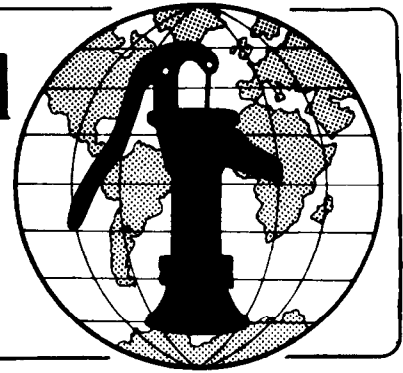


# Water for the World



## Operating and Maintaining Privies Technical Note No. SAN. 1.0.1

A privy consists of a pit to hold excreta, a slab with a squatting hole or a seat and pedestal, and a shelter to give the user privacy. There is little operation of a privy except for using it. Maintaining a privy involves cleaning the slab weekly, repairing the privy as needed, and eventually filling the pit with soil and moving the slab and shelter to a new pit.

Routine maintenance of a privy is important, because a poorly maintained privy can become unsightly, smelly, unsanitary, and a breeding place for flies. This technical note describes how to operate and maintain a privy.)

### Useful Definition

EXCRETA - Human body wastes.

### Materials Needed

For operating a privy: lid; anal cleansing materials; and bucket of water for a pour-flush privy.

For cleaning a privy: brush; mop or palm fronds, bucket, and soapy water; or ashes and whisk broom.

For repairing a privy: shovel; the same tools and materials needed to construct the privy shelter and slab, that is, hammer, saw, nails, boards, fly-proof screen, bamboo, wire, bricks, and mortar.

For moving a privy: shovels; cart and draft animals for moving the slab; tools for disassembling the shelter.

### Operating a Privy

Be certain the privy has a lid over the squatting hole or the seat and pedestal, anal cleansing materials, and a box or jar of ashes or dry soil. After each use of the privy, use a small can or coconut shell to sprinkle ashes or soil through the hole. This will help eliminate odors and prevent fly-breeding. See Figure 1. If it is a pour-flush toilet, water must be readily available. The easiest way to take care of this is to keep a bucket in the shelter. Users should be taught to pour enough water into the pour-flush bowl after each use to flush the contents of the bowl into the pit and to replace the water seal. The lid should be put back on after every use to keep flies and odors out of the shelter and the shelter door, if there is one, should be kept closed at all times. Re-supply the privy with anal cleansing materials and water as needed.

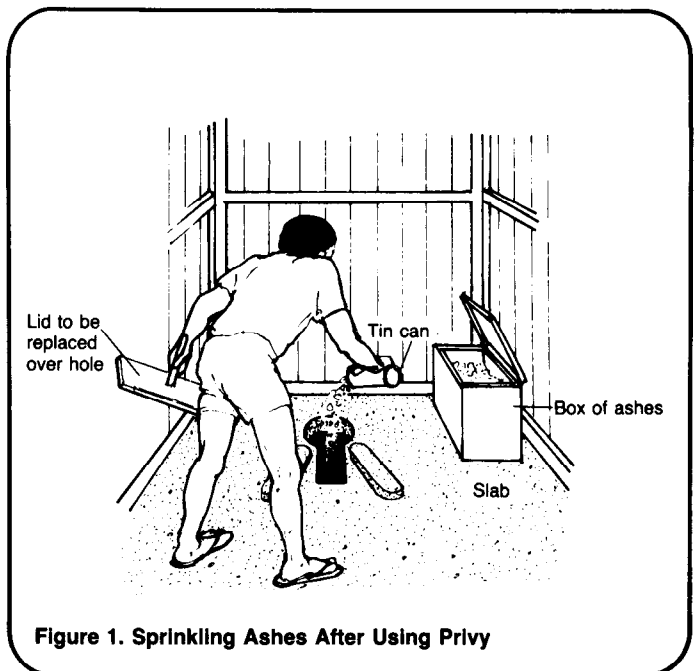


Figure 1. Sprinkling Ashes After Using Privy



Figure 2. Cleaning Privy Slab

### Cleaning a Privy

Clean the privy slab at least once a week. Keep a brush in the shelter to clean the squatting hole or seat. Wash the slab with a mop or palm fronds and soapy water, if it is available, as shown in Figure 2. If water and a mop are unavailable or unacceptable, sprinkle ashes on the slab to absorb moisture and excreta. Then brush or sweep the dirty ashes into the hole.

