

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between **7 and 20 September 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 such as household visits, community meetings or focus group discussions in four countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (7709 feedback comments), Cameroon (570), Mozambique (15) and Ivory Coast (8). Comments relative to COVID-19 received through the NS hotline were included from Sierra Leone (155). Feedback was also received during interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Cameroon (132) and Gabon (74), and Ivory Coast (5). Feedback shared through staff and volunteers from Ivory Coast (21) and Cameroon (16) was considered as well.

Focal points in three countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Lesotho, Malawi, Burundi.

Similar to last weeks trends, we are still seeing a **low and decreasing risk perception** among community members, many believe that it cannot affect young people or Africans. There are also numerous comments indicating the disease does not exist, that the geographic area of the community member is not affected, or that the pandemic has already ended.

In this context, it was also discussed where all the sick people are and **requested to show sick or recovered people** in the media.

A high number of countries have also shared feedback indicating **non-compliance with public health measures**. It is mentioned that people are not wearing face masks anymore, and that physical distancing is not being respected. It was criticized that authorities do not follow the rules such as wearing masks and practicing physical distancing themselves. More and more people mention not wanting to talk about COVID-19 anymore and do not want to participate in sensitization activities.

Facemasks are still a common topic of discussion and in DRC the most common feedback topic are requests for the distribution of facemasks. There are also many concerns about facemasks and people complain about respiratory problems when wearing facemasks. It is also mentioned that people only wear facemasks out of fear of being fined.

Questions and beliefs **about the outlook and the evolution of the pandemic** are also common. People want to know how long the outbreak might last, as well as up to date information on the number of cases and areas affected. Some believe that we will have to live with COVID-19 and others think that it will end soon.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

- Actively address people's perception that there is no danger of catching COVID-19 or that the outbreak is over. 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.
- 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. Many believe

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that the pandemic has come to an end or are requesting information on the response, as well as the latest epidemiological trends. 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.

- Explain that it is difficult to show sick or deceased people due to the protection of the right and dignity of the affected persons, but also try to find ways to share testimonials of those who have recovered from the disease. Try to 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.
- Continue to communicate with communities on protective behaviours, explaining why it can help stop the spread of the virus, how it works in daily life and what dangerous situations there are where you should protect yourself. You can access face mask factsheets and IEC materials, including videos and infographics, [here](#), and content on physical distancing [here](#). Make sure to provide practical tips on how to protect yourself in public transport, markets, as well as at home, here is a [Ask Dr Ben video](#) on this topic.
- 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. We also have Ask Dr Ben videos discussing [why one should not shake hands](#).

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 4 countries or more



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Beliefs that the disease does not affect everyone or that the pandemic does not exist or is already over

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Lesotho, Mozambique

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Les enfants ne peuvent pas contracter le virus.” – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 19 September 2020

“La covid19 n'existe pas en Afrique, elle est seulement chez les blancs.” – DRC, household visit, 14 September 2020

“COVID-19 does not affect Basotho because of the high altitude.” – Lesotho, NS focal point reporting to IFRC, 14 September 2020

“People do not believe that this disease exists.” – Mozambique, community meeting, 7 September 2020

“COVID-19 n'est plus.” – Burundi, NS focal point reporting to IFRC, 9 September 2020

“La covid n'est plus présente au Cameroun.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 19 September 2020

“Le coronavirus est fini on sait pas pourquoi vous collez les affiches.” – Ivory Coast, face to face to RC volunteer, 9 September 2020

2. Mentions of non-compliance with public health measures

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Personne ne respecte plus les mesures barrières.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 19 September 2020

“Les autorités doivent montrer l'exemple en respectant eux-mêmes les mesures barrières, Est-ce normal que le Ministre de la Santé soit accueilli par plus de mille personnes dans sa province d'origine alors que lorsqu'il était Porte-Parole du COPIL il ne cessait de rappeler aux gens de respecter la distanciation sociale ou limitté les attroupements de plus de 10 personnes.” – Gabon, social media, 14 September 2020

“People are not using facemask the right way.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 17 August 2020

“Although preventive measures are being taken in cities and towns, in remote areas nothing has changed. People continue to have traditional weddings, full parties, funerals, and people continue to share glasses while drinking traditional alcohol.” – Mozambique, community meeting, 7 September 2020

“Les chauffeurs de gbaka ne respectent pas les mesures barrières.” – Ivory Coast, focus group discussion with volunteers, 16 September 2020

3. Comments about face masks

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Lesotho, Mozambique, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“Le port régulier du masque donne lieu à des problèmes respiratoires.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 16 September 2020

“Les masques nous amènent la toux, ils sont contaminé.” – DRC, household visit, 16 September 2020

“Nous portons les masques pour éviter d'être tracassé par la police nationale et non pour se protéger de la covid-19.” – DRC, household visit, 16 September 2020

“Police arresting people for facemask.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 17 September 2020

“People put masks in their pockets and only put them because of the fear of Mahindra (Police car).” – Mozambique, community meeting, 7 September 2020

4. Questions and beliefs about the outlook and the evolution of the pandemic

Heard in: Burundi, Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Sierra Leone

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“COVID19 va se terminer lui même.” – Burundi, NS focal point reporting to IFRC, 9 September 2020

“La maladie est en train de finir au Cameroun.” – Cameroon, focus group discussion with community members, 13 September 2020

“Covid 19 will not end soon in the world.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 14 September 2020

Questions:

“Est-ce que cette pandémie finira un jour?” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 12 September 2020

“When will this disease end?” – Mozambique, community meeting, 7 September 2020

“Can we expect reduced numbers of COVID-19 cases in this summer?” – Malawi, NS focal point reporting to IFRC, 7 September 2020

“Pourquoi la maladie n'augmente pas depuis la réouverture des bars?” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 16 September 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

“Nous vous félicitons beaucoup vous les membres de la Croix-Rouge pour nous faire quitté dans l'ignorance..” – DRC, face to face to RC volunteer, 18 September 2020

“Vivement merci aux volontaires de la Croix-Rouge qui sensibilisent avec bravoure, insistance et courage.” – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 9 September 2020

“Félicitations aux personnels soignants, à la population aussi qui a pris conscience, félicitations aussi aux gouvernants pour les moyens mis pour combattre la pandémie. On ne baisse pas les bras.” – Gabon, social media, 18 September 2020

“Thanks to Red Cross for their service in the country.” – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 11 September 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.