



NARRATIVE REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (Published September 2023)

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.

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 amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism, South Africa's premier investigative non-profit, spun off the Hub in June 2019 and incubated it administratively until June 2021. Amabhungane remains and IJ Hub member centre but does not receive funding from the Hub.

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.

The Hub's investigative centre membership included the following centres during the review period:

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

[The Investigative Unit of The Namibian](#) (Namibia)

[Platform for Investigative Journalism](#) (Malawi)

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

[MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) (Zambia)

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

[INK Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) (Botswana). Towards the end of the review period, in November 2022, INK took a decision to relinquish its membership until it was back on its feet and ready to return to the fold. The Hub's management keeps in contact with INK to see how the process of re-establishing itself is progressing.

While INK is still not in a position to re-join the network, re-establishing a centre in Botswana and establishing a new centre in Zimbabwe when funding permits is a priority for the Hub.

IJ Hub NPC 2019/285016/08, PBO 930066244, NPO 291-738

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FUNDING UPDATE

The Hub was in a difficult financial position and as of the beginning of FY23/24 it has been operating on an austerity budget. These measures were taken because of a funding gap after the Hub was not able to secure a new grant from the Open Society Foundations and new funding from other sources. The grants from existing funders, namely, the Millennium Trust and the Joffe Trust, were not sufficient to support the IJ Hub operational budget. The funding gap led to a reduction in programme activities and a reduction in overheads. This was a challenging situation to navigate as it threatened the sustainability of the network. Since the previous live board meeting, there have been welcomed, positive developments.

- In July, the IJ Hub was offered a general support grant of USD 400 000 grant over two years from the Open Society Foundations.
- In September the Hub was offered a ZAR 1 000 000 grant over two years from the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust.

These developments are welcomed and have come at a critical time. However, more work to adequately resource the network is needed to buffer the organisation from other shocks in the sector as was the case when the IJ Hub's biggest funder was not able to commit to funding the Hub. During this period there were unsuccessful funding applications most notably from the Raith Foundation which did not take the Hub's application further given the Hub's operations outside of South Africa. The Ronald W. Naito MD Foundation also rejected the application because of its board looking to move away from supporting journalism at this stage. New and diverse pools of funders are needed to fund the work of the Hub to keep the network going.

PEOPLE AND GOVERNANCE UPDATE

At the start of the review period, after both previous managing partners left in quick succession for unrelated reasons, the Hub was staffed by two managing partners, Troye Lund (editorial) and Stefaans Brümmer. Stefaans stepped down from the IJ Hub board to stabilise the ship, show Troye the ropes and help look for a person to fill the managing partner (organisational) position. In August 2022, Sebenzile Nkambule was appointed as managing partner (organisational) and Stefaans returned to his position as a non-executive director on the board.

During the period under review, Troye's employment contract was converted to permanent employment with effect 1 March 2023

Though much responsibility is shared between the two managing partners, and many tasks are indivisible, the former has an overarching responsibility for editorial capacity building and the latter for organisational capacity building – and managing the Hub itself.

The Hub's MOI determines that it is governed by a board of three to five non-executive directors elected by member centres, and up to two ex-officio, non-voting, executive directors. At least one third of the elected directors are up for rotation annually but may be re-elected.

The board is actively engaged with appointments, matters of compliance and significant financial decisions. During the review period it comprised:

Prof Dumisani Moyo, dean of humanities at North-West University – non-executive director and chair (serving second term 2021-2023)

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)

Stefaans Brümmer, journalist and amaBhungane co-founder – non-executive director, executive director between 1 March 2022 and 31 August 2022 (serving third and final term 2021-2023)

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

Sebenzile Nkambule, Hub managing partner (organisational) and ex-officio executive director appointed 15 August 2022.

