

Community feedback considered in this report was received through reports from Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points, as well as through primary data collection, in 14 African countries.

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Society CEA focal points were asked to share the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries and to grade them according to their frequency. Focal points from the following eight countries provided information this way: Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia.

Community feedback was also collected during social mobilization activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (3202

feedback comments), Cameroon (175), Gabon (6), Togo (4) and Ghana (2). Activities include focus group discussions, community meetings, household visits, as well as mass sensitization activities. Information was not gathered through structured surveys, but volunteers documented comments relating to COVID-19 they heard during their interactions with community members.

Community feedback shared through social media in South Sudan was included as well.

Information included in this report was collected between 1 and 7 April.

These highlights are not representative for the countries mentioned in the update but indicate broad trends in community perceptions of COVID-19.

OVERVIEW

This report shows there is still a lot of **confusion in communities about COVID-19**, particularly what the disease is and how to prevent or treat it. **Misinformation about who can be affected** is common with many people believing that only elderly, rich people or foreigners can be affected. Of concern, is the frequent rumours that **COVID-19 has been man-made and deliberately introduced** to harm Africans or for Governments and agencies to make money. If these rumours are not addressed, they could affect the safe

access of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers. Based on the feedback in the report, National Societies and partners are recommended to scale up risk communication to explain what COVID-19 is and correct methods of prevention and treatment. It is also important to explain the virus is a natural phenomenon and what the Red Cross Red Crescent is doing to bring the outbreak under control, including explaining why these activities are expected to help

RUMOURS - OBSERVATIONS - BELIEFS

Beliefs about who can be affected

Heard in: Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Zambia

“It mostly affects elderly people” – National Society report, Botswana, 5 April 2020

“Children cannot be infected.” – WhatsApp, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“The disease can not affect children and young people who take tea daily.” – Focus group discussion with volunteers, Benin, 3 April 2020

“The virus contaminates only those living in big cities” – National Society report, Madagascar, 6 April 2020

“Those with blood group O+ cannot get the disease” – National Society report, Kenya, 6 April 2020

“People with blood group A cannot infected with covid-19” – National Society report, Ghana, 6 April 2020

“Black can't die from COVID-19.” – WhatsApp, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Coronavirus is for the white people.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“COVID-19 is the disease of the rich.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

Beliefs about protective behaviors

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia

“Black tea without sugar taken very early in the morning (04.00hrs) can protect one from getting Corona.” – National Society report, Kenya, 6 April 2020

“Akpetasi [local alcohol] is used to rub hands and legs and drink to boost immunity” – Community meeting, Ghana, 6 April 2020

“Whisky allows you to disinfect yourself.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“You have to rinse your throat by gargling with salt water.” – WhatsApp, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Use alcohol to prevent the spread of COVID-19.” – National Society report, Zambia, 6 April 2020

“It is said that one should eat a lot of bananas to fight against coronavirus.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

Beliefs about disease

Heard in: Botswana, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana

“COVID-19 was manufactured by the whites to wipe the black race” – National Society report, Ghana, 6 April 2020

“COVID-19 is an American invention” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“Coronavirus is something fabricated by the whites in order to finish the Africans” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 1 April 2020

“White people created COVID-19 to reduce the world's population” – WhatsApp, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“It is a disease made by Chinese” – National Society report, Botswana, 5 April 2020

“COVID-19 is god's punishment.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“COVID-19 is real.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“COVID-19 does not exist.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

Beliefs about ways to treat COVID-19

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Mozambique

“Make compresses with hot water to cure COVID-19” – National Society report, Mozambique, 6 April 2020

“The sun can cure the COVID-19” – Focus groups discussion with community members, Ghana, 6 April 2020

“Heat cures COVID-19” – Social media, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Traditional remedies will kill COVID-19.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“A cure has already been found.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“There is neither a treatment nor a vaccine for COVID-19.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“We have medicine for coronavirus, which is hair found in the bible and mixed with water.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

Beliefs about people or institutions responding to the disease outbreak

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, South Sudan

“This UN has intentionally brought the deadly virus to South Sudan” – Social media, South Sudan, 6 April 2020

“COVID-19 was injected into tap water.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“It is said that water from the CDE (Cameroonian Water Company) has been infected by the government to kill Cameroonians.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“COVID-19 is a way to make money.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Coronavirus was fabricated so that people working on the EVD response don’t lose their jobs.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“COVID-19 is a political matter.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“COVID-19 is a strategy that governments use to launder money and relocate to Africa.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

Observations or beliefs about preparedness or response activities

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Mozambique, Tanzania

“Barack Obama is asking Africans not to accept the vaccines that will come from America and Europe” – National Society report, Mozambique, 6 April 2020

“The illuminatis made COVID-19 so they could vaccinate Africans and implant fleas in them and control the men” – WhatsApp, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Bill Gates wants to destroy Africa with his vaccine.” – WhatsApp, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“The lack of support measures for the families of positive cases with children under the age of 10 prevents them from accepting quarantine without their children.” – Other channel, Gabon, 1 April 2020

