Kitui County locust situation

Introduction

Kitui County is divided into 8 sub-counties namely;

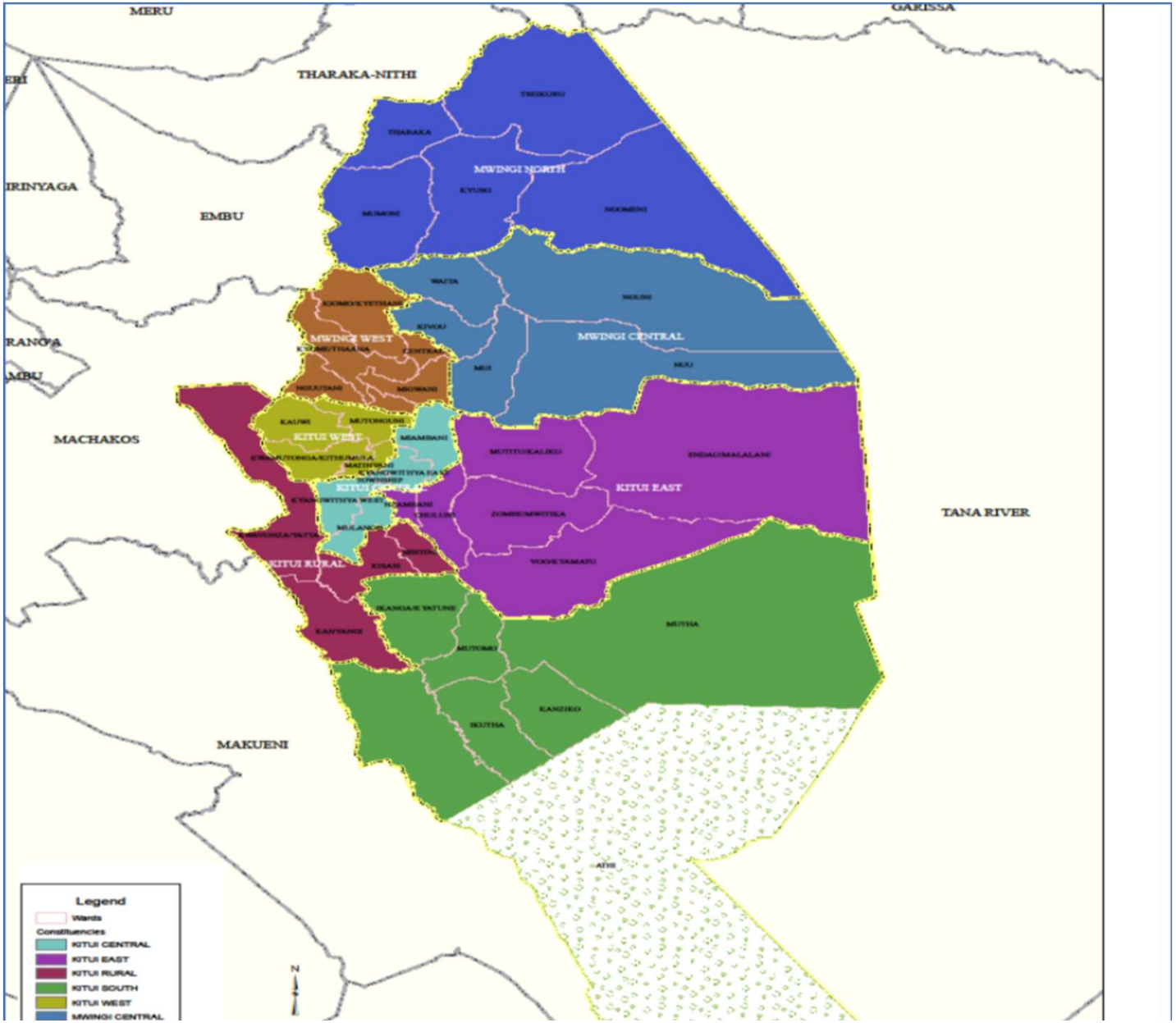
- Mwingi North
- Mwingi West
- Kitui West
- Kitui Rural
- Kitui Central
- Kitui East
- Kitui South

Kitui County continued

- The Sub-counties are further sub-divided into 40 wards and 247 villages.

