

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between the **27 July and 9 August 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **16 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities in three countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (6959 feedback comments), Cameroon (2565), Mozambique (24), Côte d'Ivoire (6) and South Sudan (1). Feedback collected through social media in Cameroon (31), Gabon (12) and Côte d'Ivoire (3), as well as received during interactive radio shows in Cameroon (31) and Gabon (5), and via the National Society hotline of Sierra Leone Red Cross (66) was also included. Feedback shared through staff and volunteers during focus group discussions or via WhatsApp groups has been shared by Mozambique (43), Cameroon (20), South Sudan (2) and Botswana (1). Focal points in ten countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe.

The topic most widely spread across the region continues to be questions and beliefs about **protective behaviour**, especially the wearing of **face masks and physical distancing**. Many asked about how to protect themselves and their loved ones in general, others wanted to know how to practice physical distancing in markets, public transport or within households. While some

asked about how to use masks safely, others complained about negative side effects. There has also been an increase in comments highlighting complacency, and it is frequently mentioned that authorities do not follow the measures they are imposing themselves.

Another common topic were questions about **lockdown measures and the reopening of certain places**. There were many questions about the opening of bars and restaurants, but keeping schools and churches closed. People also wondered about the reason for lifting restrictions while the pandemic is still ongoing. There were statements about the difficulties with lockdown measures, but also beliefs that the lifting of the lockdown will increase the spread of the disease and some think that this is done on purpose.

Across countries there were also many **questions about the evolution of the epidemic** and the **anticipated length** thereof. People asked if the peak was already reached, if the pandemic has ended yet, as well as the reasons for cases rising or going down.

A topic that has become increasingly common are the **consequences of the pandemic**. It was mentioned that people are suffering because of the lockdown, that unemployment has increased, that people are starving and getting tired of the disease.

Among the topics most widely spread across countries were also **beliefs about who is or is not affected by COVID-19**. Many mentioned that it was the disease of whites, of rich or old people, or of those living in big cities.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

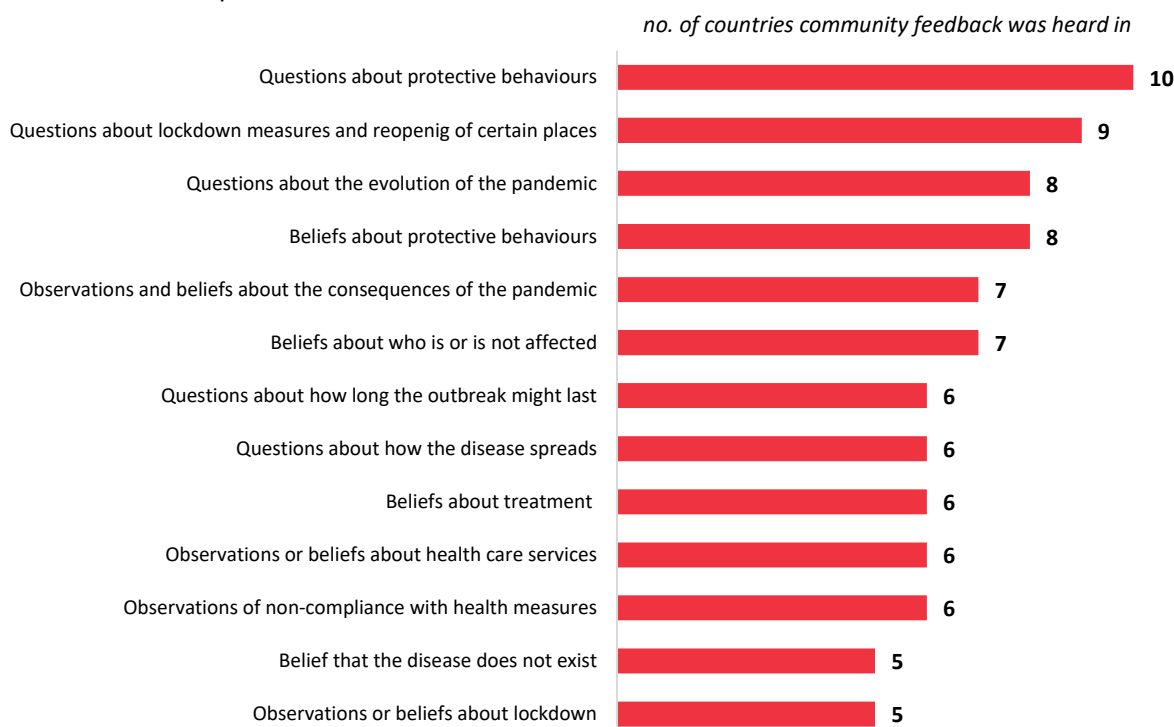
- Clear information is needed on the changes of restrictions and the reason for doing so. Use the [Ask Dr Ben factsheet #7](#) to clarify that lifting lockdown measures does not mean the outbreak is over and discuss internally and in coordination meetings on how to answer questions about bars and restaurants being open, while schools and churches are not in some countries.



