

The search to survive

In Honduras, tragic and eerie similarities exist between 7-year-old Jason Lopez and the vulture perched next to him. Both wait for the next garbage truck to roll by. And both scour the same dumpsite daily in an attempt to survive.

Amid swarming vultures and truly hellish surroundings, little Jason rummages through the Ocotillo dump in search of recyclable items and food. Often knee-deep in refuse, Jason competes with older boys and men for recyclable garbage. When he finds something of value, the little boy carries the item to a storage spot he's carved out on the outskirts of the dump.

But Jason and the items he finds are rarely safe in this environment. Older children steal what Jason collects. And men carry knives not only to pick through trash, but also to protect themselves. Children jump in and out of garbage trucks and sustain frequent injuries. Last year, a young boy died after being hit by an incoming truck.

Sadly, little ones like Jason have no other option. Jason's mother has no source of income or food, so the young boy has no chance of attending school or receiving nutritious meals. Instead, he combs through filth daily in search of sustenance. And like all the children in the dump, Jason suffers from constant stomach illnesses, skin rashes and flesh wounds.

With each passing day, the risk heightens for children who are forced to live off these dangerous garbage dumps. While the sites may provide a way to get by today, they continually diminish a child's chances of surviving tomorrow.

An innocent child's outlook on the future also diminishes with time spent toiling at the dump. On the outskirts of Ocotillo, Jason was asked what he wants to be when he grows up. The boy solemnly replied, "I don't know," and somberly headed back into the fray of refuse.

*"Out of the depths I call to you, LORD; Lord, hear my cry!"
(Psalm 130:1-2a)*

Children like Jason desperately need our help; your support will provide relief and hope to those mired in extreme poverty.



No place for a child

According to the United Nations, an estimated 2,000 Honduran children work in dumps – the highest rate in Latin America.



What lies ahead in Wendy Valle's future is threatened by the garbage dump looming directly behind her.



For those who are hungry and desperate, food is sometimes eaten as soon as it's found.

When we met 9-year-old Wendy in Honduras, the sweet little girl stood in front of a dangerous dumpsite that she visits every day.

Wendy's mother died three years ago. Since then, Wendy has been coming to the Ocotillo dump with her grandmother to gather recyclable items and food.

Most parents and grandparents would shy away from admitting that their children come to the dump to work. The poorest of the poor realize that this is no place for a child. But utter desperation sometimes outweighs shame.

With no other source of food or income, more than 400 Honduran families like Wendy's currently attempt to live off what they can find at the Ocotillo dump. Amid the abominable conditions, the most tragic sight is the little children who must rummage through the trash in search of something to sustain them.

But young Wendy still has hope for the future. Her greatest wish is to one day attend school. "I want to be a nurse," she says. Even though she now stands in such horrific surroundings, Wendy explains her selfless aspiration: "To help people. I want them to be healthy."

With your support, Food For The Poor can help innocent children like Wendy break free from the cycle of poverty that enslaves generations. Please, do what you can to help.

Building a Future



Julio Murillo looks remarkably different. Since we last saw him a year ago, the 9-year-old boy has grown taller and sports a new haircut. But these physical changes only accentuate a deeper, inner transformation.

Julio and his family received a new Food For The Poor home last year. Featured on the cover of our November 2006 newsletter, Julio's family once lived outside the Ocotillo garbage dump in Honduras. They would struggle to survive by scouring the garbage daily for a means of sustenance. Thankfully, the family was recently moved away from the dump and into a sturdy new home in a safer area of town.

When we visited the Murillo family in front of their new Food For The Poor house, a once-subdued Julio was running around his new yard, sharing hugs with his next-door neighbor and best friend, Gerson, as well as our staff members.

Ironically, 10-year-old Gerson was featured on the cover of our August 2006 newsletter. Over the past year, both boys' families were moved out of crumbling shacks and away from unhealthy, dangerous environments. And the two friends now live in new Food For The Poor homes directly next to each other.

"My nightmare is over," Gerson's mother told us, in gratitude to those who made this miracle possible. Julio's mother, reflecting on the blessing she and her family now share, observed, "I never thought I would have a house." Both of Julio's parents, who were unable to find work when they lived near the dumpsite, now have the opportunity to earn an income in their new location.

Julio, who used to rummage through the Ocotillo dump, no longer scours garbage for survival. Instead, his life now more closely resembles a normal experience of childhood.

In his new, protective home, Julio studies more. He can even enjoy playing with friends on the soccer field next to his house.

*"The LORD had done great things for us; Oh, how happy we were!"
(Psalm 126:3)*

In all, through the compassion and generosity of people like you, this innocent young boy has a newfound sense of hope concerning his future.

Julio constantly thanks God for those who helped make this dream of living in a new home away from the garbage dump possible. "Thank you, God, for giving me a new house," Julio exclaims, with a grin stretching from ear to ear. And he quickly adds, "Thank you, everyone!"

