

Rural Education & Economic Development Society (REEDS) Pakistan

Introduction: As expected increased rain falls were received in month of September 2020 in Pakistan. The weather conditions in the recent months favored the development and growth of Locust in the particular areas. As per seasonal prediction, there would be conducive environment for the locust breeding during September, particularly in the lower and eastern parts of Sindh. Temperatures are expected to remain within the requisite criteria (20-35 °C) in most parts of the Sindh. The expected temperatures of the region may favour the Egg and Hopper development of Locust. Generally, winds are expected to prevail westerly in lowland areas. Along with the expected temperatures and wind pattern, higher rains have provided favorable environment for Locust breeding during September. Looking these forecast departments are active and well equipped to combat any attack. Widespread and appropriate insecticides spray using aero planes/helicopters or special vehicles in the affected areas, is the only solution to control the breeding/spread of locust. Moreover Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority Lt Gen Mohammad Afzal, during a briefing to diplomatic corps at the National Locust Control Centre (NLCC) has warned of the locust issue to raise in the next months between July 15 and Sept 15 would be critical because of monsoon and the government's ongoing commitment with anti-Covid-19 measures.” In same meeting NLCC's Deputy Coordinator Maj Gen Saeed Akhtar also observed that migration from Iran had lately subsided, but Pakistan is still not out of danger. Dawn has highlighted the threat could grow twenty-fold in the coming monsoon season unless extra measures are undertaken to counter the swarms as reported by The FAO. Similarly, the FAO predicts that a limited number of small swarms formed in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province and South Khorasan too would move to the summer breeding grounds in Pakistan. Desert Locust Situation Update, National Agro-met Centre, Pakistan Meteorological Department & <https://www.dawn.com/news/1568081>

FARMER AWARENESS RAISING

Rickshaw/Mosque announcements: Awareness through rickshaw announcements found one of the effective ways for transferring the information/knowledge to people. So, it's going on regular bases, as rickshaw along with sound system and IEC material moves from village to village announcing awareness slogans and guidelines for local people which are designed with the support of Agriculture Extension Department. REEDS team along with some lead farmers almost covered 250000 male female farmers/farm workers in 169 villages and also distributed IEC (Information, Education & Communication) material.



Radio Awareness Program: Sensitization and awareness raising among the farming communities through FM Radio program is routine practice of REEDS for all the programs so it also continued for Locust control and management. During last three programs different experts from REEDS, Agriculture Extension Department, Department of Pest Warning, emphasized the importance of timely response in case of locusts attack. Mr. Rahit Rashid, Additional Director, Department of Pest Warning, Rajanpur also participated one of the Radio Awareness Program for locust identification at different developmental stages. Live questions from the farmers were also addressed by the experts during the program.



Awareness Walks: Self awareness is important because when we have a better understanding of ourselves, we are able to experience ourselves as unique and separate individuals. We are then empowered to make changes and to build on our areas of strength as well as identify areas where we would like to make improvements. REEDS gathered the local people/farmers to conduct awareness walks with collaboration of Agriculture Extension Department. The purpose of the walks was to sensitize people about the importance of response from the field in case of Locust attack. These participants were holding banners and play cards with different awareness slogans.



TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building of Farmers (Male & Female): Capacity building focuses on furthering an individual's or organization's ability to do new things and improve what they currently do. In this case capacity building by REEDS and Agriculture Extension department improved 19 REEDS staff members and 5688 capacity to function and continue within a rapidly changing environment. As heavy rains were forecasted in target districts and there was a more chance of locust breeding and spreading. The main focus of the trainings was use of spray man kit to avoid physical exposure to chemicals, identification of eggs along with timely information sharing with locust control rooms.



PLANNING / PROGRESS SHARING MEETINGS

District Administration & Agriculture Extension Department: District Administration, Agriculture Extension Department, Department of Plant Protection, District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) & REEDS-Pakistan are active members of planning and progress sharing meetings which is going on weekly bases in Deputy Commissioner's office of Punjab & Sindh. The purpose of these meeting is to share the situation report about surveillance, locusts attack and planning for efficient use of available resources to combat the attack. Dr. Muhammad Yousaf Ali, Project Manager (REEDS) is regularly participating on behalf of REEDS-Pakistan and sharing updates.



Surveillance & Combat: After receiving information at REEDS Locust Information Cell, REEDS Pakistan participated and facilitated the Agriculture Extension Department as well as District Administration for surveillance surveys to locate locust eggs. Local farmers facilitated a lot especially in providing tractors to destroy eggs of the locust. During surveys the farmers were also guided for first aid activities to avoid locust settlement. Farmers, REEDS team, NDMA, Agriculture Extensions and other stakeholders are always vigilant in the field.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Turning Problem into Solution

Thank you REEDS Pakistan, Thank you Agriculture Extension; Sakina exclaimed!

It was early morning when I was walking through the sand dunes to collect some sticks for burning fire to make breakfast for my family when I saw a group of locust sitting on sand which was not flying even when I walked across, Sakina shared from Chak # 138-P Manthar, Tehsile & District Rahim yar Khan. Why these are not flying away? Question arose in my mind. I came back home, started making the food but question keep moving in my mind when suddenly I recalled the radio program where an expert from REEDS was sharing about locust eggs laying. I along with my husband rushed to the site, he holds a locust and pulled its body out from the sand. Yellow colored packets of eggs can be easily seen by us. Lot of people gathered there.



I took the pamphlet out from my bag which was given to me by REEDS team to get the contact number of locusts information cell established in Deputy Commissioner Office by support of REEDS. We informed control room of locating the egg lying in the sand dune near us. The next hour REEDS team along with Agriculture Extension Department and Department of Plant Protection were there at the location. The experts from these departments confirmed the egg laying. Combat team along with our villagers destroyed the eggs by using tractor and guided the villagers do the same. The activity was very effective to help us get rid of eggs which may hatch to form a locust swarm that can destroy our crop in minutes, villagers responded!

Sakina say I am feeling important from that day as whole village is thankful to me for informing them of big threat in time.

Thank you REEDS Pakistan, Thank you Agriculture Extension; Sakina exclaimed!

For more Information

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