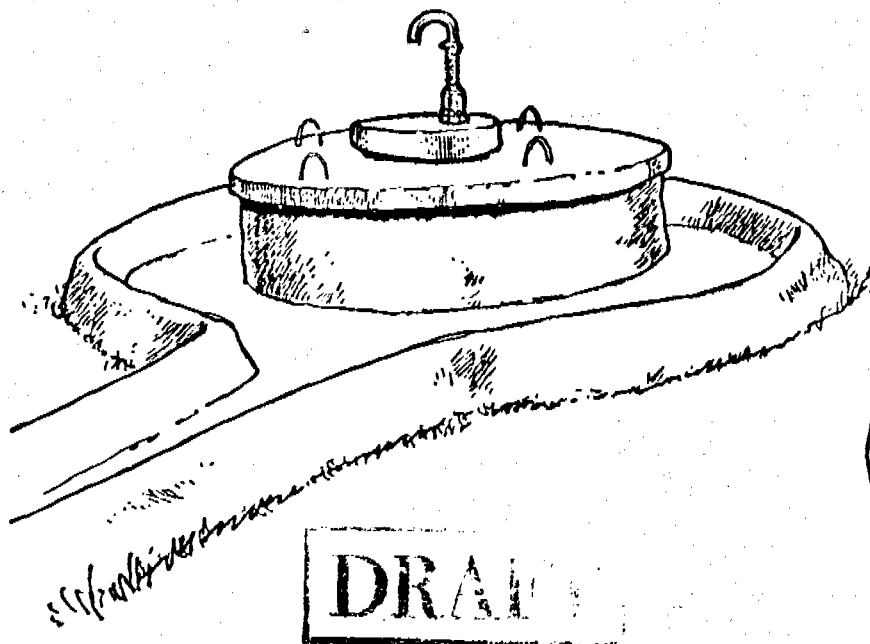


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Water For All

well digging

a guide to the
construction
and protection of
hand-dug wells.



First draft

Acknowledgements

This book is written in non-technical language. It describes how to dig and protect a well. It also describes how to improve and upgrade a traditional well.

Many people have assisted the author by providing valuable information for the book. In particular, mention should be made of the Public Health Inspectorate of the Ministry of Health, the staff of Blair Research Laboratory, non-Governmental organisations, and the teams of health and other workers who strive so hard to improve water supplies throughout Zimbabwe.

To the Health Education Unit of the Ministry of Health and many others not specifically mentioned, but who have so willingly supported this work - our thanks.

Finally, to GTZ, who have generously funded the development of this book. - our appreciation.

Sue Laver

Illustrations: Hans de Waard

Well digging

**A guide to the construction
and protection of hand-dug wells**

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Our book is about well digging.

It tells us how to

- * join a well digging project**
- * dig a shallow well**
- * protect a shallow well**
- * improve a traditional well**

Our book also describes what the community can do to maintain the well and use it hygienically after it has been completed.

Wells provide an important source of water to our people

Promote well digging at community level

At this time in rural Zimbabwe, thousands of families depend on wells for their daily water supplies. Many of these wells are constructed by groups working together in the community. Others are built by their individual owners or experienced well diggers.




Water is essential to development and our Government supports the people's efforts to provide water to their families in this way. In promoting well digging at community level we should also promote methods of well protection, and help people to understand water hygiene too.

In this way water will come to be valued by our people as an asset to good health and development at community level.



We can promote well digging for these reasons.

- * Wells can be constructed close to the home
- * People in the rural areas of Zimbabwe can afford to build wells
- * Wells are traditionally acceptable to the people of Zimbabwe
- * Wells provide a place for natural water storage
- * Most materials needed for well digging are available in the community
- * There are skilled well diggers in many communities so there is no need to call outside experts
- * Well digging is a group activity
- * The quality of water in traditional wells can be improved and maintained by protection, good hygiene and careful maintenance



There can be disadvantages too.

- * Some wells provide inadequate supplies of water because they are too shallow
- * Shallow wells may dry up quickly after the rains
- * Many wells are sources of hidden disease and danger because they are polluted
- * Uncovered, unprotected wells are dangerous

It is important to combine education with well digging.

Why is it that some families who take their daily water supplies from wells commonly suffer from sicknesses such as diarrhoea and other health problems? These problems occur because their family water supply is polluted with disease-carrying germs. Sometimes the wells are far away from the homes. Sometimes they are shallow. When problems like these exist, the people do not collect enough water to use for daily hygiene activities. Then health problems such as sore eyes, skin infections and malnutrition occur. If the people do not collect enough water for growing food, then malnutrition may occur. Health problems also arise when people are careless about how they collect and store the water from their wells.

It is just as important to tell people about the causes of health problems as it is to tell them about good ways of digging wells. The people must understand the need

- * to protect a well so that waste cannot enter the water
- * to maintain the drainage area around the well so it does not become littered with rubbish and mud
- * to fit a windlass or simple pump to raise water hygienically
- * to collect and store water hygienically
- * to provide plenty of water for body hygiene, use in the home and for projects such as growing food
- * to improve sanitation in the community

Project information about well digging

All plans for water development projects in an area must be discussed with the VIDCO. Representatives of the VIDCO will help groups to reach decisions about their water projects. There are also other community-based workers such as Health Inspectors, Village Health Workers, Agritex workers and many more people who can share information about water projects. Groups also need to talk to key leaders and those who have dug traditional wells.

Before starting to dig the well, the project group needs to decide together with the community leaders



- * who will use the well
- * who will dig the well
- * what materials and tools will be needed for digging the well
- * how the group members will share the tasks
- * how to protect the well
- * how to raise clean water from the well either with a simple windlass or handpump
- * how to make a drainage area around the well
- * how to share the maintenance of the well
- * where to site the well
- * who will pay for the well

If a professional well digger is hired, the group should decide who will be responsible for providing food and shelter.

A well-digger needs materials and tools

Building materials

- Cement for
- * lining the well
 - * protecting the well
 - * building the drainage area

The amount of cement will depend on the depth of the well and the type of lining eg

- * for a 5 m deep well which is lined with stones or burnt bricks, 5-6 bags of cement will be needed.
- * for a well 5 m deep which is lined with concrete rings 13 bags of cement will be needed

- Reinforcing wire
- * use 8 gauge reinforcing wire for strengthening the cover slab

- Stones
- * large stones for lining the well and
 - * small stones for the concrete mix

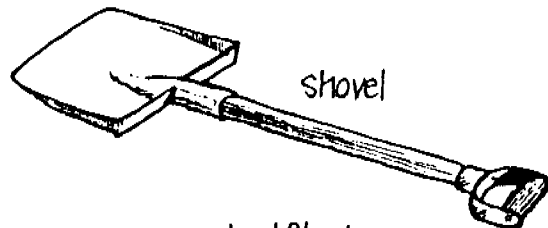
- River sand
- *for the concrete mix

* In some parts of the country, steel moulds are available for making concrete well liners. In other places steel shutters are used for this task.

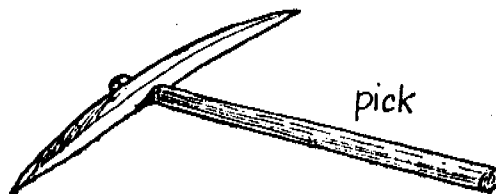
Tools

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| ladder | trowel | rope | hammer |
| 2 buckets | tape | shovel | string |
| pick | wooden float | spirit level | steel float |
| chisel | pliers (for cutting wire) | | |

A simple windlass can also be made to make the task of raising the rock and soil from inside the well easier as it is dug. Use strong poles, steel wire, a pulley and a bucket.



