

The
Better
Jewelry
Project

THE JEWELRY BUYER'S GUIDE:

How to Align Your Gold Purchases with Your Values

Have you seen claims that buying “recycled” gold jewelry is the best option for our planet? The reality isn’t so simple. In this guide, you will learn why jewelry made with gold from responsible artisanal and small-scale mines might be more aligned with your values.

**"empowering jewelry buyers to
be conscious consumers"**

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Dear Reader —

Do you want to know how to buy gold that has minimal negative social and environmental impact, and can even make a positive impact on the world? The Better Jewelry Project is here to provide the necessary information to make your own informed decision.

We want to empower **YOU** to make the decision that best fits your values. The information presented in this document illustrates why we consider artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) to be the best option to support social, environmental, and racial justice.

Your jewelry holds personal and sentimental value, yet our industry is built on a foundation of inherently unsustainable and imperialistic structures. Bearing the brunt of this damage are millions of marginalized global communities — especially Black, indigenous, and other people of color. Although this is our history, it doesn't have to be our legacy.

These days, many companies are presenting recycled gold as an “eco-friendly” solution to these problems when it is simply the status quo. Gold has always been reused and recycled. And yet, using recycled gold does not reduce gold mining and holds no benefit for gold-mining communities.

It might be hard to hear that buying recycled gold isn't the simple solution some companies portray it to be. But the encouraging news is that there are other impactful options for you to consider!

Our own approach to buying Better Gold is to support ASGM, rather than recycled or untraceable gold. In coming to this decision, we considered the plight of the small-scale gold miner, the important issue of mercury pollution, and other environmental impacts of mining.

Every purchase you make is an opportunity to make the world just that much better.

We sincerely thank you for delving deeper into this topic. The jewelry industry has a responsibility to do better. And with your help, we can!

Sincerely,

The Better Jewelry Project

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Some important terms to know

ASGM¹

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining conducted by individuals or small enterprises with limited capital investment and production.¹ Groups of 4-10 individuals are common. For small scale mining organizations or cooperatives, 30-300 people can be involved.² Individual countries' mining laws define what constitutes artisanal and small-scale mining based on volume of **ore** extracted. Artisanal mining often uses more rudimentary tools and techniques.

Mercury

A chemical element that can be used to process gold ore due to its unique property of binding with the gold particles in the extracted ore. It is a dangerous neurotoxin and heavily restricted substance, but still easily accessible and widely used in ASGM operations notwithstanding the environmental or health impacts.

Recycled

There is currently a lack of consensus on the definition of "recycled" as it applies to precious metals. Definitions include, "anything that is gold-bearing and has not come directly from a mine in its first gold life cycle" (London Bullion Market

Association) and "precious metals that have been previously refined" (Responsible Jewellery Council), which differ from the Federal Trade Commission's definition of "materials that have been recovered or otherwise diverted from the waste stream". Read on to learn more!

Responsible Artisanal Gold Mining

For the purposes of this document, we define "responsible" ASGM as operations that meet a certifiable standard and/or provide evidence based assurances of operating by internationally recognized standards or guidelines, including but not limited to [OECD](#) Due Diligence Guidance, [CRAFT](#) code, and [Minamata Convention](#).

Sustainability

The successful stewardship of the environment, culture, and economy. See full definition plus explanatory notes via the [Jewelry Glossary Project](#).

¹ United Nations, "Minamata Convention on Mercury," last modified 2023, accessed June 17, 2024, https://minamataconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/information_document/Minamata-Convention-booklet-Oct2023-EN.pdf.

² OECD, "OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas: Third Edition" (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016), accessed June 17, 2024, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252479-en>.

A Jewelry Buyer's Guide: How to Align Your Gold with Your Values

Every time you make a purchase, you're making a statement about what brands and values you support.

The decision to buy something as valuable as gold jewelry is especially empowering, as it offers an opportunity to directly help the global community.

As a well-meaning jewelry consumer, it may be confusing to sort through generalized product claims and vague marketing language.

This guide lays out facts about the gold jewelry industry and offers seven steps to help you make a purchasing decision that aligns with your values.



