

INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT: QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES OF

BARCARENA (PA), MACAPÁ AND SANTANA (AP)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	3	9. Information Gaps and Needs	22
2. Executive Summary	4	9.1 Vaccination	22
2.1 Key Learnings	5	9.2 Government Benefits	22
2.2 Recommendations	5	9.3 Treatment for COVID-19	22
3 About the Rooted in Trust project in Brazil	7	9.4 Post-COVID-19 Effects	23
3.1 Methodology	7	9.5 The Origin of COVID-19	23
3.2 Limitations	8	9.5 Monkeypox	23
4. Brief Background on the Quilombola Communities	10	10. Main Barriers to Accessing Information	24
5. COVID-19 and the Quilombolas	12	10.1 Access to School Education	24
6. Media in the North of Brazil	14	10.2 Infrastructure and Resources	24
7. Quilombolas in Brazilian Media	15	11. Trust	26
8. Quilombola Community Organization and Dissemination of Information	16	12. Information Sharing	27
8.1 Community Leadership and Associations	16	13. Real-life Impacts and Impacts on Daily Life	28
8.2 TV and Radio	17	13.1 Fear, Misinformation and Mental Health	28
8.3 Internet and Social Media	18	13.2 Quilombola Traditional Medicine and Remedies	29
8.4 NGOs and Government Bodies	19	13.3 Perception of the Pandemic	29
8.5 Community Health Workers	21	14. Conclusion	30
8.6 Sound Car	21	15. References	31
		16. Acknowledgements and Credits	33

1. LISTA DE SIGLAS

AP

Amapá

CEBRAP

Brazilian Center of Analysis and Planning

CHW

Community Health Worker

CONAQ

National Coordination of Black Quilombola Rural Communities

FASE

Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance

FCP

Palmares Cultural Foundation

IBGE

Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

IEA

Information Ecosystem Assessment

IEB

International Institute of Education of Brazil

INCRA

National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform

ITERPA

Pará Land Institute

Malungu

Coordination of the Associations of the Remnant Communities of Quilombos do Pará

PA

Pará

PHCF

Primary Health Care Facility

Terras Amapá

Amapá Land Institute

TQ

Quilombola Territory

UHS

Unified Health System

WHO

World Health Organization



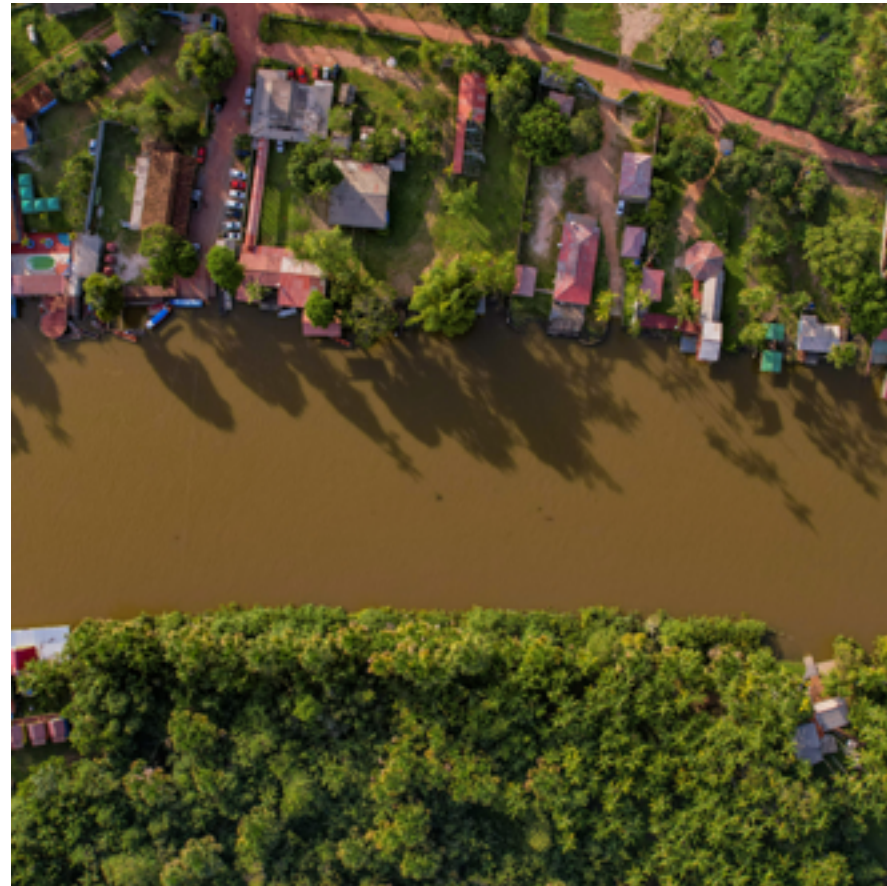
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To analyse information ecosystems in quilombola contexts, we must understand the historical, political and social trajectory that has brought us to a contemporary definition of the concept of quilombo and quilombola in Brazil. This trajectory began with movements of resistance against the enslavement of Black people brought over from the African continent to colonial Brazil, whereby Black populations formed organized settlements in unoccupied – usually remote – land. It has its roots in the slavery system and its lasting consequences, even after it was officially abolished.

Since then, quilombos have existed as territories of resistance. These territories are spaces that not only have a geographical location, in which their people can grow and gather crops and continue their ways of living and being, but they are also spaces for constructing and maintaining their social and cultural identity. It is through these different processes of land occupation and social organization that these people collectively recognize themselves as quilombolas.

Territory, identity and resistance are therefore fundamental to understanding these groups and their impact on shaping Brazilian history to date. As a result, there is no translation for the terms quilombo and quilombola in other languages, even though they bear similarities to other slavery resistance movements in other regions of the world, and which today are also part of the struggle for territorial acknowledgement and rights. For this reason, in this document we will use the terms “Quilombo” and “Quilombolas”.

This brief explanation of the historical, political and social trajectory of the quilombola communities in Brazil helps us to understand the obstacles experienced by these communities throughout the national territory in terms of recognition and access to ethnic, territorial and citizenship rights. A lack of up-to-date information on social issues faced by quilombolas is often observed, making their



process of territorial acknowledgement (titulação – land titling), and therefore, access to rights and public services, long, slow and contentious. Despite having rights provided for by law, communities claim to experience a scenario of marginalization. This scenario worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the underreporting of COVID-19 cases and deaths among quilombola communities, as well as the proper implementation of the vaccination program. In 2022, quilombolas were included for the first time in the national census (IBGE), which should finally provide some basic data for analysis relevant to quilombolas in the future.

The media coverage of quilombolas tends to be limited to cultural aspects, mainly commemorative dates around Black Awareness Day, while ignoring other issues and debates. However, this focus changed with the discovery of the Brazilian Government’s underreporting of COVID-19 cases among

quilombola communities, despite the numerous positive cases and deaths, combined with the political mobilization of these communities, resulting in national headlines that began to draw attention to this underreporting. Despite this lack of quilombola representation in the media, TV and radio are seen as important sources of information, and residents of these communities have reported that television news was useful and reliable during the pandemic. Online social networks are also an important means of sharing information, including information about the pandemic. Although popular, access to information via TV, radio and social media is hampered by problems with electricity supply and unstable internet connection, as well as lack of money to pay for them.

It is essential to understand how quilombolas received, shared and relied on information during the COVID-19 pandemic. By understanding this, within the context of quilombolas’ ongoing struggle for self-determination and territorial acknowledgement on their own terms, the humanitarian sector, journalists and communicators will be better able to reach the quilombola communities and work with them to meet their needs.

With this in mind, the methodological approach used for data building and analysis described in this assessment prioritized the establishment of dialogue with the different quilombola communities in the states of Pará and Amapá. The aim of this is to enable partner institutions and quilombolas themselves to be active subjects in identifying their information ecosystems and the subsequent formulation of requests and recommendations for strengthening them. Focus groups and interviews were conducted by the Rooted in Trust Brazil team, in person in different communities, together with capacity-building courses in the communities, to enable quilombolas to conduct interviews themselves. This meant that their trust and information systems could be mapped during the project while also allowing them to continue these autonomously after the project ends.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 KEY LEARNINGS

1. Community Health Workers (CHW) are one of the main sources of information for quilombola communities. Their proximity to the communities and their health knowledge have made these people trustworthy sources of information about the pandemic.

2. Quilombola leaders and their representative organizations, such as CONAQ Nacional, Malungu and CONAQ-AP, were also viewed as trustworthy sources of information.

3. Quilombolas frequently use social media and apps to share information, particularly WhatsApp. Quilombolas reported that they tend to use WhatsApp groups with several different members of the community, including community health workers and community leaders.

4. Community social workers were identified as the main source of information about how to access government benefits and assistance for loss of income caused by the pandemic, or regarding pandemic mitigation measures.

5. TV, radio and social media are seen as important sources of information for quilombolas.

6. Fear caused by misinformation and information overload about the pandemic permeated quilombola communities and reportedly resulted in an increase in searches for mental health support services.

2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the humanitarian sector, it is recommended to:

1. Elaborate a collective database that brings together the contact of quilombola communicators, humanitarian agencies and the media, which remains in constant sharing and updating, based on a mapping carried out with the quilombola communities, guaranteeing the strengthening of a reliable and healthy ecosystem of information.

2. Support community actors seen as trusted by communities, in networked organizations specifically focused on communication and information. This should be provided through 1) events and workshops on communication and community engagement; 2) establishing contacts between communities and media agents 3) training and capacity building for communities; 4) allocation of resources, funding and grants that can instrumentalize and qualify community communication.

3. Create specific training aimed at Community Health Agents and community leaders about COVID-19 and other health emergencies. Due to their proximity to the communities, it is important that these actors have access to training that qualifies their knowledge, ensuring that the communities' information needs are duly met in a qualified manner.

4. Support the adequacy and expansion of basic health services, in dialogue and respecting the reality of communities such as the use of traditional medicine as a complementary action. The expansion and adaptation of these services has the potential to support communities in future health crises.



