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Blood Diamonds are still a reality

Conflict or blood diamonds fuel conflict, civil wars and human rights abuses. They have been responsible for funding recent conflicts in Africa which resulted in the death and displacement of millions of people. During these conflicts, profits from the illegal trade in diamonds, worth billions of dollars, were used by warlords and rebels to buy arms. An estimated 3.7 million people have died in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, and Sierra Leone in conflicts fuelled by diamonds.

While the wars in Angola and Sierra Leone are now over and fighting in the DRC has decreased, the problem of conflict diamonds hasn't gone away.

Despite the fact that an international diamond certification scheme called the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was launched in 2003, conflict diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire are finding their way through Ghana into the legitimate diamond market. As the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone has shown, even a small amount of conflict diamonds can wreak enormous havoc in a country. Between 1991 and 2002 over 50,000 people were killed, over 2 million displaced within the country or made refugees, and thousands mutilated, raped and tortured. Today, the country is still recovering from the consequences of the conflict.

The launch of the film Blood Diamond is a timely reminder that governments and the diamond industry must ensure that no conflict diamonds find their way into the consumer market.

About the film Blood Diamond, by Warner Brothers:

Set against the backdrop of the chaos and civil war that enveloped 1990s Sierra Leone, Blood Diamond is the story of Danny Archer (Leonardo DiCaprio), a South African mercenary, and Solomon Vandy (Djimon Hounsou), a Mende fisherman. Both men are African, but their histories and their circumstances are as different as any can be - until their fates become joined in a common quest to recover a rare pink diamond that can transform their lives. While in prison for smuggling, Archer learns that Solomon - who was taken from his family and forced to work in the diamond fields - has found and hidden the extraordinary rough stone. With the help of Maddy Bowen (Jennifer Connelly), an American journalist whose idealism is tempered by a deepening connection with Archer, the two men embark on a trek through rebel territory. More than a search for a valuable diamond, the journey could give Archer the second chance he thought he would never have and help Solomon retrieve his most precious possession: his son, who has been abducted by rebel forces and forced into the life of a child soldier.

Blood Diamond stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Djimon Hounsou and Jennifer Connelly and is directed by Edward Zwick. The screenplay was written by Charles Leavitt (The Mighty), from a story by Leavitt and C. Gaby Mitchell. Blood Diamond is produced by Paula Weinstein, Marshall Herskovitz, Edward Zwick, Graham King and Gillian Gorfil. The executive producers are Len Amato and Benjamin Waisbren, with Kevin De La Noy co-producing.

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