Understand the Worldwide Impact of Gold

Follow the [lifecycle](#)* of gold, learn where it comes from, and understand the scale of the industry.

With operations on almost every continent, gold mining employs hundreds of millions of people worldwide.² The journey of gold begins with extraction from the earth through activities like pit mining, dredging, or panning. The raw gold is then [refined](#) before export and sale on the global market.

The primary buyers of gold are financial institutions, investors, and the consumer goods sector - industries like jewelry and electronics, where the end customer is you.

In addition to consumer goods markets, gold is also closely tied to global financial markets. Because gold is considered a “safe haven” investment, at times of international tension, disruption, and violence, gold prices and trades tend to go up. The price of gold has skyrocketed in recent years ³, triggering a more aggressive hunt for gold.

Large-scale and/or irresponsible mining often leaves unusable land and toxic chemicals in its wake, displacing communities and extorting value from the source.⁴ Unregulated and [illegal mining](#)

often funds [conflict groups](#) and contributes to human rights abuses through things like corruption, illegitimate taxes, and forced labor.

The complex and opaque nature of the gold industry makes it hard to thoroughly evaluate the impact of gold mining and/or trace the exact origin of any specific gold piece, unless it's closely tracked from the start. Additionally, the ability to re-refine gold over and over can easily obscure any available origin information.

Due to this lack of transparency, some jewelry brands avoid the issue altogether, while others exploit it to evade accountability. Vague or misleading communication from brands, in turn, leaves consumers unaware of how their gold jewelry purchases are directly affecting the lives of others.

You might think that the solution to these problems is to avoid newly mined gold altogether. However, due to its inherently high financial value, gold will always be pursued and extracted. This means that consumers have an opportunity to make a positive impact by choosing to buy gold sourced through [responsible](#), [ethical](#) supply chains.

* see glossary at the end for any underlined terms

³ Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF), “Global Trends in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM): A Review of Key Numbers and Issues” (Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2017), accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/igf-asm-global-trends.pdf>.

⁴ World Gold Council, “Gold Prices,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.gold.org/goldhub/data/gold-prices>.

2

Compare the Three Main Ways Gold Comes to Market

All gold comes from the earth - it is extracted either via Large-Scale Gold Mining (LSGM) or Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM). After gold is extracted, it can also be recycled endlessly.

Large-Scale Gold Mining (LSGM)

Large-Scale Gold Mining (LSGM) produces about 80% of newly mined gold.⁵ The process of large-scale gold mining typically involves massive machinery and immense pits in the Earth. To give you an idea of scale, one of the largest open-pit gold mines in the world spans more than twice the area of Central Park, and is as deep as twice the height of the Eiffel Tower.⁶

LSGM destabilizes ecosystems and displaces huge amounts of earth. **A 2001 study found that LSGM methods displaced an average of 20 tons of earth to extract enough gold to**

produce a single ring.⁷ Numerous large-scale mining corporations have also been accused of grave human rights violations over the years. One example is presented in the case study on the next page.

Methods used by LSGM help explain the concept of the resource curse — the paradox that nations with an abundance of natural resources experience declining wealth and development rather than prosperity, due to exploitation of said resources.⁸

The majority of the gold that currently enters the market is the product of LSGM. Because of the scale of operations, LSGM has an outsized impact in perpetuating social injustice, environmental degradation, and global wealth inequality. Unless the brand can verify otherwise, it is most likely that the gold in your jewelry is the product of LSGM.

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⁵ Extrapolated from ASGM accounting for 20%, source: planetGOLD, "Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining 101," accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.planetgold.org/asgm-101>.

⁶ This fact is extrapolated from the measurements of Muruntau open-pit mine in Uzbekistan: 3.3km long x 2.5km wide x 600m deep, source: KUN.UZ, "Uzbekistan's Muruntau Named Largest Gold Mine by Production in the World," last modified March 9, 2021, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://kun.uz/en/news/2021/03/09/uzbekistans-muruntau-named-largest-gold-mine-by-production-in-the-world>.

