

GUIDANCE K

Housing and Living Conditions

Version 1



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1. PURPOSE

Rainforest Alliance is a growing network of people who are inspired and committed to working together to achieve our mission of conserving biodiversity and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. The rights and well-being of people are key to the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard on which certification is based. Human rights must be respected on Rainforest Alliance certified farms, to make them better and safer places on which to live and work. Farmers are required to provide safe and decent housing and living conditions for workers, and access to clean drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare.

This guidance provides explanations of terms used to help Certificate Holders (CH) interpret the objective of the core requirements. For some of the terms or aspects of the requirement, the guidance gives benchmarks to concretely help correct implementation and assess compliance.

According to the Office of The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the "right to housing should not be interpreted narrowly, for example, as four walls and a roof. Rather, it is the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity."

International Finance Corporation guidance states that, "generally, workers are housed by their employers in cases where, either the number or the type of workers required cannot be sourced from or accommodated within local communities. Thus, provision of workers' accommodation is often associated with the importation of an external workforce into an area. This can occur because the local labor supply or skills base is inadequate, because the workers are simply not available due to the remote location of the worksite or the particular skills required or because labor requirements can only be satisfied by migrant workers due to the nature of the work or the working conditions. "

Workers living at the worksite on property owned or controlled by the employer tend to be less integrated into the local community, and more dependent on the employer. However, certain circumstances, such as when an undertaking is located far from normal centers of population, or where the nature of the employment requires that the worker should be available at short notice, it may be mutually beneficial for the employer to provide housing for his or her workers. In cases where employers do not provide housing directly to workers, employers are encouraged to help their workers to obtain housing, such as through private agencies, public housing, or cooperatives, or other schemes.

There is a range of different type of housing provided to agricultural workers, from temporary camps to temporary housing. The standard includes different type of requirements for the different settings:

- Large farms (or individual certification)
- Smallholder farms
- Temporary workers in off-property housing
- Housing that accommodates workers and their families or dormitories in which several workers live in the same building/rooms

In considering worker housing, it is important to first be aware of the international, national and local regulatory framework. At a general level, several international instruments recognize a right to an adequate standard of housing for everyone or for specific categories of the population as part of respecting human rights.¹¹¹ For workers, the recognition of such a right has been included in ILO Conventions and Recommendations for both Plantations and for Safety and Health in Agriculture, and in the ILO Recommendation 115 on Workers' Housing (1961) in particular. Although the latter is a non-binding recommendation providing guidance on policy, legislation and practice to the State and to the national authorities in charge of housing, it offers useful guidance on what is expected from employers who provide housing to their employees, and it specifies a number of housing standards. The 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard is among others based on this Recommendation.



2. SCOPE

It is important to note that the standard does not make it mandatory for farm management to provide their workers with housing. Workers should not be required to stay in accommodation provided by the employer but should be free to choose their own if they wish to do so.

The scope of these requirements includes only:

1. **Housing and/or part of the houses provided by Management;** It does not include non-authorized extensions made by workers.
2. **Housing provided to workers and their families;** if non-workers or their families live on-site, this requirement does not apply to their housing. For example retired workers who have, according to national legislation the right to remain living on the farm premises, would not be included in the scope of this standard.

The standard also includes requirement 1.2.1, which stipulates that

“Management complies with applicable laws and collective bargaining agreements (CBA) within the scope of the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard. In the case that an applicable law or CBA is stricter than a criterion in the standard, such law or CBA will prevail unless such law has become obsolete. In the case that an applicable law or CBA is less strict than a criterion in the standard, the criterion in the standard will prevail, unless the criterion explicitly allows for such law or CBA to apply.”

This requirement applies to laws on housing and living conditions.

3. ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED AND REGISTRATION

First of all, the CH should verify if housing for workers is needed at all. If needed, it is important to see how many habitable areas might be needed at the peak of the year, and to identify if there is any gap with the amount of habitable areas available on the farm. In order to identify this, the below steps can be taken.

