



IJHub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Impact Report

April to September 2024





IJHub

SERVING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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 2024. It also highlights the punch they pack above their weight.

The IJ Hub currently has **seven** 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 amaBhungane member centre 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

25 Journalists

39 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, award-winning investigative outfit.

- Journalists: 3 / 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



MBOMBELA,
DURBAN AND
CAPE TOWN,
SOUTH AFRICA

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

Founded in 2012, Oxpeckers is Africa's first journalistic investigation unit focusing on environmental issues. It combines traditional investigative reporting with data analysis and geo-mapping tools to expose eco-offences and track organised criminal syndicates.

- Journalists: 7 / Contributors: 12



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: 2 / Contributors: 8



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 an 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 fellows.

- Journalists: 6 / 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 / Contributors: 2



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: 2

Journalism

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

On the right is a selection of 16 standout stories published from April to September 2024.

Milking the system

Platform for Investigative Journalism

The story uncovered how a Christian charity, 2nd Milk, exploited Malawi's poor and hungry children by pretending to feed them with donor money when, in fact, the charity's founders, Jason and Lacy Carney, were siphoning off most of the money to fund their lavish lifestyle.

[Read more](#)

Impact: Malawi's NGO oversight authority launched investigations into 2nd Milk. These have resulted in the US State Department also conducting a criminal investigation into 2nd Milk and cancelling the NGO's accreditation. Several US donors have disinvested from the NGO and news coverage of the feeding scam has appeared in various US media, including in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Nepotism claims rock development fund

MakanDay

In Livingstone, Zambia, allegations of nepotism and corruption regarding the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) have surfaced. At the centre of the accusations are Minister of Tourism Rodney Sikumba and his close associates, who are said to be benefiting disproportionately from grants and contracts. Despite Sikumba's claims of having no direct influence over fund allocations, concerns persist about the transparency and accountability of the process.

Investigations into contractor performance and allegations of political favouritism have

highlighted the urgent need for reform and oversight in CDF distribution.

[Read more](#)

Impact: The CDF committee for the Livingstone constituency was dissolved amid ongoing challenges.

Mining given go-ahead despite local dissent

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

As Madagascar's government prepares to award licences to companies mining commodities that are needed for the global energy transition, it stands accused of keeping affected communities in the dark about these plans.

[Read more](#)

Mining firm fingered for pollution

MNN

MNN collaborated with journalists in Zambia and the UK to investigate Letšeng Diamonds, a UK mining company situated in Lesotho. The company, which has won environmental awards, has been linked to severe water pollution affecting local communities. The journalists conducted a scientific analysis of water flowing out of the company waste pipe into the community river and used satellite imagery to determine the level of alleged pollution.

[Read more](#)

Impact: Letšeng Diamonds started engaging with local community representatives as well as local media. The mine also constructed two water pipelines in two villages located downstream of the mine after MNN published this story.

Reporters Shield, a UK-based organisation that defends investigative reporting around the world from legal threats, contacted MNN offering support as it had become aware of MNN's existence through this story, which, it said, "stood out and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public interest journalism".



Mugabe's ex-pilot faces N\$20.8m theft charge

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

Court papers filed in South Africa reveal that a total of N\$20.8 million was stolen from SME Bank between 2014 and 2015. The money was transferred to, and laundered by, former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe's pilot and confidant, Robert Mhlanga. It was laundered through various entities and transferred to the trust account of a Johannesburg-based law firm, Casasola and Associates, owned by Mhlanga's lawyer, Paul Casasola. He kept N\$2 million of the stolen funds. The balance of N\$18.8 million was pocketed by Mhlanga and his associates.

Zambian Enock Kamushinda, who was Mugabe's former personal banker, is accused of masterminding the bank heist.

