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## WORLD

# 2012 World's Worst Pollution Problems Report

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New York, NY Oct. 23, 2012 - A new report released today by New York-based Blacksmith Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to cleaning up life-threatening pollution, and Green Cross Switzerland calculates, for the first time, the global health impact of pollution across 49 countries, giving the broadest picture of pollution's toll to date. The 2012 report *The World's Worst Pollution Problems* reveals that the health impact of pollution is the same or higher than some of the most dangerous diseases worldwide, threatening millions of lives. It is similar in scope to better-known problems such as malaria and tuberculosis. The report also identifies the top ten toxic industries responsible (see list below), and offers workable solutions.

"The report underscores the need to fully recognize the health impacts caused by toxic pollution at this critical

juncture. Life-threatening pollution is likely to increase as the global economy exerts an ever-increasing pressure on industry to meet growing demands. The damage will be greatest in many low and middle-income countries, where industrial pollution prevention regulations and measures have not kept pace," says Richard Fuller, President, Blacksmith Institute.

"Even though it puts nearly 125 million people at risk, pollution remains one of the most under-recognized global problems. Appropriately, large amounts of time and resources are devoted to addressing the burden of diseases like tuberculosis and malaria. The striking fact is that international and local government action on these diseases greatly outpaces the attention given to toxic sites, which, as demonstrated in this report, contribute greatly to the global burden of disease," says Dr. Stephan Robinson, Unit Manager (Waste, legacy), Green Cross Switzerland.

The 2012 *World's Worst Pollution Problems Report* is the latest in a series of pollution reports released annually since 2006 that document the state of the world's worst polluted places and pollution problems. The reports have been instrumental in increasing public understanding of the health impacts posed by toxic pollution, and in some cases, have compelled cleanup work at pollution hotspots. These reports have been issued jointly by Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross Switzerland since 2007. All released reports are available for download at [www.worstpolluted.org](http://www.worstpolluted.org).

### Snapshot of industrial pollution in 49 countries, plus solutions

This year's report identifies those pollutants commonly found in industrial processes, whose health impacts are quantifiable, and traces their industry uses and health risks. It goes on to list the top ten polluting sources/industries and offer solutions, highlighting opportunities to implement life-saving cleanup and pollution prevention efforts.

Most importantly, the new report attempts to quantify the true extent of pollution's threat by measuring the global health impacts of contaminated sites across 49 low and middle-income countries. This is the first time such a calculation has been made to measure pollution's toll on lives over such a wide area. The previous report began the effort by calculating the disease burden of individual contaminated sites.

### Calculating Pollution's Toll in 17 Million DALYs

The impact of pollution is measured in Disability Adjusted Life Years, or DALYs, which capture the total number of life years

lost from early death as well as any reduction in quality of life resulting from disease.

DALYs allow for comparisons to be drawn between different types of public health risks, taking into account both the severity and duration of a given disease. Chronic headaches for example are given a lower value in the DALY metric than more severe health outcomes such as blindness or cancer.

The report found that the public health impact of industrial pollutants, measured in DALYs, is the same or higher than some of the most dangerous diseases worldwide. The report finds that exposure to contaminants at hazardous waste sites across the 49 countries analyzed results in more than 17 million DALYs. By comparison malaria results in some 14 million DALYs in the countries reviewed while tuberculosis results in some 25 million DALYs. These numbers are by no means conclusive but can be taken as indicative of the potential scale of the problem.

### **Backed by Research**

The 2012 report was generated out of analysis of on the ground data collected by Blacksmith Institute's Toxic Sites Identification Program over the past three years during site assessments at thousands of toxic hotspots in low- and middle-income countries. The impact estimates are based on the body of research that the field studies provided. This, in combination with toxicological information provided by the World Health Organization and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other public health leaders, enabled the Blacksmith Institute to quantify the most severe and widespread pollution problems.

### **Top Ten Toxic Industries Listed by DALY (Disability Adjusted Life Year)**

Lead-Acid Battery Recycling - 4,800,000

Lead Smelting - 2,600,000

Mining and Ore Processing - 2,521,600

Tannery Operations - 1,930,000

Industrial/Municipal Dump Sites - 1,234,000

Industrial Estates - 1,060,000

Artisanal Gold Mining - 1,021,000

Product Manufacturing - 786,000

Chemical Manufacturing - 765,000

Dye Industry - 430,000

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