



**NIHR GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP ON RACISM AND  
SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH IN BRAZIL**

# ORI NEWSLETTER 1

March 2026

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## Whats is ORI?

'Orí', a word of Yoruba origin, literally means 'head', but carries meanings that go far beyond the physical dimension. Orí is the mind, the spiritual centre that guides each person's inner journey, their capacity for self-knowledge, balance and care. In the imagination of Afro-Brazilian traditions, caring for Orí is caring for oneself, strengthening mental, spiritual and emotional health. At the same time, this care does not occur in isolation: it connects to roots, ancestry and the community that sustains and empowers the individual.

By choosing the name ORI, we evoke the symbolic power of care that arises from the encounter between the self and the collective, between the mind and ancestry. ORI team is thus a movement of listening, research and action that seeks to strengthen the mental health of Black communities and individuals in Brazil, of different ages and backgrounds, to produce robust evidence to influence public policy and contribute to the construction of more just, diverse and supportive societies.

The ORI group – NIHR Global Health Research Group on Racism and Social Inequalities in Mental Health in Brazil emerged as an urgent response to structural racism and social inequalities in the country. It is well known that these inequalities not only cause psychological suffering, exclusion and violence, which directly affect the mental health of the black population, but also impact access to health services. However, it is also in the group's partner communities – such as the quilombos of Rio dos Macacos, Engenho da Ponte and Boqueirão (a quilombo is a traditional community formed by descendants of formerly enslaved Black people, preserving culture, land, and collective ways of life), as well as the Heliópolis community, University Medical Service Prof. Rubens Brasil (SMURB) and the Viva Infância Institute — that we find strategies of resistance, ancestral knowledge, and collective strength that help build pathways of care and belonging.



The ORI team. Photo by: Wendell Wagner

## 'Care that comes from within and from our roots'

It is from this dialogue between the inner self and the collective that the motto of our group is born: 'Care that comes from within and from our roots.' From Within (from each person's Orí): It is an invitation for each person to look at themselves, get to know themselves, respect themselves and seek their inner balance. From the Roots (of our history and community): It is the certainty that this care is sustained by the strength of our ancestors.

# Objectives of the ORI group

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## WHY NOW?

- There is a lack of robust research on racism and mental health in Brazil from an intersectional perspective
- Many experiences do not receive adequate diagnosis, treatment or attention
- ORI team seeks to transform evidence into education, intervention and advocacy

## Primary Objective

Our primary objective is to produce evidence on how racism and social inequalities affect mental health in Brazil and develop effective interventions, adapted to the sociocultural context and committed to the needs of vulnerable black communities.

## Specific Objectives

- Produce intersectional knowledge on the effects of racism on mental health
- Conduct research engaged with black communities, valuing local and traditional knowledge
- Co-develop interventions and training activities to improve the response of mental health services and educational environments
- Influencing public policy, acting at municipal, state and national levels
- Promote intercultural exchanges in Latin America and the Caribbean, encouraging good regional practices
- Develop sustainable research capacity by forming a multidisciplinary network between Brazil and the United Kingdom



# Community Engagement and Involvement



The ORI team in Cachoeira city. Photo by: Wendell Wagner

The ORI Group is deeply committed to involving community members in all stages of its activities in Brazil. From the outset, we have adopted the principle that guides our practice: “no research about us without us.” This means that each phase of the research — from designing the methods to carrying out the interventions — is developed in a participatory manner, side by side with the quilombola and urban communities with which we work. In addition, all case studies are supported by Community Advisory Groups, reinforcing the project’s commitment to research built with the communities.

Community engagement requires, first and foremost, recognising and engaging in dialogue with the various actors that make up each territory. In the quilombola communities of Bahia and the Heliópolis community in São Paulo, this involves quilombolas, local residents, students, families, health professionals, community leaders, civil society organisations, representatives of educational institutions, cultural collectives, religious leaders and other social agents. The diversity of these interlocutors ensures that ORI is constructed in a pluralistic manner, respecting different points of view, experiences and knowledge.



