

Factors to consider when choosing building materials

Choosing the right materials for your construction project can make or break it. Figure out the best way to purchase and choose construction materials that fit your needs.

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When selecting building materials, it is important to consider the aesthetic appeal, initial and ongoing costs, durability and availability of the material. Look for materials that will not compromise the environment or run out in the future.

You will, therefore, need materials that come from renewable or replaceable sources, materials that can be recycled and are in abundant supply.

To Rashid Ssenyonjo an architect and civil engineer with HIL-Consult, construction involves making hard choices. "The best way to choose construction materials that will fit your needs is by considering the durability, maintenance, aesthetic and cost of each material to be used," explains Ssenyonjo.

The source of materials must be considered to keep transport costs minimal. The heavier or more bulky materials are, the greater the transport costs will be where possible, heavy and bulky materials in particular should be sourced locally.

David Ssemakula, a constructor with Sawa Construction Company, recommends that where possible some materials should be made on site to avoid both costs and environmental harm through car emissions.

Recyclable

Ssemakula further explains that best materials are those that can be reused because they will reduce the need for new materials to be produced in the future. How materials are installed and fixed can have an effect on the ability to reuse them, so the shorter the expected life of the building, the

greater should be the reliance on screw or bolt fixing rather than adhesive and other permanent fixings.

Availability

Architect Simon Peter Kazibwe advises people to choose material that is easily available. "Having to import material has potential for delivery delays resulting in project hold-ups thereby increasing costs," he says.

Ease of installation

"Sometimes people are attracted to a certain material without considering the complications involved in its installation," Kazibwe observes. He advises that before you commit to a particular material, find out how easy it is to install, because you might end up incurring more costs from wastage resulting from the installation process.

HEALTH SAFETY

There is so much that can happen during the lifetime of a building. The aim therefore is to minimize anything that might enhance such accidents like fire. Materials should therefore be selected for ignitability, surface spread of flame, fire loading, and fire resistance and stability.

Building design and site management should aim to minimise waste, thereby reducing waste disposal and the release of pollutants. The impact of the disposal of materials at the end of their serviceable life must be considered.

Some materials such as solvents release chemicals and other airborne pollutants that may be harmful to people during installation or application.



Before starting to buy building materials, visit several dealers and manufacturers to see what they offer and at what price in order to get the best. PHOTOS BY RACHEL MABALA

Durability

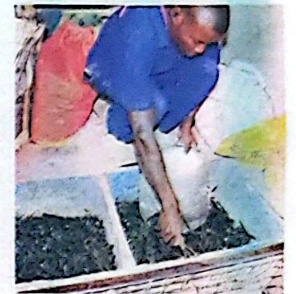
Your materials should be able to adapt to the weather and conditions they are exposed to. "Some materials deteriorate rapidly, especially in a wet environment. So it is essential that materials selected have the durability required for their area of use," Kazibwe explains.

It is, therefore, advisable to get materials that need as little maintenance and replacement as possible so they can last through the actual or serviceable life of the building.

Limit harmful effects by:

Rashid Ssenyonjo, an architect and civil engineer with HIL-Consult, tips as follows:

- Using paints, adhesives and primers that contain fewer harmful solvents
- Providing good ventilation in spaces where LOSP treated timber is being used
- Following the recommendations made by the manufacturer or supplier regarding installation or application.



Choose materials that are durable and will create a longlasting effect.



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