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## **DR. SUSAN CAVE BARAGWANATH, 1994 NEW ZEALAND**

Founder, He Huarahi Tamariki Schools

Dr. Susan Cave Baragwanath believes her fellowship came about because she had a problem, and she could not find anyone in New Zealand to help her solve it. She was a career secondary school teacher and administrator who had taught internationally. When she returned permanently to New Zealand in 1989 after 20 years away, she accepted a position as a deputy principal in one of the country's poorest schools. In the first week, she found a 14-year-old girl giving birth to a child in the school toilets. Baragwanath contacted the authorities about her continuing education, and she was told to forget about it. Baragwanath looked up New Zealand's domestic law; there it was, in black and white, "every child is entitled to have a free basic formal education until the age of 19 years". The only education available to this student, if she did not return to school (and she couldn't as there were no childcare facilities), was distance learning. Her family did not own a phone, so she could not call her tutor, and she waited weeks for her school work to be delivered by mail. As a result, she quickly fell out of the system. The pattern in New Zealand was for teenagers to have multiple pregnancies before age 21 and become state beneficiaries for life. Without proper research and a concrete plan going forward there seemed to Baragwanath no escape from this pattern continuing.



During her fellowship, Baragwanath visited 56 schools in 12 states that had provision for teenage mothers to finish their basic formal education and graduate from high school. By the end of her program, she was even more enthusiastic to start a facility for the many teenage mothers in her own school. Within six months of her return, she did just that. She named this program "He Huarahi Tamariki", which is Maori for "a chance for children".

Baragwanath experienced a steadfast "no" and "get lost" from the Ministry of Education. She was even fired by a higher up, eradicating her post, but fortunately, one of her colleagues resigned and the supportive school Board of Trustees gave Baragwanath his job. New Zealand's then-treasurer, a former prime minister, and the associate minister of education (himself a former teacher) both recognized the need and privately coached her on how to execute her program plan.

With her community, dedicated staff and volunteer support, Baragwanath fought the authorities via the media. To do this, she relied on her students to pass exams and show their success. They were, and still are, winning scholarships and prizes. One of her students, who had two children as a teenager, is now completing her PhD in Forensic Chemistry. Others, including teenage fathers, are teachers, nurses, social workers, police officers, scientists, qualified tradesmen, and in other professions with prospects including parliamentary secretaries.

In a population of over four million, there are almost 50 schools based on the He Huarahi Tamariki model. Baragwanath calls them "Eisenhower schools" because she believes without her experiences and exposure in the U.S., such an effective and comprehensive response to the needs of young parents and their children would not have been realistic. It took her ten years to get a purpose-built fully state-funded facility, including quality early childhood education, but now, if one goes to the NZ Ministry of Education website under Teen Parent Units, there is a how-to guide to set one up!

Of her fellowship, Baragwanath states, "being an Eisenhower Fellow meant that other people believed I could change things for the better at a time when I was finding it almost insurmountable. It gave me the knowledge and confidence that I was doing the right thing". The twentieth anniversary of He Huarahi Tamariki is in 2014. The school keeps growing and is seen as a flagship attracting interest internationally.

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