

**POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS  
FOR THE  
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

**UDF-20-903-BRA  
Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies to Fight Inequality and Poverty in Brazil**

**28 September 2025**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Development Context.....	6
(ii) Project Objectives and Intervention Rationale.....	8
(iii) Project Strategy and Approach.....	10
<b>III.EVALUATION METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>IV.EVALUATION FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
(i) Relevance.....	13
(ii) Coherence.....	14
(iii) Effectiveness.....	14
(iv) Efficiency .....	16
(v) Impact .....	18
(vi) Sustainability.....	18
(vii) UNDEF added value.....	20
<b>V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>VI.LESSONS LEARNED .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>ANNEXES .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Annex 1: Evaluation Questions.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Annex 2: Documents Reviewed .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Annex 3: People Consulted.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Annex 4: Acronyms.....</b>	<b>32</b>

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### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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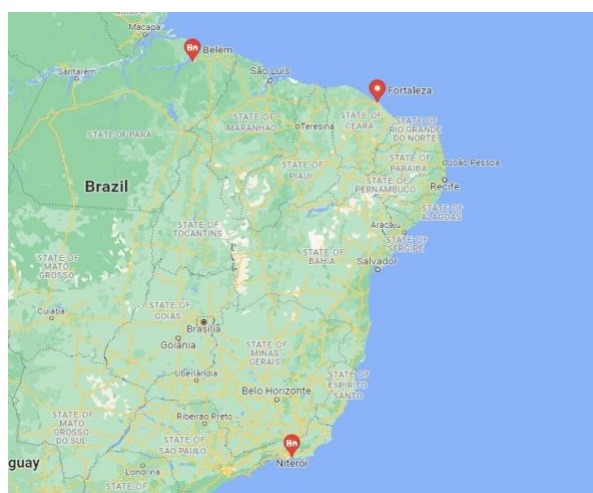
This report was written by Kevin Lyne.

## Project Area

Project activities were in the municipalities of Belém, Fortaleza and Niterói. The Grantee is based in the city of São Paulo.



[www.ibge.gov.br](http://www.ibge.gov.br)



Location sites: municipalities of Belém, Fortaleza and Niterói





**Citizens' Assembly participants – Belém, September 2023**



**Citizens' Assembly participants – Fortaleza, December 2023**



**Citizens' Assembly participants – Niterói, October 2023**

## I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled “Deliberative Democracy and Citizens’ Assemblies to Fight Inequality and Poverty in Brazil”. The Implementing Partner for the project was *Rede Conhecimento Social* (Social Knowledge Network). Its Local Implementing Partner was *Coletivo Delibera Brasil* (Brazil Deliberates Collective). Both organisations collaborated closely on the implementation of the project, from 1 July 2022 to 31 October 2024. The project benefitted from a UNDEF grant of USD 198,000 to carry out the following activities for the holding of Citizens’ Assemblies (CAs, or “Minipublics”) in the municipalities of Belém, Fortaleza and Niterói:

- Initial meetings with focus points and local public decision makers for each municipality, and then workshops and working groups. Leading to commitment letters from each municipality, with detailed work plans and governance models for the CAs;
- Three CAs conducted, one in each municipality;
- Three Citizen Recommendation reports presented and submitted to local authorities;
- Communication products disseminated locally and nationally;
- One online repository established to document and communicate project materials;
- One research paper published to disseminate knowledge in the Brazilian academic community;
- Six inter-municipal online workshops held to strengthen the deliberative cycle;
- A community of practice created and at least six meetings held to organize learnings on citizens’ deliberations;
- Three international webinars held to promote acknowledgement of citizen deliberation.

Direct beneficiaries/participants were: around 120 citizens participating in CAs (40 per municipality, at least 50% women, 50% non-white, 20% youth); at least 30 public administration staff with a direct involvement in citizen deliberation initiatives (10 per municipality); 15 civil society representatives participating in Reference/Content Groups for each CA (5 per municipality).

### *Overall Achievements*

This was a well-run and impactful project, with multiple outputs designed to engage with and influence a broad range of civil society actors/citizens and decision-makers – from grass-roots organisations to government institutions, and in three locations that were geographically spread across the country.

The project has enhanced the reputation of the Grantee as a leading actor in the promotion and organisation of Citizens’ Assemblies in Brazil – having now organised 20+ Minipublics since its foundation in 2017. But Minipublics remain a relative novelty in the wider system of social participation in Brazil.

Of special note is how the project’s outputs and outcomes have increased the credibility of the Grantee with the Federal Government and the UN Country Team (UNCT).

### *Key Recommendations*

- There is an **opportunity for the Grantee to be more strategic with its future work**, if it wishes to move beyond the holding of CAs at the municipal level. The evaluator strongly supports this, and encourages the Grantee to consider options on the following fronts:
  - i. Explore ways of helping the Federal Government improve alignment of participatory process mechanisms, including through drawing lessons from the Grantee’s methodology that could be applied at the national level.
  - ii. As part of this, continue to engage with the UNCT in the delivery of the UN

Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027, under its pillar on Governance & Institutional Capacities.

- iii. Knowledge transfer. Already, from the project's experience in Niterói, there is interest in more direct support to the Municipality, for help with its other participatory mechanisms. This could include dedicated training for officials.
- iv. Advocacy work with political parties, all of whom share some degree of mistrust of participatory processes – with populist tendencies increasingly seeing politicians claim their own “direct” communications with society.
- Work on establishing a **Community of Practice** on participatory/deliberative processes in Brazil should continue.
- Further thought should be given to the establishment of **follow-up mechanisms** that can ensure a higher degree of success for recommendations emerging from deliberative processes, when governments change.
- To **improve access to key materials and learning on the Grantee's website, include welcome pages in English and Spanish**, and increase the number of documents and features translated from Portuguese.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- The most successful Citizens' Assemblies take full account of circumstances and contexts, and adapt accordingly – hence the different lottery selection techniques used by the Grantee in each of the three locations. Respecting key principles is more important than the methods used.
- CAs can be most useful and effective when addressing “hot” topics that existing political systems and structures are unable to resolve. But this is not always possible where political actors, who need to be part of the process, perceive unacceptable political/electoral risk. A balance may often need to be struck to find a theme/question that is acceptable to all.
- Engaging with journalists was challenging, and media interest was not as strong as the Grantee was hoping for. Reporting good news stories (as opposed to crises and conflicts) is a challenge everywhere. Plan accordingly and manage expectations. Communications strategies should remain an important part of any project design and delivery – to improve understanding and acceptability of CAs. For countries in the Global South, like Brazil, these should tackle head-on any reservations about the “random” nature of selection, and representation/inclusivity. The Brazilian experience is already demonstrating that CAs are not some Western import but are building on a long tradition of social participation in decision-making processes at local and national levels.
- Evaluating projects on participatory/deliberative democracy is a relatively new practice for Monitoring and Evaluation, and some lessons can be drawn from the experience of this project: Ensure there is sufficient engagement with CA members, and make good use of the OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes, especially the three-step evaluation cycle: (1) process design integrity; (2) deliberative experience; and (3) pathways to impact.

