

Chapter 5

Participatory Evaluation of a Community Centre Policy

The Experience of the Compaz Network (Recife, Brazil)

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Abstract

The Compaz Network in Recife, Brazil, is a public policy focused on the creation of community centres to combat urban violence and promote social inclusion. The participatory evaluation of this network was carried out by the Municipality of Recife with the support of CLEAR-LAB. The Compaz Network, inspired by Colombian models, seeks to reduce violence by offering educational, cultural, and sporting activities in vulnerable communities. The evaluation included the participation of municipal, academic, and civil society actors, enabling a comprehensive and detailed overview of the programme. Tools such as the Problem Tree and Theory of Change were developed, alongside surveys and focus groups with beneficiaries. The findings showed a positive perception of social impact, highlighting the reduction of violence in the areas served and the strengthening of community cohesion. The participatory process facilitated evidence-based decision-making and generated recommendations for the expansion of the programme, prioritising adaptation to local needs and the inclusion of young people in training activities.

Keywords

Participatory Evaluation, Violence Prevention, Social Inclusion, Community Centres, Rede Compaz.

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Introduction

The evaluation of public policies is a fundamental process for understanding the effectiveness and impact of governmental initiatives on the lives of citizens. Rapid evaluation is a quick form of evaluation with a flexible format and multiple agile data collection methods to underpin decision-making and aid understanding of the policy¹⁴. In the Brazilian context, the city of Recife, located in the North-east region of the country, has been expanding evaluation initiatives to strengthen evidence-based decision-making, seeking to identify the effects of management and the implementation of policies aimed at improving the quality of life of its population.

One such policy is the Compaz Network (Community Centres for Peace), a programme whose objective is to combat violence and promote social inclusion through community centres that offer a variety of services and activities. The policy was developed with the aim of mitigating and preventing problems associated with urban violence, as the city has a track record that makes it one of the state capitals with the highest violence rates in the country. This chapter presents a participatory rapid evaluation of the Compaz Network policy, carried out by the Municipality of Recife at municipal level with technical advisory support provided by the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Lusophone Africa and Brazil (CLEARLAB).

¹⁴ For more information on what rapid evaluation is, see <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/rapid-evaluation>.

CLEAR-LAB is one of six centres in the CLEAR Network, all of which are located in internationally recognised academic institutions in the Global South. Based at the São Paulo School of Economics (EESP) of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV), CLEAR-LAB acts as an implementing partner of the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI), disseminating a culture of monitoring and evaluation and evidence-informed decision-making.

Through a diverse evaluation committee, the participatory rapid evaluation of the Compaz Network sought to capture a broad and detailed view of the implementation and results achieved by the policy in the city of Recife. The methods used included the development of monitoring and evaluation tools and field research with the beneficiary population and employees of the community centres.

What follows is a presentation of the Brazilian context of public policy evaluation. The subsequent section details the Compaz Network policy. This is followed by a discussion of the details of the evaluation, from the formation of the committee through to the development of monitoring and evaluation tools, the results achieved, and the formulation of recommendations and an action plan for the continuous improvement of the policy. Finally, some lessons learned from the participatory evaluation process are discussed.

The Brazilian Context of Public Policy Evaluation

When discussing the institutionalisation of evaluation in Brazil, it is necessary to contextualise the Council for Public Policy Monitoring and Evaluation (CMAP) of the Federal Government. The Council was established in 2019 (Decree No. 9,834/2019) and comprises members from the Ministry of Planning and Budget (MPO), the Civil House (Office of the Chief of Staff), the Ministry of Finance (MF), the Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services (MGI), and the Office of the Comptroller General (CGU) (Ministério da Economia, Planejamento e Gestão do Brasil, 2024a).

With these actors, the CMAP performs two main functions. Firstly, the CMAP selects, in accordance with criteria of *materiality*, *criticality*, and *relevance*, the federal public policies that will be subject to evaluation during the current cycle. Secondly, following the evaluation process, the CMAP is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations suggested by the evaluation process for each policy.

Since its creation in 2019, 60 evaluations of public policies have been carried out in areas such as social assistance, health, education, industry, commerce and entrepreneurship, infrastructure and transport, defence, justice and public security, agriculture, labour, communication, science, technology and innovation, energy, housing, and sanitation. Each evaluation cycle

results in an Annual Report on Public Policy Evaluation, which is presented to the National Congress and made available to the Brazilian population (Ministério da Economia, Planejamento e Gestão do Brasil, 2024b).

