion relating to about M822 773.61 (USD43 663) owed to Revenue Services Lesotho.

The promise of clean water

Inhlase

In 2020, the Coca-Cola Foundation and WaterAid Eswatini unveiled a pilot solar water project worth E27 million (USD1.42 million) that would pipe water to five rural communities. The project was hailed as a life-changing solution in a country where only 49% of the population has access to piped water. In 2021, the project collapsed, and taps in the five communities that the project was supposed to cover ran dry. By May 2023, residents in these communities were still walking long distances to fetch water.

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

Impact: Water supply has been restored to one of the five communities.

The University of Eswatini: insolvent and dysfunctional

Inhlase

The story sets out how mismanagement and abuse of funds have debilitated the once-prestigious institution and jeopardised its survival.

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

Impact: A new board of trustees has been tasked with giving the university strategic direction, and the university’s E1.3 billion (USD68.8 million) income tax debt has been written off.



Journalism

...continued



Boast: *MakanDay launched its annual Eminent Journalist Award, which goes to Zambian journalists who contribute to an open and just democracy by holding leaders to account. The first recipient was Christopher Bazilio Banda, who won a laptop. Runner-up Angela Mutambo won a three-month fellowship at MakanDay.*

Promises, patriarchy and the politics of getting elected

Inhlase

As election fever gained momentum in Eswatini, this story exposed an unwritten rule that requires nominees campaigning for parliamentary seats to incentivise voters in cash or in kind to secure support. This makes success very unlikely for those representing marginalised groups.

[Read More](#)

The football star and the property scam

Platform for Investigative Journalism

This story reveals how one of Malawi's most famous female footballers was scammed out of a fortune by a crooked football administrator and a questionable bank when she bought a house on the outskirts of Lilongwe.

[Read More](#)

Impact: The story generated an uproar on social media. The bank has reacted angrily and the PIJ has been threatened by those implicated.

Trading bridal commodities

Platform for Investigative Journalism

The increasing price of brides in China has opened up a lucrative market in poor countries. While some Chinese men are looking for cheaper brides in Malawi, poor families in the African country are being pressured into offering their daughters in exchange for cash, even if they are minors. The facilitators in Malawi know how to get around local laws. Malawian authorities have pledged to crack down on the trade, but there is no visible action at this stage.

[Read More](#)



Refugee camp abuse: high-ranking officials implicated

Platform for Investigative Journalism

This investigation reveals how United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) officials, Malawian police and homeland security officials are implicated in the horrific sexual abuse and extortion of vulnerable female refugees. PIJ journalists were physically threatened by those involved.

[Read More](#)

Impact: After the PIJ story was published, the UN contacted victims and is now investigating the matter. Some of the women have been transferred out of the camp and the country for protection.

Surviving on refuse

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

This was an investigation into food insecurity and how it affected a marginalised community trying to survive on food scavenged from a dump site.

[Read More](#)

Impact: The story prompted members of the public to provide help to families by offering them jobs and food.



IJH Hub

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Journalism

...continued

Boast: MNN founding partner and award-winning journalist



Sechaba Mokheithi was invited to The Centre for Investigative Journalism's 2023 summer conference at the University of London to present his investigation which exposed shady dealings between politicians and "investors" in a USD15 billion wind farm project. The story was rated the best among the Oxpeckers' #PowerTracker programme 2022.

Oil deals and power struggles

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

The story reveals how the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (Namcor) was looking into questionable transactions worth about N\$300 million (USD16 million) involving a private company supplying fuel and infrastructure to the military. This story, which took more than four months to complete, also details how the oil deal is linked to an ongoing power struggle between Namcor's board and its suspended managing director.

[Read More](#)

Spotlight on dodgy property deals

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

The managing director of a state-owned company was fired for various questionable transactions involving millions of dollars. Details of his wheeling and dealing are now laid bare in this story by investigative journalists who first flagged the questionable deals four years ago.

[Read More](#)



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.

6

Workshops

70

Participants

IJ Hub workshops

We arrange and host workshops on topics relevant to investigative journalism and tailored to our member centres' needs. The aim is to inspire and transfer skills to member centres and other journalists leading to high quality stories that hold power to account and increase accountability in the region

Deep dive into Computer Crime and Cybersecurity Bill

19 JUNE 2023 *(20 participants)*

This workshop was held as part of Lesotho's Free Press Initiative with the aim of educating journalists about clauses in the bill that limit media freedom and access to information. This training complemented a wider advocacy programme against the bill, which was tabled in Parliament but then withdrawn. Cabinet planned to reinstate it in May but has not yet done so.

