

# THE ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TOILETS AND RESTROOMS FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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UNIVERSAL DESIGN CONFERENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and more than half of the population is Muslim. As Muslims, the aspect of cleanliness is one of the most important and basic things that should be followed and practised in everyday life. Islamic teachings have emphasized the concept of cleanliness in terms of clothing, building and its surrounding area as well as purity in the matter of material possession and administration. Allah loves those who cleanse themselves as quoted in the holy Qur'an.

“God loves those who turn to Him, and He loves those who cleanse themselves”.

(Surah Al-Baqarah: 222)

Greed (2003) has emphasized on toilet provision should be for everyone not only for people with disabilities or the incontinent .



Figure 1.1: Various categories of Public Toilet users.

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN

In response to changing lifestyles and growing appreciation for diversity in people, we are moving towards environments that support and adapt to a variety of people. According to Leibrock C.A and Terry J.E. Universal design is an ideal that never completely accommodates diversity, but moves in that direction. The accommodation is simple and invisible, never segregating by ability or economic means.

In general, universal design emphasizes the proactive integration of accessibility and usability to products and environments as fundamental constructs of design itself.

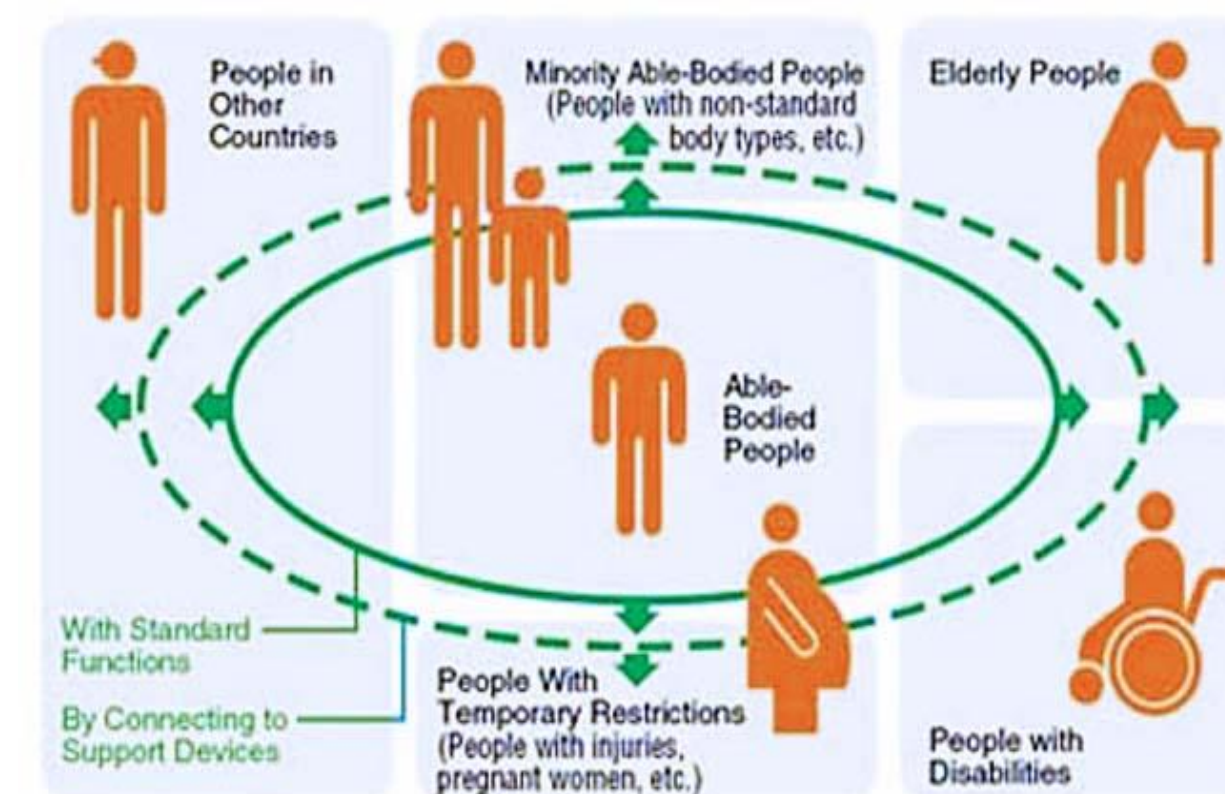


Figure 1.2: Concept of universal design is for all people (Source: <http://www.oki.com/en/csr/csract/customer/ud.html>)

## ACCESSIBLE TOILET DESIGN

The design of an accessible public toilet to accommodate the highest percentage of users, such as whether the size of the toilet is big enough, the equipment is complete and well placed for all users, usable and reachable and the floor surface is dry and not slippery makes a toilet design to be very complicated (Naziaty Mohd Yaacob and Nor Rasidah Hashim, 2013).



Figure 1.3: Toilet for PwDs in Japan that is fully equipped to cater for different type of disabilities (Source: NaziatyMohd Yaacob and Nor Rasidah Hashim, 2013).