Samba in the Rio dos Macacos quilombo. Photo by: Wendell Wagner



Walk for Peace in Heliópolis. Photo by: Fernanda Garbosa

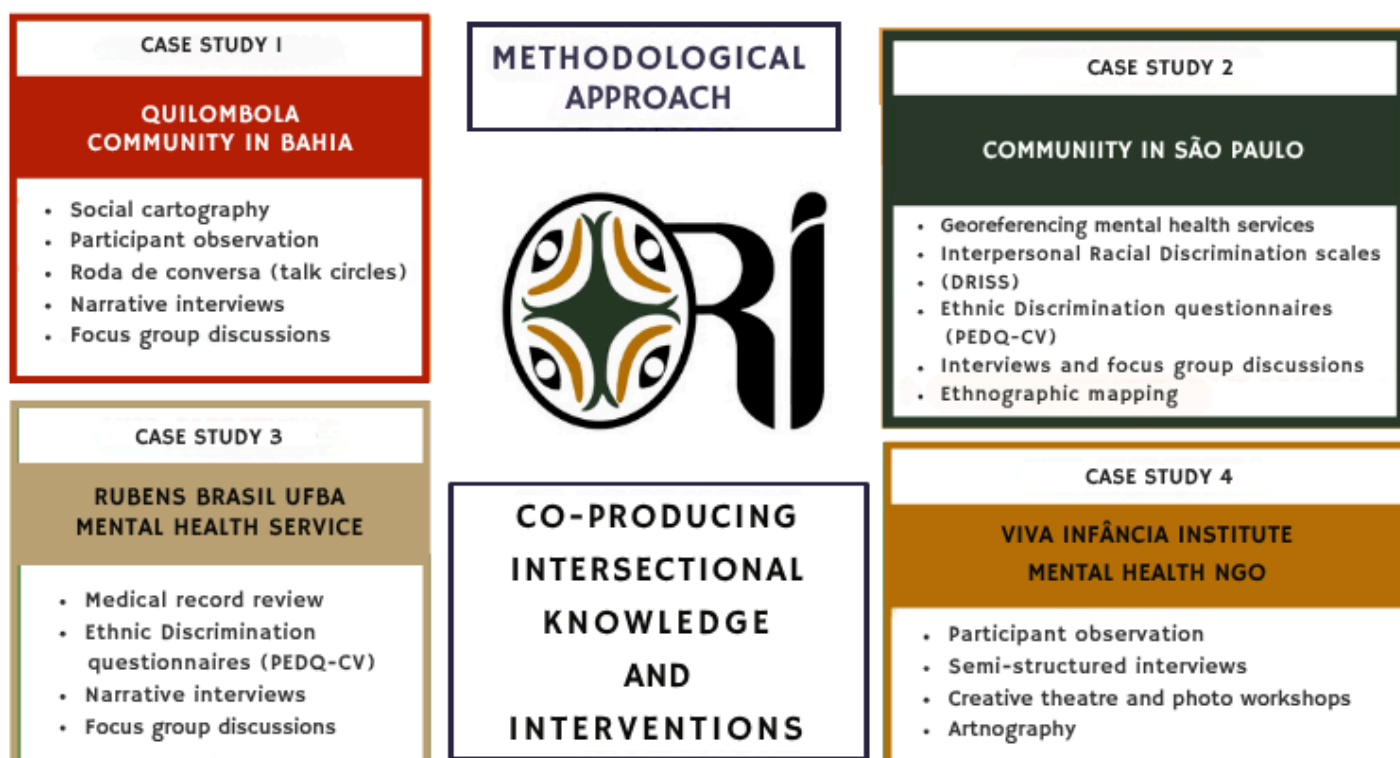
## Case Studies



The case studies presented comprise the methodological approach of the ORI group, which seeks to co-produce knowledge and intersectional interventions based on different community contexts and mental health services in Brazil. Each study uses qualitative and participatory methods, adapted to the local culture and context of each territory and social group.

