

“A Diamond’s Origins Are Forever”—Tiffany & Co. Announce Diamond Provenance Certification Program

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Tiffany & Company announced last week that it would become the world’s first jewelry company to share with its consumers [information about the country of origin of each diamond they sell](#). This is the first in a step of transparency measures that the company is undertaking. By 2020, Tiffany hopes to provide its customers with information about where each diamond was cut, polished, and set; and in the future it aspires to disclose to its customers details of where each diamond was sourced, the artisans who shaped it, and the jewelers who set it.

These measures are a big step forward for supply chain transparency and accountability not just in the diamond industry, but for any industry. While Tiffany and other major international jewelry brands have guaranteed consumers that their diamonds are [ethically sourced](#), more and more consumers are interested in ensuring that their purchases are not associated with forced labor, child labor, armed conflict, or wide-scale environmental degradation—among other ills.

Ensuring an ethical supply chain is particularly challenging with diamonds because they change hands many times during the production process. In 2000, several diamond-producing countries established the [Kimberley Process Certification Scheme \(“KPCS”\)](#) to prevent the sale of “blood diamonds” that were fueling violent conflicts throughout sub-Saharan Africa—most notably civil wars in Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. KPCS member-countries agree to meet minimum standards to certify that their diamonds are conflict-free, including national legislation, export and import controls, and committing to transparency.

While the KPCS was an important first step, the diamond industry is still far from conflict-free. According to reports, there is still significant violence related to diamond mining, most notably in Zimbabwe, where in 2008 the country’s army violently took over the [Marange diamond field](#), resulting in over 100 deaths. While efforts like the KPCS have been important in cleaning up the diamond trade, efforts like the one Tiffany is planning to undertake address not only the shortcomings of the KPCS, but the heightened expectations of customers in today’s marketplace regarding the ethical sourcing of the products they buy.

As more and more consumers think about how something they are buying came to be in the first place, ensuring ethical sourcing will be a business strategy that will yield increasing returns over time for the jewelry and other industries.

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