

Community feedback considered in this report was collected through information received from Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal points in 24 African countries, as well as through primary data collection in DRC and Nigeria.

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Society CEA focal points were asked to share the main rumours, observation, beliefs, questions or suggestions they are hearing in their countries and to grade them according to their frequency. Focal points from the following countries provided information: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé e Príncipe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo and Uganda.

Community feedback was collected during social mobilization activities in North Kivu/DRC and Lagos/Nigeria. Community comments were recorded during household visits and mass sensitization activities in North Kivu and social mobilization conducted in public places in Lagos. Information was not gathered through structured surveys, but volunteers documented comments relating to coronavirus they heard during their interactions with community members. A total of 142 community comments were recorded in Nigeria, a total of 483 in DRC.

Information included in this report was collected between 24 January and 21 March.

These highlights are not representative for the countries mentioned in the update but indicate broad trends in community perceptions of COVID-19.

RUMOURS – OBSERVATIONS – BELIEFS

Coronavirus does not affect black people

Heard in: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Togo, Uganda

“Black people can't die of coronavirus because it is a disease of white people” – DRC, 14 March 2020

“Black people are immune to COVID-19.” – Malawi, 16 March 2020

“Coronavirus is a disease that attacks only white people.” – Côte d'Ivoire, 16 March 2020

Misinformation on coronavirus prevention and treatment

Heard in: Benin, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda

“Drinking local alcohol kills coronavirus” – Benin, 16 March 2020

“Taking hot water and lemon can cure coronavirus” – Côte d'Ivoire, 18 March 2020

“Coronavirus can be cured by a bowl of freshly boiled garlic water. Just take eight (8) chopped garlic cloves, add seven (7) cups of water and bring to the boil. Eat and drink the boiled garlic water” – Mozambique, 16 March 2020

Misinformation on coronavirus prevention and treatment

“Excessive consumption of garlic prevents coronavirus” – Togo, 16 March 2020

“Washing yourself in salt water before sun rise” – Côte d’Ivoire, 21 March 2020

“Hot water with salt prevents coronavirus from getting into the body through the throat” – Benin, 17 March 2020

Coronavirus is a man-made disease

Heard in: Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda

“China has created this virus to make money.” - DRC, 27 January 2020

“Coronavirus was manufactured by US Government to destabilize the Chinese economy” – Kenya, 16 March 2020

“Coronavirus is a whiteman-made disease.” – Côte d’Ivoire, 18 March 2020

“Corona virus is a result of weapon industry manufactured as biological weapon.” – Burundi, 16 March 2020

“People believe that (...) it was invented through scientific means to punish and reduce the population of china because of over crowdedness.” – Liberia, 16 March 2020

Coronavirus will not spread in hot countries

Heard in: Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Ghana, Niger, Sudan

“The virus cannot withstand the Sahel climate” – Burkina Faso, 16 March 2020

“COVID-19 will not spread in DRC, especially not in our province (Sud-Ubangi) because of the heat.” - DRC, 14 March 2020

“Only people in cold areas are susceptible to the disease” – Ghana, 16 March 2020

“I heard the weather in Nigeria will kill the virus.” - Nigeria, 10 March 2020

Suspicion of Chinese people

Heard in: Botswana, DRC, Seychelles

“The general public has been cautious of Chinese citizens” – Botswana, 16 March 2020

“China has created this virus to make money” - DRC, 27 January 2020

“The Chinese who come here to Mambasa to work at the mining quarries will bring us here this new epidemic that has just been neutralized at home.” - DRC, 31 January 2020

“People don’t collect parcels from China” – Seychelles, 16 March 2020

QUESTIONS

Response process

Heard in: DRC, Nigeria

“Have health care providers already taken the necessary measures against the CHINA virus?” – DRC, 27 January 2020

“What precautions have you taken to prevent the disease that woke up in China from attacking us?” – DRC, 28 January 2020

“Will you also talk to the meat sellers?” – Nigeria, 10 March 2020

“Does this sensitization run every day?” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

“Is it possible to defeat Corona like Ebola?” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

“Why not give sanitizer to general public?” – Nigeria, 10 March 2020

Coronavirus facts and features

Heard in: DRC, Nigeria

“What is the difference between Corona and Ebola?” - DRC, 29 January 2020

“What is the origin of the coronavirus?” - DRC, 12 February 2020

“Is COVID-19 real?” – Nigeria, 10 March 2020

“Who brought the disease to Nigeria?” – Nigeria, 10 March 2020

“Is this virus deadly?” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

“Can COVID-19 affect elderly people?” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

Protective behavior

Heard in: DRC, Nigeria

“What are the prevention measures for the coronavirus?” – DRC, 10 February 2020

“Can people affected by Ebola be targeted by corona or immunized, is there any a link or not, is the ways to protect the same?” – DRC, 10 March 2020

“I sell to the public, how do I prevent being infected?” – Nigeria, 10 March 2020

“I can't afford hand sanitizer, what else can I use to disinfect my hands after touching dirt?” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

SUGGESTIONS

Provide community health promotion

Heard in: DRC, Nigeria

“Can you come again tomorrow, so my friends can listen?” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

“Teach me how to use the sanitizer.” – Nigeria, 11 March 2020

“We also want coronavirus awareness before it gets here.” – DRC, 28 February 2020

“Red Cross volunteers to continue with awareness raising to fight Ebola and the new epidemic attacking China” – DRC, 31 January 2020

NEXT STEPS

How should we respond to community feedback? Update your messages and activities to;

- address rumours and misinformation by providing the correct information,
- answer questions communities have about COVID-19, and
- use community suggestions to improve the response where possible.

To support this process, the IFRC CEA team will;

- support more National Societies to collect, use and act on community feedback,
- produce weekly fact sheets addressing the most commonly asked questions, rumours and fears, collected that week from communities across Africa,
- produce weekly videos with a health expert answering most relevant questions from community members and providing the needed facts, the videos will be shared through IFRC Africa’s Twitter platform in French and English.