MEMBER CENTRE GRANTS

For the period 22 September 2022 to present

Date	Member Centre	Amount ZAR
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
Total		3 461 519

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. Examples of our work helping member centres get their own houses in order include monitoring how two centres that the IJ Hub helped adopt cloud-based accounting packages are faring as they put the tool to use. This kind of work was highlighted by an effort which lasted several months and included the Hub engaging specialist legal advice to help one of the member centres overhaul an inadequate governance structure. One of the Hub's member centres has not yet been audited. The maiden audit process was delayed in recent months because of the IJ Hub's funding crunch which forced centres to survive on much less. Ensuring that this member centre's maiden audit is concluded is a Hub priority for the coming months. The Hub also provides support when centres face legal challenges. For example, the Hub provided support to a centre that received a threatening lawyer's letter in March demanding that it stops publishing further stories about a dodgy tender at a mine. The Hub helped the centre respond. The centre went ahead and published the story, and nothing has come of the legal threat.

The Hub continues to encourage member centres to diversify their sources of funding and offers help with applying for these funds or fulfilling reporting obligations. The need for centres to find other sources

of funding was made more urgent by the OSF restructuring, especially for centres that were informed that they would not be eligible for future OSF funding.

The Hub continues to offer support to member centres who find themselves in unexpected, difficult or threatening situations. For example, at the beginning of the period under review, in April 2022, police detained the head of one of our member centres and confiscated his devices in an attempt to discover the centre's sources for a story that upset prominent officials. The Hub arranged for a lawyer to travel to the police station where he was held to help secure his release. After his devices were also returned, we arranged for a digital expert to ensure the devices remained secure. When the centre's website also came under attack soon after, our expert helped secure it too.

Towards the end of the period under review the Hub also started to engage with individual investigative journalists in countries in which it hopes to establish new member centres when funding allows, including Zimbabwe and Botswana. The aim is to get to know investigative journalists working in these countries and possibly facilitate collaboration with Hub member centres on suitable stories. After the review period journalists that the IJ Hub has been engaging with started attending IJ Hub workshops regularly and, in November this year, which is out of the period under review, the Hub facilitated a small grant for a journalist in Zimbabwe to work with a human rights lawyer on an investigation in that country. Hopefully this will end in a strong piece of investigative journalism that the Hub can syndicate.

During the period under review the Hub also started producing a bi-annual impact report. These reports detail the Hub's work over a six-month period and showcase some of the best stories produced by member centres. The Hub has produced three impact reports to date which have been well received by existing and prospective donors and anyone else wanting to get a good sense of the Hub, its work, and its member centres. Member centres are also able to share these reports with potential funders.

EDITORIAL 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.

We network and advise member centres and their journalists. We help those who need it to get their stories ready for publication. We sponsor qualifying journalists for three-month fellowships where they get hands-on experience at 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.

The Hub also arranges and hosts 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. Due to management complications and changes in the 21/22 financial year, the Hub fell short of meeting targets for workshops and fellowships which is why, for the period under review, management aimed to make up for this by increasing the targets for workshops (12 as opposed to the usual 8) and fellowships (12 as opposed to usual 8).

The Hub hosted 12 fellowships during the period under review and convened eight workshops. The number of workshops held was shy of the increased target for the period under review. The reason for this is that we discovered that after Covid-19 there seemed to be an online-workshop-fatigue and management decided that fewer, more targeted workshops that were tailored to meet specific needs of individual centres, even individual journalists, would be more effective. The first in-person workshop after

Covid-19 was held over two days in Maseru in August 2022 and journalists at our member centre there were taken through a hands-on coaching plan on data journalism and how to use data to tell better stories. The two-day workshop was repeated for other centres and have been followed up by monthly lunch hour sessions with OpenUp that allow journalists to raise questions as they put new skills into practice. In addition to the workshops and lunch hour sessions, OpenUp has also offered IJ Hub member centre journalists access to a data helpdesk that they are piloting for six months. This allows journalists who are battling with organising and managing large data sets to ask for help as and when they need it.

