



# Blood Diamonds are NOT Forever



**Consumers:  
Put the  
Romance Back  
into the Stone**

**Take Action!  
Stop  
Conflict  
Diamonds**

The movie, “Blood Diamond,” starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Djimon Hounsou and Jennifer Connelly, casts a spotlight on the issue of conflict diamonds, graphically illustrating the tremendous human rights abuses and devastation caused by the trade in diamonds that finances civil wars and other conflicts in Africa. The film also provoked viewers across the U.S. to begin asking more questions about the role of the U.S. government and the diamond industry in the perpetuation of this deadly enterprise. The challenge now is to turn that spark of interest into a heightened campaign to end this illegal practice and address the other human rights abuses present in diamond mining. Civil society campaigns against the conflict diamond trade have already made remarkable progress, moving governments and the diamond industry to take some initial steps, but the work is far from over.

The simple act of many consumers asking jewelers about the source of diamonds in their shops prompted many of the leading diamond retailers to respond to the issue in subsequent advertisements. De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. launched “Project Horizon” to combat the movie’s message and the consumer response, and Mervis Diamond Importers had Ronnie Mervis on radio stations nation-wide assuring listeners that all their diamonds came from their mines in South Africa, not countries embroiled in conflict. These initiatives by leading members of the diamond business showed that, for at least a brief moment, citizen action succeeded in getting the attention of this powerful industry.

This document provides some background on this human rights issue and identifies some clear opportunities for action to change U.S. policy and impact the diamond industry at large. Conflict diamonds are not the only diamonds with blood on them in the African continent. The exploitation and brutal conditions of diamond mines even in conflict-free countries, like South Africa and Botswana, should not be overlooked by human rights activists. Human rights abuses in the diamond industry are not addressed in the current international processes that seek to eliminate the illegal diamond trade. Though this paper focuses on diamonds, it is also important to note that other resources in Africa, including gold, oil, and timber, are also used to fuel conflict or benefit the elite at the expense of the majority.

## *What Are “Conflict” or “Blood” Diamonds?*

### Inside this resource:

<i>The Complexities of Conflict Diamonds</i>	2	“Conflict diamonds”, also known as “blood diamonds,” are stones that have financed and fueled conflict including civil wars and extreme human rights abuses. The profits of trading in diamonds have generated billions of dollars that have been used by rebel groups and warlords to buy arms and finance conflict. Cruelty related to diamond extraction dates back to the 19 <sup>th</sup> century when Europeans exploited African laborers to extract these valuable resources in order to fuel colonization. Cecil Rhodes, the British founder of De Beers, sold diamonds to fight the Boers. The more recent cultivation and trade of	diamonds as a means to fund civil wars in Africa boomed in the 1990’s when several rebel groups seized national diamond mines.	rights abuses when those in charge of the mines used terror to ensure control over the workers and ensure that the local population did not siphon away any of the precious stones. The wars these gems financed have also been wrought with human rights abuses including rape, torture and mass murder. Conflict diamonds have gone hand-in-hand with a rise of child soldiers, as children have often been targeted for the mines and then drugged and forced to engage in violent activity as a way to ensure their compliance in the mining process.
<i>The Name and Shame Game</i>	2		Blood diamonds have financed civil wars primarily in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia and Sierra Leone. Amnesty International estimates that 3.7 million people have died in diamond financed conflicts in these countries alone. In addition to those killed, the people coerced to mine the diamonds suffered amputation, forced consumption of drugs, rape and other gross human	
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## *The Complexities of Conflict Diamonds*

Once a diamond is polished, it is almost impossible to trace, making it exceedingly challenging to assess the depth of the current conflict diamond trade. Rough diamonds are small and easily hidden, making them hard to find as they cross borders into conflict-free countries where there are fewer suspicions or controls. The illicit diamond trade in Sierra Leone continues to be between 15-20% of its total trade and conflict diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire are finding their way through Ghana.

Even though the conflicts in Angola and Sierra Leone have been largely resolved, and the international community has developed a diamond certification scheme called the Kimberley process, blood diamonds continue to find a way into the

legitimate diamond market with forged certificates. Overall, since 2003, conflict diamonds represent 15% of the global trade in rough diamonds. The global production of cut and polished stones amounts to \$9 billion. Although the diamond industry at large has committed itself to a system of self-regulation to prevent conflict diamond trade, retailers and even some of the largest diamond companies have failed to do their part of the bargain.

