



arche noVa
Initiative for People in Need



ECT WASH — Lessons Learned

NEAT+

Country
MYANMAR

Organisation
EEI and
SMDO

Duration
SEPT 2024 TO NOV
2024



BACKGROUND

The ECT WASH project in Myanmar has been instrumental in addressing critical water, sanitation, and hygiene needs in conflict-affected areas. Operating across 10 locations—6 in Mogaung, 3 in Mansi, and 1 in Bhamo township—the project focuses on Kachin State, a region plagued by frequent conflicts and road restrictions. This volatile environment required the project team to adopt adaptive implementation strategies to ensure continuity and success.

Key partners in this initiative include arche noVa Myanmar, Sopyay Myanmar Development Organization, and Ethnic Equality Initiative (EEI), with EEI acting as the primary implementer and managing the field office in Myitkyina township. The project leveraged the NEAT+ (Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool) to evaluate environmental risks and incorporate

mitigation measures into its WASH activities. Training sessions were conducted for field teams, followed by environmental assessments in four initial locations in Mogaung township. These assessments included participation from community members, local leaders, and camp committee members, fostering a collaborative approach to identifying risks and their root causes. The findings were shared with communities to raise awareness and integrate environmental considerations into WASH infrastructure designs.

Challenges, such as supply chain disruptions and local context constraints, posed significant hurdles. Despite these issues, the project team's proactive approach ensured that many mitigation measures were successfully incorporated into the infrastructure design and implementation processes.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The project provided valuable insights into the challenges and successes of implementing environmentally sensitive WASH activities in conflict-affected regions.

Challenges:

Implementation was hindered by both external and internal barriers. External challenges included ongoing conflicts and frequent road restrictions, which disrupted operations and affected material delivery timelines. Supply chain and transportation limitations further compounded these issues, delaying project activities. Internally, some mitigation measures recommended by NEAT+ assessments were not fully compatible with local contexts. Additionally, community members initially lacked awareness of how their daily behaviors contributed to environmental risks, making it difficult to address these issues effectively at the start.

Successes:

Despite these challenges, the project achieved significant milestones. The NEAT+ assessments and subsequent training sessions enabled the field teams to identify and address key environmental risks. Community participation played a critical role in highlighting local concerns and fostering a shared sense of responsibility. The translation of NEAT+ tools into the Myanmar language further enhanced understanding and usability among field staff and community members. By integrating mitigation measures into WASH infrastructure designs, the project successfully aligned its activities with both environmental and community needs.

Funded by:



Engaging with the community proved to be a transformative approach. It not only enabled us to gather valuable insights and information but also fostered a sense of accountability among community members, encouraging them to actively participate in finding and implementing solutions. By utilizing the NEAT+ tool, we were able to swiftly identify and mitigate environmental risks, ensuring that our projects were not only safer but also more sustainable. Additionally, the training we underwent played a crucial role in enhancing our skills, allowing us to conduct more thorough and detailed assessments, which significantly improved the quality of our work.

The consultative approach adopted by the project team also proved invaluable. By engaging community members in discussions about environmental risks, the project not only raised awareness but also encouraged sustainable practices that could be maintained long after the project's conclusion.

"The NEAT+ assessment helped us see how our daily behaviors impact the environment. With the project team's guidance, we are exploring better ways to meet our needs without harming our surroundings."



Top – Global Hand Washing Day Event at Naung Pong Ywar Thit village.

Bottom – IDRR Day Event at Namti Lambraw Yang Camp, Mogaung.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Expanding the NEAT+ assessments to additional locations is a critical step in enhancing environmental sensitivity across diverse regions. NEAT+ has proven to be a powerful tool for identifying and mitigating environmental risks, and its broader application would ensure more comprehensive and sustainable project outcomes. This expansion should also include raising awareness about climate change and environmental preservation within communities, encouraging them to actively engage in protecting their local ecosystems. Translating NEAT+ tools and resources into local languages should remain a priority to improve accessibility and ensure that all stakeholders can participate effectively.

Developing contingency plans for supply chain and transportation challenges is vital, especially in conflict-prone regions, to maintain project continuity. These plans should be designed with an emphasis on reducing environmental impacts, such as adopting eco-friendly transportation solutions and minimizing waste. Environmental sensitivity must be a guiding principle in addressing logistical hurdles.

Early engagement with communities is essential for collaboratively identifying environmental risks and co-creating mitigation measures. This approach not only fosters shared ownership of the process but also embeds sustainability in local practices. Community education initiatives should include targeted messaging on climate change and the importance of environmental conservation, aligning their efforts with the goals of the NEAT+ framework.

Capacity-building activities for field teams should focus on equipping them with the skills to adapt NEAT+ tools and methodologies effectively to local contexts. Training should also emphasize integrating environmental considerations into all project phases, ensuring that decisions consistently align with sustainability goals. Additionally, avoiding rigid implementation frameworks is crucial to addressing dynamic challenges, such as conflicts or unexpected logistical constraints. A flexible and environmentally conscious approach will enhance the project's resilience and ensure it continues to uphold the principles of sustainability, even in the face of unforeseen challenges.