

Community feedback considered in this report was collected between the **3 and 9 June 2020** and shared by Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in **12 African countries**.

Community feedback was collected during conversations with community members during social mobilization activities in seven countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (17716 feedback comments), Cameroon (47), Côte d'Ivoire (9) and Guinea (9). Feedback received through the National Society hotline in Sierra Leone (376), as well as feedback collected through social media and WhatsApp groups with both community members and staff and volunteers in Cameroon (76) has also been included. Focal points in seven countries shared the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries: Burundi, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Zimbabwe.

The community feedback heard across most countries were questions and comments about **ways to protect yourself from COVID-19**. Most people talk about **face masks** and many ask about the correct use of a facemask. People also mention that it is less people wearing them, and that the police is forcing them to do so. A frequent question is also about how to respect **physical distancing** within your family, at markets or at schools.

Another common topic was the **treatment** of the disease. Many ask about when and if a treatment will be found, and others mention herbs and other remedies, as well as alcohol as ways to treat COVID-19. People also asked

about where patients should go or are taken care of, and mention that some people are scared of going to the hospital out of fear of being tested or infected with the disease.

**Questions about testing** came up more often, with people asking where to get tested or what the procedure for testing are.

There is still a **lack of understanding of who is or is not affected** by the disease, with many stating that it is the disease of the rich, white or influential people and does not affect poor people. Some people think that it can't kill Africans.

Many comments related to **response activities**, with many questions about the lockdown, as well as when places such as schools and places of worship will be opened again. There is an upwards trend of people asking about precautions taken at schools and share concerns about sending their children back. People were also providing many suggestions on how to improve the response and ask for the distribution of hand washing equipment, personal protective equipment (mainly face masks), livelihood support and community health promotion.

**There are still comments indicating mistrust in people or organizations** in relation to the outbreak, although they are less prominent across countries during this period of time. Most commonly it is mentioned that the outbreak is used to **make money, for political purposes or for intentionally harming people**. This was often mentioned together with the belief that the disease does not exist in the respective region or country.

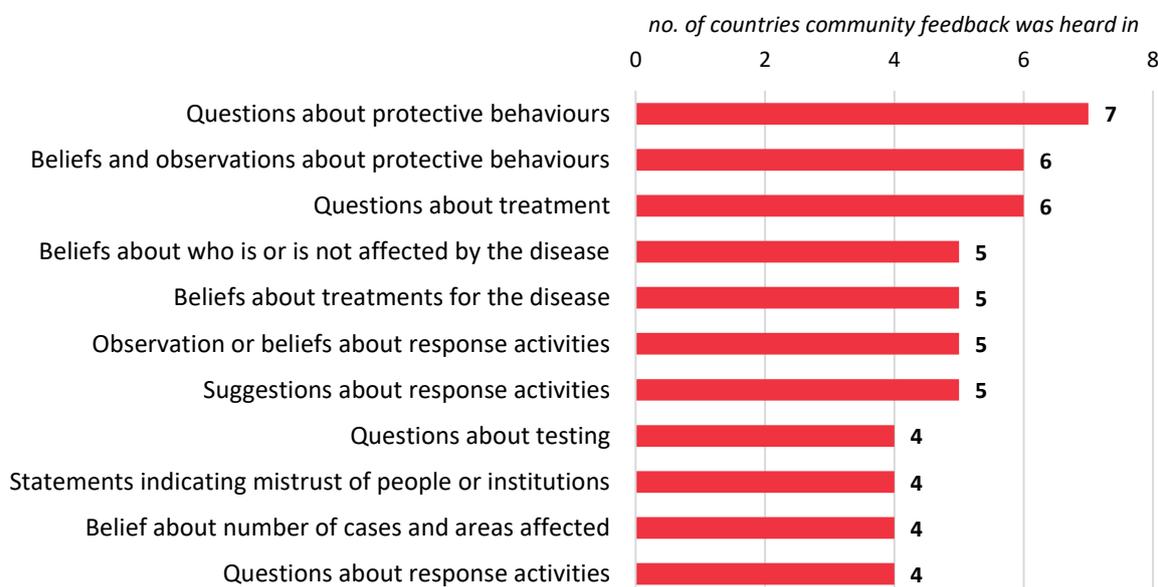
## TO ADDRESS THIS FEEDBACK, WE NEED TO:

- Actively discuss COVID-19 prevention and who can catch the virus during all social mobilization activities. Explain how COVID-19 spreads, so people understand why prevention measures work. Also warn people about the measures that won't work.
- Provide practical guidance on how to address challenges to adopt protective behaviours, such as how to use a limited amount of water when washing your hands, as well as how to make your own face mask and use it in a safe way.

