

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between the **10 and 23 August 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **14 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities such as household visits, community meetings and focus group discussions in five countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (7403 feedback comments), Cameroon (1585), Malawi (496), Ivory Coast (23), and Gabon (16). Comments relative to COVID-19 which was received through NS feedback mechanisms was included as well from Sierra Leone (496), Ivory Coast (56), and Burundi (7). Feedback was also received during interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Cameroon (289), Gabon (34) and Ivory Coast (4).

Focal points in four countries shared the main rumours, observations, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Lesotho, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan.

Most widely spread across the region were **questions about response activities**, mainly about distribution of face masks, but also about the provision of water and hand washing supplies, about communication and information about the pandemic, as well as questions about the management of those who died of COVID-19.

An increasing amount of countries have also shared feedback indicating **non-compliance with public health measures**. It is mentioned that people are not wearing face masks anymore, that physical distancing is not being respected. Many people seem to believe that the pandemic is over and that therefore there is no need to adopt preventive behaviours anymore. More and more people mention being **tired of the disease**, and not wanting to hear about it anymore.

Facemasks continue to be a common topic, and while some complain about negative effects of facemasks, others mention that they are only used to enter shops or avoid problems with the police. Many others mention the usefulness of facemasks and request the provision thereof.

Across countries, there were also many comments about the **consequences of the pandemic**, with most of them mentioning **increased prices, unemployment and poverty**.

There have also been an increasing amount of **questions in the evolution of the pandemic**. Many asked if the outbreak was over, if it exists in their area, how many cases there are and if the peak was reached yet.

Another common topic is still the **treatment of COVID-19**. Community members want to know if there is medication for COVID-19 and how it is possible that people are recovering, if there is no cure.

TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

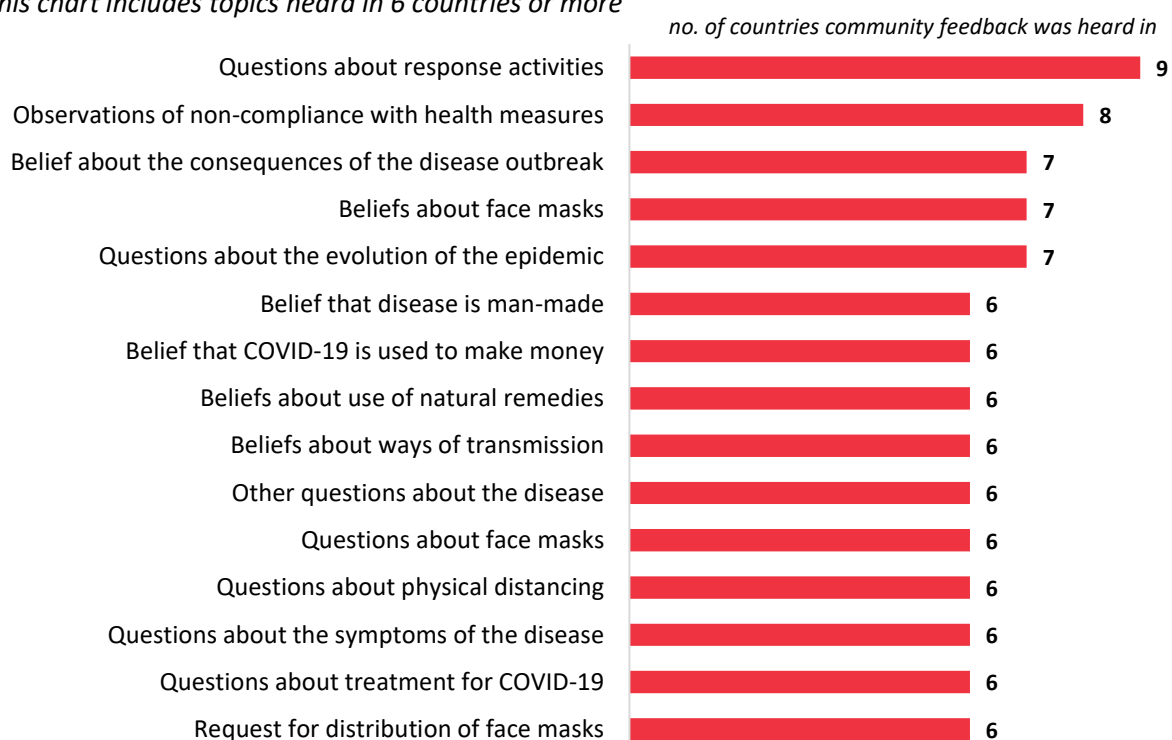
- Provide information on the interventions conducted as part of the COVID-19 response. Explain that safe and dignified burials (SDB) are not needed for COVID-19, as dead bodies are not infectious. You can use our latest [Ask Dr Ben factsheet](#) and find more information on this topic in [this guidance note](#).
- 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.