2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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5. To the humanitarian sector and other civil society organizations, it is recommended to prioritize the demands for psychological support from the communities, adequate in number and duration, guaranteeing a contextualized service that considers the changes and impacts caused by the pandemic with effects on mental health of these communities.

For the media, journalists and communicators, it is recommended to:

1. Elaborate journalistic products in a contextualized way, mobilizing and diversifying its sources, and establishing contacts with quilombola leaders seen as trustworthy by the communities, as they can guide the lived reality so that the contents produced are reflecting the real needs and events within the communities.

2. Take advantage of the Quilombolas' preference and easier access to online social networks and apps, using WhatsApp and Facebook groups to disseminate reliable information, privileging information in audio format. This strategy should be considered for several reasons, and in particular the data package options offered by mobile phone companies, the preference for quick consumption of information with less text, and the inclusion of groups whose access to education has not been sufficiently guaranteed by the Brazilian Government.

3. Create mechanisms for dialogue with Community Health Agents and quilombola leaders to understand the specific demands and information needs of quilombola communities, such

as information regarding long-term COVID symptoms and post-COVID care and treatment.

4. Create communication strategies that go beyond text, video and audio formats, including face-to-face approaches to dialogue with communities, such as listening groups, meetings and home visits. Considering that face-to-face and "word of mouth" communication is seen as one of the most recurrent and reliable ways of establishing communication, strategies and approaches that favor this format will be well received by communities. In addition, due to the invisibilization processes suffered by these communities, face-to-face engagement with them would ensure that they were "seen" and "heard" by the media. It is, therefore, a way of *recognizing* and *validating* their existence.

For the communities, it is recommended to:

1. Create communication networks between members of quilombola communities. These collectives and networks have the potential to expand community mobilization and ensure the existence of focal points for articulations in partnerships with other organizations, whether humanitarian or media.

2. Organize a regional and/or national event of quilombola communicators, allowing initiatives in the Amazon and throughout the country to be strengthened through the exchange of experiences and knowledge.



3. ROOTED IN TRUST

The Rooted in Trust project was developed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to build stronger information ecosystems through initiatives that promote community engagement and dialogue on the topics of information media, rumors, COVID-19 and vaccines. In Brazil, Rooted in Trust works alongside Indigenous communities and quilombolas in the states of Amapá, Pará and Roraima. The Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) is the first step towards understanding the information ecosystem of a quilombola community, and was developed in partnership with the International Institute of Education of Brazil (IEB, Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil). The quilombola communities of Barcarena in Pará, and Macapá and Santana in Amapá were involved in this assessment.

The IEA seeks to understand the relationship between quilombola communities and information about the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores the available sources of information, and how communities receive, consume, request and share information about the COVID-19 pandemic. The IEA also provides a brief background of the quilombola communities in Brazil and their needs and priorities.

Understanding the information ecosystem of quilombola communities will allow the Rooted in Trust project to identify the information needs and challenges faced by quilombolas. In a context increasingly marred by disinformation and barriers to accessing news, understanding the information ecosystem can and should help to enhance communication

between quilombola communities in the Brazilian Amazon and other stakeholders such as humanitarian organizations, media stakeholders and health practitioners.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The Internews Information Ecosystem Assessment takes a human-centered approach, working with trustworthy local partners to co-construct and develop the research required. This means that community members are involved in all stages of the research cycle and are partners in it, rather than simply being respondents. For quilombola communities, this meant prioritizing the collection of qualitative data and understanding the history of mistrust around quantitative methods and approaches, which entail little involvement of the quilombola communities.

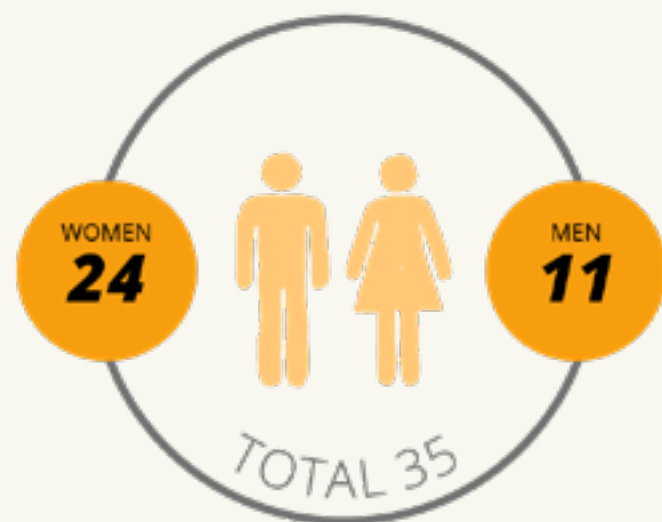
A literature review was conducted to understand the media environment in northern Brazil, and the context around other information sources, particularly in Amapá and Pará. This literature review also sought to provide a context for the current challenges faced by the quilombola communities involved in the IEA. This stage was complemented by interviews with key stakeholders, such as the IEB team, quilombola leaders, and a communicator from the Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE, Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional).

¹ The communities included were São Francisco do Matapi (AP), São João do Matapi, (AP), Abacate da Pedreira (AP), Ilha Redonda (AP), Nossa Senhora do Desterro (AP), Gibrié de São Lourenço (PA), Sítio São João (PA), Burajuba (PA), Sítio Conceição (PA), Sítio Cupuaçu (PA).



3. ROOTED IN TRUST

COMPOSITION OF FOCUS GROUPS HELD



AMAPÁ (AP)

MACAPÁ

SÃO FRANCISCO DO MATAPI
ASSISTENTE SOCIAL, LIDERANÇA

SÃO JOÃO DO MATAPI
BIBLIOTECA, ESTABELECIMENTO, LIDERANÇA

ABACATE DA PEDREIRA
BIBLIOTECA, ESTABELECIMENTO, LIDERANÇA

ILHA REDONDA
AGENTE DE SAÚDE, BIBLIOTECA, LIDERANÇA

SANTANA

NOSSA SENHORA DO DESTERRO
AGENTE DE SAÚDE, ASSISTENTE SOCIAL, PROFESSORA, LIDERANÇA

PARÁ (PA)

BARCARENA

GIBRIÉ DE SÃO LOURENÇO
AGENTE DE SAÚDE, ASSISTENTE SOCIAL, BIBLIOTECA

SÍTIO SÃO JOÃO
ASSISTENTE SOCIAL, LIDERANÇA, BIBLIOTECA

BURAJUBA
LIDERANÇA, PROFESSORA

SÍTIO CONCEIÇÃO
AGENTE DE SAÚDE, PROFESSORA, LIDERANÇA

SÍTIO CUPUAÇU
AGENTE DE SAÚDE, ASSISTENTE SOCIAL

To understand how information is received, shared and disseminated, and how to identify trustworthy information sources, 20 quilombolas were trained in interview methods with key intermediaries, and took part in the joint drafting of questionnaires. These quilombolas were involved in the Comunica Quilombola (Quilombola Communicates) course, led by the IEB partner, as part of the Rooted in Trust project. These quilombolas conducted 35 interviews in person with community members, community leaders and representatives, social workers, community health workers and teachers. The interviews took place between 10 July and 7 September 2022, but not all quilombolas indicated the exact date of the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

It should be noted that the quilombola communities involved in this IEA are located in territories currently without land titles.

Three focus groups were also organized in two quilombola communities – one in Amapá and two in Pará. The focus groups were conducted in person by the Rooted in Trust team, with support from local quilombola leadership. At the suggestion of these leaders, the focus groups were not separated by gender, and included men and women alike. It was not possible to identify specific characteristics of the focus group participants, such as their level of community participation or their age. The focus groups were also audio-recorded and transcribed.

After being transcribed, all interviews and focus groups were analyzed by the Rooted in Trust researcher. Preliminary findings were shared with the IEB and with quilombola leaders for validation and feedback, and then incorporated into the final version.

3.2 LIMITATIONS

Given the limitations regarding the data available and the methodology, the findings of this report are indicative and should not be viewed as representative.

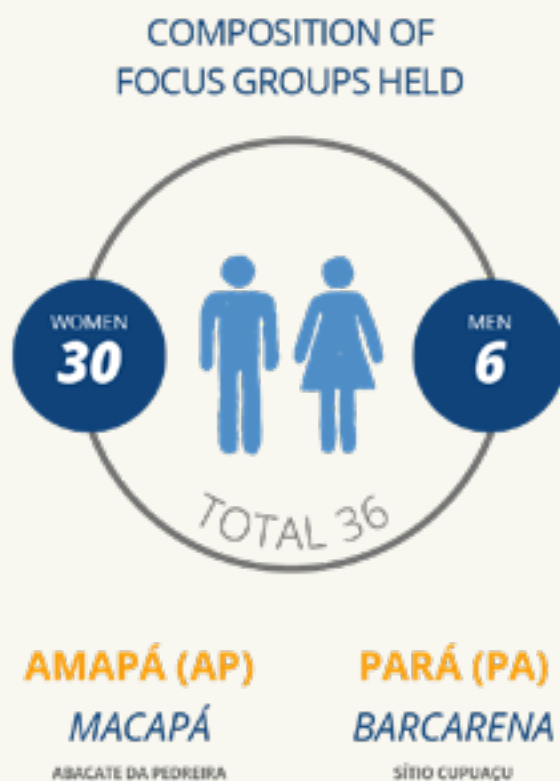
Limitations in the literature review include the lack of basic data about the quilombola communities, the lack of up-to-date data on quilombola communities, and the lack of comparative data on quilombola communities in the north region of Brazil.

In the media analysis, and analysis of the various information sources available in Brazil (TV and radio), this report was based on data from Atlas da Notícia, a platform that maps local journalism in Brazil, and on official government data. The two data types do not correspond, in part because Atlas da Notícia is a platform still under construction, so that at the time of writing some information was still incomplete. Federal government databases are not centralized or systematically updated, meaning that they include TV and radio stations that may no longer be active.

