



## Eritrea: Boosting Locust Control Efforts

Control measures conducted in more than 28,000 hectares across the Northern Red Sea Region

### Background Overview

Historical records indicate that preliminary initiatives aimed at managing desert locust infestations in Eritrea began in the 1960s. Building on a wealth of experience, the efforts to control desert locust and their impact have, therefore, been consistently strengthened in the period following Eritrea's independence.

Given that over 7 million hectares of the country's total cover is suitable for desert locust breeding, prevention has been the major strategic measure. The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has established national guideline for desert locust control, which emphasize the importance of comprehensive survey, timely interventions, comprehensive control measures, safety protocols, and reliable logistical support.

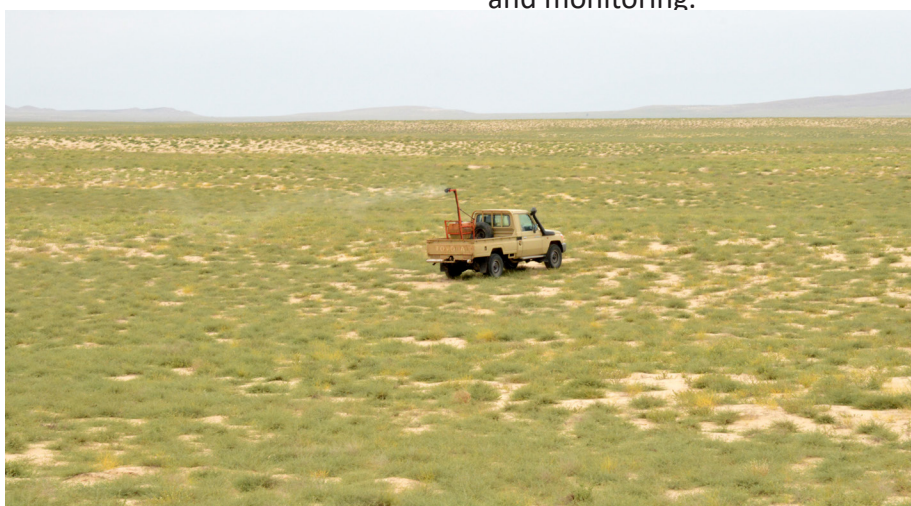
Even though the intensity and spread differ from year to year, Eritrea experiences desert locust outbreaks almost annually. According to reports from the MoA, after 1991, serious desert locust infestations occurred in 1995, 2006/2007, 2013/2014, 2019 and 2020. The size of the areas affected ranged from 51,000-101,000 hectares.

The 2020/2021 desert locust upsurge across the region was among the worst in the past 50-70 years. However, this was not unusual for Eritrea. The country was keenly following the developments in the region and it made utmost preparations as Eritrea has been experiencing to the most serious migratory pests like Desert and Tree locusts, African armyworm, Fall armyworm, and *Quelea-quelea* birds, among others, which demand continuous follow-up and monitoring.

### Eritrea's Strategic Approach

Eritrea's strategic framework for addressing desert locust infestations is primarily centered on preventive measures, particularly targeting hoppers before they start to fly. Here, the operational significance of both permanent and temporary stations are critical during the winter breeding season, which spans from September to April. The summer breeding season, usually occur from June to September.

Upon detecting any signs of locust hopper upsurge, immediate ground control operations are initiated to either eradicate or mitigate the potential damage. As the guidelines emphasize, the importance of containing swarms within their breeding habitats is the preliminary task. For swarms that invade from neighboring countries, ground control efforts are conducted at night when the adult locusts are less mobile. Overall, thorough preparation is a vital component that has significantly enhanced the effectiveness of desert locust control measure. It is also noteworthy that basic resources and personnel, even though not always adequate, are usually mobilized at the stations in advance. The flexibility and diligence of the operation's



coordinators, staff and members of the defence factors are also among the major forces behind the country's success in controlling the dangerous pest.