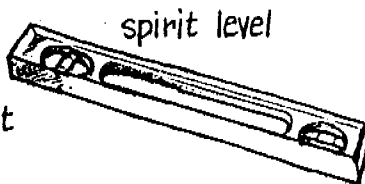
shovel



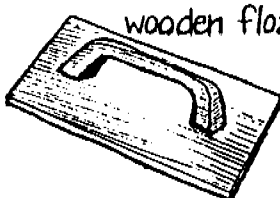
pick



steel float



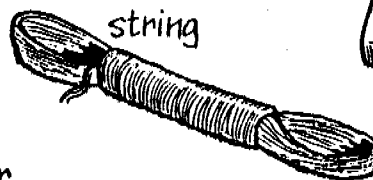
spirit level



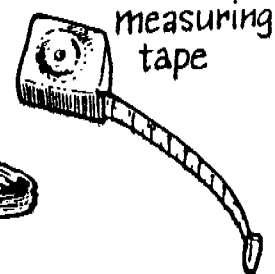
wooden float



trowel



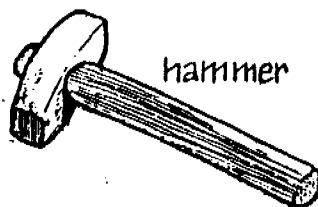
string



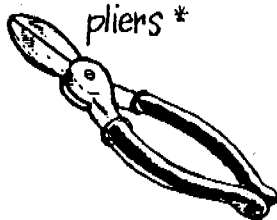
measuring tape



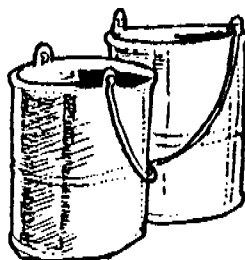
chisel



hammer

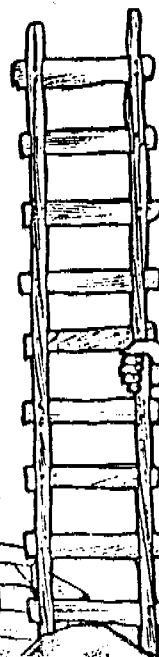


pliers *

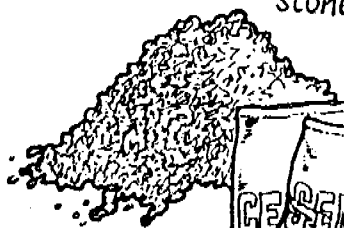


2 buckets

* the pliers are used for cutting wire



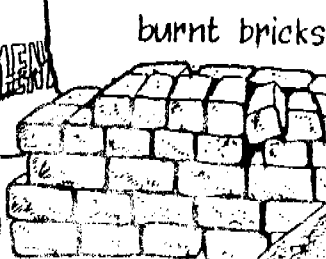
ladder



stone chips



cement



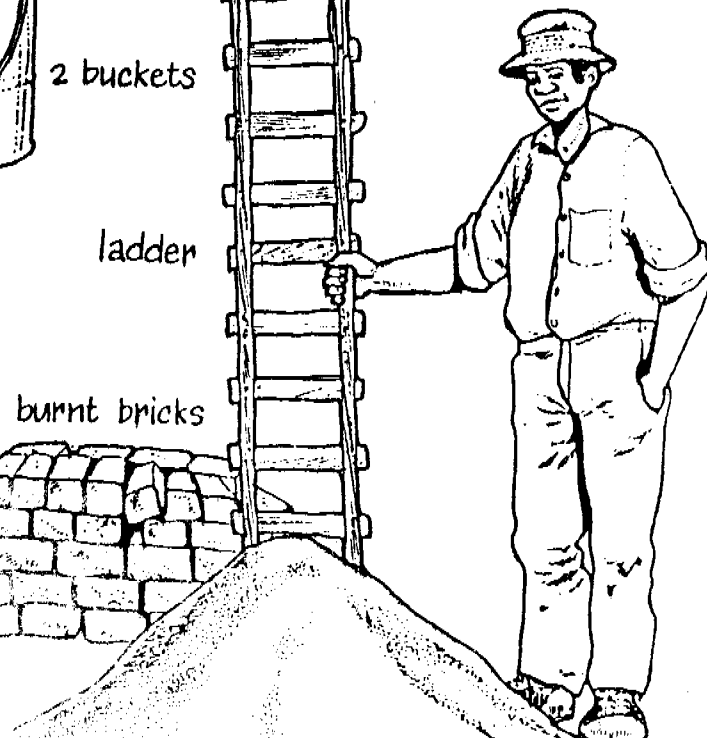
burnt bricks



reinforcing wire (8 gauge)



rope

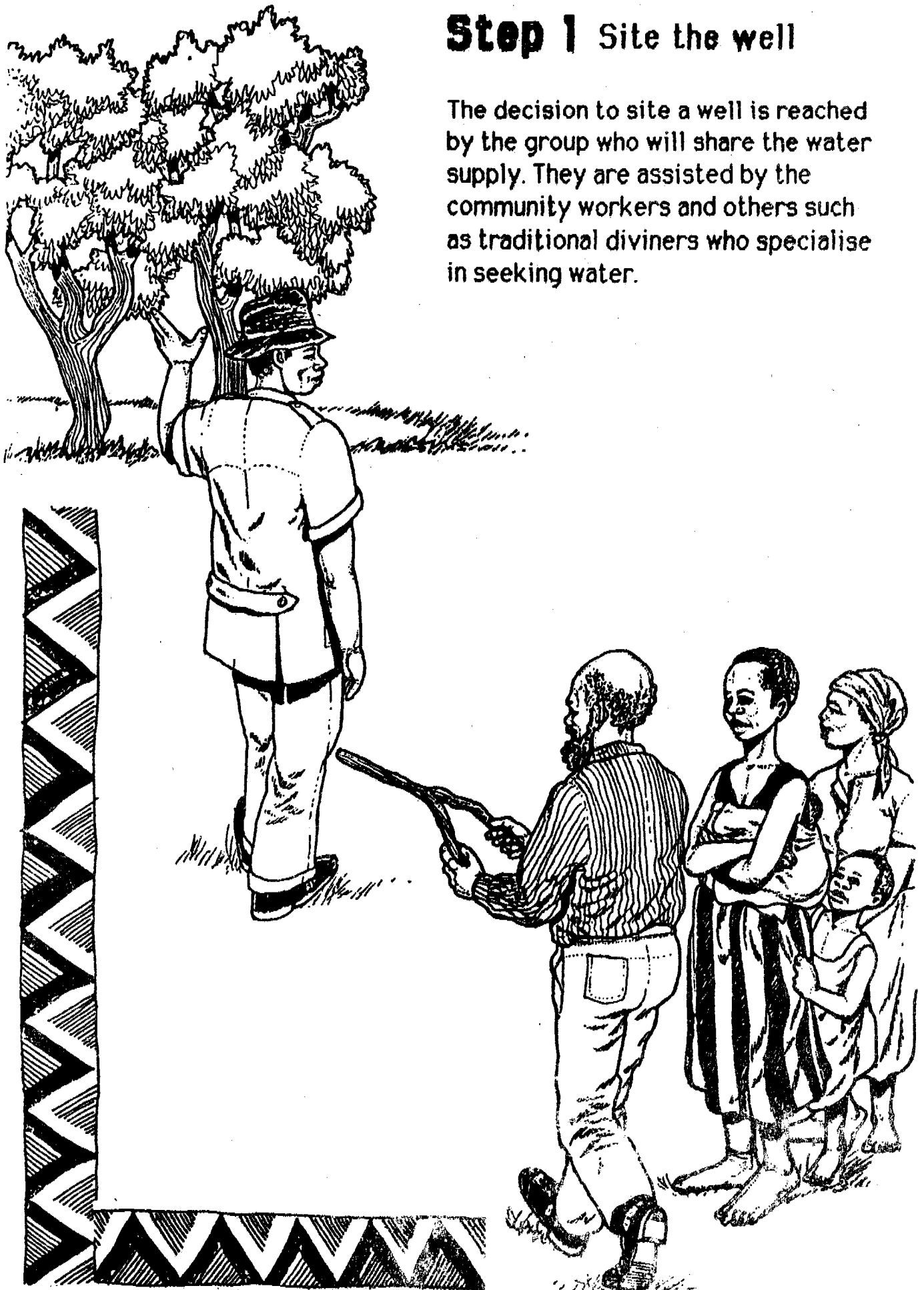


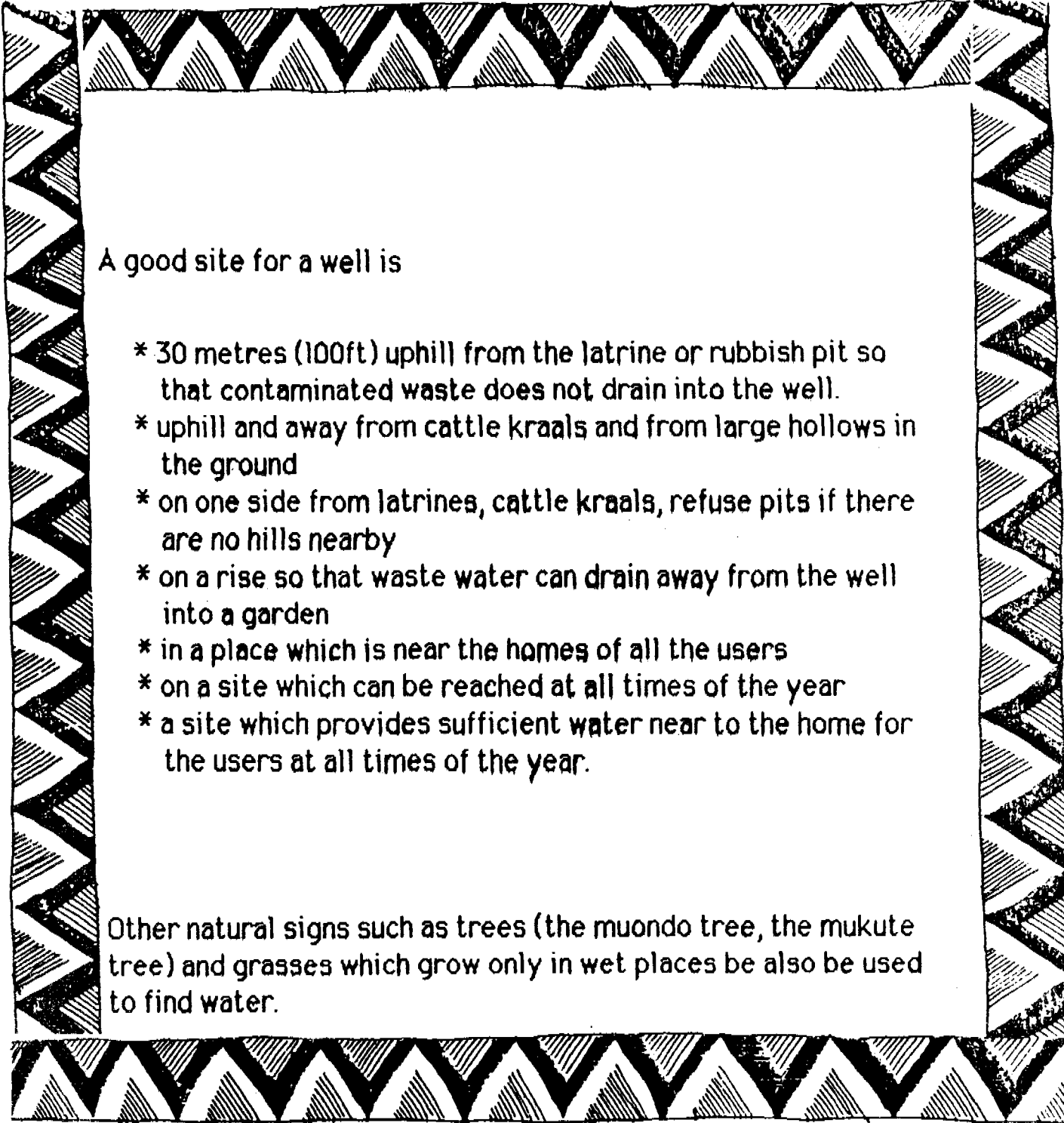
river sand



Step 1 Site the well

The decision to site a well is reached by the group who will share the water supply. They are assisted by the community workers and others such as traditional diviners who specialise in seeking water.





