

DUTCH PRESS COUNCIL COMPLAINT

Please note that this document is an informal translation of the official complaint, filed in Dutch, solely for information purposes.

on behalf of: Carbon Tanzania

against: Trouw, [redacted for privacy] and [redacted for privacy]

date: 4 February 2025

A. Not truthful

The article contains a large number of factual inaccuracies. Some of them are of such a nature as to give the public a false impression of CT and the project in Yaeda-Eyasi, damaging CT's reputation

The following expressions are incorrect:

- *"This project hires so-called village game scouts"*
 - For an explanation, see the answer to the question "Why are you not satisfied with the outcome?".
- *"The Hadzabe have been a minor player within the project since 2021."*
 - The participation of the Datooga does not change the central role of the Hadzabe. They manage about 50% of the project area, have their own forest conservation activities in it and have full autonomy over how their income is spent.
 - The claim also gives the impression, due to the lack of context, that Trouw is exposing wrongdoing here, where it is not.
- *"...so that local governments and UCRT can act..."*
 - Only local governments have the authority to enforce if illegal logging is taking place; UCRT does not. UCRT mediates only when there are conflicts.
 - The passages from UCRT's annual report cited by Trouw in its response do not support its claim. They show only that UCRT mediates.
- In his response dated 13 December 2024 (annex 1), StJohn Anderson lists even more factual inaccuracies. The relevant points are highlighted.

B. One-sided and biased

The article highlights CT and the project in a one-sided and biased manner. The tone of the article shows a biased attitude directed against carbon projects in general and against CT in particular.

- This is most clearly expressed by Trouw's use of the term "colonialism". In the title, Trouw included the quote "New form of colonialism", used by an anonymous "employee of a local NGO" to describe the project. This serious and unjustified accusation is not substantiated anywhere in the article, but is quoted no less than four times. In this way, Trouw deliberately creates an incorrect and offensive image of CT's activities, and implicitly attributes expertise to the employee (while their expertise cannot be verified), thus negatively colouring the

reader's view. The fact that other media also use the term to refer to carbon projects, as Trow states in its response, does not give Trow the right to link this term to CT without any substantiation.

- One-sidedness and bias are also evident from the fact that Trow gives critics of carbon projects much more space than proponents. Some proponents and parties involved in the project are briefly quoted, but not mentioned by name. Nor do the journalists quote Hadzabe involved in the project, even though they have spoken to them at length. They write only: "Hadzabe involved in the project by Carbon Tanzania agree [with CT's assertion that autonomy and community participation are cornerstones of the project]."
- Trow then immediately questions this affirmation, naming that "independent" activists are critical, and stating that most Hadzabe do not understand how carbon projects work. This falsely creates the impression that the Hadzabe just cited do not actually know what they are talking about at all, when in fact they have an excellent understanding of how carbon projects work. The use of the word independent is also tendentious in this context, as Trow thus implies that the Hadzabe involved are not independent. Incidentally, no one can check whether the activists are independent because they are not mentioned by name.

The following points also show one-sided and biased reporting:

- Trow repeatedly mentions that Plan Vivo is a private label, as if that is a specific feature, while almost all labels are private. By doing so, Trow not only gives the impression that this is a commercial organisation (while Plan Vivo is a foundation), but also that the label has less value.
- By stating that Plan Vivo approved the project despite objections from an external investigator, Trow reinforces that impression. The issues raised date from the project's start phase, and have long been addressed by following the author's recommendations. In fact, a decent proportion of the Hadza now know well about the project.¹ Trow's statement that Plan Vivo certified the project already in 2011 is clearly incorrect (see annex 2).
- The paragraph on revenues gives the impression that CT makes more from the sale of carbon credits than it says. For instance, Trow writes "*That's 60 per cent of the revenue, the company says. But Carbon Tanzania sells most of the carbon credits to a middleman*". This is a false contradiction: CT's revenues consist of carbon credits sold directly, and credits sold to middlemen. Revenues from those two streams make up the company's total revenues. Of this, 60% is paid to participating communities, including those of the Hadzabe. In concluding that the "final revenue" is higher, Trow wrongly suggests that CT benefits from the middleman's higher selling price.
- With the last paragraphs, Trow suggests that CT has played a role in the demise of sacred sites and Hadzabe culture. This is very objectionable, because in fact CT's aim is to preserve the habitat and culture of the Hadzabe and other original inhabitants.
- Trow writes only about four Hadzabe, all of whom do not live in the project area, but in areas suffering from tourism. In doing so, it misrepresents the reality for a large proportion of the Hadzabe, who have land rights and the opportunity to practise their traditional lifestyle precisely because of CT.

¹ <https://carbontanzania.com/reflect-the-social-value-solution/>

C. Insufficient room for rebuttal

- Finally, CT was given insufficient opportunity in the article to respond to the allegations, even though it fully cooperated with the article, providing extensive, substantiated responses to the allegations. It spent a lot of time doing so, but that response was given virtually no place in the article. In doing so, Trouw violates the norm that anyone accused should be given sufficient space to respond to the allegations. Also, the statement provided by CT was not included with the article, even though CT explicitly asked for that, and it is customary in productions of this kind to include such a statement.

Legal grounds

Carbon Tanzania (CT) believes that Trouw has not adhered to the following journalistic principles, contained in the Guidelines:

- Journalists report truthfully, verifiably and as completely as possible. They avoid one-sided and biased reporting.
- Journalists must hear those who are disqualified as a result of a publication, even if their role is marginal. Those who are accused must be given ample opportunity to respond to the accusations, preferably in the same publication.

As part of the complaint procedure, the complainant is obliged to send their complaint to the media outlet first. It is required for the complainant to explain why they are not satisfied with the media outlet's response. CT answered this question as follows.

Trouw wrongly dismissed many of the objections raised by CT, and did not even respond to some of them. On three of the points raised by CT, Trouw has rectified, but on one of those three points, the rectification still contains a factual inaccuracy. In its rectification, Trouw writes that it is not CT that hires game scouts, but "the project". The latter is incorrect: the responsibility for hiring the game scouts lies with the village councils. They hire the game scouts, and pay for that hiring from their general funds, part of which consists of the proceeds of the project.

In addition, Trouw apparently misinterpreted some of the complaints, making its response incomplete. For instance, Trouw states, "It is also incorrect that nowhere in the article Hadzabe are being quoted". However, that was not CT's complaint. Its objection is that the article follows the narrative that Hadzabe are underdeveloped people, who do not know how carbon projects work, by not quoting Hadzabe in *that context*.

Also, Trouw writes: "You state that proponents of the project have hardly been addressed. This is incorrect, in several places the views of CT and those involved can be read". However, CT's complaint is that from the side of proponents and parties involved in the project in Yaeda-Eyasi, not a single person is quoted *under their name*.