De Beers of South Africa, for example, which controls 60% of the world diamond supply, has been marketing itself as a "clean" diamond company, but it has been accused of setting up other shadow com-

panies and subcontracting to companies that have continued to buy and sell conflict diamonds. In addition, analysts assert that De Beers could benefit if the African diamond market were to dry up based on concerns about conflict diamonds. De Beers has been stockpiling diamonds since the 1930s, the lot of which has been valued at more than \$4 billion.



### **The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)**

The Kimberley Process was launched in 2003 by governments, civil society organizations and representatives of the private diamond trade. It is an international governmental certification process that seeks to control and regulate the import and export of rough diamonds in order to prevent conflict diamonds from fueling wars and human rights abuses by guaranteeing that the shipments are free of blood diamonds. Participants of the process can only trade in diamonds with other participants. Currently, 71 countries participate in the Kimberley Process. In addition there is a self-regulation required of the diamond industry to implement a code of conduct to keep conflict diamonds out of legitimate trade.

In the U.S., the Kimberley Process is implemented through the Clean Diamond Trade Act, but according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), blood diamonds may still be entering the U.S. because of major weaknesses in the implementation of this critical Act.

Several studies of hundreds of diamond jewelry retailers, released over the past several years, revealed that few shops have an explicit policy on diamond purchase and employees are not prepared to answer questions about conflict diamonds. These are both basic elements of the self-regulation envisioned by the Kimberley Process.

## *The Name and Shame Game*

The Kimberley Process identifies **Côte d'Ivoire** as the primary remaining culprit in the conflict diamond trade. This name and shame process has been problematic since countries not in hot conflict are not included despite some evidence that illicit trade could be continuing. In November 2007, the **Republic of Congo (Brazzaville)** and **Liberia** were admitted to the Kimberley process after several years of being on the list of perpetrators.

Countries like **Angola** and **Sierra Leone** are considered members of good standing

in the process since ending hot conflicts, but these nations continue to use brutal tactics in the diamond mines, including killing miners when they fail to follow orders. Sierra Leone exported \$142 million worth of diamonds in 2005, but poverty and post-conflict challenges abound following the civil war that left more than 50,000 dead and thousands of amputees. Angola's civil war claimed a half million lives and 100,000 maimings. The rebellion in this vicious civil war was funded largely by \$4 billion worth of high-quality blood diamonds in the 1990's.

Political or military opposition groups and rebels from other countries outside the African continent have also traded in conflict diamonds. Hezbollah, for example, uses Lebanese networks in Angola, Congo and Sierra Leone to raise funds through blood diamonds, yet their host nations are not named by the Kimberley Process.

**Liberia** was named until recently, because it was a convergence center for the diamond trade, but today, democratically elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has successfully re-joined the Kimberley Proc-

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## *Name and Shame Con't*

ess now that the brutal regimes of Charles Taylor and Samuel Doe have ended. Assistance has been sent to diamond miners and manufacturers in Liberia to train diamond evaluators to ensure compliance with the Kimberley Process. The total recorded diamond production of Liberia has gone up, indicating that illegal trade might be in the process of being replaced by legitimate mining companies.

The war in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** continues today and estimates are that hundreds of millions of dollars worth of conflict diamonds are

smuggled across the border every year, helping finance over 5 million deaths and millions of wounded and disabled victims of conflict.

**Côte d'Ivoire** heads towards elections and a process of disarmament and reunification in the first half of 2008, but the slow pace on practical aspects of the agreement between the President and former rebel leader could result in another postponement of elections and the continued simmering of this civil war. The Kimberley Process has been especially

focused on monitoring Côte d'Ivoire, pursuant to the Moscow Resolution that sets out specific measure to prevent trade in conflict diamonds from the North. There continues to be evidence that conflict diamonds are being smuggled through Ghana and entering legitimate trade. The government in Ghana agreed in 2007 to enhance its controls by monitoring exports, licensing miners and producing accurate diamond production data with assistance from Kimberley process participants and the

## Financing Terror

**The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States by al-Qaida were funded by blood diamonds, enabling Osama bin Laden to skirt the asset freeze placed by the Clinton administration after the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.**

## *Conflict Diamonds are not the only Bloody Diamonds*

The blood on diamonds is not only that which is shed in conflict but also the blood coughed up by miners who suffer from tuberculosis, asbestosis and silicosis or the blood spilt in accidents in this dangerous industry. In addition to working to ensure that diamonds don't fuel conflict it is also critical to press the diamond industry and international governments to protect the human rights of the miners. Diamond miners need just wages, efficient dust control measures and access to affordable health care. Governments must protect populations in diamond rich areas from being dispossessed as a result of new excavation sites.

