

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between the **10 and 16 June 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **5 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities in two countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (8684 feedback comments) and Cameroon (28). Feedback collected through WhatsApp groups with community members in Cameroon (34) has also been included. Focal points in three countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Burundi, Malawi, Mozambique.

As in last week, the community feedback heard across most countries were questions and comments about **ways to protect yourself from COVID-19**. Many people talk about **face masks** and ask about the correct use of a facemask, including the use of face masks for children. People also mention that they are only wearing it to protect themselves from the police. **Physical distancing** is another frequent topic with some mentioning

the difficulty to respect it and it is causing tensions between couples and within families.

There are many comments indicating mistrust in people or organizations in relation to the outbreak. Most commonly it is mentioned that the outbreak is used to **make money, for political purposes or for intentionally harming people**. Some also mention that it is wrong numbers that are being communicated.

There still seems to be a lack of knowledge on **the general characteristics of the disease**, as there were many questions on the transmission and the signs and symptoms of the COVID-19, as well as on who is most affected and why.

Another common topic was the **treatment and health services** for the disease. Many ask about when and if a treatment will be found, and others mention herbs and other remedies, as well as alcohol as ways to treat COVID-19. People also asked about where patients should go or are taken care of, and mention that some **people are scared of going to the hospital** out of fear of infected there.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

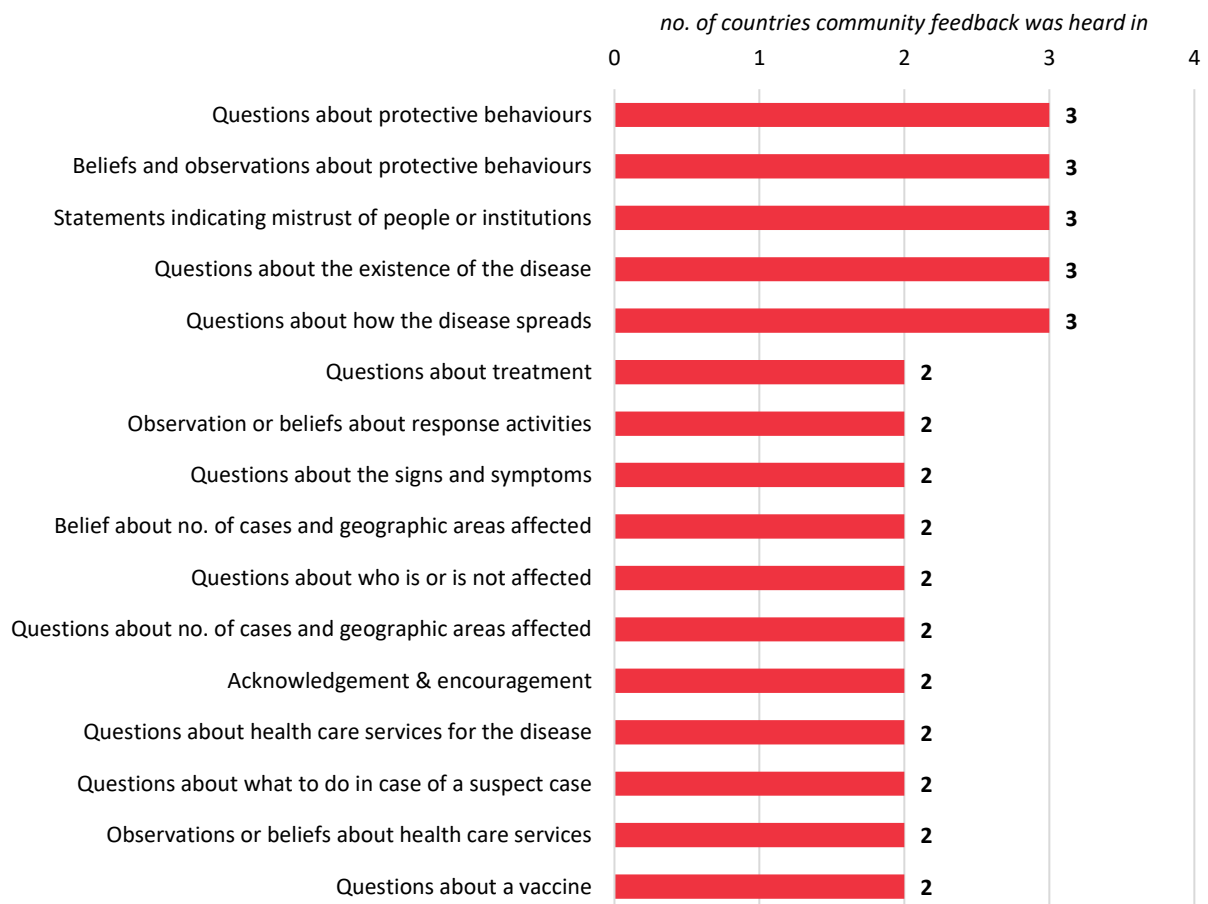
- Actively discuss COVID-19 prevention and who can catch the virus during all social mobilization activities. Explain how COVID-19 spreads, so people understand why prevention measures work. Also warn people about the measures that won't work.
- Provide practical guidance on how to address challenges to adopt protective behaviours, such as how to use a limited amount of water when washing your hands, as well as how to make your own face mask and use it in a safe way.
- Share the Ask Dr Ben videos, especially the ones on [safe mask use](#) and addressing the belief [Africans are immune](#). Consider dubbing these into local languages or remaking with National Society health staff and sharing widely with volunteers and communities through social media and WhatsApp.
- Organise some Focus Group Discussions (if possible) or key informant interviews (by phone if necessary) to find out why people believe COVID-19 is being deliberately spread to harm people and why they believe it does not affect Africans. Until we fully understand where these beliefs come from, it is hard to challenge them and the risk is if mistrust of the response continues it could undermine National Society efforts to stop the outbreak. Also, if

people believe they are immune to COVID-19 they are unlikely to follow prevention measures and so infection and death rates will increase.

