

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between **23 November and 04 December 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **5 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 Cameroon (639 feedback comments) Democratic Republic of Congo (223), Malawi (64) and Zambia (4). Comments related to COVID-19 were also received through the NS hotline from Sierra Leone (24) and Malawi (2), as well as interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Cameroon (75).

During the reporting period, the most common topic in community feedback across the countries was about **preventative behaviours**, particularly **requests for the distribution of washbasins, soap and face masks**. There were also many questions about how the public health measures help protect adults and children against the virus, mostly about **face masks and physical distancing**. While some highlighted the importance of wearing face masks and handwashing, others complained about people not taking the pandemic seriously and people becoming complacent with the public health measures.

One of the most talked about topics was also the **existence of the disease**, with several people believing that the disease has already ended or that the disease is not real, or it does not exist in their country or in the Africa region. Among these comments, there were also **questions about why we don't see sick people** or people who have recovered from COVID-19 in the media.

Preparedness and response activities was also widely spoken about. Many people requested community health promotion on the disease and asked for more responsive action from Governments particularly around the communication of the disease and financial aid. There were also some questions and comments about the management of the dead bodies during the COVID-19 response.

In this reporting period, there were also some comments indicating **mistrust in the response**, with many people believing that some people or institutions are making money from the disease. There were also statements suggesting COVID-19 was created in a laboratory and that the virus was created to reduce the population or to harm people in Africa.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

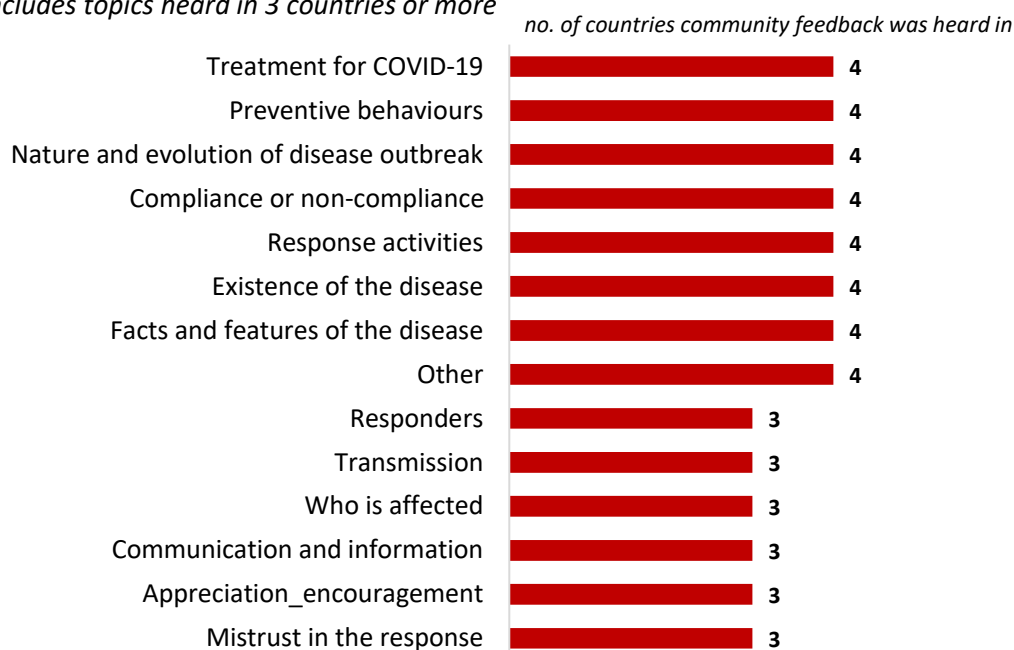
- Actively address people's perception that the COVID-19 outbreak is either not real, it's just a tool for political gain or to make money, or it only affects certain groups of people. You can use the [guidance note on mistrust and denial in communities](#). Among other options, is to mobilize and engage 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 aware 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 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 ourselves. You

can also these resources on how to use a face mask correctly and how to make a face mask ([Ask Dr Ben video](#), [Interagency Factsheet](#)). The [Ask Dr Ben factsheet #19](#) clarifies why it is still important to practice preventive behaviours. All face mask factsheets and IEC materials, including videos and infographics, are available [here](#), and for 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 follow the 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, [Ask Dr Ben Factsheet #23](#) explains why Africa has been less affected than other parts of the world and this [Ask Dr Ben video](#) explains the outbreak has not ended.
- 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 FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 3 countries or more



