

10 Building latrines

OVERVIEW



Many diseases, such as diarrhoea and cholera, are spread to others through unclean living environments.

Latrines can save the lives of people in the community during an epidemic.

Why build latrines?

- ➔ When everyone uses latrines, the environment is clean and free of germs.
- ➔ Latrines can help keep water sources clean.
- ➔ Using latrines can prevent diarrhoeal diseases.
- ➔ In an epidemic, building latrines and encouraging the community to use them can help prevent the spread of the disease.

What kind of latrines should you build?

There are many types of latrines, such as pit latrines, which can be built easily with local materials. When latrines are not available and they have to be built quickly, trench latrines are a very good option.

Trench latrines can be quickly prepared to provide a short- to medium-term solution. There are two basic types: shallow and deep trench latrines. Their lifespan will depend on the number of users and the latrine size. A shallow trench latrine may last 2–4 weeks, while a deep trench latrine may last for 1–2 months.

Ensuring good sanitary conditions

- Provide a sufficient number of latrines to cope with peak use in the mornings and evenings. Design them for a maximum of 50 people per metre length of trench per day (better for 25).
- Communal trench latrines must be supervised and maintained if they are to remain in sanitary conditions.
- Latrine supervisors must regularly clean the foot boards and surrounding area, and periodically cover the trench content with 5–10 cm of soil.
- Provide anal cleansing material, soil for covering excreta, and water and soap for handwashing.

Use community message(s): 6

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What you need to build a trench latrine

➤ Shovels and picks
➤ Plastic sheeting or local materials

➤ Wooden poles
➤ Empty cans

➤ Stakes for the fence
➤ Water container with tap and soap

How to build a trench latrine

1. Choose a site more than 30 m away from water sources.
2. Dig trenches about 30 cm wide and 90–150 cm deep, allowing about 3.5 m per 100 users. Place the excavated soil near the side of each trench so that the users can cover their stools with soil after each use.
3. Lay planks down the two sides in order to ensure a good foothold.
4. Fence the area (with plastic sheeting, for example) and put a zigzag entrance in order to limit the risk of straying animals and to keep some privacy.
5. Put a water container with a tap and soap in an obvious place near the exit to encourage handwashing after defecation.
6. You can put some posters about handwashing near the water container.

1. Fence (plastic sheeting)
2. Water container/tap/soap
3. Stones for drainage
4. Zigzag entrance
5. Planks
6. Trenches
7. Soil for burying excreta

