

## 18 Months of CHARM

Variously termed “SIDA-funding”, “Civicus-funding”, and “FOJO-partnership”, the not-yet-named but soon-to-be-named CHARM Consortium got off the ground in October 2019 – just 6 months before life as we knew it changed irrevocably. Prof Franz Kruger, HOD of the Journalism Department and Juliana Thornton, Partnerships Coordinator for the Department travelled to Ethiopia to meet with partners for a joint planning session in December of 2019.

Juliana, Franz, Anton and many other members of the Department had already met Lars Tallert, Head of Policy and International Development of FOJO Media Institute who travelled to Johannesburg in November to meet with us and learn more of our activities. In retrospect it was these initial meetings that played an important role in what was to become a close working relationship between the two “Media” partners of the consortium: ourselves and FOJO.

In Addis we met up with the 3 civil society partners who would also be lead partners of the Consortium:

[Civil Rights Defenders](#) is an expert organisation for human rights that partners with and supports human rights defenders who work in some of the world’s most repressive regions on four continents.

[DefendDefenders](#) seeks to strengthen the work of human rights defenders throughout the region by reducing their vulnerability to the risk of persecution and by enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights. DefendDefenders serves as the Secretariat of East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) representing more than 78 members, i.e. HRDs and their organisations.

[Hub Afrique](#) is a member of the Innovation for Change (I4C) global network of people and organisations who want to connect, partner and learn together to defend and strengthen civic space as well as overcome the restrictions placed on basic freedoms of assembly, association and speech. It is a community-led network inspired by ideas, methods, and technologies from across different sectors

In addition we were introduced to Sofie Gulberg, Programme Manager of FOJO and Caroline Hammargren, Fundraising and Programme Officer. The beginning of a long and fruitful working partnership.

The first activity which fell under the consortium banner was the Annual [African Investigative Journalism Conference \(AIJC\) of 2019](#). Held in person from **28-30 October** at the Wits Science Stadium at Wits University in Johannesburg it included plenty of time for in-depth masterclasses on a range of topics, networking and socializing in ways we are no longer able to enjoy. We hosted a record 353 delegates in total from 36 different countries including 57 African journalists from 26 countries on our fellowship programme. We also had bursaries for 10 journalists from community media in South Africa and for 30 students: 10 from the SADC region and 20 South African students. The following African countries were represented: Sudan, Morocco, Madagascar, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo, Burundi, Liberia and Namibia.

The final months of 2019 were then dedicated to planning and finalizing the contractual logistics with Civicus. **In early 2020 three students were selected to receive support to complete their Masters** in Journalism this year: Hans Ngala from Cameroon, Tisaukirenji Tembo from Malawi and Adeoye Emmanuel Aanu from Nigeria and these students have so far made good progress on their research and studies.

We began planning for the inaugural **JamFest**, a new African media and information festival directed at a diverse set of African media makers and media publics, to occur in March. Two years in the planning and already once-delayed JamFest was intended to build on the successful work of [JamLab](#) and the [Civic Tech Innovation Network \(CTIN\)](#), involving a wider audience and encouraging cross-pollination between investigative journalists and civil society.

The initial plan was to meet with CHARM partners for the first “Face to Face Meeting for the SIDA Consortium Project & Steering Committee Meetings” on the 16-17 March, then hold the inaugural JamFest on the 18<sup>th</sup> March followed by CTIN meetings on the 19-20<sup>th</sup> which Consortium members were also free to attend.

As it turned out the first COVID case in South Africa was announced 5 March, Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation on 15 March indicating a state of Emergency; the Consortium Face-to-face meeting was rapidly converted to an online meeting taking place 19-20 March; JamFest was indefinitely cancelled pending a reschedule; and the whole of South Africa went into full lockdown by the end of the month.

Wits University, and the Journalism Department along with it, rapidly pivoted to “Emergency Remote Learning and Teaching”. We started a new series of **Midweek Webinars** in **March** to offer a virtual space to discuss the challenges of journalism under Covid, which proved very successful, engaging new audiences and new discussions.

Starting in **April** we were able to support journalistic projects in South Africa and across the continent with record numbers of grants. In response to the effects of the pandemic on journalists in Africa the **Africa-China Reporting Project (ACRP)** put out a call for a range of [public health-focused grants](#). 11 grants were allocated in a first round in May/June to 7 female and 4 male journalists. Of these grants, 2 were for Cameroonian journalists; 3 Kenyan; 1 Liberian; 2 Malawian; 1 Nigerian and 2 Sierra Leonian.

Together with Fojo Media Institute we worked to develop a **network of journalism schools** from across the continent. A planned round table meeting was another early victim of the hard lockdown, but was held virtually in **May**, with additional brainstorming sessions scheduled subsequently and finally culminating in the newsletter **AJENDA** launched in early 2021

Work began on State of the Newsroom South Africa as well as, for the first time, a State of the Newsroom Malawi in partnership with Media Institute of Southern Africa MISA-Malawi

Work also began via interviews and data collection for a third report: a Mapping study of centres of investigative journalism across the continent which will provide baseline data on the extent to which investigative journalism is supported in the Consortium countries.