Data Journalism

15 - 21 APRIL 2023 *(7 participants)*

The IJ Hub partnered with OpenUp on a pilot project aiming to bridge the gap between data journalism and regular story production. Journalists were taken through the basics of how to find relevant data, organise and verify it, and how to use it to enhance storytelling. After the training, participants were invited to make use of an OpenUp "datadesk" for a set period so they could get guidance as they put the skills they had learned into practice.

The two-day workshop was also followed up by three power-hour sessions. These monthly virtual gatherings provided further support for journalists who attended the initial training to share challenges and ask questions. It was also an opportunity for OpenUp to introduce some new data management techniques.

Podcasting 101: Building an audience and crafting a voice

20 APRIL 2023 *(8 participants)*

Presented by Brendan "Spike" Balantine, a seasoned broadcaster, copywriter and ideation professional, the session covered the podcasting landscape and how it is growing in Africa and globally. Spike also explored ways to package stories and, in particular, how to create a data story. The workshop also focused on the dos and don'ts of the production process, the use of music and broader sound design, building a narrative and options for hosting platforms. On presenting a data story, Spike advised that journalists should think about the visual aspect of the story and use a strong host voice to tell the story. He then cited several examples of how to get started and different types of news podcasts that the attendees could access and learn from when thinking about their own podcasts.

Scraping and organising large data sets

8 AUGUST 2023 *(2 participants)*

A considerable amount of data was leaked to one of the IJ Hub's member centre journalists. This training session was designed to help him

understand how to manage the data and how to find links between individuals and the transactions listed. This bespoke workshop was a useful way to address a skills gap quickly while moving a real-time investigation forward.

Surveillance: an increasing threat to Africa

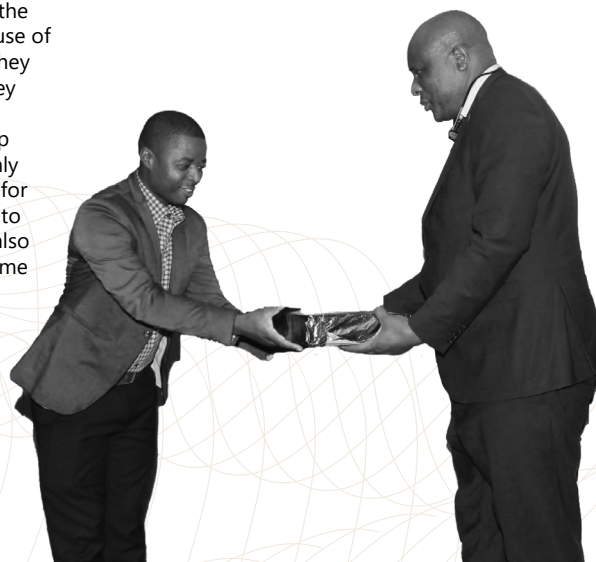
14 SEPTEMBER 2023 *(24 participants)*

Dr Allen Munoriyarwa, a lecturer, researcher and expert on all matters involving surveillance in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana, hosted the workshop. During the session, he unpacked the factors fuelling electronic surveillance across the continent. He also explored how and why government surveillance practices are developing and growing. A discussion about factors driving the increased surveillance of journalists was also held.

Money laundering and asset forfeiture

29 SEPTEMBER 2023 *(9 participants)*

The Platform for Investigative Journalism facilitated this workshop, which aimed to provide journalists with an understanding of what constitutes money laundering and asset forfeiture. The Malawian government's Financial Intelligence Unit gave presentations that provided the participants with insights into how to investigate and expose these crimes and what techniques are best to uncover them. Malawian media houses that fall under the umbrella of the Continued Journalism Education Initiative were represented.



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.



Liapeng Raliengoane

1 September - 30 November 2023

IJ Hub fellow from Lesotho
hosted by MNN in Lesotho



Angela Mutambo

1 May - 31 July 2023

Fellow from Zambia
hosted by MakanDay in Zambia



Earlene Chimoyo

1 September - 30 November 2023

IJ Hub fellow from Malawi
hosted by PIJ in Malawi



Gift Phiri

1 September - 30 November 2023

IJ Hub fellow from Zambia
hosted by MakanDay in Zambia



Zwelethu Dlamini

1 September - 30 November 2023

IJ Hub fellow from Eswatini
hosted by Inhlase in Eswatini

5
In-country





Editorial support and syndication system

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

Boast: *The Platform for Investigative Journalism's* award-winning journalist, Golden Matonga, was elected chairperson of the Media Institute of Southern Africa's (MISA's) Malawi Chapter in May. And in September, Matonga was awarded a prestigious nine-month Hubert Humphrey Fellowship to the United States. He will be based at Arizona State University in Phoenix, where he will learn about public-interest journalism from some of the best in the business.



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](#) |
[Read More 7](#)

20

Stories supported with editing

7

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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www.ijhub.org



THE NAMIBIAN
INVESTIGATIVE UNIT