



# VISUAL FIELD GUIDE

## About the Visual Field Guide Series

Visual Field Guides are intended for use during field visits by USAID and implementing partner staff.

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.

The field guides complement the more detailed guidance found in USAID's Environmental Guidelines: [www.usaid.gov/environmental-procedures/sectoral-environmental-social-best-practices](http://www.usaid.gov/environmental-procedures/sectoral-environmental-social-best-practices).

For the Visual Field Guides landing page, go to [www.usaid.gov/environmental-procedures/sectoral-environmental-social-best-practices/visual-field-guides](http://www.usaid.gov/environmental-procedures/sectoral-environmental-social-best-practices/visual-field-guides).

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Toilets/Latrines

A GUIDE FOR QUICK IDENTIFICATION OF SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN SMALL-SCALE SANITATION ACTIVITIES

**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.



<p><b>1. Do latrines seem abandoned/overgrown/unused? Are human feces evident in nearby field or brush?</b></p> <p><i>Issue: Results in the disposal of human waste and its pathogens into the general environment, where they can contaminate water sources, be spread by insect vectors, etc.</i></p>		<p><b>YES</b></p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p><b>NO</b></p>
<p><b>2. Is there overflow or seepage around latrines or septic tanks?</b></p> <p><i>Issue: Indicates that the toilet/latrine is failing in its basic function: to prevent unprocessed waste and the pathogens it contains from entering the general environment.</i></p>		<p><b>YES</b></p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p><b>NO</b></p>
<p><b>3. Are insects able to freely enter and leave the pit or tank?</b></p> <p><i>Issue: Contributes to the spread of disease via the fecal-oral route.</i></p> <p><i>The photos depict latrines that allow insect entry. The left photo shows an open pit design. The right photo shows broken screens on the vent stack of a VIP-type latrine.</i></p>		<p><b>YES</b></p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p><b>NO</b></p>
<p><b>4. Are there no or too few handwashing stations? Do they lack water or soap?</b></p> <p><i>Issue: Results in spread of pathogens. (Sound latrine design and handwashing help contain the spread of pathogens.)</i></p> <p><i>The left photo shows a handwashing station that lacks soap. The right photo shows a latrine without a handwashing station.</i></p>		<p><b>YES</b></p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p><b>NO</b></p>

## Checklist: Key Risk Factors for Poor Latrine Utilization

Toilets/latrines only safeguard the environment and public health if they are used—and used properly. The following key risk factors indicate poor utilization.

“Yes” answers to these questions merit follow-up from 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?	YES NO
If no, do you have reason to believe the recent cleaning is unusual/exceptional?*	YES NO

\*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 strongly disincentivizes toilet/latrine use.


Is the approach path unworn or overgrown?	YES NO
If the approach path is clear, does it seem to have been received a long-overdue clearing just prior to your visit?*	YES NO

\*You may be able to judge this by the 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.

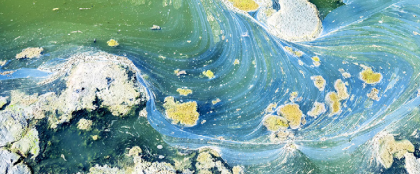
Are there only adult-sized toilets/latrines (even if the installation is also intended for use by small children)?	YES NO
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<b>5. Are latrine waste bins being dumped near/around the latrine? Is pump-out or other waste disposed off-site in an uncontrolled manner?</b>	YES NO
<p><i>Issue: Introduces waste and the pathogens they contain into the general environment, where they can contaminate water sources, be spread by insect vectors, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Note: Check behind the latrine.</i></p> 	

<b>6. Are specific groups (women, young children, ethnic groups, etc.) refusing to use latrines?</b>	YES NO
<i>Issue: Results in uncontrolled disposal of human waste.</i>	

**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. ↓

<b>1. Is there an open-bottom pit latrine or septic tank soakaway within 30 meters of a shallow well, stream, or pond providing drinking water?</b>	YES NO
<p><i>Issue: Increases risk that latrine/toilet contaminates drinking water.</i></p> <p><i>Note: Look beyond the site boundaries. As shown in the picture, trees and buildings can obscure the line of sight.</i></p> 	

<b>2. Are nearby surface waters overgrown with aquatic plants/algae?</b>	YES NO
<p><i>Issue: May indicate that toilets/latrines are contaminating nearby surface waters. If so, shallow groundwater is also likely to be contaminated.</i></p> 	

<b>3. Do the latrines smell notably bad? Are there complaints of bad smells around latrines?</b>	YES NO
<i>Issue: If not due to poor cleaning, may indicate an overfull pit, overly-high water table, broken vent stack, or another issue that affects the latrine's ability to contain or process waste/pathogens.</i>	

<b>4. Are children getting water-borne illnesses more frequently and/or more severely than in the past?</b>	YES NO
<i>Issue: Indicates worsening water contamination; sanitation facilities are one possible source.</i>	

<b>5. Is there standing or stagnant water around latrines?</b>	YES NO
<i>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.</i>	

<b>6. Has drinking water from sources nearest to the latrine/toilet become off-color or developed a bad smell or taste?</b>	YES NO
<i>Issue: Indicates new water contamination; sanitation facilities are one possible source.</i>	