

Henry Nxumalo
FOUNDATION

ENABLING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING



ANNUAL REPORT

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01 March 2024 - 28 February 2025

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INTRODUCTION

This report covers the activities of the Henry Nxumalo Foundation (HNF) from 01 March 2024 until 28 February 2025.

This year has been a year of growth and change for our Foundation. We began 2024 as a small operation which gave out a few grants a year to journalists to do a wide range of investigative work in different media. We had no staff, and we were hands-off on the work we supported. We end the year as one of the most productive investigative journalism operations in the country and region. We now have a number of payroll and contract staff, and we are actively involved in mentoring, training and editing.

However, even with our growth, our basic goal remains the same: to enable and support investigative journalism on public interest topics throughout the Southern Africa region.

It is a role that has become increasingly important: to look after those pockets of journalism that survive as traditional media shrinks under financial pressure.

Overall, we can conclude that our strategy has been successful: we are well funded, have an excellent team, have improved our operational efficiency, produced more with better consistency of quality and can point to work which had a real impact.

OUR PROJECTS

Apart from our normal grant-giving, we undertook four funded projects during the course of the year.

SA | AJP

The biggest was the EU-funded Southern African Accountability Journalism Project (SA|AJP). This came in response to a call for proposals from the EU to support investigative journalism in seven countries of the region. It required us to gear up to offer mentoring and training and kicked off in November 2024 for three years at a total of Euro 500,000.00.

We issued a call for proposals for stories, received 109 applications in the first round, and selected 19 of them for initial funding. These came from South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Tanzania and dealt with water abuse, human trafficking, corruption among Kruger Park rangers, corruption in dealing with cattle rustling, splits and theft accusations in the Botswana ZCC, Zimbabweans voting illegally in Mozambique's election, the Stilfontein Zama Zama deaths, corruption in the Mthatha High Court registry, fisherman going missing in Tanzania, the covert sale of job opportunities and the sale of fake holy water from Mecca.

At the time of this report, nine of these stories have been published (in the 2025/6 financial year), three were spiked, and the rest were on track to be published during 2025.

We have published them in The Guardian of London, Daily Maverick, GroundUp, Despatch and EP Herald in South Africa; The Continent; Guardian and Mmegi in Botswana; the Chronicle in Zimbabwe; and Savana in Mozambique.

These stories can be viewed [here](#).

OUR PROJECTS

Child Literacy

We teamed up with Binding Constraints, a South African NGO, to commission work on the problems with child literacy training and why so many of the country's children cannot read for meaning.

We put out a call for proposals and commissioned four teams of journalists: Cecilia Russel and Anna Cox, writing for Daily Maverick; a Dispatch, Sowetan, EP Herald collaboration for their publications; The Outlier, for infographics and two articles, in Daily Maverick; and a Rhodes University Journalism collaboration with local education NGOs.

Three of these have been published. The Rhodes contribution has been delayed by university processes but is on track for completion in the next three months.

HNF-Viewfinder Pilot Project

In the build-up to the EU project, we partnered with Viewfinder Investigative Centre in Cape Town to support work in the region, sharing the costs between us. We issued a call for stories, selected 10 of them for development grants of USD400.00 and then narrowed this down to three full grants.

At the time of writing this report, one of these had been published, one is ready for publication, and one has been spiked. This was a lower success rate than we later achieved with the EU project, but it provided an important set of learnings for how to manage these grants and the mentoring process.

OUR PROJECTS

These stories were based in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Malawi and Kenya and covered maltreatment of refugees, mercenaries in the DRC war and young women being taken across the Kenya/Tanzania border for female genital mutilation.

Capacitating Investigative Journalism in Botswana

We signed an agreement with the US State Department in Botswana for a one-year programme to promote investigative reporting in Botswana. After we had done all the initial set-up work, the new Trump Administration froze the project. We had to cancel contracts and re-budget.

