



**CORONAVIRUS PREPAREDNESS OF  
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY  
SERVICE (AEAS) ACTORS IN AFRICA**

**REPORT**

**April 2020**

**CORONAVIRUS TASK FORCE**

## Abbreviations

AEAS	Agricultural Extension and Advisory Service
AFAAS	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
CF	Country Fora

## INTRODUCTION

At the time this report is written, 4th of April 2020, Covid-19 has officially infected more than one million persons on planet Earth and killed more than 60 thousands individuals<sup>1</sup>. The pandemic is unstoppable and has spread through the globe with Africa being the last lucky continent to be affected. But have Africans learned something in the meantime?

While some countries are taking rapid and aggressive measures to try to control the pandemic, others are procrastinating and are expecting miracles. Africa has got time to observe the early stages of chaos created by the lack of reactivity in some countries and have got time to learn the mechanisms deployed by others who seem to have more control on their public health.

The question is: Is Africa ready? More precisely, are African Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services actors ready to face this pandemic?

With the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Africa, AFAAS initiated a quick and simplified survey to assess the readiness of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) actors in Africa vis-à-vis of the Coronavirus threat. The survey was conducted to have an overview of the situation and the AEAS actors who were solicited are unknown (anonymous survey) but reached through AFAAS Dgroups. These people are policy makers, public servants, researchers, extension managers, rural development agents, field extension workers, farmers' representatives and agro-business people from private sector.

From the 30th of March to the 3rd of April, three surveys were conducted at AFAAS; two through the networks' Dgroups using Google Forms, one in French and another in English, and the last survey was done live with Zoom Poll during AFAAS e-meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2020.

Among the 1400 registered members in the Dgroups, 60 responses were received (44 for the English survey and 16 for the French version) and 20 out of 39 meeting participants responded to the online poll during AFAAS online meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April.

Below are the results of the survey.

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Reviewers: Prof. Margaret Mangheni  
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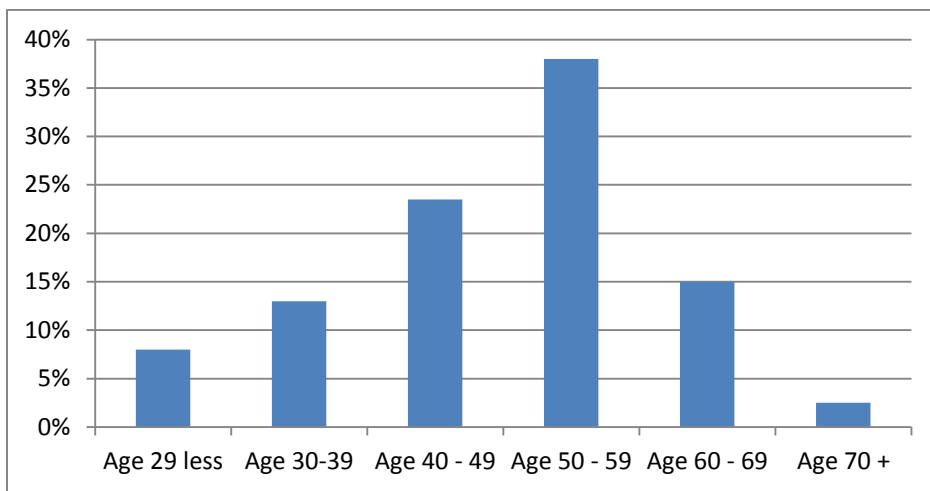
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus>

## About the participants

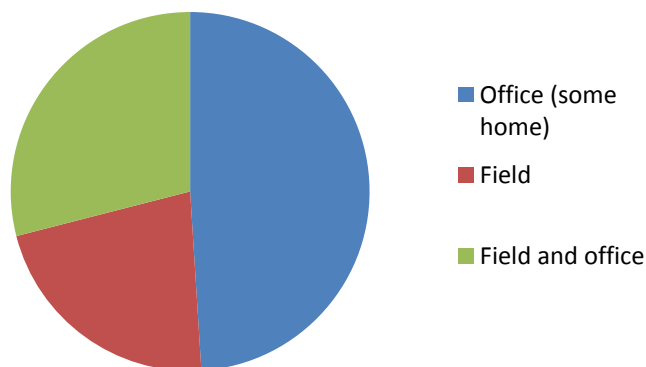
The survey was anonymous but some background and demographic information was collected.

