EthiXPERT

ARIN
African Research Integrity Network

"We are as strong as our weakest link"
Fieldworkers' role in research integrity

Francis Kombe
CEO, EthiXPERT
Co-founder-African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

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Background

http://www.maphill.com/

- Cradle of Humankind!
- Home to 20% of world's population
- One in four people on the planet will be African by 2050
- Disease burden remains high
- Clinical research low, but increasing
- Collaborative research on the rise
- Few studies led by PIs from Africa

Introduction to Fieldworkers

Credit-KWTRP

- Research frontline staff

- Employed to support in consenting, data collection and participants' follow up

- Facilitate community entry or "giving back to the community"

- Explain complex studies in local language and maintain trust

- Their role RI remains understudied

Study Objectives

- Exploring fieldworkers' institutional support systems
  - **What institutional support systems, if any**
  - **How do they shape fieldworkers' RI practices**
  - **What roles do fieldworkers' play in promoting RI**

Methodology

Mixed qualitative methods approach

- **Sample:** Two large international research Institutions, and their fieldworkers purposively selected

- **Document review-**Existing policies, guidelines, frameworks

- **Key informant interviews-**Knowledge of in/formal support systems, procedures and processes

- **Individual In-depth interviews-**Knowledge of in/formal support systems, procedures and processes
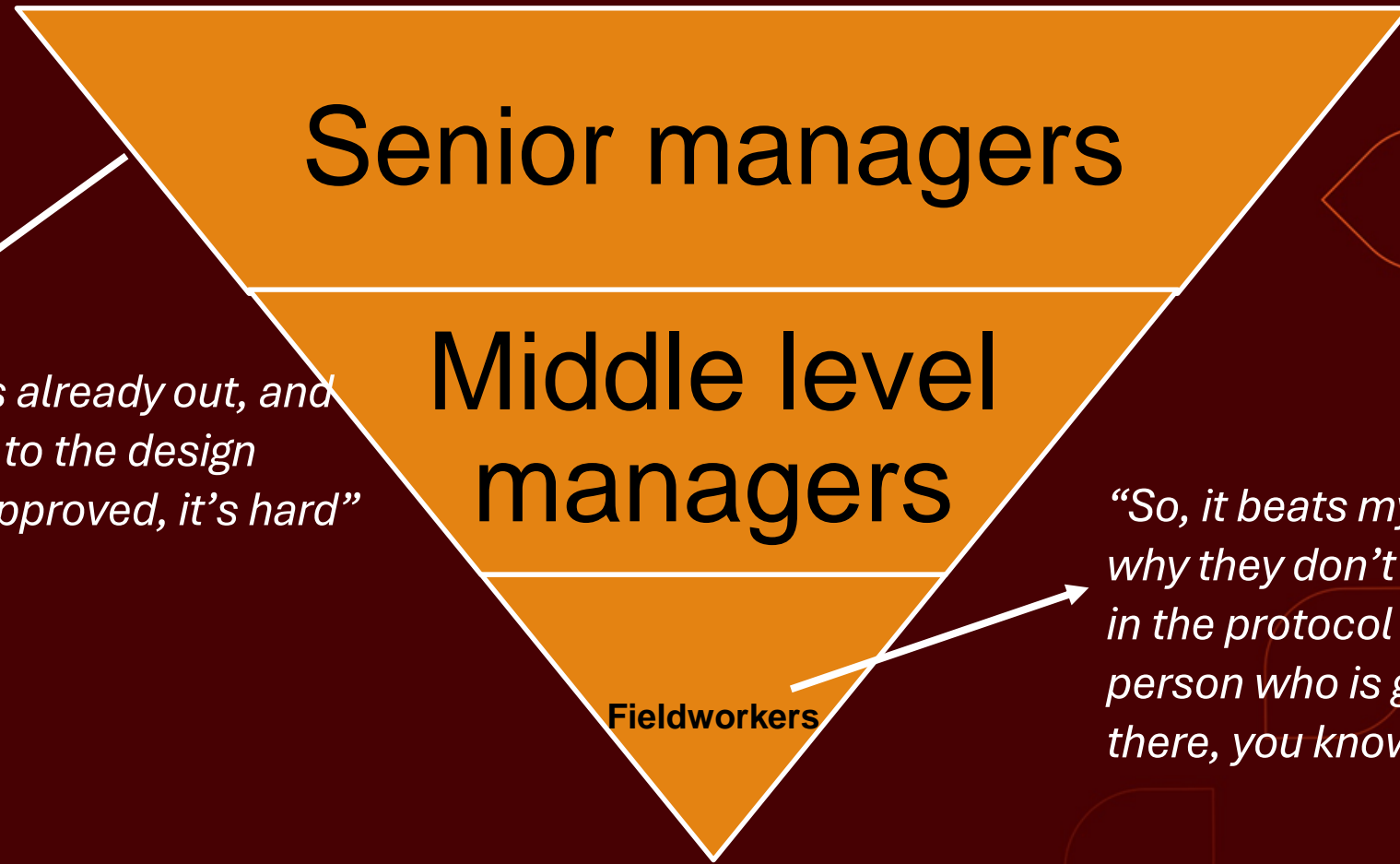
Findings