⁷ Earthworks, "How the 20 Tons of Mine Waste per Gold Ring Figure Was Calculated," published April 25, 2013, accessed June 17, 2024, https://earthworks.org/publications/how_the_20_tons_of_mine_waste_per_gold_ring_figure_was_calculated/.

⁸ International Monetary Fund. African Dept., "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Selected Issues," IMF Country Report No. 19/286, published September 4, 2019, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2019/286/article-A002-en.xml>.

Case Study: human rights violations at a LSGM site in Tanzania

A recent report by the NGO, MiningWatch Canada, details [alleged] violations by Barrick Gold Corp against the people of Kuria village in Tanzania. The report recounts “mine police practices leading to high levels of death and injury” of locals near the North Mara, Tanzania gold mine owned by Barrick. Mine security also controls local roads so villagers are not free to travel to or from their own homes after 6pm. People are even forced out of their homes. “Barrick is now complicit in another involuntary eviction process for planned expansion of the North Mara mine that, based on MiningWatch’s findings, is not only unfair and of

questionable legality, but also inhumane and violent.”⁹ With this expansion of Barrick’s operations, the traditional ways of life of the Kuria people (traditionally a farming and pastoral community) have been impacted: “As the North Mara mine’s pits, its waste rock dumps, tailings impoundment and infrastructure have continued to expand onto the land of nearby Kuria villagers, these villagers have increasingly struggled to access sufficient land for their food security and for grazing their cattle. They have also lost income from small-scale mining of the near-surface gold deposits on their lands now covered by the mine.”¹⁰

Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM)

About 90% of those employed in gold mining worldwide are involved in **ASGM**, but all this labor produces just 20% of newly-mined gold.¹¹ This type of mining largely takes place in extremely remote areas of the **Global South**, sometimes **informally or illegally**.¹² These unique factors present a great opportunity to focus on empowering responsible ASGM sources as a direct step towards social justice in the jewelry industry.

ASGM takes place in 80 countries, across every continent except Antarctica¹³, and takes many forms including individuals, small groups, and organized cooperatives. Techniques may be as simple as digging with shovels or can involve mechanized equipment.

Great diversity exists in the ASGM landscape. Artisanal and small-scale gold miners are often operating in a **hand-to-mouth economy**, selling what they earn at the end of the day to put food on the table. Many are trapped in a kind of **economic slavery**, mining for their own survival — and the survival of their families.

Unfortunately, ASGM frequently involves the use of mercury. Mercury has historically been used in mining because it binds easily with particles of gold. Once these two elements bind together, the gold is extracted by burning off the mercury. When mercury is burned off it flows into our atmosphere as **methylmercury**. ASGM is currently the world’s number one source of mercury pollution.

9 MiningWatch Canada, “He was murdered”: Violence against Kuria High after Barrick Takeover of Mine,” published October 2022, 13, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://miningwatch.ca/sites/default/files/northmaramwcreport-ct112022.pdf>.

10 Ibid., 4.

11 Alliance for Responsible Mining, “Why Fairmined,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://fairmined.org/why-fairmined/>.

12 Due to the informal or illegal nature of these practices, precise data is difficult to come by.

13 planetGOLD, “Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining 101,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.planetgold.org/asgm-101>.

Compare the Three Main Ways Gold Comes to Market

Due to a lack of understanding about mercury's neurotoxicity, or lack of access to alternative methods, it is frequently handled by hand — even by pregnant women and children, who are particularly vulnerable to its effects. Furthermore, mercury is often improperly stored and disposed of, contaminating human and animal habitats, water sources, and food supplies.

Beyond mercury's immediate safety hazard to vulnerable communities, the use of this toxic substance also casts a negative light on ASGM.

While the harsh realities of ASGM lead some to dismiss this as a responsible source of gold, the truth is that nothing will change if we continue to ignore the plight of these impoverished communities. In fact, the only way to emerge from such damaging practices is to engage with mining communities and support their improvement.

Issues surrounding ASGM are truly intersectional, encompassing humanitarian, environmental, and racial justice concerns. The goal is to lift up responsible artisanal and small-scale gold miners so that they can advocate for themselves, improve the systems they operate in, and work to eliminate mercury use.