In **June** a group of our Masters students convened under supervision of Prof Lesley Cowling and Dr Bob Wekesa. The project comprised a new partnership between Wits Journalism Department, African Media Salon, and the Wits African Centre for the Study of the United States. Articles were published in October on <https://www.africaportal.org/>. For many student journalists this will be their first publication of research/academic material. The partnership is also a new one for Wits Journalism.

**July** saw our annual conference **Radio Days Africa** go online. [Radio Days 2020](#) (RDA20) was held from 5 to 31 July 2020 as the first ever on-line offering of Africa’s biggest radio conference. A total of 2778 people

attended the twenty RDA sessions. A total of thirty-four different countries were represented by attendees, nineteen of these being from Africa. There were 789 unique people attending RDA2020 (as per the registration system). New partnerships were initiated with 4 community radio stations in Zimbabwe who re-broadcast some of the RDA sessions.

Applications also opened in **July** for the first [JamLab Accelerator Programme for Southern African](#) students and a promising cohort of 8 teams selected in September. Teams originated from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar, eSwatini, Zambia, Botswana and Angola.

Then-consultant and now Community Media Coordinator Jacob Ntshangase commenced work in **September** on a **Mapping of Community Radio** in the CHARM countries. The Community Radio Mapping will lead to increased understanding of the community radio landscape in the rest of Africa, and new opportunities for partnership and skills-building, particularly for the Wits Radio Academy.

The [African Investigative Journalism Conference \(AIJC\) 2020](#) was held as a series of online events over the entire month of **October** 2020. We had a record number of 457 registered delegates from 47 countries, and additional audiences for public events on YouTube and Facebook. Through the month of the conference, we reached a daily average of 1 188 people on Facebook and signed up 1 521 followers. Our post-conference survey indicated that 25% of attendees worked in newsrooms and 38% were freelancers. The rest were editors (10%) NGO/Civil society representatives (10%) and trainers (2%). They came from all media types, but the vast majority worked in online media. News articles covering the conference can be found here: <https://aijc.africa/news/>

We experimented with hybrid events with mixed success: We hosted simultaneous networking events in four cities during the Africa Check awards and the Carlos Cardoso Memorial Lecture. These were held as hybrid virtual and real events to enable small groups of AIJC2020 delegates to get together physically in Botswana in partnership with INK Centre for Investigative Journalism, Uganda in partnership with the newly launched Africa Institute for Investigative Journalism, Zimbabwe in partnership with the Information for Development Trust, and we hosted our own in Johannesburg at the Wits Club.

As part of the conference we awarded 4 Henry Nxumalo grants to journalists Cliff Chiduku from Zimbabwe reporting on mining asset stripping, Odimegwu Onwumere from Nigeria reporting on youth mental health issues; Elunya Joseph from Uganda reporting on government COVID-19 corruption and Ekonde Daniel Congo from Cameroon reporting on disappearing forests in the Gulf of Guinea.

**JamFest** was finally held as part of [Civic Tech conference in October](#). This was the first edition of Urban Festival and the focus was on inclusivity, accessibility, and digital innovation. As part of the Festival JamLab hosted weekly "[Jam Cafes](#)" Discussions focused on narratives, public opinion and media.

We ran our **Development Communications** (DevComm) course aimed at communicators in civil society starting in **October** with a strong contingent of African students. The course finished in February and is expected to contribute to civil society groups' practical ability to communicate, and to think critically about issues of development communication.

The [State of the Newsroom South Africa 2019 report](#), titled "**Before/After**" was published in **November**, it has established itself on the SA media landscape as an important contribution to discussion and analysis of the media. The report included a detailed analysis of the status quo of media ownership up

until the end of 2019, and a roundtable discussion of the roles and pressures faced by women media workers in the newsroom.

We published a very well-received [mapping study of journalism schools](#) in sub-Saharan Africa in **December**.

And by the end of the year **ACRP approved another 8 grants** (5 men and 3 women) to journalists from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Malawi and Mali; as well as launched a new training website, [www.africachinatraining.com](http://www.africachinatraining.com).

In 2021, starting in February we accepted a number of African students for the **Media Management** course, an introduction to management with a special focus on increasing the representation of women in senior leadership. We were able to bursar 2 Zimbabwean students for the **Advanced Radio Certificate course** and plan to run a second edition of the **DevComm** course for African students in April.

By the end of the pilot phase of the programme in June 2021 we will have provided grants to XXX journalists from XXX countries resulting in XXX publications. We will have supported 3 Masters students, XX DevComm students, XX Media management students and XX Radio students. Our combined conferences will have provided training and skills-building for XXX journalists, editors and media-makers across Africa. The 8 JamLab Accelerator teams from Southern Africa graduated successfully from the programme.

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In summary, we provide a wide spectrum of capacity-building support to a diverse range of African journalists and media

- Networking and training opportunities at our annual conferences Radio Days Africa and the African Investigative Journalism Conferences (AIJC)
- Support for community radio personnel in the form of courses and training in content production
- Grants to support specific story ideas and mentorship and training to take it from idea to publication through the Africa-China Reporting Project and the Henry Nxumalo Fund
- Career development in the form of our accredited courses in Media Management, with a focus on women in senior leadership and support for communicators from the non-profit and government sectors in the form of our Development Communications course
- Our Accelerator programme – JamLab – provides early-career entrepreneurs with the tools to launch their own social justice and media organisations across the continent
- Networking Journalism schools across the continent to share learnings and improve journalism education in a systemic fashion.