### **Strengthening Regional and Global Collaborations**

Eritrea has built a robust foundation for sustainable solutions through strong collaboration and shared commitments among neighboring countries and various stakeholders. To enhance these coordinated efforts, Eritrea has engaged with different organizations, and, thus became a member of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC), which was established in 1967. Besides, Eritrea is a member of the Desert Locust Control Organization for East Africa (DLCO-EA), which previously had its headquarters in Eritrea before relocating to Ethiopia in the late 1970s.

### **Strengthening Standardized Regulatory Services Role**

The Ministry of Agriculture is consistently working for a standardized and regulated approach to guarantee comprehensive safety within prevention strategy. This includes the proper use of registered



pesticides. Moreover, to minimize the pesticide's impact on the environment, the Ministry conducted a pilot study on the use of bio-pesticide (*Metarhizium anisopliae* var. *acridum*) across three distinct phases: in an open field located in the Karora Sub-region, in a closed field within the Sheeb Sub-region, and in a controlled environment at the National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory (NAPHL) during January and February of 2021. Mechanical means in the form of vacuum cleaner has also been tried to suck hoppers into bags for use as chicken feed. However, this is yet at a pilot level.

Each year, during the course of desert locust control campaigns, it is estimated that between 150 to 200 empty pesticide drums of varying sizes are accumulated. The implementation of a drum

crusher to manage these empty pesticide containers in the main store (Daero Paulos) has been a significant step forward. Additionally, the washing facility for sprayer-mounted vehicles established at Gadem Haleb is an integral part of the overall safety measures.

### **The Northern Red Sea: The major hub of desert locust and control operation**

The extensive nature of the Northern Red Sea region necessitates continuous collaboration among all stakeholders as the winter breeding area is vast, covering around 4.7 million hectares, generally along the country's long Red Sea coast. In the previous year, due to winter precipitation and conducive conditions, a significant locust upsurge occurred. To mitigate such risks before posing any damage, from September 2024 to first months of January 2025, over 400 thousand hectares of land was surveyed, of which 28,280 hectares were infested by hopper bands and few adults were put under control.

By establishing three permanent and two temporary stations, in the major breeding areas effective control operations were carried out in vast areas of Karora, Afabet, Sheeb,



Massawa and Foro Subzones. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, members of the Defence Forces, local administrations and the public in the respective areas, successful

control measures were carried out without causing any significant damages on crops and range land.

According, to the latest FAO, monthly locust bulletin, a second

generation is expected in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Eritrea in the months to come. As usual, Eritrea is prepared for any eventuality.

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# Children's Day care service; necessary intervention relieving working women of the Ministry of Agriculture

*'I used to feel equal to men, until I had my child which suddenly affected my beliefs and future vision. I only had the options of leaving my child behind bothering a relative or bringing him to my workplace. However, with the advent of the day care center, I am contributing as my colleagues and seeing a bright future in my career. It is an opportunity every woman in the country should get''.*



Selamawit Ghebrezgiabhier

This is how Selamawit Ghebrezgiabhier, a member of the National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory (NAPHL) and a beneficiary, describes the relief she has got from the daycare service of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Researches conducted worldwide present the evidence that access to childcare reduces women's mental distress, improves their concentration on their jobs, enhances child development, and increases household income. Access to child care service helps

working parents to concentrate on their work without having to worry about their children's well-being while they are at work. It is a way of creating an enabling environment, where women employees are able to significantly contribute to their organizational success.

Childcare services may shift the composition of women's work demand and give them time and freedom to get into better paying work indispensable for

their empowerment, and social and economic status. Working mothers without access to good and affordable childcare services, may be forced to resign and lose an opportunity to excel in their career and chip-in the development of a country. This inflicts economic problems, dependency, dissatisfaction and low self-esteem; which may have a decline effect that negatively affects society as a whole.

## Background of the service

The Ministry of Agriculture believes that helping women with access to child care, would empower them to engage in their profession, which, in turn, can result in increased creativity, productivity and organizational excellence. That is the reason why, the Ministry has established daycare centers in three of its branch offices; Gejeret, Villajo and Halhale which officially commenced in December of 2022.