- 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 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.
- 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 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.
- 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](#).
- Work together with traditional healers, as many rely on traditional medicine to treat COVID-19. Train them on the signs of COVID-19 and discuss when to refer people to health care centres and when herbal remedies can help.

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 6 countries or more



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Questions about response activities

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania

Questions:

"Why don't you distribute masks to people?" – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 15 August 2020

"Why no water to wash hands in the Public places like in our market?" – Tanzania, National Society radio show, 15 August 2020

"Who does the burials of people who die of COVID-19?" – DRC, household visit, 14 August 2020

"How can we deal with the dead body of COVID 19?" – Sudan, National Society report, 17 August 2020

"Why aren't people sick with COVID-19 shown?" – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 19 August 2020

2. Mentions of non-compliance with public health measures

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

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"Washing of hand is a thing of past." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 22 August 2020

"Social distancing is still a challenge as taxis are still operating at full capacity, some villagers still go to funerals in numbers exceeding the government recommendation." – Lesotho, National Society report, 17 August 2020

"People are not using their facemask the right way." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 15 August 2020

"The authorities do not respect the barrier measures." – DRC, household visit, 12 August 2020

"School children are not using facemask." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 21 August 2020

3. Comments about the consequences of the pandemic

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

Questions:

"Covid-19 has paralyzed the economy, we no longer sell anything" – Cameroon, focus group discussion, 21 August 2020

"Covid 19 has bring poverty in Malawi." – Malawi, household visit, 17 August 2020

"This illness is creating a headache to us. [...] 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, National Society reporting to IFRC, 11 August 2020

"Prices of some commodities is high as a result of COVID-19." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 21 August 2020

4. Beliefs and comments about facemasks

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"In the long run the face masks will cause lung disease." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 22 August 2020

"We are not comfortable with the use of masks and we know the preventive measures of Covid-19." – Malawi, household visit, 13 August 2020

"If the community wears the face masks, it is to prevent them from being arrested by the police, but not to fight against coronavirus." – DRC household visit, 19 August 2020

"Police is arresting people for facemask." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 19 August 2020

5. Questions about the evolution of the pandemic

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

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

"Is COVID-19 on the rise or declining?" – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 15 August 2020

"Is corona still there? Is it back?" – Tanzania, National Society radio show, 15 August 2020

"What is the real situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in DRC?" – DRC, household visit, 15 August 2020

"Why the numbers are increasing every day while the COPIL is working?" – Gabon, social media, 10 August 2020

"What is the update on COVID-19?" – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 18 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, Malawi, Sierra Leone

"The population congratulates and encourages the Red Cross because even after Ebola it continues to carry out their good work." – DRC, household visit, 10 August 2020

"We thank the Cameroon RC for helping us to continue to respect the barrier measures on COVID-19, despite threats when out in the field." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 12 August 2020

"Always encourage the medical doctors and all the personnel who accompany patients at this time that the pandemic is raging around the world." – Gabon, social media, 10 August 2020

"We can never forget the good work of Red Cross in Covid-19 fight." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 22 August 2020