

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between the **17 and 23 June 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **10 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities in three countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (5424 feedback comments), Cameroon (794) and Côte d'Ivoire (7). Feedback collected through social media, WhatsApp groups with community members and interactive radio shows in Cameroon (33), Gabon (13), and Côte d'Ivoire (3) has also been included. Sierra Leone Red Cross also shared the community feedback relating to COVID-19, which was received through their National Society hotline (56). Focal points in five countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda, South Africa.

The topic that came up across most countries was **beliefs and questions about the treatment of COVID-19**. There were still many mentions of herbs and traditional medicine to be used as treatments. People also asked about how to treat sick people and about different treatments they had heard of.

Another common topic were questions and comments about **ways to protect yourself from COVID-19**. Many people talked about **face masks** and asked about the correct use thereof. People also mentioned that less people comply with public health measures or

complained about politicians, military or police not following the rules of physical distancing or wearing face masks. Many mentioned the **difficulty of respecting physical distancing**, especially at markets and within families.

There were many comments **indicating mistrust in people or organizations** in relation to the outbreak. Most commonly it was mentioned that the outbreak is used to **make money, for political purposes or for intentionally harming people**. Many also **do not believe that the disease is real**.

Another common topic were beliefs and questions about the **number of confirmed cases**, as well as the **geographic areas affected** by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many stated that they don't believe there are any cases in their area.

There were also many comments relating to **health services** for the disease. People talked about a **COVID-19 vaccine**, with some saying they do not want it, while others suggested to vaccinate community members. People also asked about where patients should go or are taken care of, and mentioned that some **people are scared of going to the hospital** out of fear of being infected or of automatically being declared as a COVID-19 case.

There was also a considerable amount of **comments about the lockdown**, with many people asking about when places of worship and schools will be opened again, as well as about why certain places are still open such as markets, restaurants and bars.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

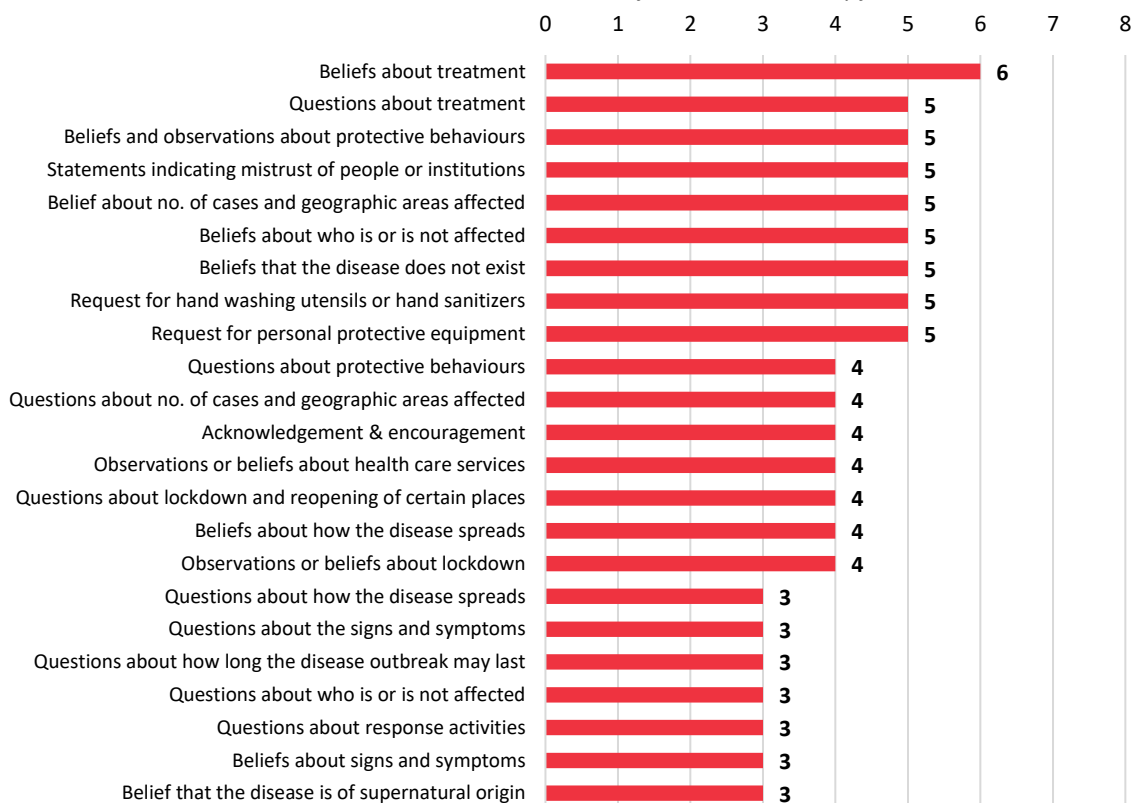
- Address the rumours and questions on COVID-19 treatment with communities by explaining that so far no cure has been proven to work. Until we have proof, people should continue to follow measures like physical distancing and hand washing as we know these definitely work. Provide practical advice on how to alleviate symptoms, where to seek help and how to care for sick people in your household in a safe way.