[Read more](#)

Swazi Secrets

Inhlase

This cross-border investigation has uncovered the murky underbelly of Eswatini, Africa's last absolute monarchy, where political power and wealth are wielded by King Mswati III and a royal coterie of con artists. Through this groundbreaking probe, co-ordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a team of 38 journalists from 11 countries worked to expose the vulnerability of Eswatini's financial institutions. The probe is based on a leak of 890 000 internal records from the Eswatini Financial Intelligence Unit.

The Swazi Secrets leak reveals the alarming ease with which politicians and corporations exploit loopholes in the banking system to evade taxes, move money abroad illegally and move illicit funds through the kingdom. These activities have serious implications that extend far beyond



Eswatini's borders, showing how financial institutions can be manipulated to fuel money laundering and organised crime across Southern Africa.

This leak is the largest of its kind from a financial intelligence unit in an African country. The documents include bank records, police investigation reports, court affidavits and transcripts, and confidential exchanges between government agencies within Southern Africa. The records include detail how banks around the world have facilitated financial transactions for people and companies suspected of criminal activity.

[Read more 1](#) | [Read more 2](#) | [Read more 3](#)

Making municipalities bankable

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

Many of the municipalities in South Africa's energy heartland, Mpumalanga, are in debt and so they face significant problems when it comes to attracting financial investments to support the province's transition to renewable energy. Oxpeckers spoke to stakeholders trying to overcome the hurdles.

[Read more](#)

Cobalt crush poses a threat to DRC's forests

Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

An historic United Nations deal to restore degraded forest ecosystems in the south-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is being torn apart by mining companies.

[Read more](#)

Corrupt officials divert student funds

MakanDay

As part of his pledge to redistribute resources equitably in order to benefit all Zambians, President Hakainde Hichilema said he would shift monies from “thieves in Lusaka” to other constituencies. However, in Chitambo district, more than K5.2 million that had been allocated for youth education and skills development is reportedly being embezzled by council officials. Allegations include directing students to specific driving schools for personal gain, leading to confusion and wasted resources. This, as investigations into the misuse of the Constituency Development Fund funds continue.

[Read more](#)

Impact: The Anti-Corruption Commission launched investigations into the Chitambo Council CDF scandal.

Drug procurement scandal unravels

MakanDay

Thirty-eight trucks carrying medical supplies were stranded at the Chirundu border for a month because of alleged corruption by officials at the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (Zammsa). An employee was reportedly arrested for colluding with a clearing agent to prolong customs clearance in exchange for kickbacks. Concerns over drug quality and safety are mounting as the government investigates the misuse of funds amid ongoing management inefficiencies at Zammsa.

[Read more](#)

Impact: Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema reassigned Minister of Health Sylvia Masebo to a new portfolio. The director-general of Zammsa was dismissed.

personal get-rich-quick scheme. She left that position to work for the US-funded Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). After a month in her new job, she was sacked when her employer found she was still drawing a salary from the SADP and overseeing its activities. Nkhethoa, who is facing corruption charges, is contesting her dismissal in court.

[Read more](#)

Disgraced director's lies and due diligence dodge

MNN

Malichaba Nkhethoa was the director of Lesotho's donor-funded Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP) until she was found to have turned the project into her

Impact: Following MNN's investigations, an independent consultant has been hired by the SADP to investigate whether donor-funded grants disbursed under Nkhethoa's direction were ethical. For its part, the MCA has provided anti-fraud and corruption training to its employees, and now has a whistleblowing feature on its website for the public to raise the alarm about fraud and corruption.



Journalism

... continued

Boast: *Justice Under Seige* – the PIJ’s newly launched podcast, which offers another exciting way of telling stories that hold power to account by uncovering corruption and human rights abuses.



[Read more](#)

Tender bidders hatch dubious deal

MNN

MNN revealed how, in 2022, two bidders for a lucrative state debt-collecting contract struck a questionable pact that included splitting the rewards. In a follow-up investigation, MNN examines how the country’s finance minister has only recently taken action to intervene and petition the court to set aside the contentious contract, claiming various irregularities in the procurement process. Critics doubt her intentions, though, particularly because a competitor, Super Solutions, expressed similar concerns during the bidding process. However, Super Solutions ultimately decided to withdraw its legal case, which was aimed at exposing the irregularities, in exchange for money. The anti-corruption agency is probing the matter and the court action is ongoing.

