

Fact sheet 3: The dump site in Nakuru

The dump site is situated 2 miles to the northwest of Nakuru on a large site of 54 acres. Most of the collected waste from the town is dumped there.

There are over 130 people living on the site in homes made from rubbish, or in caves in the walls of the rock. The people who live there are called salvagers by local people. The salvagers, most of whom are single people (widowed, divorced or unmarried) over 40 years old, try to find food in the dump or materials that they can sell to be reused. In addition to those who live at the site, there are about 20 families who salvage there, but don't live there.

Why do people end up there?

A survey was done in 2005 to ask people why they live on the site. The findings were that:

- Many were unemployed and couldn't afford the basic human needs of food, water, shelter and clothes.
- Some had been born there and it was the only home they knew.
- Some were orphans and had no family to help them.
- Widows ended up there when the money earner of the family died.
- In the 1990's there were disputes between different tribal groups in Kenya and some of them became refugees in their own countries.
- Some were thrown out of the slums they had lived in when Governments tried to clear the areas up.
- Some had nowhere else to go following a divorce.

Where do they live?

Two thirds of the salvagers live in poorly constructed homes made from mud, plastic bags and boxes. The local church provided some sheets of corrugated iron for some roofs, but most houses leak when it rains. Most have no furniture and bedding is also collected from the site in the form of old clothes or blankets. Those who live in the caves cover themselves with plastic carrier bags when it rains. The caves become dangerous and sometimes walls collapse. In the photograph below, scavengers can be seen collecting whatever re-usable waste they can.

What do they collect and what is done with it?

Some of the materials collected are used by the salvagers themselves, such as the food dumped by hotels in Nakuru and cloth which is used for clothing and bedding. The rest of the materials are sold to middlemen who in turn sell to recyclers. These include bones, plastics and scrap metal.

There are so many people living on the dump site now that the salvagers are having to look for alternative sources of income. These include:

- Working on local farms.
- Subsistence farming (growing crops to eat themselves) along the roads and spare land around the dump site.
- Doing laundry for people.
- Weaving baskets and mats using scavenged polythene.
- Selling water.

Major issues

- The salvagers have poor access to water and sanitation. There are no toilets, no bathrooms and no clean water to drink. They have to buy water from vendors to drink. Some of the salvagers collect rainwater.
- The health of these people is poor. Malaria is common due to the pools of stagnant water which allow the mosquitoes to breed. Diarrhoea. Pneumonia and skin infections are common.
- Scavengers cannot afford to visit a doctor. They have developed other ways of coping with their illnesses, such as using herbal remedies, buying cheap drugs across the counter or borrowing money from friends.
- The dump site contains harmful substances, including broken bottles, used syringes and other clinical hospital waste and industrial waste.
- 47.3% of the scavengers have never been to school and all the rest bar one, failed to complete secondary education. Although the Kenyan government now provide free primary education, some of the children of scavengers do not attend school. The reasons given include the cost of buying school uniforms and because the families often need their children to scavenge in order to increase the family's income.

Suggest four recommendations that you could make to the authorities that might make the scavengers lives better.

-
-
-
-