Study method	Cadre of staff	A	B	Total
Key informant interviews	Directors/HODs/Project leads	6	5	11
Individual In-depth Interviews	PIs	3	1	4
	Coordinators/managers/supervisors	8	5	13
	Fieldworkers	12	10	22
Non-participants observations	Coordinators/managers/supervisors	1	0	1
	Fieldworkers	3	5	8
TOTAL		33	26	59

Different Processes, Different players..

- Research involves different stages and engagements

    - Conceptualisation, planning, implementation and dissemination

- Engagement of different players, at different stages

    - Scientific leader, PIs, senior researchers, researchers

    - Managers, coordinators, supervisors, MD, Cos, nurses,

    - Fieldworkers

Different players, different engagement
....Conceptualisation and planning
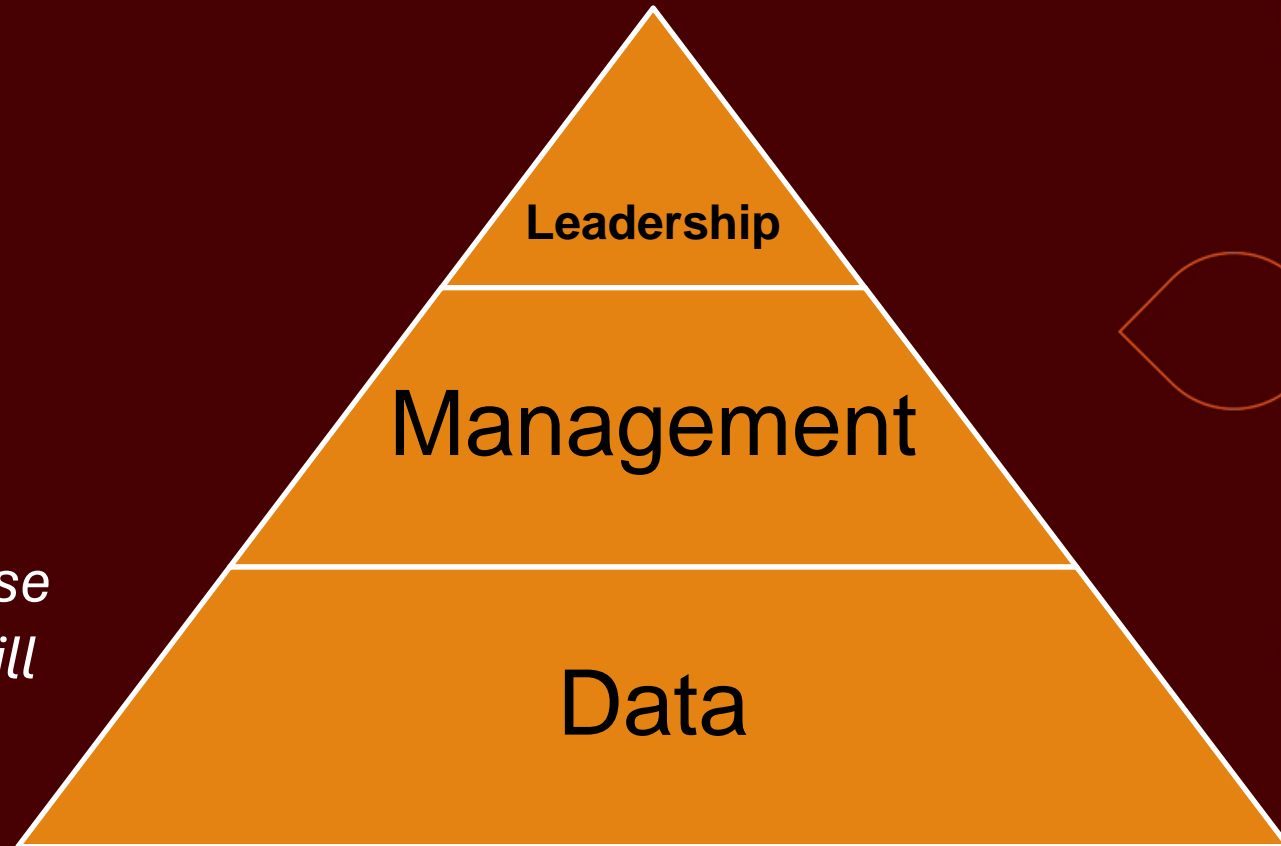
Senior managers