A good site for a well is

- * 30 metres (100ft) uphill from the latrine or rubbish pit so that contaminated waste does not drain into the well.
- * uphill and away from cattle kraals and from large hollows in the ground
- * on one side from latrines, cattle kraals, refuse pits if there are no hills nearby
- * on a rise so that waste water can drain away from the well into a garden
- * in a place which is near the homes of all the users
- * on a site which can be reached at all times of the year
- * a site which provides sufficient water near to the home for the users at all times of the year.

Other natural signs such as trees (the muondo tree, the mukute tree) and grasses which grow only in wet places be also be used to find water.

Step 2 Mark out the circumference of the well

Decide on the finished diameter of the well (usually about 1,5 m (5 ft) if bricks or stones are used for lining).

Mark out the well.



To do this

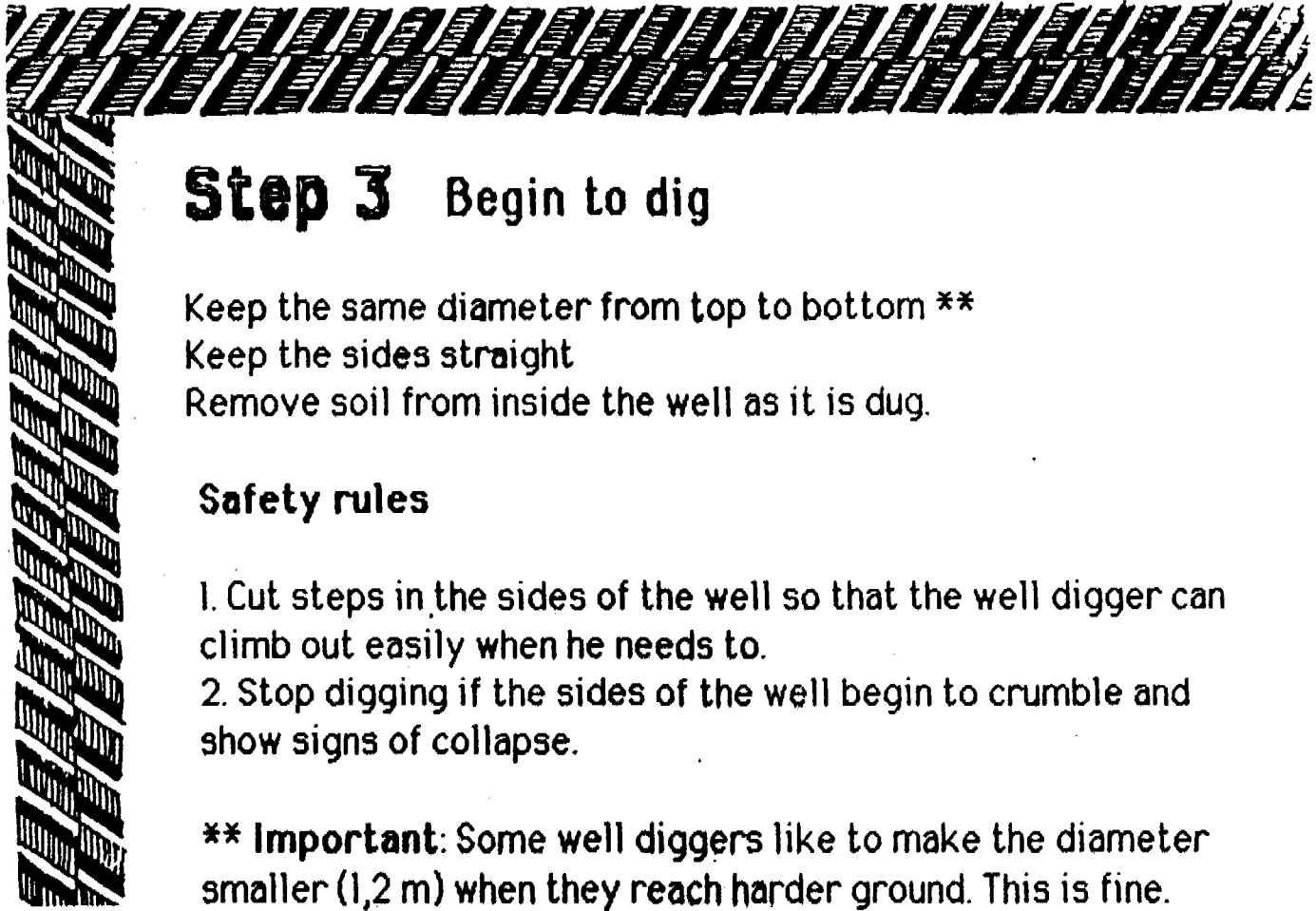
- * cut a piece of string which is the same length as the diameter of the well
- * place a peg in the ground
- * loop the string around the peg
- * use the string as a guide, and mark out the circumference of the well

Safety rules for well digging

Well digging can be dangerous.

Follow these rules for safety.

- 1. The best time to dig a well is at the end of the dry season. It is the safest time and the underground water level is at its lowest.**
- 2. Tell the group when digging is being done.**
- 3. Always have a helper nearby when digging. NEVER DIG ALONE**
- 4. Stop digging at once if any signs of collapse are noticed.**
- 5. Cover the hole when digging is not in progress. This will prevent children or animals falling inside. Do this with strong poles or branches from thorn trees.**



Step 3 Begin to dig

Keep the same diameter from top to bottom **

Keep the sides straight

Remove soil from inside the well as it is dug.

Safety rules

1. Cut steps in the sides of the well so that the well digger can climb out easily when he needs to.
2. Stop digging if the sides of the well begin to crumble and show signs of collapse.

**** Important:** Some well diggers like to make the diameter smaller (1,2 m) when they reach harder ground. This is fine.



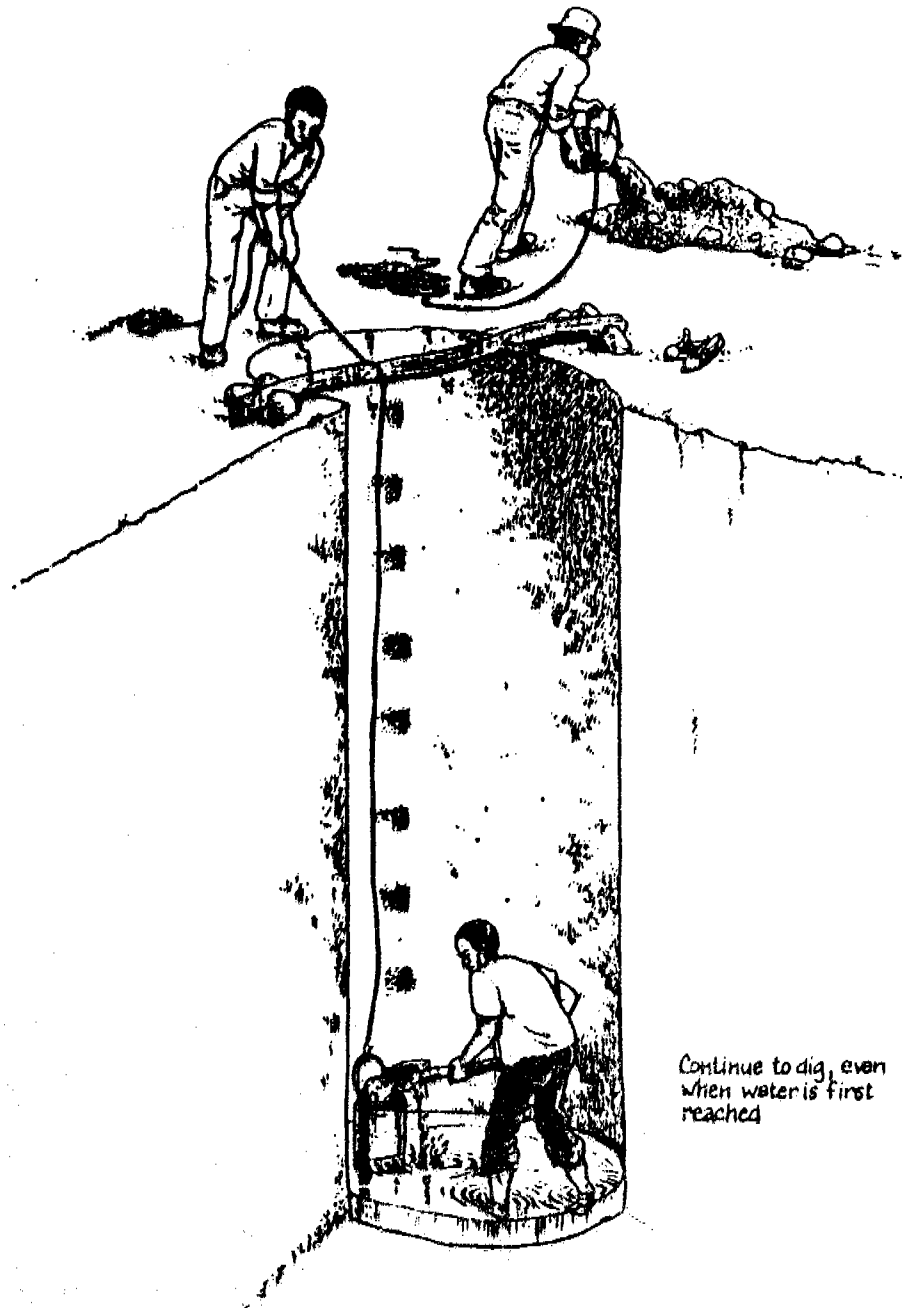
Step 4 Continue to dig even when water is first reached.