“The population is against a lockdown.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 2 April 2020

“IEC materials did not consider vulnerable groups, disabled and children.” – National Society report, Tanzania, 6 April 2020

QUESTIONS

Questions about how the disease spreads

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Tanzania

“Is Corona virus transmitted through sex?” – National Society report, Kenya, 6 April 2020

“Can COVID-19 be transmitted, even when you are not showing any symptoms?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“Is there a likelihood that if a mother who is pregnant and is infected with the virus can infect the child after delivery?” – National Society report, Kenya, 6 April 2020

“The ministry of health has recommended the use of face masks. Does that mean that COVID-19 can be transmitted through air?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Can cigarette smoke transmit COVID-19?” – National Society report, Tanzania, 4 April 2020

Questions about protective behavior

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Kenya

“What can the community do not to be infected with COVID-19?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“How can married couples protect themselves during sexual intercourse?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 1 April 2020

“Can the ocean water be used as a disinfectant or sanitiser if one doesn't have soap?” – National Society report, Kenya, 6 April 2020

“Are there any other means of prevention besides handwashing?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“How do you prepare your own hydroalcoholic solution?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“How to follow the rules of social distancing within the family?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Can I buy fabric and make masks? And wash them after use for reuse?” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

Questions about health care services

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC

“Where do I go to get tested?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Why don't all the hospitals take the test?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Why don't you do testing?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“Are trained health workers already in place?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Have you already prepared a place for the victims of COVID-19 here in Beni?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“Who are the people here who are capable of taking care of a person who is infected with COVID-19?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 4 April 2020

“In which lab have the COVID-19 cases of DRC been tested?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

Questions about treatment

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC

“Is there medical treatment for COVID-19?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 1 April 2020

“Why is there no treatment?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 1 April 2020

“Is there an antidote?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Can hot beverages cure Covid-19?”– Social media, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Can COVID-19 be cured?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

Questions about the disease

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC

“What's COVID-19?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“What are the symptoms of COVID-19?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“What is the difference between influenza and COVID-19?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Can the signs for coronavirus and Ebola be the same?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 1 April 2020

“How does COVID-19 manifest itself?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Does every fever mean you have COVID-19?”– Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions about preparedness or response activities

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Madagascar, Mauritius, Togo

“Increase the handwashing points.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 2 April 2020

“Distribution of disinfectant gels and masks.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Produce posters in English.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

“Talk to us about COVID-19.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“We want the true information against COVID-19.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, DRC, 3 April 2020

“Multiplication of posters, pamphlets, and sticking them everywhere in the neighbourhoods.”
– Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“Show on TV a report on the treatment centre, or a referral hospital, or the treatment site, to make show that the disease exists.” – Focus group discussion with volunteers, Togo, 6 April 2020

Request for COVID-19 testing

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC

“Facilitate the access to tests for COVID-19.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“The government must organize a free COVID-19 testing campaign.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 1 April 2020

“That our provincial government constructs a lab for rapid testing of COVID-19.” – Face to face to social mobilizer, Cameroon, 3 April 2020

VIOLENT OR SENSITIVE COMMENTS

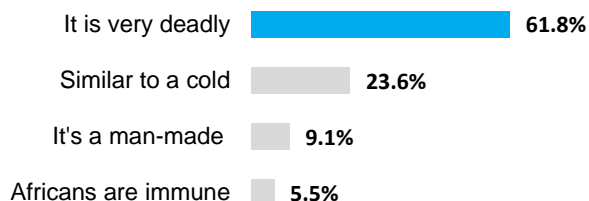
Call for violence against humanitarian agencies

Heard in: South Sudan

“UNMISS Health Department can diagnose a disease within a week instead of a month. Their intention is to spread it widely before announcement. I urge South Sudan Youth to attack UN staffs across the country to revenge themselves before they die otherwise. When they are attacked by Congolese youth, no more cases of Ebola now.” – Social media, South Sudan, 6 April 2020

TWITTER POLL

Which of these is true about the #Coronavirus (#COVID19)?



The poll was open from 2 to 4 April. 55 twitter users voted and the majority of them chose the option of COVID-19 being very deadly over the other options.

NEXT STEPS

How should we respond to community feedback? Update your messages and activities to;

- share this factsheet with staff and volunteers
- address rumours and misinformation, you hear in communities by providing the correct information,
- answer questions communities have about COVID-19, and
- use community suggestions to improve the response where possible.

To support this process, the IFRC CEA team will;

- support more National Societies to collect, use and act on community feedback,
- produce weekly fact sheets addressing the most commonly asked questions, rumours and fears, collected that week from communities across Africa,
- produce weekly videos with a health expert answering most relevant questions from community members and providing the needed facts, the videos will be shared through IFRC Africa's Twitter platform.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IFRC RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS ON COVID-19 IN AFRICA, PLEASE CONTACT SHARON READER AT SHARON.READER@IFRC.ORG.