[Read more](#)

Problems pile up at state oil company

Investigative Unit of The Namibian

Our investigative journalists have doggedly followed the corruption case involving national oil company Namcor. With the recent oil discoveries in Namibia, Namcor has become the site of a power struggle among Namibia’s ruling elite, who include individuals linked to Namibia’s defence force.

Namcor’s managing director, Immanuel Mulunga, was fired earlier this year after allegations surfaced about N\$500 million worth of questionable transactions having occurred under his watch.

[Read more 1](#) | [Read more 2](#) | [Read more 3](#)

[Read more 4](#) | [Read more 5](#) | [Read more 6](#)

[Read more 7](#)

Essential services in crisis

Inhlase

Civil servants have raised the alarm about the shambolic state of Eswatini’s government offices as they struggle to perform their duties, citing deteriorating infrastructure, sheer negligence and inconsistent enforcement practices as primary reasons. The situation has reached crisis point, with widespread dysfunction across multiple ministries. As a result, essential services and basic operations are almost non-existent.

[Read more](#)

Allegations mount against AG

Platform for Investigative Journalism

Thabo Nyirenda, Malawi’s Attorney General, is tasked with enforcing the law and ensuring good governance. The story exposes how Nyirenda persuaded a foreign mining company that was seeking a mining concession to pay US\$180 000 for a legal opinion produced by a private firm he single-handedly sourced.

However, US\$80 000 (MK138 million) of the amount received from the mining company went missing and is believed to have been stolen.

[Read more](#)

Tender fraud laid bare

Platform for Investigative Journalism

Malawi’s government brazenly broke the law by pushing through a contract without a competitive and open tender. The proposed deal concerned the supply of fuel from a fake

company that the government claimed represented the royal family of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

However, PIJ exposed this company to be a dubious Lilongwe-based forex bureau recently registered in Malawi. The investigation punched several holes in the government’s narrative and exposed how the alleged UAE company was not only going to be paid half the contract sum upfront, it was also going to be paid in the local kwacha currency. In a country that is perennially facing foreign currency shortages, such a move means the money was not going to a foreign company.

[Read more](#)

Impact: The story led to an official investigation by the public protector which eventually resulted in the contract being cancelled by the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority.





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.

13

Workshops

273

Participants

IJ Hub workshops

We arrange and host workshops on topics that are relevant to investigative journalism and tailored to the needs of our member centres. The aim is to inspire and transfer skills to member centres and other journalists – and in so doing, facilitate the generation of high-quality stories that hold the powerful to account and increase accountability in the region.

Asset recovery and tracking

Date: 20 June
Participants: 20

Date: 6 September
Participants: 20

These two workshops were supported by the Basel Institute. Journalists were guided in how to trace missing money and how to find individual assets. The sessions also focused on how to write investigative stories by incorporating complicated research processes and storylines in a way that is easy for readers to follow.



Investigative story writing in partnership with BBC Media Action

Date: March to November 2024
Participants: 11

MakanDay partnered with BBC Media Action to train journalists from BBC's partner stations in investigative journalism. The training involves a one-week boardroom session, followed by remote mentoring throughout the project.

Environmental crime reporting

Date: March to August 2024
Participants: 20

MakanDay partnered with Wildlife Crime Prevention to facilitate a one-week environmental crime-reporting fellowship for Zambian journalists. The week of formal training was followed up with on-the-job mentoring for participants.



Workshops

... continued

Environmental and data journalism

Date: 12 to 15 February 2024

Participants: 28

Oxpeckers Training and Professional Support Programme trained a group of Zimbabwe-based mid-career journalists and academics on environmental and data journalism. The three-day training programme was supported by the Fojo Media Institute in partnership with the National University of Science and Technology's (NUST) Journalism and Media Studies Department.