Steps the CH can take to estimate whether housing on-site is needed:

1. Abide by the Initial principles (based on ILO workers' housing recommendation 115):
 - It is generally not desirable for employers to provide housing for their workers directly, and employers should use alternatives where possible. If there are no alternatives, specific attention should be paid to renting arrangements, workers' rights, and housing standards. In addition, the possibility of worker-occupants acquiring, for a fair price, ownership of housing provided by the employer should also be examined.
 - Renting arrangements should be fair. Adequate and decent housing should not cost the worker more than a reasonable proportion of their income and should never include a speculative profit.
2. Identify applicable laws or Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) on the area of housing. Specifically identify how much housing they require you to provide, under which circumstances and with which conditions.
3. Identify all currently habitable areas on the farm as per standard requirement 1.2.9. A habitable area is a space within a building or structure intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking, or eating. Bathrooms, laundry rooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces, accessory buildings, and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.



4. Identify if during the year there are high labor-intensive periods in the risk assessment question (1.3.1). Estimate how many workers might be needed in this period. Will those workers be found in the area, or will workers from other regions need to be hired, or any other workers that might require to be housed on the farm? Is enough off-site housing available for workers coming from further away?
5. Compare the assessment of housing needs with the actual number of workers on-site and the data collected in the Management chapter (1.2.5), on housing address, number of family members and year of birth of the family members, to assess if sufficient housing is provided.

NB: please consult the Rainforest Alliance Certification and Auditing Rules for the binding timelines within which non-conformities need to be closed.

The table below can be used to identify if there is a shortfall in housing provided:

Demographics	
Number of resident workers (permanent and temporary).	
Number of family members of resident workers.	
Housing	
Quantity of required houses.	
Quantity of houses in conformity with the standard.	
Quantity of houses not in conformity with the standard that need updating prior to audit.	
Total shortfall of housing.	
Sanitation	
Quantity of required sanitations.	
Quantity of sanitations in conformity with the standard.	
Quantity of sanitations not in conformity with the standard.	
Total shortfall of sanitation.	



4. REQUIREMENTS APPLICABLE TO LARGE FARMS AND INDIVIDUAL CERTIFICATION

CORE REQUIREMENT 5.7.1

Workers and their families that are housed or lodged on-site have safe, clean, and decent living quarters considering local conditions. This includes at least:

Location and construction:

- **Safe construction;** build on a **non-hazardous location**, structure protecting against extreme weather conditions, consisting at least of dry floor, permanent walls and in a good state of repair
- Workers/ families are informed about emergency evacuation plans
- Measures are taken to reduce the effect of extreme climate conditions such as flooding
- Fire Safety: collective housing has marked fire exits, firefighting equipment, and instructions for their use
- Avoid housing on sites subject to air pollution and surface runoff of wastewater

Health and Hygiene:

- Availability of enough safe drinking water; at least 20 liters per adult per day and within 1km/30 minutes round-trip
- Adequate sanitary and washing facilities: The number of toilets or pit latrines, urinals, handwash facilities and shower/bathroom facilities: 1 unit of each for a maximum of 15 persons. Handwash facilities must consist of a tap and basin.
- Safety and privacy of vulnerable groups are ensured, at least by well-lit and lockable facilities. Sanitary facilities are located within the same buildings, or at a safe distance from the buildings (No more than 60 meters from rooms/dormitories) and provided separately for men and women
- Adequate closed-sewage or pit latrines, sanitation and garbage disposal facilities are in place.
- Cooking areas with smoke ventilation;
- Enough lighting (daylight and artificial)
- Dry floors; raised from ground level, either of cement, stone, tile, wood, or clay (the latter only if sealed and levelled)
- Pest control; Absence of rats, mice, insects, and vermin, or conditions that favor their populations that could cause disease or carry parasites that function as vectors of diseases.