Diamonds are often found in beds of asbestos. The asbestos dust is like glass fiber that can easily penetrate the lungs. Silica dust is also a huge problem for miners. These elements contribute to lung disease and leave miners vulnerable to tuberculosis (TB), which is the biggest killer among those with AIDS in South Africa.

De Beers, the diamond giant from South Africa, has recently been making headlines as a result of the successful class action suit against the company for price fixing, but what has been less public has been this corporation's abuse of its workers. De

Beers claims that there is no TB in their mines and that the diamond mines are the safest in the mining industry at large, claiming that occupational diseases including silicosis, asbestosis and chemical inhalation that result in lung disease are "very rare". However, De Beers doctors are checking miners and case after case has been coming to light showing that these medical professionals are hiding the diseases. De Beers does provide simple cloth



masks, but they are designed for white people and are ill fitting and extremely uncomfortable for the predominantly black workers that are inside the mines. Since De Beers tells its workers that the powder in the air is safe, many workers take off their masks, inhaling the deadly dust.

When the South African government pressed De Beers to invest in the community and address the health and safety issues with the mines, De Beers closed two large mines, one in Kimberley (the town the Kimberley Process was named after), leaving thousands without work. Shortly thereafter, De Beers contracted with Petra Diamonds which offered half of the wages De Beers had paid and workers that were re-hired no longer had the protection of the union that they had developed while working at De Beers.

De Beers claimed a dearth of diamonds, though there has been a boom in diamond sales in this region in the last two years. There are rumors that some of the sudden growth in diamond production comes not from the mines themselves but from conflict areas further North – and that the Kimberley mines in particular have become a major laundering center for Africa's conflict diamonds.

# Consumers: Put the Romance Back into the Stone. Take Action to Stop Conflict Diamonds

## Consumer Action:

Help ensure diamonds are conflict-free... ask to see a guarantee!

Are you in the market for diamonds? Ask the salesperson 4 questions to find out what they are doing to help prevent the trade of conflict diamonds and an additional question about worker protection. If they can't or won't answer the question, let the salesperson know that you are going to shop somewhere else.

1. How can I be sure that your jewelry does not contain conflict diamonds?
2. Where do your diamonds come from?
3. Can I see a copy of your company's policy on conflict diamonds?
4. Can you show me a written guarantee from your diamond suppliers stating that your diamonds are conflict-free?
5. What efforts do your diamond suppliers take to protect the worker's health and ensure just compensation?

If you are NOT shopping for diamonds... don't hesitate to check in with your local jeweler anyways. Let them know that you have become interested in this issue and ask them the above questions. Even if you don't plan to buy diamonds yourself, businesses depend on referrals and seek to protect their reputation in the community.

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## Advocacy:

Improving U.S.-Africa Policy on Conflict Diamonds

There has been some hefty criticism of the implementation of the Kimberley Process, not the least of which is the concern that participatory governments are more interested in protecting the corporations than the people that are conflict affected. Write to your members of Congress and let them know that this is an important issue for you. Ask them to:

1. Implement the 2006 recommendations of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and ensure that the U.S. has strong control systems and procedures for collecting and sharing trade data on rough diamonds, for inspecting imports and exports of these diamonds and for tracking confirmations of import and export receipts.
2. Push the President and the State Department to engage with the international community in a renewed effort to tighten the loopholes that conflict diamonds fall through by strengthening government controls and creating a baseline standard that all must meet to ensure traceability from mine to export, increasing government oversight of the diamond industry and requiring the Kimberley Process to publish detailed statistical data on diamond production and trade.
3. Appropriate the U.S. fair share of the resources to enable the Kimberley Process to implement all of these changes.
4. Raise the broader concerns of social and economic justice in the diamond mining industry and call for U.S. action to protect labor and health rights of workers in companies that trade with or operate in the U.S. market.



## Education and Awareness: Spread the Word

The movie "Blood Diamond" helped to bring this issue to a broader audience, and the impact was felt in the diamond industry worldwide. It is easy for this heightened awareness to trail off with the movie credits, but activists can keep the issue alive by talking about it with friends and family. Consider hosting a film showing of the movie and discussing it afterwards. Ask everyone who attends to commit to taking one form of action after the event.

## Want to get more involved?

Africa Action currently does not have an active campaign on this very important issue, but we would like to recommend that you get in touch with two of our allies.

Amnesty International USA

[www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)

Global Witness

[www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org)