When water is first reached

- * remove water and mud quickly. Use two buckets to do this
- * continue digging until hard rock is reached and at least 5000 litres of water is removed over 2 days. This means there will be enough water in the well for the needs of a large group of users.

Safety rule

When water is reached, extra helpers are necessary. They can assist the well digger to remove mud and water from inside the well.



Step 5 Line the well

All wells except those which are cut or blasted through solid rock, should be lined using burnt brick, cement bricks, stones, concrete well liners or concrete.

The lining is important because

- * it protects the well by reducing pollution from seepage
- * it protects the water from soil
- * it prevents collapse of the sides
- * it helps to make the well last longer

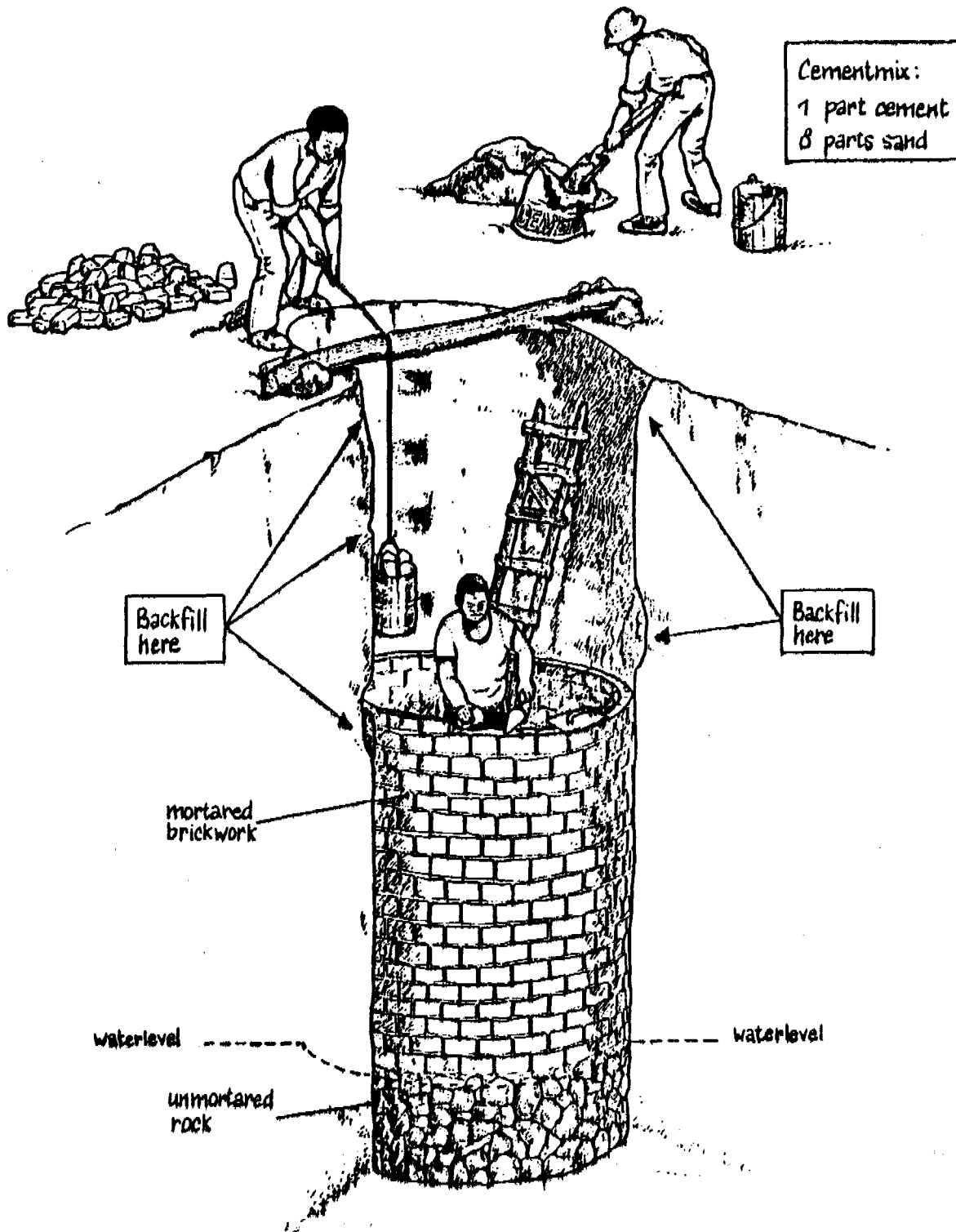
One or more methods can be combined to line a well. In areas where there is hard rock or the soil is stable, line only the top half of the well.

Method of lining	Advantages	Disadvantages
Burnt bricks. Stones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bricks can be made by the group. * Stones can be gathered by the community. * Cost of materials is less. * No special skills are required, i.e. the group can do this without the assistance of experts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bricks may not be burnt properly. * Wood is needed for burning bricks. * Groups may not participate fully.
Cement bricks Cement well liners * Concrete **	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * These materials make strong lining and are easy to make once a person is trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * There may be only a few ring moulds available and progress becomes slow * Skill and training is needed * Cement is expensive

* These are made using steel ring moulds which are available in some parts of the country.

** In some areas the lining is made of concrete. Well diggers use steel shutters for this task.

The well is lined from the bottom except where there is solid rock. In such cases the well is lined for only 2-3 metres near the top. All well linings are raised to a height of at least 30 cm above ground level.



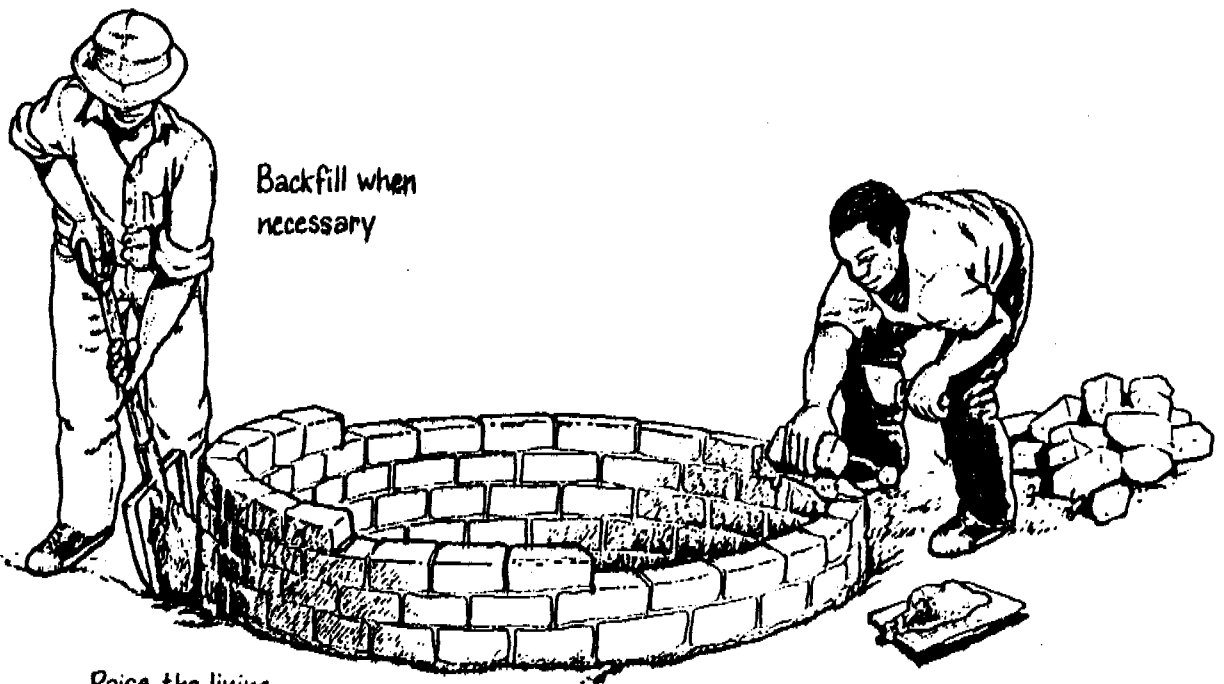
Note: It is usually necessary to backfill when lining the last three metres of the well. Backfill is always used when improving and lining a traditional well.



