

April 2011

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[Blacksmith Institute](#) works in some of the world's worst polluted places to solve pollution problems and clean up contaminated sites in order to save lives. Blacksmith is currently engaged in over 40 projects in 19 countries.



KEY PROGRAMS

[Health and Pollution Fund](#)

[Global Inventory Project - Database of Polluted Places](#)

[World's Worst Pollution Problems](#)

ENDING POLLUTION

"This is a finite problem. There are a finite number of toxic hotspots around the world. We just have to find them and clean them. We can end life-threatening pollution in our lifetime."

*Richard Fuller, founder,
Blacksmith Institute.*

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Vietnam's Toxic Craft Villages



When an American plane went down in North Vietnam during the war, the story goes that a villager knew how to smelt down the plane for valuable aluminium. And that was how the aluminium village began. Today, it is one of thousands of "craft" villages that dot the Vietnamese landscape.

More like factory collectives, each village focuses on the manufacture of one product - such as aluminium, copper or lead - in an informal, cottage industry-type setting. When Blacksmith visited the aluminium village in Nam-Dinh province recently, we saw that every family had a smelter in their backyard. [*Photo: A backyard smelter*]

"It's pretty amazing. These craft villages are like decentralized factories - hundreds of families are involved in the same industry. Scrap metal comes in from Hanoi in the morning and is shipped out in the evening as clean ingots to China," says Bret Ericson, program manager for Blacksmith's Global Inventory Project. "There is a very real health risk that needs to be addressed without hurting vulnerable livelihoods."

Life-threatening pollution has already been eliminated in many wealthier nations. Now Blacksmith is leading the fight to end it in low and middle income countries.

- **Identify:** Blacksmith is building the world's first comprehensive [global inventory](#) of polluted sites, where lives are at risk. Once identified, these hotspots will be ranked in order of priority for cleanup. Blacksmith investigators are crisscrossing the globe and have already identified 2100 polluted sites in more than 40 countries.
- **Implement:** Blacksmith is working to create the [Health and Pollution Fund](#) - a proposed \$500 million public health fund to support the cleanup of the world's worst polluted places identified by the global inventory project.

2010 REPORT



[Download Blacksmith's 2010 Pollution Report:](#) World's Worst

Now, Blacksmith is working with the Vietnamese government to begin the process of assessing the health risks and levels of contamination at these villages, which are polluted with toxic fumes and particles released during the daily manufacturing process.

Bret conducted a workshop in Vietnam earlier this month to train local officials in Blacksmith's site assessment protocol, which will be used by the Vietnamese government to build a national inventory of craft villages. This is part of an ongoing effort, between Blacksmith and the highest levels of the Vietnamese government, to move this ambitious project forward.

Success Story: Nigeria Lead Poisoning Cleanup

Last June, Blacksmith was one of the first to respond to the unprecedented lead poisoning crisis in Nigeria, which killed over 400 children. Blacksmith conducted emergency cleanup at the request of the Nigerian government, working with the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, local authorities and others.



Over nine months, Blacksmith conducted environmental decontamination in seven of the most polluted villages, including 282 residential compounds, 107 exterior areas, and 23 processing ponds.

This cleanup allowed doctors to treat more than 1000 children, who were then able to return to decontaminated homes. Today, the average blood lead levels in these children have fallen by 50%. Blacksmith also trained government, village and local personnel to conduct remediation activities so that they can undertake future cleanup. [Download](#) the full report here.

A Tour of Chernobyl 25 Years Later



On April 2, Blacksmith visited the 19-mile wide

Pollution Problems: Top Six Toxic Threats.

NOMINATE

[Nominate a Polluted Site](#)



Chernobyl Exclusion Zone - the area evacuated in the days after the explosion - as part of a site assessment trip to the Ukraine. Access to the zone is still tightly controlled. [Visit [The Pollution Blog](#) to see Blacksmith's [virtual tour](#) of the abandoned city of Pripyat and [videos of an elementary school and the Central Square.](#)]

Here are some radiation levels we [recorded](#) during our visit to Chernobyl:

.22 μSv per hour - level at Kiev (about 2 hours from Chernobyl). This was about the same level we recorded at Blacksmith's New York office.

.13 μSv per hour - at the first checkpoint on the way into the Exclusion Zone.

2.72 μSv per hour - recorded next to one of the many "hot" military vehicles that were used in the weeks following the explosion.

12.4 μSv per hour - in the vicinity of Reactor 4, the reactor that exploded.

[How much radiation is dangerous?](#) Here's a sample:

10 μSv - The average radiation you received today.

100 μSv - The radiation you receive during a dental x-ray.

800 μSv - Total radiation dose at Three-Mile Island for the duration of the accident.

3,600 μSv - Average radiation a U.S. resident receives in a year from all sources.

2,000,000 μSv - Severe radiation poisoning, sometimes fatal.

The accident at Chernobyl on April 26, 1986 is still the world's worst nuclear disaster. While Japanese authorities have recently raised the severity rating of the crisis at the Fukushima plant to Chernobyl level, events are still unfolding at that site. The April Pollution blog posts include a [Radiation 101](#) guide and a great [comparison between Chernobyl and Fukushima](#).

Call for Papers for The Journal of Health and Pollution

The Journal of Health and Pollution is looking for submissions that inform scientists, researchers and policymakers on the topic: *Toxic Pollution and Under Five Mortality and Morbidity in Poor and Middle Income Countries*. Papers are due Friday, July 1, 2011.

Read the [current issue](#) of the journal and get more information, including detailed [guidelines](#) for authors at www.journalhealthpollution.org.

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