

COVID-19: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REPORT

#22 - AFRICA REGION – 19 OCTOBER 2020

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between **21 September and 4 October 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **9 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities such as household visits, community meetings or focus group discussions in five countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (6194 feedback comments), Malawi (210), Cameroon (179), Zambia (18) and Ivory Coast (9). Comments relative to COVID-19 received through the NS hotline were included from Sierra Leone (68). Feedback was also received during interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Cameroon (218) and Gabon (82), South Africa (14), Zambia (4) and Ivory Coast (1).

Focal points in two countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Lesotho, Zambia.

One of the most common topics and most widely spread across the countries who shared community feedback was **mistrust in the COVID-19 response**. Many community members were saying that they do not want to hear about the disease anymore and that they are tired of it. There were also comments

that the response is used for political purposes and for making money.

Behaviours to protect yourself from COVID-19 was another common topic. There were many questions about **facemasks, handwashing, as well as physical distancing**, such as why it is important, proper use of facemasks and how to practise physical distancing. There were also numerous **requests for the provision of face masks, as well as hand washing utensils and stations**. Community members also complained about negative side effects of face masks or shared rumours of face masks being used to infect or poison people.

Many people also mentioned that the **pandemic has ended, is not real or does not exist where they live**. This was often mentioned in combination with **few people still following public health measures**. It was often criticised that authorities, military and police are not practising preventive behaviours themselves.

A common topic were also questions and statements about the **evolution of the pandemic**. Many mentioned that the cases were going down, or asked about the number of cases and if the outbreak has ended yet.

Many community members talked about the **return to schools** and the precautions taken there.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

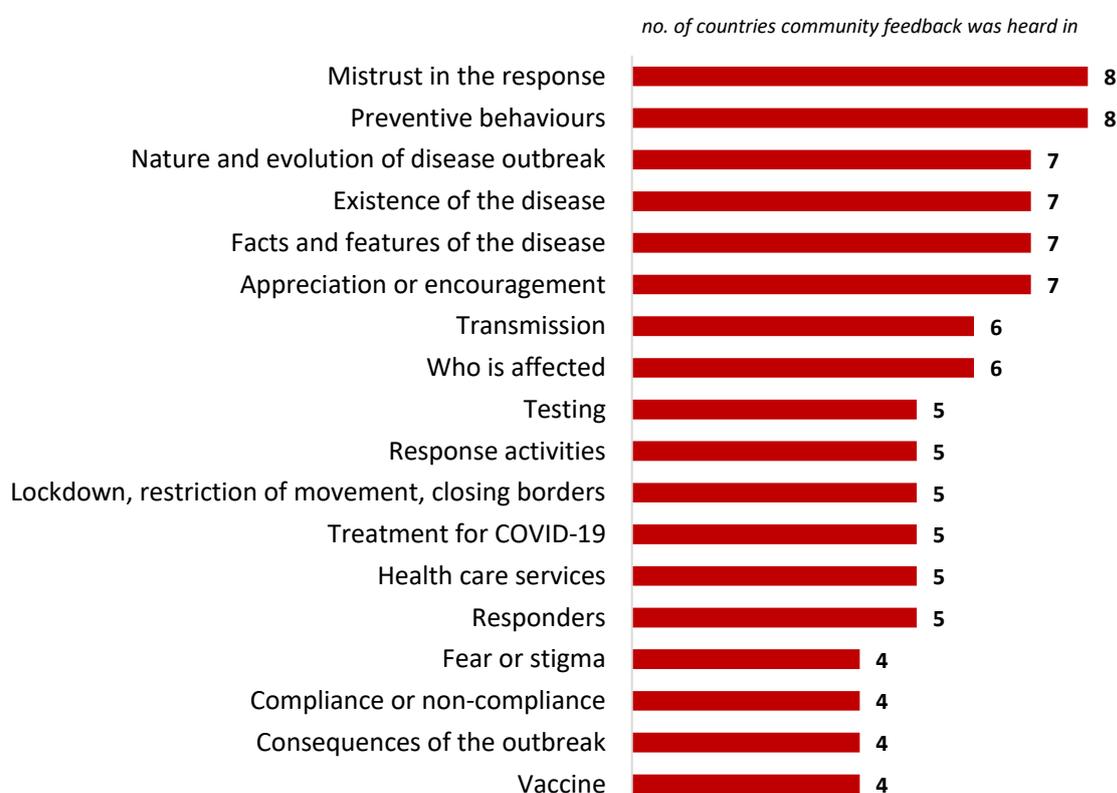
- Actively address people's perception that there is no danger of catching COVID-19 or that the outbreak is over. You can use the [guidance note on mistrust and denial in communities](#). Among other options, is to mobilize and engage with youth groups to stop the spread of misinformation, engage trusted community leaders and key influencers, explain more clearly the case rate in your country and what can be expected in the future and develop radio and TV drama/show content about COVID-19.
- Make sure community members are informed of the evolution of the epidemic – to make them understand why it is still crucial to comply with public health measures. Many believe that the pandemic has come to an end or are requesting information on the response, as well as the latest epidemiological trends. We need to provide up to date information on the number of cases and the outlook for Africa – and be clear on the fact that the pandemic is

not over. [This factsheet](#) can be useful and can be adapted to a specific country and this [Ask Dr Ben video](#) explains the outbreak has not ended.

