



Maendeleo Diamonds are the artisanal miner's best friend

Diamond Development Initiative launches new standards for responsibly-sourced, artisanally-mined diamonds

OTTAWA, April 28, 2016 – The Diamond Development Initiative (DDI), an organization dedicated to improving the working conditions and lives of artisanal diamond miners, is announcing the launch of the *Maendeleo Diamond Standards* (MDS).

Maendeleo, the Swahili word for development and progress, is a fitting designation for standards that will ensure respect for human rights, for the environment and for community well-being, according to Dorothée Gizenga, Executive Director. “Artisanal diamond mining, carried out informally with rudimentary tools, is a risky business in many ways. Historically the people who do the hardest work live in poverty and have been subject to exploitation and violence.

“These standards are an important step in protecting the miners, regulating the sector and producing diamonds that the jewelry industry can be proud to pass along to consumers.”

Workers at 14 remote mining sites in the diamond-rich Koidu district of Sierra Leone have been trained on the standards and 13 of the sites have now been certified MDS-compliant based on a third-party audit. This means that diamonds produced at these sites have been mined responsibly and ethically, and will begin to respond to the growing demand for ethical products from discerning consumers.

Implementing the principles of human rights, health and safety and environmental responsibility is already improving the conditions for the people who work in the mines.

"Establishing global standards for the artisanal mining industry helps ensure safe working conditions," said Anisa Kamadoli Costa, chairman and president of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, DDI's largest non-governmental funder and a supporter of the development of the MDS standard. "The Maendeleo Diamond Standards represent DDI's expansive, long-term approach to improving the lives of miners, their families and communities."

Ian Smillie, Chair of the DDI Board, points out that the *Maendeleo Diamond Standards* is the only model that exists in the artisanal diamond sector. The system is noteworthy as an effective complement to the Kimberley Process (KP), an international protocol to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds. “MDS takes the work of the KP one step further, says Smillie. “While the KP deals with regulatory issues, the *Maendeleo Diamond Standards* address the development needs of the artisanal diamond miners and their communities, which is foundational to conflict prevention.”

Based on the results of DDI's work in Sierra Leone, Ainsley Butler, MDS Program Director, says DDI intends to roll out the system to other regions, beginning with the DR Congo. “This process is feasible, scalable and replicable,” she says. “This is effective development.”

* *The Diamond Development Initiative works to transform artisanal mining into a source of sustainable development.*
www.ddiglobal.org

Contact:

Marg Buchanan, Communications Manager

marg.buchanan@ddiglobal.org; 613.565.0507, x105; 514.627.3932