A month later, Washington said we could restart the project, and again, we did all the preparatory work. The State Department then asked us to certify that we would not promote diversity, inclusion and equality. We declined, saying this would put us in contravention of SA law. The project was cancelled again, though we transferred two of the grantees to the SA IAJ project.

Regular Grants

In addition, we provided seven of our regular grants from our main HNF fund.

Estacio Valoi
Pinnock/Kriel
Thabo Jijana
Leonie Joubert
Vicky Abrahams
Kyle Findlay
Martin Welz

Illegal logging in Moz
Kruger Park book
Name changes in EC
Environmental stories
'Special school' conditions
Election disruption
Memoire

OUR PROJECTS

To explain some of the unusual ones:

For Leonie Joubert's work, we are collaborating with the Stellenbosch University School of Climate Studies to fund her for Story Ark, a two-year trip around the country writing about the impact of climate change. It has already been highly productive, and published stories can be found [here](#).

Kyle Findlay, Tabelo Timse and Aldu Cornellissen were a bigger investment, because it involved a team looking into attempts to disrupt the 2024 elections. It became an exposé of secretly paid influencers.

Funding Martin Welz was unusual, in that it was a memoir, but it was felt that a book by him detailing his many investigative exploits would be a valuable contribution to the field. This book is currently with the publisher.

Of the seven, four have been published, two are with the book publishers, and Leonie's travels are ongoing. Thabo Jijana's has not been delivered yet.

IMPACT EDITING

Impact editing involves systematically planning the promotion and reach of stories on social and other media, and to interested parties such as NGO's and official bodies.

We have put more effort and resources into this, particularly in the **SA | AJP** project, and this proved to be a valuable strategy. For example, on Ray Harlte's story of corruption in the Mthatha High Court, we organised interviews for him on radio and television and targeted legal and state bodies on social media to draw their attention to it.

This drew a statement and intervention from the Office of the Chief Justice. We have also widened our range of outlets, and have recently worked with Daily Maverick, Sunday Times, News24, Guardian of London, Dispatch, EP Herald and Sowetan, Chronicle in Zimbabwe, Nation Group in East Africa, Sahara in Mozambique, The Continent, and Mmegi and Guardian in Botswana.

We have an agreement with Code for Africa to assist us with social media strategy and graphics to strengthen our offering to outlets. This is still in a trial phase, which will be reviewed after four months.

