



Project Principles

Every Blacksmith intervention is identified and developed on the basis of key principles which have guided Blacksmith's work from the beginning. These principles are not philosophical: they are based on the accumulated experience of Blacksmith staff and advisors and are set out to support the implementation of targeted, effective interventions to reduce the impacts of toxic pollution on local communities. They continue to be refined as experience is gained and the scope and type of projects evolve.

FOCUS ON HEALTH: Blacksmith priorities are to address situations where there is a clear health risk, with a defined population in the pathway of exposure to toxic pollution. Other projects may be supported where there are more general health risks and broad local support.

ENSURE LOCAL OWNERSHIP: Strong local ownership of a proposed intervention, demonstrated by commitment of effort and resources, is seen as confirmation that the problem is really a local priority and so can justify external support.

POLLUTER PAYS wherever possible: Clearly the responsible parties should remedy the problems wherever possible. However, proceeding with urgent interventions should not be held hostage to legal battles. In some cases, relevant parties may be persuaded to support clean-up without admitting liability.

START WITH THE MOST URGENT STEPS: Efforts to deal with the most urgent problems should be initiated even if the full long term planning has not been finalized. Such steps typically revolve around stopping and/or containing the movement of pollutants. They should be accompanied by establishing the process and planning for the long term. Necessary immediate interventions should not be delayed while details of the ultimate solution are being examined.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY: Local institutions and groups are crucial in tackling priority problems and in achieving sustainability of pollution control efforts. Lack of experience and skills in technical aspects and in project management should be deliberately addressed through guided "action learning" in the initial phases of dealing with the problem. Ad-hoc stakeholder groups should be encouraged to coordinate or even integrate with existing institutions where this can bring stability and support for long-term efforts.

COMBINE EXCELLENT SCIENCE AND ROBUST TECHNOLOGY: Health and pollution issues can be complex. Clear understanding of underlying issues and process is important to identifying the relevant approaches. However, simple and robust technology is often appropriate for first stage interventions, especially where the results are not sensitive to small variations.

ADJUST TO EVOLVING CIRCUMSTANCES: Pollution and health problems are often not clearly defined. Initial interventions are made on the basis of best available information but flexibility must be maintained to respond to further data, often obtained during the implementation of initial works, which can require changes in the planned intervention. It is often impractical to expect to define the details of the necessary works before some site works are commenced, particularly where soil contamination is involved. Monitoring in parallel with implementation may determine the extent of the work.

PREVENTION OF RECONTAMINATION: The benefits of clean-up must not be lost through recontamination or continuation of pollution. Control of any active sources of pollution must be an essential part of a remediation programme.

PREPARATION OF THE ROAD MAP

Every Blacksmith project is based on these broad principles. For each project, the first stage includes the preparation of a ROAD MAP, which sets out the steps that need to be taken to achieve the initial goal of removing the most immediate risk and outlines the process for longer-term remediation, as needed. A key tool under the road map is the ACTION PLAN which summarises the agreed actions by each party that are needed to achieve each step in the road map, including timing, responsibility for the action, and identification of resources available to achieve each action.

For larger and more complex projects, the Road Map sets out the initial steps of what may be a decades long process of cleaning up a large site, preventing any further abuse and eventually returning the site to productive uses for the community and society.