## **II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY**

### **(i) Development Context**

Brazil is the largest country in South America. It is the world's fifth largest country by area (roughly the size of the continental United States) and the seventh by population, with over 210 million people.<sup>1</sup>

In the latest UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) Report for the period 2023-24, Brazil ranks

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank figures for 2023: 211,140,729, with population growth falling since 2020: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/brazil>.



89<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries. Data calculations put Brazil in the “High Human Development” category, but the country has slipped two places since 2021, and index measures remain lower than pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. In terms of its comparative ranking with other countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region, it is currently 11<sup>th</sup>. Brazil is also mentioned as being among many countries influenced by “global political polarisation” (the thematic focus of the HDI report), which hinders domestic and international collaboration and is having negative impacts on quality of life.<sup>2</sup> The population is also highly diverse, but racial and gender discrimination persist as systemic barriers that limit opportunities to break cycles of poverty.<sup>3</sup>

Since the period of military rule (1964-1985), Brazil has made significant progress. The 1988 Constitution defined citizen and minority rights, protected indigenous lands, advanced environmental concerns, established key democratic practices and institutions, and protected financing for critical services such as health and education. Provisions for social participation in decision-making processes at the federal and municipal levels were also included in the 1988 Constitution. Brazil has solid national legal frameworks, competent institutions, stable and sophisticated financial systems, and a well-established administrative system, particularly at Federal level. Yet Brazil still ranks in the bottom 25% on most institutional dimensions when compared to OECD countries (Brazil is an OECD “Key Partner”), limiting its capacity to implement and enforce complex policies across its vast territory.<sup>4</sup>

Its political arena, though polarised, is characterised by vibrant debate – though independent journalists and civil society activists risk harassment and political violence is high. The Presidential elections of 2022 were won by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) of the Workers’ Party (PT), who served as President from 2003 to 2011. He beat the far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro of the Liberal Party (PL) with 50.9% of the vote in the second round in October 2022. Bolsonaro did not explicitly concede defeat, and some of his supporters asked for military intervention to prevent the transfer of power. A week after Lula was sworn in as President on 1 January 2023, thousands of his supporters stormed the National Congress, Supreme Court and Presidential Palace in Brasilia. These demonstrations were eventually dispersed by the Police, with mass arrests.<sup>5</sup> A robust criminal investigation led by the Supreme Court and Federal Police into the instigators of these disturbances concluded on 11 September 2025 that Bolsonaro was guilty of attempting a coup. At the time of writing, the former President is appealing against a 27-year prison sentence.

On political polarisation in Brazil, this has risen over the past decade, with 80% of Brazilians saying that conflict between those who support different political parties is either strong or very strong, according to a 2024 survey conducted by Pew. Elevated levels of partisan polarisation have led to the emergence of zero-sum politics and the politicisation of institutions and a rise in political violence. The growing threat of political violence was illustrated by an attack by a far-right suicide bomber on the Supreme Court in November 2024.<sup>6</sup>

Levels of corruption in political life in Brazil also remain high. In February 2024, the Supreme Court Justice ordered an investigation into Transparency International (TI), a week after TI had published its 2023 Corruption Perceptions index which highlighted setbacks in Brazil’s fight against corruption. In October 2024, Brazil’s Prosecutor General requested the dismissal of this

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2023/2024: *Breaking the Gridlock*:

<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2023-24reporten.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, Country Profile Brazil, 7 April 2025: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/overview>.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, Brazil Country Partnership Framework 2024-2028:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099031824151014222/pdf/BOSIB1a9c64a780861b8d01b824b30cdb50.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025, Brazil: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/brazil/freedom-world/2025>.

<sup>6</sup> “Brazil’s democracy at risk”, pp 57-58, Democracy Index 2024 – What’s wrong with representative democracy? – The Economist Intelligence Unit, February 2025: <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2024/>.

investigation.<sup>7</sup>

While Brazil's development and governance challenges remain significant, with the departure of Bolsonaro many donors have significantly reduced funding support for civil society in Brazil.

## (ii) Project Objectives and Intervention Rationale

The full title of the project was "Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies to Fight Inequality and Poverty in Brazil".

The Implementing Partner for the project was *Rede Conhecimento Social* (Social Knowledge Network – ReCoS for short). Founded in 2016 in São Paulo, ReCoS describes itself as a non-profit organisation that promotes social participation through the collective construction of knowledge, connecting and mobilizing people, groups and organisations to stimulate the understanding and transformation of their context. The organisation was created to continue the work of social responsibility actions which had until 2015 been conducted by the highly respected IBOPE (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics).<sup>8</sup>

The Implementing Partner's local partner *Coletivo Delibera Brasil* (Brazil Deliberates Collective - *Delibera* for short) was founded in 2017 and is also based in São Paulo. It describes itself as a non-profit, non-partisan organisation that aims to contribute to the strengthening and deepening of Brazilian democracy, promoting "Citizen Deliberation" mainly through the methodology of the "Minipublic". Citizen Deliberation is a form of political participation that is integrated into democratic decision-making processes, enabling citizens to be at the centre of the process in an informed, considered and consequential manner. The Minipublic (also called Citizen Jury or Citizen/Citizens' Assembly - CA) is a democratic innovation that enables deliberation by recruiting and randomly selecting a small but representative group of a community or population – supported by a team of facilitators to become well informed, deliberate and make recommendations on an issue that is important to their community. Such recommendations are designed to influence the decisions of governments and public interest initiatives, coming as they do from evidence and citizen involvement.<sup>9</sup>

*Delibera* and ReCoS collaborated closely on the implementation of the project. References to the Grantee in this evaluation are relevant to both organisations.

The work of *Delibera* and ReCoS is part of the growing international network of civil society organisations and academic interest in **deliberative democracy** – which can be defined as a process whereby institutions, organisations and communities engage in collective sense-making and decision-making via public deliberation.<sup>10</sup> With growing disillusionment among populations in many countries towards elected officials and democratic institutions, **Citizens' Assemblies** have been tried in numerous countries – beginning with Canada and the Netherlands in the early 2000s and then in Ireland in 2007-2008 following the financial crash.<sup>11</sup>

Less well known, in the Global South, deliberative democracy has been an important form of social participation in the Brazilian context since the 1980s - with innovations such as social participation in public decisions for participatory budgets and multi-level policy councils. The 1988 Constitution required civil society actors to participate in councils, conferences and

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<sup>7</sup> Transparency International, 17 October 2024: <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/brazils-prosecutor-general-requests-closure-of-unfounded-investigation-into-transparency-international>.

<sup>8</sup> RECOS website: <https://conhecimentosocial.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> Delibera website: <https://deliberabrasil.org/sobre/>.

<sup>10</sup> Oliver Escobar (University of Edinburgh) at the UNDEF/UNDP event: *Deliberative Democracy: A gathering for breaking the deadlock*, 23 October 2024: <https://unpartnerships.un.org/news/2024/deliberative-democracy-gathering-breaking-gridlock>

<sup>11</sup> The Economist, 17 September 2020: <https://www.economist.com/international/2020/09/17/citizens-assemblies-are-increasingly-popular>. For more on Ireland, regarded as a pioneer in Citizens' Assemblies, including its well-known successes in 2016 to address constitutional issues including abortion, see: <https://citizensassembly.ie/>.



thematic forums to monitor, create, and manage policies.<sup>12</sup> Under President Bolsonaro, these channels were rendered illegal but are now back in play under President Lula.<sup>13</sup>

Working in collaboration with municipal governments and civil society, the project sought to establish CAs in three cities in Brazil (Belém – population 2.08 million, Fortaleza – population 2.68 million, and Niterói – population 510,000) to facilitate public participation in policymaking to address poverty and inequality. Belém is in the lower Amazon region, Fortaleza is on the North East coast, and Niterói is a neighbouring municipality of Rio de Janeiro.