### Repairing a Privy

Inspect the privy slab, the shelter, and the grounds around the privy at least once a month. Examine the slab for cracks, excessive wear, or other damage. Repair minor damage at once with the same materials used to construct the slab. If there appears to be major damage, consult the project designer or the person who supervised construction before attempting repairs.

Examine the lid. If it no longer completely covers the hole due to damage or excessive wear, repair it or replace it with a new one.

Examine the inside and outside of the shelter, including the walls, roof, door and hinges, vent pipe, fly-proof screens, and so on. Check for damage or excessive wear. Repair minor damage at once with the same materials used for construction as shown in Figure 3.

Look for signs of termites getting into the shelter where it touches the ground. If termites are found, they must be killed or they will eat any parts of the wooden shelter they can reach. If there are not many termites, large amounts of boiling water may be effective in killing them. Scrape away the tops of the tunnels they have made

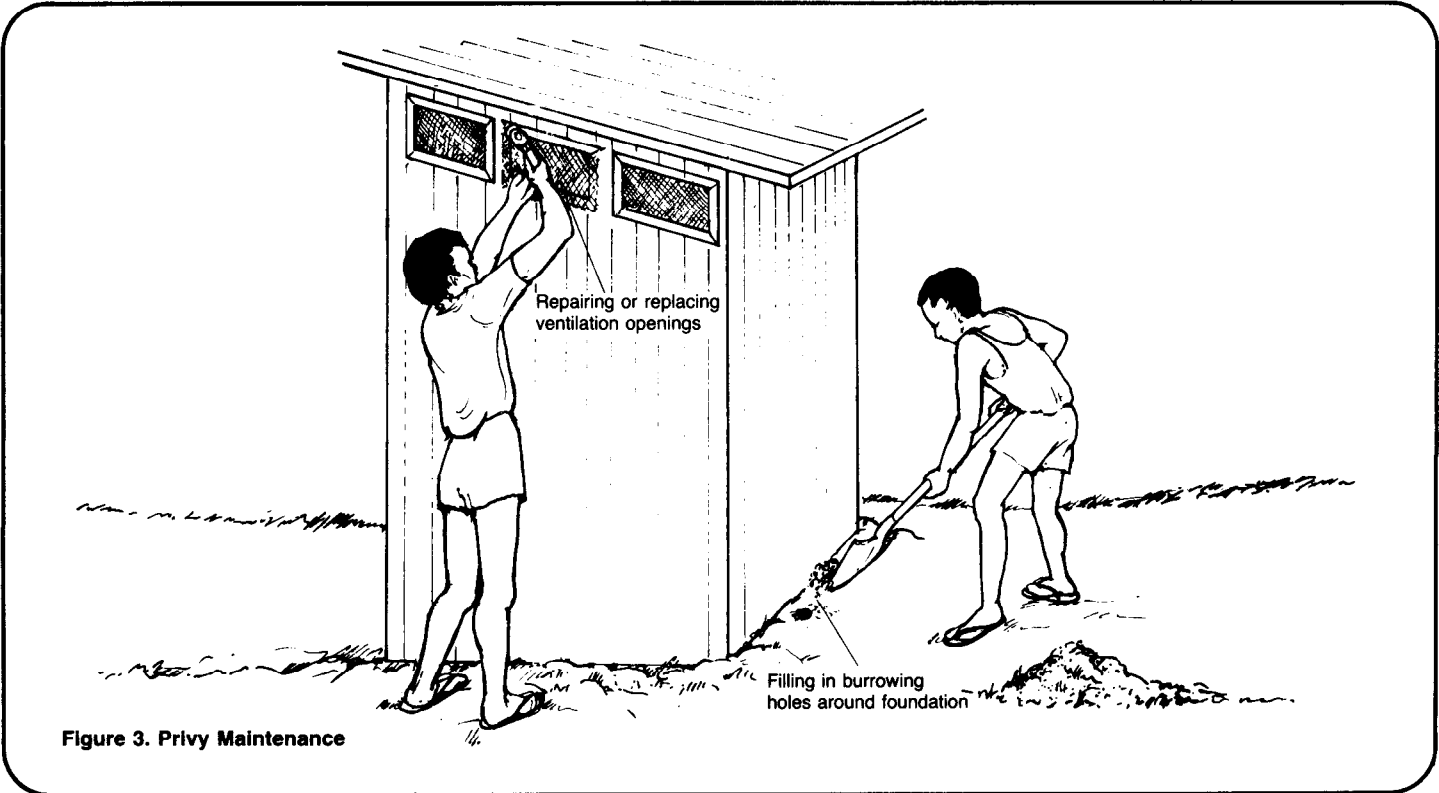


Figure 3. Privy Maintenance

in the wood and pour the water along the tunnels. If the termite infestation is large and they have burrowed deep into the wood, a chemical will be needed to kill them. Termites are very sensitive to drying, so if their tunnels are exposed to the air during a dry period, they may be killed. This method is of no use in hot, rainy weather.

Examine the ground around the privy for erosion caused by surface water or holes caused by animals digging. Fill in holes with soil. If necessary, dig shallow trenches or build small dams to divert surface water away from the privy site.

### Moving a Privy

When the contents of the pit reach 0.5-1.0m below the privy slab, begin preparations for a new pit or another excreta disposal method. The site, size, and dimensions of the new pit should be determined by the project designer (see "Designing Pits for Privies," SAN.1.D.2).

When the contents of the pit are within 0.5m of the privy slab, the pit must be abandoned. Remove the slab and the shelter. Fill in the pit with soil and mound about 0.6m to allow for settling as shown in Figure 4. After a few weeks plant vegetation over the pit site.

Depending on the condition they are in, the slab and shelter may be used for the new privy. Four to six people can load the slab on a cart and haul it to the new pit. Or, place round poles under the slab to act as rollers and drag it to the new site if it is nearby. Take the shelter down and reassemble it over the new pit and slab. If this is not possible, use salvageable parts of the old shelter to construct or repair the new shelter.

The cleaning and maintenance of a privy may be done by the privy users or by a designated worker who may care for several privies. Keep a maintenance record similar to Table 1 showing dates, locations of privies, and tasks.