Step 6 Make a raised collar for the well

To make a raised collar build the well lining above ground level

The lining must be raised at least 30 cm (1 ft) above the ground.



Backfill when
necessary

Raise the lining
at least 30 cm
above ground level

This

- * prevents run off water from spilling back into the well
- * prevents erosion at the edges of the well
- * provides a strong foundation for the cover slab.

Note: Backfill around the brick collar to prevent erosion of the soil.

Step 7 Prepare a protective cover slab for the well

A concrete cover slab for the well can be made in one or two pieces. An opening is made in the slab through which a bucket or pump can be passed into the well. The finished cover slab will rest on the raised collar of the well.

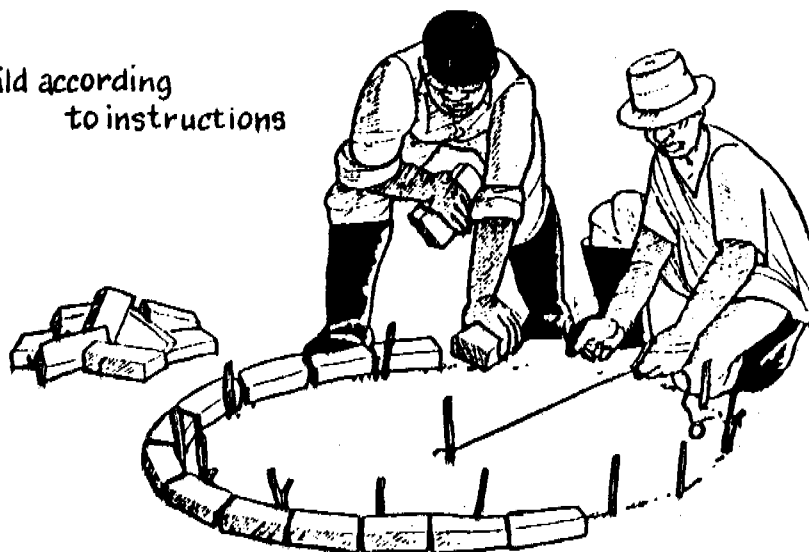
The cover slab is important because it

- * prevents waste water draining into the well
- * protects the well, prevents things from falling into the well and makes it safer for children
- * provides a safe resting place for a pump
- * is long-lasting
- * is easy to build and maintain

To do this

- * clear and level a place close to the well
- * estimate the diameter carefully. This should include the width of the cover slab, the brick or stone or cement lining and the backfill area. Allowance is also made for the overhang. Use string or tape to do this
- * mark out the diameter carefully
- * use bricks to mark the edges of the mould
- * lay old plastic bags or sand inside the mould so that the slab does not stick to the ground when it is completed

Build according
to instructions



Step 8 Make the protective cover slab

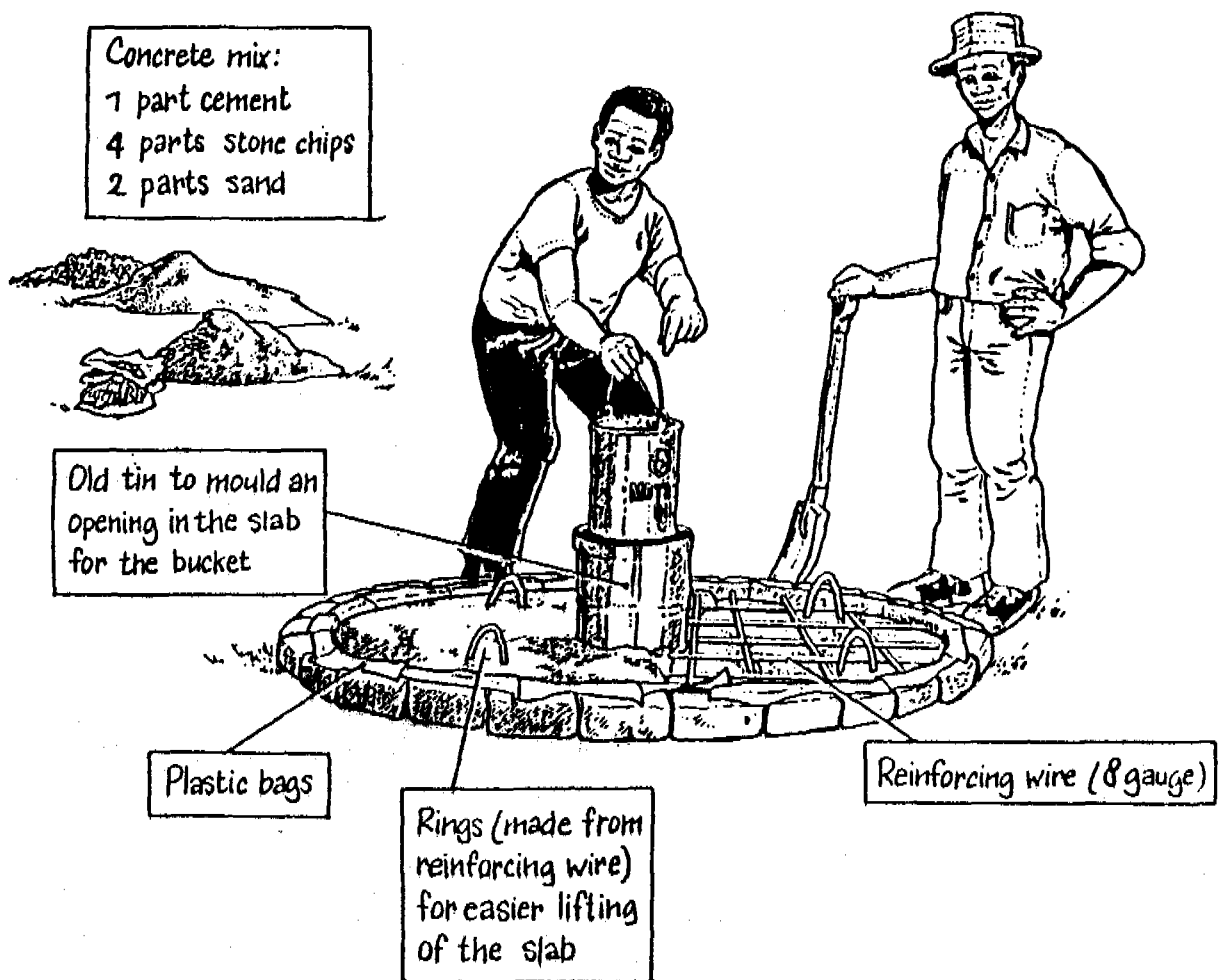
Pour a 7.5cm layer of concrete around the tin or brick templates inside the mould.

Cut reinforcing wires and lay 30 cm apart (or use one inch chicken wire) on top of the concrete layer.

Pour the remaining concrete mix on top of the reinforcing wires. Smooth off with a wooden float.

The finished slab is 7.5cm (3 inches) thick when completed.

Cover with wet sacks and leave to dry for 3-5 days before moving.

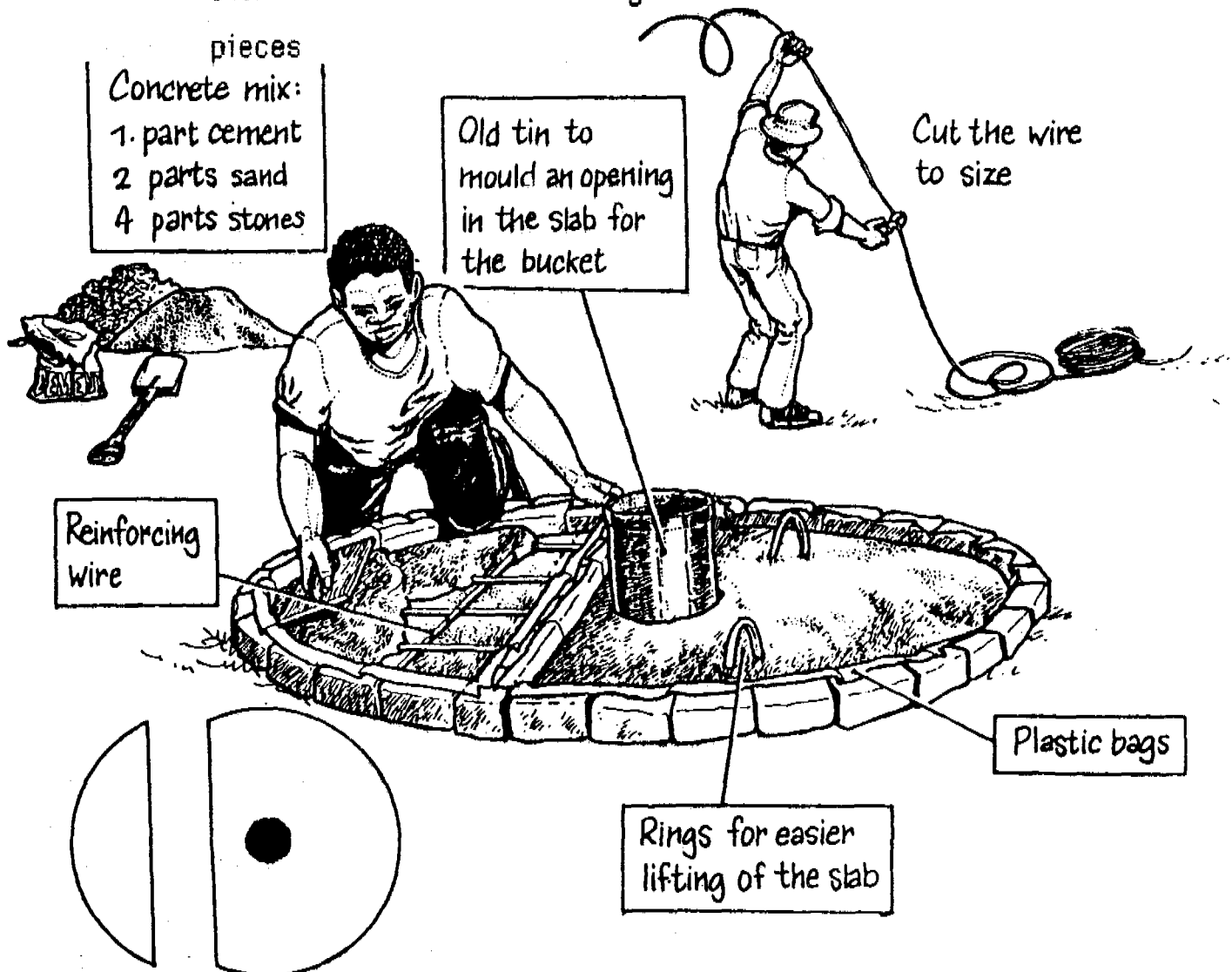


A protective cover slab can also be made in two pieces

If possible, it is better to make the cover slab in two pieces.