The project started on 1 July 2022 and was initially planned to end on 30 June 2024. A four-month extension (to 31 October 2024) was agreed in June 2024, due to a slower than expected start in 2022, with political campaigning for national elections in 2022 causing delays for activities at the municipal level. Not all of this additional time was needed, and the Final Narrative Report was submitted on 14 October 2024.

The project evolved from an earlier global UNDEF-funded pilot project (UDF-17-739-GLO: “Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections”) that included Brazil as one of three country case studies, and that concluded in November 2022.<sup>14</sup> The decision by UNDEF to support the Brazil project in 2022 reflected the intent by UNDEF to deepen its work on deliberative democracy. Lessons learned from that earlier project have also contributed to a new regional UNDEF-funded project: “Promoting Deliberative Democracy to Confront Climate Inequality in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico”<sup>15</sup> – currently still being implemented, which has *Delibera* as one of the Implementing Partners.

Deliberative democracy remains a priority focus for UNDEF, under the broad heading of strengthening civil society projects that improve governance and protect and promote civic space.<sup>16</sup>

The overall project objective was to **establish Citizens’ Assemblies contributing to build sustainable and widely supported public policies in response to complex issues.**

Three outcomes were envisaged:

Outcome 1: Recommendations from Citizens’ Assemblies officially acknowledged by municipalities in implementation plans.

Outcome 2: Improved awareness of decision makers and general public about the Citizens’ Assemblies’ deliberative cycle.

Outcome 3: Enhanced citizens’ deliberation through promotion of intersectoral collaborative spaces.

To achieve this, the project included the following activities/outputs:

- Initial meetings with focus points and local public decision makers for each municipality,

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<sup>12</sup> This was made possible through generic Articles 1 and 14 of the original 1988 Constitution and subsequent additional provisions that established participatory councils and thematic national policy initiatives such as the SUS – *Sistema Unificado de Saúde*, SUS, or Unified Health System.

<sup>13</sup> Cervellini, Adams, Rodrigues and Sendretti, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> The other countries were Malawi and North Macedonia. Post Project Evaluation, dated 24 March 2025, available on the UNDEF website: [https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/udf-17-739-glo\\_final.pdf](https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/udf-17-739-glo_final.pdf). One of the materials produced was a joint newDemocracy Foundation/UNDEF handbook “Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections”:  
<https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/newdemocracy-undef-handbook.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> UDF-22-964-RLC, due to end in February 2026.

<sup>16</sup> UNDEF Board Meeting, *Driving Governance and Change for 2025*, 13 November 2024:  
<https://www.un.org/democracyfund/news/driving-governance-and-change-2025>

- and then workshops and working groups;
- Commitment letters from each municipality, with detailed work plans and governance models for the CAs;
- Three CAs conducted, one in each municipality;
- Three Citizen Recommendation reports presented and submitted to local authorities;
- Communication products disseminated locally and nationally;
- One online repository established to document and communicate project materials;
- One research paper published to disseminate knowledge in the Brazilian academic community;
- Six inter-municipal online workshops held to strengthen the deliberative cycle;
- A community of practice created and at least six meetings held to organize learnings on citizens' deliberations;
- Three international webinars held to promote acknowledgement of citizen deliberation.

The project locations of Belém, Fortaleza and Niterói were chosen because of the municipal administrations' commitments to participation and social justice – and because of geographical spread. Fortaleza previously had a deliberation process in 2019 to build on – from the earlier UNDEF-funded project.

Direct beneficiaries were: around 120 citizens participating in CAs (40 per municipality, at least 50% women, 50% non-white, 20% youth); at least 30 public administration staff with a direct involvement in citizen deliberation initiatives (10 per municipality); 15 civil society representatives participating in Reference/Content Groups for each CA (5 per municipality).

Indirect beneficiaries were: populations of each city; academic communities and research groups (at least 30 researchers) of federal and state universities; public officials; political leaders of local, regional and national levels; civil society representatives; and at least 100 national/international participants in webinars.

### (iii) Project Strategy and Approach

The overall design of the project was encapsulated in what the Grantee called its “Key Approach” in the Project Document (PD) of 14 June 2022:

- *From the outset, the strategy is to **generate direct engagement and commitment of “political actors” in each municipality**. The deliberation cycle will be fitted into the agenda of meetings between the mayor and all heads of departments in the first stage, in articulation with civil society, creating a political collective responsiveness around the CA, since inequalities and poverty are multidimensional problems that impact all public areas.*
- *Three CAs will be carried out **following the best practices and principles of deliberative process**, ensuring that Brazil has three strong cases to demonstrate citizen deliberation as a catalyst for the convergence of public management, organised civil society and citizens to build sustainable and widely supported public policies for complex issues such as inequality and poverty.*
- *Activities will be designed to **help participants feel more prepared and confident to “tell the story”**. Professional press advice and public communication actions with audiovisual products will enhance visibility and recognition of the value of CAs for public policies to tackle inequalities and poverty.*
- *National and international events and a community of practice will **amplify the learnings of the three CAs, opening spaces to discuss concerns and perspectives through future deliberative processes** as alternative means of tackling complex issues and broadening social participation.*

It is worth noting here how the Grantee's approach to deliberative processes (Minipublics) differs from the many other mechanisms used in Brazil – where people, often in great numbers, are invited to express their opinions in the company of political actors, for example in social councils

or national conferences.<sup>17</sup> The approach of *Delibera* and *ReCoS* seeks to enable a more informed debate, and to be more inclusive and representative, even though numbers of participants can be no more than 20-40 people – selected randomly using a variety of techniques. The methodology can be summarised as follows:<sup>18</sup>

- Choose a topic or question, involving key stakeholders, with final endorsement of modalities by the local authorities to include a commitment to receive and act on any recommendations;
- Form a Content/Reference Group to monitor the activities, verify transparency and impartiality of the procedures, and to plan and follow up on recommendations;
- Select participants – ensuring the inclusion and representation of the profiles of citizens from a given population/community potentially affected by the results of the deliberation;
- In an Informative Stage, create the conditions that allow the participants to understand the context and acquire information about the topic of deliberation;
- Deliberative Stage: trained and independent facilitators ensure space for everyone to participate, promoting the respectful exchange of arguments, in a consensus-oriented manner, finding convergences and clearly identifying points of no-consensus. At the end, a record of the deliberation is prepared – with decisions and recommendations.



