Guidelines on completing an Environmental screening or proposals submitted to EDCTP calls

Why screen for environmental impact?
In line with many other funding bodies EDCTP has established a policy on Environmental Impact.

The main objectives of environmental screening for research projects are to:

Highlight any environmental opportunities that the proposed project may contribute to.
Example: a screening note might identify the need to include environmental services (water, waste management etc.) in order to build infrastructure and develop capacity to enable a clinical trial to take place.

Identify and manage environmental risks associated with the project and ensure that appropriate action is taken.
Example: A clinical trial is likely to involve use of equipment and reagents which subsequently need to be disposed of. Their use and disposal should be referred to particularly if hazardous or radioactive materials are involved. The note should make clear that any national legislation or relevant international conventions will be complied with.

How to Do Environmental Screening

1. **Check Annotated Environmental Screening Note (ESN)**.
2. **Start as early as possible.** Screening should go hand in hand with project concept development. This way environmental opportunities and risks can be appropriately and easily integrated into subsequent design stages, rather than being brought in at the last minute.
3. **Consider gender aspects of environmental concerns.** Because of existing inequalities women in low income urban and rural areas are often more vulnerable to environmental degradation.
4. **Consider impacts on different social groups.** Different groups in society feel positive and negative impacts of environmental issues differently.
5. **Consult the Checklist**
6. **Complete the ESN Template**
7. **Review the ESN annually** prior to submitting the annual project report to ensure it remains up to date and incorporates any emerging issues.

Is more information needed?
Screening may highlight the need for further environmental investigation, for any of these reasons:

a) There is insufficient information to complete screening;
b) Screening identifies issues that may have significant environmental impact and need investigation before design is completed; or
c) Further work is needed during implementation and monitoring.

The Checklist provides some examples of circumstances where environmental impact opportunities and risks might arise from health-related activities.

Checklist
Environmental screening for health-related activities

Opportunities

Training

- The inclusion of environmental issues in health-related activities can be a cost effective way of improving health outcomes and building sustainable capacity. For example, environmental health education can be provided for primary healthcare workers. Hygiene education could be provided for participants.

Infrastructure

- Engagement with health ministries provides the opportunity to consider more cost effective construction technology, particularly for primary health clinics. This should include improving resilience of buildings to environmental hazards, more efficient maintenance and energy management practices.
- Access to safe water and sanitation brings major environmental health benefits, particularly when combined with hygiene education.
- Indoor air quality can be improved, for example by use of clean fuels, improved ventilation, and improved cooking methods. There is a particular benefit for women and children.
- Health initiatives can help reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, for example improving awareness and access to needle exchange programmes for drug users, safe condom disposal and safe needle and clinical waste disposal.

Waste Management

- Other environmental health improvements include initiatives to improve hazardous clinical waste management, reducing exposure to environmental contaminants (such as pesticides and heavy metals) and the distribution of pesticide-impregnated bed nets etc.
- There may be an opportunity to facilitate healthy environments for children, particularly in areas where they live or go to school. E.g. through access to safe water and disposal of hazardous waste.

Transport facilities

- Other issues that can lead to efficiencies and cost-savings include health transport and fuel management.

Risks

- Health programmes may focus on curative interventions. Failure to address environmental health conditions (and occupational health) may compromise long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness.
- Proposed projects may not take advantage of opportunities for environmental or biological control of vectors, for example malaria-carrying mosquitoes.
- Proposed project may not take the opportunity to collaborate with other health-related initiatives in the area. e.g. an HIV/AIDS project supporting and collaborating with disease prevention activities in integrated environmental health/reproductive health/health care programmes.
- HIV/AIDS renders communities more vulnerable to environmental hazards. Projects may not address the need for safe disposal of clinical and other health-care waste.