

Guidance Note

Considerations when using the NEAT+

The NEAT+ was designed to help humanitarian organizations and workers with little or no environmental expertise to obtain a quick analysis of the environmental sensitivities and risks of their projects. The NEAT+ is freely available in English, Spanish and French and can be adapted to organizations' individual needs.

If you are interested in adopting the NEAT+ for wider use in your organisation this Guidance Note takes you through how the tool can be used by those in the field and at national, regional or global HQ level; the different ways the tool can be used; and how the NEAT+ can be incorporated into your organization's procedures. For more detailed information on how the NEAT+ fits into environmental management processes, please refer to the [NEAT+ process guidance](https://www.eecentre.org/resources/neat/), available on the NEAT+ homepage (<https://www.eecentre.org/resources/neat/>).

How the NEAT+ can be used:

By field staff/officers

The NEAT+ was designed to deliver a snapshot of the environmental concerns in a humanitarian context in a small-scale geographical area. Therefore, the tool was primarily designed for on-site field staff, and can be used both for the programme design and the programme/project monitoring and evaluation phase.

Used at field level, the NEAT+ is a practical tool with extensive benefits. It simplifies the process of integrating the environment as a cross-cutting issue into humanitarian work and encourages more environmentally sensitive and sustainable project design and implementation. It is practical, because it is simple, fast and requires no specific environmental expertise to use. NEAT+ is the first rapid environmental screening tool developed exclusively for humanitarian settings. It brings environmental expertise into humanitarian interventions without the need for extensive technical knowledge, strengthening the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance.

With the process often as important as the outcome, using the NEAT+ improves learning on environmental issues, assists in prioritizing and directing where organisations can provide environmental assistance and acts as a checklist of shelter/WASH/livelihoods environment related issues. The NEAT+ is innovative in that it produces a customized report based on a fully automated analysis process.

Field staff/project officers are not only provided with an overview of the environment and the environmental impacts of the planned/ongoing humanitarian activities, but the NEAT+ also provides mitigation tips to direct the user towards ideas of how to mitigate these negative impacts. As such, this tool is very valuable in the project design phase, as it gives tailored insights, in accordance with the project's needs and the organization's capacities. The outcome/results generated by the NEAT+ can be used to trigger a request for a full environmental assessment, request technical environmental expertise, or make a case for funding for environmental mitigation activities.

The piloting and testing phases have shown that the NEAT+ is particularly relevant for refugee or displacement settings.

As a headquarters'/ national / regional programme officer

The NEAT+ was not designed for desk-based evaluations *per se*. Evaluations can be completed remotely but will require a person in the field collecting data, or someone who knows the specifics of the area (e.g. soil types). It may need to be completed remotely if field staff do not speak English, French or Spanish, the languages that NEAT+ is currently available in.

Headquarters', national or regional staff may need to coordinate humanitarian programmes across large geographical areas. The different sites' project managers may find it useful to complete different evaluations with the NEAT+. The data collected at field level can then be compiled and analysed at desk or headquarters level.

One of the roles of programme officers at desk level is to gather all the different evaluations from the field, compile the results and use them to design a logical framework or to write a monitoring and evaluation report. This is especially true for large projects where several evaluations are needed, in different geographic locations. Receiving data from the NEAT+ conducted on the ground is beneficial to this analysis process. Several organizations that took part in the piloting phase of the tool reported that the NEAT+ brings added value when developing project proposals for donors, integrating environmental concerns in the needs' analysis or compiling the situation overview.

The NEAT+ evaluation results can also be used for advocacy. At desk level, national and regional program officers or HQ staff can use the results of the NEAT+ to:

- Showcase their interest in environmental protection and demonstrate intentions to integrate environment into humanitarian action to donors.
- Advocate and communicate with management or those who make decisions about projects, by showing the existing environmental needs
- Understand where to prioritise environmental support
- Leverage the use and results of the NEAT+ to engage and challenge senior management on making larger scale "green" changes to the organisation.

Incorporating the NEAT+ into the organization's information management procedures

The NEAT+ was designed as an on-site stool, to provide a snapshot of the environmental situation surrounding a humanitarian intervention. During the testing and piloting phases, the procedures for incorporating the NEAT+ into organizational procedures, and its link to an organization's use of KoBoToolbox, was raised.

Most users acknowledged the benefits of using the NEAT+ on KoBoToolbox, however this brought up several issues and considerations about information management and sharing, that this guidance note endeavours to answer.

1. My organization has a KoBo account and uses it to gather and share field data that I, a project officer/field staff, collect. Should I have my own KoBo account to do a NEAT+ evaluation, or should I use my organization's KoBo account?

When only one NEAT+ evaluation is needed, in a small-scale project, then for practical reasons, the general advice is for project officers to have their own KoBo account. After they generate the results of the evaluation on the Excel Kobo data entry document, they can share these results with higher level management via email or other channels. If management wishes access to the data inputted in KoBo, such as pictures, GPS coordinates, additional comments etc., projects on KoBo can be shared by link, as with the JEU demo version (see

guidance note **03 How to use the NEAT+ with KoBoToolbox**). For information on how to share KoBo projects, please visit the KoBoToolbox Help centre:

<http://support.kobotoolbox.org/en/>.

In this situation, using the NEAT+ offline with only Excel can also be an adequate solution.

However, in case of a complex project or programme that requires multiple evaluations performed by different project officers in different locations, it makes more sense to use the organization's KoBo account, as it prevents data from being scattered in multiple accounts and allows for the comparison of multiple data entries. (cf. Q2)

2. My organization has a KoBo account and uses KoBo to share the on-site data collected by project officers, that I, HQ/national/regional programme manager, gather and compile to write reports or proposals. Although the NEAT+ offers great analyses, some of the project officers have no time to set up the tool on KoBo. I am also experiencing issues gathering the data of the project officers who use their own KoBo account. Is it possible for me to set up the NEAT+ on the organization's KoBo account and share it to my colleagues on the field?

Yes, this is a possibility that has proven to work in certain contexts. Project officers may not have the time or the IT capacities to follow the process of setting up the NEAT+ on their KoBo account. What project officers can do is to create the two project lines on KoBo (Sensitivity Module and Activity Modules) and share the links with their colleagues on the field. The data collected will then appear in the organization's KoBo deployed projects tab. This is particularly useful when one project requires several evaluations in different locations. If all project officers (or people collecting data in the field) use one link shared by a programme officer (or other regional/national/HQ staff) for the same project, then the data will be stored and collected in one KoBo account.

As a programme officer or person coordinating multiple data entries from the field, it is important to be mindful of the multiplication of KoBo project lines in the organization's KoBo account. If the organization manages several complex, longer term humanitarian projects/programmes at the same time, then it can prove helpful, instead of having only one KoBo account for the organization, to have one KoBo account per programme manager, with her/his assigned projects' data stored.

In this situation, using KoBo makes more sense than doing the NEAT+ with Excel only, as it makes sharing or comparing the results easier.