This is because

- * it may become necessary to inspect the well or raise the pump fittings. It is simple therefore to move over one part of the cover slab.
- * it is easier to lift the cover slab onto the collar if it is made in two pieces
- * there is less risk of cracking when a slab is made in two



- * divide the mould with bricks as shown in the pictures
- * have an old tin or templates ready to mould an opening in the slab for the bucket or pump. The size of the opening should be larger than the bucket normally used by the group to raise water.

Step 9 Lift the cover slab into position over the well

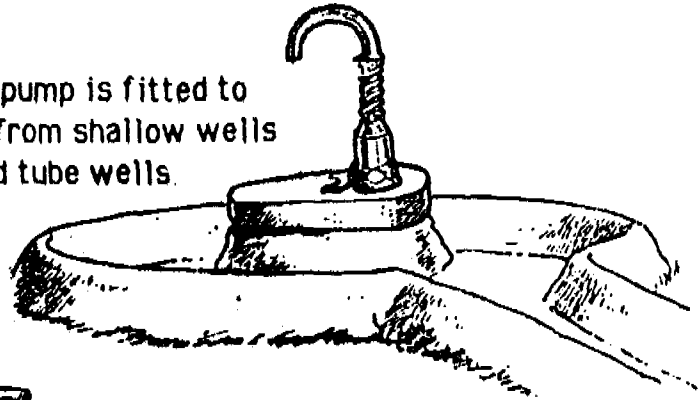
The cover slab is positioned on the raised collar above the well. Extra help is needed for this task.



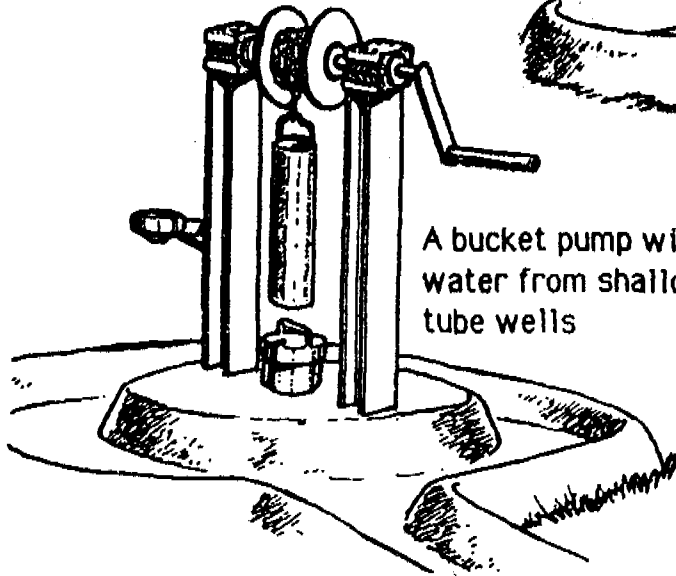
The cover slab is mortared onto the raised collar.

These diagrams show the different methods recommended for raising water from a well after the cover slab is fitted

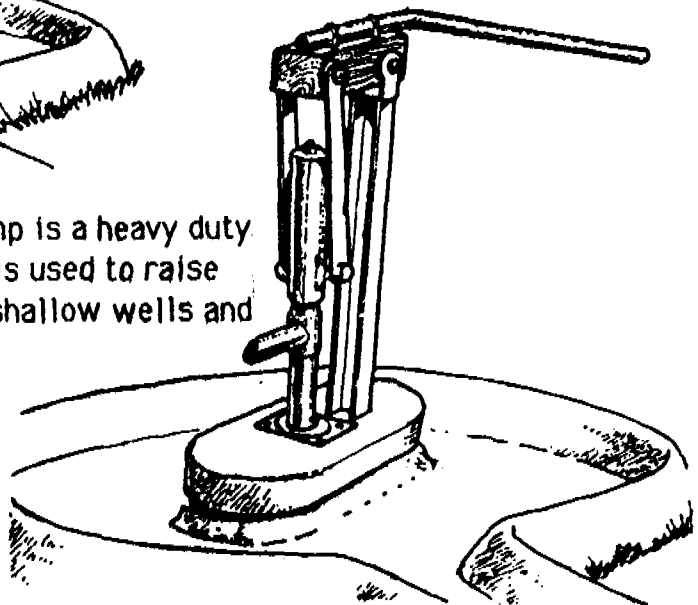
A Blair hand pump is fitted to raise water from shallow wells (12- m) and tube wells.



A bucket pump will also raise water from shallow wells and tube wells

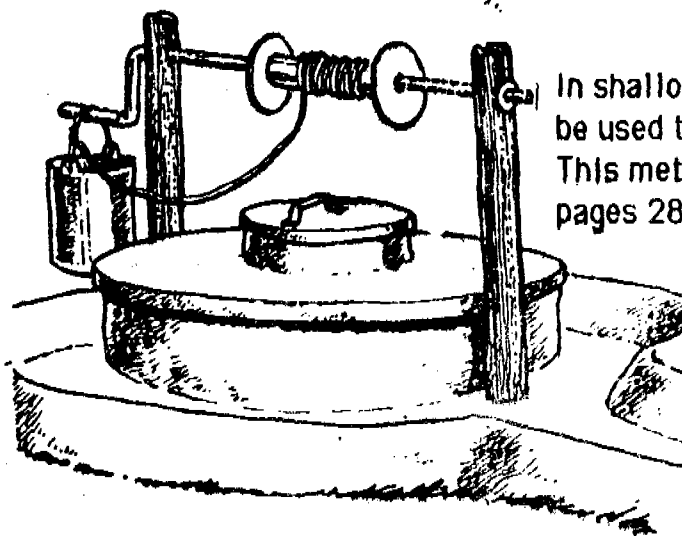


The Bush pump is a heavy duty pump which is used to raise water from shallow wells and deep wells



For more information about how to fit these pumps ask for the Pump Handouts

In shallow wells a windlass can be used to raise water. This method is described on pages 28-29 of this book



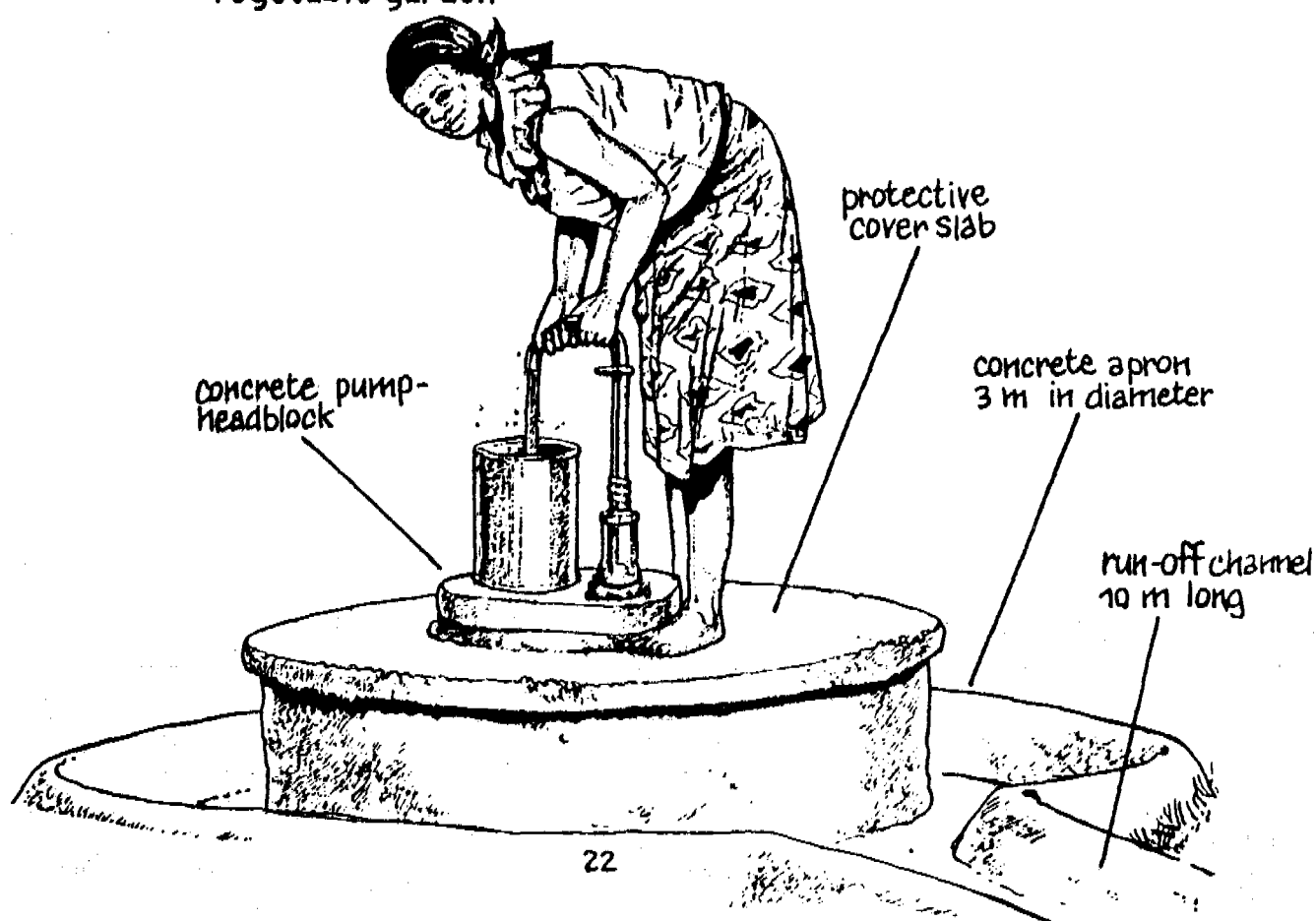
Step 10 Complete the well and make a drainage area too

