



## Minutes

### Environmental Assessments Working Group

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/zdi-GEYSuBk?si=1yrLSY4PztjAjHXC>

The mission of this working group, gathering 10 NGOs, through its exchanges and sharing of experience, is to help humanitarian actors take better account of the environment in the design of their projects by using environmental assessment tools (in particular NEAT+ but also CEDRIG, EST, OIE, etc.).

This session presented the work done on existing tools and the [MERA \(multisectoral environmental risk analysis\) matrix](#).

#### 1. The REH and the Working Group

The REH ([Réseau Environnement Humanitaire](#)) is a network of francophone humanitarian and development practitioners, working together to reduce the environmental footprint of aid. It exists since 2012, and formalised in 2021. There are over 300 members, including more than 30 organisations. The network has 4 working groups to operationalise its work:

- One on **waste management**
- One on **sustainable procurement**
- One on **environmental assessments**
- One on **carbon**

The WG has been around since 2021, and its aim is to help members of the WG and the rest of the sector to use environmental screening tools. Initially, the WG focussed on the [NEAT+](#), but now they have also explored other tools, such as the [CEDRIG](#) and the [EST](#), which will be presented below. To help the sector, the WG has developed video [tutorials](#) for the NEAT+ (in French and in English), as well as tested and provided feedback on the NEAT+ in [2022](#) and in [2023](#). The WG has also been a member of the NEAT+ Steering Committee since its creation.

The current members of the WG are: Action Contre la Faim, Handicap International/Humanity & Inclusion, Oxfam, ACTED, Première Urgence Internationale, French Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Solidarités International, Terre des Hommes and Groupe URD.

#### 2. Quick introduction to environmental analysis and screening

*Objectives of an environmental analysis:* To quickly identify issues of environmental concern, to make emergency and recovery interventions more sustainable. It allows to understand environmental risks, and as such to come up with mitigation measures to address those risks, and overall to make humanitarian operations greener and increase the quality of programming.

*Who should conduct an environmental screening:* Programs, Project Manager, involving logistics or other departments concerned. The more people are involved, the better the analysis will be and the more relevant the mitigation measures will be.

*When should one conduct an analysis:* When life-saving needs have been assessed, immediately following a crisis, ideally before project proposal and/ or when designing the project. In other words, when you know the activities your project will implement, but when you are still able to modify them in case a risk has arisen.

### 3. Rationale behind developing a multisectorial environmental risks analysis matrix

The members of the WG were not fully satisfied with the existing environmental screening tools (awaiting improvements)<sup>1</sup>. Feedback from the field highlighted that whilst real added value only comes in the adjustments that will be made in program design, teams were struggling to integrate mitigation measures at the project level. The WG wanted to highlight the importance of guiding a participatory analytical process with the key project stakeholders, as the more people are involved, the better the analysis will be and the most relevant the mitigation measures will be.

### 4. The multisectorial environmental risk analysis matrix (MERA matrix)

To answer the above analysis, the WG developed a multisectorial environmental risk analysis matrix ([MERA matrix](#)) to help humanitarian and development project developers and technical advisers to become aware of the environmental risks that the projects they are developing may entail, and to rapidly formulate recommendations to mitigate these risks. **The matrix provides a non-exhaustive database of mitigation measures for each environmental risk associated with activities in the Food Security & Livelihoods, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene, Shelter and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support sectors. The matrix is available in 3 languages: English, French and Spanish.**

You can download it as an Excel to use it use it as is relevant to your organisation e.g. use only relevant tabs/sectors/activities, add selection criteria etc.

