

Female-friendly public and community toilets in Tanzania: an assessment in Babati Town



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◀ **Photo 1:**
Public toilet
at the old bus
stand, Central
Business
District,
Babati

Key points

- Five public and community toilets exist in Babati town – three of these had an “average” female-friendly rating and the other two, in the market place, were “very bad”.
- Analysis is required to determine if more public and community toilets are needed in currently unserved areas.
- Toilets in the market areas were found to be very poorly maintained.
- No assessed toilets met accessibility requirements for people with disabilities, or contained menstrual hygiene products within the facility itself.
- A supply of water at all toilet facilities is an essential element for hygiene and female-friendly factors, and this should be prioritised in existing and future toilet blocks.
- Some simple and low-cost modifications are possible to make significant improvements in the short term such as hooks, ledges and accessibility rails.

Introduction

Sanitation is a basic human right. Sustainable Development Goal 6 calls for universal access to sanitation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. However, many people, in particular women and girls, often still cannot go to the toilet when and where they need or want. In 2018 WaterAid, in collaboration with UNICEF and Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), published [*Female-friendly public and community toilets: a guide for planners and decision makers*](#) to address this gap and to offer guidance for meeting the requirements of women and girls. The guide provides detailed information on the essential and desirable features that make toilets female-friendly, and these fall under the following headings:

1. Safe and private
2. Cater for menstrual and other hygiene management requirements
3. Accessible to all
4. Affordable and available when needed
5. Well-maintained and managed
6. Meet the requirements of caregivers and parents

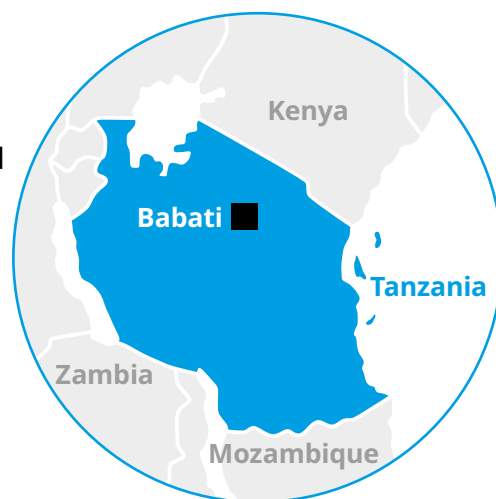
Following this, WaterAid Tanzania and Babati Town Council commissioned an assessment of public and community toilets in Babati town to identify the location of these facilities, and to assess their status, with the aim of assessing the current situation and highlighting the gaps for local-level planners and decision-makers to focus on.



Profile of Babati town

The town of Babati is one of the fastest growing in Tanzania, and is situated within the East African Rift Valley. It has an estimated population of 110,000 people living within an area of 460km².

The town is undergoing a process of rapid urbanisation, and services such as water and sanitation cannot keep up. Despite a national campaign to improve sanitation, pit latrines account for 42% of households in Babati, followed by flush or pour flush in 32% of households.¹



¹ Mshida H, Malima G, Machunda R, Njau K.N., et al., (In press). Sanitation and Hygiene Practices in Small Towns in Tanzania: The case of Babati District, Manyara region. *American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.*, 00(0), 2020, pp.1-9 Available at: DOI 10.4269/ajtmh.19-0551.

Methodology (including limitations)

The public and community toilets were identified through discussions with district and ward health officials, and through a thorough review of public health records. A physical assessment was then carried out, by male and female consultants, of each of the identified toilet facilities. At each facility the caretakers were interviewed and the results from this, plus observations, were recorded into the KoBo Toolbox.² The checklist used to record observations was derived from the [Female-friendly public and community toilet guide](#), in the absence of specific national guidance. Each item on the checklist was given equal weighting, with the total score being converted to a Likert scale of 1 to 5 for comparison across the categories.

One thing not specifically mentioned in the guide, but which WA Tanzania assessed was working conditions for operators – hence adding a seventh category for the assessment. Information about what was included can be accessed in the Tanzania Full Assessment Report, available here: <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/city-and-town-wide-assessments-of-female-friendly-public-and-community-toilets>.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in place during interviews, it was not possible to hold key informant interviews or focus group discussions with the users themselves as originally intended.

