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HOME ON A MOUNTAIN OF RUBBISH

4 The most notorious symbol of poverty in the Philippines used to be Smokey Mountain, an enormous rubbish dump in Manila where a legion of scavengers* earned their living by combing the garbage for anything that could be recycled and sold.

5 Weakened by days of heavy rain, the side of a mountain of refuse at the Payatas dump gave way, burying scavengers' shanty town at the foot of the slope. However horrifying the idea of living off a mountain of rubbish and then dying underneath it may seem, the tens of thousands of scavengers at Payatas and dumps in other cities are not an accurate symbol of the worst poverty in the Philippines. If you stand in the middle of the squatter colony at Payatas with your back to the mountain of waste, and try to ignore the
10 stench, it looks much like any other small town in the Philippines. One NGO encourages the people to see themselves not as scavengers, but as entrepreneurs in the recycling industry.

The Economist, July 15, 2000.

*scavenger : a person who searches for food among waste. (Longman)