The school on the rubbish dump

A view from the far side

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> *He and his brothers and sisters plus their father collect empty containers and sell them*

When thinking of children on rubbish dumps, what locations spring to mind? Most would think of some places in Asia or South America and associated Aid organisations that have helped make us more aware of the plight of these children. Yet such a situation exists even closer to home.

At Baruni, on the outskirts of Port Moresby, PNG, some 3,000 plus people exist. Many of these families are displaced from other provinces in the country and lack any educational opportunities.

Meet Ogasta Daniel. She is a Christian lady who runs Daniel School. For many years she has felt a burden for these children and so two years ago commenced her own school. She has not only taught them but fed them as well when possible. Initially the class met under her house, but now through the generosity of *Food for Life* an NGO, is able to operate with basic shelter and supplies.

Ogasta shares details of just four of her 30 plus students. Her grammar may not be the best but the messages are clear.

First child – *There are too many of them in the family, both parents are unemployed and uneducated. They live a very poor life, have torn clothes and looks sick and sad always. He and his other brothers and sisters plus their father they collect empty containers and sell them while their mother sell scones, lollies and other little stuff from the stores just to feed her family. Have no proper housing and sanitation plus water.*

Second child – *Parents remarried and too there are too many of them in the family. Aunt and uncle take care of him but because they have children of their own. It's hard.*





[Photographs: Dennis Perry]

Third child – *He comes from a family of 6 children. Father works as a security guard and gets little which can't last until the next pay. He and his brothers and sisters haven't been to school and they all don't look too good with their health and their living conditions too. They have torn clothes and sores all over, sad looking faces.*

Fourth child – *His parents are HIV positive. They are both still alive but sick. His aunt takes care of him. Her husband is working and they have children of their own and they feed and clothe him.*

While providing an education within a first world context is demanding and very stressful, having to provide education to students operating at the lowest levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is no less challenging or demanding. Port Moresby is claimed to be one of the worse cities in the world to live. Couple this with poor parent literacy (UNESCO, 2011), little security, and a lack of resources, then teachers like Ogasta become almost saint-like. TEACH





Reference

UNESCO (2011). PNG Literacy Rate Still A Mystery—'Over 2 million people print illiterate'. News from UNESCO Bagkok. http://www.unescobkk.org/news/article/png-literacy-rate-still-a-mystery-over-2-million-people-print-illiterate/

