

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUB-WORKING GROUP – EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

COVID-19 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK TRENDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18 June – 1 July 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 has been produced every two weeks, next reports will be produced on a monthly basis.

Four partners shared feedback trends for this report: Africa's Voices Foundation, CARE, IFRC Africa, Internews

1. Beliefs that COVID-19 is not a serious issue or does not affect certain groups

- *"COVID-19 disease is nothing more than a severe flu" – Somalia*
- *"COVID-19 is a pandemic for white and rich men of urban area" – Lesotho*

2. Lack of trust in government and COVID-19 response

- *"Who guarantees that these cases are really true? In other countries, at least patients with the virus appear on television. Here in Mozambique nothing!" – Mozambique*

Recommendations to address this feedback

For partners working on RCCE:

New recommendations

1. Stigma need to be addressed first, for people to be willing to come forward and share their stories of having COVID-19 publicly. Guidance on how to address and avoid stigma can be accessed [here](#).
 - a. Try to use medical staff to share stories about having COVID-19 as they may be less likely to be embarrassed or worried about stigma.
 - b. Try to get religious leaders and young people to share their stories
2. Find and raise voices that speak of COVID-19 as affecting people of all religions to mitigate stigma and hostility towards outsiders/non-believers.
3. To build trust in the response, need to advocate for an enabling environment (provision of buckets, water, soap for hand washing etc.) and for people's wider needs to be met (livelihoods etc.)
4. Support and use the [inter-agency guidance note on community-led solutions](#) in our work.

Existing recommendations

1. 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.
2. 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. Organise a media webinar on this topic.
3. Develop and widely clear communication and messages explaining what happens if you catch COVID-19 and that you can recover and no longer be infectious to address people's fears about being stigmatized if they catch the virus.

3. Rumours and questions about treatment

- *"There will be medication for Covid-19 treatment by September in Africa." – South Sudan*
- *"COVID-19 is a respiratory disease associated with cough and can be treated by cough linctus." – South Sudan*

Recommendations to address this feedback

For partners working on RCCE:

New recommendations

1. Organise meetings with the RCCE coordination groups at country level to better discuss how to collaborate and how recommendations from this group can be implemented.
2. Develop a regional list of health and trusted experts who are willing to talk on issues around COVID-19 and support countries to do the same at their level.

Existing recommendations

1. 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. Key messages and media webinar. This is important because it could lead people to let their guard down.
2. Work with medical and trusted experts to address information on cures and enable two-way communication on platforms such as radio or social media. Addressing recent rumours or beliefs about self-medications. AVF was doing this in Kenya and it was successful – but context dependent (Somalia better to use religious leaders).
1. Give constructive advice on treatment - do not stop at "there is no cure", but provide practical advice on how to alleviate symptoms, where to seek help and how to care for sick people in your household in a safe way.
2. Testimonials of people who have had COVID-19 and recovered could support better understanding of treatment process.

4. School closure and home-schooling challenges, especially for displaced people

- *"Learning from home is a great benefit but some people cannot afford and they do not even get a radio to listen to?" – Kenya*
- *"Covid-19 has made our children in the refugee camp lose hope in school. I have witnessed many girls become pregnant because they have high poverty levels and inability to access learning materials." - Kenya*

Recommendations to address this feedback

For partners supporting displaced people

New recommendations

1. Share this feedback with coordination groups and partners on the country level to discuss on how to address this issue. Suggested recommendations include:
 - a) Support home schooling by providing resources required at the household level, i.e. computers, internet access, smartphones, books and electricity.
 - b) Leverage partnerships with local organisations in the camps and utilise existing facilities and resources including community libraries, computer labs, and community centres, ensuring adherence to physical distancing measures.

2. Refer this feedback to UNHCR and gender equality WG. Suggested recommendations include:
 - a) Urgently address increased reports of GBV and child abuse. Take advantage of available essential services, such as the UNHCR hotline.
 - b) Raise awareness on the rise in domestic violence and on how to ensure safety for girls and boys at home. Continue to support media to fulfil its unique role in facilitating learning from home, not only through the provision of resources and learning materials but also through necessary emotional support and encouragement for parents.

For partners working on RCCE:

New recommendations

1. Map out existing technical working groups to be able to share relevant feedback with the right decision-makers and fora.

Existing recommendations

1. Information is heavily focused on prevention and treatment of COVID-19, especially for refugees. There is need to include communication on the impact of COVID-19 on access to services and changes in delivery of these services (food and rental support, ambulance services to access medical services, information on how to handle security related incidences during lockdown, education and scholarship opportunities)

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 and previously highlighted topics are addressed, please visit our [online tracking table](#).