- Be ready to answer questions about the epidemiological situation in your country, and to answer questions about the reasons for cases rising or going down. You can use [this factsheet](#) to explain the current situation with cases in Africa and how this compares to other regions.
- Continue to communicate with communities on protective behaviours, explaining why it can help stop the spread of the virus and how it works in daily life. You can access face mask factsheets and IEC materials, including videos and infographics, [here](#), and use the Ask Dr Ben factsheets answering questions on [what is physical distancing](#) and [physical distancing at home](#). Share these materials through social media, with volunteers and branches, and cover this topic on radio and TV shows.
- Actively address people’s perception that there is no danger of catching COVID-19. You can use the new [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.
- Ensure volunteers know how to answer questions about treatments and consider doing a radio or TV show to explain this topic more clearly. [Ask Dr Ben factsheets 4, 5, 9, 10, 12 and 14](#) all help to provide answers on this topic. We also have Ask Dr Ben videos discussing [treatments](#) and [how people can recover if there is no cure](#).

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 5 countries or more



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Beliefs and questions about protective behaviours and observations of complacency

Heard in: Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe

Questions:

"How to use your face mask properly?" – Cameroon, WhatsApp group with staff and volunteers, 1 August 2020

"We are being told to wear masks. We want know why!" – Mozambique, focus group discussion with volunteers, 7 August 2020

"How can we wash our hands without clean water?" – Rwanda, National Society report, 7 August 2020

"What are the measures taken to fight against Covid-19 for this return to school of our children?" – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

"Why are the health precautions not respected in public transport?" – DRC, household visit, 3 August 2020

"Why is physical distancing not practiced at markets?" – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"They only use mask at markets because there are police and at shops to buy things!" – Mozambique, focus group discussion with volunteers, 7 August 2020

"Many people refuse to wash their hands." – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

"The social distancing of 1 meter is a sign of Satan." – DRC, face to face to social mobilizer, 7 August 2020

"The police take advantage of the lockdown to bother the population because of the face masks." – DRC, face to face to social mobilizer, 7 August 2020

"People are not using face masks the right way." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 28 July 2020

"Community members don't wash themselves anymore like before." – Cameroon, 7 August 2020

"When people are sensitized, they do not believe anymore because the authorities themselves do not respect their own recommendations on the respect of public health measures." – Côte d'Ivoire, 27 July 2020

"Police officers who don't wear face masks and don't respect distancing say they are spared from this disease." – DRC, face to face to social mobilizer, 7 August 2020

2. Questions and beliefs about lockdown measures and the reopening of certain places

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Zimbabwe

Questions:

"Since churches are opened, when are schools opening for our children to resume classes?"
– South Sudan, community meeting, 7 August 2020

"Any update from government on school reopen?" – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 30 July 2020

"Why will schools be opening again while the epidemic is raging?" – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

"Why have bars been opened, instead of opening the churches?" – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

"How can we understand that the bars have been allowed to open?" – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 2 August 2020

"When will the lockdown end?" – Zimbabwe, National Society report, 27 July 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"The hour at which the curfew begins has become difficult to bear, the community wants the curfew to be lifted." – Gabon, social media, 4 August 2020

"People are worried about the closure of churches, they are supposed to pray at churches to stop the pandemic!" – Mozambique, National Society report, 7 August 2020

"They want the cases of covid-19 to spread throughout the country, that's why they have lifted the lockdown while there are still cases in Goma and Kinshasa." – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

3. Questions about the evolution of the pandemic and how long it might last

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Tanzania

Questions:

"Has the peak of the pandemic already been reached in Cameroon?" – Cameroon, social media, 7 August 2020

"Why are suddenly more people dying of COVID-19 than before?" – Malawi, National Society report, 27 July 2020

"Is Covid-19 still in other part of the world or only Sierra Leone?" – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 28 July 2020

“What would be the real explanation for this so-called exponential evolution of the positive cases that end in death?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 7 August 2020

“Why is the number of cases of COVID-19 declining when there are gatherings currently taking place?” – Côte d’Ivoire, social media, 30 July 2020

“When will the health crisis stabilize?” – Cameroon, focus group discussion, 6 August 2020

“Is this virus going to end?” – Tanzania, National Society report, 1 August 2020

4. Observations and beliefs about the consequences of the pandemic

Heard in: Botswana, Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“This illness is creating a headache to us. We hear on the radio. All the things we used to help us we have stopped. We no longer travel to sell our things to other places. We are now hungry.” – Mozambique, focus group discussion with volunteers, 8 August 2020

“COVID-19 has increased unemployment.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 2 August 2020

“Because of the disease we can't visit our family members because we can't recognize the infected people.” – Lesotho, National Society report, 31 July 2020

“COVID-19 is a disease that pisses me off, I have a hard time making ends meet. Putting a whole world to the ground, how is a germ going to do that?” – Gabon, social media, 6 August 2020

5. Beliefs about who is or is not affected by the disease

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zimbabwe

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Corona is a disease of the whites.” – Cameroon, face to face to social mobilizer, 8 August 2020

“Caucasian men are more at risk of contracting Covid-19.” – Côte d’Ivoire, social media, 30 July 2020

“It kills the rich only.” – Zimbabwe, National Society report, 2 August 2020

“Covid-19 kills only the oldest people in our country..” – Gabon, social media, 5 August 2020

“COVID-19 is from towns.” – Rwanda, National Society report, 7 August 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, Mozambique, Sierra Leone

“The work you are doing is very encouraging because it helps us to remember what we need to do.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 7 August 2020

“Courage to the DRC Red Cross for the spirit of total devotion to the community during the most difficult time.” – DRC, household visit, 7 August 2020

“The volunteers go door to door about Covid-19. They sensitize. Most population take heed of the message. We want to thank the Red Cross.” – Mozambique, face to face to RC volunteer, 31 July 2020

“Thanks to Red Cross for the fight against Covid-19.” – Sierra Leone, focus group discussion with volunteers, 27 July 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.