

New Lab Equipment Enables Mining Communities In Armenia To Take Control Of Their Health Risks

Yerevan -- ONEArmenia has launched its newest crowdfunding campaign, this time for lab equipment that will enable mining communities in Armenia to detect toxic pollution in their soil, and water, and identify lead contamination in children's blood. This campaign has a fundraising goal of \$29,000 and is implemented through collaboration with the American University of Armenia (AUA) Center for Responsible Mining. <<http://crm.aua.am/>>

There are currently 400 mines operating in Armenia, a small country with an area the size of Belgium. Twenty-two of these are active metal mines that are a major source of toxic pollution when improperly monitored and controlled.

Research done by the Blacksmith Institute and the American University of Armenia shows that high concentrations of heavy metals exist in many mining communities where children play, adults work, and families grow their food.

"We are committed to improving environmental conditions for communities throughout Armenia," says Alen Amirkhanian, director of the AUA Acopian Center for the Environment and the AUA Center for Responsible Mining. "This fundraising effort will give us the tools and equipment we need to do this on a wide scale and on an ongoing basis," says Amirkhanian.

More than 215,000 people across 20 communities in Armenia are at risk of exposure to heavy-metal pollution from mining and related industrial activities. Exposure to elements such as arsenic, lead, cadmium, and chromium lead to a wide range of health consequences including cancer, fertility problems, and reduced intellectual development in children.

The equipment to be purchased will help mining communities determine the specific locations and levels of toxic pollution in their soil and the levels of pollution in water. This information will help communities manage their health risks by avoiding polluted areas and taking steps to stabilize the soil in smaller, more manageable sites. The equipment could also arm communities with information to hold polluters accountable and seek compensation for remediation and cleanup.

The devices will be kept at AUA and taken to mining communities for analysis and testing. Additionally, AUA will implement various educational and outreach programs in impacted towns and villages so that communities are well aware of the risks from mining and action steps to mitigate these risk.