

# Finding Treasure in the Trash

## Families Work for Community's Health



The Salas family lives next to the Santiago municipal dump.

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From an outsider's perspective, it seems like Celia Salas' life revolves around garbage. Her home is built from scraps of wood and tin, most of her possessions are recycled from others' castoffs, and her husband spends each day sifting through the Santiago city dump for food and items to sell to support his family. Celia lives in Cien Fuegos, a Dominican barrio that sprung up around the city dump after the residents' homes in another area were destroyed by fire and they were left with nothing.

**"We live like animals here!"**

~Maria Eugenia,  
Cien Fuegos resident

Trash is everywhere there, without a doubt—and along with it, the accompanying smells and ever-present flies, which give Cien Fuegos its nickname "La Mosca" (the Fly). But it's a mistake to assume that the trash is all there is for Celia and her

neighbors. Like other mothers around the world, Celia's greatest treasure is her family. This is evident in the way she proudly introduces her mother, sister, and children, and in the sadness in her eyes when she recounts the recent death of her youngest boy, Sandy Mañuel, from meningitis complicated by malnutrition and dehydration. Celia's mother, Maria Eugenia, is emphatic about their desperate situation: "We live like animals here!"

Local resident Thomasa "Nena" Cabreda is working to change that. As a trained health promoter for International Child Care, Nena gathers members of her community to talk about issues like sanitation, education and health. She teaches parents about nutrition and hygiene and runs a children's program called "Children with Hope." Nena is one of seventeen ICC health promoters working throughout the large barrio of Cien Fuegos to improve the lives and the health of the residents. The promoters even have a long-term goal of helping people to relocate to healthier and safer neighborhoods away from the dump. In a community built on what others have thrown away, ICC is using the firm foundation of family to work for a better future. ●



The Salas family inside their home in Cien Fuegos. Many of their possessions are recycled from the nearby dump.

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Maria Eugenia Salas, the grandmother of the family, hopes for a better life for her children and grandchildren.

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