

THE  
**COLOURED GEMSTONES  
WORKING GROUP**

**Top gemstone and jewellery brands publish ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ a series of expert papers to demystify and share knowledge on the coloured gemstone industry**

**October 7, 2021.** *World-leading jewellery makers Chopard, Kering, LVMH, Richemont, Swarovski and Tiffany & Co. (now part of the LVMH Group) and coloured gemstone mining companies Gemfields and Muzo (together, the Coloured Gemstones Working Group or CGWG) have launched ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’, a series of expert papers researched and written by TDi Sustainability, to shed light on the coloured gemstones industry.*

The paper series ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ was launched today by the CGWG, a group uniting world-leading jewellery makers and coloured gemstone mining companies around shared sustainability commitments, to shed light on the coloured gemstones industry.

The publication of this paper series follows the launch, earlier this year, of the Gemstones and Jewellery Community Platform, a unique, digital learning and capability building initiative to catalyse positive change for the sector, from within. The Platform is freely available to all companies who are part of the gemstone and jewellery industry, from mining through to cutting and polishing, trading, and retailing.

For many centuries, gemstones have been sought out, bought, sold, coveted, treasured, and used as pivotal expressions of cultural and individual identity. They reach their apogee of value as brilliantly cut and polished pieces, wrought together with precious metals and other fine materials, sustaining the livelihoods of millions of workers and craftspeople around the world along their path.

The paper series ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ traces the journey of coloured gemstones from formation and discovery through to mining and recovery, trading, cutting and polishing, and retail, and examining how the coloured gemstone sector is governed. Each paper shows what gemstones mean to the people involved in their extraction and production, and the impacts, for miners, workers, their communities, and their natural environment. By painting a clear picture of the realities of coloured gemstones, the papers point the way forward for effective, pragmatic responsible sourcing.

The first paper in this series, “Hands that Dig, Hands that Feed: Lives Shaped by Coloured Gemstone Mining” was published today. Historically dominated by small scale ‘artisanal’ mining, using basic tools and with little infrastructure, gemstone mining is changing as bigger and more modern players enter the sector. That’s not a change that suits everyone. The paper explores this trend and addresses the benefits and drawbacks of different types of mining and what these mean for the communities who rely on this ancient activity.

The following papers will be published over the course of the next three months. They will cover subsequent stages in the supply chain, and the final paper will examine governance in the sector. The goal of this paper series is to equip the reader with relevant knowledge on an industry that is often seen as mysterious, reveal its important role in livelihoods the world over, and to enable joint action to enhance the sector’s social and environmental performance where needed.

THE  
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The papers present the varying perspectives of different groups within the sector, including miners, traders, retailers, and many other stakeholders. It points towards opportunities for improvement in the sector where they exist, while recognising the existing systems that work well. While the articles highlight the emergent expectation for greater transparency and corporate accountability, they also remind us of the need to respect the traditions and crafts of coloured gemstone mining and the relationships that have been built over hundreds of years.

Dr Assheton Carter of TDi Sustainability and co-author of the series comments, *“The coloured gemstones sector is not only fascinating, but also complex. As expectations on sustainability, responsible sourcing, and transparency increase, it is important to understand how the coloured gemstones sector works from the mine through to the high street. The paper series ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ aims to identify and educate industry players on how to address the challenges they face, and also the opportunities for positive change. There are many preconceptions on how the gemstones supply chain operates. The aim of these papers is to give the industry clarity on this. A better understanding of the reality of the situation is the first step towards truly responsible sourcing.”*

The papers are researched and written by TDi Sustainability, commissioned by and in consultation with the CGWG and with significant contributions from international experts, industry practitioners and members of society, all of whom generously shared their time and perspectives.

Gemstones may change hands dozens of times before reaching an end customer – their supply chains are extremely complex. They’re also highly informal, typically, and transactions are largely based on trust between trading parties. As such, traceability for coloured gemstones is uniquely challenging. But, with a sound understanding of the upsides and downsides at each stage of the supply chain, and of the opportunities and challenges for responsible sourcing that coloured gemstones present, everyone who is involved in the sector can help it to evolve. For this reason, we are proud of the launch of the ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ paper series, which will take us - and all brands willing to join us on our path - one step further along our ‘Journey to Sustainable Luxury,’ says Caroline Scheufele, Chopard Chopard Co-President and Artistic Director.

*“Gemfields is a leading advocate for improvements to the wider coloured gemstone and jewellery sector. Whether working with international non-profits and industry associations or with brands in the CGWG, we have been at the heart of actions to develop pioneering industry standards and initiatives. These initiatives have provided open-access tools used by the whole industry to improve supply-chain transparency and white papers to identify areas for future focus. We’re excited to launch the ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ series, which we hope will help us take steps towards distilling and demystifying what is still a complex and quite opaque industry so that the value of coloured gemstones may be better shared between those involved and the countries of origin,”* said Jack Cunningham, Sustainability, Policy & Risk Director, Gemfields.