Limitations on primary data collection include:

- The type of information collected. Because of the history of mistrust towards researchers and quantitative data collection methods, and following advice from the IEB and quilombola leadership, only qualitative data were collected.
- Sample size and distribution. Because of limited team capacity and difficulties accessing the quilombola communities, more interviews were conducted in some communities than in others. Equally, not all categories were interviewed in all communities, making comparisons between communities difficult.

3. ROOTED IN TRUST

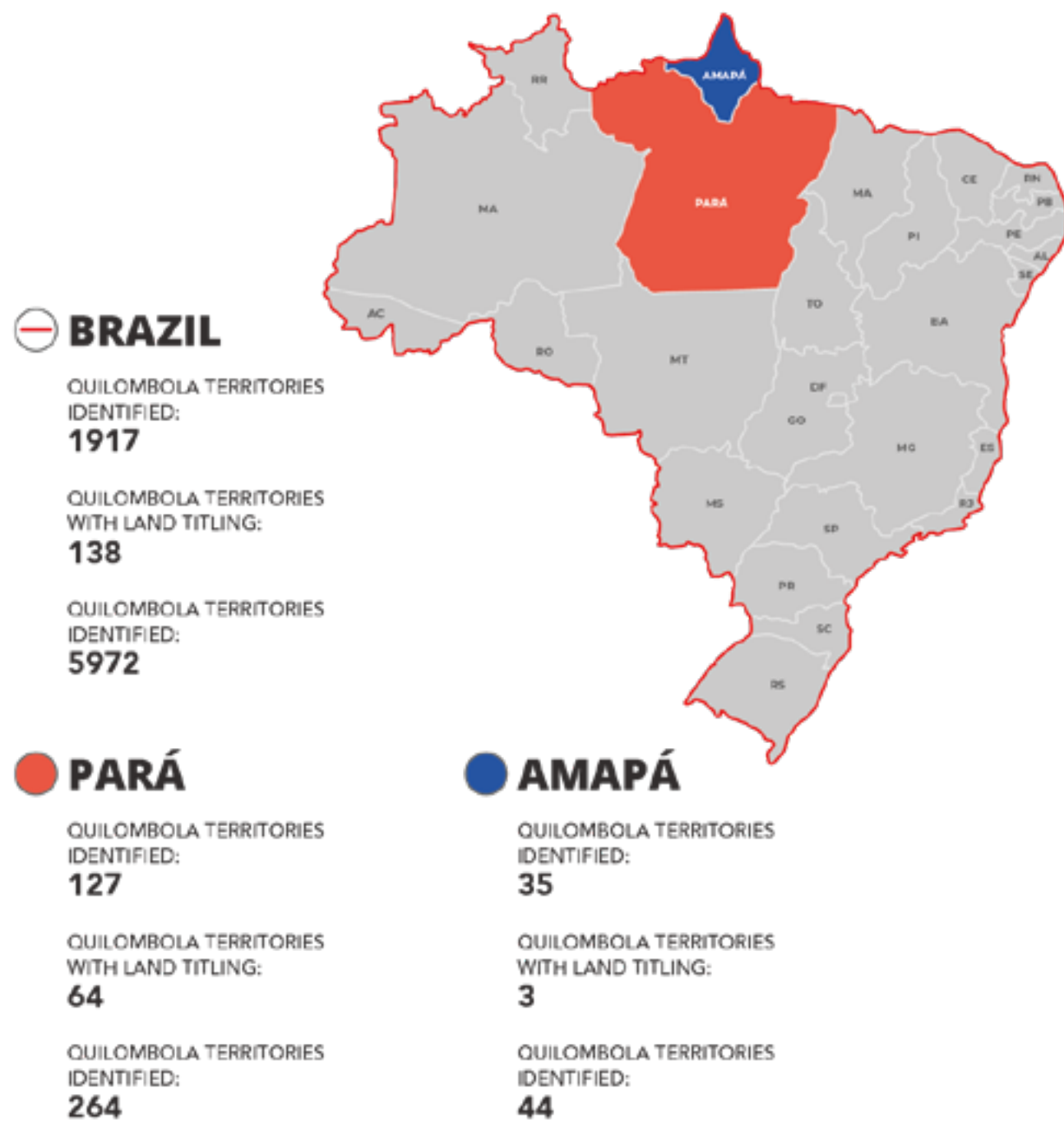


- Experience of those responsible for data collection. As primary data collection was done by members of the quilombola communities involved in the Comunica Quilombola course, they had less experience of interviews with key intermediaries. Despite the training received, there were some issues around data collection, and many interviews were short and could have benefited from more questions.

Even with these limitations, the data collection benefited from community involvement at almost every stage of the research cycle, and was trusted by the community, thanks to the approach (which involved working with leaders and community members to create and collect data). Although the data cannot be used to make comparisons between communities, the data collected can be used to provide an overview of the situation between quilombola communities in Macapá, Barcarena and Santana.



4. BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES



The quilombo remnant communities had their existence and territorial rights legally acknowledged by the 1988 Federal Constitution. Because of this, these communities can submit a land titling application for the land in which they live, ensuring that their different way of life and culture is maintained. Several of these communities are also known as Rural Black Communities because they are located in rural areas, as is the case with many of the quilombola communities of Amapá (Superti & Silva, 2015). But there are also many urban quilombo settlements. These urban quilombo settlements were once rural, but changed as urban centers grew, as is the case with some quilombola communities in Barcarena (Hazeu et al., 2019).

Quilombola communities stand out for their social and cultural diversity, which not only makes them different from the national population, but also makes each of them unique and singular. For this reason, the terms quilombo and quilombola are specific and unique to the social and historical formation of Brazil, and there is therefore no translation in other languages that can adequately convey their meaning. The diverse quilombola communities in Brazil do, however, share common characteristics, along with communities in other regions of the world

that have experienced the enslavement of Black people. Their identity is closely tied to a feeling of community and ancestry, and quilombolas usually maintain a strong relationship with the territory they occupy. The identity of these groups is therefore defined by their collective lived experiences and their shared memories of a common historical, political and social trajectory, and by their continuity as a group.

² For an excerpt that demonstrates the complexities and differences between the most diverse processes of political, historical and social organisation of groups formed in resistance to systems of slave oppression around the world: 'Thus, communities of fugitives were formed that had different names, such as cumbes in Venezuela and palenques in Colombia. In Jamaica, the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean and the southern United States, they were called maroons. In Dutch Guyana and then Suriname, they were known as bush negroes. In Saint Domingue (Haiti) and other parts of the French Caribbean, the term was marronage; while in Cuba and Puerto Rico it was cimarronaje. In Brazil, the settlements were initially given the name 'mocambos', before later being called 'quilombos'. The first information about a mocambo formed in the country, more specifically in Bahia, dates from 1575' (Dicionário da Escravidão e Liberdade, Schwarcz e Gomes, 2018, p367).

Sources: Data on quilombola territories identified and with land titling (CPISP, 2022); Data on quilombola localities and communities identified (PALMARES, 2015).

Data obtained: 09/06/2022.

4. BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES



LAND TITLING OF QUILOMBOLA TERRITORY

The 1988 Federal Constitution provides for the land titling of quilombola territory, in Article 68 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (INCRA, 2017). The first stage of the land titling process is seeking the certificate of acknowledgement from the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP, Fundação Cultural Palmares). The certificate issued by FCP represents an acknowledgement that the quilombola community exists and is necessary to advance the process of land titling of the community's territory (FCP, 2022). With this certificate, the quilombolas must begin the process with the relevant body. At federal level, this process is the responsibility of the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA, Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária). At municipal and state level, other institutions are responsible, such as the Pará Land Institute (ITERPA, Instituto de Terras do Pará), and Terras Amapá, the Amapá Land Institute (Instituto de Terras do Estado do Amapá). Land titling is hampered by territorial conflicts and disputes, in addition to bureaucracy and political will (Rosário, 2022). Although it is a long, time-consuming and contentious process, the quilombola communities generally seek land titling for their territories. For these communities, land titling means legal certainty and ensuring their way of life is maintained.

RIGHT TO PRIOR CONSULTATION

Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) provides for the right to free, prior and informed consultation of traditional peoples and communities. Brazil is a signatory to this convention and therefore

guarantees the right of quilombolas and other Indigenous communities to be consulted before implementing any project or undertaking that may impact their territories and ways of life. More and more communities have been developing their own protocols and guaranteeing that they are consulted before projects are implemented in their territories (Terra de Direitos, 2021a). Of the communities approached in this study, only Gibriés de São Lourenço had developed a consultation protocol (ACOQUIGSAL, 2018).

DISPUTES OVER TERRITORIES

Many quilombola communities live in territories disputed by major project owners, and even by public authorities. Among the quilombola communities discussed in this paper, complaints made by the communities of Barcarena, including quilombolas, about the impacts of the Hydro mining company, stand out. The impacts included the pollution of rivers and fish, and damage to the health of the local population (Antunes, 2018). Another complaint concerned Barcarena municipal council. Although the quilombolas of Barcarena have been recognized by Fundação Cultural Palmares, their land titling process has not yet progressed. As a result, Barcarena municipal council views these areas as belonging to the municipality, and is installing a sewage treatment plant in one of the quilombola communities (Pedro Neto, 2021). In 2021, the city hall of Barcarena evicted families and destroyed properties in the territory of the quilombola community Sítio Conceição. The city hall was authorized by an injunction issued by a judge from the Civil and Business Court. However, this action ignored the ban on evictions of quilombola populations during the pandemic, provided for in a decision by the Federal Supreme Court, and disregarded the prior consultation rights of these communities provided for in ILO Convention 169.



5. COVID-19 AND THE QUILOMBOLAS

Between 2019 and 2020, Brazilian newspapers began to report the spread of the virus that came to be known as coronavirus, or COVID-19. At that time, some members of the quilombola communities did not believe the virus would reach their communities in the states of Pará e Amapá, in the north region of the country. A woman from the quilombola community of Sítio Cupuaçu/PA recounted at a focus group:

“The first news I read about the pandemic was from Jornal Nacional, when it was starting over in China. When the first case arrived here in Brazil, I heard people say, “it’s here”! Something that was happening so far away, but had not come here, became a reality.

(Statement from a female quilombola resident during a focus group held in the Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022).