Public toilets: toilets built in public places such as markets and bus stands that are intended to be available for use by all individuals.

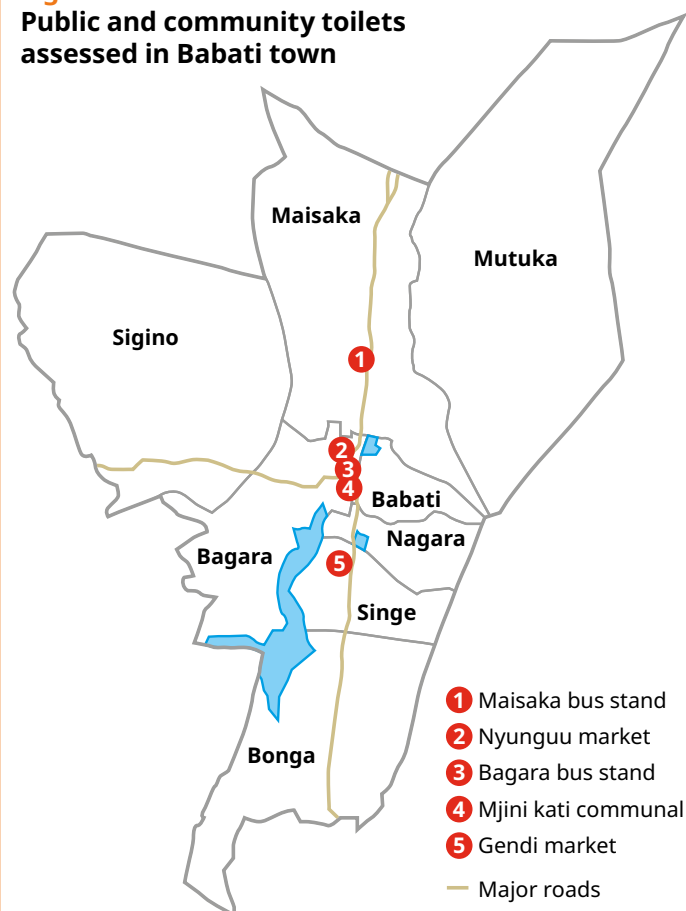
Community toilets: toilets constructed in community areas by a particular community or group of people that are intended to be available for use by a defined group of people only.

Summary of results

Four public toilets and one community toilet were identified for analysis in Babati town. These were all located along the main road.

The table overleaf shows the scores under the headings described in the introduction.

Figure 1:
Public and community toilets assessed in Babati town



² KoBo is a free open-source tool for mobile data collection.

Each element is standardised to a score out of five. The table is colour-coded for ease of reading with green being good, orange average and red bad or very bad.

	Facility name ► ▼ Facility features	Bagara bus stand	Mjini kati communal	Maisaka bus stand	Gendi market	Nyunguu market
1.	Safe and private	4.4	4.3	4.4	3.8	4.2
2.	Cater for menstrual and other hygiene management requirements (MH and hygiene)	3.7	3.5	3.3	0.0	0.4
3.	Accessible to all	1.3	1.3	0.8	1.3	1.3
4.	Affordable and available when needed	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
5.	Well-maintained and managed	4.1	5.0	5.0	0.9	0.5
6.	Meet the requirements of caregivers and parents	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
7.	Factors affecting operator's job performance	2.1	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.0
	Likert score	2.6	2.5	2.4	1.3	1.3
	Status	Average	Average	Average	Very bad	Very bad

In summary:

- **All the toilets were located well**, with **solid structures**, and most had a separate entrance for males and females, but the toilets in the markets only had male attendants which may make women feel insecure. (1)³
- The toilets with handwashing facilities scored well in – the two market toilets didn't have any provision for handwashing and did not have any nearby access to sanitary products. (2)
- The [Female-friendly toilet guide](#) requires that all toilets are accessible to all – **none of the toilets assessed had a separate cubicle for people living with disabilities**, and none of them had any accessibility aids such as handrails, a non-slip floor or seated toilets. (3)

³ Numbers refer to facility features (from table above).

