

Study Argues Pollution Is as Deadly a Problem as Malaria



Reuters

Alexander Abad-Santos 115 Views Oct 24, 2012

About 125 million people are at risk of getting sick from toxic pollution says the very first World's Worst Pollution Problems study—the first study to track the global health burden that industrial pollutants have on people. The WWP, which was published on Tuesday, is a joint effort from a US-based NGO called the Blacksmith Institute and the environmentally-focused organization, the Green Cross of Switzerland. "



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[C]lose to 125 million people are at risk from toxic pollution across 49 low to middle-income countries," reads the executive summary of the report. The toxic pollution they're referring are things like battery recycling, lead smelting, mining and ore processing, tannery operations and industrial dump sites, and Blacksmith went to several toxic sites in countries to figure out how they're affecting people. The impact of a disease is measured in disability-adjusted life year (DALY), which basically is an estimate of the potential years of life lost due to disease, disability, or early death, and

the WWP found that the worldwide DALY for industrial pollutants is at 17,147,1600. Just for perspective the DALY for HIV/AIDS at 28,933,000 and malaria is at 14,252,000 according to the report.

Of course, the health costs of pollution are not as clear as AIDS in that there are various types of pollution and various types of factors at play which fall under the umbrella of toxic pollution. As *The Guardian's* Stephen Leahy reported, lead poisoning from gold mining in the Nigerian state of Zamfara killed hundreds of children through Zamfara's villages in 2010 and according to the report, the World Health Organization has estimated that environmental exposures contribute to 19 percent of cancer incidence worldwide—both of those (lead poisoning and cancer) fall under the health burdens of toxic pollution. Compared to pollution, diseases like malaria and AIDS receive plenty of attention thanks to international organizations like UNICEF, the WHO, and the Red Cross. And the developed world often helps out its developing counterparts when it comes to this. But the problem is that many of those countries don't have the money to create agencies like the EPA which developed countries enjoy. "Much of this industrial activity is to serve our needs in the developed world," a Green Cross representative told *The Guardian*.


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