The drainage area (also called the apron and run-off channel) is important because it

- * helps waste water drain from the well quickly and easily
- * prevents stagnant water from collecting around the well
- * prevents erosion around the top of the well
- * channels waste water into a garden or watering trough
- * keeps the well area free from mud and easy to clean

To complete this task

- * measure a 3 m diameter circle around the well
- * mark the edge of the circle with stones or bricks
- * backfill the area between the bricks and the well with smaller stones or broken bricks
- * cover these with concrete and reinforce with steel wire to prevent cracking
- * smooth the concrete surface of the apron
- * slope a 10 m long run-off channel towards a soak away pit, or vegetable garden





**Improving
a
Traditional
Well**

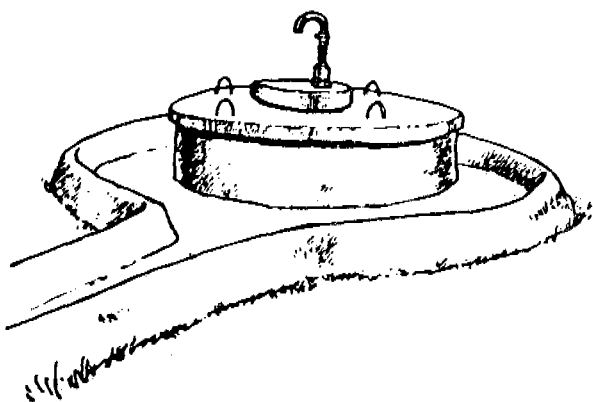
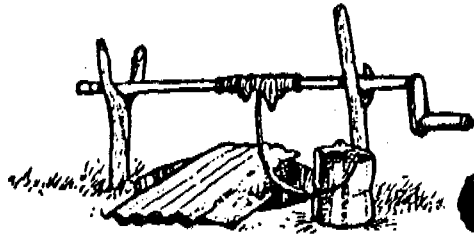
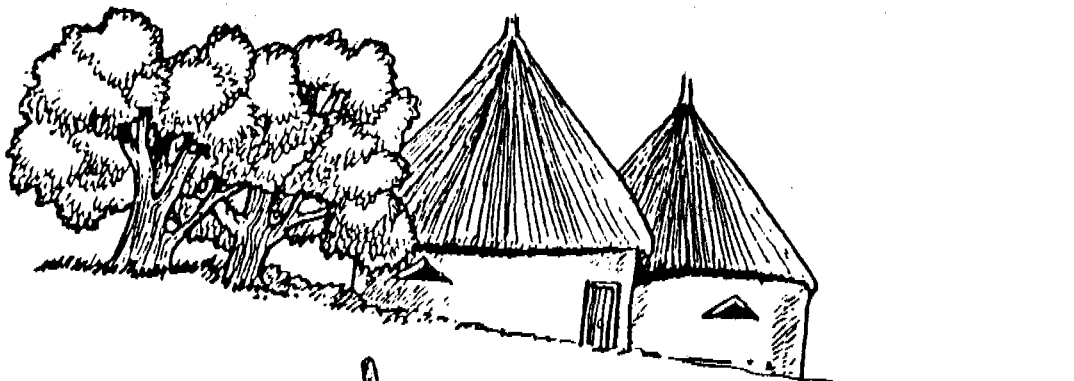


The need to improve Traditional Wells

There are thousands of traditional wells throughout Zimbabwe. Many are badly sited. They are far from the home and the user must walk long distances to collect water for their daily needs. Some traditional wells are downhill from community cattle kraals, latrines and rubbish pits so that disease carrying germs easily drain into the wells. Where the traditional wells are unprotected, badly sited, in danger of collapse or provide too little water, it is better for groups to build new wells. If the traditional well is near to the homes of the users, correctly sited and provides adequate water at all times of the year, then it is better to improve the supply.

When combined with education about hygienic practices for collecting and storing water the group will benefit from their efforts to raise better quality water.

The quality of water in traditional wells can be improved by following the simple steps described in this book.



Traditional wells
can be improved
through
group effort

How to improve a Traditional Well: step by step

Efforts to improve a traditional well will be rewarded if each task is done properly. Follow these steps carefully.

Step 1 Clean and deepen the well

Remove mud, stones and rubbish
Make the well deeper if possible

Step 2 Line the well and backfill

Below water level: stack rock on the sides of the well. Do not use cement mortar

Above water level: line the well with burnt bricks or stone. For this use cement mortar

Backfill with layers of gravel, cement and puddled clay between the old wall and new lining

Look at the picture on page 27 for more information about lining

Step 3 Raise the new lining 30 cm above ground level to make a collar

To do this follow the instructions on page 16

Step 4 Make a protective cover slab

To do this follow the instructions on page 17

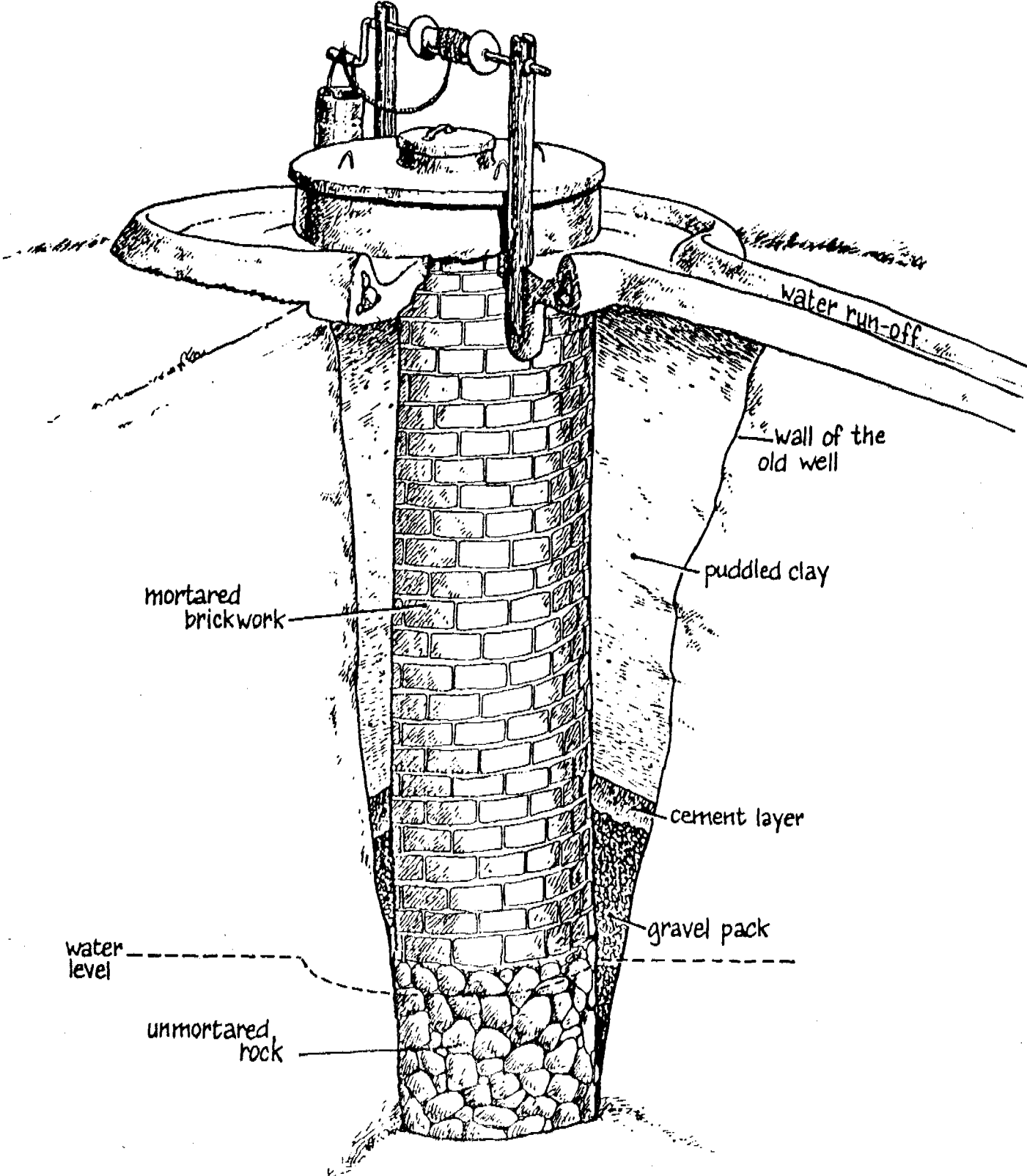
Step 5 Fit a pump or windlass to raise water