*Two miners working at Fairmined certified Chede mine in Colombia.
Credit: Will Alderfer*



Groups of miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo carving mine shafts into the side of a hill.
Credit: Kyle Bi



*A miner in Tanzania mixes gold dust, mercury, and water by hand.
Credit: Kyle Bi*

Case Study: A closer look at one ASGM initiative, USAID Zahabu Safi (Clean Gold) Project

One example of a recent ASGM project is the USAID-funded project known as Zahabu Safi, which means “clean gold” in Swahili. This project partnered with several ASGM sites in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The DRC is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of mineral wealth, but one of the poorest by GDP per capita. This contrast is a perfect illustration of the resource curse mentioned earlier.

At one site that the USAID Zahabu Safi (Clean Gold) Project partnered with, for example, several hundred miners

extracted roughly \$11 million in gold over an 18-month period. Yet they and their families have been living without access to essential human needs such as clean drinking water — let alone basic amenities like electricity or plumbing.



Credit: Kyle Bi

Initiatives such as this, which focus on creating viable market linkages between artisanal miners and gold buyers, have the potential to assist Congolese miners to

capture and benefit from the natural resources of their land — breaking the cycle through which this wealth is currently being extracted to the West. In addition, miners may be

Recycled Gold

Recycled gold is often touted as the “ethical,” “responsible,” or “green” solution to all gold sourcing concerns. The truth is, gold has always been reused and recycled. It is never intentionally thrown away. Jewelers take steps to trap, contain, recycle, and [reprocess](#) pieces as small as gold flakes and dust. Industrial scrap gold gathered during jewelry production is one category that is reprocessed. Other examples of sources for reprocessed gold are so-called “deadstock” (unsold merchandise from retail jewelers), consumers’ previously-owned jewelry and coins, and [bullion](#).

Notably, some of the definitions created by jewelry organizations merely require that gold has been refined once or doesn’t come directly from a mine to be considered recycled. This means that manufacturers can label gold as “recycled” just because it has passed through more than one refiner, even if it has never been made into a product before. This setup also makes it easy for illegally mined or illicit gold to enter the mix and be labeled as recycled. At some mines, gold that is intended to be covertly integrated into the supply chain is even cast into

large, crude jewelry pieces on site so that it can be sold without documentation or scrutiny. Once this gold enters the refining process it has been effectively laundered and is impossible to trace.

The gold yielded from all of these sources is still termed “recycled gold.” Certifications do exist that specify the percentage of pre- and [post-consumer](#) sources of gold. These certifications can give you some confidence about the journey of your gold.

However, certifications for post-consumer content or tracking the chain of custody for the source material are voluntary, so metal refiners may not necessarily track where the source gold they refine comes from.

Recycled gold has been held up as a benchmark of responsible sourcing, but in the next section you’ll learn why this isn’t a simple catchall solution.



3

Consider the Shortcomings of Recycled Gold

Though it may seem counterintuitive, there is no evidence to show that reusing or recycling gold has any effect on the demand for newly mined gold.

The narrative around recycled gold implies that recycling leads to positive environmental impact. For example, with a material like paper, recycling rather than throwing away leads to positive environmental impact by reducing the need to source new raw material from trees.

Gold, however, has no waste stream. This means that recycling gold doesn't actually offset the demand for newly mined gold.¹⁴ In fact, in the last 10 years, mining has increased by more than 20%, even as recycled gold became the norm in responsible sourcing.¹⁵ Clearly, increasing the use of recycled gold does not decrease mining activities.

Gold is also closely tied to our financial markets; there are over 84,000 tonnes of gold physically held in banks and as personal investment products

worldwide.¹⁶ As long as gold remains a currency hedge and an investment product, mining will continue no matter how much recycled gold is

used by the jewelry and electronics industries.

Since gold will always be relentlessly pursued, purchasing recycled gold takes a "hands-off" approach to the existing problems of gold mining. Recycling gold doesn't lessen overall gold mining activity and it doesn't address the existing problems.

