

# Funding the Future

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The Guardian [features a story today](#) that is on one of the most basic issues in the world: where we defecate.

And as they report, 2.5 billion people in the world do not have access to toilets that properly separate human waste from human contact.

The issue is of staggering significance to health, gender equality, education and growth.

It's about basic human dignity.

It's about equality.

It's about rights.

I find it staggering that around the world it is reported that more people have access to mobile phones than do a loo.

And that says something is seriously wrong. I'm not decrying mobile technology. I am a massive user of it. But if I had the choice for my family, a loo or a mobile, it's a bit of a no-brainer really, isn't it? You'd take the toilet too, wouldn't you?

So why doesn't it happen? Isn't it obvious? It's lack of tax fuelled by a lack of effective government. The two go hand in hand. That's obvious, I would have thought.

It was the rise of local government and broader based taxation in the UK that created effective sanitation in the Victorian era, and with it a health revolution. The industry may be privatised now, [but it was the ending of private company involvement in water](#) in the UK that delivered clean water and effective sewerage systems in this country.

In developing countries each scenario will have to be addressed on its own merits, of course. But I find it very hard to see how, ultimately, effective sanitation on the scale required can be delivered without a role for government and public funding to ensure that the externalities that are an implicit part of this issue can be properly addressed.

And where could the money come from?

Creating effective tax systems is a massive priority. In many cases this revolves around taxing companies, who have a much bigger role to play in these countries. Our reforms [to corporation tax](#), which I have been banging on about, undermine that role.

Beating the abuse of developing countries' tax systems by multinational corporations would help. That's one of the reasons for country-by-country reporting.

Beating tax haven abuse by many wealthy elites from these countries is vital.

To be blunt, ending illicit financial flows is essential if sewage is to flow.

The campaign link is almost obvious. And think of the stickers:

"This toilet is flushed by tax"

"Taking the pee: tax havens"

"Make sewage flow, not money"

"Shit should flow: money does" (Apologies for those offended, but this is what this is about)

This is what I was motivated by when I came into tax justice. I still am. And I still think tax is the answer.

And I can almost see the response. It will be "Money down the drain". I defy someone to say it.

What if it was your child who had to go into a field at night to relieve themselves? It's time we addressed this now. And we could.