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# Blacksmith Institute: What the recognition means

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*Blacksmith Institute is a leader of in the field pollution cleanups and advocacy on toxic threats. In 2011, a Green Star Award was presented to Blacksmith, whose chief, Richard Fuller, here describes what the recognition means to his organization.*

## Before the Green Star Award

The Blacksmith Institute was founded in New York in 1999 with the intent of supporting and implementing low-cost strategies to reduce and cleanup pollution in developing countries. By geographically identifying some of the world's most polluted areas as priority cases, Blacksmith has undertaken pollution cleanups in heavily contaminated places such as Haina in the Dominican Republic, and the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River in the Philippines.



## After the Green Star Award

In 2011, Blacksmith Institute was rewarded for its fine work in the field with the Green Star Award. Subsequently, Blacksmith has gone from strength to strength. Having provided valuable and vital information on the magnitude of the pollution problem, as well as identifying the geographic priorities for decontamination, Blacksmith has become part of the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP). Comprising key international organizations such as The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Commission, United Nations Environmental Program and the United Nations Industrial Development Organizations as well as the Environmental Ministries of Indonesia, Mexico, the Philippines and Senegal, the GAHP could be the key in combating the international threat of pollution.

Blacksmith has been working on the so-called "brown agenda" for the last 10 years, and feels the issues are beginning to gain some of the recognition they deserve. With the recognition accompanying the Green Star Award from OCHA, Green Cross International and UNEP, Blacksmith has managed to raise awareness and support for all the life-saving, low-cost work it is pursuing around the world. Environmental emergencies, like toxic contamination, which have been vastly underreported until recently, are now coming to the forefront of environmental troubleshooting. The awareness garnered from awards, such as the Green Star Award, has been invaluable in helping bring the problems Blacksmith has been battling to a wider audience.

## Plans for the future

Issues like pollution have perhaps not received as much attention as they should have. The "World's Worst Pollution Problems" report, produced jointly by Blacksmith and Green Cross Switzerland, makes clear that pollution is one of the world's foremost threats. By changing values with regard to pollution cleanup around the world, Blacksmith hopes to continue its fight against this challenge. With the collaborative effort of GAHP, Blacksmith is leading the way in the coordination of efforts to fight environmental degradation. Particularly in a situation of environmental emergency, be it inflicted by natural disaster, conflict or chemicals, Blacksmith feels that the collaborative and cooperative power of GAHP could be "the game-changer in the fight against this global threat".

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