"The subliminal message of environmental responsibility transmitted by recycled gold is a complete decoy since it neither slows down nor avoids the extraction."
— Patrick Schein, Founding President at Gold by Gold

Without empowering responsible artisanal and small-scale gold mining operations, the jewelry industry is unable to move away from damaging practices like mercury usage, human rights abuses, and environmental degradation.

So if you're looking to make a positive impact for People and Planet with your gold purchase, recycled gold is not a comprehensive solution. It is simply the status quo.

¹⁴ Rob Bates, "Is Recycled Gold an Example of Eco-Theater?" JCK, published July 17, 2018, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.jckonline.com/editorial-article/recycled-gold-eco-theater/>.

¹⁵ John Mulligan, "Gold Mining, Climate Change, and Africa's Transition," Brookings, published August 30, 2023, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/gold-mining-climate-change-and-africas-transition/>.

¹⁶ World Gold Council, "How Much Gold," accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.gold.org/goldhub/data/how-much-gold>.

4

Understand Why the Jewelry Industry Promotes “Recycled” Gold

The jewelry industry has centered around recycled gold as an ethical option. Here are the simple reasons why:

- Recycled material is easy to market to the public as “ethical.”
- Recycled gold has lower premiums than ASM gold.
- Jewelers “shifting” their supply to recycled gold involves minimal effort, because it is more readily available.
- Focusing on recycled gold requires less oversight and due diligence than purchasing from artisanal mining communities.

motivations behind some of the claims of their suppliers. This leaves consumers with the difficult task of identifying and supporting jewelry companies who actually make an impact by sourcing responsibly mined gold.

Sourcing materials for the jewelry industry can be exceedingly difficult, and transparency may even be impossible in certain areas. The industry is only beginning to evolve its thinking, and these complex issues don’t have easy or perfect solutions. Consumers can play an important role in shifting away from recycled gold by demanding responsibly mined gold instead.

Metals recycling is a standard and necessary practice in the jewelry industry. But because recycled gold does not solve existing issues in the jewelry industry, claiming that using recycled gold always has a positive environmental impact is [greenwashing](#).

Greenwashing is ultimately harmful to People and Planet. It is also harmful to consumers who want to make decisions with sustainability in mind.

That’s why we’re here!

Misleading narratives about the impact of using recycled gold lead to more and more jewelers promoting it as a responsible choice, regardless of whether they have personally investigated these claims. Some small business owners who genuinely do want to source their materials ethically may not be aware of the full story or

Ways to Outsmart Greenwashing:

- Ask questions! Especially when you see terms like *clean*, *sustainable*, *ethical*, *recycled*, and *conflict free*.
- Ask for certifications or other ways to verify claims.
- Make sure you’re using the same definition of a term as whomever you’re speaking to. (“Sustainable” is a great example of this! Some folks may only be thinking about sustainability in relation to the environment, but a full picture of sustainability also encompasses social and economic issues.)

Certified ASGM sources include [Fairtrade Gold](#) and [Fairmined Gold](#), as well as a few other small programs newly coming online. Jewelers working with one of these options will no doubt proudly make you aware of this, and share any info you request.

Certifications are great—when they’re available. In the event that there are none, ask questions until you are satisfied. Remember: As an

empowered consumer, you always have a choice regarding what you support with your money.

To move the industry toward equitable sourcing, jewelers, jewelry suppliers, and YOU must work together to understand where our gold comes from and the impact it has on People and Planet.

Example questions to ask your jeweler:

- Do you know where this gold came from? Can you trace your gold to a specific mine, country, or refiner with certifications?
- What, specifically, makes this ethical? And how do you define ethical?
- Are the clasps, chain, and settings all Fairmined/Fairtrade or just the pendant?
- What does sustainability mean to you? Are you looking at environmental considerations only or a holistic definition of sustainability?
- Do you have plans to work toward more ethical practices in a specific area? If so, what steps are you taking?

5

Be willing to share in the cost

As a consumer, do you consider whether you are paying the true cost for your jewelry, or whether part of that cost is being absorbed at the expense of others?

