

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUB-WORKING GROUP – EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

COVID-19 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK TRENDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

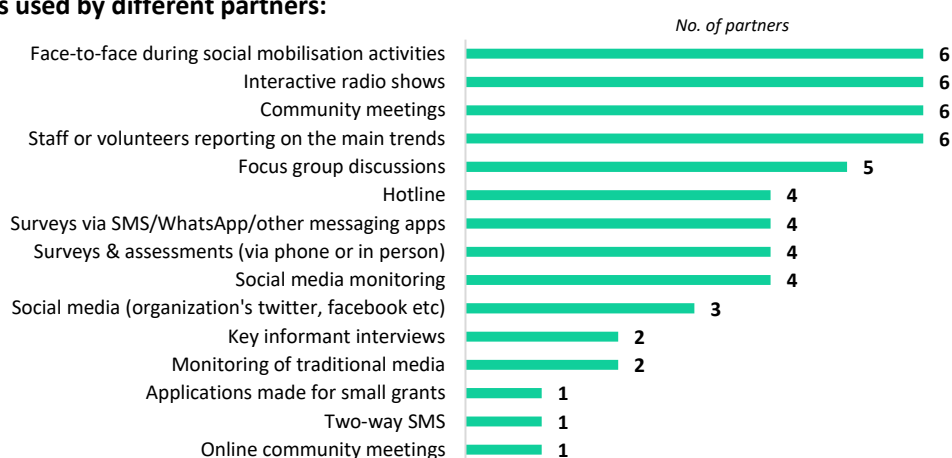
July 2020

This report documents the main trends in community feedback reported by agencies responding to COVID-19 across East and Southern Africa for the month of July. 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.

12 partners have shared their priorities (*African Council of Religious Leaders, Africa's Voices Foundation, CARE, CORE Group Polio/GHSA Project, IFRC, Internews, Novetta/Africa CDC, Oxfam, Save the Children, Shujaaz Inc., UNICEF, WHO*).

Feedback trends have been heard in **16 countries** in the East and Southern Africa region (*Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Seychelles, Eswatini, Lesotho*).

Feedback channels used by different partners:



Low and decreasing risk perception (heard in 10 countries by 6 partners)

To address the perception that the **disease only affects whites, rich or those living in big cities**:

- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Find ways to share the stories of people who have recovered from COVID-19 through the media or at community level, to show the disease is real and that anyone can be affected. Make sure to assess the risks beforehand to avoid putting people recovered at risk due to stigma and its important they are portrayed positively. For support please contact [Internews](#), resources can be accessed [here](#).
- **RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Produce a video with selfie video clips of normal people all over Africa who have had COVID speaking in their own languages.

To address the perception that **children can resist COVID-19**:

- **RCCE AND CASE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Develop a factsheet which explains children are also at risk of getting COVID-19 and that they can be carriers of the disease, even if the symptoms can be milder (depending on existing comorbidities).

To address the perception that the **outbreak has ended, isn't a serious issue or does not exist**:

- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Discuss the new interagency factsheet addressing mistrust and denial of COVID-19 with all staff and volunteers, which can be accessed [here](#). Make sure social mobilizers know how to clarify that the lifting of lockdown measures does not mean that the outbreak has ended, this IFRC ["Ask Dr Ben" factsheet](#) can be used as guidance.

- **RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Organise a webinar for journalists to discuss people's perception that the lifting of restrictions such as lockdowns means that the outbreak has ended, and how to cover this topic.

Non-compliance and challenges with preventive measures

(heard in 7 countries by 5 partners)

To address **challenges to practice physical distancing and self-isolation:**

- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Discuss cross-sectoral solutions to facilitate physical distancing and self-isolation. [This guidance note](#) can be used as guidance for supporting community-led solutions in complex settings.
- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Make sure social mobilizers know how to answer questions and provide advice on physical distancing, resources on this topic can be accessed [here](#).
- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Create a list of tips and practical solutions that can be shared by community mobilizers on how to arrange space to allow for self-isolation and physical distancing (and why it is important).

To leverage **women's higher adherence to public health measures:**

- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Discuss how to use women as agents of change in community and household behaviour.

Rumours and concerns about face masks *(heard in 8 countries by 5 partners)*

To address **concerns about negative side effects** and respond to **questions about the correct use:**

- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Plan a campaign on face masks tailored to the country, working with influencers such as celebrities, religious leaders and other influencers to advocate for the use of face masks. This campaign should also target important figures such as politicians and police to highlight their responsibility as role models. Available content on face masks can be accessed [here](#).
- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Develop a factsheet on face masks to share accurate and clear information on the effectiveness of masks (as part of other preventive measures), address concerns about negative side effects and provide practical tips on the correct use and production of face masks.

Rumours and questions about treatment for COVID-19

(heard in 7 countries by 4 partners)

To address rumours and questions about the **use of traditional medicine, hydroxychloroquine or alcohol:**

- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Collaborate with traditional healers - train them on when to refer people and when herbal remedies can help.
- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Collaborate with pharmaceutical companies in dispelling misinformation regarding hydroxychloroquine.
- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Use and discuss the new interagency treatments factsheet with all staff and volunteers. It explains the situation with current COVID-19 treatments, the process of testing new medicines (including hydroxychloroquine), the difference between treatments, vaccines and cures and where we are in the search for a vaccine. The factsheet also provides key messages for communities on COVID-19 treatments.
- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVEL:** 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.

Need for psycho-social support to handle stress and loneliness

(heard in 6 countries by 4 partners)

To address **MHPSS needs of children and youth**:

- **MHPSS AND RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Discuss the current level of MHPSS support for children, and how to include child-focused questions in RCCE assessments/surveillance tools.
- **ACTIONS ACROSS PILLARS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Consider how to incorporate more activities for young people.
- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Share and discuss the new guidance note on practical tips on PSS for social mobilizers.

To address communities' **need for spiritual support**:

- **RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Work with ACRL to develop guides on how religious services can be delivered in alternative ways and discuss how RCCE can support these effort.
- **RCCE ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Discuss how to ensure better inclusion of religious leaders in social mobilisation activities.

Protection issues of children *(heard in 6 countries by 3 partners)*

To address **increased protection risks of children and youth**:

- **RCCE ACTIONS ON REGIONAL LEVEL:** Refer this feedback to UNHCR and gender equality WG. To address wish for reopening of schools.
- **ACTIONS ON COUNTRY LEVEL:** Advocate for the safe reopening of schools based on evidence, and engage parents, caregivers and learners on the same. Where reopening is not possible, discuss solutions for challenges to access education.

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](#).