

PRESS ROOM

PRESS RELEASES AND STATEMENTS

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Commits \$10 Million to Support Global Response on East Africa Locust Invasion

SEATTLE February 24, 2020 – The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced today that it is contributing \$10 million to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to support its work with governments in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, to combat a locust infestation in East Africa that is posing a significant threat to food production and livelihoods in the region. The foundation is joining several other donors in responding to FAO’s urgent appeal to contain the crisis.

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The locust invasion is the worst Kenya has seen in 70 years, and the worst in nearly a generation in Somalia and Ethiopia. Djibouti and Eritrea are also affected, and swarms have now reached neighboring Tanzania, and Uganda. The foundation’s support is intended to help FAO and national governments confront the critical need for rapid control of the infestation, including aerial control of large swarms.

FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu [has warned](#) that the locust infestation could provoke a significant humanitarian crisis, with only weeks remaining to mount an effective containment operation. The insects are threatening East Africa’s breadbasket, the Rift Valley, shortly before the arrival of the critical “long rains” growing season, which typically begins in March. A locust swarm covering just one square kilometer can quickly destroy food crops capable of feeding 35,000 people for a year.

Despite contributions by more than a dozen governments, donors and the FAO, a significant funding gap remains. The foundation urges contributions from additional donors to avoid a greater impact on livelihoods and a potential humanitarian crisis in the region.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Mark Suzman and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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