This disbelief, combined with narratives from the federal government that downplayed the pandemic’s impact, explains the delay in adopting some of the measures the WHO announced as necessary to contain infection, such as social distancing, wearing masks and using alcohol-based hand sanitizers. In the words of a health worker:

“Until [...] the community believed that we were experiencing a time of great danger to health, several people debated whether the information was truthful, whether it really was happening everywhere in the world.

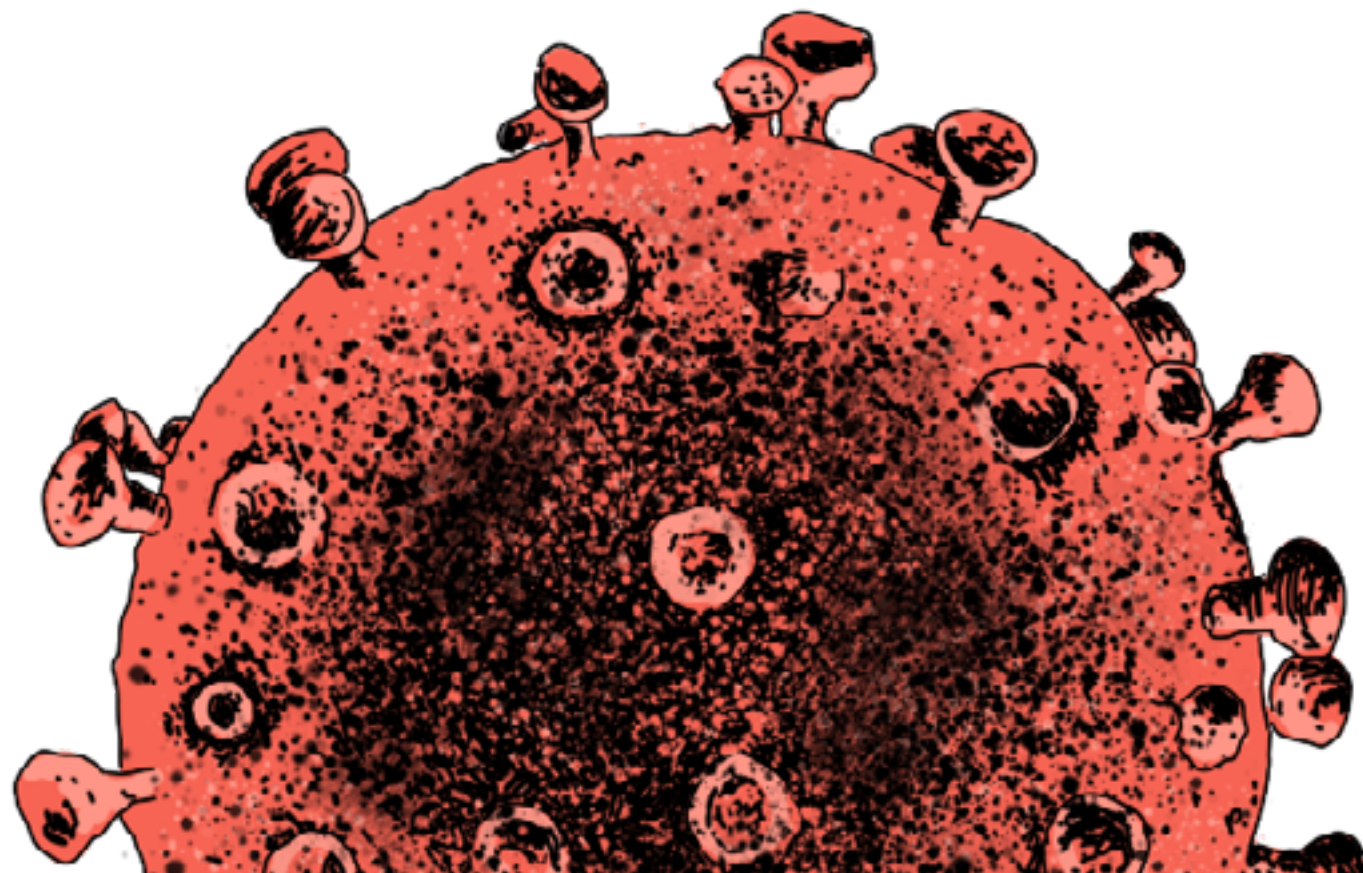
(Interview with health worker, male, aged 41, from Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 18/07/2022).

The quilombolas gradually began to recognize the danger posed by the virus and began to look for ways to prevent its spread. However, social distancing in the communities became a major issue, as many people found it hard to stop visiting their families and neighbors. In the quilombola community of Nossa Senhora do Desterro/AP, one health worker said:

“For the community, the situation with treatment was a bit difficult. How we were supposed to behave, distancing from family members – many did not like being away from each other, they wanted to be together. And, during the pandemic, we had to keep our distance to avoid catching the virus. It was a bit difficult for the community to understand the situation.

(Interview with health worker, female, aged 43, in Nossa Senhora do Desterro/AP community on 20/07/2022).

The quilombola communities received little attention from public authorities throughout the pandemic. Data on COVID-19 cases and deaths among these communities were underreported, reflecting the historic extinguishment of this population’s reality (CEBRAP, 2021 a). Quilombola organizations, in partnership with universities and civil society, therefore coordinated their own monitoring strategies, which culminated in news reports (such as those produced by Malungu in Pará) (Malungu, 2021) and the ‘Quilombo sem COVID-19’ (Quilombo without COVID-19) platform (CONAQ & ISA, 2022).



5. COVID-19 AND THE QUILOMBOLAS



When vaccination began, the quilombola communities were included as priority groups, an inclusion that was only because of campaigning by quilombola organizations (Terra de Direitos, 2021b). The federal government began counting the number of vaccinated quilombolas on its official platform (Ministry of Health, 2022). However, many quilombolas are not recognized as being of this community, especially if their territories are not covered by land titling. The result of this is that many quilombolas were de-prioritized for vaccination, and were not included in

COVID-19 vaccination statistics in official government data.

To track vaccination progress, the communities therefore once again had to organize themselves. This resulted in the 'Vacinômetro Quilombola' (Quilombola Vaccinometer), created by National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities (CONAQ) in partnership with Terra de Direitos and Ecam (Terra de Direitos, 2021c). CONAQ is a nationwide, non-profit organization that represents the vast majority of quilombolas in Brazil, including in Pará and Amapá.

The Quilombola Vaccinometer is a series of news bulletins focused on tracking the vaccination of quilombolas as a priority group in the country. The news bulletins also sought to 'address the structural problems of accessing public services that quilombolas face in their daily lives' (CONAQ, 2021a). CONAQ concluded that there was an overload of disinformation around the vaccine. It also concluded that there was a transfer of responsibility of the federal government's health care policy to quilombola leadership (CONAQ, 2021a).

PANDEMIC DATA FOR QUILOMBOLAS



5.666 CASES



301 Deaths

VACCINATION (DATA FROM MINISTRY OF HEALTH) *



600.398

1st dose



557.140

2nd dose and only dose



23.985

Additional dose



381.020

Booster dose



137.061

2nd booster dose

VACCINATION (DATA FROM QUILOMBOLA VACINOMETER - CONAQ) **



54.232

Only 1st dose



55.274

2nd dose

* The Ministry of Health platform considers a total of 1,133,106 quilombolas.

** The CONAQ Quilombola Vaccinometer had its third and last edition published in December 2021 and counted 111,820 quilombolas in 21 states of the country. Source: CONAQ/ISA; Ministério da Saúde; Vacinômetro Quilombola.

Data obtained in: 31/01/2023

6. MEDIA IN THE NORTH OF BRAZIL

In Brazil, the Rooted in Trust project works together with communities in three states in the north region of the country. This region contains seven quite different states. Despite their diversity, the region shares some common issues.

The south and southeast regions of Brazil are where the main media outlets are concentrated. These outlets produce news about the rest of the country, including the north region (Intervozes, 2017). As a result, there is not an equal proportion of journalistic output produced by the north region for the north region. 'Despite occupying 45% of the country's territory, and being home to 18 million Brazilians, the north region does not commonly feature in newspaper

headlines; nor is it represented in television programs – unless the news is about the devastation of the Amazon, or about something unusual.' (Lavor, 2021).

The local news media focus on covering municipal and regional news. Local journalism therefore plays a fundamental role, because the people who live in these areas usually have a better understanding of the challenges faced there. In the absence of a local press, the population lacks information that would enable them to call public authorities to account, actively participate in political decisions and discussions that concern them, and receive information relevant to their daily lives. This population is generally more vulnerable to disinformation. These regions that have no local press are

referred to as news deserts. In Brazil, most of these news deserts are located in the north region (Botelho, 2022).

Even though access to electricity has widened, the north region is still home to the largest proportion of the country's population living without power. Between 2018 and 2020, around 3.5% of the population of Brazil's Legal Amazon did not have access to this utility (IEMA, 2021). At the time, the population in this region was around 28 million, which means that approximately 990 thousand people were living without electricity (IMAZON, 2021). Of these, most live in rural areas. Some of these people belong to traditional communities: 78,388 were Indigenous and 2,555 were quilombolas. This means that around 8% of the population living without electricity in Brazil's Legal Amazon are from Indigenous and quilombola communities. Without electricity, this population also has no full access to television or internet.

Television still features prominently in the homes of families in the north region. The region has the highest television viewing time in the country: 6 hours and 30 minutes per day, slightly more than the Southeast Region, at 6 hours and 29 minutes (Kantar, 2020). Brazil's Legal Amazon uses special legislation for broadcast relay stations, allowing them to create local content instead of broadcasting the affiliated network's program schedule, like the rest of the country does (Lobato, 2016). Although this enables more local news programs to exist, it is still not enough to address the situation created by news deserts – in many areas there is no local news service, or only national news is broadcast.

Several media outlets in Brazil are owned by politicians and religious groups. The involvement of politicians and religious groups in these outlets is detrimental to the information ecosystem, since it may expose the news cycle to private influence (Terço, 2022b). One report showed that, of the 1,737 TV channels in Brazil's Legal Amazon: a) 373 belong to politicians; b) more than 170 channels belong to Catholic and evangelical churches (Lobato, 2017).