The ORI methodology integrates participant observation, ethnography, narrative and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, document analysis and quantitative strategies. In different territories, social cartography and creative workshops help to visualize inequalities, care practices and experiences.

- **Guiding principles: intersectionality, interdisciplinarity, community participation and data integration**
- **Shared knowledge production with quilombola communities, residents of the periphery, students, families and professionals**
- **Using creative methods, such as photography, theater and literature, to express and reinterpret experiences**





# Case Studies



## Case 1 - Quilombola communities of Bahia

Boqueirão, Engenho da Ponte and Rio dos Macacos were chosen to understand how racism, territory, memory, spirituality and care networks shape mental health.

- Methods: participatory social mapping, participant observation, conversation circles, interviews and focus groups
- Key point: dialogue between traditional knowledge, spirituality, use of herbs, collective memory and the right to territory
- Focus areas: support networks, impacts of racism, structural violence, ancestry and the everyday production of care



Samba in Boqueirão Quilombo. Photo by: Wendell Wagner

## Case 2 - Heliópolis in São Paulo

In Heliópolis, ORI investigates how structural racism, urban inequalities and barriers to accessing services shape experiences of mental health suffering and strategies of resistance.

- Methods: Geomapping, ethnography and participant observation, narrative interviews, populational survey
- Key point: Understanding Heliópolis as a territory shaped by structural inequalities, but also by strong community organisation, cultural life and networks of solidarity
- Focus areas: Barriers to accessing services, quality of care, school and community discrimination, vulnerabilities affecting young people and women



Heliópolis. Photo by: Cindy Tavares



UNAS mental health event.  
Photo by: Fernanda Garbosa

## Case 3 - SMURB/UFBA

At the SMURB from Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), the research combines reviewing medical records and listening to users and professionals to understand how racial issues permeate mental health care.

- Methods: document analysis, questionnaires on ethnic discrimination, interviews and focus groups
- Key point: student experiences, institutional barriers and clues for more sensitive care regarding racial inequalities



SMURB patient files. Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery

## Case 4 - Viva Infância

At the Viva Infância Institute, the study monitors care practices focused on childhood and adolescence, paying attention to the effects of racism on children, families and developmental trajectories.

- Methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, theatre and photography workshops and artnography
- Key point: emotional expression, discriminatory experiences, family bonds, extended care and the power of artistic languages



Viva Infância room. Photo by: unknown author



## ORI's Progress: Quilombos

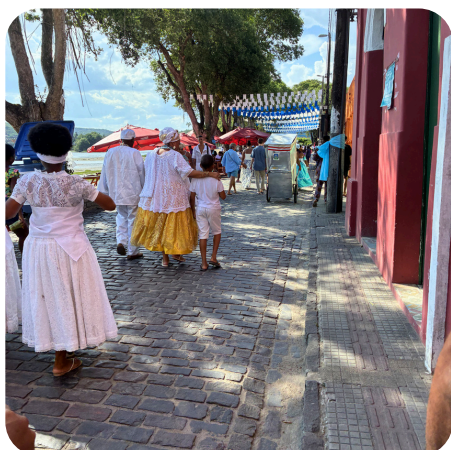
In its first year, the ORI group underwent a significant period of research maturation. We went from planning activities to collecting empirical data, co-produced with individuals from the territories and services involved. Another key advancement is that community engagement moved from a secondary role to structuring the research design itself, influencing methodological choices, feedback methods and participation strategies. These developments reveal a significant shift from a predominantly biomedical perspective to an intersectional, community-based and anti-racist understanding of mental health.