- Continue to communicate with communities on protective behaviours, explaining why it can help stop the spread of the virus, how it works in daily life and what dangerous situations there are where you should protect yourself. The Ask Dr Ben factsheet #19 clarifies why it is still important to practice preventive behaviours. You can access face mask factsheets and IEC materials, including videos and infographics, [here](#), and content on physical distancing [here](#). Make sure to provide practical tips on how to protect yourself in public transport, markets, as well as at home, here is a [Ask Dr Ben video](#) on this topic.
- Ensure volunteers know how to answer questions about how the disease spreads and consider doing a radio or TV show to explain this topic more clearly. [Ask Dr Ben factsheets 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 14 and 20](#) all help to provide answers on this topic.
- Discuss the topic of protective behaviours for children and the return to schools with your volunteers. [Ask Dr Ben factsheets 12, 16, 19, 21](#) provide you with information relative to the protection of children and precautions that can be taken at schools. Also make sure you know what your government’s plan is for the return to schools and share the information with your volunteers.

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 4 countries or more



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Mistrust in the response

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Zambia

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“We don't care about the corona, the government doesn't respect us.” – Ivory Coast, focus group discussion with community members, 22 September 2020

“Don't tell us any more about COVID-19.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 24 September 2020

“COVID-19 is a cooperation of our government with the WHO.” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“White people created Covid-19 to make us suffer.” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“COVID-19 fundraising venture by the Government.” – Zambia, community meeting, 3 October 2020

2. Preventive behaviours

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, South Africa

Questions:

“How are we going to protect ourselves without clean water?” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“Why the insistence on the use of hydroalcoholic gel?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 21 September 2020

“Why are you still wearing your masks?” – Cameroon, National Society hotline, 23 September 2020

“Why do you have to wear masks in church?” – DRC, household visit, 21 September 2020

“How do we protect our children from this COVID-19 disease?” – DRC, household visit, 21 September 2020

“How do you deal with social distancing with large class sizes in the classroom?” – Cameroon, social media, 28 September 2020

Suggestions or requests:

“You have to share face masks with students.” – Cameroon, face to face to social mobilizer, 23 September 2020

“Government to provide a daily facemask for school children.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 23 September 2020

“Distribute the face masks to the entire population of Goma.” – DRC, household visit, 25 September 2020

“Fill the water stations that are in the crossroads.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 24 September 2020

“Please put the devices all over the city centres and even in the village.” – DRC, household visit, 21 September 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“People are dying from covid19 just because they are not wearing masks.” – Lesotho, National Society report, 22 September 2020

“Can't breath while wearing mask.” – South Africa, WhatsApp group with community members, 2 October 2020

“Task force officers taking money from people without facemask in public places.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 22 September 2020

“Face masks sold in pharmacies are infected.” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“I don't know at what age a child should start putting on the mask.” – Cameroon, WhatsApp group with staff and volunteers, 26 September 2020

3. Doubts of the existence of the disease

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“It's a white man's disease that has never existed in Cameroon.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 26 September 2020

“COVID-19 doesn't exist in the DRC, we're not sure if it exists..” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“There is no COVID-19 in Zambia, its just a common flu.” – Zambia, focus groups discussion with volunteers, 2 October 2020

“We do not have this disease.” – Malawi, household visit, 22 September 2020

“The disease is over now, stop messing with us.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 23 September 2020

“Covid-19 does no longer exist because is no longer cold.” – South Africa, WhatsApp group with community members, 2 October 2020

4. Evolution of the outbreak

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zambia

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“We see that the disease has diminished..” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 26 September 2020

“Covid-19 is leaving, which is good.” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“Corona has reduced.” – Malawi, household visit, 24 September 2020

“Corona virus is not here in Ituri.” – DRC, household visit, 2 October 2020

Questions:

“Why hasn't covid-19 killed many people here at home?” – DRC, household visit, 1 October 2020

“Has Covid-19 ended in Sierra Leone?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 24 September 2020

“Is it true corona has ended?” – Malawi, household visit, 1 October 2020

“How many cases of death do you have in Europe?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 1 October 2020

“How is the epidemiological situation of the disease?” – DRC, household visit, 25 September 2020

5. Return to school

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Covid 19 cases will increase if government allow all Schools to reopen.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 23 September 2020

“It is imperative that children take the screening test before being admitted to school.” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

Questions:

“What precautions are taken by schools?” – Cameroon, social media, 28 September 2020

“How are the classes for the smallest ones going to go?” – Cameroon, social media, 28 September 2020

“How do children at school cope with this pandemic?” – DRC, household visit, 23 September 2020

“Why are Schools reopen in bit when we are still recording Covid 19 cases?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 21 September 2020

APPRECIATION - ENCOURAGEMENT

The statements of thanks and encouragement listed below represent the most frequently heard comments across countries in the IFRC Africa region.

Statements of thanks and encouragement

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Zambia

“ Thank you! I appreciated the advice on the need for parents to give their children personal utensils to go to school.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 29 September 2020

“Thanks to the Red Cross for the work and the awareness of the disease..” – Ivory Coast, focus group discussion with community members, 22 September 2020

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“Courage at the Red Cross because it clarifies our responsibilities.” – DRC, face to face to RC volunteer, 24 September 2020

“Am happy you are here to tell us more about Covid-19.” – Malawi, household visit, 1 October 2020

“Red Cross to continue the fight to end Covid-19 in the world.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 21 September 2020

“The work being done in preventing Covid-19 is remarkable and at the time people really need it.” – Zambia, community meeting, 23 September 2020

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.