

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between **02 and 22 November 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **8 African countries**.

Most of the community feedback was collected through conversations with community members during social mobilization activities such as household visits, face to face social mobilization, community meetings and focus group discussions in Democratic Republic of Congo (2,714 feedback comments), Cameroon (113), Gabon (51) and Zimbabwe (8). Comments related to COVID-19 were also received through the NS hotline from Sierra Leone (170) and interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Cameroon (108) and Gabon (92).

Focal points in five countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions, or suggestions they heard in their countries: Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Lesotho, Kenya and DRC.

The most talked about topic across the countries during the reporting period was **mistrust in the response**, with many comments indicating that **people or institutions are intentionally harming people**, or that the pandemic is used for making money or for political purposes. Many community members also said that they were tired of hearing or talking about the disease.

Who is or is not affected was also widely spoken about, with many people believing that it only affects white people or that it is a disease of the rich. There were questions about why younger people are not as affected by the virus and why some people are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms compared to others.

One of the most common topics discussed was also **protective behaviours**, particularly on **face masks**. While some people highlighted the importance of wearing face masks or complained about people becoming complacent, others shared concerns about wearing them because there is a belief that wearing a mask can cause other respiratory illnesses. A few people asked about how married couples or families can protect themselves against COVID-19 while at home. There were also several **requests for soap, wash basins, chlorine/disinfectants and face masks**.

In this reporting period, we saw an increase in comments and questions about **schools and education**. Many people asked about how protective measures will be enforced at schools or they mentioned non-adherence to the prevention measures in schools and requested for materials and awareness raising to encourage adherence from students. There are also some concerns about school fees increasing due to the pandemic or why children and parents are being charged for masks at school.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

- Actively address people's perception that the COVID-19 outbreak is either not real, it's just a tool for political gain or to make money, or it only affects certain groups of people. 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.
- Be careful not to just tell community members to follow public health measures, but explain why it can help stop the spread of the virus, how you can practice these measures in your daily life, and in which dangerous situations you should protect yourself. Use this video on [the story of coronavirus](#) to explain how the virus spreads and what we can do to protect

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ourselves. You can also use the [Ask Dr Ben video on how to use face masks correctly](#). The [Ask Dr Ben factsheet #19](#) clarifies why it is still important to practice preventive behaviours and [Ask Dr Ben factsheet #22](#) helps to address questions about why we have to wear face masks when some authorities, military and police don't. You can access face mask factsheets and IEC materials, including videos and infographics, [here](#), and content on physical distancing [here](#).

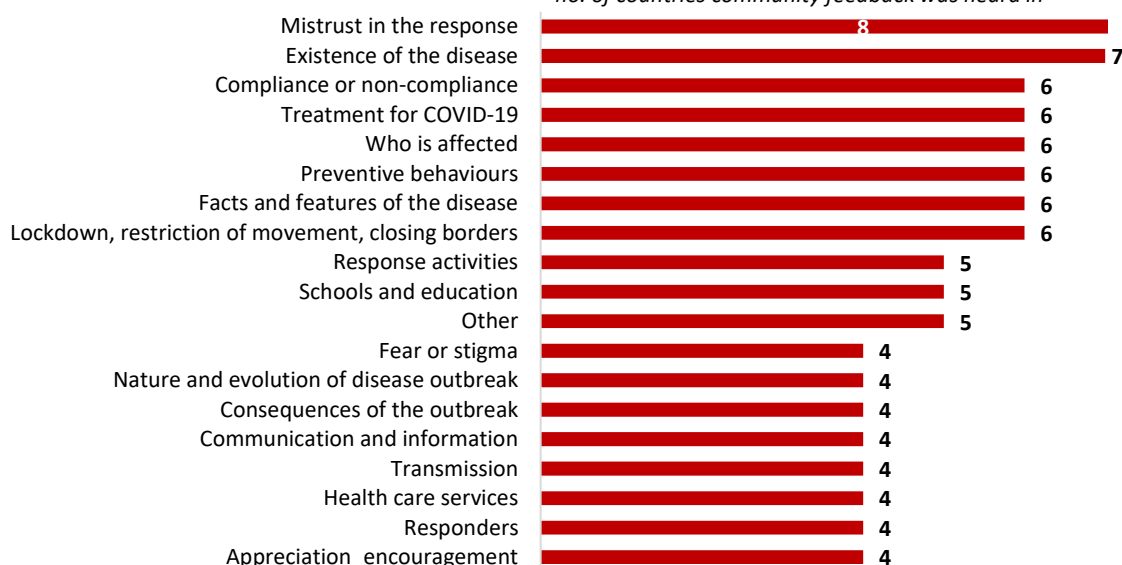
- Make sure community members are informed of the evolution of the epidemic – to make them understand why it is still crucial to comply with public health measures. This new Ask Dr Ben video gives [tips for how we can make our friends and families understand that COVID-19 is real](#) and encourage them to follow the prevention measures. 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.
- Discuss the topic of protective behaviours for children and the return to schools with your volunteers. [Ask Dr Ben factsheets 12, 16, 19, 21](#) and this new factsheet on [children and COVID-19](#) provide you with information related to the effects of the virus in children, how children can be protected and what precautions 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.
- 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.

MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 4 countries or more

no. of countries community feedback was heard in



1. Comments and questions about mistrust in the response

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Rwanda

Questions:

“What are they hiding from us behind all this fuss about covid-19?”

– Cameroon, Focus group discussion with community, 10 November 2020

“Why are the police turning this epidemic into a way of getting money?” – DRC, Household visit, 11 November 2020

“does the government want, at all costs, to kill the Gabonese with its track-record of COVID-19?”

– Gabon, Social Media, 07 November 2020

“ Why is there no transparency between health workers and the community?” – DRC, Household visit, 09 November 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“There is no covid-19 in Lesotho, it is just that the authorities want make some money” – Lesotho, From National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 16 November 2020

“In hospital are they injecting people with the coronavirus so as to increase cases?”

– DRC, Household visit, 11 November 2020

“COVID-19 is politic matter”

– Rwanda, From National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 09 November 2020

“Stop making us panic about a disease that we can’t even see”

– Cameroon, WhatsApp group with community members, 14 November 2020

“A biological weapon and we are all going to die” – Zimbabwe, Focus group discussion with community, 14 November 2020

“Are the results announced true or they are manipulated?” – Kenya, From National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 06 November 2020

2. Comments and questions about who is or is not affected by the disease

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Kenya

Questions:

“why are there more white victims than Africans?” – Gabon, Focus group discussion with community, 09 November 2020

“Why aren’t young people dying of coronavirus?” – DRC, Household visit, 09 November 2020

“Who are the people at risk and why them?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 14 November 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“It is for the rich only and those who travel by air.” – Zimbabwe, Community meeting, 12 November 2020

“The elderly population is an example of a group of people who are most vulnerable.”

– Cameroon, Focus group discussion with community, 05 November 2020

“People with Coronavirus in developed countries are dying more than in less developed countries. Can you explain that?” – DRC, Household visit, 11 November 2020

“Coronavirus is a disease of white people, not black people.” – DRC, household visit, 09 November 2020

3. Comments about preventive behaviours, including comments about non-compliance with public health measures

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Zimbabwe

Questions:

“How can you stop the disease spreading between couples?” – DRC, Household visit, 09 November 2020

“You can see a lack of interest in maintaining protective measures, above all wearing masks. How do you make young people understand its importance?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 07 November 2020

“Would sport have an impact on covid-19?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 14 November 2020

“How come people in Komanda aren’t respecting protective measures yet aren’t bring infected?” – DRC, Household visit, 11 November 2020

“Are we to still maintain Social Distance?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 04 November 2020

Rumours, beliefs and observations:

“In the same family different persons use one face mask.” – Rwanda, From National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 09 November 2020

“Police demanding money for misuse of facemask” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 07 November 2020

“They say that they’re bringing masks to kill the population again.” – DRC, household visit, 11 November 2020

“Even if I’m asymptomatic, I still have to wear my mask” – Cameroon, WhatsApp group with community members, 14 November 2020

Suggestions and Requests:

“Government to monitor markets places for COVID 19 health measures?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 12 November 2020

“Our concern is for the authorities to help us, especially with wash basins in schools for our children, and masks.” – DRC, household visit, 06 November 2020

“Can you please give us standard masks?” – Zimbabwe, From National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 02 November 2020

4. Comments and questions about schools and education

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe

Questions:

“Do you think our children are safe in schools?” – Zimbabwe, Community meeting, 09 November 2020

“what’s being done about returning to school?” – Gabon, household visit, 13 November 2020

“How can you respect protective measures with all the students on campus?” –

Cameroon, National Society radio show, 05 November 2020

“How can you limit the spread of covid-19 in schools when they have no resources from the authorities?” – DRC, Household visit, 11 November 2020

“Why are teachers asking school children to pay for facemask?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 05 November 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“No social distance maintain in government school buses.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 07 November 2020

“Education costs in Gabonese schools seem to be increasing due to Coronavirus.” – Gabon, Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc), 03 November 2020

“Hand washing in Schools is not properly organised.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 07 November 2020

Suggestions or requests:

“Need more awareness and information dissemination in schools so that children can learn and spread the knowledge back home.” – Zimbabwe, Meeting, training or briefing of staff and volunteers, 10 November 2020

“Red Cross to help with soap to be placed at hand washing stations in Schools.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 07 November 2020

“we wish the government would reduce the number of pupils per class and apply the turnover system.” – Gabon, Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc), 14 November 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, Sierra Leone

“Thank you for this new programme. It’s been a pleasure to listen to you.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 07 November 2020

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“Thank you for all you do for us, dear Red Cross volunteers.” – DRC, household visit, 09 November 2020

“it’s been a pleasure to come to the area. It proves to us that we are all committed to the response.” – Gabon, Household visit, 09 November 2020

“Thanks to Red Cross as they always advice us to use facemask and follow other precautionary measures to end Corona.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 07 November 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IFRC EFFORTS TO DOCUMENT, ANALYSE AND USE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON COVID-19 IN AFRICA, PLEASE CONTACT EVA ERLACH AT EVA.ERLACH@IFRC.ORG.