By virtue of its nature within the Brazilian government, the remit of the CMAP is restricted to the federal sphere. Structurally, the CMAP is tasked with evaluating federal public policies, taking into account the use of the Union's budget. In the Brazilian context, given the country's size in terms of territory and population, efforts towards evaluation at the subnational level (state and municipal) are necessary in order to achieve policy evaluation coverage beyond federal reach.

Furthermore, given the organisation of the Brazilian state as a federated system, the states make use of their own planning instruments, implementing more public policies at the local level than the Union. Thus, there is a need for capacity for evaluation of public policies at state and municipal level—whether *ex-ante* or *ex-post*—beyond the evaluation of planning instruments alone, such as multi-year plans. Therefore, bearing in mind that both states and municipalities have elements of institutionalised evaluation (which can be measured by legislation, structures, technical capacity, practice, and use of evaluations), and that the CMAP is tasked with evaluating federal policies, targeted efforts are needed to develop evaluation capacities at subnational levels.

In this vein, CLEAR-LAB comprises various initiatives to strengthen the culture of monitoring and evaluation of public policies at subnational level. Among these, two

initiatives in particular involved the city of Recife as one of their partners: the *CLEAR Nordeste Programme* and the *Rapid Evaluation Call* (Convocatoria de Evaluación Ejecutiva).

The CLEAR Nordeste Programme is an initiative in partnership with the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and the Centre for Data and Knowledge Integration of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Cidacs-Fiocruz). The initiative contributes to the strengthening of the culture of monitoring and evaluation of public policies and programmes in state governments and municipalities in the Brazilian North-east, a region encompassing nine Brazilian states, including Pernambuco, whose capital is the city of Recife. In general, the North-east region presents lower economic and social development indicators than other regions of the country, such as the South-east and the South (Barros, 2011). For this reason, initiatives focused on the North-east can contribute to the development of more effective policies and to the reduction of regional inequality in the country. The CLEAR Nordeste Programme operates through a network comprising public administrations, universities, and social and private sector organisations dedicated to the subject, and supports training activities and the construction of monitoring and evaluation systems (FGV CLEAR Nordeste, 2024).

Meanwhile, the Rapid Evaluation Call launched by CLEAR-LAB in 2021 had as its main objective the contribution to the development of evaluation competencies through technical advisory support in evaluation to public administration bodies in Angola,

Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. The technical advisory support consisted in the delivery of an online course on rapid evaluation and support for the evaluation of policies selected through the process. Technical support was provided through the delivery of training workshops and participatory meetings aimed at accompanying, facilitating, and providing methodological support for the activities of rapid evaluation implementation. Among the main requirements was institutional and technical diversity in the composition of the evaluation committee, which had to be made up of representatives of entities connected to the public policy to be evaluated. One of the policies selected by the Call to receive advisory support in evaluation was the Compaz Network of Recife, Brazil.

The Institutionalisation of Evaluation at Municipal Level and Context for the Implementation of the Compaz Network

Recife, capital of the state of Pernambuco in north-eastern Brazil, is the ninth most populous capital in Brazil, with 1.5 million inhabitants (IBGE, 2022), and one of the most violent in the country. In 2007 it recorded a homicide rate of 75.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, the second highest rate among the 27 Brazilian state

capitals (Atlas, 2019). In the face of this social challenge, in 2016 the Recife City Council (Prefeitura do Recife) inaugurated the first Community Centre for Peace, the Compaz, which was founded on the principles of violence prevention, territorial outreach, and a culture of peace. By 2024, eight years after the inauguration of the first Compaz centre, there are now six units in the city, constituting the Compaz Network.

In parallel, the Recife City Council also invested in good planning and management practices, developing institutional maturity across its secretariats. In this regard, project monitoring and results verification activities were already well established by 2021, when the transition took place between mayors Geraldo Júlio, who had been in office since 2013, and João Campos, both of the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB). Consequently, political stability, combined with a consolidated organisational culture of results-based management, benefitted the implementation of new actions to promote the evaluation of public policies and the use of evidence in municipal executive management. This environment enabled, among other outcomes, the development and implementation of the participatory evaluation of the Compaz Network in 2022.