Age of respondents: the graph below shows that the number of seniors is higher than adults and young adults.

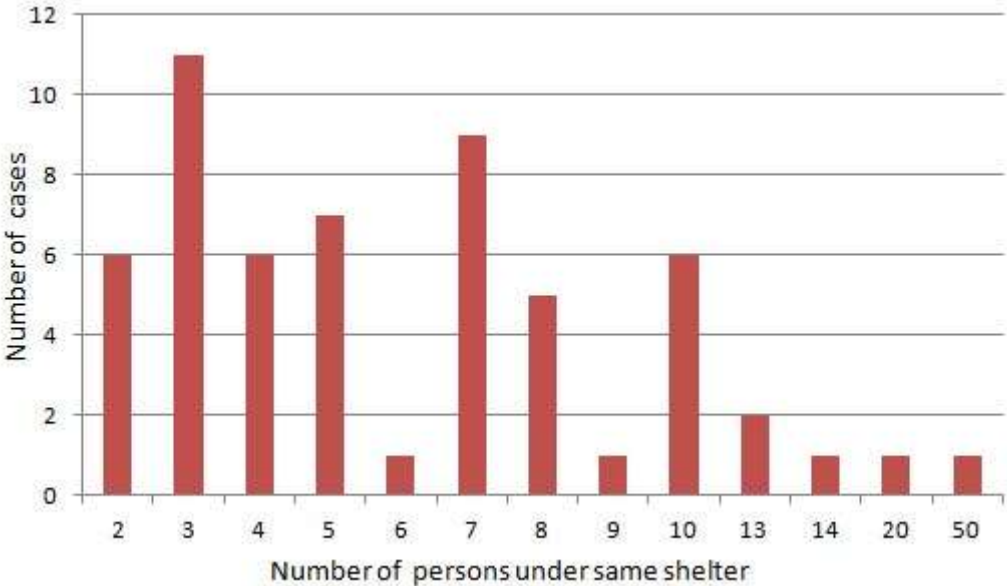
Respondents who clicked on the survey (not confirmed that they replied) are from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Guinea, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe



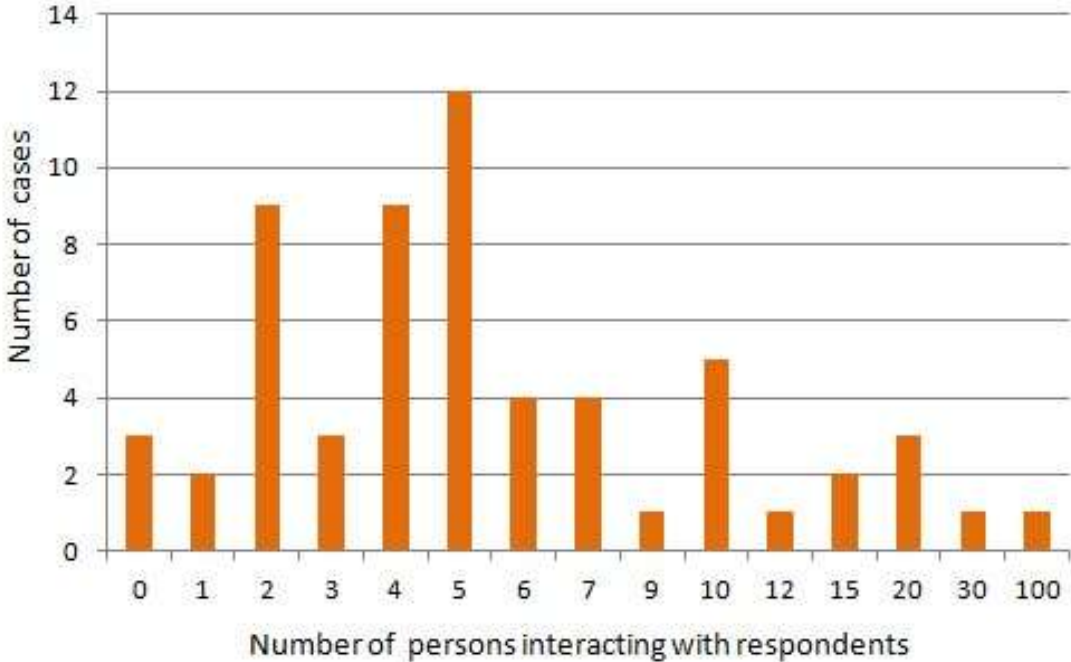
Usual workplace (before COVID-19): the graph below shows that almost half of the respondents work most of the time in office.



