Assistance for Emergency Locust/Grasshopper Abatement (AELGA)

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About AELGA

Grasshoppers, Locusts and Sustainable Development - Locusts are a type of grasshopper that are most robust and can migrate over long distances. When ecological conditions are right, large populations of locusts can develop and spread across entire regions. An adult locust can eat its own weight in green vegetation daily, which means that just a small fraction of an average swarm can eat as much as 2,500 people do in a single day. Once a plague has developed, the locusts can cause widespread damage on crops, causing famine and disrupting sustainable development programs. Other dangerous emergency trans-boundary outbreak pests include armyworm, Quelea birds and rodents. Plague control of these animals and insects is both very costly and environmentally risky due to the amount of pesticides required. As a result, preventing these plagues is extremely important for both humanitarian and economic reasons.

History of AELGA - The Assistance for Emergency Locust/Grasshopper Abatement was created in 1987 to deal with a plague of locusts and grasshoppers that infested much of Africa, the Middle East and Southwest Asia. Initially, AELGA rapidly procured pesticides, spraying equipment and technical assistance. During the recent locust/grasshopper plague that was manifested from 1986 through 1989, the U.S. Government, mainly through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), contributed more than $60 million to a $300 million, multi-donor campaign. Since then, AELGA has broadened its focus to include plague prevention, integrated pest management and environmental protection.

What AELGA Does - Since 1989, AELGA has conducted:

- Training to build capacity to monitor, survey, rapidly report and safely manage pest outbreaks;
- A rigorous Programmatic Environmental Assessment, with 19 detailed, country-specific Supplemental Environmental Assessments in sub-Saharan Africa, including six subsequent amendments based on further research;
- Follow-up studies to evaluate the environmental impact of the 1988 pesticide spraying campaign;
- Disposal of obsolete pesticides;
- Research initiatives to study the use of plant extracts and micro-organisms to control locusts and grasshoppers without the toxic effects of synthetic pesticides;
- Cost-benefit analysis of different control strategies;
- Coordination with regional pest control organizations; and
- Coordination with multi-donor activities through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

AELGA works regionally, with a focus on frontline countries, including Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Botswana, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Namibia.

AELGA Activities

- **Emergency Prevention System**. EMPRES is a multinational monitoring and information sharing system that detects growing locust populations before full plagues develop. AELGA, working with other donors, supports this UN Food and Agriculture Organization project through both funding and capacity building grants.
- **Training and Capacity Building**. Through bi-lateral training, AELGA trains host country ministry officials in

locust control and research, providing them with materials to conduct their own training of extension officers. These extension officers then train farmer leaders in order to monitor, report and control outbreaks before they reach plague proportions. This system also allows extension officers to teach farmers about the safe handling of pesticides. Through regional training, AELGA offers intensive , technical courses for senior crop protection officers, researchers, scientists and decision makers.

- **Emergency Migratory Pest Control**. AELGA reserves funds for emergency outbreaks, enabling rapid response. This increases the likelihood of early suppression and successful containment.
- **Emergency Pesticide Disposal**. Unused, donated pesticides present a serious environmental risk. AELGA provides funds to support clean up these sites. Funds are used for environmental assessments, repackaging and consolidation of pesticides, and safe transport of chemicals to high-temperature incinerators.
- **Environmental Assessments**. AELGA conducts rigorous environmental assessments of its own activities, including research on the impact of the 1986-1989 pesticide campaign on biodiversity. In addition, assessments are used to determine areas in need of emergency pesticide disposal.
- **Management Research**. AELGA manage projects activities and provide USAID field missions with technical support, including performing emergency assessments, reporting to Congress, researching new pest management options, evaluating economic impact, providing leadership among donor agencies, supporting African research in pest control and conducting outreach activities.
- **Situation Reporting**. Washington, DC-based staff distributes monthly situation reports on pest populations, control and research, as well as emergency reports to alert the international community when serious pest problems develop.