The Oxpeckers team also visited the NUST campus in Bulawayo to provide guest lectures to more than 30 final-year Journalism and Media Studies students.

What's up in South Africa's power capital?

Date: 3 September 2024

Participants: 100

The Oxpeckers #PowerTracker project hosted a training webinar for journalists and other stakeholders.

Introduction to podcasting

Date: April to August 2024

Participants: IJ Hub member centres

Jedi Ramalapa, an audio storytelling specialist, spent five months working with three IJ Hub member centres, guiding them through the process of turning an investigative story into a podcast that would reach a larger audience.

The skills development method comprised weekly instruction on various aspects of podcasting and included "homework" so participants could begin the process of creating and recording stories.

Data-crunch it for great storytelling

Build an investigative dashboard

Date: 30 April 2024

Participants: 12

Scrape and organise

Date: 14 and 15 May 2024

Participants: PIJ member centre network

Meet the Datawrapper

Date: 11 June 2024

Participants: 6

OpenUp hosted these three Data-crunch workshops as part of the data helpdesk being piloted across the IJ Hub's member centre network. The monthly lunchtime workshops offer journalists the opportunity to raise questions about investigations that they are busy with. The workshops also offer the helpdesk team a chance to share new ideas and tools. They provide a deep dive into different tools that have been touched on in other workshops and introduced to journalists in the course of their work as they ask for assistance from the data helpdesk. In one workshop the data specialists worked directly with the PIJ journalists to help with an investigation. Thanks to the new skills acquired by our journalists, they ended up uncovering more about the way in which the person they were investigating had deceived authorities in the United States and Malawi by disguising how he was using donor money to support his opulent lifestyle.

The workshops on scraping and organising data were focused on a specific investigation that our member centre in Malawi was working on.



Workshops

... continued

Boast: MNN's Billy Ntoate has been awarded a JournalismAI scholarship by the Sub-Saharan Academy for Small Newsrooms.



PIJ's Gregory Gondwe has been awarded a nine-month fellowship at Stanford University.

MNN's Sechaba Mokheithi has been selected for a three-month investigative journalism fellowship at GroundUp in Cape Town.

Master digital marketing

The following three workshops were designed to address requests from member centres for help in strengthening their online presence and in maximising the impact of their websites and other platforms. Digital media specialist Eden Storum from 4th Nomad, a digital design and digital marketing agency, facilitated the sessions.

