



ITS NOW OR NEVER FOR THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS

By Simiso Mlevu Posted November 18, 2019 In Blog, Campaigns

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Thomas Sithole who was injured by ZCDC guards on Friday

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The Kimberley Process plenary currently underway in New Delhi, India marks the end of a three year reform cycle. For the past three years, the stakeholders, who include KP member states, the industry and the Civil Society, have been struggling to finalise issues that were identified for reform. Key among the issues is the expansion of the scope of 'conflict diamonds'.

Established in 2003, the Kimberley Process' main thrust has been to curb the flow of conflict diamonds into the global supply chain. Conflict Diamonds is defined by the KP as 'rough diamonds used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments'.

The Kimberley Process has largely been successful in ensuring that funds raised through sale of diamonds are not used to overthrow 'legitimate governments' as initially set out in the core document.

However, over the years, the experiences of communities affected by diamond mining indicate that the narrow definition of conflict diamonds is self-serving for the governments and not in the interest of the public. Although rebel groups who were initially the primary targets of the definition and also the prime causers of conflict have been contained in most areas, conflict has mutated in many mining communities. New forms of diamond mining-related conflicts have emerged and the initial definition is thus no-longer fit for purpose. There have been systematic and on-going human rights abuses and many other dehumanising experiences against communities and artisanal miners. .

The inaction by the KP on reform and strengthening the scope has a negative impact on the communities and the general populace living in communities hosting diamond mining. On Friday 14, a community based organisation from the diamond mining area of Marange, Bocha Diamond Community Trust saved a 16 year old man at Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company fields.

An artisanal miner, Thomas Sithole (16) was callously injured by ZCDC guards after they caught him mining diamonds. Sithole is not alone in this predicament. Hundreds more who venture into the diamond fields for artisanal mining are injured every year.

In many other mining communities in various diamond producing countries with alluvial production, locals are subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment by state and quasi state agents.

In Marange soldiers and the police continually break into people's homes and extort money from villagers for allegedly providing shelter to artisanal miners.

Artisanal mining, unsafe as it is, is a livelihood issue for many in and around Marange. It is spurred by the downward spiral of the economy and has fuelled conflict to a new disproportionate level.

According to the Kimberley Process data, at least 10 million miners and diggers, including their families survive on artisanal mining around the world.

The failure by the Kimberley Process to address the horrific huma

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communities means a significant amount of conflict diamonds are still widely in circulation. Centre for Natural Resource Governance calls on the Kimberley Process to widen its scope and attend to the economic injustice, aggression against communities, violation of workers rights in the diamond value chain and environmental degradation associated with diamond mining.