ORI's group visit to the Engenho da Ponte quilombo. Photo by: Wendell Wagner

In the case study conducted in the Quilombos of Engenho da Ponte, Boqueirão and Rio dos Macacos (Bahia), the main progress comes from the consolidation of territorial participation, the strengthening of ties with the communities, and the construction of participatory research. The ORI teams strengthened their continuous engagement with the three territories through ethnography, social cartography, participant observation and active listening, which fostered relationships of trust and a deeper understanding of local experiences.

We consolidated the Community Advisory Groups as instances of co-management and social participation, reinforcing the project's commitment to research built with the communities. ORI team also progressed in mapping local networks of health, assistance, education and Quilombola organizations, as well as in the analysis of epidemiological data on living conditions and health.



Iemanjá Day in Cachoeira city.  
Photo by: Vitória Dias



ORI's workshop. Photo by: unknown author



ORI event in the Engenho da Ponte quilombo.  
Photo by: Wendell Wagner



# Quilombos



Community Work Day for the construction of a Community Center using Adobe. Photo by: community records



Participatory design workshop to think about the construction of the community center. Photo by: Tainá Azevedo



Quilombola Roots Festival in the Boqueirão quilombo. Photo by: unknown author



Discussion group on mental health in the Rio dos Macacos quilombo. Photo by: unknown author



Visit to Rio dos Macacos quilombo. Photo by: Fernanda Garbosa



Woman's Day in the Rio dos Macacos quilombo. Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Meeting of the Quilombola Council of the Iguape Basin and Valley. Photo by: Rivaldo Barros



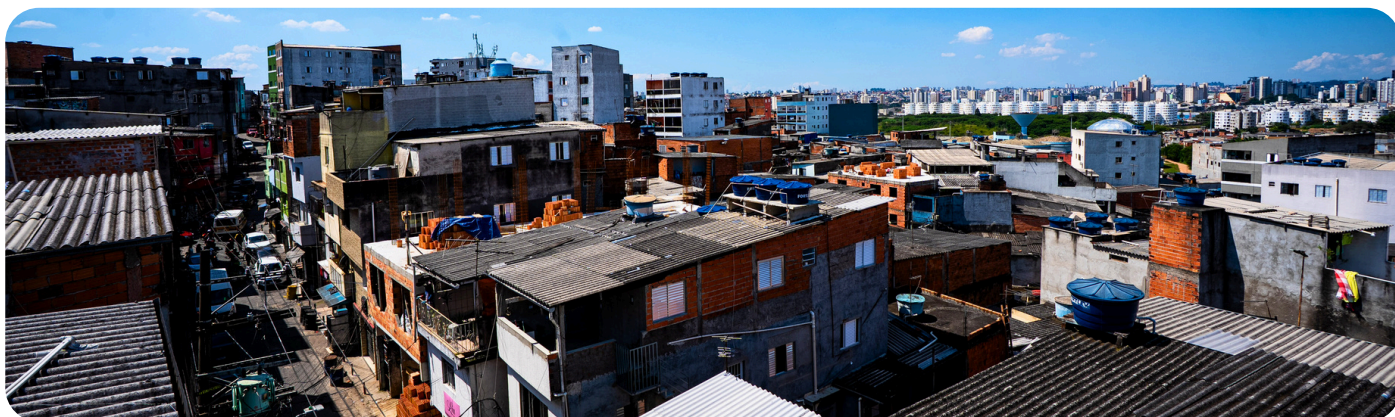
São Roque procession in the Engenho da Ponte quilombo. Photo by: Rivaldo Barros



Discussion group on mental health in the Engenho da Ponte quilombo. Photo by: Vitória Dias



## ORI's Progress: Heliópolis



Heliópolis. Photo by: Cindy Tavares

In Heliópolis, one of the most important achievements of the São Paulo team was building strong partnerships within the territory. The formal partnership with UNAS Heliópolis, the largest community organization in the area, strengthened the institutional foundation of the research and created more solid conditions for ongoing collaboration with local actors.