<sup>17</sup> During the field mission the evaluator heard numerous reservations about these traditional approaches, where large numbers can make it difficult for everyone to be heard. The system lacks overall coherence, at local, regional and national levels. At the federal level, for example, each Ministry is able to choose its own method for engaging civil society when formulating policies. Steps are currently underway (e.g. through the online *Brasil Participativo* platform) to streamline approaches and share results and lessons. Not all recent experience has been negative, with praise being given to social participation for the national-level Multi-Year Plan (PPA) for 2024-2027 – which generated over 8,000 citizen proposals. 76% of these proposals were incorporated. Participatory budgeting at the municipal level is also perceived to have been relatively successful. See: [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/brazil-digital-governance-story/#~:text=The%202024%E2%80%9320Multi%20Year%20Plan%20\(PPA\)%20outlines,being%20accessed%204%20million%20times](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/brazil-digital-governance-story/#~:text=The%202024%E2%80%9320Multi%20Year%20Plan%20(PPA)%20outlines,being%20accessed%204%20million%20times).

<sup>18</sup> Following points and diagram from the *Delibera* website: <https://deliberabrasil.org/>.

For *Delibera/ReCoS*, at the heart of this is a focus on **citizenship**. They believe that the main improvements to be made refer to the way Brazilians relate to politics and act politically, placing themselves increasingly at the centre of the process of seeking solutions and decisions of public interest, in a conscious, considered, consequential and sustainable manner.

The PD linked project activities and objectives to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries; Goal 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; Goal 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

All activities were completed and reporting documents (including milestone monitoring) produced.

The budget for the project was USD 198,000, including USD 18,000 for UNDEF Monitoring and Evaluation, and this was spent in full. The agreed four-month extension to 31 October 2024 did not require additional financial support.

### III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation focuses on the achievement of the project's outcomes, as well as on the impact and programme effectiveness in achieving its ultimate goals.

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Norms and Standards for Evaluations developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group and used a set of standard Evaluation Questions in line with the OECD-DAC criteria<sup>19</sup> adapted and developed to fit the context of the project (see Annex 1).

The evaluation also made use of the OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes, produced in 2021. These were especially useful for understanding the stages of deliberative processes, and for framing questions to participants.<sup>20</sup>

The evaluation framework was participatory and people-centred, whereby stakeholders and beneficiaries/participants were the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation.

The evaluation followed a four-step process: (1) engaging project management and conducting a preliminary desk review to describe the project and evaluation framework and consider remote data collection tools (Launch Note agreed on 23 May 2025); (2) gathering credible evidence; (3) consolidating data and writing the report; (4) sharing the draft report with the main users for feedback then finalization.

A field mission to Brazil (São Paulo, Brasília and Niterói) was carried out during 1-7 June 2025.

Documents reviewed included: project documents and reporting, third party reporting, official Brazilian resources and online platforms, and other sources. The evaluator also conducted more than 100 Internet searches in news, social networks and pages of different institutions and organisations. Some of these have been cited in this report (Annex 2).

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<sup>19</sup> See: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> In this, stages are broken down into a three-step evaluation cycle: (1) process design integrity; (2) deliberative experience; and (3) pathways to impact. See: [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/evaluation-guidelines-for-representative-deliberative-processes\\_10ccbfcb-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/evaluation-guidelines-for-representative-deliberative-processes_10ccbfcb-en.html)



During the evaluation, 34 people (18 women and 16 men) were consulted (see Annex 3).

This final report presents the main findings and gives answers to evaluation questions based on evidence.

#### IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

Evaluation criteria, questions and sub-questions are listed in full at Annex 1.

##### (i) **Relevance**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the context and needs at the Grantee, local and national levels?

##### **Main findings:**

- The project drew on the Grantee's long experience of advocating for and organizing Citizens' Assemblies in Brazil, having organised over 20 Minipublics since 2017 – with *Delibera* and *ReCoS* being the recognised leading CSOs in Brazil in this field. The project enabled the Grantee to build on this already strong reputation, at the local and national levels, and with international partners.
- The project targeted a wide range of stakeholders and decision-makers, focused on themes and questions that reflected the priorities of the communities concerned, and adapted well to changing circumstances with initial delays caused by electoral processes in 2022.
- Risk mitigation was set out clearly in the PD. The risk of changes in political leadership in the 2022 elections was covered, but not for the later elections in 2024. As it turned out, it was the later elections that proved more consequential for the project, with changes in political parties in government in two of the three municipalities (Belém and Fortaleza).

"I loved the methodology, which I had not seen before. Random selection ensured that we had real diversity in the Citizens' Assembly. With other forms of social participation, we often end up with the same people, and we always hear the same voices. The methodology used by *Delibera/ReCoS* allows all people to speak. It is much more participatory. It is very powerful. There is not enough of this kind of work in Brazil." (Evaluation interview, 2 June 2025)

**Elisângela Teixeira - (Former) Head of Planning, Municipality of Fortaleza**  
**Professor of Linguistics and Coordinator at the Office of Environmental Affairs, University of Ceará, Fortaleza**

"People who manage resources and take decisions do not know what life is like in the *favelas*. [...] The Citizens' Assembly process helps people to be heard. Unlike other larger social participation methods, having a small, representative and well-informed group allows more dialogue and exchange." (Evaluation interview, 5 June 2025)

**Lucas Dutra Gonçalves – Member of the Citizens' Assembly in Niterói**

## **(ii) Coherence**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: How well did the project “fit”? - i.e. to what extent was the project compatible with other projects and programmes in the country, sector or institution?

### **Main findings:**

- The Grantee’s approach to organizing and running Citizens’ Assemblies is complementary to the wider experience of participatory democracy in Brazil, and its rigorous methodology – ensuring high levels of representation and inclusion, and informed debate – have earned it respect from civil society, government and international partners.
- The Grantee has been receiving support from UNDEF since 2018 (UDF-17-739-GLO). The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has also been a significant donor in recent years. It is currently in discussion with Agence Française de Développement (AFD) for the organisation of two small Minipublics relevant to the upcoming COP30 in Belém in November 2025.
- Its work has been well noted by the Federal Government, and there are opportunities for the Grantee to support national-level initiatives in the future. The UN Country Team, similarly, is interested in working with *Delibera/ReCoS* as part of the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 where it sees direct relevance to the pillar on Governance and Institutional Capacities. A priority is strengthening democratic governance – including participatory processes for National Conferences. The Grantee and UNDP have already discussed a Concept Note for future collaboration.

“Citizens and Institutions” is a new strategic cross-cutting pillar for AFD, along with Climate & Biodiversity and Gender & Inclusion. Our objective is to mainstream citizen participation dynamics in AFD interventions in our partner countries, always adapting the approach to the local context. To do so, we are aiming to use robust methodology on the ground, working with partners like *Delibera* in Brazil, to enhance the credibility of these processes.”  
(Evaluation interview, 13 June 2025)

**Mirka Snopckova – Policy Officer, Citizens and Institutions Division, Agence Française de Développement, Paris**

“The inclusive processes of social participation at the federal level – including all the major thematic conferences (on health, education, environment, persons with disabilities, etc.) – could benefit from a common methodological framework to be developed. Each process has its specificities, but shared principles and guidelines could help strengthen the existing mechanisms. *Delibera*, alongside other civic organizations in this ecosystem, could support such an effort.” (Evaluation interview, 3 June 2025)

**Andréa Bolzon – Programme lead for Governance and Institutional Capacities (UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027), UNDP, Brasilia**

## **(iii) Effectiveness**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent did the activities of the project link up, achieve the agreed indicators, and provide the best approach to achieving the

outcomes and objectives?

