IFRC

FIGHTING COVID-19 MISTRUST AND DENIAL IN COMMUNITIES

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

COVID-19 is a lie. It's just a way to make money.

It's not real, just a political conspiracy; we have not seen any one sick.

Corona is the white man's disease. It is for the rich, not for the poor.
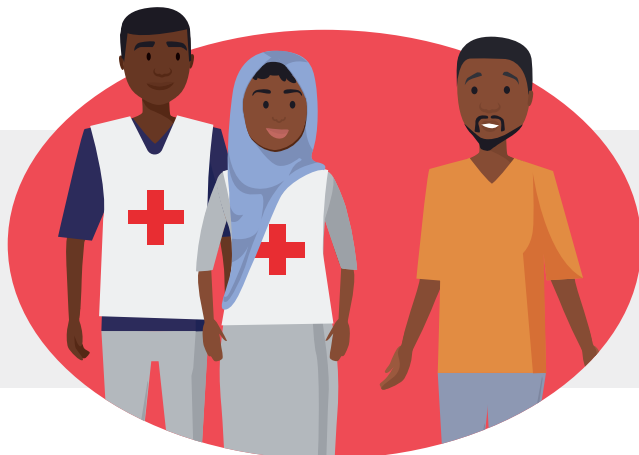
WHY DO WE NEED TO ADDRESS THIS?

If people don't believe COVID-19 is real or can affect them, they won't follow health measures like physical distancing and handwashing, and cases and deaths will keep rising.

WHAT CAN MY NATIONAL SOCIETY DO?

1 **Hold focus group discussions and key informant interviews to understand why people don't believe COVID-19 is real or can harm them.**

2 **Share stories of local people who have recovered from COVID-19, so people believe the virus is real**[*]**:**

- Ask volunteers who have had COVID-19 to tell their story on the radio or in community meetings.
- Invite people who have recovered onto your National Society radio show.
- Encourage trusted local leaders, influencers, and healthcare staff, to share their stories of having, or looking after people, with COVID-19.
- Fight stigma so people are willing to share their story publicly.

[*] But be careful not to expose people to discrimination, stigma or harm by sharing their story

3 Organise a media webinar to brief journalists on the issue, the impact it can have, and ask for their ideas and help to tackle the problem.

4 Mobilize trusted community and religious leaders and youth groups to help stop the spread of misinformation:

- Train them on COVID-19 so they can lead prevention efforts in their community.
- Set up WhatsApp or social media groups with leaders to share factual information and answer their questions.

5 Brief Government and partners on feedback showing mistrust and denial and discuss how to tackle it together:

- Organise journalist visits to COVID-19 treatment centres.
- Suggest Government press briefings on the case rate and that easing lock down does not mean the outbreak is over or not real.
- Encourage more transparency from Government about how funds are being used to tackle the view that the virus is just a tool for political gain or to make money.

6 Build trust in the response:

- Listen to community feedback and act on it, to show people their concerns are important to you – including meeting needs outside of health and COVID-19.
- Show you are there for people before, during and after COVID-19 to avoid being associated with the perceived "money making business".
- Don't just tell communities what to do – also listen to their ideas and suggestions to prevent and manage the outbreak and support them to implement these.