

That you act justly...

[Br John Deeney](#)

Tackling the crisis

The Pope has described the current world financial system as being 'built on sand' and that seems as good a description as any. Only fair and honest transactions are ever going to succeed in achieving stability without exploiting people. Given the competitive and grasping nature of human beings we can only hope that some God-centred principles will be incorporated into the new financial structures – and that some right-minded people will take on positions of responsibility and speak up for them. In the meantime, lots of

people will suffer from the downturn in the world markets; the poorest being those with least defence against the current difficulties. Five months ago the wealthier countries pledged to give \$12bn to tackle the world food emergency. To date less than \$1bn of that has been given. Nearly 1bn people are going hungry now out of the world population of around 6bn. Action on the banking crisis has been swift and powerful: action against human misery has been sluggish and feeble.

Year of Sanitation

The UN has declared 2008 to be the Year of Sanitation. We might take the view that this is not a big deal as far as the UK is concerned; we might also stretch our sympathies to the situation of poorer countries. When LDWP groups are preparing to set off overseas, one of the concerns that regularly surfaces is 'Will there be toilets?' While that might raise a smile, the problems that lie behind the question are only too serious. Around 2.6bn people worldwide live in insanitary conditions. For many, especially chil-

dren, that is a cause of premature death. For others it can mean a lifetime of poor health. Whatever the shortage of money may mean for people at the present time, it should not mean that the drive to overcome problems like this is put on hold. Quite the contrary. It is estimated

that for every \$1 invested in water sanitation and hygiene education you get a return of between \$3 and \$34 in health and other benefits.

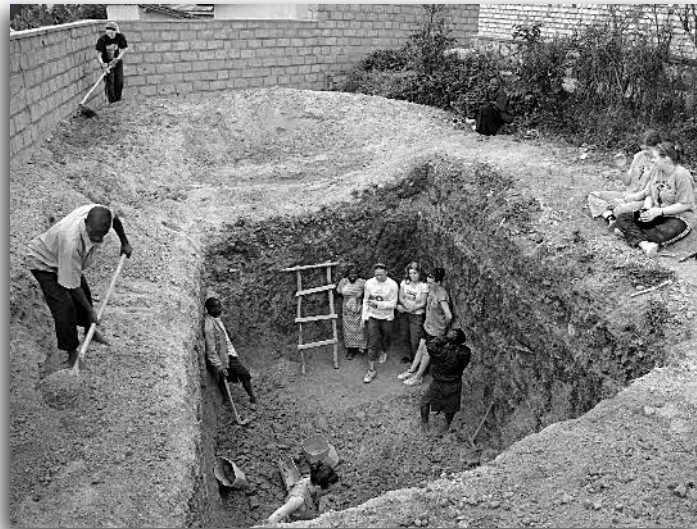
By one of those ironies in life I ended up this summer digging a large septic tank for teachers' housing in Rwanda. The technology of sanitation is not

complex – it is just hard work. A group of us spent nearly 3 weeks digging a 2.5 metre deep pit and were most relieved when it was finally judged finished. Gandhi said that sanitation was more important than independence, which puts the topic in perspective.

In the interests of security

A teacher from the UK set off for Sri Lanka this summer to do some English teaching and work with teachers. He planned to go to Mannar in the north west but the security situation meant that he was unable to get there. The war between the government and the Tamil Tigers has intensified of late and the latter are being squeezed. The government has ambitions of destroying the Tamil movement but runs the risk of creating a more desperate terrorist organisation. The whole background to the war is murky and vicious.

The teacher had arranged for a Sri Lankan student to come to the UK to study in his college. There were almost endless problems getting a visa from the British High Commission but



in the end this was granted and carried safely home. That very same night a van load of armed, uniformed men arrived at the family's residence, took all the mobile phones, examined everyone's documents, hustled the father and the student son into the vehicle and drove off at speed. Neither of them has been heard of since. The remainder of the family is distraught. The teacher, who was present during the abduction, despite exhaustive searches has been unable to find any trace of them through police, army or political contacts. The interests of security, if not of justice, are obviously the priority.

That kind of activity has been a part of the Sri Lankan scene for decades and is clearly something given full support by the government. You could argue that such an approach mitigates the equally nasty operations of the Tamil Tigers but that would be no consolation to the large numbers of totally innocent people from both 'sides' who get caught up in this. A retired Major

General was a recent victim of a terrorist bombing in Anuradhapura. In his early days he crushed a far-left group that had an estimated 2000 members; but around 15,000 civilians ended up either dead or missing – in the interests of security, of course. Another suppression campaign around 1989 is said to have cost double the number of lives. Part of the 'success' of his career was his role in resisting the Tamil Tigers, though again hundreds of civilians are reputed to have disappeared after the capture of Jaffna. Interestingly, before his death he had been a trenchant critic of the government's present aggressive approach to the Tamil problem, warning that it was likely to provoke more suicide attacks. Oppression does not bring peace or long-term security. Sadly, he was educated at a Catholic school and was trained at Sandhurst. We might well conclude that he never learnt the lessons of justice.