



ENCAP Visual Field Guide: TOILETS/LATRINES

for quick identification of serious environmental concerns in small-scale sanitation activities

About the ENCAP Visual Field Guide Series

ENCAP Visual Field Guides are intended for use during field visits by USAID and Implementing Partner staff who are not environmental specialists.

They are intended to ensure that the most common serious environmental deficits in activity design and management are quickly and easily identified for corrective action.

Note that an activity may be subject to environmental design and management conditions specified in its Environmental Assessment or Initial Environmental Examination but not captured in this document.

The field guides complement the more detailed guidance found in USAID's *Environmental Guidelines for Small Scale Activities in Africa*,

Consult the *Guidelines* for guidance regarding remedies, mitigation and corrective actions.

The *Guidelines* are available at www.encapafrika.org/egssaa.htm.

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PROBLEMS. A "YES" answer to any of the following indicates an environmental deficit in activity design or management. For USAID-funded activities, corrective action will be required. Notify the Chief of Party and the USAID Project Manager.

1. Do latrines seem abandoned/overgrown/unused? Are human feces evident in nearby field or brush?

YES



Issue: Unused latrines mean that human wastes and the pathogens they contain are being disposed into the general environment where they can contaminate water sources or be spread by insect, human or animal vectors.

NO

2. Is there overflow or seepage around latrines or septic tanks?

YES



Issue: Overflow/seepage means that the toilet/latrine is failing in its basic function: to prevent unprocessed wastes and the pathogens they contain from entering the general environment.

NO

3. Are insects able to freely enter and leave the pit or tank?

YES



Issue: Insects can spread pathogens contained in latrine pits/tanks, spreading oral-fecal route disease. Open pit designs (left photo) facilitate this, as do broken screens on the vent stacks of VIP-type latrines (right photo).

NO

4. Are handwashing stations lacking? Is water or soap missing at handwashing stations?

YES



Issue: Containing pathogens requires sound latrine choice/design AND handwashing.

NO

(At left, handwashing station is missing soap. At right, latrine lacks handwashing station)

Checklist of some key risk factors for poor utilization

Toilets/latrines only safeguard environment & public health if they are used. Here are some key risk factors for poor utilization.

Yes answers to these questions merit follow-up by the Chief of Party and the USAID Project Manager.

Dirty toilets/latrines?

Both children and adults will avoid dirty toilets/latrines. Latrine squat holes should be cleaned daily.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Are the latrines dirty? | Y | N |
| If no, do you have reason to believe the recent cleaning is unusual/exceptional?* | Y | N |

*often facilities are cleaned prior to inspection. Try to ascertain if cleaning is regular/reliable.

Overgrown approach path?

Particularly at night, an overgrown approach path is a strong disincentive to toilet/latrine use.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Is the approach path unworn or overgrown? | Y | N |
| If the approach path is clear, does it seem to have been cleared just prior to your visit?* | Y | N |

*May often be judged by length of cuttings on the path and the stalk/trunk diameter of cut brush.

No child-sized toilets/latrines?

Children will avoid latrines that are dark, have handles or locks placed for adult use, or have adult-sized squat holes.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| If the toilet/latrine installation is intended for use by small children, are at least some of the latrines child-sized? | Y | N |
|--|---|---|

5. Are latrine waste bins being dumped near/around the latrine? Is pump-out or other waste disposed off-site in an uncontrolled manner?

| | |
|-----|--|
| YES |  |
| NO | |

Issue: Introduces wastes and the pathogens they contain into the general environment, where they can contaminate water sources or be spread by insects or other vectors.

Note: check behind the latrine.

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 6. Are specific groups such as women, young children, or particular ethnic or religious minorities) refusing to use latrines? | YES | NO |
| →Issue: Human wastes are being disposed in an uncontrolled way | | |

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS. A "YES" answer to any of the following indicates that an environmental concern MAY exist; follow-up is required. Notify the Chief of Party and the USAID Project Manager.

1. Is there an open-bottom pit latrine or septic soakaway within 30m of a shallow well, stream or pond providing drinking water?

| | |
|-----|---|
| YES |  |
| NO | |

Issue: High possibility that the latrine/toilet is contaminating drinking water.

Note: look beyond site boundaries. As in the picture, trees and buildings can obscure line-of-sight.

2. Are nearby surface waters overgrown with aquatic plants/algae?

| | |
|-----|--|
| YES |  |
| NO | |

Issue: May indicate that toilets/latrines are contaminating surface waters. If so, shallow groundwater is also likely to be contaminated.

(photo: www.play-with-water.ch)

| | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 3. Do the latrines smell notably bad? Are there complaints of bad smells around latrines? | YES | NO |
| Issue: If not due to poor cleaning, may indicate over-full pits, overly high water table, broken vent stacks, or other issues that affect the latrine's ability to contain or process wastes/pathogens. | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4. Are children getting water-borne illnesses more frequently and/or more severely than in the past? | | |
| Issue: Indicates worsening water contamination, sanitation facilities are one possible source. | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 5. Is there standing or stagnant water around latrines? | | |
| Issue: Indicates a high water table and thus high probability of groundwater contamination; also increases the number of insect vectors, increasing risks to latrine users. | | |

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|--|--|--|
| 6. Has drinking water from sources nearest the latrine/toilet become off-color or developed a bad smell or taste? | | |
| Issue: Indicates new water contamination; sanitation facilities are one possible source. | | |