In addition, the team expanded its dialogue with public mental health services, schools and community-based organizations. This is an important step because it helps embed the research within the territory's existing networks, supporting an approach that is more connected to local needs and to the different spaces of care, education and social mobilization.

Another key point was the team's preparation for fieldwork. Even with the ethics process still underway, the group made a strategic investment in methodological and political training, including participation in an ethnography course, anti-racism literacy training and capacity-building in school-based mental health promotion.

Community engagement has also already features as a central pillar of the research in Heliópolis. The team took part in important local events, promoted dialogue on racism and mental health and completed a local geomapping exercise, identifying services, networks and strategic actors.



Presentation at the Ame Sua Mente Meeting.  
Photo by: Fernanda Garbosa



UNAS mental health event.  
Photo by: Fernanda Garbosa



# Heliópolis



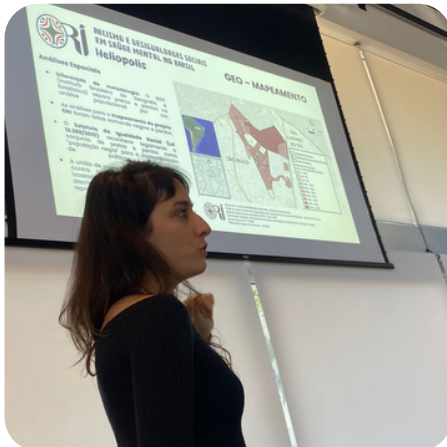
Presentation at the ORI's event.  
Photo by: Wendell Wagner



Plenary of the Black Movement.  
Photo by: Cindy Tavares



Plenary of the Black Movement.  
Photo by: Wallace França



Presentation at the Ame Sua Mente Meeting.  
Photo by: Fernanda Garbosa



Visit to Bahia. Photo by: Joice Silva



Visit Odon School. Photo by: Clarice Madruga



Visit to UNAS/CCAs.  
Photo by: Daniela Carvalho



June celebration.  
Photo by: Clarice Madruga



Visit to Campos Salles: Awareness-raising and Training. Photo by: Clarice Madruga



## ORI's Progress: SMURB



SMURB's Archive room. Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery

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Presentation of the case study progress.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Team care moment.  
Photo by: unknown author



# SMURB



Visit to SMURB. Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



SMURB team meeting.  
Photo by: Vinicius Carvalho



ORI's workshop. Photo by: unknown author



Discussion group with SMURB users.  
Photo by: unknown author



Discussion group with SMURB users.  
Photo by: unknown author



Visit to SMURB. Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Presentation at the ORI's event.  
Photo by: Wendell Wagner



Commemorative mural for Black Awareness Day.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Discussion group with SMURB users.  
Photo by: Diogo Sousa



## ORI's Progress: Viva Infância



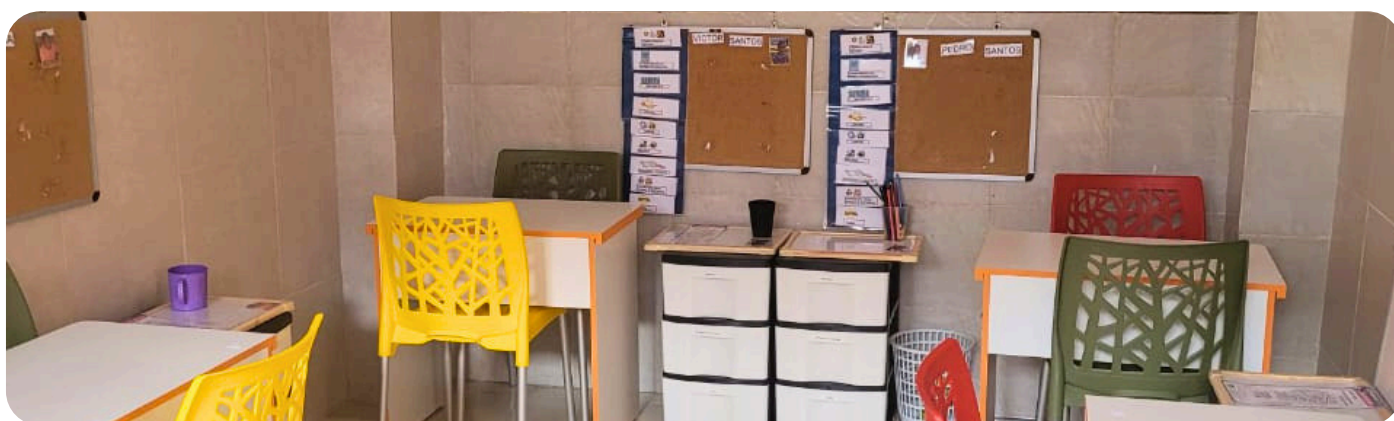
Presentation of the case study progress.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Visit to the Viva Infância Institute.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery

In the case of Viva Infância, we advanced this research through the broadening of methodological and clinical sensitivity to capture the effects of racism on childhood and family life. The implementation of participant observation in spaces such as the waiting room and the playroom allowed for the systematic recording of scenes from daily institutional life through field diaries and reports, expanding the understanding of the ways in which suffering, care and interactions between staff, children and families circulate.

The workshops and cultural activities with children and families, such as Cine Viva (a movie session for children and parents), a workshop on recyclable toys, and storytelling with musicality, proved important not only as bonding strategies but also as devices for expression and listening. One of the most relevant advances was the consolidation of a racialized clinical reading on the early medicalization and pathologization of black children, this enabled preparation for the analysis of medical records, focusing on diagnoses and medications received prior to entering the service.



Classroom of Viva Infância. Photo by: unknown author



# Viva Infância



Facade to the Viva Infância institute.  
Photo by: Joice Silva



Presentation of the case study progress.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Visit to the Viva Infância Institute.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Visit to the Viva Infância Institute.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Biodanza workshop.  
Photo by: Gessinayde Queiroz



Viva Infância classroom painting.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Presentation of the case study progress.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



ORI's event.  
Photo by: Ana Flávia Nery



Biodanza workshop.  
Photo by: Gessinayde Queiroz

# Meet the ORI Team



## CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

**Prof Lisa Dikomitis (University of Warwick, UK)**  
Medical anthropology  
Health service research



**Prof Leny Trad (UFBA, Brazil)**  
Collective health  
Anthropology, psychology



## CO-INVESTIGATORS

### BRAZIL

Federal University of Bahia (UFBA)

**Prof Clarice Mota**  
Anthropology of health



**Dr Claudia Mascarenhas**  
Psychology



**Prof Monique Espiridiao**  
Public health



**Prof Joilda Nery**  
Social epidemiology



**Dr Laise Rezende de Andrade**  
Public health



### BRAZIL

Federal University of Recôncavo of Bahia (UFRB)

**Prof Carlos Alberto de Paula**  
Social policy



**Prof Jeane Tavares**  
Clinical psychology



**Prof Diana Anunciacao**  
Sociology of health



### BRAZIL

Bahia State University (UNEB)

**Prof Sandra Assis Brasil**  
Psychology



### BRAZIL

Federal University of Sao Paulo (UNIFESP)