What	This matrix is intended to identify potential environmental risks and its associated mitigation measures. For activities in FSL, WASH, Shelter and MHPSS
How	The risks and associated mitigation measures listed in the matrix are organised by sector of intervention (FSL, WASH, Shelter, MHPSS), then by subsector and by activity within each sector.
When	MERA shall be used during project design to be able to integrate adequate resources in your proposal in order to effectively implement environmental risks mitigation measures.
Who	Project managers, project coordinators and technical advisors

What it is not:

- The matrix does not replace environmental screenings (ex: NEAT+, EST etc.) but can complement them.
- The matrix does not provide an exhaustive list of environmental risks and mitigation measures.
- This matrix is not context specific.
- It can serve as a basis to review other tools.

The suggested methodological approach to use the tool was presented with the following steps:

- Organise a workshop gathering all the key local stakeholders (NGO program and support staff, local partners staff, representatives of communities, etc.) to contextualize the discussion
- Once environmental risks and corresponding mitigation measures are prioritised, discuss how they can be integrated into project design
- Define the adequate resources to implement those mitigation measures (human resources, logistic, material, finance, etc.)
- Integrate the measures and associated budget in your proposal

**A quick walkthrough the tool was then given, to highlight how to use it – watch it here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdi-GEYSuBk&t=1290s>.

More information on the methodology of development for the tool can be found in [the presentation sheet in the three languages](#).

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on this, see last year's presentation at HNPW:

<https://www.environnementhumanitaire.org/session-du-gt-evaluations-environnementales-au-hnpw-30-04-2024/>

**Q:** Would you recommend MERA to be used as a stand-alone tool, or in combination with other existing tools? And environmental assessments are generally participatory 'process', how do you take the participatory aspects into consideration, lets say the community engagement?

**R:** MERA can be used as a basis for risk and mitigation prioritisation, but an initial screening such as the NEAT+ Environmental Sensitivity module will help you have the risk analysis in your area. So it is best used as a complement. **This and the participatory approach will be highlighted in an SOP the WG will release soon, on how to conduct environmental screening.** Because of course if you don't take community perspective in your analysis, you might miss some aspects and/or have mitigation measures that are not relevant in your context!

Erika shared a specific example of how they use it within ACTED, combining both NEAT+ and the MERA matrix.

**Q:** Does it have a climate shock filter - i.e. type of disaster? Might responses to floods or droughts or displacement have specific environmental risks?

**R:** Short answer - no. But these risks are integrated throughout. The idea is to have an activity entry to the analysis, so for the user to go through their project activity rather than the risk.

**Q:** How will you monitor the impact of the MERA matrix on the uptake of environmental approach/practices in humanitarian response (which is the ultimate goal from env. assessment/screening right?), given that you said MERA was developed out of a gap identified by REH in tools available for humanitarian practitioners? Could you explain how MERA is addressing the issues we identified (we as a community in our discussions around NEAT+, including REH) on the "technicality" of language and measures which calls for env/climate experts when organizations don't necessary have them in-house, on the non-contextualization which makes the applicability quite challenging, and finally on the length of measures/information. In one word, what are the next steps to ensure the matrix is not "just" a long list in an excel.

**R:** Next step is to really highlight the approach in the SOP. This is based on the process implemented in other organisations, and we reckon this will help overcome some of the issues mentioned.

**Q:** There is no specific logistics tab? Taking into account the large footprint of the supply chain...

**R:** This was a big discussion we had within the WG. But in the end we integrated logistics aspects throughout the matrix. Indeed, many mitigation measures are specific to logistics. But this was done to also raise awareness amongst all the staff of the collective work needed throughout project activities to mitigate the risks - it's not only the WASH people or one sector in particular, you need everyone involved (or at least as many as possible!).

## 5. Next steps for the WG

The WG will:

- **Finish the version of the Health and Nutrition tab, and implement a peer review process (please reach out if you or a colleague is interested!)**
- Disseminate the matrix throughout the sector and gather feedback on the matrix and improve it
- Finish a SOP on how to conduct an environmental screening
- Continue testing and providing feedback to the other tool

**Thank you all for joining, and if you have any questions, you can reach out to [evalenv@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:evalenv@environnementhumanitaire.org)**