- Share the Ask Dr Ben videos, especially the ones on [safe mask use](#) and addressing the belief [Africans are immune](#). Consider dubbing these into local languages or remaking with National Society health staff and sharing widely with volunteers and communities through social media and WhatsApp.
- Provide clear information on health care services, including testing as well as where patients are treated. Clarify the procedures are in place to protect people from contamination at hospitals.
- If herbal cures are popular in your country, address this with communities by explaining that so far no cure has been proven to work, so until we have proof, people should continue to follow measures like physical distancing and hand washing as we know these definitely work.
- Make sure you have the correct and up-to-date information on lockdown measures and the re-opening of schools, restaurants, places of worship and other places. Provide clear information on which precautions will and should be taken to keep everyone safe once measures are eased or lifted.
- Organise some Focus Group Discussions (if possible) or key informant interviews (by phone if necessary) to find out why people believe COVID-19 is being deliberately spread to harm people and why they believe it does not affect Africans. Until we fully understand where these beliefs come from, it is hard to challenge them and the risk is if mistrust of the response continues it could undermine National Society efforts to stop the outbreak. Also, if people believe they are immune to COVID-19 they are unlikely to follow prevention measures and so infection and death rates will increase.
- Work with local and national media and ask them to help address gaps in knowledge and misinformation through their reporting, including reporting stories about people who have recovered from the disease so people realize the virus is real. If your National Society is broadcasting radio or TV shows consider having a show where people who have had COVID-19 can call in to tell their story.

## MOST COMMON FEEDBACK TOPICS ACROSS COUNTRIES

*This chart includes topics heard in 4 countries or more*



## MOST COMMON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ACROSS COUNTRIES

### 1. Rumours and questions on protective behaviours, especially face masks

Heard in: Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan

#### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**"We are not breathing well with face mask."** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 5 June 2020

**"People rarely wear masks."** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"We wear masks because we're afraid of the police, not coronavirus."** – DRC, household visit, 8 June 2020

**"Taxi/bus drivers do not respect the protective measures."** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"People are forcing other to wash their hands."** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 5 June 2020

**"Corona stops us meeting friends it's really hard we can't stop ourselves so sorry!"** – Côte d'Ivoire, focus group discussion, 6 June 2020

#### Questions:

**"Why are politicians not complying to social distancing?"** – Malawi, National Society report, 8 June 2020

**"For how long can you wear the same mask?"** – Burundi, National Society hotline, 5 June 2020

**"People don't apply the measures for preventing coronavirus anymore. Why are motorcyclists starting to take 3 people on their bikes as if the pandemic no longer exists?"** – DRC, household visit, 3 June 2020

**"How to stop the spread of COVID\_19 without proper water in some villages?"** – Rwanda, National Society report, 5 June 2020

**"How should we deal with children with regard to COVID-19? And how can we make them understand that COVID-19 exists?"** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 3 June 2020

### 2. Comments and questions about treatment

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Guinea, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Sudan

#### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**"The WHO is politicising this pandemic, which is why it is delaying finding a cure."** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"The only medicine that can protect us against COVID-19 is still CHLOROQUINE."** DRC, household visit, 8 June 2020

**"Many people say that hot water, lemon juice, honey, ginger and traditional plants are effective remedies for COVID-19."** – Guinea, key informant interview, 4 June 2020

**"Traditional Herbs can cure corona, just like any other flu."** – Namibia, National Society report, 5 June 2020

**"People belief that Sawa-Sawa (Herbal) drink can cure Covid-19, men and women in Juba."** – South Sudan, National Society report, 6 June 2020

**"Taking alcoholic drink can cure COVID\_19."** – Rwanda, National Society report, 5 June 2020

## Questions:

**"Is medicine from Madagascar true for COVID-19?"** – Malawi, National Society report, 8 June 2020

**"Does a treatment for COVID-19 already exist?"** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"How can people be cured of corona?"** – Côte d'Ivoire, face to face to RC volunteer, 4 June 2020

**"Alcoholic drinks can't get rid of coronavirus?"** – DRC, household visit, 8 June 2020

## 3. Confusion around who is or is not affected by COVID-19

Heard in: DRC, Guinea, Mozambique, South Sudan, Zimbabwe

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**"The disease doesn't kill Africans."** – Guinea, key informant interview, 3 June 2020

