

ALTER Team Conducts First Site Visits in Armenia

July 13, 2018

ALTER Team members gathered in Yerevan, Armenia from June 18th to 22nd to meet with in country stakeholders and visit the three project target areas. The team first traveled to the southern Armenian region of Syunik to visit the cities of Kapan and Kajaran located in Project Area 3. They met with private sector partners Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine CJSC and Polymetal International PLC to introduce the project and discuss collaboration with the project for the tailing management facilities and water reservoir associated with the companies' mining activities in the area. The team also had the opportunity to visit the Syunik Regional Rescue Service Department, Crisis Management Centre of the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations located in Kapan and gained insight on the existing response system and its connections with regional and local self-governing bodies. As a part of the visit, the team briefly visited the Geghi reservoir and Artsvanik tailing management facility.

From Kapan, the team travelled to Project Area 2 which covers the Vorotan Cascade hydroelectric infrastructure. Productive meetings were held with Mr. Arthur Sargsyan, the Head of Sisian Community, as well as with local administrative leaders of the project target villages - Vorohtavan, Uyts and Shaghat. The meetings showed that local leaders are interested in collaboration, but that risk reduction activities have been limited to this point due to a lack of finances. As a part of the site visit, the team also inspected the safety equipment associated with the Spandaryan reservoir and found that much of the equipment was in need of update. Meetings with ContourGlobal, owners of the Vorotan Hydroelectric Cascade, revealed that the company is in the midst of a large scale overhaul of the safety systems monitoring the cascade. Company representatives expressed optimism that ALTER's mission has synergy with their wider risk reduction efforts.

The team's visit to Project Site 3, in the northern region of Lori, began in the village of Akhtala. Meetings with Akhtala Community Head and the Health and Safety Engineer of the mining company which owns the Nahatak tailing management facility, revealed that the company plans to re-cultivate



the facility within the next six months. After the meeting, the team visited the Nahatak Mine Tailing Facility to gain a general understanding of the current situation.

As the facility will no longer actively be used, this opened the possibility to include another water or tailing dam in the project. Given this possibility, representatives from ALTER visited the Metsavan Reservoir located near Tashir city, Lori region owned by the state and used for irrigation. The dam is currently in a state of severe disrepair and a break in the dam could have serious consequences for downstream communities. The team further discussed these issues with the Head of Department at the Lori Regional Rescue Service Department. This discussion also included including service department staff as well as the administrative representative of Metsavan reservoir. Another possibility for the replacement of Akhtala as a pilot site includes the Teghut tailing management facility and the downstream villages. The dam is a potential project site for ALTER if the Teghut CJSC or its parent Vallex Group agrees to participate. Concerns have been raised by a former investor in the Teghut project, the Danish export credit fund EKF, about the dam's compliance with international standards¹. Further discussion on Project Area 1 and possible changes will continue in June and July.

On the final day of the trip, team members visited the Garni Geophysical Observatory of the "Regional Seismic Protection Survey" SNCO to explore the availability of national seismic hazard assessments and data from earthquake catalogues. The Survey operates the Armenian nationwide seismic network, to continuously monitor the seismicity in a near-real time. Specialists at the Survey informed the team that a new seismic station in Kapan area will be installed soon.

ALTER is funded by DG ECHO, the European Union Directorate for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. The project focuses on the establishment of public-private partnerships in Armenia to address flood risks that stem from water and mine dam failures. It is project number 783214. For more information, see the ALTER website, www.alter-project.eu, or find us on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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<http://www.ekf.dk/en/about-ekf/news/Pages/EKF-withdraws-financing-from-Armenian-mining-project.aspx>