- The county covers an area of 30,496.4 Km2 with a population of 1,136,187 (2019 census)

Map of Kitui County Showing Sub-



Desert locust invasion in Kitui county- Migration pattern

- The county received a total of 4 swarms beginning on 21st January 2020, at around 3 pm. The swarms split and crossed to Embu County
- On, 29st January, the swarms started to drift back to the county through Mwingi sub counties (Mwingi North and Mwingi Central)

- On 31st January, some swarms crossed to Tharaka Nithi county with other swarms later crossing to Meru National Park.
- The third swarm invaded the county on 6th February and later disappeared to Tsavo National park
- A fourth new swarm invaded the county on 12th February

Nature of the Desert locusts which attacked

- The initial swarms were mainly pink in colour (immature adults),
- They were followed by yellow mature DLs which laid eggs in the Northern part of the county due to delays in combating them. A total of 14 breeding sites were established whereby hatching occurred in 12 of the them
- Blackish nymphs which proved to be a nuisance in households within the environs of hatching

Effects of the locust invasion

- In total 7 sub counties out of a total of 8 sub counties were infested.
- Vegetation affected included the *Acacia spp.,* pasture grasses and food crops which included cowpea leaves, Pearl millet heads leaves, maize and pigeon peas.
- The locust were also a nuisance especially where young nymphs were hatched near homesteads

Estimated pasture and crop damage

- Estimated vegetation damage was at 8,364 MT of browse and pastures valued at 83 Million (MAWLD, 2020)
- Estimated food crops damage was at 1,476 MT valued at 88 million (MAWLD, 2020)

Control and coping mechanisms: County governments, national government and other stake holders

National government

- Provision of pesticides and aircraft services for aerial spraying
- 100 National Youth Service service men and women for ground spraying
- Provision of insecticides

Control and coping mechanisms: County governments, national government and other stake holders

County Government:

- Coordinating and providing ground support
- Surveillance and identification of roosting sites,
- Collection and transmission of roosting sites coordinates,
- Marking of extends of the roosting sites for easy of visibility

Cont’d

- Fuel and lubricants, heavy trucks and vehicles
- Batteries for ULV pumps

Pesticides used

Aerial spraying using ULV application

- Malathion,
- fenitrothion

Ground spraying

- Marshal EC (carbosulphan)
- Mursban 480 EC chlorophyriform

Control and coping mechanisms: communities affected

- Burning of materials that create smoke eg plastic containers, worn out tyres, dry twigs
- Screaming, beating drams and metallics containers
- Shooing them away using twigs branches etc
- Informing local authorities
- Praying , using school children to scream at the swarming bands

Challenges encountered

- Poor weather conditions – rains, clouds and fog which hindered spray operations
- Low efficacy of pesticide (malathion) initially used
- Shortage of pesticides
- Inadequate sensitization of communities on control of desert locusts
- Inadequate personal protective equipment
- Poor infrastructure in terms of mobile network coverage especially in Tharaka Ward.
- Difficult terrain for ground spraying

Fears/threats

- There is fear that breeding and multiplication of desert locusts may occur in the inaccessible Kora game Reserve and Meru National Park which border our county and this may cause a threat to coming cropping season (MAM rains)

Way forward

- Increase of surveillance along the paths of the migratory desert locust
- Build the capacities of the local communities towards identification of the DL and networking for relay of information timely
- Training of extension workers and other stake on DL control and management
- Timely dissemination of information to stakeholders prior to cropping season on likelihood of infestation, expected swarms and their sizes and likely routes they may follow

Contn’d

- Timely control mechanisms to be put in place to avoid massive destruction to vegetation (crops, pasture and browse, trees)