The 2023 daycare annual report of the Ministry describes that the objectives of the service are to provide a conducive environment which promotes women's equality, participation and empowerment at work, and to exploit all the available workforce of the Ministry. This grand objective stands along the principle of the Government of the State of Eritrea, which welcomes any action that encourages women's participation in every aspect and strictly prohibits any action that limits it.

### Why empower women employees?

*'Carrying my first child in my back in the office hours was really difficult for him, and also for me in that it affected my efficiency and effectiveness. My second born is now in a room with caregivers, where he has others to play with, adequate meals, toys and puzzles, mattresses and other*



Ghidey Tesfay

*necessities.'* Ghidey Tesfay, a member of the Human Resource Development and Training division of the Ministry of Agriculture and a mother of two explains.

Real development, as stated by many social scientists, is only achieved if efforts focus on women. Eritrea's experience in its 30 years of armed struggle, in which around 30 percent of

the liberation army were women (NEUW, November 1999). Empowering women and creating opportunities for them would induce all round development. It is with this understanding that the Ministry of Agriculture established the daycare centers-to encourage its employees into investing their skill and energy in their organizational tasks.

### What services are offered?

The daycare centers are open from 8;00 am to 4;00 pm in the working days, accommodating children of four months to four years. They each have four workers; a cook, two care givers and a person responsible for sanitation. Benefiting mothers pay 100 Nakfa for a child and additional 50 Nakfa for every additional child a month; and the Ministry's employees contribute 5-10 Nakfa per month while the Ministry and its partners take care of the balance. Regular breakfast, lunch and snack services

are provided for the children with nutritious food in the daily menu. Attempts are also being made for the centers to partially respond to their food requirement by allocating small plot of land where they plant some important vegetables, including sweet potato.

Each center has a room colorfully painted with alphabets, numbers and pictures of animals and flowers both on the inside and outside. Playing facilities like indoor and outdoor swings, puzzles and other items are available to help children develop mentally and physically. The centers are also equipped with kitchen supplies (including washing machine and gas oven), safety materials (including fire extinguisher and first-aid kit) and television.

### Initiatives to improve the service

In collaboration with different bodies of the Ministry and other stakeholders, the centers arrange different trainings for mothers and attendants on issues of nutrition, sanitation health and care giving. The centers have a strong linkage with community hospitals around their area. Godaif community hospital, for example, sends medical experts for weekly checkup on the children and the attendants get checked up once every three months-free of charge. Recently, the Ministry presented certificates of appreciation to the health centers of Villajo, Godaif and Debarwa which have continually been assisting the centers.

### Challenges

The initiative of establishing the daycare centers by the Ministry is commendable and should be a model for other organizations in Eritrea. However, there are still some prevailing challenges that need to be addressed soon. For example, each daycare center has only one room, apart from the kitchen and playground. The centers of Villajo and Gejeret have 20 kids each, which is expected to increase. Hence, preparing additional rooms is a necessity. With the availability of a room, the younger kids would be in one room and the others in the other room, making it easier to teach them basic education.

### Future plan

The daycare centers have come a long way in a short time, providing accessories, nutritious food and medical services. The playground of the respective centers will shortly be fenced, providing a safe area to play on. Another plan expected to minimize expenses would be boosting the production of vegetables in the small plots of land. Moreover, the daycare centers have a plan to enhance documentation and develop a data base that include necessary information about the children and their mothers.

### Recommendation

Since the responsibility of taking care of a child is mostly of women, encouraging women and creating opportunities to commit their



Almaz Ghebreyohannes

energy for themselves and their organization's development would be supporting the policy of the government. To this effect, all government and non-government organizations should work towards establishing day-care centres.

The benefits of having access to daycare services are evident from the account of one beneficiary of the daycare service in the Ministry of Agriculture and a member of Agricultural Strategic Information System Division (ASISD) - Almaz Ghebreyohannes; *'It was difficult working with my child around. I was simply hoping for a mattress and a room where I can put my child on. Well, the relief I now feel is beyond measure and every woman in other organizations should get the same relief. Each governmental and non-governmental organization should, therefore, just take similar initiative and many will contribute into making it a great day-care.'*

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