

# CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN WATER SNAPSHOTS



**BRAZIL** | Teresina  
Enhancing Municipal  
Governance and  
Quality of Life  
Project

## CONTEXT

**Lagoas do Norte is a poor and vulnerable part of Teresina, the capital of Piauí State in Northeast Brazil.** The region is characterized by perennial flooding, poverty, and social exclusion. Unemployment is at 15%, and a majority of those who do earn money (65%) make no more than \$1.50 per person a day. Education level among residents is low; 1 in 2 adults have graduated high school, and less than 1 in 6 have a college degree. In Lagoas do Norte neighborhoods, the proportion of women to men is higher than in the city overall, and the region houses a population of Afrodescendants, one of the most excluded minority groups in Brazil.

The objectives of the Teresina Enhancing Municipal Governance and Quality of Life Project, approved in 2008, were to modernize and improve the financial, urban environmental, service delivery management capacity of the municipal government, and its role in facilitating in the financial, urban environmental, service delivery, and economic development improvement of the quality of life of the low-income population of the Lagoas do Norte region of the city. The first phase of the project helped protect the residents from floods, expanded access to sanitation, improved the quality of water services, and provided green and leisure spaces for the community. In 2016, the project received additional financing to further improve the living conditions for 92,000 of the poorest residents of Teresina in Lagoas do Norte. Citizen engagement has been a core component of the project from its inception, and in most elements of the project.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

The Project Management Unit (PMU) within the Municipality of Teresina actively engaged local residents to secure community buy-in and involvement, and used inputs from consultations and public hearings to inform project design and implementation. To this end, the project team has used a variety of citizen engagement mechanisms, discussed below.

### *Social Project Unit*

The Social Project Unit was a 'one-stop shop' placed in the project area as a **grievance redress mechanism** to resolve issues and complaints, and to answer citizens' questions related to the resettlement process. The office was successful in engaging citizens and keeping communication lines with residents open throughout the project. It also helped establish a close link with the local community, and was considered instrumental in the implementation of the resettlement. The model will be replicated in Phase 2 of the project.

### *Local Committee and Community Engagement Activities*

Establishing a local committee with elected representatives from each neighborhood helped foster participation and engagement of local residents. A **project committee** met on a regular basis to contribute to planning and executing citizen engagement events and public information campaigns. It organized community breakfasts and designed a range of activities to **engage local youth**. The team's active and continuous involvement in community life resulted in high awareness about the project, and a sense of ownership and buy-in among the residents.

### *Community Contribution to Project Design*

The high awareness of the project continuously built the momentum for even greater **community involvement**. For example, when local youth learned about the upcoming construction of a skateboarding plaza, they asked to see the plans, subsequently providing **inputs to improve the design**. The city incorporated their suggestions, which led to the skateboarding ring being embraced and frequently used by the community and local youth. In another instance, in response to the Afrodescendant community's request to design cultural public spaces, the project hired an architect who widely consulted with the communities before preparing design plans. The project also issued a **call for expression of interest** to decorate the path along a canal. For a small amount of R\$100, artists from the community and the city transformed the path with colorful wall graffiti.



*Local artists decorated the path along a canal*

### *Public Information Campaigns*

The resettlement of roughly 2,000 people during Phase 2 of the project is associated with social risk, but is also an opportunity for citizen engagement. **Communications campaigns** using media outlets, local leaders, and neighborhood committees to disseminate information are key in securing community buy-in. Adequate information is paramount. Those who move to new homes as part of the resettlement, for example, will gain access to water and sanitation services for the first time in some cases, and need to be fully prepared for the changes that come with the move. To reduce tariff shock during the resettlement process of Phase 1, an information campaign was launched with suggestions for how to reduce water and electricity bills by using these services more efficiently. In addition, the project's social team helped low-income families to register and gain access to the existing **social tariffs** for these services. These will also be undertaken as part of the resettlement process during Phase 2.

## **GOING FORWARD**

The activities and achievements described above are merely a sample of project engagement initiatives in Lagoas do Norte. While many of these initiatives are to be replicated in Phase 2, some new components are introduced to improve the project as a result of learning from previous experience and community feedback. A good example is that the second phase of the project will support the development and implementation of a **Municipal Violence Prevention Plan**, with a special focus on **gender-based violence** and youth services.

Sources and additional information:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/02/24/brazil-teresina-social-inclusion-water-sanitation-lagoas-norte>  
<http://projects.worldbank.org/P088966/br-municipal-apl-teresina-enhancing-municipal-governance-quality-life-project?lang=en>

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