DEVELOPING REGIONAL COOPERATION

Encouraging cooperation among countries is one of the most important aspects of the Programme and a number of joint activities and trainings are organized such as annual joint and cross-border surveys.

For example, three cross-border surveys were carried out between Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan-Uzbekistan in May 2015.

A joint survey was also conducted in Kakheti, Georgia, involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia.

A total of 42 locust experts from seven countries participated. While these surveys allow locust experts to jointly collect data and evaluate the locust situation in border areas, one of their major breakthroughs is a significant reduction in tension between countries regarding the sources of locust invasions.

Those benefits have been fully recognized by countries.
Information collection and exchange is the cornerstone of any preventive approach. Nine out of the ten CCA countries, i.e. a total of almost 100 locust experts, have benefitted from training on improved locust monitoring and data management since the start of the Programme.

Every year, national bulletins on locust situations and their actual management are prepared and issued as monthly regional bulletins that are shared amongst all countries during the locust campaign in CCA.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is under development for locusts in CCA that will be used both at the national and regional levels. It will allow storing, sharing and analysis of the standardized, geo-referenced locust data, which are collected during field surveys by the observers and scouts from the national plant protection services.

A complementary tool was developed in 2013, the Automated System for Data Collection (ASDC), which will be linked to the GIS. Two pilot countries, Georgia and Uzbekistan, whose experts were trained, were designated to test the system from 2014; Russia has also decided to join as a pilot country from 2015. The ASDC will be improved on this basis and then shared with all countries, together with the GIS.

A pilot activity was conducted in 2014 in Tajikistan to develop an integral system for monitoring locust control operations. As a result, for the first time ever in CCA, a Human Health and Environmental Monitoring Team was set up during the 2015 locust control campaign. A similar system is being developed in Kyrgyzstan in 2015.

Since its launch, highly positive results have been obtained by the Programme in terms of strengthening national and regional locust management in CCA. This is an ongoing process and more is envisaged, such as training-of-trainers so that each country will be able to train a large number of national experts.