## TOILET DESIGN ACCORDING TO THE ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES

### 1) Entering

- The Qur'an states that one should enter the restroom with left foot first while saying a prayer of protection. It is not permissible to enter a restroom while carrying anything that bears the name of Allah.

### 2) Seclusion

- Privacy is therefore a major requirement when providing restroom facilities for Muslim users

### 4) Squatting/Sitting

- Muslims are encouraged to urinate while sitting or squatting and not while standing since this was the usual practice of the Prophet. It is healthier for the body and there is less chance of urine splashing onto one's body or clothes.

### 5) Cleaning

- After using the toilet, one should perform the Istinjaa (cleansing with water). In Istinjaa, water is preferred for the purpose of cleaning oneself

### 3) Prohibition Facing the Qiblah

- From the Islamic perspective, it is necessary to establish the direction of qiblah first before locating and designing a toilet.

### 6) Stepping Out

- Muslims have a practice of leaving the toilet with right foot first as this is the usual practice of the Prophet.

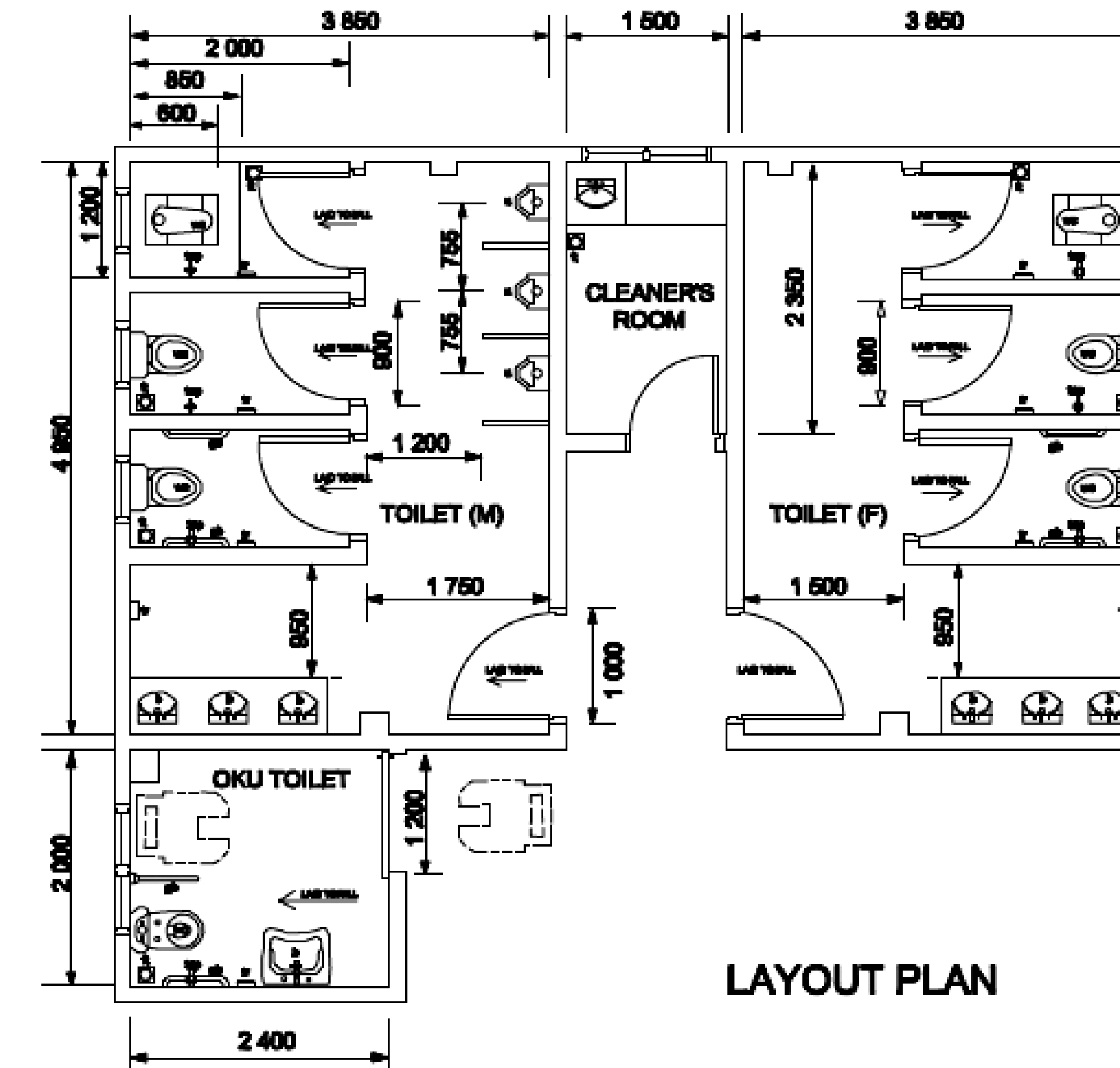


Figure 1.4 Male, female, cleaners' room and accessible toilet - Layout plan (Source: MS 2015: PART1)

## URINALS FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Mustafa Umar (2011) pointed out some Islamic guidelines regard using the restroom from Islamic perspective, while he pointed out to the most common male-practice in the world is to stand and urinate which is unacceptable in Islam for several reasons:

**Shamelessness** One of the bad habits that resulted from the use of public urinals is the loss of shame in the restroom. It is very common to see two men using the bathroom and having a conversation with each other. Had they peeked over just a little bit they would have been able to see the private parts of the other man.

