

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between **19 October and 1 November 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **8 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 (5295 feedback comments), Malawi (132), Gabon (114), and Cameroon (57). Comments relative to COVID-19 received through the NS hotline were included from Sierra Leone (170). Feedback was also received during interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Gabon (160) and Cameroon (153).

Focal points in four countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions, or suggestions they heard in their countries: Botswana, DRC (for areas not covered by the Ebola operation), Lesotho and Somalia.

Most common during the reporting period were comments about **preventive behaviours** again. Many were mentioning **non-compliance** with public health measures, were wondering why people are not practicing preventive behaviours anymore or suggested to **better enforce the rules** and encourage compliance with them. There were numerous **requests for the provision of**

**face masks**, as well as **hand washing utensils and stations**, and **water**.

There were also many questions and comments about the **existence of the disease**. While many stated that COVID-19 did not exist, that there were no cases in their country or region, or that the outbreak had already ended, there were others who pointed out that it does exist.

A common topic was also questions, and beliefs about the **nature and evolution of the pandemic**. Many asked about how long the pandemic is going to last, as well as about the number of cases and geographic areas affected by the outbreak.

One of the most common topics was also **lockdown measures and the lifting thereof**. There were many questions about the specifics of the rules and regulations, about when these will end and requests to lift the measures. Some also mentioned that the lifting of the lockdown or curfews showed that the outbreak had ended.

Common were also observations, beliefs, questions, and suggestions in relation to the **return to schools**. Some shared beliefs that the reopening of the schools meant that the outbreak was over, while others wondered how they could be opened, while there were still cases. People also asked about the precautions taken at schools or mentioned the non-adherence to prevention measures at schools.

## TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

- 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 use the new [Ask Dr Ben video on how to use face masks correctly](#). [Ask Dr Ben factsheet #19](#) clarifies why it is still important to practice preventive behaviours. 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

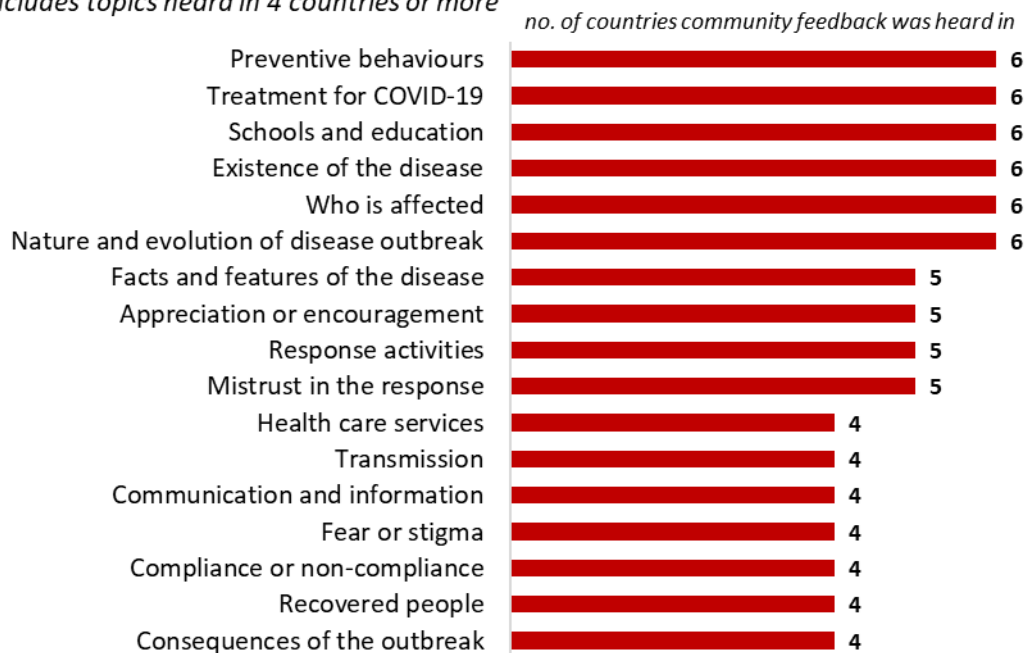


provide up to date information on the number of cases and the outlook for Africa – and be clear on the fact that the pandemic is not over. [This factsheet](#) can be useful and can be adapted to a specific country and this [Ask Dr Ben video](#) explains the outbreak has not ended.

- Discuss the topic of protective behaviours for children and the return to schools with your volunteers. [Ask Dr Ben factsheets 12, 16, 19, 21](#) provide you with information relative to the protection of children and precautions that 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.
- 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.
- 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 4 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, Gabon, Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone

#### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

***It seems health measures don't have any impact on COVID-19.*** –

*Gabon, focus group discussion with community members, 23 October 2020*

***We need to be sensible so as to stop the spread of the pandemic.***

*– Cameroon, social media, 20 October 2020*

***“We eat chillies and garlic to fight off diseases.”*** – DRC, household visit, 26 October 2020

***“The pandemic will persist if people don't respect the rules for protective measures.”***

*– DRC, household visit, 23 October 2020*

***“School children removing their facemask in public transport.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 21 October 2020

