

Economic dimensions of conflict

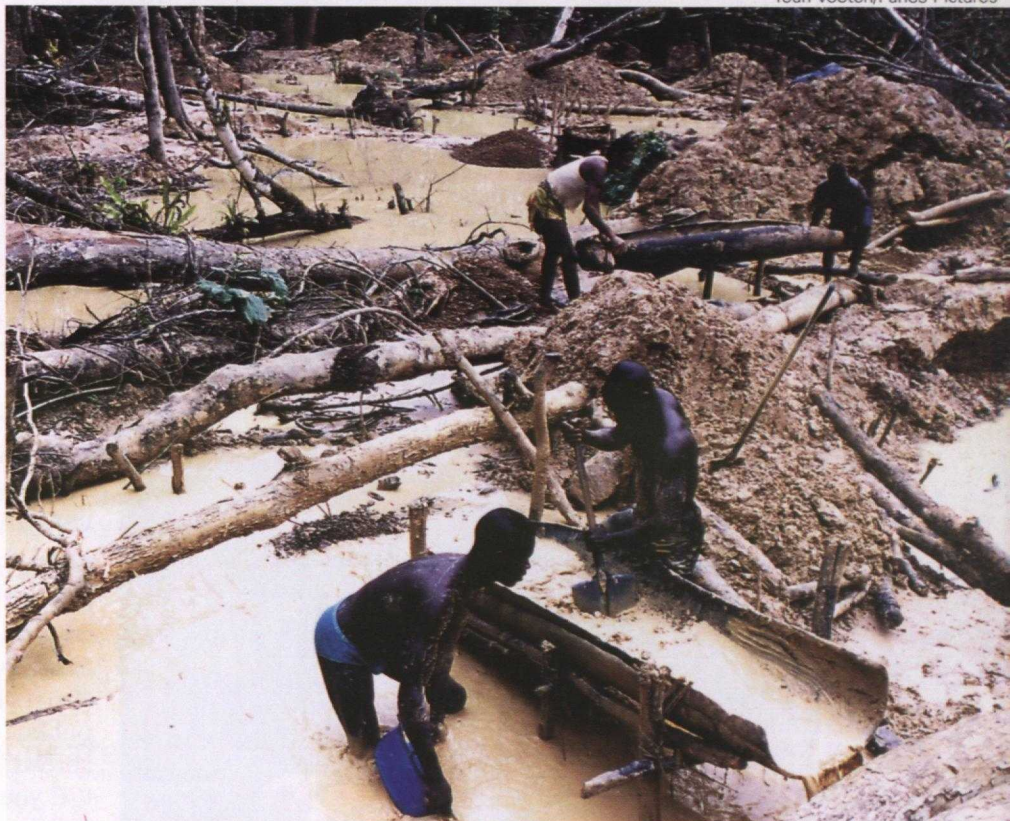
■ Profit rather than political power is a growing motivation for violence in many contemporary armed conflicts. Wars create an environment in which some armed groups and other non-state actors seek to accumulate wealth, frequently through the exploitation of high value resources including diamonds, tropical timber, narcotics and even humanitarian aid. Given these economic incentives, factions often oppose peace negotiations and prolong wars, with tragic implications for civilian populations.

■ Along with other like-minded governments, Canada is committed to addressing the economic dimensions of armed conflict. At the United Nations, particularly during its recent term on the Security Council, Canada provided leadership to expose the link between diamonds and war. Our contributions included chairing the UN Security Council committee responsible for implementing sanctions against the Angolan rebel movement UNITA, which targeted illicit diamonds and other sources of financial support for its military effort. Canada is also an active participant in the Kimberley Process, established to create an international certification scheme to tighten controls over the trade in rough diamonds and to prevent “conflict diamonds” from finding access to legitimate markets. Canada’s legislation to implement the Kimberley Process was passed in December 2002. The linkage between armed conflict and the exploitation of natural resources was further addressed in the G8 Africa Action Plan agreed to in Kananaskis in 2002.

■ Canada will continue to work through the UN, the Kimberley Process and the G8 to break the link between diamonds and armed conflict. Diamonds are only one of many natural resources implicated in prolonging armed conflict. Consequently, broader international measures are needed to ensure systematic and effective responses to other war-related commodities and to the sophisticated financial networks through which they are laundered.

human security Conflict prevention

Teun Voeten/Panos Pictures



Sieving for diamonds in the mining village of Lolima B, Democratic Republic of Congo. (2000)

The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security

Canada’s Human Security Program supported a ground-breaking study entitled *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security* by Canadian non-governmental organization Partnership Africa Canada (PAC). The document broadened international concern about conflict diamonds beyond Angola, and was a significant impetus behind efforts to create an international diamond certification scheme. The study and more information about PAC’s advocacy efforts are available on-line at: www.partnershipafricacanada.org.