7. QUILOMBOLAS IN BRAZILIAN MEDIA

Quilombola communities in Brazil were, for a long time, all but invisible in traditional media. They tended to only be remembered on commemorative dates, such as Black Awareness Day on 20 November. Another commemorative date frequently chosen by traditional media to 'celebrate' the quilombolas is 13 May, the date slavery was supposedly abolished in Brazil. This date is criticized by quilombola organizations because the decision to abolish slavery on that date did not secure the end of slavery in Brazil, and was actually the result of political and economic agreements that were not interested in recognizing, repairing or adequately integrating the once enslaved Black population into Brazilian society as equal citizens (Nunes, 2021). A representative from Malungu, the quilombola organization of Pará, in an interview with Internews, said that quilombolas found themselves forgotten the rest of the year. Marking this cultural moment is not, therefore, effective, and does not leave room for other important demands of these groups, such as land titling (Interview with representative from Malungu, conducted online by Internews on 24/03/2022).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, a dual effect was observed (CEBRAP, 2021b). On the one hand, there was inaction by the federal government. On the other, political organizing by the quilombolas gained more coverage in news headlines nationally and locally. In 2021, news bulletins were published that analyzed media coverage on these communities (CEBRAP, 2021a; CEBRAP, 2021b). The main topics identified were lack of pandemic support (or other support) from state authorities; land conflicts; racism and culture. The relationship between quilombolas and the traditional media is generally problematic. Their stories rarely reach the wider general public and, when they are shared, they are not always the result of a process of dialogue that promotes and celebrates the communities.



8. QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

There have been many changes in how news is shared and circulated among quilombolas, both in Pará and in Amapá. Decades ago, the main ways of sharing news were through the radio or by letters sent via boats. These forms of communication were more time-consuming and relied heavily on the transmission of news by ‘word of mouth’; verbal communication between members of the communities or visitors to the communities. The daily lives of these communities have changed greatly, particularly with the popularization of TV and the internet, which have become a valuable means of getting news and, in the case of the internet, disseminating it. Printed newspapers and letter writing have lost ground, while radio and news-sharing through conversations have remained important.

8.1 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND ASSOCIATIONS

Quilombola communities tend to organize themselves into associations. The presidents and vice-presidents of the associations, along with other active members of the community, are regarded as leaders. They participate in events outside the community and partner with other organizations for the community’s benefit. These leaders are often sources of information for almost all situations experienced by the community, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our community president has always been very ready to pass information on to us.”

(Interview with a young leader, female, aged 19 years, in Sítio Conceição/PA community on 03/08/2022).

“Our community president has always been very ready to pass information on to us.”

(Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in Abacate da Pedreira/AP community on 24/08/2022).

Many quilombola initiatives have emerged as a necessity, in response to the marginalization of their key issues in the traditional media. Thanks to this initiative, the traditional media have been pressured to make space in their news agendas for reports on quilombolas’ key issues.

The quilombola associations are engaged with other nationwide organizations, such as the National Coordination of Black Quilombola Rural Communities (CONAQ, Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas). CONAQ is a national non-profit organization that represents the vast majority of Brazil’s quilombolas, including in Pará and Amapá. Regionally, in Pará there is the Coordination of the

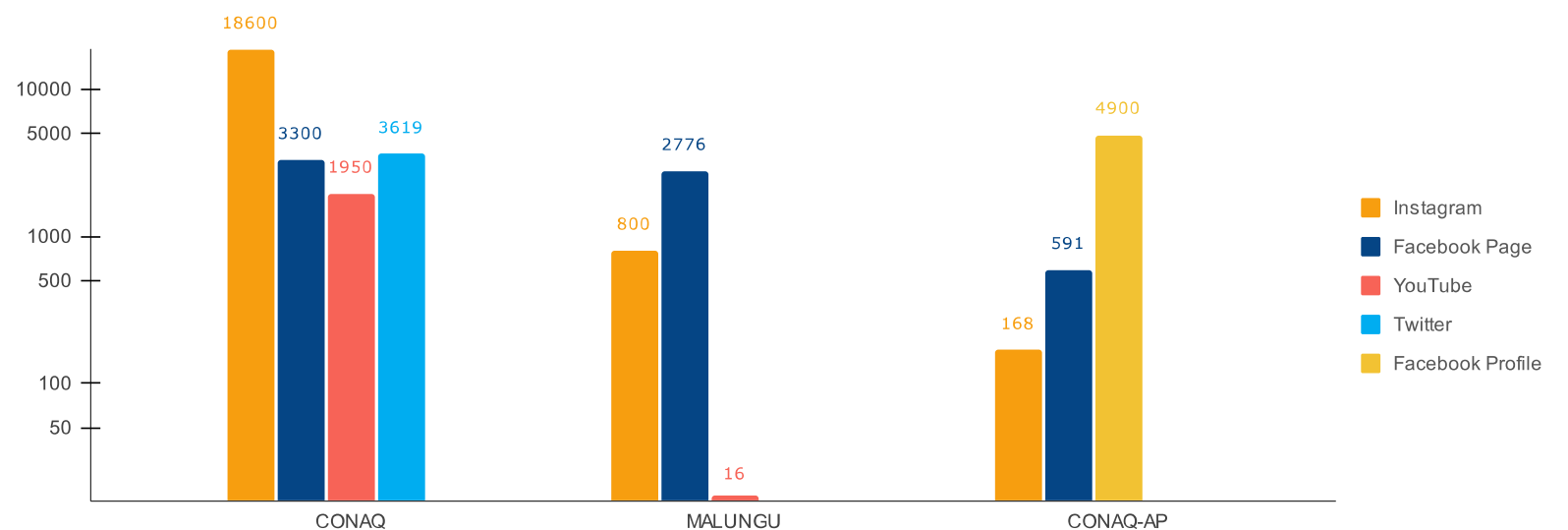
Associations of the Remnant Communities of Quilombos do Pará (Malungu, Coordenação Estadual das Associações das Comunidades Remanescentes de Quilombo do Pará) and in Amapá there is CONAQ-AP.

These associations are in direct contact with organizations that represent the quilombolas, such as CONAQ, CONAQ-AP and Malungu. With support from these organizations, leaders have produced information materials about the pandemic, which were received by quilombolas in the communities of Barcarena, Macapá and Santana.

“I also follow Conaq and then pass things on to the people in my community. I’m president of an association and there I pass on truthful information.”

(Statement by a quilombola leader during a focus group held in Abacate da Pedreira/AP community on 24/08/2022).

QUILOMBOLA ORGANIZATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Data obtained: 14/07/2022.



8.2 TV AND RADIO

Television has a strong presence in the lives of quilombola communities, among those living in urban areas and also those living in rural areas. Where electricity is powered by a generator, it is common for the generator to be switched on in the late afternoon, when soap operas and news programs begin. Television is therefore a form of entertainment and information. In communities where not everyone has electricity or a TV set, members of the community can come together to watch certain TV shows. Data on TV channels suffer the same issues as data on radio stations. A survey in 2022 did not identify any TV station in Barcarena, but identified 27 in Belém. It identified none in Santana, and only 7 in Macapá (Atlas da Notícia, 2022). Official government data suggest that there is 1 station in Barcarena, 31 in Belém, 23 in Macapá and 4 in Santana (MCOM, 2022).

65% of quilombolas interviewed by Rooted in Trust said that they followed the news on TV news programs and bulletins. The most frequently cited news program was Jornal Nacional, broadcast by Rede Globo. It is one of the country's best-known news shows. Two local programs were also mentioned – Jornal Amapá and Jornal Liberal, which are also linked to Rede Globo. In addition to this broadcaster, other popular news programs are Balanço Geral, Record TV, and SBT Notícias, on the SBT channel.

Some quilombolas said that it is more typical for older adults and the elderly to watch the news on TV. Older audiences also listen to the

news on the radio. In Pará, the most frequently cited radio stations were Metropolitana and Rádio 99. In Amapá, quilombolas mentioned the talk radio show Luiz Melo Entrevista. 'Every day on the radio, on Luiz Melo and others like it. People listen to a lot of Luiz Melo here at home' (Interview with quilombola, male, aged 41, in São João do Matapi/AP community. Date of interview not given). Melo is the founder of Diário do Amapá and the Diário FM radio station, and his program has been running since 1990 (AL-AP, 2016). It is possible to follow his radio program on social media and his online portal.

Some radio shows tend to be broadcast via mobile phones and sent via WhatsApp. Other programs are also broadcast via Rádio Postes and Bicycletas Rádios, where a loud speaker is attached to a post or to a bicycle that cycles around the community. In this format, scheduling switches between commercial broadcasts, religious programs and information about the daily lives of the communities.

It is difficult to establish how many radio stations exist in these municipalities as the data available is incomplete or contradictory. A survey in 2022 indicated that there is only one radio station in Barcarena, but identified 26 in Belém, a nearby town and the state capital, whose programs are also relevant to Barcarena (Atlas da Notícia, 2022). 10 stations were also mapped in Macapá, and 1 in Santana. By contrast, official government data indicates the existence of 5 radio stations in Barcarena, 18 in Macapá and 4 in Santana (MCOM, 2022).



MAIN TV BROADCAST RELAY STATIONS	AFFILIATION	STATE
	Rede Globo	Pará
	SBT	Pará
	Record	Pará
		Pará
		Pará
		Pará
	Rede Globo	Amapá
	SBT	Amapá
	Record TV	Amapá
	Rede Bandeirantes	Amapá



MAIN RADIO STATIONS	STATION COVERAGE
Super Marajoara 1130 AM. No coração do Povo	Belém and region (PA)
Metropolitana 94,3 FM. A FM do Povo	Belém and region (PA)
Barcarena 87.9 FM	Barcarena
Nazaré 91,3 FM	Pará

“I’d say around 90% of people [have internet access]. Fiber optic internet has reached the quilombo community and the community can access it. But it’s not accessible all the time. We can access it, but it also drops out. Today [it’s ok] because it’s not raining. [...] There are days when the internet is useless, and it can’t load a three-minute video”

(Interview with quilombola leader, male, from Gibrié de São Lourenço/PA community, conducted online by Internews researchers on 17/03/2022).