Alongside the process of institutionalisation at the federal level — with the establishment of the CMAP — and other examples at the subnational level, the city of Recife created a department to strengthen the culture of municipal policy evaluation. In 2021, the Centre for Public Policy Evaluation and Data Science (NAPCD) was created, which directly supports the Executive

Secretariat for Planning and Management (SEPLAN) of the Recife City Council in its institutional activities to implement the municipal administration model. In this way, the NAPCD actively participated in the preparation of diagnostic reports and analyses that underpinned the formulations of the *2022–2025 Multi-Year Plan* and the *2021–2024 Municipal Strategic Plan “Recife on the Road to the Future”*, which established, among other targets and priorities, the expansion of the Compaz Network services.

This institutional priority arose, on the one hand, from the diagnostic reports prepared with the views of citizens and municipal public administration staff, which identified the Compaz as an excellent public policy. On the other hand, quantitative analyses of municipal indicators showed that, despite a recent decline, the *Rate of Intentional Lethal Violent Crimes (ILVC)* per 100,000 inhabitants, when compared with other state capitals, remained high in the city of Recife. Thus, against this backdrop and incorporating the results of public consultation, the goal of expanding the Compaz Network emerged as the public choice for the continuation of a recognised policy for combating violence and promoting a culture of peace and social justice (Prefeitura do Recife, 2022).

However, beyond simply increasing the number of services within the network, the technical capacity of the NAPCD made it possible to seek a deeper understanding. It was necessary to investigate the mechanisms through which the Compaz achieved its results. At the time the participatory evaluation of the

Compaz Network began in 2022, the NAPCD consisted of four members and comprised a multidisciplinary team: led by an economist, it also included a social urbanist, a project manager, and a data scientist. This diversity of skills and knowledge enabled a broad and complementary approach to the analysis and understanding of the Compaz Network, facilitating an in-depth exploration of its mechanisms and impacts.

From this perspective, the diversity of the team made it possible to apply different evaluation methods. Still in 2021, the NAPCD's first product in relation to the Compaz was a summary evaluation showing that the launch of the first two units of the network was associated with a reduction in ILVC rates in the territories served¹⁵. These findings reinforced the evidence that the Compaz Network has a positive influence on the territorial dynamics of communities and on the lives of its beneficiaries. At the Compaz Ariano Suassuna, the monthly moving average of intentional lethal violent crimes revealed a fall of 5.8% two years after the launch of the unit. At the Compaz Eduardo Campos, located in one of the most vulnerable communities in the city, the decline was even more significant: 13.8%.

These were important findings that were even used as evidence of the results achieved by the Compaz in the successful submission of the programme to the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) (Bayma, 2023). The 2022 UNPSA recognised ten innovative initiatives

in public services, aligned with the United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* (UN, 2024).

However, it was still necessary to go further in order to understand the determining mechanisms behind the Compaz Network's results. In this regard, this institutional recognition needed to be accompanied by the generation of evidence regarding the processes carried out and how the results were achieved, thus giving rise to the idea of the participatory evaluation.

The Object of Evaluation: The Compaz Network

The community centres of the Compaz Network are known as *Citizenship Factories*, as they seek to contribute to a culture of peace in the city by offering activities and services for children, young people, and adults in need. The design of the community centre policy was inspired by the Library Parks, a model of social urbanism implemented in Colombia, whose aim is to generate transformation in the communities most affected by crime and social inequality through social inclusion and community strengthening.

The mission of the Compaz Network is to make the city increasingly safer by promoting peaceful social interaction and a culture of non-violence. The Compaz Network is embedded within the Municipal

¹⁵ Although the evaluation report is not published, the City Council makes it available on request. (<https://compaz.recife.pe.gov.br/publicacoes-e-documentos>).

Policy on a Culture of Peace and Restorative Justice of Recife (Municipal Law No. 18,850/2021), from the perspective of developing activities that prevent violence and reduce crime. The policy is included in the municipality's strategic plan and in the municipal plan for urban security and violence prevention, known as the Pact for Life.