Comfort and Decency:

- Families of permanent workers with children have separate rooms from workers who are non-family members
- Workers' children live together with their parents and are not separated from them
- Workers' children living on-site are in a safe place and under the supervision of an adult during working hours
- Group accommodations for individual workers have separate rooms and separate facilities for women and men that can be locked. A separate bed for each worker is provided. There is a minimum space between beds of 1 meter. Where bunk beds are used, there must be enough clear space between the bunks of the bed, at least 0.7 meters
- Storage for the personal belongings of workers is provided, either an individual cupboard or at least 1 meter of shelf unit for each worker.
- Electricity (in-house or nearby) if available in the area

ILO Recommendation, Workers' Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115)
ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture, 2010



INTERPRETATION GUIDE FOR REQUIREMENT 5.7.1

Location and construction

Safe construction: is defined as a housing unit built on a non-hazardous location and has a structure adequate to protect its inhabitants from the extremes of climatic conditions such as rain, heat, cold and humidity. It must consist at least of a dry floor raised from ground level in cement, stone, tile or wood floor or clay; clay floors may only be accepted if sealed and leveled. Walls must be permanently built in either brick and cement, prefabricated panels, wood, clay, mud, soil, stone or metal, well-grounded and whose condition does not represent a risk to the workers. There must be a roof without leaks.

Non-hazardous location: is a location that avoids flooding and other natural hazards such as avalanches, landslides, eruptions, among others. The non-application zones for pesticides defined by the Rainforest Alliance must be respected between the house and the treated crop. Likewise, the dwellings or living areas should not be exposed to vapors of chemical substances, fuels, or other substances that are harmful to human health.

Bed arrangements and storage facilities: if the administration or the owner of the farm supply the furniture for the workers, regardless of whether they are permanent or temporary, an adequate number of beds of an appropriate size is essential to provide workers with decent, safe and hygienic conditions to rest and sleep, and to avoid overcrowded conditions. Particular attention is paid to privacy. Consideration should be given to local customs so beds may be replaced by hammocks or sleeping mats.

Benchmarks

1. A separate bed for each worker is provided. The practice of "hot-bedding" should be avoided. NB Hot-bedding is a practice whereby multiple workers share a bed(room)s in shifts. Often, the hot-bedding practice involves more occupants than is intended for the room or house.
2. Where deck bunks are used, there must be enough clear space between the bunks of the bed; the minimum acceptable is 0.7 meters.
3. Beds are not in direct contact with soil, unless this is a custom in the country or region where the farm is located, and the workers agree to be offered this type of accommodation.

Drainage: The presence of stagnant water is a factor that promotes the proliferation of potential disease vectors such as mosquitoes, flies and others, and must be avoided. To avoid the risks associated with stagnant water, drains must be cleaned and maintained at least once a year.

Benchmarks

1. The building site is adequately drained to avoid the accumulation of stagnant water.

Sanitary and toilet facilities: it is essential to allow workers to maintain a good standard of personal hygiene but also to prevent contamination and the spread of diseases that result from inadequate sanitary facilities. Sanitary and toilet facilities will always include any the following: pit latrines, toilets, urinals, washbasins, and showers. Sanitary and toilet facilities should be kept in a clean and fully working condition. Facilities should also be constructed of materials that are easily cleanable and ensure privacy.



Benchmarks

1. Sanitary and toilet facilities are constructed of materials that are easily cleanable.
2. Sanitary and toilet facilities are designed to provide workers with adequate privacy, including ceiling to floor partitions and lockable doors.
3. Sanitary and toilet facilities are not shared between men and women, except in family accommodation.

Toilet facilities: Toilet arrangements and cleanliness are essential to avoid any contamination and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Benchmarks

1. Toilet facilities are conveniently located and easily accessible, should be well lit, have good ventilation or external windows that open and close to allow ventilation.

Showers/bathrooms and other sanitary facilities: Washbasins and showers should be provided in conjunction with rooms/dormitories. These facilities must be kept in good working condition and should be cleaned by the farm management at least once a day.

The flooring for shower facilities should be of hard washable materials, damp-proof, and properly drained. Adequate private or common space must be provided for hanging, drying, and airing clothes. Suitable light and ventilation should be provided.

Handwashing, shower, and other sanitary facilities are out of the house must be at a maximum of 60 meters of distance from other facilities and from sleeping facilities.

Benchmarks

1. Shower/bathroom flooring is made of anti-slip hard washable materials.
2. An adequate number of handwash facilities are provided to workers and their families, 1 unit for a maximum of 15 persons. Handwash facilities should consist of a tap and a basin.
3. Shower/bathroom facilities are provided with a permanent supply of running water.