*“The CGWG’s paper series ‘Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’ serve as a jumping-off point for research and debate, to engage and to inform. LVMH and its Maisons are committed to working together with the CGWG to highlight what the complex business of responsible sourcing means in the jewellery and gemstone supply chain and how the people, practices and process at each stage play their part,”* says H el ene Valade, Environment Development Group Director, LVMH.

THE  
**COLOURED GEMSTONES  
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*“At Muzo, we have always made social responsibility a cornerstone of the way we work. We are proud to have contributed our knowledge, expertise and experience to the development of the paper series “Ancient crafts, modern challenges”, an important piece of work that will shed light on one of the most complex but fascinating sectors and set the ground for meaningful conversations on how gemstones mining can be improved around the world. With the appropriate knowledge, technology and incentives, responsible coloured gemstone mining will not only mitigate but also add value to the social and environmental impacts on local communities,”* says Charles C. Burgess, President & CEO, The Muzo Companies Colombia.

To read the papers in the series Ancient Crafts, Modern Challenges’, please visit <https://gemstones-and-jewellery.com/research/>

**Notes to editors:**

Please see below the schedule of publication for the papers, which will be published on a monthly basis:

1. Hands that Dig, Hands that Feed: Lives Shaped by Coloured Gemstone Mining – published today, October 7, 2021. *Discover the first steps of the journey of coloured gemstones from geological formation and discovery through to mining and recovery, and insight into the potential for coloured gemstone mining to catalyse sustainable development.*
2. Glimmers in the Shadows: The Complex Web of Coloured Gemstone Trading – October 21, 2021. *Uncover the complex trading web that enables coloured gemstones to find their way to high street boutique, and the challenges of traceability, transparency and accountability in this multi-layered supply chain.*
3. Wheels of Fortune: The Industrious World of Coloured Gemstone Cutting and Polishing – November 4, 2021. *Learn about the transformation of a gemstone from rough stone to polished jewel, a process that employs hundreds of thousands of skilled men and women using techniques that haven't changed for centuries.*
4. A Storied Jewel: Responsible Sourcing and the Coloured Gemstone Retail Sector – November 18, 2021. *Demand is growing for greater clarity about how gemstones are valued and their attributes disclosed. How is and should the industry adapt to shifting expectations for product stewardship and accountability?*
5. Letting it Shine: Governance in Coloured Gemstone Supply Chains – December 9, 2021. *The coloured gemstone industry is an ecosystem as rich and diverse as a tropical rain forest, functioning through informal relationships established over many decades. How can expectations for standardisation, structure and systems be incorporated into this traditional sector?*

To sign up for a preview of each paper, prior to publication, please write to [contact@gemstones-and-jewellery.com](mailto:contact@gemstones-and-jewellery.com)

**About the Coloured Gemstone Working Group**

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The Coloured Gemstones Working Group (CGWG) is a unique alliance between the world's leading luxury jewellery brands and mining companies: Chopard, Gemfields, Kering, LVMH, The Muzo Companies, Richemont, Swarovski, and Tiffany & Co.

The CGWG aims to help businesses in the gemstones and jewellery supply chains to be more sustainable and make responsible sourcing part of the way in which they work. To this end, the CGWG has dedicated the resources of senior and specialist staff to work towards achieving a more accountable and transparent industry. The result is the collaborative development of robust and practical resources, guidance and tools, focused on the coloured gemstones supply chains and available to all members of the jewellery industry at large. These are accessible through the Gemstones and Jewellery Community Platform.

[www.gemstones-and-jewellery.com](http://www.gemstones-and-jewellery.com)

To read this paper series: <https://gemstones-and-jewellery.com/research/>

### **About TDI Sustainability**

TDI Sustainability is an international consulting firm working with companies in the luxury, electronics, automotive and energy industries along the entire value chain, from mine to market, to build responsible supply chains that work for people, business, and the planet. TDI services range from strategic consulting in the boardroom to impact projects on the ground. Through its sister organisation The Impact Facility, TDI works directly with artisanal and small-scale mining communities, to provide mining communities with access to the technical assistance, markets, capital, and equipment that enable the building of diverse local economies through viable and thriving small- and medium-sized businesses. The aim is for all communities endowed with mineral wealth is to have the means to grow a sustainable and just economy that is catalysed by – rather than relying on – mining.

[www.tdi-sustainability.com](http://www.tdi-sustainability.com)

[www.impactfacility.com](http://www.impactfacility.com)

### **Contact details:**

For press enquiries and to obtain further information on this paper series, please get in touch via [contact@gemstones-and-jewellery.com](mailto:contact@gemstones-and-jewellery.com)