8.3 INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Internet access in the north region of the country is marked by inequalities (IDEC, 2022). In this region, around 65% of users access the internet solely via mobile phone. Use of the internet by these groups is often restricted to communicating with others, which requires less connectivity and costs less. Neighbors sometimes share a fixed internet connection, dividing the costs. For the north region population that does not have internet access, the main reasons are the high costs and the unavailability of the service in the region.

Among the quilombola communities of Macapá, Santana and Barcarena, most people who manage to access the internet do so through their mobile phones, with poor and unstable connections that are frequently affected by rain and lack of proper maintenance by the network operators. Despite this, these communities have joined digital spaces, particularly social networks. This is something more evident among young people, but is not limited to them. News published on traditional media portals, independent portals and even radio programs reach these communities, mainly via WhatsApp and Facebook.



For example, you have a story on COVID-19, and you share the link from wherever you are, on Facebook or on Instagram, or on Google. Then you post the link and it's passed on and arrives in our [WhatsApp] groups, and sometimes individually [...]. We make a lot of broadcast lists; people create a lot of groups, and in these groups we get music, videos, texts [...]. It can be a family group, a church group, a community group, a hospital group, a staff group or study group. There are lots of groups.

(Interview with quilombola leader, male, from Gibrié de São Lourenço/PA community, online by Internews researcher on 17/03/2022).

Social media, including WhatsApp, have emerged as the main source of information about COVID-19 for quilombolas. One social worker aged 42 from Gibriés de São Lourenço community, reported: 'Today social media is the main channel of communication, because someone might not have a radio or a TV, but for them [the person] having a phone is crucial, because everyone is connected on WhatsApp, so information is shared faster' (Interview with social worker, female, aged 42, from Gibriés de São Lourenço/PA community on 07/09/2022).

Almost all respondents reported being in a WhatsApp group with several other members of the community. These groups include leaders and Community Health Workers (CHW), who share information about the pandemic. There are even WhatsApp groups for the entire community. When in-person classes were suspended because of social distancing measures, WhatsApp also became a

study tool. School teachers created groups for pupils and their caregivers, in which they shared updates and class materials.

In addition to WhatsApp, other social networks mentioned were Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Facebook was the second most cited network. On Facebook, members of the communities followed posts by the municipal council pages, on which COVID-19 case numbers and deaths in the municipality were reported, plus vaccination schedules.

8.4 NGOS AND GOVERNMENT BODIES

At least two government bodies are responsible for producing and distributing information about quilombolas in Macapá, Santana and Barcarena, as well as other quilombolas in Brazil: INCRA, the body responsible for the land titling of quilombola territory, and Fundação Cultural Palmares, a public entity that advocates for the country's Black and quilombola population. However, these two government institutions have suffered changes under the current government, and their actions have become ineffective and misaligned with political achievements and legal recognitions for the quilombola community.

Independent news portals and non-profit civil society organizations have begun to support these communities. The NGO Terra de Direitos has supported the monitoring and systematization of data on how the pandemic has affected quilombolas. FASE, an organization founded in 1961, also works with these and other quilombola communities, including with a radio program called Tipiti, which is also broadcast by social media. Amazônia Real has conducted several reports on the quilombolas of Macapá, Santana and Barcarena. Alma Preta, an independent news portal created in 2015 and specializing in racial issues, shares relevant information about quilombola

communities. The work by the IEB, which works directly with these communities, producing studies and running workshops on media education and communication, also deserves special mention.

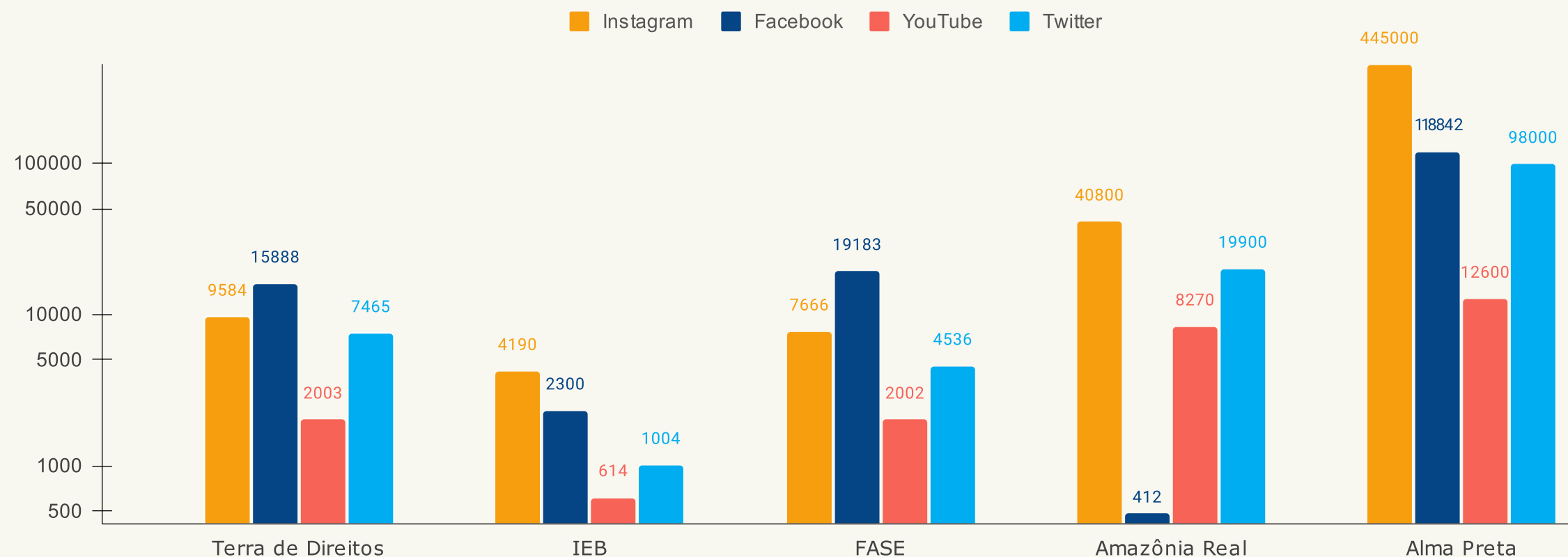


RÁDIO TIPITI PROGRAM, CREATED BY FASE

The Tipiti program was created in 2020 by FASE, and produced by a team of four people. In an interview with Internews, one of its creators said that the program seeks to ‘give more visibility to traditional communities – their way of life, their territories, their customs, their cultures, their way of seeing the world, their history, but also to allow them to talk about problems, threats and risks to their territories’. (Interview

with FASE communicator conducted online by Internews on 04/03/2022.) The focus is on broadening the voices of these traditional communities through interviews. Experts on other topics are also sometimes invited on to the program. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Tipiti recognised that social distancing was especially difficult for riverside communities, which often travel by boat. It therefore focused on sharing preventive information tailored to the riverside communities. The program is broadcast by Rádio Conceição and the audio from the broadcasts is also posted on the FASE website and shared via social media, especially on WhatsApp.

OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Data obtained: 14/07/2022.



8.5 COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Community Health Workers (CHW) were mentioned by 40% of respondents as sources of information about the COVID-19 pandemic. CHWs work directly with the local population, making the public health service in Brazil more accessible. Their work involves regularly visiting members of the district or community in which they work, and providing support at primary healthcare facilities (PHCFs), also known as health clinics.

“I think that the health clinics are very effective, aren't they? Because of the intense work on health on top of this, information was immediately passed on to the health workers, who shared it with everyone in the community. They're always there, aren't they?”

(Interview with teacher, female, aged 52 years in Sítio Conceição/PA community on 10/07/2022).

“Our health worker was also very present. He visited a lot of houses at that time and brought so much data – how many cases there were, who had died, who was hospitalized, where the vaccine treatments were, and where masks were being distributed. He was someone who was very present, giving guidance from the health service.”

(Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022).

The CHWs who were interviewed by Rooted in Trust reported that they had received materials from the Ministry of Health, such as illustrated leaflets, that were useful for their training and for distribution to the community. These CHWs also reported having participated in training courses about COVID-19 for community awareness.

8.6 SOUND CAR

In Barcarena, the company Hydro used a sound car to help disseminate information about COVID-19 to the population. This initiative was mentioned by members of the Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community.

“Within our area, the community's territory, during the pandemic, there was a lot of dissemination by Hydro, which used to share information through sound cars. These cars would come into the community, and there were also fixed speaker recordings talking about COVID, about prevention, on wearing a mask – there was a lot of messaging.”

(Interview with health worker, male, aged 41 years, in Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 18/07/2022).

As well as reinforcing the mask wearing message, messages broadcast by the sound car also conveyed the importance of handwashing and social distancing.

“A sound car comes round the community every Tuesday at one o'clock, asking families to stay at home, for people to take care, wash their hands, avoid social contact, not to leave their houses unnecessarily. This was very important in the community.”

(Interview with social worker, female, aged 52 years, in Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 20/07/2022).



9. INFORMATION GAPS AND NEEDS

9.1 VACCINATION

When asked about their COVID-19 information needs, 40% of quilombolas interviewed talked about the safety of the vaccine. They said that the communities needed clearer messages about the science behind the vaccine and the reasons for the changes in vaccination policy,

I think that, on vaccination, many people say that it's not reliable and that in the community many people don't want to get the vaccine because they say that when they get it, they'll die.

(Interview with young quilombola student, female, aged 17 years, in São João do Matapi/AP community. Date of interview not given).

For others, the speed with which COVID-19 vaccines were produced raised suspicion. Vaccination of pregnant women was also an issue in the communities, because of rumors about the possible risks to the pregnancy. This inconsistent information caused some pregnant women in the community to stop seeking to get vaccinated.