The design of the policy is grounded in the evidence-based premise that violence is the result of multiple factors and, therefore, its resolution does not rest on public security alone (Di Tella, Edwards & Schargrotsky, 2010). Thus, the locations of the Compaz units were selected so as to occupy violent and socially vulnerable territories, enabling the local population to access educational, cultural, sporting, vocational training, health, and wellbeing activities. In this way, the population benefits and — through the promotion of basic rights, active citizenship, and the generation of opportunities — it is expected that fewer people, especially adolescents and young adults, will enter or remain in the cycle of violence and social vulnerability.

Between 2016 and 2021, four units of the Compaz Network were inaugurated, implemented in peripheral areas classified among the most vulnerable and violent in the city of Recife, capital of the state of Pernambuco¹⁶. The choice of location for the units, prioritising territories most affected by violence and vulnerability, took into account the needs of the

population in the beneficiary neighbourhoods. To this end, the planning process included moments of community listening and participation, with the aim of ensuring greater community support for the policy being developed. According to the data gathered in the participatory rapid evaluation, approximately 10% of the population residing in the neighbourhoods served by the Network is registered at one of the four units.

The first Community Centre for Peace unit in the network was inaugurated in March 2016, named *Compaz Governador Eduardo Campos*. Among the main services of this unit are the state's largest martial arts training centre and an 850squaremetre library with around 15,000 books in its collection. One year later, the second unit was inaugurated, the *Compaz Escritor Ariano Suassuna*, which features a sports centre with tennis courts, an income-generation training space, legal advice services, and others. The third unit, the *Compaz Governador Miguel Arraes*, was opened in December 2019, offering services dedicated to maker culture, robotics courses, and courses on digital animation and film/theatre, among others. Finally, the fourth unit, the *Compaz Dom Helder Câmara*, was inaugurated one year later, during the Covid-19 pandemic. This unit is notable for its aquatic sports facilities and a radio, television, and photography studio. The main activities offered by the Compaz Network, considering the totality of the units, are summarised in the table below.

¹⁶ Two further community centres for peace were inaugurated after 2021, bringing the total to six centres. The first four were the subject of the participatory evaluation.

Dimension	Activities offered
Sports	- Swimming, Jiu-jitsu, Capoeira, Judo, Taekwondo, Olympic Wrestling, Football, Tennis, Futsal, Basketball, Volleyball, Hockey, Aquagym, Gymnastics, Functional Training, Rugby.
Education	- Technology courses (UTEC), Skills for the Future, Languages, Preparatory Mathematics Course for entrance exams and for admission to Technical Colleges.
Services	- Social Assistance Reference Centre, Procon Recife, the Military Board, Conflict Mediation and the Women's Secretariat.
Health and Wellbeing	- City fitness programme (Academia da Cidade), Psychological Support, Auriculotherapy, Integrative Practices (Biodanza, Meditation, Tai chi chuan), Mãe Coruja.
Culture	- Library, lessons in guitar, drama, singing, ballet, folk dance.
Vocational Training and Income Generation	- Recife Employment Agency, Entrepreneurship Centre, Vocational Courses.

Table 1. Activities offered by the Compaz Network
Source: Participatory Rapid Evaluation of the Compaz Network (NAPCD), 2022.

The services available at the Compaz Network units are open to any resident of the city of Recife. However, to participate in the activities, each person must register, and in the case of children and adolescents, the person responsible for the minor must also register.

The Rapid Evaluation of the Compaz Network: A Participatory Perspective

This rapid evaluation was carried out in the context of an expansion plan for the Compaz Network to build new units, in accordance with the Recife Strategic Plan

2021–2024. Thus, in addition to providing evidence for decision-making by managers of the existing Compaz units, the rapid evaluation also sought to gather data and identify potential benefits that would support the decision to expand the policy.

As noted above, the evaluation of the Compaz Network was carried out within the framework of the Rapid Evaluation Call, offered by CLEAR-LAB. The Call was designed to facilitate, through capacity-building in evaluation and the provision of technical advisory support, a rapid evaluation of the selected public policy—as was the case with the Compaz Network—. To make this process possible, an evaluation committee was formed and a series of meetings was organised.

