



# Diamonds With a Cause

**T**he diamond industry has had to worry about the issue of conflict diamonds ever since this problem reached the public consciousness in 2002. But, as it turns out, a marketing opportunity has also emerged. While the current marketing push to branded diamonds centers mainly on new cuts, the new premium on conflict-free origins also offers diamantaires another angle from which to differentiate their product. There is now one company, Igloo Diamonds, that not only promises to deliver conflict-free diamonds, *it* also promises that approximately 50 percent of the gross profit of each diamond sale will help rid parts of Africa of some of the remnants of conflict – a first for the industry.

## **IGLOO DIAMONDS – “ETHICALLY” BRANDED**

In early October 2004, Igloo Diamonds – based in Carson City, Nevada – announced a partnership with Adopt-A-Minefield (AAM), in which the proceeds of the sale of diamonds will be directly used to finance land mine removal in Mozambique. Nongovernmental organization (NGO) AAM is a public–private partnership between the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), the UN, Ted Turner’s Better World Fund and the U.S. State Department. Its mission is to clear minefields, provide assistance to land mine survivors and raise awareness of the global land mine crisis, often

*Top: Children returning to school in the outskirts of Maputo, Mozambique, following mining of the area. Opposite page: Mined area outside of Maputo, Mozambique. Photos by Chris Sundberg and Amanda Richards.*

through AAM Goodwill Ambassadors Paul McCartney and Heather Mills—McCartney.

“There are between 50 and 70 million land mines in over 80 countries throughout the world and local communities rarely have the resources to clear them,” says Nahela Hadi, AAM executive director. “As a nongovernmental organization that relies on private contributions, AAM is constantly looking for additional sources of funding. This partnership with Igloo Diamonds will help to save lives and return land to productive use as our battle against the scourge of land mines continues.”

How did Igloo Diamonds come up with this concept? “The challenge you see again and again in this industry is that branding a diamond is a very tough job; diamonds are a very branding-resistant type of item,” says Gad Zak, president of Igloo Diamonds. “When we were considering the problem, we thought that one way to do it is to not only make the brand unique, but make it do something unique, something good for the world. Another thing that we could do is to work together with other people to get the word out about our brand. So, we connected the dots and what we came up with was Igloo Diamonds.”

#### WHY NOT SIERRA LEONE?

When asked why the proceeds of the sales of Igloo Diamonds are benefiting Mozambique and not an African country from which the diamonds are actually mined, Zak explains that it was really just a matter of how the idea unfolded. “During our initial brainstorming sessions, we came upon the idea that what we do should benefit a country in Africa. We then contacted different organizations and during that process both our company and the others assessed whether our not we would be a good fit together,” says Zak.

“We approached AAM and told them, ‘We are a luxury product that doesn’t want only to make money, we want to work with you and give a portion to something good.’” Zak continues. “It just came down to the fact that we got the best response from AAM and for our purposes, the correct response. They have a proven track record, are affiliated with venerable organizations in the United States and are reputable.”

Zak believes that while the profits don’t directly affect the problems in diamond-mining countries, helping to

solve at least one of the crises in Africa is ultimately significant. “By partnering with AAM, we have taken the concept of clean diamonds to the next level. Using profits from the sale of diamonds to help with a humanitarian crisis on the African continent, where so much of the misery generated by blood diamonds has originated, makes this initiative especially fitting and appropriate. And I believe that this is the first luxury product that tries to do something of this nature, especially in such a noticeable, per-sale way?”

#### ASSORTMENT OF GOODS

Offered exclusively on the internet for now —on [www.diamonds.org](http://www.diamonds.org), there is a wide variety of Igloo Diamonds available. In addition to the round cut, the stones come in fancy shapes; princesses, radiants and emeralds are predominantly featured and there are a few ovals, marquises and hearts available as well. The colors range from D through L and the clarity ranges from IF to SI. Zak comments that the company tries to stay away from I clarity because he believes it can be disappointing and deceiving and it can add “a bad surprise element,” certainly a danger for a company doing business on the internet.

In terms of size, the stones start at approximately 30 points and go up to 1 carat. There are also a few offered over 2 carats. All diamonds come with either a Gemological Institute of America (GIA) or American Gem Society (AGS) grading certificate, as well

as an Igloo Diamond Certificate, a Certificate of Canadian Origin and an Igloo/AAM joint certificate, the last of which includes a notification about the successful clearing, location and size of the particular assigned plot in Mozambique.

In addition to the U.S. market, the company would also like to target the market in Japan. “From a straightforward perspective, the market is the second-biggest diamond goods and diamond jewelry market after the U.S. in terms of size,” says Zak. “However, our product lends itself to that market for other reasons. Culturally, the Japanese are very keen on products with good quality. We try to offer goods that are very close to ideal cut. Secondly, we really feel that they would be interested in the pacifist nature of our product. That mentality is really a part of the national psyche of Japan; they abhor war and try to avoid it. What better place to sell our goods?”