***“The protective measures are hardly respected. People aren't observing social distancing.”*** –

*Gabon, National Society radio show, 20 October 2020*

***“The people of Goma don't protect themselves against COVID-19 any more and things have gone back to normal.”*** – DRC, household visit, 30 October 2020

#### Suggestions or requests:

***“We need washbasins and masks.”***

*– DRC, household visit, 30 October 2020*

***“Red Cross to help with soap for hand washing.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 30 October 2020

***“Wearing a mask should be compulsory.”***

*– DRC, household visit, 28 October 2020*

***“Government should encourage us to follow preventive measures.”*** – Malawi, household visit, 21 October 2020

***“Why has the government given up on protective measures when the community still thinks that COVID-19 doesn't exist any more because of the authorities have failed?”***

*– DRC, household visit, 23 October 2020*

#### Questions:

***“Why aren't the authorities insisting that people respect the protective measures?”*** – DRC, household visit, 26 October 2020

***Why don't they respect protective measures in public places any more?”***

*– DRC, household visit, 19 October 2020*

***“Why wear a mask when most of the population of Butembo doesn’t any more?”***

– DRC, household visit, 30 October 2020

***“Is it possible to wear a mask for several hours at a time without it causing damage?”***

– Cameroon, National Society radio show, 19 October 2020

***“ Are we to still maintain Social Distance?”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 27 October 2020

## 2. Comments and questions about the non-existence or existence of the disease

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

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

***“There hasn’t been COVID-19 in Butembo, but lots of people die from poverty.”***

–DRC, household visit, 30 October 2020

***“Covid is real let’s stay safe.”*** – Malawi, face to face to RC volunteer, 26 October 2020

***“Thanks to the Red Cross raising awareness, we believe that COVID-19 exists.”***

– Malawi, face to face to RC volunteer, 26 October 2020

***“COVID 19 has ended in the world.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 19 October 2020

***“Coronavirus doesn’t exist any more, it’s already over!”***

- DRC, household visit, 28 October 2020

***“I don’t believe there is coronavirus in Gabon because they show COVID cases in other countries but here in Gabon they don’t show deaths from COVID.”***

- Gabon, focus group discussion with community members, 23 October 2020

### Questions:

***“Why don’t we see victims of coronavirus?”*** – DRC, household visit, 28 October 2020

***“Does COVID still exist?”***

– Cameroon, National Society radio show, 24 October 2020

***“Wait, I don’t have any friends who know someone with a relative who’s died of coronavirus or even has contracted coronavirus. Where are the cases?”***

– Gabon, focus group discussion with community members, 23 October 2020

***“Why don’t you disclose the people who have COVID-19?”***

– DRC, household visit, 21 October 2020

## 3. Comments and questions about the nature and evolution of the outbreak

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

## Questions:

**“How is coronavirus going to come to an end without a vaccine?”** – DRC, face to face to social mobilizer, 24 October 2020

**“What’s the latest situation with the COVID-19 disease?”** – DRC, household visit, 28 October 2020

**“How many positive cases of COVID-19 are there in Goma?”** – DRC, household visit, 23 October 2020

## Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**“There’s a rise in cases because COVID-19 has started again.”**

– DRC, household visit, 30 October 2020

**“COVID-19 is once again a threat in Cameroon.”** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 31 October 2020

**“According to sources over 20 people are reported dying everyday of COVID 19 in Sierra Leone.”** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 25 October 2020

**“COVID-19 is going away, it’s good.”**

– DRC, household visit, 26 October 2020

## 4. Comments about lockdown measures

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

### Questions:

**“How many people are allowed for public gatherings?”** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 20 October 2020

**“Why close schools and borders?”** – DRC, household visit, 19 October 2020

**“Will the curfew be lifted in Sierra Leone?”** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 25 October 2020

**“You’re really having a laugh, 30 people per service once a week, ok we hope you’re going to be able to manage all the churches?”**

– Gabon, focus group discussion with community members, 23 October 2020

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**“The end of lockdown has shown that COVID-19 has come to an end.”** – DRC, household visit, 26 October 2020

**“The government keeps us at home while the Gabonese are struggling to feed themselves and pay their rent.”** – Gabon, WhatsApp group with community members, 5 October 2020

**“The government has already announced that everything is being reopened, in other words lockdown has ended and we’re not afraid of this virus any more.”** – DRC, household visit, 19 October 2020

### Suggestions or requests:

**“We demand the borders to open.”**

– DRC, household visit, 28 October 2020

**“Government to lift ban on curfew order.”** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 20 October 2020

**“Relax the curfew and keep protective measures if you want!! The curfew doesn’t achieve anything.”** – Gabon, focus group discussion with community members, 24 October 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 toll-free number for psychological support that the CRC has set up is a very good initiative.”** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 30 October 2020

**“We encourage your work as it’s not easy because the community is capricious.”**  
– DRC, household visit, 26 October 2020

**“We congratulate Radio Massanga and the Red Cross for their awareness-raising work during the breaks.”** – Gabon, National Society radio show, 20 October 2020

**“The volunteers should continue doing great job.”** – Malawi, household visit, 6 October 2020

**“Thanks to Red Cross and they should continue the fight against COVID 19.”** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 11 October 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](mailto:EVA.ERLACH@IFRC.ORG).