Water: An adequate supply of potable water must be available in the same buildings where bedrooms or dormitories are provided. Potable water must meet local or WHO drinking water standards and water quality must be monitored regularly. Depending on the local context, it could either be produced by dedicated catchment and treatment facilities or tapped from existing municipal facilities if their capacity and quality are adequate.

Benchmarks

1. Access to a supply of free drinking water is always available to workers.
2. Drinking water meets national/local or WHO drinking water standards.
3. All tanks used for the storage of drinking water are constructed and covered to prevent pollution or contamination and should be cleaned at least twice a year.
4. Drinking water quality is monitored preceding each Rainforest Alliance certification audit and any time that water contamination risks have occurred or been identified.

Wastewater and solid waste: Wastewater treatment and effluent discharge as well as solid waste treatment and disposal must comply with local laws and be adequately designed to prevent contamination of any water body, to ensure hygiene and to avoid the spread of infections and diseases, proliferation of mosquitoes, flies, rodents, and other pest vectors. Depending on the local context, treatment and disposal services can be either provided by dedicated or existing municipal facilities.



Benchmarks

1. Wastewater, sewage, food, and any other waste materials are adequately discharged, in compliance with local standards and without causing any significant impacts on neighboring residents, the natural environment or surrounding communities.
2. There must be at least 50 meters between the points where contaminated water or waste is discharged and the freshwater sources from which the farm or members of the community for human consumption is supplied.
3. Waste is segregated into decomposable/organic and non-decomposable/inorganic waste at a minimum. It is better if waste is segregated into different waste types such as glass, rubber, metal, etc.
4. Hazardous wastes that generate biological, chemical, physical, or other risks must be separated and disposed of in accordance with local legislation.
5. Specific containers for rubbish collection are provided and emptied on a regular basis. An adequate number of rubbish containers must be provided. Best practice is to provide leak-proof, non-absorbent, rust and corrosion-resistant containers protected from insects and rodents. Such containers must be emptied at regular intervals (to be determined based on temperatures and volumes generated) to avoid unpleasant odors associated with decaying organic materials.
6. Pest extermination, vector control, and disinfection are carried out throughout the living facilities in compliance with the farm's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan or local requirements. Where warranted, pest and vector monitoring should be performed on a regular basis according with the requirements of the IPM plan.



CORE REQUIREMENT 5.7.2

5.7.2 Children living on-site and of school-going age go to school. Children either:

- Go to a school at safe walking distance.
- Go to a school at reasonable traveling distance, with availability of safe transport.
- Have on-site schooling of a recognized and equivalent level.

INTERPRETATION GUIDE FOR REQUIREMENT 5.7.2

Safe walking distance and reasonable travel distance: The times and distances of the trips made by the children from their houses to the schools must be reasonable in relation to the conditions of each area, climate and communication routes, and must be compliant with relevant local law.

Benchmarks

1. The distance is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied if necessary, may walk safely.
2. A suitable school is defined as the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability, and aptitude of the child, as guided by the local/national law/guidelines.
3. If possible, children under 16 should not travel alone on the way to school through areas that put their safety at risk, such as dense forests, river crossings that lack bridges, desert areas, waste disposal areas, among others.
4. A child's home is defined as the place where he/she is habitually and normally a resident.

In the absence of local legislation, the following parameters must be respected:

Zone	Age	Maximum distance to walk per journey	Maximum time to walk per journey
Rural	5 to 10 years	0 to 3km	30min
	10 to 15 years	0 to 5km	1 hour

Source: World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 308

Safe transportation: If an employer provides transportation to workers, it must meet transportation safety standards, which include at least the following:

- A separate seat for each passenger or benches with enough space for each passenger.
- Seats that are securely attached to the vehicle.
- Vehicles must have seat belts as required by local legislation.
- If the transport has windows, these are not broken or cracked.
- All doors are properly attached.
- Proper ventilation.
- No holes or rusted areas inside the vehicle.
- The vehicle works properly and complies with local regulations regarding revision and operation authorization.

If an employer is providing an employee with transportation to a job site, the vehicle used must be properly insured and operated by a licensed driver.