Note: If a pump is chosen, follow the step-by-step instructions in the Pump Handouts. If a windlass is chosen turn to page 28

Step 6 Make a hygienic drainage area around the well

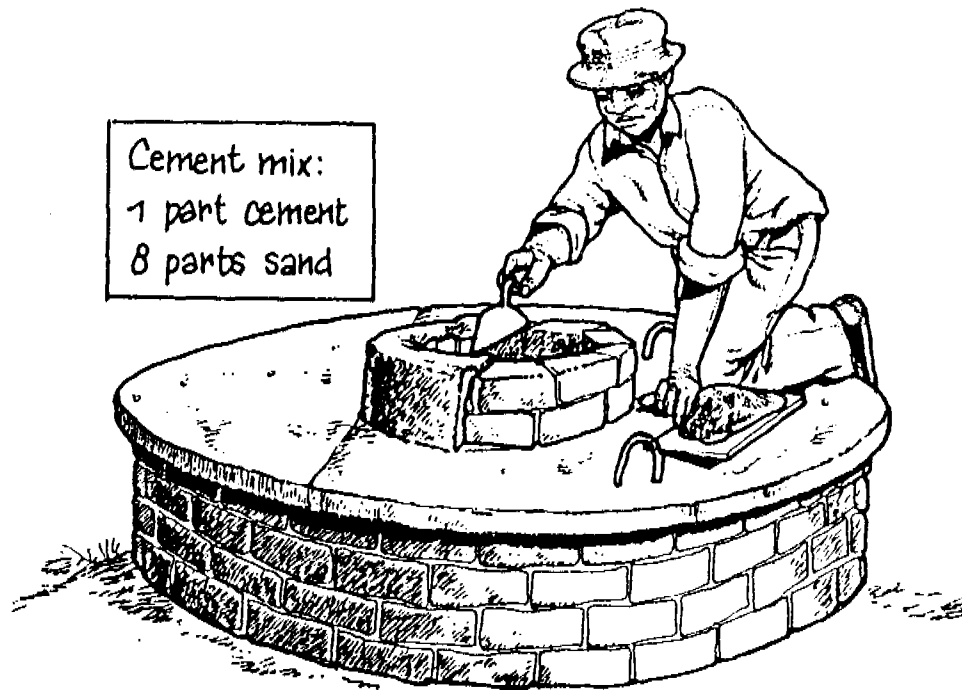
To do this follow the instructions on page 22

How to improve a Traditional Well



Method for fitting a windlass to a Traditional Well

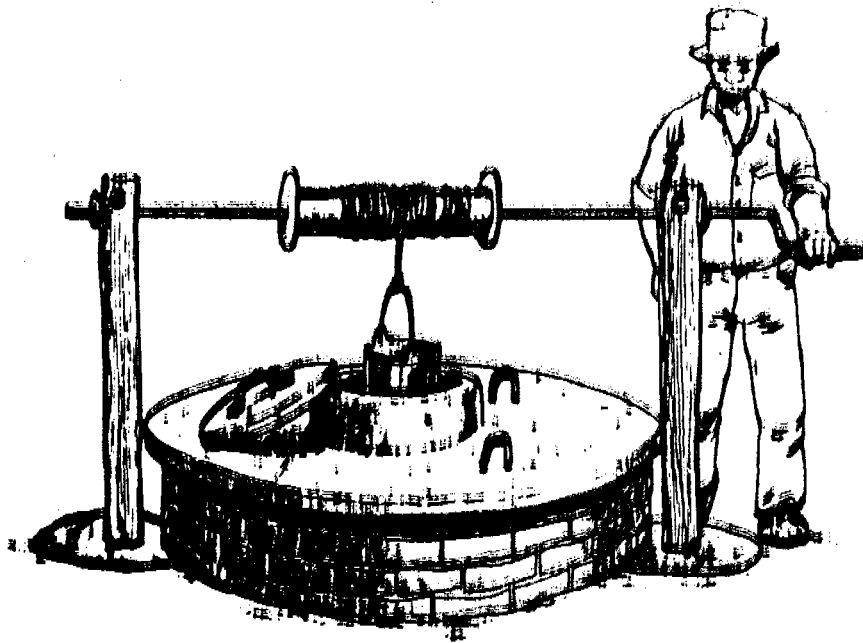
1. After the cover slab is positioned over the well, make a protective collar around the opening of the well



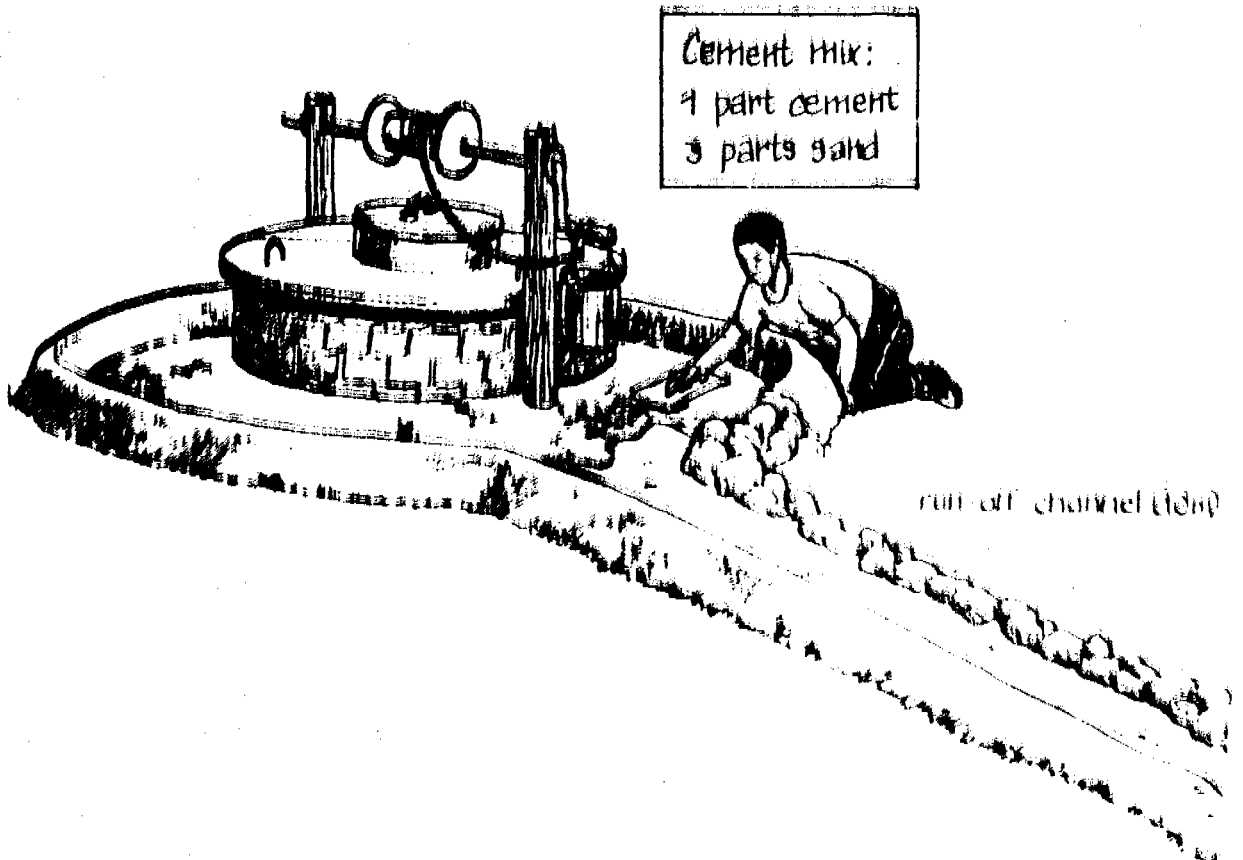
2. Make holes for the windlass supports




3. Fit the windlass



Now complete the project and build a drainage area around the well





Water hygiene

Even if a well is properly maintained with a protective slab and a good drainage area, the water inside the well can be contaminated if the people do not use hygienic practices for collecting and storing water.

Water hygiene is important!

Encourage users to

- * collect their water in clean containers
- * store their water in clean covered containers
- * wash their hands frequently
- * make a hook on the windlass on which to hang the bucket when it is not being used
- * keep the rope or chain off the ground so that it does not get dirty
- * replace the protective cover over the well when the windlass is not in use
- * keep the drainage area free from dirt and mud
- * keep animals away from the area
- * teach hygienic practices to children (as they will very often be collecting the water)
- * maintain the pumps so that water can continue to be raised hygienically
- * use more water for body hygiene
- * use water for other development projects, such as growing food for the family

Good sanitation is important tool

Encourage people to support latrine building projects in the area.