

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between the **8 and 14 July 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **9 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities in two countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (3453 feedback comments) and Côte d'Ivoire (13). Feedback collected through social media in Gabon (19) and Cameroon (7), as well as received through the National Society hotline in Sierra Leone (75) was also included. Focal points in four countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Most widely spread across countries were **questions about the disease** itself. This includes questions about its existence, the symptoms of the disease, but also if reinfection is possible or if it is similar to a common flu.

A common topic is still **protective behaviour**, especially the wearing of face masks. Many asked about precautions to take in schools

and churches, now that they are opening in some countries. There were still comments about politicians, military and police not wearing masks or practicing physical distancing, as well as complacency of community members in general.

Community members also asked about the **lockdown and changes of these policies**. Many wanted to know if and when schools and churches were opened again.

Another common topic was the **treatment of COVID-19**. People often asked about the existence and availability of medication for COVID-19 and some wondered how it is possible that people are recovering, if there is no cure.

Community members also shared **suggestions for response activities**. They asked for a scale up of community health promotion as well as the provision of hand washing utensils, face masks and livelihood support.

What can be observed overall, is that there is an increasing amount of questions and comments on the disease and the outbreak overall, and less comments about Africans not being affected or denial of the outbreak.

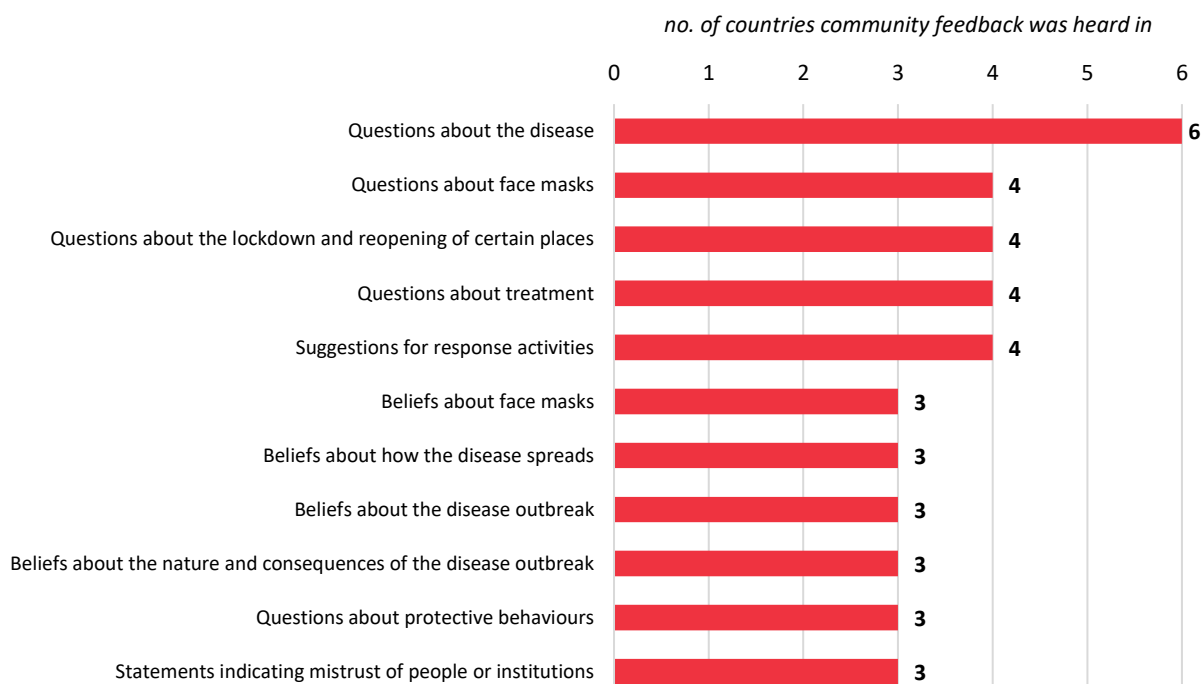
## TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

- Ensure the basic information on the characteristics of the disease such as the signs and symptoms and transmission are still covered during social mobilisation activities. Our [guide for community mobilisers](#), which include talking points, and [Ask Dr Ben factsheets](#) provide the needed information.
- Continue to communicate about face masks with communities, explaining why they can help stop the spread of the virus, how they should be used and who should wear them. You can access face mask IEC materials, including videos and infographics, [here](#). Share these materials through social media, with volunteers and branches, and cover this topic on radio and TV shows.
- Share the feedback from community members criticizing politicians, police and military not wearing face masks and practicing physical distancing through coordination mechanisms and offer support to sensitize military and police and strengthen their awareness of role model status in the society.