5. REQUIREMENTS APPLICABLE TO SMALL FARMS AND GROUP MANAGEMENT

CORE REQUIREMENT 5.7.3

5.7.3 *Workers* and their families that are housed or lodged on-site have safe, clean and decent living quarters considering local conditions and the possibilities of each producer, and include:

- Safe accommodation; build on a non-hazardous location, structure protecting against extreme weather conditions, consisting at least of dry floor, permanent walls and a good state of repair.
- Marked evacuation routes for group accommodations.
- Protection against air pollution and surface runoff. Adequate sewage, sanitation and waste disposal facilities are in place.
- Access to safe drinking water.
- Adequate sanitary and washing facilities. Safety and privacy of vulnerable groups is ensured, at least by well-lit and lockable facilities.

ILO R115 Workers' Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115)

INTERPRETATION GUIDE FOR REQUIREMENT 5.7.3

Safe accommodation: is defined as a housing unit built on a non-hazardous location and has a structure adequate to protect its inhabitants from the extremes of climatic conditions such as rain, heat, cold and humidity. It must consist at least in a dry floor raised from ground level in cement, stone, tile or wood floor or clay; clay floors may only be accepted if sealed and leveled. Walls must be permanently built in either brick and cement, prefabricated panels, wood, clay, mud, soil, stone or metal, well-grounded and whose condition does not represent a risk to the workers. There must be a roof without leaks.

Non-hazardous location: is a location that avoids flooding and other natural hazards such as avalanches, landslides, eruptions, among others. The non-application zones for pesticides defined by the Rainforest Alliance must be respected between the house and the treated crop. Likewise, the dwellings or living areas should not be exposed to vapors of chemical substances, fuels, or other substances that are harmful to human health.

Marked evacuation route: When there is a fire or any other need for workers to evacuate the building, chaos and confusion can occur. Therefore, it is key that evacuation routes are clearly marked for all workers to be able to see. Markings should be visible and understood by all workers. Clear signs must mark all the exit routes. These marks should preferably be visible when the electricity is off.

Protection against surface runoff, sewage, or other waste:

- Wastewater and solid waste: wastewater treatment and effluent discharge, as well as solid waste treatment and disposal, must be designed to prevent contamination of any water body, to ensure hygiene and to avoid the spread of infections and diseases, proliferation of mosquitoes, flies, rodents, and other pest vectors.
- Specific containers for rubbish collection are provided and emptied on a regular basis. Such containers must be emptied at regular intervals (to be determined based on temperatures and volumes generated) to avoid unpleasant odors associated with decaying organic materials.
- There must be at least 50 meters between the points where contaminated water or waste is discharged and the freshwater sources from which the farm or members of the community for human consumption is supplied.



Safe drinking water: For small farms, if there is no access to safe public drinking water, management implements and documents a training program to instruct group members on potable water treatments through boiling, filtering, or chlorinating, and on the prevention of water contamination. Member farms must demonstrate that they implement one of these methods to ensure that the water provided to their workers is safe.

Adequate sanitary and washing facilities: It is essential to allow workers to maintain a good standard of personal hygiene but also to prevent contamination and the spread of diseases that may result from inadequate sanitary facilities. Sanitary and toilet facilities will always include any the following: pit latrines, toilets, urinals, washbasins, and showers. Sanitary and toilet facilities should be kept in a clean and fully working condition. Facilities should also be constructed of materials that are easily cleanable and ensure privacy.

6. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS FOR OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Durable building materials: Construction elements that are able to withstand wear, pressure, or damage; hardwearing for the local conditions.

Cooking facilities:

1. The cooking area must be in areas that are free of objectionable odors, dust, or other contaminants and are not subject to flooding, and have adequate drainage.
2. The cooking area should have adequate smoke ventilation to avoid smoke accumulating indoors or in the area.
3. Buildings and facilities should be of sound construction and maintained in good repair, and all construction materials should not transmit any undesirable substances to the food.
4. Buildings and facilities must provide for appropriate storage of food. Storage areas must be protected from moisture and pests and be separate from the storage of chemicals and other potential hazards.
- 5.
6. Buildings and facilities should be designed to permit easy and adequate cleaning.
7. Buildings and facilities should be designed to prevent the entrance and harboring of pests and animals.
8. Toilets, and areas where animals are kept, should be completely separated from food-handling areas. They should not open directly into food handling areas

Sealed floors: Floors that have a non-porous coating without cracks or holes to avoid an accumulation of residues, dirt, and microorganisms.



