

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between **5 and 18 October 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 five countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (6802 feedback comments), Malawi (45), Cameroon (93), Gabon (45), Zimbabwe (5). Comments relative to COVID-19 received through the NS hotline were included from Sierra Leone (146). Feedback was also received during interactive radio shows, social media and WhatsApp in Gabon (214) and Cameroon (175).

Focal points in three countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they heard in their countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe.

Most common during the reporting period were comments about **preventive behaviours**. While some mentioned the importance of wearing facemasks, other mentioned that it would not be needed to wear face masks anymore, or complained about negative side effects of wearing them. The enforcement of rules to wear face masks was mentioned as well. There were numerous **requests for the**

**provision of face masks** (especially to school children), **as well as hand washing utensils and stations**. Many also asked about **facemasks, handwashing, and physical distancing**. It was often asked why mask wearing and physical distancing was not respected anymore.

A common topic were 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.

Increasingly common were 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.

One of the most common topics was also **mistrust in the COVID-19 response**. Many stated that the disease was man-made, or that it was used for making money or political purposes. Many community members were saying that they were tired of hearing about the disease or refused to talk about it completely.

## 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](#)

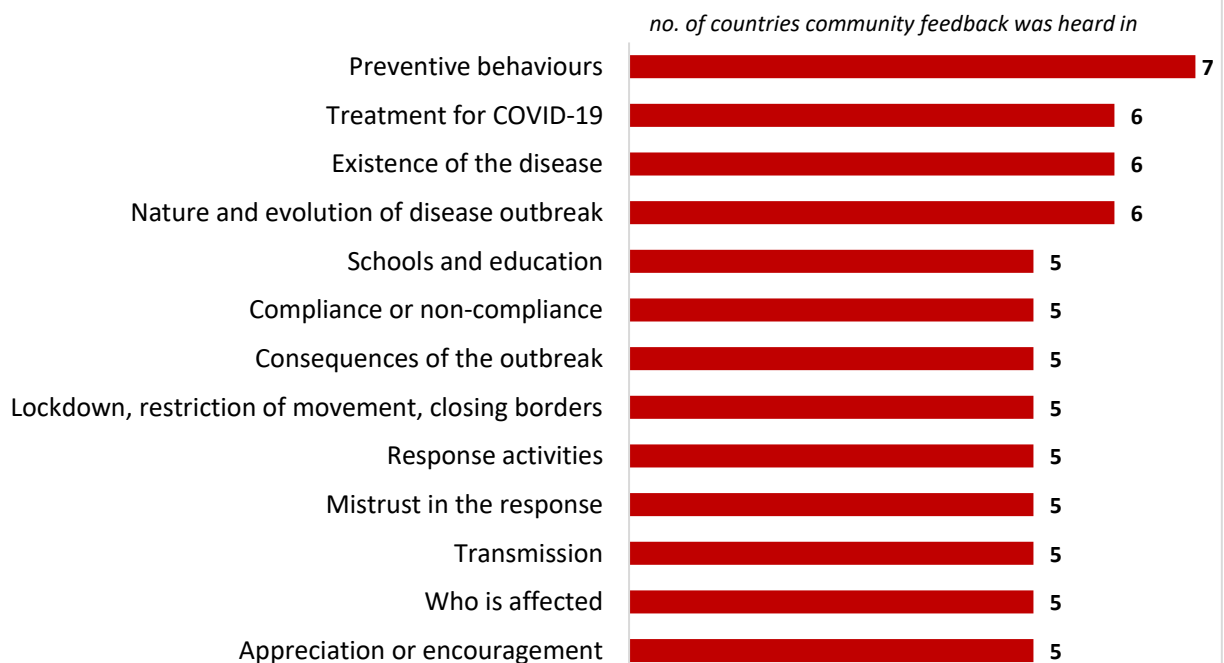


[COVID-19 is real](#) and encourage them to follow the prevention measures. We need to provide up to date information on the number of cases and the outlook for Africa – and be clear on the fact that the pandemic is not over. [This factsheet](#) can be useful and can be adapted to a specific country 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 5 countries or more*



## MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

### 1. Preventive behaviours

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

#### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

***“Police is arresting people for facemasks.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 11 October 2020

***“We should always wear masks in public places.”*** – Malawi, household visit, 7 October 2020

***“When I wear a face mask it bothers me.”*** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 10 October 2020

***“Wearing masks is not a favourable way to protect yourself from COVID-19.”*** – DRC, household visit, 12 October 2020

#### Suggestions or requests:

***“The authorities should distribute disinfectants to the population in order to reassure us that COVID-19 is a reality and that the response is doing its job..”*** – DRC, household visit, 12 October 2020

***“Hand out face masks to schoolchildren who will soon be heading back to school.”*** – DRC, household visit, 5 October 2020

***“We still do not have enough hand washing station in our town.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 5 October 2020

***“Can you give us masks in communities.”*** – Zimbabwe, community meeting, 14 October 2020

***“That the authorities insist on the respect of prevention measures.”*** – DRC, household visit, 9 October 2020

#### Questions:

***“Why is physical distancing not respected?”*** – DRC, household visit, 14 October 2020

***“Why do people refuse to wear the face mask?”*** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 15 October 2020

***“[...] washing our hands with soap ... well, they've been cutting off our water for a month now, how can we respect that?”*** – Gabon, National Society radio show, 15 October 2020

***“Who is responsible for refilling the tippy tanks?”*** – Lesotho, National Society report, 5 October 2020

### 2. Nature and evolution of the outbreak

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

#### Questions:

***“When will this disease end?”*** – Gabon, household visit, 7 October 2020

***“Why doesn't covid-19 end?”*** – DRC, face to face to RC volunteer, 7 October 2020

***“Are there any more cases?”*** – Gabon, social media, 18 October 2020

*"How many cases there already been in the province?" – DRC, household visit, 14 October 2020*

## Rumours, observations and beliefs:

*"Corona virus is killing a lot of people." – Malawi, household visit, 7 October 2020*

*"Soon there will be more cases in Gabon." – Gabon, social media, 17 October 2020*

*"In Goma there are no cases of covid19." – DRC, household visit, 5 October 2020*

*"COVID 19 will end before December." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 13 October 2020*

## 3. Return to school

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

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

*"Covid-19 is gone now that schools are open." – Zimbabwe, community meeting, 17 October 2020*

*"The schools do not respect the hygiene measures against covid-19, especially during registration, you want to make corona reappear by force through the resumption of schools." – DRC, household visit, 16 October 2020*

*"I'm not sure we'll be able to cover the syllabus." – Cameroon, WhatsApp group with community members, 7 October 2020*

### Questions:

*"What health precautions should be taken in schools?" – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 10 October 2020*

*"Is Covid 19 finished so we can talk about opening schools?" – DRC, household visit, 7 October 2020*

### Suggestions or requests:

*"Government to monitor COVID 19 health measures in Schools." – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 16 October 2020*

*"The best way to make children understand that they are not sharing their effects is through teachers." – Cameroon, focus group discussion with community members, 14 October 2020*

## 4. Mistrust in the disease

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

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

*"Covid19 was made by whites in a lab." – Malawi, household visit, 6 October 2020*

*"Covid is a disease invented by whites to kill the black race." – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 14 October 2020*

*"Corona is a government-created disease." – DRC, household visit, 12 October 2020*

***“This is nonsense, a big joke. They do everything to further ruin the oppressed, to deprive them of their income-generating activities.”*** – Gabon, WhatsApp group with community members, 15 October 2020

***“The covid is a trade policy.”*** – Cameroon, face to face to RC volunteer, 14 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, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Sierra Leone

***“Thanks for the show, we're learning a lot about COVID-19.”*** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 16 October 2020

***“We encourage the Red Cross team for the educational talk on fighting COVID-19.”*** – DRC, face to face to RC volunteer, 12 October 2020

***“Congratulations to the members of the government and the president of the republic for this effective management of the crisis.”*** – Gabon, social media, 11 October 2020

***“I thank Malawi Red Cross for sharing us COVID-19 knowledge through its volunteers.”*** – Malawi, household visit, 6 October 2020

***“Thanks to Red Cross for the hand washing kits.”*** – 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).