

# PPA Data for Impact Symposium

---

## Discussion on Crowdsourcing App for Responsible Production in Africa (CARPA) with Robert Masua Bwana and Michelle Westermann-Behaylo

**Attendee 1:** You touched on it in the presentation, but I was wondering if you could come back to the challenges. And how do you manage to go beyond that first spike of attention that brings in data and brings on the real enthusiasm, and how do we sustain that kind of the interest? Basically, then the system is basically as strong as the data that is put in.

**Robert:** Exactly. With regards to that, we've definitely seen spikes whenever we have the in-person workshop. And then people really like the idea. They go back to their organizations, their groups, and communities and our user numbers increase.

But then it sort of slows down a little bit. Being researchers, we've asked them what happens? Why does it slow down? And then the most common response is sort of, "We really like this, we obviously are looking forward to when the other side of the table sort of gets involved..." So, they're presenting the incident, but they really want the local governments or the companies to start getting involved and [involvement from] companies is still quite early on.

So, some of that functionality, or the sort of catering to those specific users, is still ongoing. Presenting to the PPA is one of the first major steps of introducing CARPA to a corporate clientele that will get involved as well.

We also have some personal contacts of communications with people on the ground and they like the idea of CARPA. They want to continuously put the information in it. But one challenge that they also face is that most of them are contracted to an NGO or a project which has funding attached to it. And that funding typically also has a technology or platform that the source company or the overall company or international government organization wants them to use. Then it's a challenge to put information in that [platform] and also go and put information in CARPA, which doubles the workload that they have to do. So, we're really trying to make it as easy as possible to integrate CARPA – make it easy for them to just put it in as a chat, or we're looking to how we can integrate CARPA with some other platforms.

That's also another challenge. How many of those platforms want to release the information to what is an open and transparent platform in a sense.

**Attendee 1:** Thanks so much. For follow up on this question. Yeah. I mean, the vision of interoperability and what really distinguishes CARPA from other applications that might be similar in terms of functionality or scope is it's definitely, I think, an open one. If I remember, you were working closely with the Pole Institute in that area. So where would you see your core group of stakeholders? Are you starting to piloting it in the DRC cobalt zones? Then potentially getting up to other geographies?

**Michelle:** That has been where we've been reaching out at this point because our connection in the area was with the Pole Institute. We did have an engagement with an NGO in Mali and also in South Africa. And it just turned out that the situation on the ground was not as... it wasn't fertile enough ground for us to sort of take-off and have the engagement there. And, at the Pole Institute, Nene is fantastic and has been really great to work with. So we've been lucky. And so that's taken our attention to kind of where

he's paying his attention a little bit. And, as you mentioned and jumping on to where Robert was speaking a moment ago, is this dialogical function – of having a story and telling a story and having a conversation and engaging with other stakeholders about a topic – is really how the design of CARPA is supposed to distinguish it from these other types of technology where you're just reporting it, giving data, giving data, and never hearing back from anybody about 'did anybody ever read it' or...

**Attendee 1:** Sending it into a black hole, essentially.

**Michelle:** Yes, and so getting the key, critical mass of people who are going to be commenting on each other's stories and buttressing ideas and triangulating within the app or even outside of the app. But just getting that dialogue going is a challenge that I think getting that to take off is going to be the key. So that's also a research question in the communication literature, in terms of how do you get that going in social media? So, another research project.

**Robert:** I was just going to add in the end that I think, at the moment, we have a lot of cases, in a geographical sense, to touch upon what you are asking. A lot of them are from North and South Kivu, but we are starting to see a lot of interest as well from NGOs in the Katanga area where there's a lot of the more industrial mines as well. So at least up to now, a lot of the people who have been eager to sort of onboard themselves onto CARPA are monitoring artisanal mines. And that also gives a little bit of a challenge in terms of who can you link them up to in the corporate sense? Because corporations aren't buying from artisanal mines, and so they're not going to acknowledge or say that this is, well, mine.

**Michelle:** Not directly.

**Robert:** Yes, exactly. But then with the interest from the area that's quite industrialized in terms of mining, we're hoping that with the introduction in that area, then we can actually get both sides involved. The interest is on both sides.

**Attendee 1:** We've seen a lot of reticence from companies to at least admit that they're sourcing from artisanal mining. Although I mean, as Michelle we were saying entirely and a lot of them do especially in the middle area, which is I mean, which could be sign of, you know, the adequate diligence guarantees were applied.