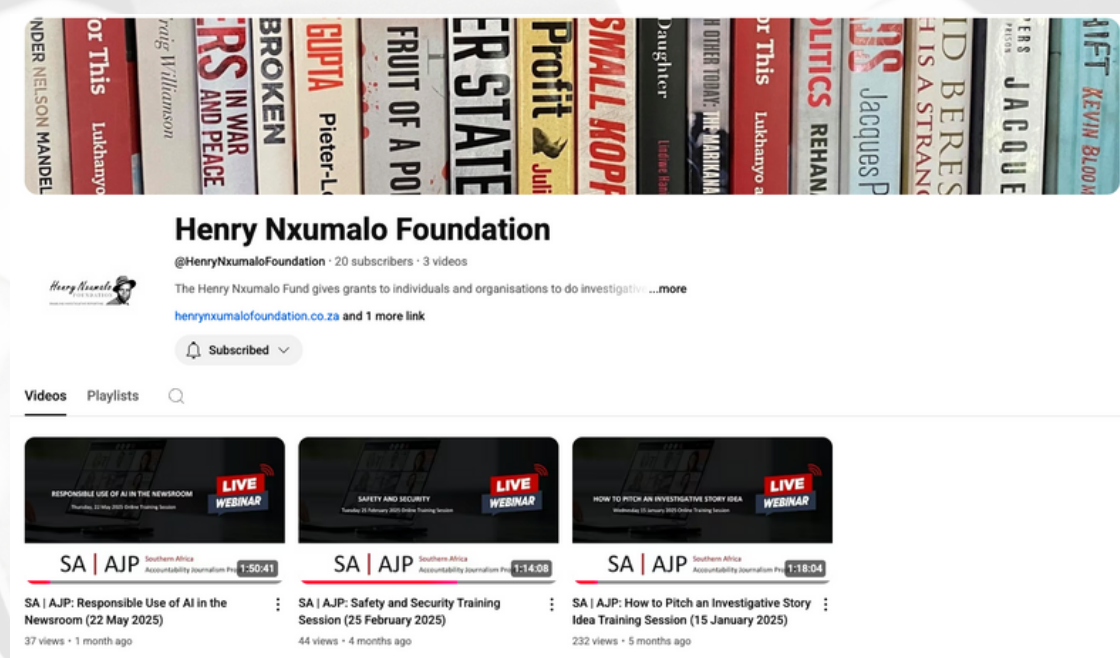
TRAINING

As part of our SA | AJP project, we will offer four online and one face-to-face training session to our grantees each year. We surveyed our grantees to see what training they would most value and used this to design our plans. So far this year, we have done three online sessions:

- How to Pitch an Investigative Story Idea Successfully, by Daneel Knoetze
- Personal Safety and Security, by Desmond Latham
- Responsible use of AI in the Newsroom, by Camilla Bath

We have had a total of 119 participants in these sessions.

We are currently planning our fourth, on New Digital Tools That Will Make Your Work Easier. The face-to-face one will be held at the African Investigative Journalism Conference in November.



STAFFING

Our staff resources have grown considerably, tied to and paid for by our various projects.

- Anton Harber was given a 50% contract as EU project lead and Executive Director.
- Ndapewoshali Ilunga was hired full-time as Operations Manager.
- We promoted our Financial Manager, Pretica Singh, from occasional per-hour work to 40%
- We contracted Daneel Knoetze and Fiona McLeod as part-time editors/mentors.
- We contracted Nic Bothma part-time as a visual editor

SAFETY

In a previous board meeting, we discussed the need to take steps to ensure the safety of our grantees. We have since introduced a risk management system for each grantee. They fill in a comprehensive risk assessment form (based on the CPJ/Human Rights Watch template), and we make a formal assessment of each one on a scale of 1-5. If it is a 5, we will most likely cancel the project. For anything below that, we make stipulations to improve security.

In the **SA | AJP** project, we have allocated funds for emergency safety measures. Fortunately, we have not had to draw on this yet

THE FUTURE

Joburg Pop-Up Newsroom: Johannesburg Accountability Project

Since the end of the financial year, we have signed a contract with the Association for Savings and Investment SA (ASISA) to run a six-month pilot for what we have called the Johannesburg Accountability Project (JAP). We are setting up a virtual, pop-up newsroom to focus on city governance in the run-up to next year's local government elections. This move is in line with the trend towards specialist independent investigative units. By making it a pop-up, that is, for a limited period of time, we avoid infrastructural costs and issues of long-term viability. For this project, we are contracting an editor, two senior and two junior journalists, a social media/impact editor and an administrative assistant.

Joburg Speaks

We have also signed with the EU a contract for a six-month parallel project, Joburg Speaks. In this project, we will work with a cohort of young people to collect and publish/broadcast short videos of Joburg citizens talking about their connection with the city: why they love it or hate it, their experiences in interacting with city institutions, and the steps they are taking to improve it. The material will be used on social media, on the Joburg website we are setting up for both projects, and to complement our stories in other media. For this one, we are contracting one coordinator/mentor and another mentor/trainer.

THE FUTURE

These projects bode well for our continued growth and expansion into fresh and innovative areas. We have a strong and effective team in place, and a growing fundraising base.

Although we continue to grow and expand our operations, we intend, for the foreseeable future, to remain fully remote. This allows us, as far as possible, to direct the bulk of our financial resources towards grant-making and advancing our core mission: supporting investigative journalism on matters of public interest across the Southern Africa region.