- 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. The latest [Ask Dr Ben video](#) discusses treatments and an interagency factsheet will shortly be published for this purpose as well.
- Encourage staff and volunteers of your National Society who had COVID-19 and have recovered from it to share their own story. You could record a short video with their testimonials, invite them to interactive radio shows and have them answer questions on WhatsApp or social media.
- Communicate clearly about precautions to take at schools and places of worship, in case they are opened again. You can use the [Ask Dr Ben factsheet #12](#), which answers the question about precautions at schools.
- Work with communities to find local affordable solutions to meet their requests for soap, hand washing stations and masks. Read the [interagency guidance note on finding local solutions](#), which also includes good examples from National Societies across Africa. This also helps build trust and encourages communities lead the fight against COVID-19.

## MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

*This chart includes topics heard in 3 countries or more*



## MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

### 1. Questions about the disease

Heard in: Burundi, DRC, Gabon, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Somalia

#### Questions:

**"What is the coronavirus?"** – DRC, household visit, 8 July 2020

**"Does the coronavirus really exist?"** – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020

**"What are the symptoms of COVID-19?"** – Burundi, National Society report, 12 July 2020

**"If I had the disease before, shall I get it again?"** – Somalia, National Society report, 12 July 2020

**"Does age matter in COVID-19?"** – Malawi, National Society report, 14 July 2020

**"COVID-19 is a type of flu but the difference is that it causes complications in people with a weak immune system?"** – Gabon, social media, 12 July 2020

### 2. Questions and beliefs about face masks and other protective behaviours

Heard in: Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia

#### Questions:

**"For how long do we have to wear masks?"** – Mozambique, National Society report, 14 July 2020

**"Are people going to use face mask and maintain social distance in mosque and churches?"**  
– Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 8 July 2020

**"Why do some people turn their mask inside out to wear it after using it the right way round?"** – Côte d'Ivoire, focus group discussion with community members, 8 July 2020

**"Can regularly wearing a mask cause other illnesses in the long term?"** – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020

**"Why don't the military or police follow social distancing?"** – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020

**"Can taking hot water with lemons protect from COVID-19?"** – Malawi, National Society report, 14 July 2020

#### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**"These masks suffocate!"** – Mozambique, National Society report, 14 July 2020

**"People rarely wear masks!"** – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020

**"With the reopening of the classes the children from 5 to 11 year olds will change masks between them and on hygiene issues there won't be enough buckets and soap for all the schools"** – Mozambique, National Society report, 14 July 2020

*"On the news last Thursday, we saw the president greet the prime minister by shaking his hand, while people are being asked not to shake hands anymore!" – Côte d'Ivoire, focus group discussion with community members, 8 July 2020*

## 3. Questions about the lockdown and reopening of schools and places of worship

Heard in: DRC, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe

### Questions:

*"When will the lock down be over?" – Zimbabwe, National Society report, 13 July 2020*

*"When will government allow normal schooling?" – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 10 July 2020*

*"When will places of worship be opened up in Gabon?" – Gabon, social media, 12 July 2020*

*"Has government lifted ban on public prayers?" – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 10 July 2020*

*"Why is the lockdown continuing when we don't have any coronavirus here?" – DRC, household visit, 8 July 2020*

## 4. Questions and beliefs about treatment

Heard in: Cameroun, DRC, Sierra Leone, Somalia

### Questions:

*"Do herbal medicine could be preventive and treatment alternative?" – Somalia, National Society report, 12 July 2020*

*"We want to know what the treatment for COVID-19 is?" – Cameroon, social media, 10 July 2020*

*"How do people get cured of coronavirus if there is no medication for it?" – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020*

*"What is being used to treat coronavirus?" – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020*

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

*"The Americans have already found a treatment for coronavirus and can cure it in 7 days." – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020*

*"The treatment for COVID-19 is in the pharmacopoeia." – Gabon, social media, 12 July 2020*

*"TF1 adverts say that we can recover from COVID-19 by resting." – Gabon, social media, 12 July 2020*

## 5. Suggestions for response activities

Heard in: Burkina Faso, Cameroun, DRC, Sierra Leone

### Suggestions:

*"You also need to raise awareness on following the lockdown measures." – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020*

*"We need more information on the COVID-19 protective measures." – Cameroon, social media, 10 July 2020*

***"Red Cross to provide face mask and food for the people."*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 9 July 2020

***"We need masks."*** – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020

***"Red Cross to help with hand washing soaps."*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 9 July 2020

***"The Government should control the borders."*** – DRC, household visit, 10 July 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, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Sierra Leone

***"We would really like to thank you for your courage in raising awareness and keeping us informed of these recommendations."*** – DRC, household visit, 13 July 2020

***"Thanks to Red Cross for COVID-19 health TV Show."*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 9 July 2020

***"Thank you for sharing this feedback. Keep up the good work."*** – Cameroon, social media, 10 July 2020

***"Satisfied with the interactive radio programme. Because it helps us to be better informed about this disease."*** – Côte d'Ivoire, face to face to social mobilizer, 8 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](mailto:SHARON.READER@IFRC.ORG).