**Prof Rodrigo Bressan**  
Psychiatry



**Prof Clarice Madruga**  
Clinical epidemiology



**Dr Henrique Akiba**  
Psychiatry



**Dr Carolina Gaya**  
Sociology



### UNITED KINGDOM

KCL AND BSMS  
KMMS

**Prof Seeromanie Harding**  
Social epidemiology



**Prof Papreen Nahar**  
Medical anthropology



**Prof Sukhwinder Shergill**  
Psychiatry



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT CO-INVESTIGATORS

### BAHIA

**Valderia Lopez**  
CEI



### SÃO PAULO

**Jorge Assis**  
CEI



## CASE STUDY 1 Quilombola Communities

### Rio dos Macacos

**Prof Gabriela Silva (Lead)**  
Postdoctoral researcher



**Maryana Carneiro**  
Master student



**Bruno William**  
Master student



**Franciele Silva**  
Undergraduate student



**Natasha Navarro**  
Undergraduate student



**Josinelia Paixão**  
Scholarship



### Engenho da Ponte

**Prof Gustavo Menezes (Lead)**  
Postdoctoral researcher



**Prof Carlos Alberto**  
Co-investigator



**Livia Figueiredo**  
PhD student



**Messias Júnior**  
Undergraduate student



**Larissa Silva**  
Undergraduate student



**Bárbara Santos**  
Master student



**Rivaldo Barros**  
Master student



### Boqueirão

**Dr Alessivânia Mota (Lead)**  
Postdoctoral researcher



**Felipe Santos**  
Master student



**Adriel Almeida**  
Master student



**Albino Júnior**  
Master student



**Cremilda Jesus**  
Researcher Assistant



**Felipe Meireles**  
Master student



**Tainá Azevedo**  
Master student



**Vanilda Santos**  
Researcher Assistant



**Maia Naeh**  
Researcher Assistant



**Nayane Souza**  
Researcher Assistant





# Meet the OR Team



## CASE STUDY 2 Heliopolis Community

**Pedro Pereira (Joint Lead)**  
Researcher



**Olga Paz (Lead)**  
Master student



**Daniela Carvalho**  
Researcher



**Gustavo Estanislau**  
Researcher



**Fernanda Garbosa**  
Researcher



**Joice da Silva (Joint Lead)**  
PhD student



**Katia Barreto**  
Researcher



**Prof Cinara Brito**  
Researcher



**Prof Luciana Silva**  
Researcher



**Eduarda de Oliveira**  
Specialist in black community



**Felipe do Nascimento**  
Community Member



## CASE STUDY 3 University Mental Health Service (SMURB)

**Dr Camila Andrade (Lead)**  
Researcher



**Elaine Cristina Santos**  
PhD student



**Neemias Rosa**  
Research Assistant



**Dr Diogo Silva (Lead)**  
Postdoctoral Researcher



**Vinicius Pereira de Carvalho**  
PhD student



**Felipe Gomes**  
Undergraduated student



**Luciana Santana**  
PhD student



**Adelmaria Ione Santos**  
Researcher Assistant



**Josenete Amorim**  
Undergraduate Student



## CASE STUDY 4 Mental Health NGO (Viva Infancia)

**Prof Ricardo Arantes (Lead)**  
Postdoctoral researcher



**Dr Cláudia Fernandes**  
Researcher Assistant



**Lília Pires**  
Researcher Assistant



**Andaye Marques**  
Master student



**Flávia Fernanda Santos**  
Master student



# Meet the ORI Team



## UK TEAM

**Dr Brianne Wenning**  
Postdoctoral  
researcher



## ORI ADMIN SUPPORT

### UK

**Louise Law  
(Lead)**  
Project Officer



### Bahia

**Giselle Ferraz  
(Lead)**  
Administrator



**Monique Silva**  
Admin Support



**Joyce Santos**  
Admin Support



### São Paulo

**Priscilla Selles  
(Lead)**  
Admin Support



**Luci Zeferino  
Silva**  
Admin Support



## COMMUNICATION AND ARTS

### Bahia

**Ana Flávia Nery**  
Communication  
Analyst



**Gessinayde  
Queiroz**  
Master Student



**Vitória Dias**  
Undergraduate  
student





# Announcements



Elaine Luz was accepted into the Professional Doctorate in Collective Health at the Institute of Collective Health of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



Luciana Boa Morte was accepted into the Professional Doctorate program in Collective Health at the Institute of Collective Health of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



Adriel Almeida was accepted into the Master's program in Psychology at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



Rivaldo Barros was accepted into the Master's program in Collective Health at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



Joilda Nery has become the new Director of the Institute of Collective Health at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



Vinícius Carvalho graduated in Medicine from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



Flávia Fernanda was accepted into the Master's program in Collective Health at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).