Middle level managers

Fieldworkers

"Sometimes the design is already out, and they can't make changes to the design because if a protocol is approved, it's hard" IAKII24

"So, it beats my understanding why they don't want to involve me in the protocol design, yet I am the person who is going to go out there, you know" IAIDI18
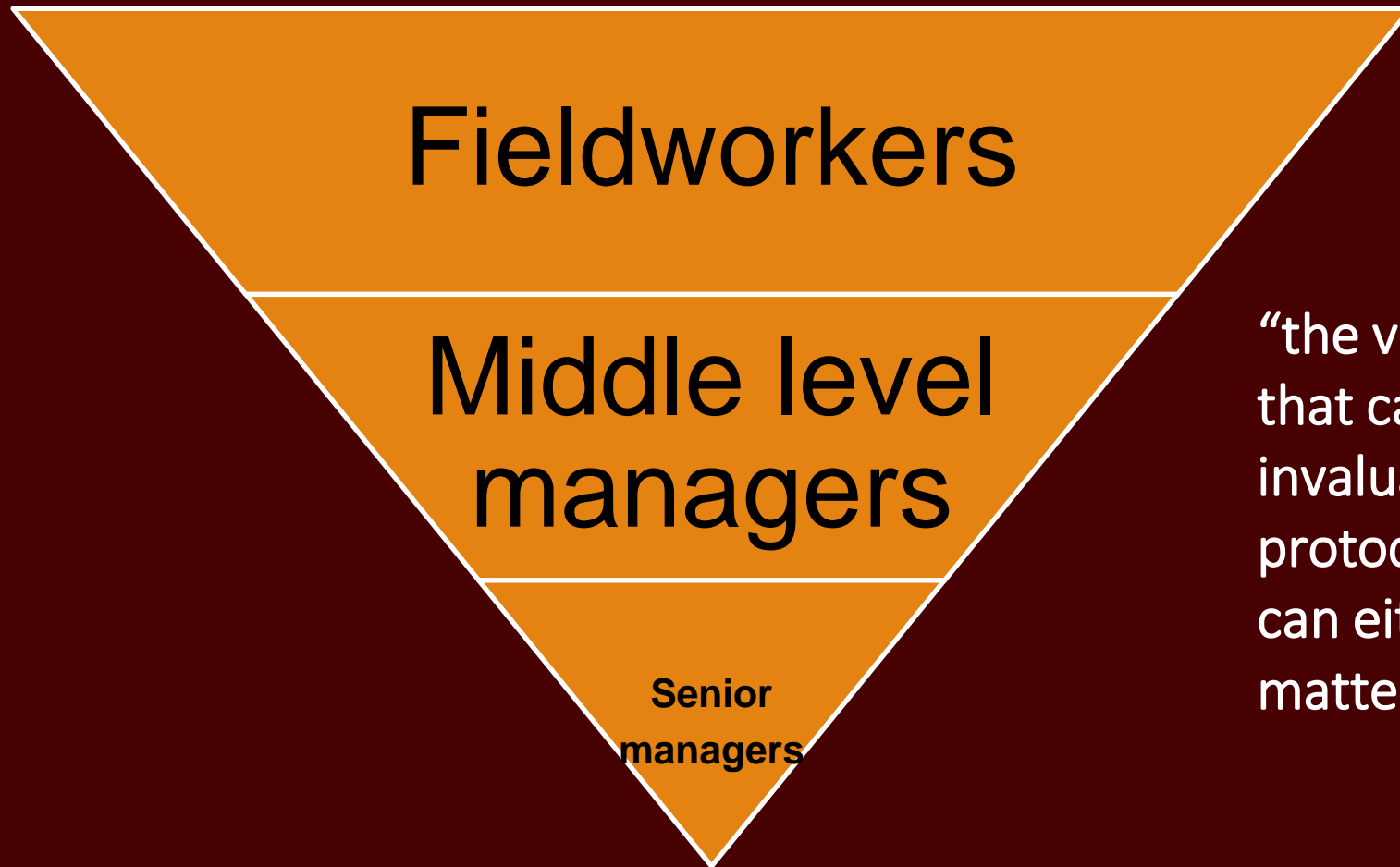
Different inputs, different value

"Data quality is important because the data that we are collecting will affect the research that we are doing" *IBIDI16*