**Impurity** How many urinals have you ever seen that have toilet paper next to them? Probably none. This results in people putting their pants back on without cleaning themselves

**Disrespect for others** One of the common habits we find among people who regularly use urinals is that they also stand up while using a toilet. This usually results in a seat covered with urine drops. Very few people care to clean the urine off the seat after leaving, so the next person who needs to use it has to deal with that disgusting mess.

## A PUBLIC TOILET SYSTEM FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

### User View on Public Toilet

#### Outside

- Appearance
- Access
- Location
- Signage

#### Inside

- Security/Privacy
- Payment
- Attendants
- Cleanliness
- Fixture Fittings

#### Design

- Lighting
- Ventilation
- Orientation (Direction)
- Seclusion
- Entrance
- Visual

#### Facility

- Male/Female
- Baby Changing
- Sink for Elderly
- Urinals-non Muslims
- Accessible Toilets
- Rest Product
- WC

## CONCEPT OF ABLUTION OF WUDU'

One of the Islamic teachings regarding cleanliness involves a method of performing abluion or wudu'. Wudu' must be carried out before each prayer. A place for performing abluion is one of the features that need to be taken into consideration when designing a public toilet. However, even at the present state of a toilet that has a place for abluion; it could be redesigned or refurbished to cater to the need of everybody inclusive of senior citizens, pregnant women, children as well as wheelchair users. Refer to the picture below for better understanding (Asiah, 2005).

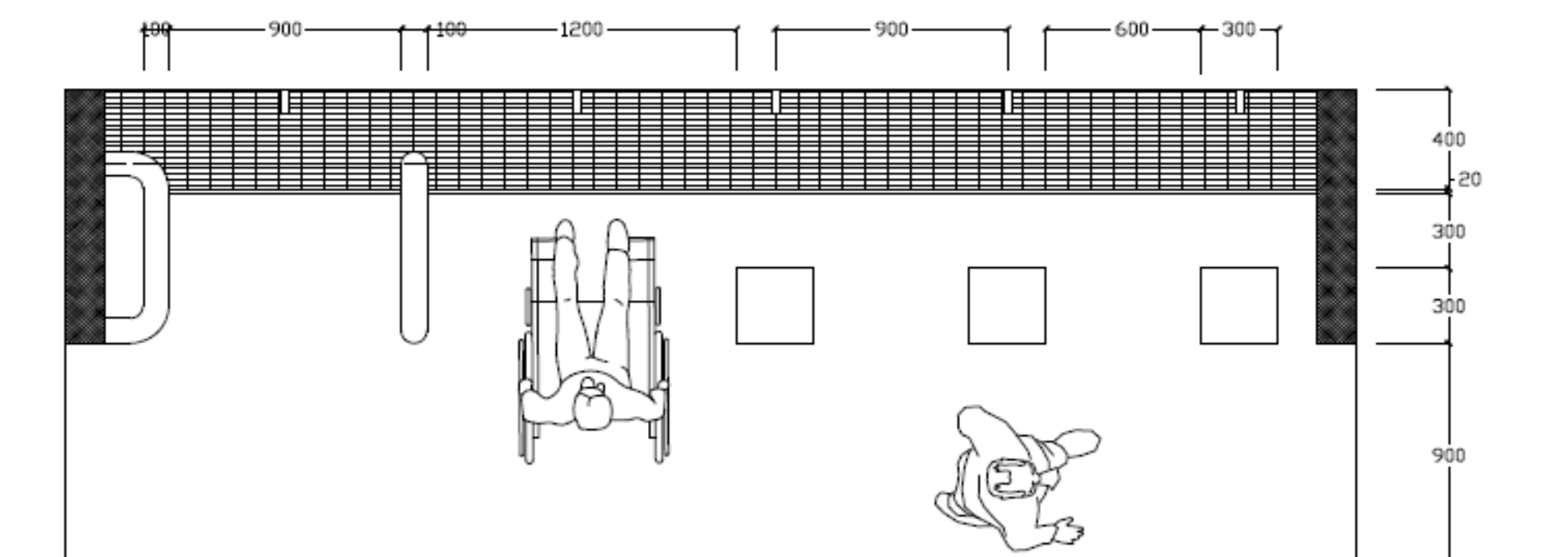


Figure 1.5 Accessible Ablution - Layout plan (Source: MS 2015: PART1)

## CONCLUSION

In our daily life, whether at home or at the office or anywhere else like at the public places, one of the most important facilities is a public toilet. The design of the toilet sometime does not comply with every user needs for instance a Muslim, children, disabled person, to name a few. People of the world still have much to learn from Islam's frank information on cleanliness

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