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

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

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Malawi, Sierra Leone

Questions:

“Does washing your hands protect you from infection?” – Cameroon, face to face through social mobilization, 25 November 2020

“Is there any special way we diabetic people have to follow apart from wearing face mask to protect ourselves from Covid 19 since we are more vulnerable to contract the disease?” – Malawi, household visit, 23 November 2020

“If you wear a mask, does that mean this Covid disease can’t infect you?” – DRC, household visit, 25 November 2020

Rumours, beliefs and observations:

“We’re not refusing to wear masks, but we haven’t got the money to buy them.” – DRC Household visit, 27 November 2020

“Wearing of face mask have no use – Malawi, Household visit, 24 November 2020

“People are not taking corona serious” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 25 November 2020

“Some people say that you put fake products in the masks you give people so they get sick, that’s why some people don’t wear masks.” – DRC, household visit, 25 November 2020

“I wear my mask and I avoid using my hands to greet my friends.” – Cameroon, household visit, 27 November 2020

Suggestions and Requests:

“People need help in form of cash, soap and mask – Malawi, household visit, 24 November 2020

“The social distancing issue in mosques needs to be reviewed.” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilization, 27 November 2020

“Red Cross to help with facemask?” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 26 November 2020

“Tell the authorities that we don’t have the means, that’s why we’re asking for masks and medicine.” – DRC, Household visit, 25 November 2020

2. Comments and questions about the existence of the disease

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Malawi, Zambia

Questions:

“Why don’t we see people on TV with covid?” – DRC, Household visit, 27 November 2020

“Is there still covid in Cameroon?” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 27 November 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Covid -19 is not real is only exaggerated”– Malawi, Household visit, 25 November 2020

“There’s no more covid19, but is there Ebola?” – DRC, Household visit, 25 November 2020

“There is no Corona virus in Zambia.” – Zambia, Focus group discussion with community, 23 November 2020

“We know that covid exists, but we haven’t seen any dead bodies or sick people yet”– Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 23 November 2020

3. Comments and questions about the response activities including communication and information

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Zambia

Questions:

“Why has Government stopped giving COVID-19 Updates?”– Zambia, Focus group discussion with community, 25 November 2020

“How is the state helping the general public to fight this pandemic?”–

Cameroon, National Society Social Mobilizer, 23 November 2020

“How were all the people who died from covid19 buried?” – DRC, Household visit, 23 November 2020

“In Africa, the body is very important to the family. Don’t you think you should find a way to disinfect the bodies and return them to the families?” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 25 November 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“They say Covid-19 is real but we don't have proper equipment to fight against the disease.” – Malawi, Household visit, 23 November 2020

“Awareness is the most effective way of limiting the spread of the virus in the community.” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 25 November 2020

Suggestions or requests:

“We also ask for more education so that others are also informed, as well as those who deny that the disease exists.” – DRC, Household visit 25 November 2020

“The State should distribute kits and raise awareness in the most vulnerable communities.” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 25 November 2020

4. Comments and questions about mistrust in the response

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Malawi

Questions:

“For a time, when someone died in hospital, they were diagnosed with having died from covid, although some people died from other diseases?”

–Cameroon, National Society Radio Show, 25 November 2020

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“Do you want to use covid to wipe out the entire population?” – DRC, Household visit, 23 November 2020

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“There is no covid here, there was only one case and the person was already dead. You lie so you can get money.” – DRC, Household visit, 23 November 2020

“Coronavirus was created in a laboratory to decrease the population” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 23 November 2020

“People just want money in the name of covid” – Malawi, Household visit, 24 November 2020

“White people want to kill Africans” – Cameroon, Face to face through social Mobilizer, 23 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, Malawi

“Many people are praising Red cross for the job well done covid 19” – Malawi, Household visit, 24 November 2020

“We were glad to have your advice.” – DRC, household visit, 23 November 2020

“Thank you for the dedication of the Red Cross volunteers.” – Cameroon, face to face social mobilizer, 25 November 2020

“Thank you for your continued work in the field.” – Cameroon, face to face social mobilizer, 23 November 2020

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