

# A Flawless Career Arc: Entrepreneur Goes From Fashion Model To Mining Magnate



(Image: Tigui Mining Group)

It's not every day one goes from being a fashion model to becoming a miner. But that's the fascinating career arc of Tiguidanke Camara, remembered in the fashion world simply as Tigui.

Camara is the daughter of Mohamed Mounir Camara, a former Governor and currently the political advisor to the Prime Minister of Guinea Conakry

She is Chairman and CEO of [Camara Gold and Mining Network](#) and the CEO of [Tigui Mining Group](#). Her companies acquire and develop mining assets with a focus on gold, diamond and associated minerals.

So how does a model go from elevated runways in the fashion capitals of the world to looking and panning for gold and diamonds 2 miles beneath the earth?

Camara began her work on the runaway when she was fourteen. A rare achievement at the time in her native Guinea. While still modeling she graduated early from high school and received her college degree in Business Management in Morocco.

Then in 1996 she hit the U.S to try her luck in entertainment. She was discovered in New York by **Hilory Beckford Management**, the company owned by the mother of supermodel **Tyson Beckford**.

Her whirlwind career included features in Essence Magazine, GQ, Marie Claire. She also featured in music videos, "Shaft 2000", alongside the late, great **Isaac Hayes**, "Notorious" the remix by **Sean Combs** and **Lil Kim** and "Let's Not Play The Game", by

Maxwell. She also featured in Reebok Commercials with **Allan Iverson**.

**Black Enterprise** caught up with Camara while she is sidelined in Abidjan, the economic capital of **Cote D'Ivoire**, waiting for the Ebola Outbreak to run its course. She is one of thousands of entrepreneurs forced to keep put their business on hold, a process costing them and West Africa millions every day.

Her company recently expanded, opening an office in Cote D'Ivoire.

She tells **BE**, “We opened our office in February and we are in negotiation to acquire some licenses in gold and diamond fields so this is now one of our bases.”

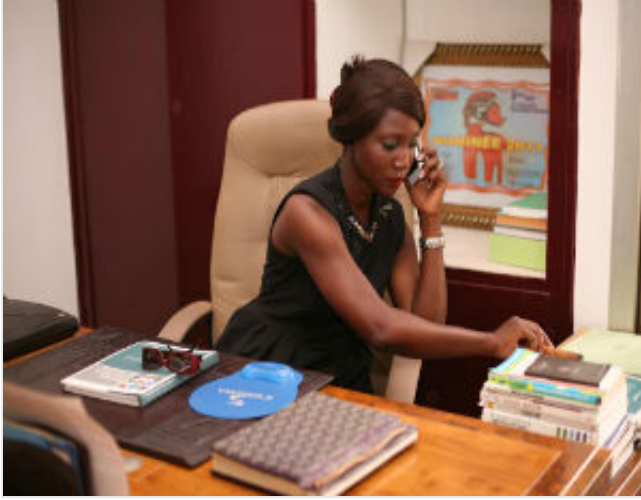
Cocoa is the main export of Cote D'Ivoire – but the nation also boasts a thriving mining sector. The United Nations had placed an embargo there to prevent the sale of Blood Diamonds but the embargo was lifted three months ago. Now many of the major mining companies are setting up shop.

We asked her how she went from modeling to mining.

“Being in the modeling field we get to meet so many people as we model clothing, jewelry fashion, etc. I made a lot of friends who were jewelers and they had companies in Africa. That' when I first got wind of the opportunities. I figured it might be a good idea for me to look into it. And I've always been aware that the mining sector is a major driver for development, because our African countries are very rich in mineral resources and the government decided to put in place development programs to improve the mining sector.”

She tells us one of the reasons she decided to bet it all on mining was because there were few women involved at the time.

“I opened my first company, Camara Diamond Gold trading network, in 2009. My second I started in 2012, Tigui Mining group which is a holding company. We also have advisory companies that link businesses in the U.S with businesses in Africa.”



*(Image: Tigui Mining Group)*

She says she was lucky because she had a solid support network when she wanted to get her firm off the ground. Her real challenge was money. It was tough getting the requisite funds required to finance a mine.

“I started my business during a period when the economy was shaky. The global Recession. People were a lot more skeptical about putting money into businesses. As for the banks most

of them just looked the other way. In the end we had to use our own money.”

It paid off. Today her business is expanding. She’s currently in negotiation to acquire more mining permits in Ivory Coast. In addition to the licenses in Guinea. But it’s tough to overemphasize the effect of Ebola on the emerging market.

Consider this, according to the World Bank, unless the epidemic is quickly contained The outbreak of Ebola could cost the West African economy **\$32.6bn by the end of 2015**.

“For now everything is on standby until the situation clears. Its impacting our trade a great deal because the zone where the first outbreak hit is the area where I have my activities. It’s been rough. We are actually near the the zone where the villagers killed about eight or nine people because they didn’t want the government or anyone coming there, because of suspicions they were there to infect them.

She also tells us Ivory Coast temporarily closed its borders to Liberia and other hard hit countries.

“For the last couple months the government has closed up all the borders, no planes coming in and out from the affected countries and all the land borders are also closed. It was a bit of a relief when two weeks ago the government said they will begin to open borders. Especially the airlines which can start flying into and out of the affected

countries. These include Nigeria, Guinea and Sierra Leone. If that is the case that will be really good.”

As a dual citizen of the world, Camara considers herself African American. And she believes its time for Entrepreneurs of color to seriously consider doing business in Africa.

“We share a continent. This is our home. They just need to take the initiative and be courageous.”

She believes Real Estate, the Mining sector, Agriculture and Energy are the most promising markets for those who wish to unleash their entrepreneurial spirit.

“These are the most lucrative fields and the governments are always willing to work with the right kinds of investors – especially the ones bringing in technology or simple know-how.