As soon as vaccination began in the country in January 2021, many uncertainties arose. The population wanted to know who would have priority for vaccination, and how the vaccination schedule would be organized. The quilombolas were included in the country's priority vaccination group, but not everyone went to get vaccinated immediately. Rumours about the vaccine causing health risks made many people wonder whether or not they should get vaccinated.

The change in recommendation around the number of doses, and additional recommendations on booster

doses, also created unease and uncertainty, with many quilombolas saying they did not understand the need for further doses. The change in vaccination guidance also caused confusion. When vaccination first started, the general guidance was that people should take the first and second dose from the same vaccine manufacturer (Pfizer, Sinovac-Coronac, or Astrazeneca) (Ministry of Health, 2021). However, this guidance changed when new evidence emerged that meant that people would be allowed to receive the second dose from a different vaccine manufacturer and still be assured that they were protected.

But according to a teacher from the Sítio Conceição/PA community, this change in vaccination guidance was never explained: 'Because when the quilombo received the first dose of the vaccine, we got it from one type, a brand that was Oxford [Astrazeneca]. And the second dose was from another vaccine. And the third dose was from another. So there were three types of vaccine and we took all three and nobody ever said why. This meant that some people, at the start I think they took the first dose, but they didn't want to take the second one unless the first type of vaccine was available' (Interview with teacher, female, aged 52, in Sítio Conceição/PA community on 10/07/2022).

9.2 GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

The quilombolas said that they lacked information about the benefits offered by the government during the pandemic. Owing to the measures introduced to contain the pandemic, the worsening economic crisis in the country, and the loss of family members who were the main breadwinners, many people were left without sources of income. Emergency support of R\$600 per month was offered, but many quilombolas had difficulty finding information about how to access that benefit. Social workers were the main sources of information about



this issue. One social worker told of how people came to her when '... they had some uncertainty about what government benefits they could be receiving'. (Interview with social worker, female, aged 42, in the Gibrié de São Lourenço/PA community on 07/09/2022.)

9.3 TREATMENT FOR COVID-19

Quilombolas have sought out information on ways of treating COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, the Ministry of Health made an early COVID-19 treatment kit available. This kit was very controversial, as it included drugs that have not yet been proven to be effective against the virus, or to reduce symptoms. During the debate about the effectiveness of

9. INFORMATION GAPS AND NEEDS



different drugs, the quilombolas felt that there was a lack of further explanation about what treatments could be used. In the Ilha Redonda/AP community, one health worker said that ‘we need to see the right form of treatment, which we don’t have here yet’. (Interview with health worker, female, aged 44, in Ilha Redonda/AP community on 02/08/2022.)

9.4 POST-COVID-19 EFFECTS

The quilombolas that Rooted in Trust spoke to said they needed more information about the effects and after-effects of COVID-19 and of the vaccine. ‘We need to have more reliable information about COVID, because when someone gets COVID, they have after-effects, and we want to know about these after-effects – what is true and what isn’t. If people have treatment, we want to know what after-effects are true or if it’s fake news.’ (Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022.)

Memory loss in people who have had COVID-19 is one of the most recurrent and dramatic symptoms reported among the communities. According to a study published in 2022 by University of São Paulo, half the research participants said they had suffered from memory loss after having COVID-19. Although this information is increasingly widely disseminated, what quilombolas do not know about are the treatment pathways. The result is that they experience a lack of post-COVID care at the primary health care units and a lack of further information.

9.5 THE ORIGIN OF COVID-19

The most common uncertainty that arose among respondents in the quilombola communities of Barcarena, Macapá and Santana was about the origin of COVID-19. In the community of Gibrié de São Lourenço/PA, one health



worker said: ‘I’d really like to know about it – how it started, and who or what caused this virus. About why the virus just spread. We know it was from China, but so far nobody has explained the origins of this virus.’ (Interview with health worker, female, aged 37, in Gibrié de São Lourenço/PA community on 07/09/2022.) With so many rumors about the origin of COVID-19, understanding how it emerged is fundamental to these people, to make sense of the very difficult period they lived through.

9.6 MONKEYPOX

In 2022, Brazil saw an increase in cases of another virus known as monkeypox. There were numerous rumors

that linked this virus to COVID-19, including rumors that people could catch monkeypox from the COVID-19 vaccine. The quilombolas that Rooted in Trust spoke to expressed uncertainty about monkeypox, and asked for more information about how this virus is spread, and whether it could have any connection to COVID-19. ‘I’m very interested in knowing more, but not about COVID. I’m already sick and tired of COVID. But I’m really interested in knowing about this monkeypox. It’s a new thing.’ (Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in the Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022.)

³ What the quilombolas referred to as ‘memory loss’ may be what has widely been called post-COVID ‘brain fog’.

10. MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING INFORMATION

10.1 ACCESS TO SCHOOL EDUCATION

The average literacy rate among quilombolas aged 10 and over is 75.6%, significantly lower than the national average of 91% (CEBRAP, 2021^a). The dissemination of information via audio instead of in written formats is therefore preferable and can have greater reach. People who cannot read or whose literacy skills are poor, but who do have a mobile phone, may prefer to listen to audio, since they cannot read the messages they receive.

10.2 INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Since 2020, Amapá has been experiencing long blackout periods, where several towns have been without electricity for several days or weeks. In addition, in the municipalities of Barcarena, Macapá and Santana, the communities have to deal with problems with electricity supply, particularly on rainy days. One quilombola from the Abacate da Pedreira/AP community told us: 'Energy is our worst enemy, because when you don't have energy, you don't have the internet and you can't find anything out.' (Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in Abacate da Pedreira/AP community 24/08/2022.) Another similar report was received from a teacher in Nossa Senhora do Desterro/AP community: 'The only barrier is in the winter, when energy is in short supply and you can't turn on your mobile or TV. That's the barrier. But in summer it's fine.' (Interview with teacher, female, aged 31, in Nossa Senhora do Desterro/AP community on 24/07/2022).

Half of the quilombola communities that spoke to Rooted in Trust are rural, and are located far away from urban centers, in hard-to-reach areas with precarious infrastructure. They therefore face difficulties making calls and accessing the internet. The monetary costs of accessing the internet are also a challenge. For some, buying a computer or even a mobile phone with internet connectivity is already a major financial challenge. Of those who have a computer or mobile phone, not everyone is able to pay for the internet. Most people only access the internet on their mobile phones, but

the costs of mobile data packages limit user access. On these packages, people can only access specific social networks or their data only lasts a few days per month (IDEC, 2021). This is also the situation for other quilombola communities in northeast Brazil, as the 'Territórios Livres, Tecnologias Livres' (Free Territories, Free Technologies) research showed. The 2021 survey, carried out in 33 quilombola territories, showed that internet connections are also restricted there because of prices and the poor quality service provision (Intervozes, 2021)



“These restrictions and limitations are well known to users of data packages in Brazil, who have found selected parts of their access has been blocked when they exceed their data cap. Known as zero rating, this practice may seem positive, by allowing access to certain apps even without data being available, but it violates the so-called net neutrality principle, provided for in the Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet, by giving differentiated treatment to data packages.”

(Terço, 2022a.)



10. MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING INFORMATION



'Not everyone is able to have a good internet connection, right? [...] I come across many people who use mobile data that is prepaid. It's prepaid, right? It's only a few gigas. So it's difficult to access material, for example, a video, that will use up a lot of their data'. (Interview with health worker, female, aged 42, in Sítio Conceição/PA community on 18/07/2022.)

'There is a bit of a barrier because lots of people are relatively poor, with no purchasing power to buy a mobile phone. Sometimes there is no internet at home, they have poor energy supply, and the cost of that is also high' (Interview with community leader, male, aged 22, in Sítio São João/PA community on 01/08/2022).

Because social media networks and the internet are such a central part of how information is disseminated among quilombolas, barriers to internet access mean that people struggle to access information about COVID-19. Many public services closed their in-person services to the public during the worst points in the pandemic. To get information about these services, people have to access online apps or pages. One woman from São João do Matapi/AP said that, because of this, and because the telephone and internet service in her community was scarce, she could not access public services for a long time.

In the ten quilombola communities involved in this assessment, only one reported not having a primary health care facility or a CHW. Despite this, a member of Malungu pointed out that 'There are no health centers in most regions. The quilombolas are forced to go to the town. Public services in this country are generally not designed for rural areas' (STEVANIM, 2020). The requirement to travel to urban areas to access health services during a pandemic, at a time when health authorities were telling people to stay at home to stay safe, caused confusion and fear.

11. TRUST

For most quilombolas, WhatsApp and TV news are the main sources of information about COVID-19. However, when asked who they trust the most, most said community leaders and Community Health Workers. These are people who disseminated information via WhatsApp that they trusted.

Some people said that they were totally distrustful of messages received via WhatsApp, or that they always preferred to check information by searching online. 'I don't believe anything that comes from WhatsApp. The messages are very confusing, and they also share a lot of fake news. They make up so many things [...] because they take news that happened a long time ago, like an image, and they throw in a text with that image. Then they share that, they throw it out to the network'. (Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in the Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022.)

For quilombolas, not everything on the internet is reliable. On the other hand, TV news programs are usually credible and are considered 'key sources' for the communities: 'because they aren't going to put out a news item before it has been checked out. They can't put it out there only to have to withdraw it afterwards. So this is the key thing that makes people believe in the vaccine and in the deaths that are happening.' (Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022.) But not everyone agrees which news programs are worth watching. Following the national trend, SBT and Record appear to be more reliable sources than Rede Globo (REUTERS INSTITUTE, 2022).

Despite being widely cited as reliable sources, some CHWs faced situations that impeded their work at the start of the pandemic. Because these practitioners had more contact with sick people, this generated a fear

that they might transmit COVID-19 to healthy people who were socially distancing. When the CHWs went to visit families to provide information about prevention, some residents did not let them into their homes for fear of contracting the virus.

“It has taken almost a year for us to regain people’s confidence, especially for elderly people. For people to let us in [the houses]. With all the necessary precautions, with all the precautions that the protocol requires.”

(Interview with health worker, female, aged 44 years, in the Ilha Redonda/AP community on 02/08/2022).

