

The community feedback considered in this report was collected between **01 March 2021 to 31 March 2021** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **6 African countries**.

Most of the community feedback was received through National Society hotlines in Sierra Leone (151) and in Cameroon (36). Community feedback was collected through conversations during social mobilisation activities such as household visits and face to face through social mobilizers in Gabon (55), Cameroon (51), Cote d'Ivoire (16) and Benin (7) as well as through National Society radio shows in Gabon (66) and in Benin (7).

Feedback comments related to COVID-19 were also gathered through social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc...) in Gabon (22) and in Benin (3). Additionally, feedback was also obtained through focus group discussions, and community meetings in Cote d'Ivoire (19), Gabon (12) and Benin (2) and through WhatsApp groups as well as National Society focal points in Gabon (16) and Burkina Faso (3) respectively.

During this reporting period, **vaccines** was the most spoken about topic in community feedback, with many questions about the roll out of the vaccine including where people can access the vaccine, who is eligible to take it, and whether the vaccination will be made obligatory. There were also a few questions and beliefs related to the possible side effects of taking the vaccine. Some comments indicated hesitancy towards taking the vaccine, due to the perceived side effects and the AstraZeneca vaccine, in particular was criticised and described as ineffective. As in previous months, we continue to see comments indicating suspicion that the COVID-19 vaccine was developed to kill the African population. There were also comments suggesting that they would only take the vaccine if the President or Government officials took it first. However, there were also positive comments related to the vaccine, people are hopefully that public health

measures might relax with the roll out of the vaccines and there were requests for authorities to be more involved in sensitization campaigns about the disease, with a proposal that countries most affected should be prioritised for vaccines and vaccines should be optional.

As with previous months, **preventative behaviours** was one of the widely commented topics with many questions on COVID-19 measures, particularly on the effectiveness of face masks, how to wash our hands properly, and what measures can we take to prevent the spread of the disease. There were also some questions about why authorities are not distributing them in schools? There were also several requests for the provision of materials such as face masks, hand washing buckets and soap.

Many comments were also linked to **lockdown, restriction of movement, closing borders** during this reporting period. Some people wanted to know what about the curfew measures in their countries and if tighter restrictions of movement would be implemented. There were questions related to the effectiveness of restricting the movement of people with arguments focused on the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the region. Some comments revealed the need for lockdown to be reinstated in some countries, though there were also comments indicating frustrations about the length of the lockdowns.

There were also several questions, beliefs and observation about **Nature and evolution of disease outbreak**. Questions on why the outbreak is not coming to an end was widely heard. However, there were some comments stating that the pandemic will soon end but people should readily accept living with the disease in their communities just as they have done with other diseases such as HIV. There were also speculations from the population that the disease is spread by people coming from abroad.

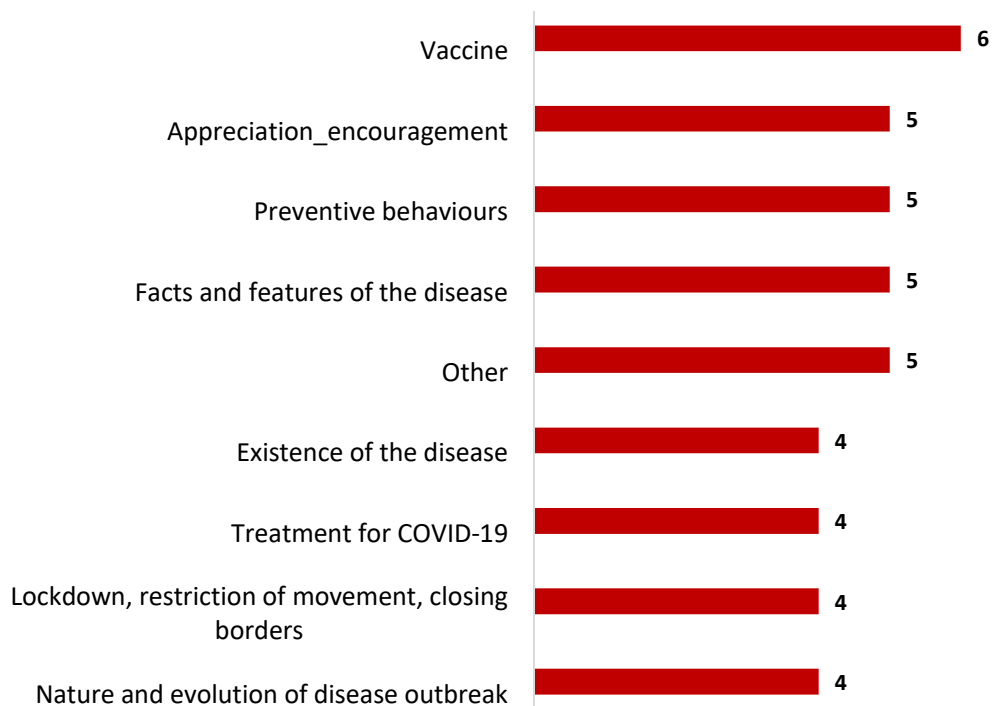
TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

- Ensure community members are informed of the evolution of the epidemic to help them better understand why it's still crucial to follow the public health measures. This 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. See [Ask Dr Ben Factsheets 21, 26 and 28](#) for tips on how we can stay informed of the evolution of the pandemic.
- To help stop misinformation and rumours that the outbreak is over we need to provide up to date information on the number of cases and the outlook for Africa. This [video](#) helps to explain why the outbreak is not over and [Factsheets 23, 26 and 28](#) help to explain the emergence and eradication of infectious diseases and [Factsheet 23](#) address the question why Africa has been less affected than other parts of the world.
- Make sure that volunteers are updated on the COVID-19 vaccine developments and that they can respond to community member's questions and concerns about the vaccine. Use this new [vaccine FAQ guide](#) to help explain the vaccine's safety and benefits, when the vaccine will be ready for distribution, who will be immunized, IFRC's role and many more! You can also use these [WHO videos](#) which explain the effects of the virus variants on the COVID-19 vaccines. Access all available materials on the COVID-19 vaccines [here](#).
- Continue to engage with community members on the public health measures, 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 follow the health measure to 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 use these resources including factsheets, videos, and IEC materials on face masks available [here](#), and for physical distancing [here](#).
- Work in partnership with communities to find and support local, practical solutions to preventing the spread of infection and bringing the outbreak under control. Use the [community-led solutions webinar package](#) and the [guidance note on community-led solutions](#), which provides step-by-step guidance to work with communities to plan COVID-19 response measures.

MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chart includes topics heard in 4 countries or more

no. of countries community feedback was heard in



MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

1. Comments and questions about Vaccine

Heard in: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Gabon

Questions :

“Why do we have a single vaccine for polio yet there are many vaccines for Covid-19?” – Burkina Faso, National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 16 March 2021

“Why doesn’t the government vaccinate the sick?” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 18 March 2021

“How many days difference between the first and the last dose of COVID-19 Vaccine” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 20 March 2021

“Do you have to pay for the covid vaccine?” – Cote d'Ivoire, Focus group discussion with community, 3 March 2021

“what are the vaccination criteria?” – Gabon, Household visit, 14 March 2021

“People are talking about the vaccine having serious side effects. Will it be compulsory?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 21 March 2021

“When you take the vaccine, will you ever get COVID-19?” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 19 March 2021

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“The vaccine we have is for killing Africans” – Benin, National Society radio show, 18 March 2021

“Because they haven’t managed to reduce the number of children each woman in Africa has, they want to vaccinate us and reduce it at the same time” – Burkina Faso, National Society focal points reporting to IFRC, 16 March 2021

“Up to now there has been no progress. We hope that with the vaccine, the measures can be eased” – Gabon, WhatsApp group with staff and volunteers, 21 March 2021

“If you take the Vaccine the Corona Virus will get active in the system” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 21 March 2021

“At the moment, the effectiveness of the AstraZeneca jab is being analysed yet Gabon is launching an outreach programme on a product whose side effects are unknown to us. Isn’t it just the same as calling lambs to the slaughter?” – Gabon, National Society Radio Show, 21 March 2021

Suggestions or requests:

“vaccination should have started in the worst affected countries” – Gabon, Household visit, 21 March 2021

“Give each citizen the chance to refuse or agree to be vaccinated” – Gabon, Social media (twitter, facebook etc), 2 March 2021

“Government and Red Cross should engage in massive COVID-19 Vaccine sensitization” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 19 March 2021

2. Comments and questions about Preventive behaviours

Heard in: Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Gabon

Questions:

“Can facemask protect you from not having COVID-19?” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 24 March 2021

“The covid is only for civilians right? The military themselves do not wear bibs?”
– Gabon, Household visit, 16 March 2021

“How can we avoid catching this disease?” – Cote d'Ivoire, Focus group discussion with community, 9 March 2021

“Do you really trust your measures?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 13 March 2021

Rumours, observations, and beliefs:

“we wash our hands with water from the river! We want gel” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 21 March 2021

“No soap for frequent hand washing” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 26 March 2021

Suggestions or requests:

“The government needs to make masks available to vulnerable people” – Cote d'Ivoire, Household visit, 3 March 2021

“Give us protective equipment” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 5 March 2021

3. Comments and questions about Lockdown, restriction of movement, closing borders

Heard in: Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Gabon

Questions:

“what is lockdown?” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 5 March 2021

“Why aren’t borders being closed to fight against the disease?” – Cote d'Ivoire, Focus group discussion with community, 9 March 2021

“Because cases are still rising, does that mean the curfew and lockdown aren't working?” – Gabon, National Society radio show, 13 March 2021

“Any further ban on inter districts movement?” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 25 March 2021

Rumours, observations and beliefs:

“They’re going to get tired one day and they’ll set us free. This prison won’t last forever.” – Gabon, Focus group discussion with community, 10 March 2021

“Time for Curfew Order in Sierra Leone” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 9 March 2021

Suggestions or requests:

“we just want the curfew to be lifted” – Gabon, Social media (twitter, facebook etc), 16 March 2021

“Government should close the Guinea border” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 21 March 2021

4. Comments and questions about Nature and evolution of disease outbreak

Heard in: Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Gabon

Questions:

“Why doesn’t coronavirus end?” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 18 March 2021

“Why doesn’t Côte d'Ivoire have more cases than France?” – Cote d'Ivoire, Household visit, 9 March 2021

“Can you explain how people are in lockdown yet cases are rising?” – Gabon, Social media (twitter, facebook etc), 2 March 2021

“How many months left to end COVID-19 in the world?” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 13 March 2021

Rumours, beliefs and observations:

“we simply have to accept living with this disease like we do with HIV” – Gabon, Household visit, 13 March 2021

“Most people coming from abroad have Corona Virus” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 6 March 2021

“COVID-19 will not end soon in the world” – Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 8 March 2021

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, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Malawi

“Many thanks for your commitment in the fight against coronavirus” – Cameroon, Face to face through social mobilizer, 18 March 2021

“Thank you to the red cross for raising awareness” – Cote d'Ivoire, Household visit, 9 March 2021

“Thanks to Red Cross for the case transfer and educating us about government measures put in place to reduce the spread of Corona in Sierra Leone” - Sierra Leone, National society hotline, 3 March 2021

“Well done for everything the Red Cross does to fight against COVID-19” Benin, Social media (twitter, facebook etc), 22 March 2021

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.