In order to support fair wages, social and economic development, and environmental protection, the price of certified ASGM is higher than conventionally mined gold. This higher price represents the true cost of the gold, with supplier communities reaping the benefits they deserve.

Historically, the most marginalized populations absorb the human and environmental costs associated with exploitation and resource extraction.

This inequitable system allows jewelry consumers to enjoy the benefits of falsely low prices for materials.

The premium for responsible ASGM helps to distribute those costs more equitably. Your willingness to pay the true cost for jewelry means a direct improvement in the lives of individuals and communities where gold is sourced.

**“Real mining wealth comes when we can know that we are part of a sustainable and responsible economy.”
— Rolberto Alveres, President of La Fortaleza association**

Better Without Mercury

One example of a mining community impact project is the Better Without Mercury initiative. Rolberto Alvares, the general assistant at the Gualconda mine and the President of La Fortaleza association, has always had his sights set on improving the processes used at the small-scale gold mine, in the Nariño Department of Colombia.

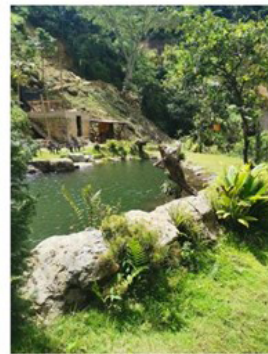
Rolberto sees the stewardship of the environment and community nearby as the association's responsibility. He and La Fortaleza association are committed to the monumental task of mitigating the negative environmental impacts the mine had over the years, as well as regenerating the ecosystem.

Processing the ore using mercury was a standard practice that had been in place since the mine opened. With the

assistance of Alliance for Responsible Mining and grassroots fundraising, the Gualconda mine was finally able to cut out the use of mercury in processing their gold ore.



before



after

Better Without Mercury - Gold Mine Site Restoration, Gualconda Mine, Colombia
Credit: Rolberto Alvarez

In phase one of fundraising, Better Without Mercury supported La Fortaleza to construct an area for safe **tailings** storage, conduct the removal of mercury contaminated soil in a safe manner, and begin reforestation. Further support will allow them

to help the ecosystem recover fully and construct educational facilities and ecological trails for the local community.

These initiatives by groups like Better Without Mercury are an example of how consumers and the public can directly support healthier mining communities by choosing to purchase responsibly sourced artisanal gold.

6

Embrace the journey - it won't be perfect

We must understand that we live in a complex world, and the ideal is not possible in every situation.

Growing pains inevitably accompany growth. There are no perfect answers to these complicated questions, and the industry has a long road ahead. As we move forward together, there will be opportunities for continual improvement.

When it comes to choosing a jeweler, look for transparency and honesty. Companies that are genuinely working to better the industry will be honest about their current limitations and will be glad to share their accomplishments. By asking questions and demanding better answers, you have the power to push jewelers to make better choices for our planet and its people.

An easy way to begin shopping for more responsible gold is to focus on one or more of the impact areas you value most - whether that's community development, labor rights, or reduction of toxic mercury. Then, look for jewelers who share and work specifically toward your common goals.



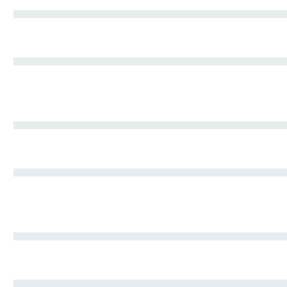
Support brands and groups doing good work

Use your dollars to vote for organizations and brands that support the development of responsible ASGM.

Every day, you make decisions about where to spend your money. Picking and choosing which businesses to support — and which not to — ultimately shapes our future.

And having read this far into this document, you — yes, YOU — are now an empowered gold-buying consumer! You have the knowledge and ability to decide which gold supply chain you wish to see in your future world.

We encourage you to take full advantage of this empowerment. The information you've learned here can empower you to make purchasing decisions that help support social, environmental, and racial justice. With each jewelry purchase, you help raise the bar for the industry. You may not think one ring makes any difference, but all movements start small.



