

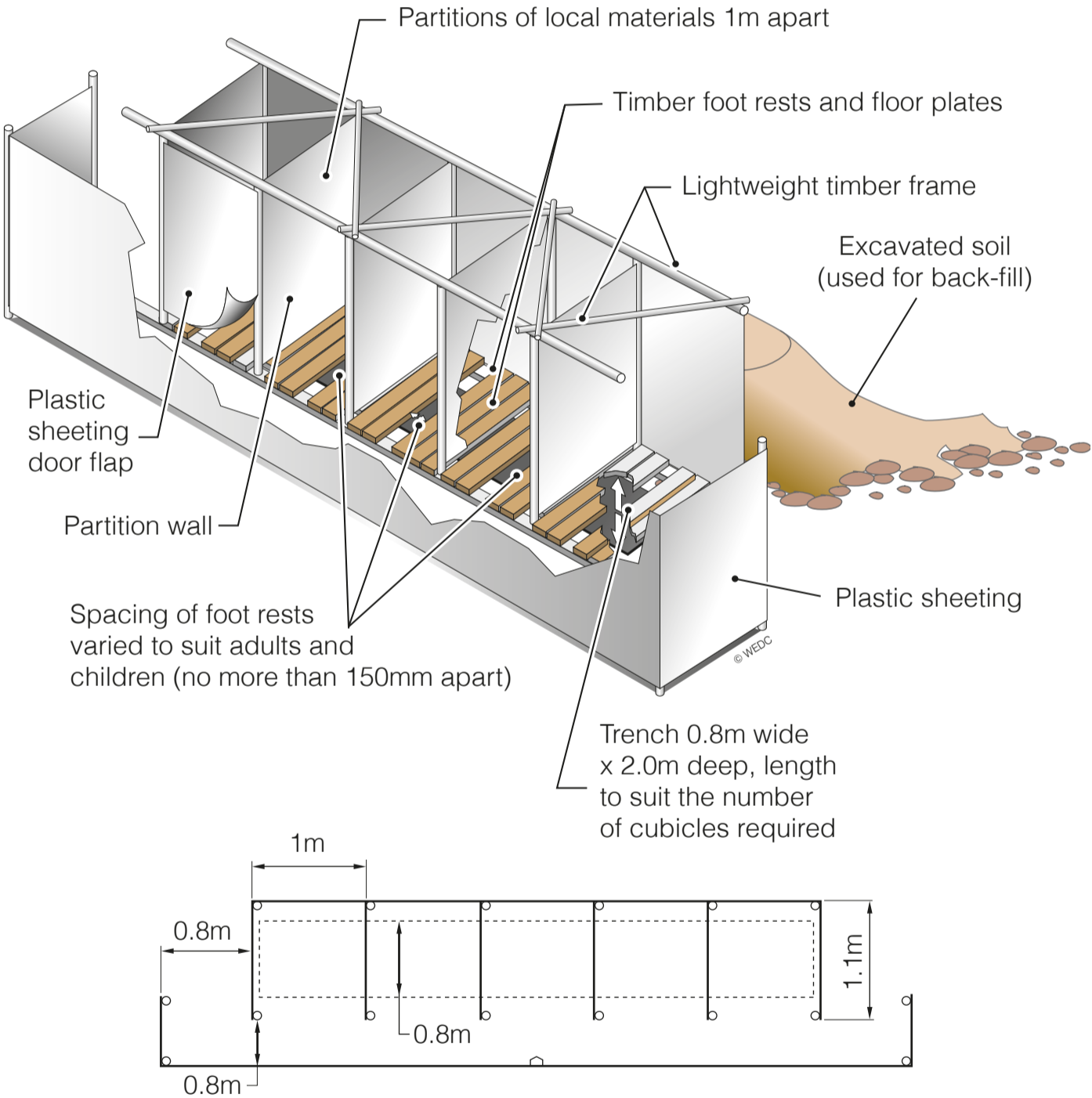
Deep trench latrines in emergencies

Deep trench latrines are often constructed in the immediate stage of an emergency and will be appropriate if there are sufficient tools, materials and human resources available. These involve the siting of several cubicles above a single trench which is used to collect excreta. However, care should be taken not to provide too many latrines side by side. The recommended maximum length of trench is 6 metres, providing six cubicles.

Trenches should be 0.8-0.9m wide and at least the top 0.5m of the pit should be lined to ensure that the trench remains stable. There are a number of different pit-lining materials that can be used including concrete, bricks, blocks, sandbags, and timber.

After the trench has been dug, the quickest option is to put self-supporting plastic slabs straight over the trench. If slabs are not available, then wooden planks can be secured across the trench until proper wooden or concrete slabs can be made. The trench should be covered with planks leaving out every third or fourth plank, through which people defecate. Planks should overlap each side of the trench by at least 15cm. Ideally, all designs should be discussed with the community beforehand – and should take into account the safety of women and children and elderly or disabled people.

The latrine superstructure can be made from local materials, such as grass matting, cloth or wood, or plastic sheeting (though this often makes the interior very hot). The emphasis should be on using materials which are readily available and that can be applied rapidly. Some agencies have rapid-response kits for slabs and superstructures which can be used where there are few resources locally.



Advantages: Cheap; quick to construct; no water needed for operation; easily understood.

Constraints: Unsuitable where water-table is high, soil is too unstable to dig or ground is very rocky; odour problems; cleaning and maintenance of communal trench latrines are often poorly carried out by users.

Source: HARVEY, P. A. 2007. *Excreta Disposal in Emergencies: A field manual*. Loughborough, UK: WEDC, Loughborough University