- 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 make your own face mask and use it in a safe way. Clarify when to practice physical distancing and which measures are necessary within a household – and which are not.
- 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.
- 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. Explore ways of working with partners to organize visits to centers or producing videos on that topic.
- 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 3 countries or more

no. of countries community feedback was heard in



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Beliefs and questions about treatment for COVID-19

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Lesotho, Rwanda, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"People believe that, using of garlic, ginger and artemisia will be helpful to get rid of the COVID19." – Lesotho, National Society report, 22 June 2020

"Infusions of tea and herbs kill the virus." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"Taking alcoholic drinks can cure COVID-19." – Rwanda, National Society report, 19 June 2020

"A committee of idiots. The Malagasy remedy has been available for a long time. You, that is the WHO, with all its intentional prevarication." – Gabon, social media, 19 June 2020

"They're waiting for this disease to decrease the world's population before coming out with a treatment." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"Corona virus doesn't have medication." – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

Questions:

"What's the corona medicine?" – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

"If corona exists, why do doctors use chloroquine to treat infected people?" – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"What are people that are recovering treated with?" – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

"Is covid-19 curable when using traditional herbs or what?" – Lesotho, National Society report, 22 June 2020

"How effective is the new COVID-19 drug announced by WHO?" – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 18 June 2020

2. Rumours, observations and questions on protective behaviours and requests for protective equipment

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ghana, Gabon, Lesotho, Rwanda, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"We don't have face masks to protect ourselves." – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

"We have seen a decrease in the wearing of masks, about 3 out of 10 people in these communities." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"The face masks that are handed out are poisoned...." – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

"The police take advantage of the confinement to harass, extort money from the population while they themselves do not respect the public health measures against Covid-19." – DRC, household visit, 19 June 2020

"The police are mistreating the people of Goma by saying that they are checking masks." – DRC, household visit, 19 June 2020

“Social distancing is useless since it cannot be observed at the bar, in nightclubs or even in the bed at home.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“Physical distancing is really very difficult at the market.” – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

Questions:

“Why are people ignoring the ideas of masks use?” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“Why are some of the authorities moving without masks (the forces of law and order, officers...)?” - Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“What is the importance of face masks?” – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

“Can we use face mask at home?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 17 June 2020

“How often do I have to wash my hands?” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“Why is it that at the market people never respect the 1 meter rule?” – DRC, household visit, 23 June 2020

“Can we kiss as a couple?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 17 June 2020

Suggestions:

“We want several handwashing points.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“Hand washing kits should be distributed to the population.” - DRC, household visit, 23 June 2020

“There must be a free distribution of face masks and hand sanitizers.” - Ghana, National Society report, 19 June 2020

