

Building project management capacity for uranium legacy site remediation in Central Asia

The challenge...

The remediation of areas with a history of extensive uranium mining and milling operations is a global issue, present in many countries across the world. Previous activities, conducted through various assistance mechanisms (national programmes and international aid channels, including the IAEA technical cooperation programme), have aimed at the physical reclamation of the subject areas, and at enhancements to local regulatory regimes. Central Asia still exhibits a high amount of uranium tailings sites to remediate, some 200 in total. However, building uranium mine-and-mill remediation project management capacity as such has never been addressed.

The project...

With IAEA assistance, this regional project helped to fill a gap, consisting of a missing dedicated educational environment, by providing training sessions for potential or current managers running remediation work at the sites in Central Asia under the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) uranium legacy site remediation programme.

A uranium mine and mill site remediation project manager requires a combination of quite specific skills, including an understanding of processes such as radiation surveys, clean-up technologies, groundwater and geology after-effects, disposal pathways, environmental impact assessments, project management and the actions ending in a regulatory oversight exempt site status (including the assessment and selection of technical and engineering solutions).

Through the project, these skills are being brought to managers in an all-in-one package. A further aim is to expand the success of the project onto other similar programmes under implementation worldwide.

The impact...

Project management capacity has improved: sixty project managers have received training over the past two years. Affiliations of these managers vary from remedial action organizations, through technical support institutions, to regulatory authorities. As a result, Kyrgyzstan now has an extra twenty remediation managers and Tajikistan, with a dozen newly trained managers, has achieved a level where local expertise guides site remediation in the country. New workplaces are being instituted in participating Central Asian Member States with the expansion of remediation activities following the intake of trained managers, and more jobs will become available when a remediated site re-opens for investment. Therefore, a potential is being created for affected lands to return to productivity – for example, for factories to be built or for tourist attractions – and for species to re-populate their natural habitats. The project supplements site reclamation work taking place around the world and is networked to harmonize and strengthen conformity with the international site remediation standards.

The project provided an essential link to the International Target Programme ‘Remediation of the Uranium Mining Areas of the EurAsEC Member States’, with the overall aim of contributing to an evolving broad international cooperation to eliminate the issue of residues of uranium mining and milling activities.



Briefing remediation project managers on-site.