

RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PUT TO THE TEST

MERA PILOT IN BURKINA FASO

14 September 2026



Who are we?



REH Environmental Assessments WG

Since 2021

Help members and sector to use environmental assessments

Initially focus on NEAT+, also explored other tools (CEDRIG, EST) and developed the MERA

Technical feedback to NEAT+ ([2022](#), [2023](#), NEAT + Steering Committee member)



The Netherlands
Red Cross



ACTION
CONTRE
LA FAIM



1. WHAT IS THE MERA?



The Multisectoral Environmental Assessment (MERA) Matrix!



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)			
Sub-sector	Activity	Potential Environmental Risks	Mitigation measures
Water	Desalination	Generation of brine resulting in salination of soils or/contaminating shallow wells	•Consider productive use of brine (fish farming, ...). •Safely dispose concentrate following national and international guidelines
Water	Water reservoirs/ tanks	Overflows that deplete water source, cause soil erosion, water stagnation, destroy vegetation/crops	•Plan for and install automatic mechanisms for preventing overflows. •Provide adequate drainage infrastructure. •Where avoiding overflowing is not possible, reuse overflowing water (for example for
Water	Water reservoirs/ tanks	Danger to users e.g. children climbing on water tanks, risk of drowning in open tanks, dams	•Robust and secured infrastructure that's not hazardous to users. •Raise awareness for the communities on the existing risks on site. •Use warning signs to ward off undue access. •Fence dangerous infrastructures.
Solid Waste Management	Waste segregation, recycling and reduction	Waste accumulation	•Separate organic and inorganic waste to reduce landfill volume. •Procure items with minimal or environmentally friendly packaging. •Implement communication strategies to promote behavioural changes, such as limiting waste, selective sorting, composting, and proper use of waste disposal areas. •Promote recycling of materials. •Strengthen both formal and informal waste management systems across the full waste chain. •Support the development of regulations and/or their implementation for the safe management
Guidance note			

1 2

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2. MERA PILOT PROCESS



The MERA Pilot at a Glance

Objectives

- Test MERA in operational settings and identify opportunities for improvement
- Compare MERA and MERA & NEAT+ approaches
- Generate evidence for the humanitarian sector

4 sectors represented

- WASH
- Food Security & Livelihoods
- Health & Nutrition
- Mental Health & Psychosocial Support



Key figures

- 13 participating NGOs
- 14 environmental assessments



Pilot Process

A Collaborative Learning Approach



Deliverables

- ❑ The report '**Rapid Environmental Assessments Put to the Test, MERA Pilot in Burkina Faso** – Lessons learnt from the MERA pilot project in Burkina Faso
- ❑ The 14 **rapid environmental assessments**
- ❑ A **template of environmental assessment report**
- ❑ A **template of environmental management plan (EMP)**



3. MERA PILOT RESULTS



Environmental Assessments Deliver Real Value

What did the pilot demonstrate?

Benefits reported by participants

- Improved project quality
- Better environmental risk management
- Enhanced project planning
- Stronger dialogue with donors and stakeholders

Limitations reported by participants

- Differences in how NGOs approach each stage
- Time is the main difficulty identified by the NGOs
 - Neat+ Alone 35 hours (17-121)
 - Neat+ & MERA 29 hours (10-54)
- Unresolved questions regarding which stakeholders to be involved (and how many)

Rapid environmental assessments help identify risks and opportunities that might otherwise remain overlooked.



