

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUB-WORKING GROUP – EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

COVID-19 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK TRENDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

09 – 20 May 2020

This report documents the main trends in community feedback reported by agencies responding to COVID-19 across East and Southern Africa. It was prepared by the community feedback sub-working group, which is part of the COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Interagency Working Group. This report is produced every two weeks.

Six partners shared their trends and priorities for this report: African Voices Foundation, BBC Media Action, CORE Group Polio Project Ethiopia, Hagaha Coronavirus, IFRC, Internews, UNICEF

1. Questions on how to protect yourself from COVID-19

- *“I, as a resident of remote and rural areas would want to know how we can fight this disease while our communities are far away from health facilities and practitioners” – Somalia*

Recommendations to address this feedback:

For partners working on RCCE:

1. Clearer messaging and risk communication activities that clarify the difference between a cure/treatment and a remedy - and that while some herbal remedies might help you feel better and ease the symptoms of COVID-19 like a sore throat they will not cure the disease.
2. Work with the case management TWG to get more information on the current situation regarding the trials of different treatments and what stage these are at.
3. Brief Governments on these issues and ask them to help address them through their public communication.
4. Work with local and national media to encourage them to actively address the changing rumours and information gaps in their reporting.
5. Work with communities to find ways ways to protect themselves that are adapted to their local realities / cultural practices. Share examples of how approaches are localised.

For partners working on case management:

1. Integrate traditional healers into the COVID-19 response and provide them with correct/accurate information and referral systems.
 2. Provide clear information on the current situation regarding the trials of different treatments and what stage these are at to make sure the correct information is provided during social mobilisation activities.
 3. Brief Governments and community leaders on these issues and ask them to help address them through their public communication and community networks. In particular, MoH should provide clearer information on treatment and isolation processes.
 4. Make sure frontline workers receive clear information on IPC and are well equipped.
-

2. Mistrust in the humanitarian response and denial of the outbreak

- *“Since we have not seen pictures or video of people being treated or dead of Corona, we will not accept that Corona exist. This is a Government strategy to get funds” – Madagascar*

Recommendations to address this feedback:

For all partners:

1. Provide clear and transparent information on response processes and how funding is used.
2. Work with community representatives to develop community-led solutions.
3. Demonstrate how community feedback is listened to, discussed and acted upon.

For partners working on RCCE:

1. Share more stories from normal people who recovered from COVID-19 so that people hear directly from those that experienced the virus first-hand and can see that it is real and can affect anyone.
 2. Support Governments to directly address beliefs that the virus is a tool for political gain or funding and build trust by giving more detailed information on the impact of the virus in their country and how funding is being used to tackle it.
 3. Work with the case management TWG to develop key messages that explain the case fatality rate in Africa and what this looks like in reality in a simple and clear way.
-

3. Fear and mistrust of health-care workers and others affiliated with the response

- *"The families of the infected we had experiences where they became combative towards healthcare staffs, worried that they never see their loved ones. They report how their neighbors have been avoiding them" – Somalia*

Recommendations to address this feedback:**For partners working on treatment and case management:**

1. Alert the MHPSS working group on stress and fear of those in isolation/hospital and discuss how people can get PSS support
2. Understand the challenges faced by people in adhering to isolation and quarantine and advocate for services to help mitigate these challenges e.g. livelihoods support, safe process for family visits/calls for those in hospital

For partners working on RCCE:

1. Better understand where animosity towards healthcare workers and others working on the response comes from and discuss with communities on how to address this.
 2. Explain more clearly why isolation and quarantine are important and how they can help stop the spread of infection at the community level.
 3. Explore options of organized visits of isolation or treatment centres for people to better understand the process. Videos could be produced to show these places and explain the processes.
 4. Engage special interest groups (especially women, community leaders and community health workers) for targeted messaging on the feedback topic.
-

4. Concerns and questions about impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods, education and the return to the workplace and everyday life

- *"Our business depends on the neighbouring country of Kenya. What's the situation now the border is closed?" - Tanzania*
- *"Coronavirus has affected our education because education has become online and I cannot afford th[e] means [for it]." - Kenya*

Recommendations to address this feedback:**For partners working on case management and continuity of services:**

1. Remote learning is clearly not an option for many due to lack of access to internet. Collective thought is needed on provision of alternatives i.e. classes over radio.
2. Find a way to offer clarity on messaging from Governments about the situation at the border and what it means for local businesses.
3. Understand challenges people are facing and advocate for people's broader needs to be met - livelihoods, basic needs etc. with Governments and agencies

For partners working on RCCE:

1. Clear and consistent messages on the lifting of lockdown, the reasons of changes of public health measures and precautions taken at public places in case places such as workplaces and schools are reopened.
2. Provide more information on livelihoods support available to people – can the available support, and how to access it, be mapped at country level and then shared widely with communities?

For more information on the work of the RCCE community feedback sub-working group, please contact Eva Erlach at eva.erlach@ifrc.org.

For information on how these topics are addressed by the members of the working group, please visit our [online tracking table](#).