

Poverty and Hope Appeal 2026/27: A message from Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge

The landscape of aid has changed in the last few years as national interest is put ahead of global need in country after country. We could debate the ethics of this, but we must deal with the reality – a reality which is being felt acutely in places. A vicious Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo; an horrific mud tsunami in Nepal; acute famine in Sudan, among many other challenges.

The risk of exposure to tragedy after tragedy is the apathy it can induce. What difference can I make? There are too many causes to give to. Will the money get to the people who need it anyway?

The lessons of our diocesan Poverty and Hope appeal are that small contributions can make a disproportionate difference in the lives of impoverished people because the links we possess and the agencies we use are rooted in local communities and sensitive to their needs.

This year, the theme is schools and education. When natural disaster, war and famine occur, and climate change strangles the land, we can understandably become preoccupied with meeting immediate needs. Behind this, however, are children deprived of an education. Perhaps the school has been shelled or swept away in a flood; maybe the government lacks the infrastructure to deliver basic rights; or children are so debilitated by hunger and thirst that they have no energy to learn.

This year, we have the chance to support children in Myanmar, Gaza, Honduras; and in our companion diocese of Tanzania and Zimbabwe, besides other initiatives.

Please give as generously as you can to support these children.

Big and small nations are rearming today, mistrustful of one another. It was Nelson Mandela who said: *'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'*

Let's give it that chance.