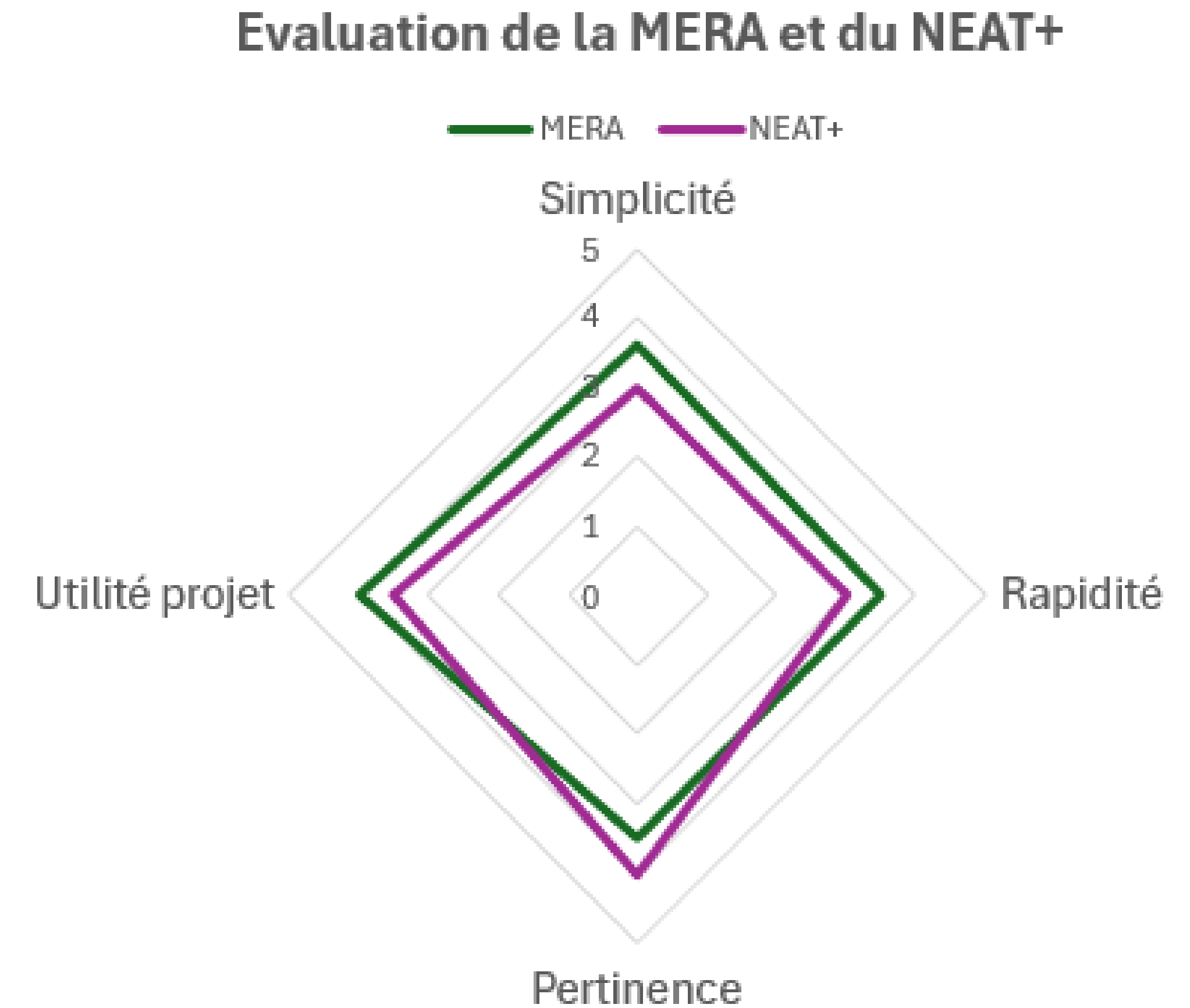
Comparison NEAT+ / MERA

❑ **NEAT+**: a context-specific tool... not always easy to use!

- ✓ Environmental sensitivity analysis
- ✓ Strong contextual perspective

❑ **MERA**: an easy-to-understand tool... but one in which you can feel a bit lost!

- ✓ Easier to use
- ✓ Faster to implement
- ✓ Broader sector and activities coverage
- ✓ Strong operational focus



Is Combining MERA and NEAT+ Always Necessary?

The combined assessments generated only a small number of additional mitigation measures that were uniquely attributable to NEAT+ (less than 5%).

- Participants' consensus on complementarity:
 - contextual analysis via NEAT+
 - and detailed operational analysis using MERA

However... what added value do NEAT+ and MERA offer in relation to the time required? (efficiency considerations)

When the context is unfamiliar → MERA + NEAT+ sensitivity

When the context is well understood → MERA alone is often sufficient

Complementarity exists, but combining tools should be a strategic choice rather than a standard requirement.



The Most Important Lessons

Tools Support the Process...

- Structure environmental thinking
- Reduce the risk of overlooking issues
- Suggest mitigation measures

...But People Create Value, Teams must:

- Interpret findings
- Contextualize results
- Prioritize actions
- Exercise critical judgment
- Adapt recommendations to local realities

- **Environmental Management Plan** is a key result of an environmental screening.
- **Budget** associated with selected recommendation to be implemented is central to ensure proper implementation of mitigation measures

The quality of an environmental assessment depends first and foremost on human analysis, not on the tool itself.



The Real Investment: Building Capacity

What participants asked for

- More comprehensive training
- Practical case studies
- Continued mentoring and support
- Stronger internal environmental focal points

Outcomes

- Significant increase in participants' confidence and skills
- Strong motivation to continue using environmental assessments
- High overall satisfaction with the pilot process

Strengthening people and organizations is now a greater priority than developing additional assessment tools.



Five Strategic Messages to Take Away

1

- Invest in the process as much as in the tool: it is the **quality of the critical analysis, contextualization, and prioritization** that determines the value of an evaluation

2

- Strengthen **capacity building** and create a **help desk** accessible to all users;

3

- Use a **single tool by default**, and in some cases combine the use of different tools;

4

- Engage in a collective discussion focused on the **convergence of tools** and the clarification of expectations, rather than on the multiplication of tools.

5

- Prioritize now the **next step** after EE, the **Environmental Management Plan implementation** and organize a pilot to draw lessons learnt on real impacts of EE

TESTIMONY FROM STEPHANE SOUBEAGA

participant from the MERA PILOT
working at national NGO Tin Tua





RESEAU ENVIRONNEMENT HUMAINITAIRE

Thank you!

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