### Main findings:

- The project was, in large part, able to deliver against the agreed outcomes<sup>21</sup> as below.
- Outcome 1: *“Recommendations from Citizens’ Assemblies officially acknowledged by municipalities in implementation plans”*.
  - Target Indicator 1.1: By the end of the project, the three municipalities (Fortaleza, Belém and Niterói) have an Implementation Plan based on recommendation of each Citizens’ Assembly as tool[s] for implementing the prioritized goals in the Multi-Year Plan that aim to tackle inequalities.
  - Target Indicator 1.2: By the end of the project, at least 25% of Citizen’s Assemblies participants are monitoring the feedback process and development of the Implementation Plans in each municipality.

Assessment: By October 2024, the end of the project, the Letters of Recommendations in all three Municipalities were influencing positively the elaboration of implementation plans. However, because of the municipal elections of October 2024, which brought changes of government in Belém and Fortaleza but not Niterói, only Niterói was able to see this work being fully adopted into government commitments – through the adoption of a new law in December 2024.<sup>22</sup> On the continuing engagement of CA participants, the Grantee has monitored their activity through social media and messaging groups and the 25% target was exceeded.

- Outcome 2: *“Improved awareness of decision makers and general public about the Citizens’ Assemblies’ deliberative cycle”*.
  - Target Indicator 2.1: By the end of the project, at least 200,000 people per city have been reached with the communication products and repository.
  - Target Indicator 2.2: By the end of the project, there is evidence that the published research paper strengthens the demonstrative value of the citizen deliberation processes.

Assessment: This is a difficult area to measure. By tracking online platforms directly managed by themselves, the Grantee estimates that a total of 123,879 people were reached. Additionally, project material was also shared on social media and profiles of project partners, who combined have over 1.2 million followers on the networks where the project was mentioned. On the research paper, two papers were eventually written (see below under Efficiency) and only one has recently been published so far. It is therefore too early to assess the contribution of this, but the papers are of high quality and can be expected to add value to the academic debate on this area in Brazil.

- Outcome 3: *“Enhanced citizens’ deliberation through promotion of intersectoral collaborative spaces”*.
  - Target Indicator 3.1: By the end of the project, at least 75% of the community of practice participants perceive as relevant the intermunicipal and intersectoral exchanges and collaborations and intend to continue stay in contact with more than one other participant.
  - Target Indicator 3.2: At least 50% of the participants of webinars perceive the citizen

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<sup>21</sup> The evaluator understands ‘outcome’ to mean: behavioural, policy, procedure or budgetary change in target population/institution, partially attributable to project outputs, achievable by the end of the project, but more in the control of the project target population/institution.

<sup>22</sup> Lei Ordinária no. 3.970 approved by the Municipal Chamber of Niterói on 6 December 2024 to adopt the *Plano Municipal de Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação* for the period 2025-2034 :  
<https://leismunicipais.com.br/a/rj/n/niteroi/lei-ordinaria/2024/397/3970/lei-ordinaria-n-3970-2024-aprova-o-plano-municipal-de-ciencia-tecnologia-e-inovacao-de-niteroi-e-da-outras-providencias>  
<https://niteroi.rj.gov.br/prefeitura-de-niteroi-lanca-plano-municipal-de-ciencia-tecnologia-e-inovacao/>

deliberation as a relevant alternative to face complex issues and enhance citizens' participation.

Assessment: The establishment of the Community of Practice remains work in progress, but there is strong interest in this. There are currently 44 members, but no formal structure. On the webinars, 79% of those participants responding to a survey believe that citizen deliberation is a relevant alternative for addressing complex issues and increasing citizen participation.

- Project activities were not hampered significantly by any remaining challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There was no change of project staff during the lifetime of the project.

(iv) **Efficiency**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?

**Main findings:**

- The project delivered activities and outputs<sup>23</sup> in a coordinated manner and with a high degree of efficiency, which can be summarised in the table below.

Outputs	Achievements
Output 1.1: Commitment letters co-created with each municipality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> Meetings/workshops were held in each municipality, to define the specific themes of the Citizens' Assemblies and develop the work plans. The themes were not necessarily the most politically-sensitive or most debated topics in each location, but had to be politically acceptable to Mayors in terms of minimizing any perceived electoral risk.</li> <li>• Questions chosen were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Belém: How can we expand selective collection to all districts in Belém, providing income for the population and the municipality?</li> <li>○ Fortaleza: How to universalize full-time education in Elementary School – Final Years, involving students and families as partners in this policy? What to prioritize, in which models, in which places?</li> <li>○ Niterói: How can the government expand and improve free access to the Internet, in addition to implementing new digital inclusion platforms?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Content/Reference Groups were also created in each Municipality, and this was self-observed by ReCoS in June 2023 in Belém, as Milestone 2.</li> </ul>
Output 1.2: Three Citizens' Assemblies carried out, one in each municipality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> The "biggest challenge of the project" according to the Grantee, but all activities were completed in line with the Grantee's methodology and evolving international best practice.</li> <li>• The "Recycle Belém" Citizens' Assembly was held in August-September 2023. The "Connect Niterói" Citizens' Assembly was held in September-October 2023. The Citizens' Assembly for "Full-Time Education in Fortaleza" was held in November-December 2023.</li> <li>• Lottery techniques for the recruitment of the 40-50 participants in each CA varied depending on the location – and in some cases were innovative. For example, in Fortaleza, for the first time, elementary school students were included. In Niterói, a CSO (BEMTV) that works with media and education with young people</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> The evaluator understands 'output' to mean tangible (infrastructure, equipment) products delivered/completed, changes in intangible (knowledge/skills) capacities of stakeholders as a result of project activities, and activities completed. Completely/significantly in the control of the project.



	in marginalised communities helped with the registration of some participants. Retention rates and testimonials provide evidence of the success of each CA. <sup>24</sup>
Output 1.3: Three Citizen Recommendation Reports presented and submitted to local authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> In Niterói and Fortaleza, the local authorities participated actively in the construction of an implementation plan – based on the recommendations. In Belém, the contributions were used in relation to the hiring of companies for garbage collection and recyclable materials. In Niterói, a workshop involving a diverse group of local decision-makers, civil society partners and participants from the CA permitted an in-depth analysis of the recommendations and was self-observed by ReCoS as Milestone 3 – in April 2024. Similar events took place in Belém and Fortaleza.</li> </ul>
Output 2.1: Communication products disseminated locally and nationally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> Media products were created and disseminated, though media coverage was more limited than the Grantee would have liked. This was sometimes down to bad luck: like the Mayor of Belém pulling out of an event to receive the recommendations at the last minute, and a teachers' strike in Niterói grabbing the headlines on the day when a similar event was held. There is also the challenge of presenting "good news" stories as news when the media remain overly focused on less positive topics.</li> </ul>
Output 2.2: One online repository established to document and communicate project materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> The <i>Delibera</i> website is being used to store and access all documents produced, with each municipality having its own page. The Grantee is keen to promote this learning space more pro-actively.</li> </ul>
Output 2.3: One research paper published to disseminate knowledge in the Brazilian academic community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Partially achieved.</b> Because of the different timings, and locations, of the CAs, it proved difficult to find academics willing to cover all three processes in a single paper. So, three papers were commissioned. The one on Belém was published; the one on Fortaleza has been written but not yet published; the one on Niterói was not finished due to personal circumstances of the researcher concerned. The Grantee also promoted and participated in an academic event to contribute to the field of study on social participation and participatory democracy.</li> </ul>
Output 3.1: Six inter-municipal online workshops held to strengthen the deliberative cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> The number and timing of events were streamlined to align with meetings for the Community of Practice. There were meetings involving representatives from all three municipalities, in September 2023 and March 2024, and (online) meetings with citizens who participated in the three Citizens' Assemblies in April, May and June 2024.</li> </ul>
Output 3.2: Community of practice created and at least six meetings held to organize learnings on citizens' deliberation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Partially achieved.</b> Productive meetings were held, but the objective of creating a Community of Practice to build on the successes and learnings from this, earlier and ongoing projects remains work in progress. Initially, with funding from NED, the idea was to create a <i>Rede Brasileira de Assembleias Cidades</i> (REBRAC) – with a website. For now, there are 44 practitioners who remain connected via WhatsApp.</li> </ul>