**"Covid-19 is only for specific tribes in South Sudan."** – South Sudan, National Society report, 6 June 2020

**"Coronavirus is a disease of rich people and white people."** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"Coronavirus is a disease that kills bosses."** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

### Questions:

**"Why does the COVID-19 virus often affect old people?"** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"Why aren't poor people victims of coronavirus?"** – DRC, household visit, 8 June 2020

## 4. Statements on response activities

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

**"We are glad school is starting again."** – Cameroon, social media, 6 June 2020

**"Classes that do not have exams have not resumed. The psychosis caused by COVID-19 is making parents keep their children at home."** – Côte d'Ivoire, face to face to RC volunteer, 3 June 2020

**"You don't close the markets because that is where your income comes from."** – DRC, household visit, 8 June 2020

**"We know that Corona doesn't have any money, which is why we are not being given washbasins or soap to protect ourselves from it."** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

### Questions:

**"Has government lift ban on churches and mosque?"** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 3 June

**"What day will schools and churches open?"** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

**"Why is no one giving a set date for the end of lockdown?"** – DRC, household visit, 8 June 2020

**"Why do you let convoys of suspected foreign cases cross the borders of North Kivu?"** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

***“When is the Government going to give us food?”*** – Namibia, National Society report, 24 May 2020

***“Can you contact the catholic establishments and ask them to really respect these protective measures?”*** – Cameroon, National Society radio show, 5 June 2020

## Suggestions:

***“Give masks and disinfectant to the population of KARISIMBI.”*** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

***“Taxis should be stopped if there are more than two people on board.”*** – DRC, household visit, 3 June 2020

***“Please distribute masks and ThermoFlashes to all the motorcyclists and bus drivers.”*** – DRC, household visit, 3 June 2020

***“Because of this coronavirus disease, I can’t even meet people. My little business is closed so I’m asking the government to come and help us.”*** – Côte d’Ivoire, face to face to RC volunteer, 3 June 2020

***“Government to lockdown Freetown because Freetown has recorded the highest number of Covid 19.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 4 June 2020

## 5. Statements and questions indicating mistrust and denial of the pandemic

Heard in: Cameroon, DRC, Guinea, Sierra Leone

### Rumours, observations and beliefs:

***“Nurses are distributing tents [mosquito nets] with Covid-19 virus to kill us all in Sierra Leone.”*** – Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 5 June 2020

***“The Guinean government is on it, it has even declared an end to the disease within 60 days.”*** – Guinea, National Society report, 3 June 2020

***“White people create viruses to keep decreasing the number of people on planet earth.”*** – DRC, household visit, 6 June 2020

***“No corona in DRC, the government is looking for one to get money.”*** – DRC, household visit, 5 June 2020

### Questions:

***“Is it true that in Tanzania they tested the blood of a goat and it came back positive?”*** – DRC, face to face to social mobilizer, 4 June 2020

***“Why do white people always want to create viruses to eliminate the African population?”*** – DRC, household visit, 3 June 2020

## VIOLENT STATEMENTS

The statements listed below include all comments classified as violent statements across countries in the IFRC Africa region.

### Mention of police brutality

Heard in: Sierra Leone

***"One police officer beat my brother very seriously for curfew and he is presently sick."*** –  
Tehun, Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 4 June 2020

### Youth threatening community volunteers

Heard in: Sierra Leone

***"Some youths threatened community volunteers, who were conducting household visits and sharing messages on hand washing."*** – Nyadahun, Sierra Leone, National Society hotline, 4 June 2020

## APPRECIATION - ENCOURAGEMENT

The statements of thanks and encouragement listed below represent the most frequently heard comments across countries in the IFRC Africa region.

### Statement of thanks and encouragement

Heard in: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Sierra Leone

***"It is not easy to bring the message to every household, so don't tire yourself out."*** – DRC,  
household visit, 3 June 2020

***"Thank you to the Red Cross for visiting us so at least we know someone is thinking of us."*** –  
Côte d'Ivoire, focus group discussion, 4 June 2020

***"Thanks to Red Cross for their restless effort to stop the spread of COVID-19."*** – Sierra Leone,  
National Society hotline, 3 June 2020

***"Thank you for the radio programmes you have made to raise awareness of the disease."*** –  
Cameroon, social media, 6 May 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IFRC RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS ON COVID-19 IN AFRICA, PLEASE CONTACT SHARON READER AT [SHARON.READER@IFRC.ORG](mailto:SHARON.READER@IFRC.ORG).