

All You Need To Know About Ethical Diamond Mining

In 2006 a film called, Blood Diamond, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, took the entire world by storm. Not only did the movie bring unethical diamond mining to everyone's attention, but it gave a very powerful message regarding conflict diamonds. With that in mind, Southern African diamond-producing regions made sure to put a system in place to prevent unethical diamonds from reaching the consumer. But what exactly does the system entail?

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme

In 2000 the United Nations General Assembly supported the idea to put an international certification scheme in place when you purchase a rough diamond from the mines. The certificate scheme was designed to make sure that a manufacturer purchases a diamond from legitimate diamond mines committed to ethical diamond mining and upholding the rights of miners.

In 2002 multiple organisations in the international diamond industry, civil society organisations and even the government got involved in putting together the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). These documents ensured that mines follow a procedure to control the trade and production of rough diamonds.

What is the Kimberley Process?

In order for you to mine or sell a rough diamond, you need to follow the extensive requirements from the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme before it enters the trade. This process was put in place to ensure that no conflict diamonds or spurious diamonds make their way to the consumer. Before any country can trade with rough diamonds they need to follow the strict rules and regulations set out by the Kimberley Process.

The minimum requirements are to ensure that mining facilities have control over exports, imports and internal processes while being able to prove statistical data and methods of sourcing. In order to continue to follow the legal procedure participants are only allowed to trade with other institutions, who follow the minimum requirements of the Kimberley Process.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme can also give a record of over 99.8% rough diamonds worldwide, assisting consumers to not support unethical diamond mining.

What Exactly are Conflict Diamonds?

Conflict diamonds, also known as blood diamonds, are used to financially support the devastating war in Africa and fund armed conflicts. The profits they received from rough diamonds were used by rebels and warlords to purchase weapons during a civil war. But with the Kimberley Process in place, the flow of conflict diamonds has declined dramatically. While all efforts are made to ensure that the trade in conflict diamonds ends, it's still up to the consumer to make sure that they're purchasing diamonds from a manufacturer who follows the correct procedures of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

How can you make sure your diamond is conflict-free?

When buying a loose diamond or a diamond set in a beautiful jewellery creation, make sure you purchase from a reputable jeweller who is able to answer a few simple questions on the matter. Before you purchase a diamond make sure you ask the following questions:

- Can you confirm that the diamond is conflict-free? Reputable diamond jewellers will state on their invoices that the diamonds contained in the jewellery item abide by the Kimberley Process.
- Do you know if your diamond supplier is part of the Kimberley Process?
- Would you be able to provide me with your company's policy towards conflict diamonds or an Ethical Compliance Certificate confirming that the diamonds were sourced from diamond mines that abide by ethical human rights policies as set out by the United Nations?

If the jewellery store is unable to answer these questions rather do your own research before buying a diamond. But, with the strict regulations of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme most suppliers would be able to confirm in writing that their diamonds are conflict-free.

In conclusion, it's just as important for the consumer to make sure that they buy a conflict-free diamond as it is for a retail jeweller and manufacturer to follow the Kimberley Process regulations. Luckily, with the implementation and willing adoption of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme by participating countries, the amount of conflict diamonds in the market has reduced substantially. Today, consumers can purchase a beautiful diamond with the knowledge that it's, in fact, conflict-free.