<sup>24</sup> Details provided in the report that presents the methodology used and the experience from each Municipality: Sistematização: Assembleia Cidadã: *Enfrentando Desigualdades: Experiences in Belém, Fortaleza and Niterói*: <https://deliberabrasil.org/projetos/democracia-deliberativa-e-assembleias-cidades-enfrentando-a-desigualdade-e-a-pobreza-no-brasil/> and [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17LADG4KSAV\\_RwCbS571FVj4MtkIUdQs/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17LADG4KSAV_RwCbS571FVj4MtkIUdQs/view). In this document the "citizen call and draw" process is summarised as follows: "[...] ... a sample of the population affected by the issue in question is initially invited through letters and the media, and then they show interest in participating in the assembly by registering on physical and virtual forms. Finally, the participants are drawn among those registered in a public event, widely disclosed and with the participation of members of the content group, ensuring transparency in the process. This care is fundamental to maintain the integrity of the method and the community's trust in the decisions taken by the Citizens' Assembly. The draw considers random criteria, such as participation by gender, sexual orientation, race/colour, region, etc, thus seeking to ensure the diversity of population profiles and views on the topic under discussion."

Output 3.3: Three international webinars held to promote acknowledgement of citizen deliberation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieved.</b> The three events engaged diverse speakers and fostered collaboration among political leaders, policymakers, and civil society. Outputs included an open letter and a synthesis of learnings to advance citizen assembly initiatives.</li> </ul>
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- The project adapted well to changing circumstances in its first year, related to disruption and delays caused by the elections of 2022 at the municipal and national levels when there were fears that the Far Right would retain its ability to disrupt participatory processes. The initial delay of six months did not prevent the final delivery of all project outputs.
- During implementation, the project coordinator did not change and Advisory Boards for both *Delibera* and *ReCos* were able to monitor and contribute to project delivery.

(v) **Impact**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to the objectives of the project and democratization more broadly?

**Main findings:**

- The project demonstrated the ability of civil society actors and organisations in Brazil to contribute significantly to the democratic process.
- The project has raised the Grantee's profile with Municipalities, Federal Government, the UN Country Team, and other international partners.
- The Letters of Recommendations contributed significantly to the elaboration of municipal planning up to the municipal elections of October 2024. These elections resulted in changes of administration in Belém and Fortaleza, where the utility of these recommendations is currently under discussion – supported by civil society actors in both places. In Niterói, recommendations were fully integrated into local government commitments through the adoption of a new law in December 2024.
- Project materials have added significant value to wider learning on participatory processes in Brazil and internationally.

“Operationalising the recommendations from the Citizens’ Assembly is the main challenge, especially after the change of government at the Municipality in Belém. We are using social media (including a WhatsApp group) to connect with the new local authorities, also involving residents, the private sector, and civil society. [...] Waste management remains a big problem in the city. The Letter of Recommendations is still our road map in terms of knowing what needs to be done.” (Evaluation interview, 25 June 2025)

**Ivan Costa - CSO Social Observatory of Belém, and member of the Content/Reference Group for the Citizens’ Assembly in Belém**

(vi) **Sustainability**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?

**Main findings:**

- Project outputs and outcomes have been observed favourably by the Federal Government and

the UN Country Team, and the Grantee has opportunities to support both at a more strategic (national) level.

- While funding in this sector remains limited, nationally, other potential sources of funding for the Grantee now include AFD – who will be organizing three Minipublics related to COP30 later this year.
- In Niterói, as well as the CA's recommendations being passed into law shortly after the end of the project, the senior politician responsible for social participation is looking to work with the Grantee to improve other participatory mechanisms there – as part of the new Municipal Plan for Social Participation.
- A Community of Practice in Brazil, while still in the making, can be expected to support the durability of the project's achievements.

"The Mini-Public was a great novelty. For the Municipality, it was a new sort of dialogue with the people and I thought it was very good. We are looking to amplify this experience through the Municipal Plan for Social Participation, which is a strategic and central action of the current administration in its very first year. We hope to collaborate with *Delibera Brasil* and *Rede Conhecimento Social* to help us fit the Mini-Public model into the other mechanisms we have for social participation." (Evaluation interview, 4 June 2025)

**Octávio Ribeiro - Secretary for Social Participation, Municipality of Niterói**

"Most experience of deliberative democracy is at the municipal level. For bigger (national-level) events, diversity is guaranteed by involving large numbers of participants. [...] Minipublics offer something we do not currently have: an opportunity to discuss and debate in depth with qualified information. This approach could be used at the national level, for tough issues. [...] Minipublics are also important in the context of countering the levels of disinformation we have to live with." (Evaluation interview, 3 June 2025)

**Carla Bezerra - Director for Social Participation (Digital), Federal Government, Presidential Palace, Brasília**



**Seminar participants, Community of Practice – São Paulo, March 2024**

(vii) **UNDEF added value**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?

**Main findings:**

- The Grantee received support from UNDEF for a pilot project in 2018-2022 (UDF-17-739-GLO), also involving Malawi and North Macedonia (implemented by local implementing partners other than ReCos/*Delibera*), and is currently part of an UNDEF-supported regional Latin American project using Citizens' Assemblies to debate climate change. The Grantee sees UNDEF support for their work on Minipublics as having been "strategic", in the absence of other national or international funding streams. The Minipublic in Fortaleza in 2019, as part of the UNDEF project during 2018-2022, was the first large official event of its kind in Brazil.<sup>25</sup>
- UNDEF support to the Grantee was visible in all events and material produced.
- Numerous interlocutors for the evaluation made the point that UNDEF support added significant credibility to the project, especially with local government. In Fortaleza, one previous member of the Municipality described how UNDEF visibility gave "authority" to the Citizens' Assembly and helped to involve the Municipality.<sup>26</sup> In Niterói, members of the Municipality explained how there were no other international actors in Niterói supporting this work.<sup>27</sup>
- The online UNDEF Lessons Learned facility was not used to support or influence project implementation, but in the PD the Grantee acknowledged lessons learned from the earlier UNDEF-supported pilot project from 2018-2022 (UDF-17-739-GLO), especially on the need to ensure local government buy-in at the CA design stage.



**Examples of documents produced with supporting logos<sup>28</sup>**

<sup>25</sup> Evaluation interviews with Silvia Cervellini, Fernanda Império and Marisa Villi on 4 and 6 June 2025.

