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SNAPSHOT

Partnership with Gemological Institute of America empowers Ivoirian diamond miners, government

Training and distribution of weighing scales helps miners get a fair price and the government its fair share of taxes



Photo: Sabine Jekak

Traditional weighing scales are easily manipulated to trick miners



Photo: Erahima Bakayoko

Mining cooperative members and government valuers learn the state-of-the-art in rough diamond valuation

Telling Our Story

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Washington, DC 20523-1000
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The GIA's famous "four C's"—color, clarity, cut and carat (weight)—help millions of consumers choose engagement rings each year, but for an artisanal diamond miner, that knowledge can be the difference between earning a piece of bread or a new house.

Since a diamond of the same weight can cost pennies or millions, buyers often exploit the lack of knowledge—and use inaccurate weighing scales—to cheat miners of a fair price.

Through its Property Rights and Artisanal Diamond Development (PRADD II) program, USAID is helping empower miners in Côte d'Ivoire through training and the distribution of accurate electronic weighing scales to cooperatives.

"We've noticed at least a 0.2 carat difference between the old scales and the new scales," said Fofana Abou of the Diarabana cooperative." In nearby Bobi, villager leaders have banned all sales that do not use the new scales.

Through a unique partnership with the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), PRADD offered a world-class rough diamond valuation training to six cooperative members. PRADD is working on simplified follow-up trainings to reach more miners.

The GIA training also included Côte d'Ivoire's customs officials. Before the decade-long civil war, authorities calculated taxes using a per-kilo rate, leading to a major loss in tax revenue that could have otherwise been used for social development projects.

"Thanks to these new techniques, we can now better collect taxes when exporting diamonds," said Commander Tia of the Ivoirian Customs service at the training's closing ceremony.

Accurate diamond valuation is also an essential part of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, since a diamond's value is like a "fingerprint" used to trace stones. In addition, accurate valuation can be a tool to detect money laundering.

“The GIA training in Côte d’Ivoire is an essential part of the country’s transition from the U.N. embargo,” said Mark van Bockstael, chair of the Kimberley Process Working Group on Diamond Experts, who attended the closing ceremony. The government of Belgium plans on funding an internship for Ivoirian valuers in Antwerp in the coming months.

PRADD played a key support role in getting the UN diamond ban lifted in April 2014, and its activities aim at strengthening Kimberley Process compliance and improving the lives and livelihoods of small-scale miners.

The USAID Property Rights and Artisanal Diamond Development Program (PRADD II) supports governments to implement mining best practices in Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea, and promotes good governance of the mining sector at the international level through the Kimberley Process, the international mechanism that prevents rough diamonds from fueling conflict. The program—a \$19 million five-year joint USAID/European Union initiative.

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