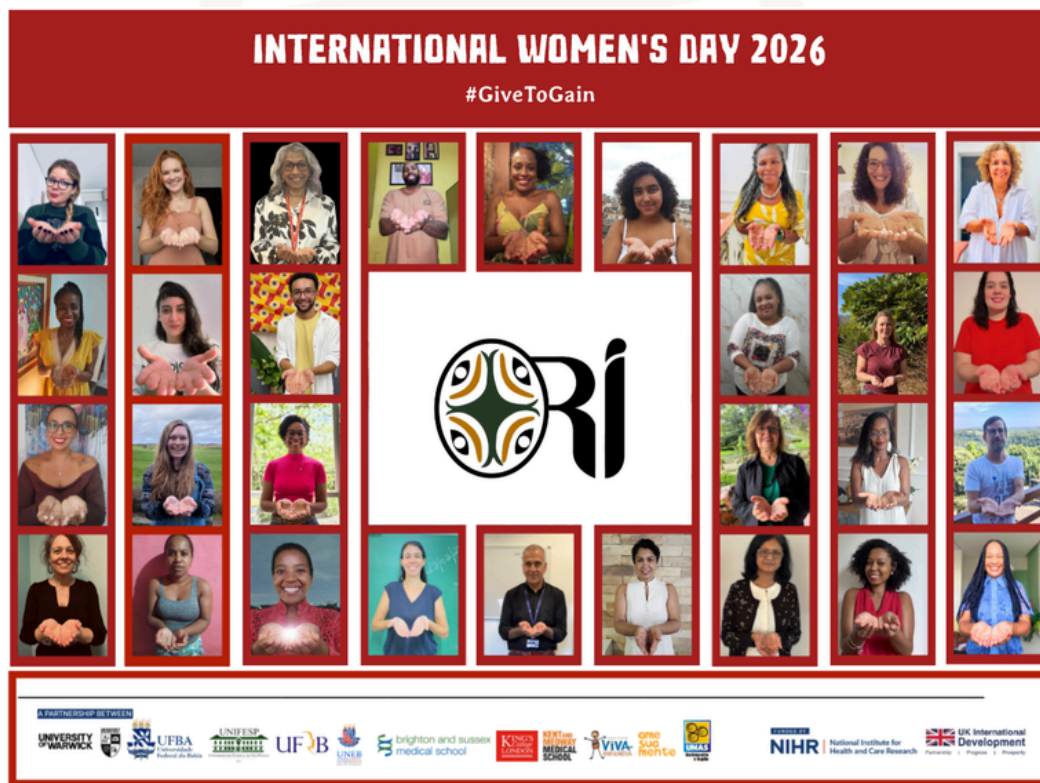
Joice Lanne was accepted into the Doctoral Program in Collective Health at the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP).

# Campaigns



In 2026, the International Women's Day invited us to reflect on a key question: what are we willing to give to advance gender equality in meaningful ways? The #GiveToGain campaign emphasized that generosity is not a loss — it is intentional multiplication. By sharing knowledge, time, resources, care, visibility, and opportunities, we strengthened women and expanded networks of support, solidarity, and justice.

On International Women's Day 2026, the ORI Group highlighted how racism and gender intersect to shape experiences of Mental Health and access to care. Our work sought to understand and address these inequalities, contributing to the development of more equitable, inclusive, and just mental health systems.



Watch the video we produced to celebrate International Women's Day by [clicking here](#).

Find out more:



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www.ori-community.com



@oricommunity

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<https://www.fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR156517>