<sup>26</sup> Elisângela Teixeira - (Former) Head of Planning, Municipality of Fortaleza Professor of Linguistics and Coordinator at the Office of Environmental Affairs, University of Ceará, Fortaleza. Interviewed on 2 June 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Evaluation interview, 4 June 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Left: Meeting of Citizens, Uniting Experiences and Strengthening the Network. Rights: Letter of Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly "Belém Recycles".



## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion	Recommendation
<p>This was a well-run and impactful project, with multiple outputs designed to engage with and influence a broad range of civil society actors/citizens and decision-makers – from grass-roots organisations to government institutions, and in three locations that were geographically spread across the country.</p> <p>The project has enhanced the reputation of the Grantee as a leading actor in the promotion and organisation of Citizens' Assemblies in Brazil – having now organised 20+ Minipublics since its foundation in 2017. But Minipublics remain a relative novelty in the wider system of social participation in Brazil.</p> <p>Of special note is how the project's outputs and outcomes have increased the credibility of the Grantee with the Federal Government and the UN Country Team.</p>	<p>(1) To significantly enhance the sustainability of the project, there is an <b>opportunity for the Grantee to be more strategic with its future work</b>, if it chooses to go beyond the holding of CAs at the municipal level. The evaluator strongly supports this, and encourages the Grantee to consider options on the following fronts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explore ways of helping the Federal Government improve alignment (standardization/harmonization) of participatory process mechanisms, including through drawing lessons from the Grantee's methodology for Minipublics that could be applied at the national level. Guidelines on best practice could be developed, drawing on lessons learned from <i>Delbera/ReCoS</i> experience and stressing key principles.<sup>29</sup></li> <li>b. As part of this, also engage with the UNCT in the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027, under its pillar on Governance &amp; Institutional Capacities. Work is already underway to develop a "methodological strategy" to strengthen participatory processes at the national level. The Grantee is already exchanging views on a Concept Note with UNDP.</li> <li>c. Knowledge transfer to Municipalities. Already, from the project's experience in Niterói, there is interest in more direct support to the Municipality, for help with its other participatory mechanisms – through its new Municipal Social Participation Plan. This could include dedicated training for non-political officials/public servants.<sup>30</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>29</sup> Such as the six key principles developed by newDemocracy Foundation: (1) diversity of perspectives and life experiences is more important than volume of people involved; (2) openly share the hard problem; (3) a better decision comes when people consider a range of information sources; (4) balance insistent voices with invited voices; (5) be clear about what aspects of any decision have already been made and which are the parts where there can be genuine impact; (6) give adequate time to the process. See nDF/UNDEF Handbook (pages 38-40) :

<https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/newdemocracy-undef-handbook.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> As noted earlier in the report, this already has the full support of the senior official at the Niterói Municipality responsible for social participation. Other officials interviewed on 4 June also supported this, including the holding of an annual Minipublic in the future.

	<p>d. Advocacy work with political parties, all of whom share some degree of mistrust of participatory processes – with populist tendencies increasingly seeing politicians claim their own “direct” communications with society.</p>
<p>Linked to the above, the Grantee’s standing in this field in Brazil means it is in a unique place to hold and share key learnings from the field.</p>	<p>(2) To improve the effectiveness of the work to date to establish a <b>Community of Practice</b> on participatory/deliberative processes in Brazil, momentum in this regard should not be lost. The Community could be consolidated and launched at a high profile event in Brasilia, where representatives from Federal Government, the UN Country Team, and prospective donors from the international community could be invited.</p>
<p>The Grantee learned valuable lessons from earlier CAs, to involve local authorities in the design and organisation of the CAs covered by this project. But the municipal elections of October 2024 brought changes of administration in two of the three Municipalities. This raises questions about the <b>impact/sustainability of the results of the CA deliberations</b> – especially the Letters of Recommendations that are ultimately meant to be owned and implemented by local authorities. Of the three Municipalities, the CA recommendations are really only being used at the political level in Niterói.</p>	<p>(3) The Grantee is already seized of the importance of impact/sustainability of its work. Consideration should be given to the establishment of more formal/institutional <b>follow-up mechanisms</b> that can ensure a higher degree of success for recommendations, that can survive changes of government. These should stress the non-partisan nature of CA deliberations and could be “owned” by municipal teams responsible for social participation. Accountability mechanisms already being used for participatory budgeting, where successful, might also provide useful precedents. These steps would enhance sustainability of the project.</p>
<p>The Grantee is already well connected to a growing national, regional and international network working in the field of participatory/deliberative democracy. Much of the international attention recently has been on experience in Europe and North America, and not enough on the Global South. Since the 1988 Constitution, and arguably before, Brazil has tried and tested numerous forms of participatory processes, and this experience deserves wider understanding.</p>	<p>(4) To <b>improve access to key materials and learning on the Grantee’s website, welcome pages in English and Spanish could be included.</b> The number of documents and features translated from Portuguese could also be increased. This would make the project’s effective delivery more impactful.</p>

## VI. LESSONS LEARNED

Some key lessons can be learned from the project that could be applied to other projects either in the same region or on the same theme.

Project Experience	Lesson
The Brazilian experience of social participation in decision-making processes demonstrates the variety of tools and mechanisms available for this. The methodology used by <i>Delibera/ReCoS</i> is arguably more rigorous and inclusive than most other experiences in Brazil.	The most successful Citizens' Assemblies take full account of local circumstances and contexts, and adapt accordingly – hence the different lottery selection techniques used by the Grantee in each of the three locations. <b>Respecting key principles is more important than the methods used.</b>
Selection of the core theme or question. For the project, this was not necessarily the hottest topic for the communities concerned, due to political sensitivities.	Evolving international best practice seems to suggest that <b>CAs can be most useful and effective when addressing “hot” topics that existing political systems and structures are unable to resolve.</b> But this is not always possible where political actors, who need to be part of the process, perceive unacceptable political/electoral risk. <b>A balance may often need to be struck to find a theme/question that is acceptable to all.</b>
Engaging with journalists was challenging, and media interest was not as strong as the Grantee was hoping for.	Reporting good news stories (as opposed to crises and conflicts) is a challenge everywhere. Plan accordingly and manage expectations. <b>Communications strategies should remain an important part of any project design and delivery – to improve understanding and acceptability of CAs.</b> For countries in the Global South, like Brazil, these should tackle head-on any reservations about the “random” nature of selection, and representation/inclusivity. The Brazilian experience is already demonstrating that CAs are not some Western import but are building on a long tradition of social participation in decision-making processes at local and national levels.
Evaluating projects on participatory/deliberative democracy is a relatively new practice for Monitoring and Evaluation, and some lessons can be drawn from the experience of this project.	There could have been <b>more evaluator engagement with CA members</b> (The same was said for the post project evaluation that looked at the UNDEF project UDF-17-739-GLO of 2018-2022). Agree in advance, who and how many participants would be acceptable, and factor in sufficient time and resources to make best use of tools such as Focus Groups.  When drawing up inception reports/launch notes, include the <b>OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes</b> , especially

	the three-step evaluation cycle: (1) process design integrity; (2) deliberative experience; and (3) pathways to impact.
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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Evaluation Questions.