Resources

For Further Reading:

[Better Without Mercury](#)

[Jewelry Glossary Project](#)

[Fairmined](#)

[Fairtrade](#)

[Mercury Free Mining \(MFM\)](#)

[USAID's Zahabu Safi \(Clean Gold\) Project](#)

Acknowledgments

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Glossary

ASGM

Artisanal and Small-Scale gold mining conducted by individuals or small enterprises with limited capital investment and production.¹⁷ Groups of 4-10 individuals are common. For small scale mining organizations or cooperatives, 30-300 people can be involved.¹⁸ Individual countries' mining laws define what constitutes Artisanal and Small-scale Mining based on volume of ore extracted. Artisanal mining often uses more rudimentary tools and techniques.

Bullion

Precious metals of high purity (99.5-99.9%) in the form of bars, coins, or ingots used primarily for investment purposes.

Conflict Groups

Refers to groups engaged in conflicts between people and organizations in different nation-states, as well as within one country where the group is fighting for independence or increased social, political, or economic power.¹⁹

CRAFT Code

The Code of Risk-mitigation for ASM: engaging in Formal Trade. CRAFT is an open-source standard.

It enables ASM gold producers to access formal markets by proactively facilitating due diligence of their supply chains conforming with the OECD Guidance at the earliest possible stage of their development.²⁰

Economic slavery

When economic power becomes stratified until poverty forces an increasing proportion of the population into a system whose purpose is primarily productive exploitation, and which is ultimately codified in law along with other economic and authority relationships.²¹

Ethical

Guided by principles that facilitate environmental and human well-being and avoid practices that do harm.²²

Fairmined Gold

A label applied to gold and silver that is sourced exclusively from artisanal and small-scale mining organizations that meet the requirements of the Fairmined Standard written by the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM). Learn more at the link in the resources section.

¹⁷ United Nations, "Minamata Convention on Mercury."

¹⁸ OECD, "OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals," 2016.

¹⁹ Cate Malek, "International Conflict," Beyond Intractability, last updated May 2013 by Heidi Burgess, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.beyondintractability.org/coreknowledge/international-conflict>.

²⁰ Alliance for Responsible Mining, "CRAFT Code Version 2.0," published October 2020, accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.responsiblemines.org/en/2020/10/craft_v2-0/.

²¹ Edgar Bowden, "Three Stages in the Evolution of Slavery in Precivilized Societies," Behavior Science Notes 8, no. 2 (1973): 111-121, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1177/106939717300800201>.

²² Jewelry Glossary Project, "Ethical," accessed June 17, 2024, <https://jewelryglossaryproject.com/ethical/>.

²³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/life%20cycle>

Fairtrade Gold

A label applied to products that are third-party certified against standards created by FLOcert (Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International), the certification body of Fairtrade International. As of this writing, gold and silver are the only certified Fairtrade jewelry-related products. Learn more at the link in the resources section.

Global South

“Has traditionally been used within intergovernmental development organizations... to refer to economically disadvantaged nation-states and as a post–Cold War alternative to ‘Third World.’ However, within a variety of fields, and often within literary and cultural studies, the Global South has been employed in a postnational sense to address spaces and peoples negatively impacted by contemporary capitalist globalization.”²³

Greenwashing

The act or practice of making a product, policy, activity, etc. appear to be more environmentally friendly or less environmentally damaging than it really is.²⁴

Hand-to-mouth

Having or providing nothing to spare beyond basic necessities.²⁵

Illegal Mining

Refers to any prospecting or mining operations undertaken by any person in any area without holding any mineral concession, permit or any other permission granted or permitted under

these rules or without any lawful authority, as the case may be.²⁶

Informal Mining

Refers to operations that do not have the requisite licenses and permits required by law, but do have a social license to operate.²⁷

Lifecycle

A series of stages through which something (such as an individual, culture, or manufactured product) passes during its lifetime.²⁸

LSGM

“LSM is usually done by companies with high amounts of capital, technical, and legal support. It is often a highly mechanized process, unlike artisanal mining which is largely reliant on human labor, and a single operation can cover a large area of land. There is not a standardized definition of large-scale or industrial-scale mining. Referring to mining laws of specific countries is useful for country-specific sourcing.”²⁹

Mercury

A chemical element that can be used to process gold ore due to its unique property of binding with the gold particles in the extracted ore. It is a dangerous neurotoxin and heavily restricted substance, but still easily accessible and widely used in ASGM operations notwithstanding the environmental or health impacts.