During the review period, the eight workshops included:

- **Top tools for non-profit newsrooms around the world have used to break big investigations.** Presented by GIJN's Rowan Philp and Benon Oluka (11 April 2022)
- **Cybersecurity Power Hour.** Presented by Toby Shapshak (21 April 2022)
- **Avoiding lawsuits and other legal dangers.** A discussion with Dario Milo, a Webber Wentzel partner and expert in all aspects of media and information law (27 May 2022)
- **The couch of cash, the Namibian connection, and the dodgy politics of it all.** Fireside chat with amaBhungane's Tebogo Tshwane and Namibia's freelance investigative journalist Tileni Mongudhi (2 August 2022)
- **Malawi's king of dodgy government contracts.** The Platform for Investigative Journalism's Gregory Gondwe and Golden Matonga shared how they uncovered an industrial-scale system of bribery and tender corruption in Malawi that UK-based businessman Zuneth Sattar put in place to get obscenely rich. (9 August 2022)
- **Data visualisation and storytelling.** In-person workshop held in Lesotho. Followed up with monthly lunch hour sessions and access to a data helpdesk (30 and 31 August 2022)
- **How to talk so your audience will listen.** This offered focused training designed to meet the needs of one member centre which had asked for help to improve its use of social media. Hosted by Adam Oxford from Area of Effect (24 January 2023)
- **OSINT tools.** This was a session with a journalist from one member centre who had asked for help with finding specific information for an investigation he was working on. Hosted by Vortimo's Roelof Temmingh (15 February 2023)

During the review period 12 three-month fellowships were arranged and sponsored by us which means that the increased target was met.

Bazilio Banda, was placed with the MakanDay Centre in Zambia from March to May 2022.

Keketso Mohalenyana Pakhela from Lesotho was placed at amaBhungane from April to June 2022.

Lemohang Rakotsoane from Lesotho was placed at MNN from April to June 2022.

Donald Matthys from Namibia was placed at the Investigative Unit of The Namibian from June to August 2022.

Mirriam Chabala from Zambia was placed at MakanDay from July to September 2022.

Mefika Ndlangamandla from Eswatini was placed at amaBhungane on Johannesburg from July to September 2022.

Retšelisitsoe Khabo from Lesotho was placed at the Investigative Unit of The Namibian from August to October 2022.

Timo Shihepo from Namibia was placed at amaBhungane in Johannesburg from 1 October to 31 December 2022.

Pamela Kapekela from Zambia was placed at MakanDay in Zambia from 3 October to 31 December 2022.

Suzgo Chitete from Malawi was placed at amaBhungane in Johannesburg from 1 January to 31 March 2023.

Josephine Chinele from Malawi was placed at the Platform for Investigative Journalism in Malawi from 1 January to 31 March 2023.

Thomas Kachere from Malawi was placed at GroundUp in Cape Town from 1 February to 30 April 2023.

The financial crunch that the IJ Hub faced for the six months post the review period forced management to stop the fellowship programme. New funding has allowed the in-country fellowship programme to resume in September 2023 and hopefully the cross-border fellowships will be up and running again soon.

Editing and syndication system

The Hub continues to help with editing member centre stories. This is where member centres who feel they need it are helped to get stories ready for publication. Far from only a linguistic edit, the process is often interactive and may involve several drafts where investigative gaps, legal risks, etc. are addressed. During the review period, 39 published stories benefited from greater or lesser Hub input.

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 of this system 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. This benefit is multiplied if stories are good enough to be published by publications in other countries, as some have been.

Once an investigation is earmarked for syndication and is ready for editing the IJ Hub works closely with the member centre to prepare the story for publication. The IJ Hub also contracts a sub-editor to cast an eye over the final version. Since the system was launched, 16 stories have been syndicated. These have been well received by member centres as well as other publications, including Daily Maverick and GroundUp which, in turn, have offered stories to a network of publications with which it collaborates. The hub hopes to scale this system up in the coming year as it has quickly raised the Hub's profile which, in turn, as we have experienced, increases opportunities for the Hub's centres including invitations from other investigative units in other parts of the world who are looking to collaborate on investigations.