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the context and needs at the beneficiary, local and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How adaptive was project management – especially when faced with electoral activity in 2022 and 2024?</li> <li>• Was there an adequate risk mitigation strategy in place?</li> </ul>
Coherence	How well did the project “fit” - i.e. to what extent was the project compatible with other projects and programmes in the country, sector, or institution?	<p><i>Internal coherence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are there synergies and interlinkages between the project and other initiatives carried out by the Grantee?</li> </ul> <p><i>External coherence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is there consistency with other actors’ initiatives in the same context?</li> <li>• To what extent is there complementarity, harmonisation and coordination between the Grantee/the project and other organisations/projects working in the same context and on the same issue?</li> <li>• To what extent is the project adding value while avoiding the duplication of efforts?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	The evaluator will assess whether the activities of the project linked up, achieved the agreed indicators, and provided the best approach to achieving the outcomes and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluator will assess the extent to which the project’s objectives have been reached and how this has been measured.</li> <li>• Was there any rotation of project management staff and if so, did this have any impact on the effectiveness of project implementation?</li> </ul>
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluator will look into how the project was organised and how cost-effective it was.</li> </ul>
Impact	To what extent has the realisation of the project objectives and outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are recommendations from Citizens’ Assemblies officially acknowledged by municipalities in their implementation plans, before and after the elections of October 2024? (Outcome 1)</li> <li>• Is there improved awareness of decision makers and the general public about the deliberative cycle of Citizens’ Assemblies? (Outcome 2)</li> <li>• Has the promotion of intersectoral collaborative spaces enhanced citizens’ deliberation? (Outcome 3)</li> </ul>

Sustainability	<p>What measures did the Grantee put in place to ensure sustainability of achieved results?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent will the Grantee be able to take forward work initiated by the project, supported by other means?</li> <li>• To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, contributed to democratic development in Brazil? How are these initiatives influencing government at the Federal level?</li> <li>• Given the development of new methodological frameworks, and the sharing of the project's experience in Brazil with the wider international network of experts and practitioners of deliberative democracy, how enduring are the achievements of the project?</li> </ul>
UNDEF value added	<p>What was the value of UNDEF specific support to the project? Could the objectives have been achieved through alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders?</p>	<p>This will be assessed in relation to other initiatives in the country that may have the same aims, and the comparative advantage that UNDEF offered to the Grantee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?</li> <li>• To what extent did the use of UNDEF Lessons Learned support or influence project implementation?</li> </ul> <p><i>UNDEF value-added</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How far did UNDEF funding provide value added to the work of <i>Delibera/ReCoS</i>?</li> </ul> <p><i>UNDEF visibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there evidence showing that UNDEF support to the Grantee appears in all printed materials distributed during the project?</li> <li>• Does UNDEF visibility appear also in all events organised by the Grantee which are related to the project?</li> </ul>

## Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

### PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

- Project Document, 14 June 2022.
- Project Extension Request Form – agreed by UNDEF on 26 June 2024.
- Milestone Verification Report M2, 1 June 2023.
- Milestone Verification Report M3, 15 April 2024.
- Final Narrative Report, 14 October 2024.
- Final Financial Utilization Report, 9 October 2024.
- Various documents and media files submitted by Grantee.

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<https://deliberabrasil.org/sobre/>  
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Rede Conhecimento Social: <https://conhecimentosocial.org/>

Deliberative Democracy Digest: <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/>

newDemocracy Foundation: <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/>

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(including article on Brazil at <https://www.peoplepowered.org/news-content/bridging-the-digital-divide-lessons-from-brazils-national-participatory-planning-process>)

Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/brazil/freedom-world/2025>

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### Annex 3: People Consulted

Those marked with an \* were interviewed remotely.

Grantee & Implementing Partner (ReCoS and Delibera)		
Silvia Cervellini	Director and Co-Founder	Delibera Brasil
Fernanda Império	Director and Co-Founder Associate and Independent Collaborator	Delibera Brasil ReCoS
Marisa Villi	Co-Founder CEO and Co-Founder	Delibera Brasil ReCoS
Yuri Vazquez*	Project Coordinator	ReCoS
Thomas Cardoso	Project Assistant	ReCoS Delibera Social
Beneficiaries/Participants		
Octávio Ribeiro	Secretary for Social Participation	Municipality, Niterói
Juliana da Câmara Torres Benício	Secretary for Innovation, Science and Technology	Ditto
Fabiana da Silva Leite Nogueira	Deputy Secretary for Innovation, Science and Technology	Ditto
Gustavo Affonso Marinho	Deputy Secretary for Digital Transformation and Process Modernisation	Ditto
Katherine Nunes de Azevedo	Director, Project Management Office (EGP)	Ditto
Guilherme Garcia Dias dos Santos	Coordinator, EGP	Ditto
Fernando Stern	Coordinator of Digital Government and Citizen Engagement (COLAB)	Ditto
Paula Kwamme Latge	Executive Coordinator	BEMTV, Niterói
Ana Lucia Araujo	Administrator	Ditto
Giulia Latge Mangeli Ladino	Psychologist	Ditto
Matheus de Souza Magalhães	Trainer	Ditto
Thaís da Cruz Amaral	Producer	Ditto
Veronica da Silva Gomes	Network Coordinator	Ditto
Ygor da Silva Claudino dos Santos	Media Adviser	Ditto
Lucas Dutra Gonçalves	Member of the Citizens' Assembly	Niterói
Elisângela Teixeira*	Former Head of Planning  Professor of Linguistics and Coordinator at the Office of Environmental Affairs	Municipality, Fortaleza  University of Ceará, Fortaleza
Renata Marques de Oliveira*	Researcher	Federal University of Ceará, Fortaleza
Ana Olimpia Cardoso Alves*	Professor	Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia,

		Belém
Ivan Costa*	Founder of CSO Observatório Social de Belém and member of Reference Group	Belém
<b>Other Partners/National Actors</b>		
Carla Bezerra	Director for Social Participation (Digital)	General Secretariat of the Presidency, Federal Government, Brasília
Laila Bellix*	Former Director for Social Participation (Digital)	General Secretariat of the Presidency, Federal Government, Brasília
<b>International Community</b>		
Samantha Salve	Data and Monitoring Officer	UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Brasília
Andréa Bolzon	Programme lead for Governance and Institutional Capacities	UNDP, Brasília
André Spigariol	Senior Political Officer	UK Embassy, Brasília
Mirka Snopckova*	Policy Officer, Citizens and Institutions Division	Agence Française de Développement, Paris
Enrique Bravo-Escobar*	Senior Program Officer, Global Programs	National Endowment for Democracy, Washington DC
Emanuele Sapienza*	Global Lead, Open and Inclusive Public Sphere	UNDP, Brussels
<b>Others</b>		
Jaime Hitchen*	Consultant	Evaluator for Post Project Evaluation, March 2025: UDF-17-739-GLO: Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections
Iain Walker*	Executive Director	newDemocracy Foundation

#### Annex 4: Acronyms

CA	Citizens' Assembly
COP30	30th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
Delibera	Coletivo Delibera Brasil
FNR	Final Narrative Report
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PD	Project Document
RCO	(UN) Resident Coordinator's Office
ReCoS	Rede Conhecimento Social
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	UN Development Programme