But I understand this issue of incentives, how to draw in different stakeholders in the conversation. And maybe one – it came to mind when you were describing it, Michelle – this kind of dialogue and really leading, hopefully, towards resolution and risk mitigation as described under some of the guidance. It looks a little bit like the type of a direction we saw, and we still see, in the local risk monitoring committees in some of the strategic areas in the East and that are in place in terms of existing structure in the South, for example, in the gold mines. But they're not really functioning as much or as well, and the same infrastructure does not exist.

Misbehavior with consequences we've seen on social media, Twitter being utilized to voice some of this concern. But, of course, it cannot only function like that, it serves the purpose of highlighting some of these concerns and maybe a channel like that could be helpful.

And going back to the question about incentives is: It is specific? Let's say of course. There is competition among NGOs on the ground. They also have to justify funding, and with different donors are you targeting specific types of stakeholders beyond, for example, your partnership with the Pole Institute, among NGOs, but also among companies. For example, I'm thinking about downstream companies, but also

more local upstream companies, although we know and this is my next question, that the issue about payment for data and about data is a very thorny one.

**Robert:** Yes. And CARPA, since it's funded by the Dutch Research Council and the University of Amsterdam, it means that we have to be in GDPR compliance. Unfortunately, not all African countries are considered trusted, or safe, third-party countries, which limits how much actionable information we can share. We can report the base cases of incidents, but exactly who to contact, who to reach out to... that comes very close to the boundary of whistleblower protections and so on. For the moment, in terms of who we're targeting, I think we're really looking at least the key for the local NGOs, because they seem to be the people who have the connections to the local communities, the actual miners.

You know, they go out in the field, they can actually conveniently gather that information, but then they also have a little bit of knowledge in terms of who owns what and/or which companies are where. Because, a lot of these companies, or at least from what we've heard, they change on a two-to-three-year basis in a legal sense. The original owners might still be the same one, but every couple of years, you know, they change in the legal sense who actually owns the mine.

And so that's why local NGOs staff, I think, are absolutely key to what we're trying to achieve. But once we have them, then the next key group will then be upstream. Like you say, for some cases, it'll be local upstream. Now, even local governments in other cases we are sort of relying on, and I think the PPA also focuses on this, where you have the expertise and the resources and also sometimes the pressure from the upstream, really close to the final manufacturer or final producer to sort of put pressure on the rest of the supply chains down the way.

So we're hoping that if we can get at least, we're not expecting to get every single company that sources from this area on board, but if you get enough of them, then they also put pressure on the chain. And then if you are going to reform for two companies, then you might as well enact those same reforms when you supply to the other ones, because then it's more effective as well just to have one standard or system in place.

We're hoping that there's enough critical mass in terms of the upstream companies as well that can encourage everyone along the way to reform and become more responsible in this sense.

**Michelle:** There's also the drop in the bucket issue, right? If this all happens, it doesn't necessarily happen on our particular platform. So, if we are providing information and they are free to come in and look at it and read everything and not required to respond or provide any information themselves, in some ways, we may never know what effect we really have, which is frustrating. But we feel there is value in openness and transparency, so we will continue.

---

*CARPA is a platform developed to allow users to report and engage with tech-based initiatives aiming to promote due diligence and responsible production in Sub-Saharan Africa. Designed as an open platform based on crowd-sourcing principles, CARPA aims to give all participants equal visibility when attempting to address incidents that may occur due to business activity as well as allow for the promotion of initiatives that are intended to improve the lives of affected stakeholders in Africa.*



**Robert Masua Bwana** is a PhD candidate at the Amsterdam Business School and the current developer behind the Crowdsourcing App for Responsible Production in Africa (CARPA). He has a MSc in Data Science and a BSc in Computing Science as well as experience working in FinTech in his home country of Tanzania. His research focuses on how technology can be used to improve corporate behavior in value chains that extend to sub-Saharan African countries.



**Michelle Westermann-Behaylo** is Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Sustainability Initiative at University of Amsterdam Business School. She has published articles in high impact journals on the role of business in promoting peace and human dignity, respecting human rights, and reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Her latest projects consider how social media and information and communication technology can amplify the voices of powerless stakeholders.