Leadership

Management

Data

Different players, different roles
....Data collection
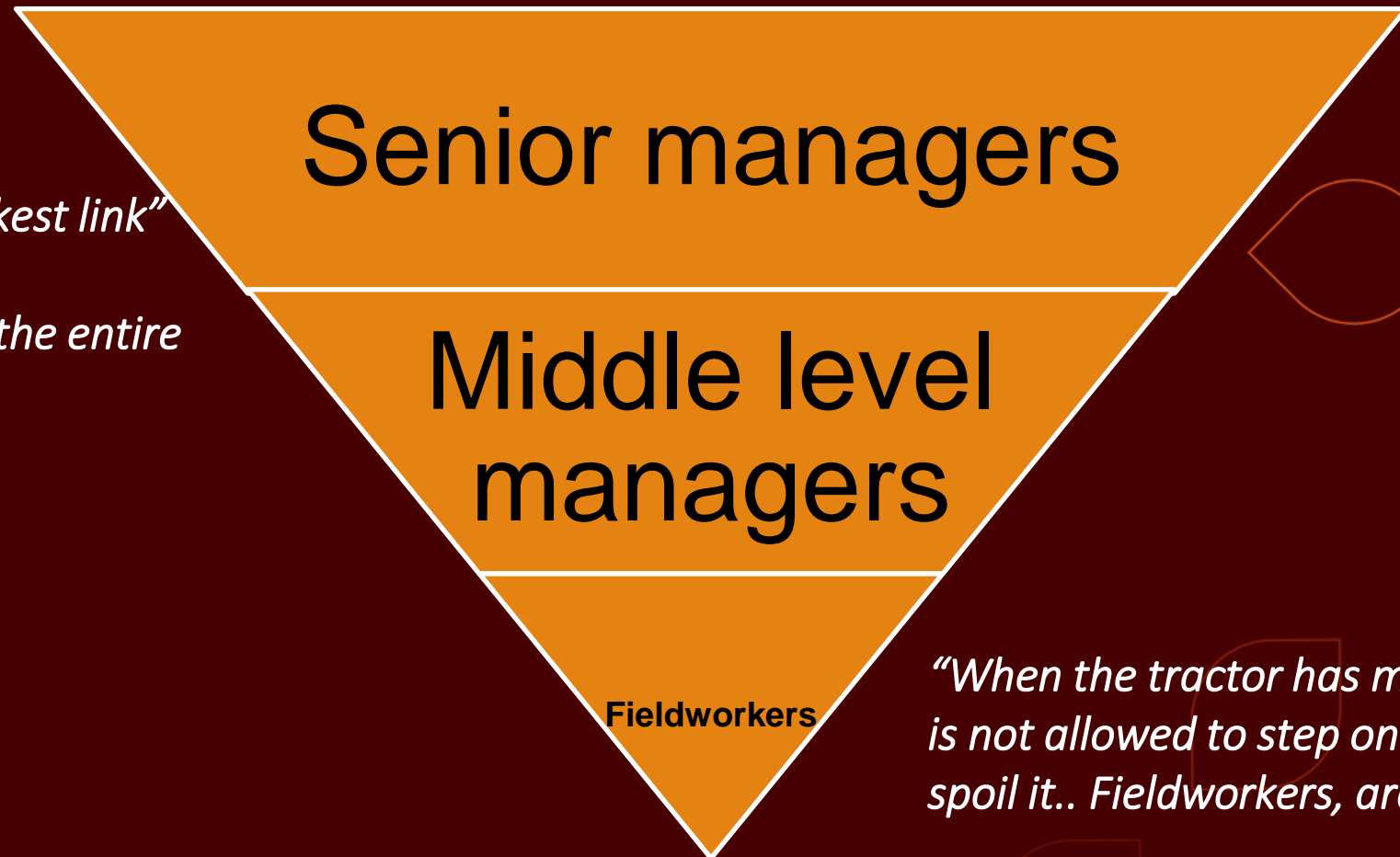
Fieldworkers

Middle level managers

Senior managers

"the value of fieldworkers is not something that can be quantified...it's so invaluable...after you have written the protocol, it is given to them to run it.. they can either make it or kill it, it doesn't matter how smart you might" IAIDI06

Different players, different engagement
Institutional Support..

Senior managers

Middle level managers

Fieldworkers

"We are as strong as our weakest link"
IAKI01, ..failure to empower
fieldworkers can compromise the entire
research enterprise

"When the tractor has made the road, it
is not allowed to step on it because its will
spoil it.. Fieldworkers, are like the tractor"

IAIDI31

Conclusion

- Fieldworkers perceived to play a critical role

- Inverse relationship between perceived value of research data, data collectors and institutional support

- Implication for fieldworkers' morale and practice?

- **Implication for institutional vision for excellence?**

- Enabling environment for research excellence?...*we are as strong as our weakest link..*

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