WEDC

MOBILE NOTE 12

Latrine slabs: checklists

Introduction

The following checklists can provide a basis for gathering information to inform the designer of latrine slabs.

Loughborough University

Contents

Design checklist

Have the range of users been identified?

- Consider people with specific needs, such as children, the elderly, pregnant women and nursing mothers, people with restricted sight or mobility
- Is the latrine going to be used for bathing (including washing during menstruation?)

Are there cultural and religious considerations relating to who is allowed to use or share the latrine?

- Who is going to clean the latrine and how?
- How much are people willing and able to pay for the slab
- for building it?
- for using, operating and maintaining it?

Are people being given a choice of design?

- Do people prefer to squat or sit to defecate?
- Which way do people want to face when defecating?
- What is used for anal cleansing?
- What size hole and foot rests are preferred?
- Is a lid needed and will it be used?

What building skills and materials are available now – and in the future?

- How many slabs are needed locally?
- What transport is needed or is available?
- What materials are available and preferred?
- Will the slabs be of good enough quality – relating to strength and surface finish?
- When and where are they required?

- Are they temporary or permanent?
- Can the slab be moved or reused when the vault is emptied?

What are the ground conditions like?

- Is the pit lined? Are foundations needed?
- Where does surface water flow? – consider flooding, drainage and erosion

Maintenance

Slabs must be kept clean to make them pleasant to use. Faeces and urine need to be removed as soon as possible to prevent odours, the attraction of flies, and to prevent it becoming unsightly.

Apart from regular cleaning and occasional repainting, slabs will need periodic inspection, repairs and maintenance to ensure that they remain structurally sound.

Maintenance checklist

The following checklist can provide a basis for monitoring the use of the latrine.

Have there been any complaints about the latrine?

- User comments are the most important indicator to record

Is the latrine being used? A worn path shows it is, spiders' webs over the hole shows it is not.

- If it not being used, there may be an underlying problem

Is the slab clean?

- If it is dirty, investigate if this is due to poor design, lack of cleaning, lack of cleaning materials or user behaviour

Is the slab wet?

- Is this due to urine, anal cleansing water, bathing water, rainwater or because it has just been cleaned?

- Does the slab drain properly?

For pour-flush toilets, is a water seal present?

- Is water for flushing available?
- Are solids present in the U bend/ trap/ water seal?

Are there signs of flies or vermin either in the latrine or around the hole?

- Is this due to poor design or poor cleanliness?
- Is a stopper or lid used?

Is the slab structurally sound?

- Look for cracks, surface damage (e.g. to the screed or paint), excessive flexing of the slab, rocking of the slab. Check the foundations for signs of erosion.

Conclusions

The latrine slab is the interface between a person going to the toilet and the technology that disposes of the excreta safely. For this reason, the design has to meet both technical and social requirements.

Consulting with users is as important as checking that the slab is structurally sound. If people do not use the latrine because they do not like it then all investment will be wasted.

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About this note

Author: Brian Reed
Editor: Rod Shaw
Illustrators: Rod Shaw and Ken Chatterton
QA: Bob Reed

Designed and produced by WEDC

Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC)
School of Civil and Building Engineering
Loughborough University
Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK

Phone: + 44 (0) 1509 222885
Email: wedc@lboro.ac.uk
Website: wedc.lboro.ac.uk
Twitter: wedcuk
YouTube: wedclboro

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