

The Kimberley Process is Not Enough



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The diamond industry and the governments that are members of the Kimberley Process are justifiably proud of the progress it has made in preventing diamond-fueled conflicts through the Kimberley Process. Most wars are over and the conflict in the Côte d'Ivoire is nearing the end, we hope. Because the Kimberley Process was designed to help prevent conflicts, the need for it continues.

But the Kimberley Process wasn't designed to work to improve the root causes of instability in the chaotic artisanal diamond mining sector, a sector that is vulnerable to economic predators, prone to violence, and difficult to regulate.

To address this underlying challenge, the jewelry industry, governments, and developmental organizations have joined together to create the Diamond Development Initiative.

The Diamond Development Initiative focuses on artisanal diamond miners and their communities, seeking to improve understanding, promote policies, and find possible solutions to the challenges and issues they face every day.

DDI *complements* the Kimberley Process, by concentrating on issues outside its limited mandate, such as social and economic factors in artisanal mining, environmental concerns, labor issues, improving livelihoods, working conditions and human rights, and community beneficiation. DDI is also working with governments to assist in the formalization of artisanal mining for better natural resource governance.

WHY DDI MATTERS

The artisanal diamond miners of Africa and South America produce about 15 percent of the world's gem diamonds a year. About 1.5 million people are involved in this work, making them—by population—one of the largest parts of our industry, supporting an estimated 15 million family and community members. Helping this sector will also have a tremendous impact on improving overall conditions in these mining countries.

Artisanal diamonds are as much a part of the diamond value chain as any other diamond. While the Kimberley Process helped douse the worst of the fires kindled by the conflict diamond issue, it hasn't completely removed the public's unease. Poverty, environmental degradation, and sub-standard and completely unsafe working conditions, including human rights abuses, are not what a consumer wants along with that something special that diamonds symbolize.

Holding up clean hands is not enough. The industry has to be seen to care and to take action to put things right. This is why it needs to pay close attention to the social development of its most vulnerable family members: artisanal miners and their communities.

Consumers are becoming much more discerning. They want to know where diamonds are coming from and how they are mined. DDI is part of the consumer confidence chain. It makes good business sense for the industry to be involved.

In addition, with soaring rough diamond prices and apparently, no prospect of a significant kimberlite mine coming on stream in the next five to 10 years, the industry will continue to look at artisanal diamonds as a necessary and viable part of the supply chain. Here is yet another commercial reason to get invested in a well-organized, formalized artisanal diamond production.

BUILDING THE FUTURE, ONE STEP AT A TIME

The Diamond Development Initiative is starting the long-term work in the artisanal diamond mining communities and is seeking to involve governments, NGOs, and industry in building a better future for miners and their communities. With the "Standards and Guidelines" project we are creating a guide which will inform governments, exploration and mining companies, buyers, and exporters what they need to know and what they need to consider when operating in the artisanal diamond areas. We also have launched a pilot initiative in the Democratic Republic of Congo to remove children from the mines by providing incentives to return to school and learn new competencies.

With the success of the Kimberley Process, it is time to take the next step and make sure that the industry does all it can to take care of all of its members. By supporting the Diamond Development Initiative, you can make a difference in the lives of miners, their families, and their communities in some of the most troubled regions on earth. This will be a legacy that will be worthy of diamonds.

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