The number of people living under a same roof runs from 2 to 50, with an average of 9 per household.



The number of people interacting with respondents daily runs from 1 to 100, with an average of 8 per individual per day. It is good to note that the transmission rate of Coronavirus is between 1.4 and 4 in most countries even during lockdown time.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus>

The contextual and demographic information revealed in these results confirm that the respondents to this survey are generally people exposed to high risks:

- Because of their age (majority more than 50)
- And because of their professional and social interactions (more because of that) and the size of household

## About the readiness and preparedness

A quick poll during AFAAS e-meeting confirmed that more than 55% of AFAAS members consider that AEAS actors are not ready to respond to the Coronavirus disease while 20% are not sure.

### 1. How do you rate African AEAS actors with regards to fighting Coronavirus?



A set of test questions related to general knowledge of COVID-19, the virus propagation mechanism, the new behaviors and prevention habits to adopt, and the symptom identification confirmed that AEAS actors, or at least respondents to this survey, are **not ready to respond to the disease and to some extent not aware of COVID-19 threat.**

**The average score for the 60 participants is 6.5/14 for the English speaking and 7.1/14 for the French speaking respondents to the questionnaire.**

Note that 8 staff from AFAAS Secretariat did a preliminary test with the same questionnaire before releasing it to the public and the result was equally not reassuring but with a higher score of 8.7/14.

**There is no doubt that AFAAS Network members are not ready to face Coronavirus pandemic.**

## Which areas need to be addressed?

The study conducted within AFAAS Network is quite basic but revealing.

### **People don't know the symptoms resulting from the Coronavirus infection.**

The most urgent area where AEAS actors need to be informed is the symptoms. Only 18 people out of the 60 sample (30%) could respond correctly to the multiple choice question related to symptoms of Coronavirus.

This is a dangerous situation given the fact that the later the patient is treated the higher he is at risk.

### **Information and knowledge are not enough nor precise enough so people don't know the right-effective-preventive habits and behaviors to adopt.**

One evident example is that loud message is heard everywhere about frequent hand washing with soap for a minimum of 20 seconds but still 28% of respondents didn't know that 7 seconds is not enough to clean hands from Coronavirus.

While most respondents are aware of the importance of social distance and some cultural changes, the lack of precise information brings some to overestimate the capacity of the virus to for instance "fly up to 5mn" in the air.

It is important to note that there is one response that Coronavirus doesn't kill at all. Maybe that person was not on planet Earth for a while!

**The survey has revealed the low awareness about mechanisms for spread, prevention, and control of Covid-19, resulting in a huge threat and probably a catastrophic health and social situation in the near future**

## WHAT SHOULD AFAAS DO?

Experts say most responses to Coronavirus are already late at this point and this is why AFAAS will take quick actions to contribute in preventing worse scenario in the AEAS community. Below is a first estimate of activities that AFAAS can undertake.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
Define the context and different profiles of AEAS actors across Africa	Corona Task Force with Country Fora	Week 2 April	Technical description sheet
Prepare messages and recruit communicators	ICTKM unit with Task Force	Week 2 April	Message, story board, mockup ...
Develop communication materials	Communication firm	Week 3 &4 April	Communication material
Run the campaign targeting different segments with the right channels at the right frequency	Mainly Country Fora members with local team	May, June, July	Periodical report, blog posts, social media posts
Follow up and evaluation of the results	AFAAS M&E with Country Fora members	May, June, July	Report with stats and photo evidence