7. OBSERVATION GUIDE

The objective of this table is to provide implementers and auditors with a practical way of evaluating whether the basic requirements of habitability and hygiene of the spaces are met. The table provides a way to evaluate the main requirements for housing conditions set out in Chapter 5 of the 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard.

Themes	Factor to observe
<p>Location and construction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a flood zone, the house is built elevated from the ground level. • The houses respect the zones of non-application of pesticides in the standard and are not exposed to contamination by vapors, smoke or dust that endanger the health of the occupants of the house. • The structure of the house is solid, and its materials and design protect the inhabitants from external climatic conditions. The walls do not present cracks or inclination that represent a risk for the inhabitants. • The floors are kept dry and without areas that allow the accumulation of contaminated water or humidity.
<p>Health and hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The home environment is clean and tidy. • There is enough water for all uses in clean tanks and covered. • Direct-use treated water is stored in clean containers and covered. • There are containers with a lid to store rubbish inside of the house. • Wastewater is disposed of in a way that reduces the proliferation of diseases. • Care in the preparation and preservation of food and cookware. • The house has protection to prevent the entry of insects and rodents.
<p>Comfort and decency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are separate areas for families and individual workers. • Parents and children occupy the same housing unit. • There is a bed for each worker and the bedrooms respect the accommodation parameters of requirement 5.7.1. • Separate spaces inside the house for sleeping, cooking and social life. • Each worker has an area to store their personal belongings safely.

Adapted From: Towards Healthy Housing – Facilitator’s Guide, Pan American Health Organization.



8. PICTORIAL GUIDANCE

Poor housing conditions



Temporary worker housing constructed of non-durable materials at floor level, without ventilation or lighting, access to electricity, running water, sanitary or cooking facilities, adequate sewage, sanitation, and garbage disposal facilities.

Good housing conditions



Durable worker housing with enough ventilation and lighting, signposted, with ventilation, access to electricity and rain evacuation systems, and dry and sealed floors.



Sanitation in poor condition



Shower installation in a precarious situation. It lacks walls and a door to guarantee privacy.



Latrine without a door, and with a flooded floor without drainage, and without a door that guarantees the privacy and security of those who use it.

Sanitation in good condition

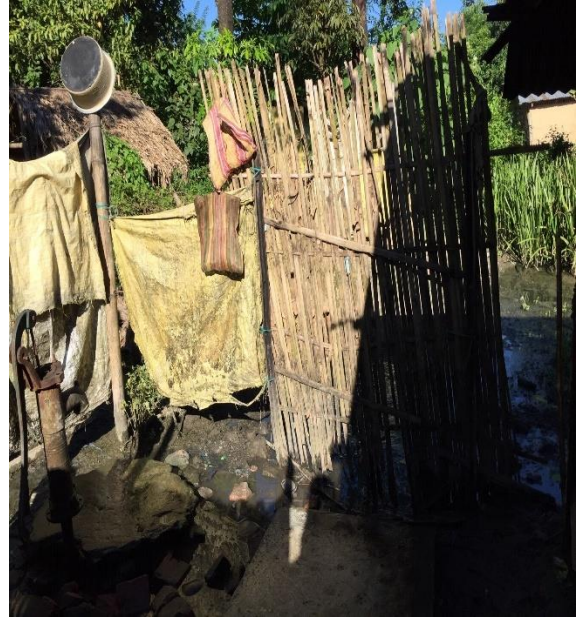


Bathrooms built with durable materials, easy to clean, with ventilation, lighting, and a door with a closing mechanism.





Lack of adequate drainage



These photographs show a housing area and a communal area with deficiencies in the drainage of gray water from the houses. In both cases, bad odors are generated, the transmission of parasites, and multiplication of disease vectors.

Adequate drainage



Dry areas and with adequate systems for the collection and disposal of rainwater and domestic water.



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