Module B. Colour from the Cosmos

Lesson 11 - Processed Diamonds

Kimberley Process: The 5th C?

The [World Diamond Council](http://www.worlddiamondcouncil.com/), formed in 2000, is one of many organizations involved in the monitoring of the diamond industry. The Council's original mandate, which has now become known as The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS, also simply known as the Kimberley Process), was:

**"to address the development, implementation, and oversight of a tracking system for the export and import of rough diamonds to prevent the exploitation of diamonds for illicit purposes such as war and inhumane acts"**

This mandate includes the elimination of Blood or Conflict diamonds. The process officially endorses stable countries and allows them to produce (which includes mining, cutting, or polishing) conflict-free diamonds. These conflict-free diamonds are tracked in parcels and can only be sold to other countries that are also endorsed as conflict-free, and provided that they too have strict regulations for exporting and importing rough and polished diamonds. By facilitating the trade of legitimate stones, the Kimberley Process has significantly reduced global trafficking of conflict stones. The Process has provided more confidence to retailers and consumers that they are not supporting illegitimate mining operations.

The Kimberley Process is not simply a collection of international laws, but rather an agreement between the major diamond mining, exporting, and importing countries and companies. In total, [81 countries are involved](http://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/participants)as of August 2013, some of which have more significant impacts than others. For example, the United States imports huge volumes of diamonds and therefore has a very significant impact on the success (or failure) of the consumption aspect of the Kimberley Process. Conversely, poverty stricken regions with diamond production can significantly impact the success (or failure) of the Kimberley Process through proper implementation and regulation in areas that are prone to illicit diamond trade. Other countries that neither produce diamonds nor import significant volumes of diamonds will not have a significant impact on the success (or failure) of the Kimberley Process.

It is the cooperation amongst all the countries involved that gives the Kimberley Process its strength. Assisting the World Diamond Council in ensuring the validity and effectiveness of the Kimberley Process are other non-governmental organizations that are involved more specifically with human rights issue, notably[Global Witness](http://www.globalwitness.org/index.php) and [Partnership Africa Canada](http://www.pacweb.org/en/).

With that being said, there is still significant trouble in the diamond world because of the significant value and ease of smuggling diamonds. For example, Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela are countries with imperfect track records relative to compliance with the Process. Unfortunately, the Process is more geared to monitoring large scale production from more significant sources (e.g., hard rock mines) and has difficulty addressing smaller artisanal scale operations.

Read this six-page report by Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada entitled["Loupe Holes: Illicit Diamonds in the Kimberley Process"](https://connect.ubc.ca/bbcswebdav/pid-2559971-dt-content-rid-10494266_1/courses/SIS.UBC.EOSC.118.99C.2014WC.44220/Course_Files/moduleB/lesson09/download/Loupe-Holes-Kimberley-Process.pdf), published in November 2008. It is a current review of the Kimberley Process and addresses some of the issues at hand. The accompanying [Kimberley Process Guide](https://connect.ubc.ca/bbcswebdav/pid-2559971-dt-content-rid-10494266_1/courses/SIS.UBC.EOSC.118.99C.2014WC.44220/Course_Files/moduleB/lesson09/download/Diamond-Kimberley-Process-Guide.pdf) will help you focus on the important aspects of the report.

Unfortunately many problems with the Kimberley Process continued after the publication of Loupe Holes and a great deal of lobbying from groups like Human Rights Watch, Partnership Africa Canada, Global Witness and the Diamond Development Initiative. More diamonds sourced from conflict regions were making their way through the system as 'conflict free'. Perhaps the largest issue was the certification of Zimbabwe diamond operations from the military-controlled Marange Region. There, several NGOs were claiming that the production of diamonds were fuelling corruption and violence. This along with the issues in Venezuela and Cote d'Ivoire pushed one of the KP's founders, Ian Smillie, to quit the board of the KP in 2009. Following suit after continuing controversy of conflict diamonds passing as conflict-free, the NGO Global Witness, [officially removed its support in 2011](http://www.globalwitness.org/library/why-we-are-leaving-kimberley-process-message-global-witness-founding-director-charmian-gooch) for the KP as well. Similarly, Martin Rapaport of the influential Rapaport group of companies continues to lobby the KP for better regulations and better definitions of what "Conflict Minerals" are in light of the 'certified diamonds' from Zimbabwe.

Sadly, although the KP has made great strides in regulating the trade of rough diamonds from conflict regions, it has recently been failing at upholding its core principles in the face of human rights violations in a few select countries. Despite the number of disputed countries being low, the scale of the problems and diamond volume are significant. For example, ~12 million carats of diamonds worth $645 million USD were exported from Zimbabwe in 2012 according to KP documentation. This information by no means negates the fact that the KP is still important, but it certainly shows that it cannot be the only solution. At present, there seems to be no reconciliation as Zimbabwe continues to operate under the certification of the KP and the above mentioned parties continue to protest the efficacy of the KP.