23 Anne Garland Mahler, “Global South,” Oxford Bibliographies, last modified October 25, 2017, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0055.xml?rkey=eMzKAW&result=16>.

24 Merriam-Webster, s.v. “greenwashing,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/greenwashing>.

25 Merriam-Webster, s.v. “hand-to-mouth,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hand-to-mouth>.

26 Law Insider, s.v. “illegal mining,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/illegal-mining>.

27 International Institute for Sustainable Development, “Six Key Factors in Formalizing Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining,” published January 22, 2018, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/six-key-factors-formalizing-artisanal-and-small-scale-mining>.

28 Merriam-Webster, s.v. “life cycle,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/life%20cycle>.

29 Amazon Aid Foundation, “Glossary,” Jeweler Toolkit, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://amazonaid.org/jeweler-toolkit/glossary/>.

Methylmercury

Refers to any of various toxic compounds of mercury containing the complex $\text{CH}_3\text{Hg}-$ that often occur as pollutants which accumulate in living organisms (such as fish) especially in higher levels of a food chain.³⁰

Minamata Convention on Mercury

An international treaty. The Minamata Convention on Mercury is the most recent global agreement on environment and health, adopted in 2013. It is named after the bay in Japan where, in the mid-20th century, mercury-tainted industrial wastewater poisoned thousands of people, leading to severe health damage that became known as the “Minamata disease.”³¹

OECD

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an intergovernmental organization comprising 38 countries focused on economic development and world trade.

Ore

A naturally occurring mineral containing a valuable constituent (such as metal) for which it is mined and worked.³²

Post-Consumer

Having been discarded by a consumer or having been used and recycled for reuse in another consumer product.³³

Reprocessed

Gold produced from any product containing

more than 2% of gold in weight with the purpose of changing its state (e.g., bullion melted to create jewelry, jewelry melted to become a bar being sent to a refinery, unsold or used or broken jewelry being melted to create new jewelry or a different type of product, sputtering targets, manufacturing scraps, ...).³⁴

Refining

The process of extracting gold metal from its ores, which are mined from the earth.³⁵

Resource Curse

The apparent paradox that an abundance of a natural resource is associated with declining national standards of living rather than prosperity.³⁶

Responsible Artisanal Gold Mining

For the purposes of this document, we define “responsible” ASGM as operations that meet a certifiable standard and/or provide evidence based assurances of operating by internationally recognized standards or guidelines, including but not limited to [OECD Due Diligence Guidance](#), [CRAFT code](#), and [Minamata Convention](#).

Sustainability

The successful stewardship of the environment, culture, and economy. See full definition plus explanatory notes via the Jewelry Glossary Project.³⁷

Tailings

Tailings are the waste materials left after the target mineral is extracted from ore. They consist of: Crushed rock; water; trace quantities of metals such as copper, mercury, cadmium, zinc, etc.; additives used in processing, such as petroleum byproducts,

30 Merriam-Webster, s.v. “methylmercury,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/methylmercury>.

31 United Nations, “Minamata Convention on Mercury.”

32 Merriam-Webster, s.v. “ore,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ore>.

33 Merriam-Webster, s.v. “postconsumer,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/postconsumer>.

34 Precious Metals Impact Forum, “Projects,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://pmimpactforum.com/projects/>.

35 World Gold Council (India) Private Limited, “How Is Gold Refined?” My Gold Guide, published May 15, 2018, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.mygoldguide.in/how-gold-refined>.

36 Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, “Resource Curse,” in *A Dictionary of Geology and Earth Sciences*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1574>.

37 Jewelry Glossary Project, “Sustainability,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://jewelryglossaryproject.com/sustainable-sustainability/>.

38 Earthworks, “Tailings,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://earthworks.org/issues/tailings/>.



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