Creating an effective social media strategy

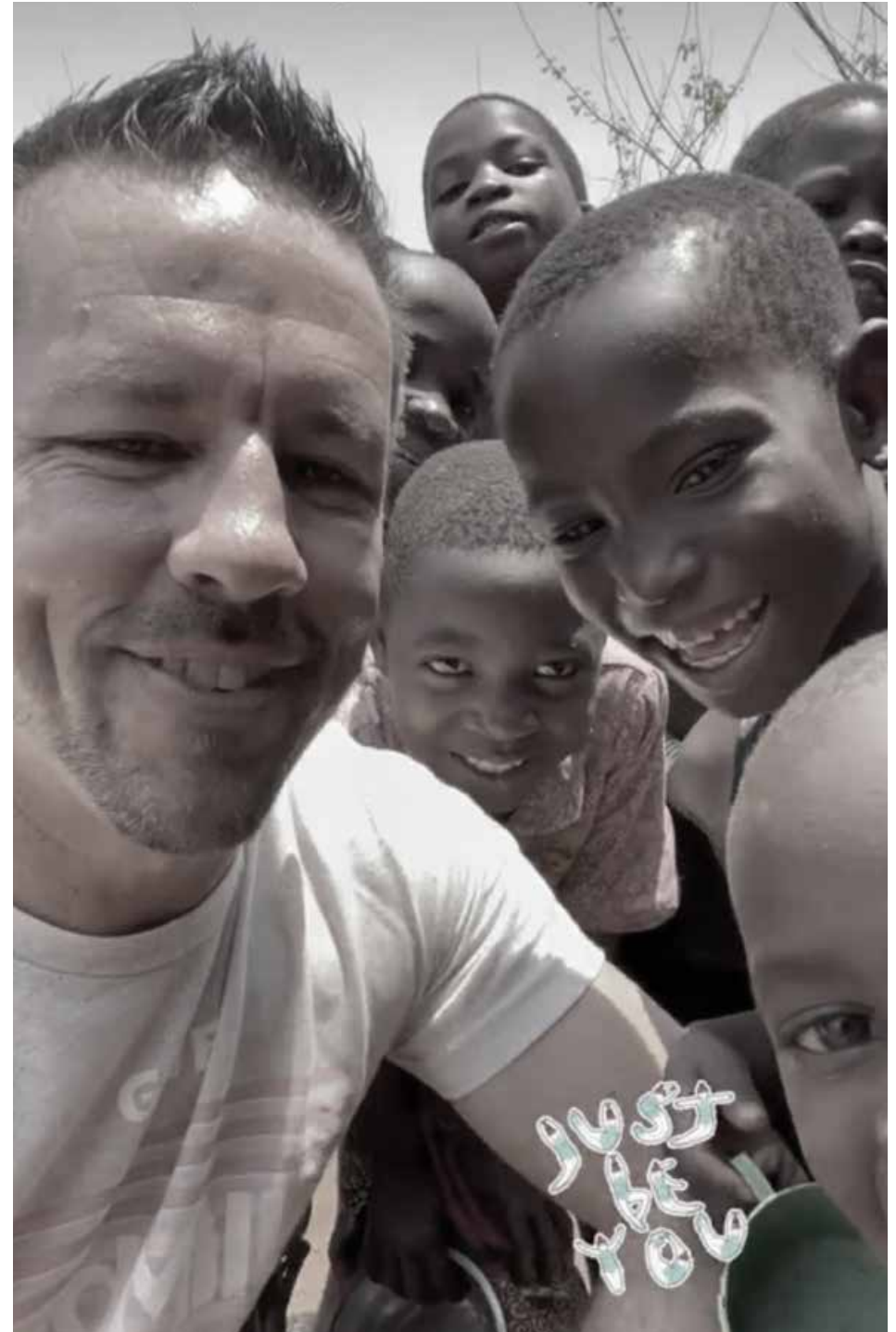
Date: 24 July
Participants: 15

Unlocking your website's potential

Date: 31 July
Participants: 17

Boost digital presence with analytics

Date: 7 August
Participants: 14



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.

4 In-country



Jedi Ramalapa

April – August 2024

IJ Hub fellow hosted in South Africa



Relebohile Khutlang

August – October 2024

IJ Hub fellow hosted by MNN in Lesotho



Lucy Nambela

August – October 2024

IJ Hub fellow hosted by MakanDay in Zambia



Cebelihle Mbuyisa

August – October 2024

IJ Hub fellow hosted by the IJ Hub in Eswatini



Editorial support and syndication system

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

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](#) | [Read more 8](#) | [Read more 9](#)

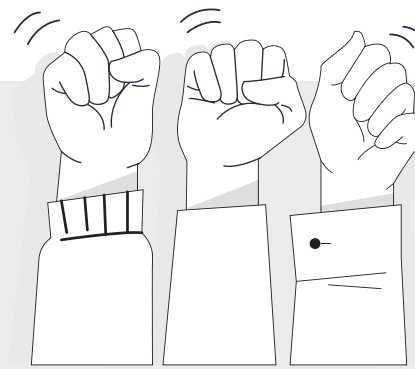
[Read more 10](#) | [Read more 11](#)

22

stories supported with editing

10

stories syndicated



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 partner:

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THE NAMIBIAN
INVESTIGATIVE UNIT



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