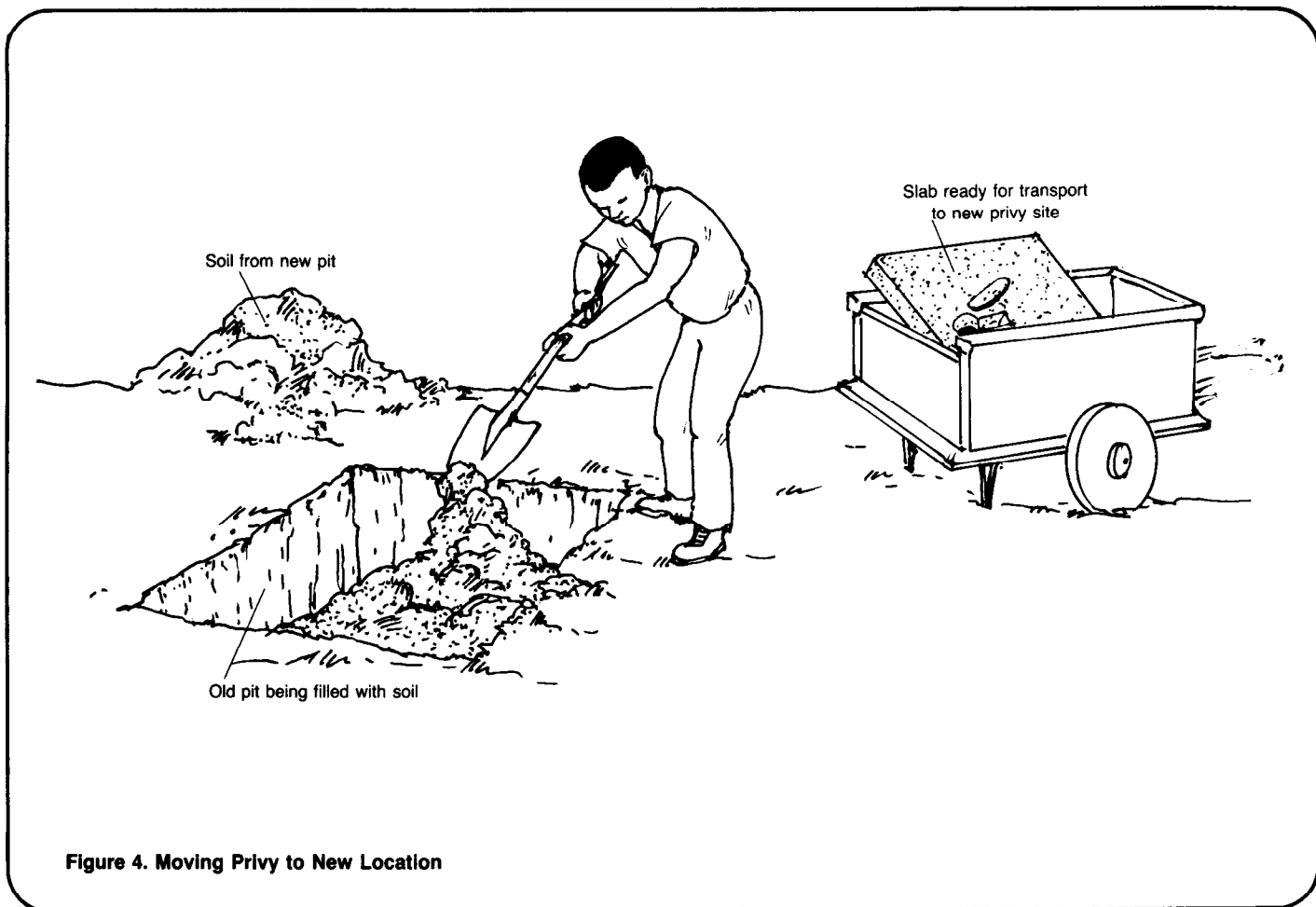


Figure 4. Moving Privy to New Location

Table 1. Sample Maintenance Record for Privies

Date	Location	Task
4 May '82	School	Cleaned three privies. Inspected. Okay.
5 May '82	Mendoza house	Cleaned privy. Inspected privy and grounds. Repaired screens.
5 May '82	N'Kruma house	Privy cleaned by family. Inspected privy. Okay.
7 May '82	Nixon house	Cleaned privy. Inspected privy and grounds. Filled in hole near privy. Repaired lid and door.
9 May '82	Al Hafar house	Cleaned privy. Inspected privy. Okay. Contents of pit about 1.0m from slab. Notified project designer.
11 May '82	School	Cleaned three privies.

**Technical Notes** are part of a set of "Water for the World" materials produced under contract to the U.S. Agency for International Development by National Demonstration Water Project, Institute for Rural Water, and National Environmental Health Association. Artwork was done by Redwing Art Service. Technical Notes are intended to provide assistance to a broad range of people with field responsibility for village water supply and sanitation projects in the developing nations. For more detail on the purpose, organization and suggestions for use of Technical Notes, see the introductory Note in the series, titled "Using 'Water for the World' Technical Notes." Other parts of the "Water for the World" series include a comprehensive Program Manual and several Policy Perspectives. Further information on these materials may be obtained from the Development Information Center, Agency for International Development, Washington, D.C., 20523, U.S.A.