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Top Ten Toxic Pollution Problems

A study addresses toxic industrial pollution around the world and its impacts on health

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Toxic pollution in the developing world

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A report released this week by the Blacksmith Institute reveals the major causes of toxic pollution and the associated challenges facing the developing world. In the report, "The World's Worst Toxic Pollution Problems Report 2011," the health impacts on the people who live near the sources of pollution are discussed.

Those individuals could lose "an average of 12.7 years to death or disability," according to a press release. The Blacksmith Institute explains that in the countries residing outside North America and Western Europe, "pollution hotspots are poorly documented, and sometimes are completely unknown to local and national governments." Yet, the report finds that most of these sites are caused by multinational corporations. Thus, they are "poorly regulated, locally owned small and medium-scale operations."

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According to the United Nations Development Program, developed countries "consistently failed to meet their stated

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pledges" in fighting "the impact of climate change in developing countries." The Blacksmith organization's top ten list consists of the collected data of over 2,200 sites where toxic pollution exists in levels above internationally accepted health standards. The list is as follows:

10. Pesticide Manufacturing and Storage
9. Naturally Occurring Arsenic in Ground Water
8. Lead-Acid Battery Recycling
7. Mining and Ore Processing (Lead Pollution)
6. Mining and Ore Processing (Mercury Pollution)
5. Tannery Operations (Chromium Pollution)
4. Lead Smelting
3. Agricultural Production (Pesticide Pollution)
2. Industrial Estates (Lead Pollution)
1. Artisanal Gold Mining (Mercury Pollution)

While most developed countries have well-established environmental regulations to keep pollution levels at bay, lower-income countries lack infrastructure or the regulation necessary to properly control and address the pollution problems that pose risks to human health. The report is targeted to help raise awareness and "can be used as a tool to direct international efforts to those places where people are the most impacted by toxic pollution."

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