

Trash Heaps Pile on Hope

The first time Brett Durbin stood atop a trash dump community, his senses were overpowered by the horrific smells and the sight of vultures circling in the sky as small children searched for food and recyclables as if it were a treasure hunt.

“It’s probably the darkest place I’ve ever seen in my life,” says Durbin, founder and executive director of the Kansas-based Trash Mountain Project (TMP), a nonprofit organization that works with children and families living in landfills around the world.

It was 2008 when Durbin, then a college pastor in Florida, witnessed the extreme poverty and crime at a trash dump community in Honduras.

“Many of the people in their own culture look at them as part of the trash,” he says of those living there. “They don’t even see them as humans.”

Forever changed by his exposure to this reality, Durbin was ready to head home, sell his possessions and return to live among the lost and forgotten outcasts. But a Honduran pastor slowed him down. “Don’t move down here,” the pastor told him. “You live in America. You have resources and influence. If people like you don’t tell our story, that guy dies Thursday.”

Durbin went home and founded TMP. With outposts today in the Philippines, Honduras, Cambodia and the Dominican Republic, TMP partners with local leaders, churches and organizations already working within trash communities to develop Christ-centered environments while addressing the physical, emotional and educational needs of the people. TMP provides meals, health care, schools and churches.

Once doubtful that God still performed miracles, Durbin says

his faith has grown as he's watched God heal the sick. "To see Him move in this way, I'll never be the same," he says.