Quilombolas who spoke to the Rooted in Trust project said that they also trust friends, relatives, close neighbors and the 'elders' of the communities. The only organizations mentioned in the interviews were CONAQ, CONAQ-AP and Malungu, and all referred to these entities as sources of reliable and very relevant information.

Among these responses, there were also those who said they 'no longer trust anyone'. The amount of fake news that emerged during the pandemic has shaken many people, in such a way that they don't feel they can fully trust anyone. Most residents in the quilombola communities of Barcarena, Macapá and Santana are catholic or evangelical, and reported that their worship was impacted by the need for social distancing. Priests and pastors were not mentioned as reliable sources of information. Although some religious leaders are also community leaders, it is clear that primacy is given to those with strong community ties, rather than a religious authority.



12. INFORMATION SHARING

According to the quilombolas that Rooted in Trust spoke to, they share information mainly in three ways: through social media, by 'word of mouth', in other words, by talking to each other, and through printed materials (leaflets and booklets distributed in the community). As one quilombola from Ilha Redonda/AP explained: 'Often, as the community is small, people will make up something from having a coffee at someone or others' house and pass on

this information.' (Interview with quilombola resident, male, aged 57, in Ilha Redonda/AP community, 03/08/2022.) The most frequently mentioned social networks were WhatsApp (messages and status updates) and Facebook. People also said that they shared news and information about COVID-19 with relatives and friends, even when they weren't sure the information was true, or were looking for confirmation.

During a focus group in the Abacate da Pedreira/AP community, some participants reported that they shared fake news. At the start of the pandemic, out of fear and insecurity, these people shared news that they received. When they discovered that they had been misled, and they had shared fake news, those people said they felt very frustrated and regretful. 'I admit I did share [fake news]. When I realized, I was like: 'Oh my God, I can't believe it. I'm contributing to it and spreading fake news.' (Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in Abacate da Pedreira/AP community on 24/08/2022.)

Because of these experiences, some said they no longer shared any information. Even if it's from a reliable source, they usually check if the information is true. 'Whenever information is posted by a community member, you have to first check the authenticity and veracity of the information. Because unfortunately, as we know, some people are simply forwarding news or redirecting news. (Interview with health worker, male, aged 41, in Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community, on 18/07/2022.)

The main topics shared are vaccine schedules and COVID-19 case and death numbers. Some people also talked about sharing information about the symptoms of COVID-19, or information received by the Ministry of Health. Another topic frequently shared, mainly at the start of the pandemic, was about possible natural treatments for COVID-19, or for preventing infection. Quilombolas received and shared information ranging from tea and juice recipes to inhalations. It is important to bear in mind that these groups continue their traditional and ancestral practice of natural medicine. Some CHWs were opposed to the use of these natural medicines, while others encouraged these practices. Some members of the communities said they felt positive effects from using these remedies. Based on the reports collected, the quilombolas said that these remedies were used alongside social distancing and vaccination measures.



13. REAL-LIFE IMPACTS AND IMPACTS ON DAILY LIFE

13.1 FEAR, MISINFORMATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

When describing the pandemic period, 45% of respondents said they felt fear, dread or horror, or that it was a frightening time in their lives. All focus groups mentioned this fear. Fear of contracting the virus, of losing family and friends, or of being hospitalized. This was a common feeling in the last two years.

“Because you can’t see the virus, and when you can’t see something, how does that make you feel? You fear what you cannot see. So, I felt afraid of all I could lose – fear for my own life, fear when looking at my children of not seeing them grow up, fear of losing siblings. So, it was all this big fear that I felt.”

(Statement by a quilombola resident during a focus group held in the Sítio Cupuaçu/PA community on 31/08/2022.)

“She didn’t want to go to the hospital, because she also had the thought: ‘Once I’m intubated, I’ll die. If they take me to hospital and intubate me, I’ll die.’”

(Interview with quilombola nurse, female, aged 40 years, in Ilha Redonda/ap community, on 03/08/2022)

The circulation of misinformation contributed to this feeling of fear. Information overload also had this effect. The volume of news and the frequent reports about the death of hundreds of people from the virus had an impact on people’s mental health. As a result, and because of the impact of COVID-19 social distancing measures, there was an increase in people seeking psychological

support during the pandemic. CHWs and social workers reported that many people sought support because they were suffering from anxiety and depression. With the relaxation of distancing measures, many people reported not feeling comfortable in crowded places, or that they could no longer adapt back into daily life.

RUMORS AND FALSE NEWS THAT CIRCULATED AMONG THE QUILOMBO COMMUNITIES INVOLVED IN THE DIAGNOSIS

“Vaccines against COVID-19 are harmful to health and cause the death of those who take them.”	“Vaccines did not respect safety procedures in their manufacture.”
	“Whoever took the first dose of a vaccine from a manufacturer, can only take the second dose from the same manufacturer.”
“Only with the first dose of the vaccine you are already protected against COVID-19.”	“COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous for pregnant women.”
“To protect yourself against COVID-19, get the early treatment kit.”	“The virus was created in a laboratory.”
“Vaccines prevent 100% death from COVID-19.”	“Whoever goes to the hospital will surely die.”

13.2 QUILOMBOLA TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND REMEDIES

During the interviews, quilombolas were asked whether drugs such as ivermectin could be used to treat or prevent COVID-19. Of the respondents, 21% said they believed that the drug was effective in combating the virus. 'It's true, for sure. It's very important, it really fights it, it works. It really prevents the virus.' (Interview with quilombola resident, male, aged 41, in Ilha Redonda/AP community on 02/08/2022.)

Another 72% of respondents said that they did not believe in the effectiveness of this drug. There were also some who did

not know how to answer the question. Even if fewer people believed this information, the topic tends to resurface frequently and poses a risk to the population. After all, the use of these drugs without medical guidance can create health risks and their untested use was widely promoted by a large number of representatives from government agencies, including the then President of Brazil.

This type of drug, however, is not the first choice among quilombolas. These communities, not only in Amapá and Pará, but in general, tend to use so-called traditional medicine, or even 'home remedies'. This means teas, healing essences ('garrafadas'), syrups and other remedies made from medicinal herbs, collected from forests or planted in vegetable gardens,

from knowledge passed down between families. In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, many quilombolas resorted to traditional medicine. Quilombolas reported that these home remedies had not yet been recognized as ways of preventing and treating COVID-19, but that they preferred to take these remedies to try to improve their symptoms and that they often felt positive effects.

13.4 PERCEPTION OF THE PANDEMIC

In 2022, it is already customary to hear the expressions 'when the pandemic happened' or 'during the pandemic'. This suggests to us that, for some people, the pandemic is already a thing of the past. This inference is backed up by the results of vaccination, the reduced mortality of the virus, and because of the relaxation of social distancing and the non-mandatory use of masks in public spaces. People can still be seen walking around with masks in towns and communities, but the majority of the population have not continued this precaution.

For a long time, there was a slower rate of vaccine take-up in Brazil's north region. In late 2021, the states in this region had the lowest vaccination rates. More recently, this region continues to have a high rate of hospitalization. However, as quilombolas have pointed out, field hospitals – units created specifically to treat COVID-19 cases – have now been closed.

Perception of the pandemic varies between quilombolas in the communities of Barcarena, Macapá and Santana. For some, it is already a thing of the past; something they are not seeking more information about. For others, the positive changes of recent months are still not enough. 'Thank God for the vaccine. Many people think it's over now. But it isn't over yet'. (Interview with health worker, female, aged 42, in Sítio Conceição/PA community on 18/07/2022.)



14. CONCLUSION

As the saying goes: information is power. However, what we witnessed in the most intense period of the COVID-19 pandemic was that disinformation is also power, that is, the condition of disinformation about the pandemic was not only the absence of information, but the deliberate action to misinform, the intentionality in disseminating content on the subject that had no technical or scientific support and, even more, often configured in what popular language calls half-truths, as they often used excerpts from technical and scientific content and remodeled the content in a way favoring a mistaken view of the pandemic.

The consequences were proven to be harmful to the fight against COVID-19: people denying the existence of the virus, real campaigns on social networks against the vaccine and vaccination, thousands of men, women and children being exposed to the risks of contamination and the most terrible, the suspicion that the number of lives lost was real. In this context, where does the power of disinformation stand? It is in denial: denial of science, denial of verification of what is reliable or unreliable, and even the denial of human frailty, that is, that not everything can be predicted, not everything can be trusted.

This set of denials hit everyone, but not in the same way and not with the same intensity. What we saw in relation to deaths from COVID-19 is that the disease whose contamination began among wealthy executives predominantly killed the poor in urban peripheries and rural communities. Likewise, the disinformation that was disseminated to everyone did not have equal consequences for those who received it. As shown in this diagnosis, Quilombola communities were impacted differently, since the power of disinformation implied tensions between community members; increased the risk to the lives of the elderly, who are key people in keeping the memory of communities alive; and demobilized strategic actions for the public recognition



of quilombolas, such as priority vaccination for them.

In this sense, the work carried out within the scope of the Enraizado na Confiança project in Pará and Amapá, in partnership with the IEB and the participation of 20 leaders of the quilombola communities, indicated that the confrontation with this set of impacts, effects and consequences of disinformation goes through two strategic components: the first one is to carry out a qualified diagnosis of the information ecosystem that is participatory, that is, that the quilombola community participates in the entire process, from the elaboration of the research proposal, formulation of instruments, field activities and data discussion. Another aspect is that this process must be a pedagogical journey, that is, a dynamic of teaching and learning where the leaders

of the quilombola communities and their organizations are strengthened as protagonists of healthy information ecosystems in their communities. Thus, the power of disinformation will be diluted and the power of safe, reliable information with social and technical quality will be reinforced.

This diagnosis, produced by many hands, hearts and minds, is one of the deliverables of the Enraizado na Confiança project with the Quilombolas. The identified challenges continue to encourage the leaders mobilized in the project to remain active; that other communities are reached, and therefore other hands, hearts and minds of quilombolas are mobilized; and that more national and international civil society organizations are engaged. May these provocations be accepted!

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