“We need face masks, soap, gel to be able to protect ourselves effectively.” - Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“Help us with the face mask for protection.” - DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

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

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“White people are always doing research to experiment on black people, this time it's gone out of control for you.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“COVID-19 has never existed in China, it's the American technique to neutralize the Chinese.” – DRC, household visit, 19 June 2020

“You want to make money off us with COVID-19.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“COVID-19 does not exist in our province, there is only the COVID-19 business.” – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

“People no longer trust the Government.” – Côte d'Ivoire, face to face to RC volunteer, 20 June 2020

“There is no Corona, the Government is out to get foreign aid.” – Kenya, National Society report, 19 June 2020

“The other issue is that it is flu season and the government is including people with flu in the COVID-19 statistics.” – South Africa, National Society report, 22 June 2020

4. Beliefs and questions about number of cases and geographic areas affected

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Since we're in the rainy season, the number of cases is increasing.” – Côte d'Ivoire, face to face to RC volunteer, 18 June 2020

“Confirmed cases are gradually increasing in the province of Tshopo.” – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

“Over 50 confirmed cases of COVID-19 from Western Area daily.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 18 June 2020

“We don't have coronavirus in our town.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“Here in Bunia there's no corona.” – DRC, household visit, 19 June 2020

Questions:

“Are there infected people in Magba?” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“In Bukavu there are how many cases?” – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

“What are the results in Haut-Ogooué?” – Gabon, social media, 19 June 2020

“How many confirm case and death of COVID-19?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 18 June 2020

5. Observations, beliefs and questions about health care services

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Sierra Leone, South Africa

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“The people who come with their vaccines will be beaten here.” – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

“The vaccine is already here and it will be soon used.” – South Africa, National Society report, 22 June 2020

“Many patients are now dying in hospitals because doctors are injecting the harmful products to say they died from COVID-19!” – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

“We're afraid to go to the hospital because when getting there they say someone has coronavirus!” – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

“Doctors in hospitals don't take care of people.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

“The Government is planning to run COVID-19 tests on every citizen.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 18 June 2020

“How is it that we don't even have the equipment for testing!” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

Questions:

"Why do they want to try the vaccine in Africa when Western countries are the most affected?" – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"Why didn't you bring us the vaccine?" – DRC, household visit, 22 June 2020

"Is it true that there is already a corona vaccine in Goma?" – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

"Who cares for the COVID-19 patients?" – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

"Is the treatment for suspected cases free of charge?" – DRC, household visit, 23 June 2020

"Why don't you do the tests?" – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

Suggestions:

"Give us the corona vaccine." – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

"We don't want the anti-corona vaccine." – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

"Multiplication of rapid tests." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"That the government give medicine to all health areas." – DRC, household visit, 17 June 2020

"Please treat the corona patients well so that it doesn't come back." – DRC, household visit, 19 June 2020

SENSITIVE OR VIOLENT STATEMENTS

The statements listed below include all comments classified as sensitive or violent statements across countries in the IFRC Africa region.

Mention of police brutality

Heard in: DRC, Sierra Leone

"The policemen are starting to kill people because of the face masks." – Karisimbi, DRC, household visit, 18 June 2020

"Military men have beaten people for face mask in Matru." – Bonthe, Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 18 June 2020

Threat against health centres because of vaccines

Heard in: DRC

"They say the corona vaccine already exists in Goma, for those we're going to burn down all the health centres." – Goma, DRC, household visit, 17 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, Ghana, Sierra Leone

"We encourage the Red Cross team to continue with awareness raising even after the outbreak." – DRC, household visit, 19 June 2020

"God bless the Ghana Red Cross Society for using their volunteers to educate people on the COVID-19 and their food distribution during the lockdown." – Ghana, National Society report, 19 June 2020

"They thank the organisation for the number of people that they have send to their areas." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 17 June 2020

"Congratulations for the quality of your panellists and thank you for your guidance we are receiving every day." – Cameroon, National society radio show, 17 June 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.