

MATERIALS

Blocks do not require burning, while bricks are cost-freindly

Which is better, bricks or blocks?

BY UMAR NSUBUGA

In construction, bricks or blocks are a major requirement. Bricks are prepared using mud, clay or cement.

However, burnt bricks are preferred by most developers because they are cheaper than blocks.

Fred Lukoda, a construction engineer, says the strength of bricks or blocks determines the durability of the structure.

"Clients get confused when choosing bricks. However, each has unique features. The quality of bricks, which can be made at a particular site, is determined by the type of soil or materials used," he says.

David Kireli, a civil engineer, advises people to choose materials that lower the cost of construction without compromising structural strength and safety.

"You should not buy different sizes of bricks without consulting professionals," he says.

Blocks
Peter Wasswa, who has been involved in the construction industry for 12 years, says blocks are made from cement and sand (usually lake sand) and are bigger than the bricks. They make a stronger wall than bricks.

"A house built using blocks lasts longer than one built using bricks," he says.

With blocks, laying them takes a shorter time. However, it is much more expensive to build using them than bricks.

Muhammad Kawooya, who works with Katalemwa Concrete in Wakiso district, says on average, one block costs between sh2,800 and sh3,000, while a burnt mud and clay brick costs between sh150 and sh300.

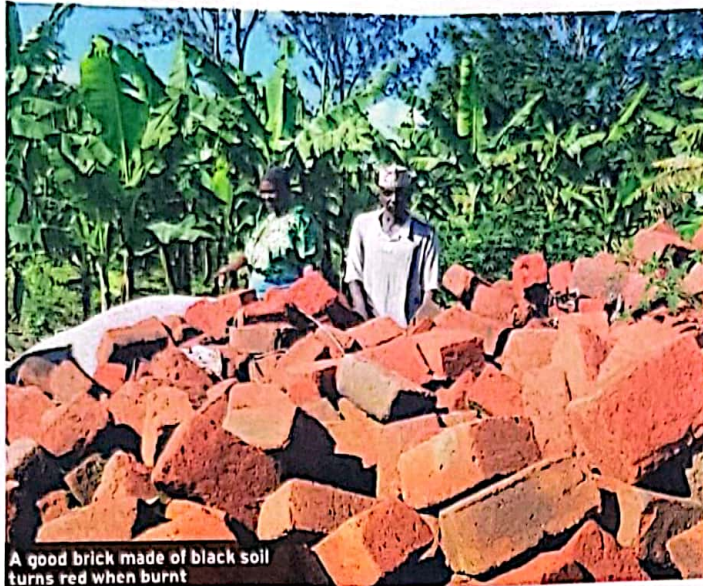
"The dimension of a standard block is 400x200x150mm and that of a brick is 200x100x50mm.

Identifying good bricks
Kiwanuka says a good brick made of black soil turns red when burnt, while a brick made from clay turns to copper colour. A good brick should not absorb water more than 20% of its own dry weight after a day.

Compressed earth blocks
Elvis Kaddu, a construction engineer, says these are dense solid blocks compacted using a machine. They are made from a mixture of soil, sand, cement or lime, water and a stabilising agent.

They are compressed by motor-driven machines or manually.

Kaddu says these blocks



A good brick made of black soil turns red when burnt

are used for wall construction. They do not require baking.

Interlocking blocks
Kaddu says the use of reinforced hollow concrete blocks is common in developed countries. With this kind of blocks, you reinforce the masonry by grouting concrete into the narrow spaces between the blocks with stands of steel rods at the critical locations or openings.

Steam-cured blocks
According to Kaddu, with these kinds of blocks, a mixture of lime, industrial waste, like fly ash and sand can be compacted into a high-density block. The lime will react with fly ash forming water insoluble bonds and strengthening the block.
Kaddu says people have to know that blocks of higher strength can be easily achieved by adjusting the mix proportions. These kinds of blocks are energy-efficient and stronger than bricks.

Fine concrete blocks
The process and concept of fine concrete blocks is similar to that of stabilised mud blocks, except that instead of soil, some fines are added to the mix.

"Fines such as fly ash and polished stone waste are mixed with either sand or stone quarry dust, along with water and cement," Kaddu explains.

Bricks
We have burnt factory and sundried bricks. According to Kireli, burnt bricks are the most used material for single-

storied buildings because they are cheaper than blocks.

"These bricks are made from good soil, which is free from saline deposits," he says.

Medi Kiwanuka, who lays bricks in Kawanda, Wakiso district, says the cost of a burnt brick ranges from sh150 to sh300, depending on the location and season. They are more expensive during rainy seasons.

Sun-dried bricks are

also used in most parts of Uganda. They are not commonly used in urban areas because they are considered to be temporary.

In rural areas, people use sun-dried bricks because they are mainly for low-cost housing.

Factory-made bricks

Factory-made bricks do not require plastering. They have different sizes and some are



Interlocking blocks are environmentally-friendly because they do not require burning



EXPERT ADVICE

DAVID KIRELI

According to Kireli, a civil engineer, burnt bricks are the most used material for single-storied buildings because they are cheaper than blocks. He says these bricks are made from good soil, which is free from saline deposits.

used for internal walls, while others for external walls. According to Kireli, factory bricks require an

expert before they are used in construction; they also need maintenance such as varnishing.

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