

New Initiative Tackles Colored-Gemstone Traceability



The American Gem Trade Association (AGTA) has unveiled a new project that aims to improve transparency and traceability, ethics, sustainability, and human rights with regard to colored gemstones mined in Africa.

The project, named the “Transparent and Traceable Gemstone Supply Chains Initiative,” will examine colored-gemstone supply chains in Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. AGTA partnered with the Colorado School of Mines (Mines) on the initiative.

“AGTA and Mines recognize that guidelines developed for responsible sourcing of diamonds and precious metals do not fit the colored-gemstone supply chain,” John Ford, CEO of AGTA, said in a statement last week. “Both AGTA and Mines share the common goal of improving the transparency and traceability within the international mining community and desire to identify and cement best practices at sites worldwide.”

AGTA plans to expand this program to the South American and Asian supply chains, Ford added.

Nicole Smith, assistant professor of mining engineering at Mines, and PhD student Jenna White will lead the research effort. Research preparation will take place through March followed by site visits to Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Nigeria and Sri Lanka until November, AGTA said. The supervisors will examine several types of mining operations of various sizes in different environmental and social contexts, analyzing colored gemstones at each location. A report is expected in the spring of 2024.

“Consumers want transparency when it comes to the sourcing of all sorts of goods, and colored gemstones are no different,” Smith said. “We’re excited ... to examine some of the best practices along colored-gemstone supply chains and how consumers can be sure the stones they’re purchasing are produced in an ethical way.”

The partnership was made public following the annual AGTA GemFair show in Tucson and amid AGTA’s plans to be involved in the public comment process the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has launched for its “Green Guides,” which govern eco-friendly advertising claims and terminology.

Image: (From left) Sebnem Duzgun, Nicole Smith, John W. Ford Sr., Kimberly Collins and Jenna White.