- Provide clear information on health care services, including testing as well as where patients are treated. Clarify the procedures are in place to protect people from contamination at hospitals.
- If herbal cures are popular in your country, address this with communities by explaining that so far no cure has been proven to work, so until we have proof, people should continue to follow measures like physical distancing and hand washing as we know these definitely work.
- Work with local and national media and ask them to help address gaps in knowledge and misinformation through their reporting, including reporting stories about people who have recovered from the disease so people realize the virus is real. If your National Society is broadcasting radio or TV shows consider having a show where people who have had COVID-19 can call in to tell their story.

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 2 countries or more



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Rumours and questions on protective behaviours

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Malawi, Mozambique

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"The masks distributed by the health ministry against COVID-19 are poisoned." – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

"The masks suffocate you." – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

"It is difficult to keep social distancing at the market because there are too many people." – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

"Extending lockdown creates conflicts within families!" – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

"We are afraid of respecting social distancing because our husbands will say we're neglecting them!" – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

"Let's seek God's presence. This is the right solution for us." – Mozambique, National Society report, 16 June 2020

Questions:

"Who is supposed to wear a mask?" – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

"What are the consequences of constantly wearing a mask?" – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

"Can you put a mask on children under two years old?" – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

"Can pregnant women also wear a mask?" – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

"What measures do we need to take to ensure sellers respect social distancing?" – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

"Can cigarette smoking reduce risk of COVID-19?" – Malawi, National Society report, 15 June 2020

2. Statements and questions indicating mistrust and denial of the pandemic

Heard in: Burundi, DRC, Mozambique

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"There are many COVID-19 positive cases that the government doesn't publish." – Burundi, National Society report, 16 June 2020

"Coronavirus is political." – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

"EVD and coronavirus are biological weapons." – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

"This COVID-19 disease has become a business in DRC." – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

“Filipe (the president) said we will close churches and mosques, but there in Maputo they keep praying, I see it every Sunday on TV. Covid-19 is a policy.” – Mozambique, National Society report, 16 June 2020

Questions:

“Are the cases of COVID-19 in Bukavu made up by the government?” – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

“Aren’t Ebola and Corona a policy?” – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

“We dont see people dying of COVID-19, is this COVID-19 real?” – Malawi, National Society report, 15 June 2020

“Who guarantees that these cases are really true? In other countries, at least the parts of the patients with the virus appear on television. Here in Mozambique nothing!” – Mozambique, National Society report, 16 June 2020

3. Questions about how the disease spreads, its symptoms and who is affected and why

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Malawi

Questions:

“Can a pregnant mother transmit COVID-19 to her unborn baby?” – Malawi, National Society report, 15 June 2020

“How can you tell if someone is infected with COVID-19?” – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

“How would you describe someone losing their sense of taste and smell? This is a situation that has happened to a lot of people, including me?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

“ Why are children less at risk from this pandemic?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

“Why is COVID-19 killing Chinese people but not us?” – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

4. Questions and concerns about treatment and health care services

Heard in: Burundi, Cameroon, DRC

Questions:

“Which hospital can we send people to when they have COVID-19?” – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

“Why didn’t they build a treatment centre for infected people during COVID-19 like they did during EBOLA?” – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

“Sometimes someone is healthy and they just have a mild fever. She is frightened of going to hospital because they say that’s where you are at risk of catching the disease. Is it bad to stay at home?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

“What medicine has been used to treat people who have been cured of COVID-19?” – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

“People are talking about treatment with chloroquine. What if you are allergic?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

“Is there already an appropriate treatment for COVID-19?” – DRC, household visit, 11 June 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Since the country has been fighting this disease, I have been afraid of going to hospital and being infected.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 13 June 2020

“When we listen to the radio, the number of people cured of coronavirus is higher than the number of people dying from coronavirus, this means that there is a drug to cure coronavirus.” – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

“There are patients recovering from hospitals which invite people to eat a set of food that treats COVID-19.” – Burundi, National Society report, 16 June 2020

The medicine for COVID-19 is hemp with alcohol.” – DRC, household visit, 10 June 2020

APPRECIATION - ENCOURAGEMENT

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

Statement of thanks and encouragement

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC

“Good luck to the DRCRC team and the media in raising awareness of COVID and Ebola.” – DRC, household visit, 12 June 2020

“The Community of Kagnote thanks us for raising awareness in the rain, and hopes that the Red Cross always continues their work tirelessly.” – DRC, household visit, 11 June 2020

“Congratulations on the quality of your interventions.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 10 June 2020