

Kyrgyzstan, Mailuu-Suu: Filters improve safety of water contaminated by radionuclides while children create an education campaign

#

Long defunct uranium mining operations have left a dangerous legacy in the town of Mailuu-Suu; one of many similar communities across the region. Heavy metals and radionuclides from 23 nearby tailing dumps have migrated into the town's crumbling water system. Immune system disorders have been found in nearly one in five adolescents. A project to install water filters in schools and kindergartens; measure radiation levels in houses including where needed installation of radiation shields and in very rare cases resettlement of inhabitants; undertake health investigation of risk groups, mainly children and youth; and educate population on risks from the tailing sites, has helped to reduce residents' exposure to these hazardous substances.

Water samples from schools where filters were installed showed uranium content 48-65 percent lower than before. Blood tests taken from adolescents 40 days after the installation of the water filters have also shown marked improvement. However, the much-needed expansion of these efforts is currently stalled due to lack of funding.

#

Location	Mailuu-Suu, Kyrgyzstan
Pollutant	Uranium, other radionuclides, heavy metals
Source	Abandoned uranium mining tailings
Population affected	25,000
Health and environmental impacts	Depressed immune system in adolescents; higher occurrence of cancer than in the rest of the country.
Intervention	Installing water filters in schools and kindergartens; measurement of radiation levels in houses, where needed installation of radiation shields and in very rare cases resettlement of inhabitants; health investigation of risk groups, mainly children and youth; education and public outreach activities.
Outcome	Significant reduction in exposure to contamination in water and onsite



GAHP