- Fees for all the toilets were affordable and equal for men and women, but there were no additional toilets for women to take account of the extra time and frequency women often require (4)
- The cleanliness of the toilets varied hugely but it was the Babati Town Council run market toilets that scored worst here (5)
- As noted in the [Female-friendly toilet guide](#), women are often caregivers or with children, therefore toilets should have space for children to enter as well as facilities for changing babies or for children to wash their hands. None of the toilets in Babati had addressed this in their design. (6)
- For a public or community toilet to be well cared-for there must be certain conditions in place for the operator such as cleaning materials, good employment policies and personal protective equipment. Again the market-based toilets scored badly here, with the other three achieving an average score. (7)

There were some points of commonality which might be a reflection on the methodology and should be discussed before action is taken:

- No toilets were open 24 hours a day as required by the scoring matrix – the [Female-friendly toilet guide](#) states that opening times should be adapted to community needs and activity area, so it may be that the current opening hours are sufficient.
- None of the toilets had menstrual hygiene products available, meaning they scored zero for that section, but they are all within about 30m of a shop where materials can be purchased. Again, it should be determined if that is sufficient in this case.
- All toilet blocks had equal numbers of men and women's cubicles: the guide specifies additional cubicles for women due to the amount of time a cubicle is required by the different sexes. Queues and waiting times should be analysed to determine if additional female cubicles are needed.

► **Photo 2:**

The cubicles of toilets with solid doors to ensure safety and privacy at Maisaka main bus stand (the hand washing stations are outside the cubicles on the corridor)



Recommended quick wins and long-term actions

There are some simple and low-cost improvements that could be made to make the public and community toilets more female-friendly in the short term:

Short term	Medium term	Long term
Some areas have no access to a public toilet, so plans should be made to rectify this if it is determined they are needed. These should be prioritised starting with settlements with the least household sanitation coverage and worst indicators for nutrition and gender-based violence	Additional cubicle added to blocks for people living with disabilities. This cubicle should be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, and should be fitted out with accessibility aids (see Female-friendly toilet guide for more information). This cubicle could also double as a caregivers' cubicle, large enough for two people and with the addition of a baby changing station	Monitor whether toilets are and remain female-friendly. Apply any necessary corrective action
Handwashing facilities should be made available – at the very minimum these should be in each toilet block, but ideally there should be water access in each cubicle for managing menstruation	Design and implement a fair working policy for toilet attendants, including regular breaks, protective materials and a chair or bench for their comfort	Babati Town Council, or the ministry responsible, should seek to develop gender and inclusion guidelines for future public infrastructure, and this assessment should be repeated on a regular basis
Install hooks and ledges in cubicles and a mirror above existing handwashing facilities to improve useability for women		Advocate for public toilets to become a service provided by CCC instead of an income-generating initiative
Add rails to existing cubicles to improve accessibility for the elderly and people living with disabilities. A seated toilet could also be added to one of the cubicles		
Frequently monitor and inspect the facilities and the performance of operators, particularly in the two market-based toilets which were found to be unclean and poorly maintained		

Acknowledgements

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Additional information:

- The full report of this assessment can be accessed at:
<https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/city-and-town-wide-assessments-of-female-friendly-public-and-community-toilets>
- The *Female-friendly public and community toilets: a guide for planners and decision makers* can be accessed at:
<https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/female-friendly-public-and-community-toilets-a-guide-for-planners-and-decision-makers>
- This assessment was part of a series of assessments done across four countries – Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Tanzania. The summary of each country assessment as well as a four country overview report can be accessed at:
<https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/female-friendly-public-and-community-toilets-a-guide-for-planners-and-decision-makers>
- An assessment tool to help assess the female-friendliness of public and community toilets can be accessed on the mWater WASH data management platform (free and open access) at:
<https://formlink.mwater.co/#/90ec9f061ae041c583643de0fea05095/409d75577b6f460ea13a167facec5678?branding=mwater>



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