The Evaluation Committee

The evaluation committee was made up of Recife City Council officials, managers of the Compaz units, and members of academia and civil society. The participation of these diverse actors provided the evaluation with a broad, complex, and detailed perspective of the object under evaluation, and was fundamental to obtaining the evaluation results. What follows is a detailed account of the composition of the committee and the respective roles of its members:

- **Four members of the NAPCD (Centre for Public Policy Evaluation and Data Science of the Recife City Council):** the Centre's role was to coordinate the evaluation and its results as an evaluation team. The NAPCD general manager served as the focal point for communications between the Centre and CLEAR-LAB, which provided advisory support for the evaluation, as well as coordinating relations with the other members of the evaluation committee to organise advisory meetings and to facilitate working groups with participants external to the committee. The NAPCD was also responsible for drafting, finalising, and disseminating, on demand, the final evaluation report, under the City Council's responsibility.
- **One key official from the SESEC (Citizen Security Secretariat of the Recife City Council):** responsible for institutionally representing the Compaz Network, defining the object of evaluation, and taking decisions on the policy.

- **Four managers of the Compaz units:** the fundamental role of the Compaz managers, also attached to SESEC, was to attend and actively participate in all CLEAR-LAB advisory meetings, providing a strategic overview of the Network and collaborating in and organising the dynamics during data collection at each Compaz unit. The managers also participated in the development of the action plan based on the evaluation recommendations.
- **One PhD student in economics from UFPE (Federal University of Pernambuco):** the academic member's role was to gather and organise secondary data on the Compaz Network for use during the evaluative process.
- **Two members of Coletivo Massapé (a social organisation for collaborative urban planning in the city of Recife):** responsible for training the interviewers (in this case, residents living near the Compaz units), finalising the questionnaires, and implementing collection and analysis of primary data for use in the rapid evaluation.

The Advisory Support and the Role of CLEAR-LAB

The role of CLEAR-LAB was to provide advisory support to guide the evaluation committee throughout the rapid evaluation of the Compaz Network. To this end, a series of ten sessions was arranged, combining the presentation of theoretical concepts of monitoring and

evaluation of public policies with practical activities to develop evaluation tools. The sessions lasted two hours each and were held at a frequency agreed upon by the group, between April and September 2022. The majority of the sessions took place online to enable the participation of people in different locations. However, one of the advisory workshops was held in person, with the full committee present in Recife. The session took place at the facilities of the Compaz Governador Eduardo Campos unit, the first to be built in the Network.

Throughout the ten workshops in CLEAR-LAB's rapid evaluation advisory programme, a roadmap was drawn up from the evaluation planning stage, through the construction of monitoring and evaluation tools, the formulation of evaluation questions, the construction of data collection instruments, and finally the analysis of the collected data and the finalisation of the evaluation.

During the consultancy sessions, concepts relating to monitoring and evaluation were presented, and participatory sessions were held to develop tools for the sound conduct of the evaluation. The sessions were thus divided between expository and participatory moments (using an online collaborative platform for the construction of the tools), as well as communications and guidance on the evaluation process.

The main tools constructed during the sessions (*Problem Tree* and *Objectives Tree*, and *Theory of Change*), along with the evaluation questions, are described below.

Problem Tree and Objectives Tree

The concepts presented, and the presence of a diversified evaluation committee, resulted in the construction of monitoring and evaluation tools that captured the complexity of the Compaz Network's reality. The first step was the identification by the NAPCD of the main problems that the Compaz seeks to address. A list was drawn up that included violence indices, such as the homicide rate, the number of ILVC and VCP (violent crimes against property), and education and health indicators for the city of Recife. In the evaluation committee discussions during the advisory workshops, the process of defining the central problem was swift and straightforward, as there was agreement among all committee members that the *high rate of violence in the city of Recife* would be the main problem on which the Compaz Network would focus.

With the central problem established, it was possible to discuss and identify its causes and consequences, thus forming the Problem Tree for the policy (Figure 1). In this process, primary causes were identified, such as social inequality in the city and insufficient public policies. These primary causes lead to a lack of access to various basic elements, such as rights and a sense of citizenship, and quality public services (transport, street lighting, public spaces). This combination results in under-occupation of the territory, creating space for irregular and illicit activities which in turn, combined with a culture of violence in the resolution of conflicts, lead to the central problem: the high rate of violence in

the city of Recife. The identified consequences of this problem were: increasing social inequality, cycles of

permanent violence and vulnerability, loss of lives, and deterioration of public spaces.

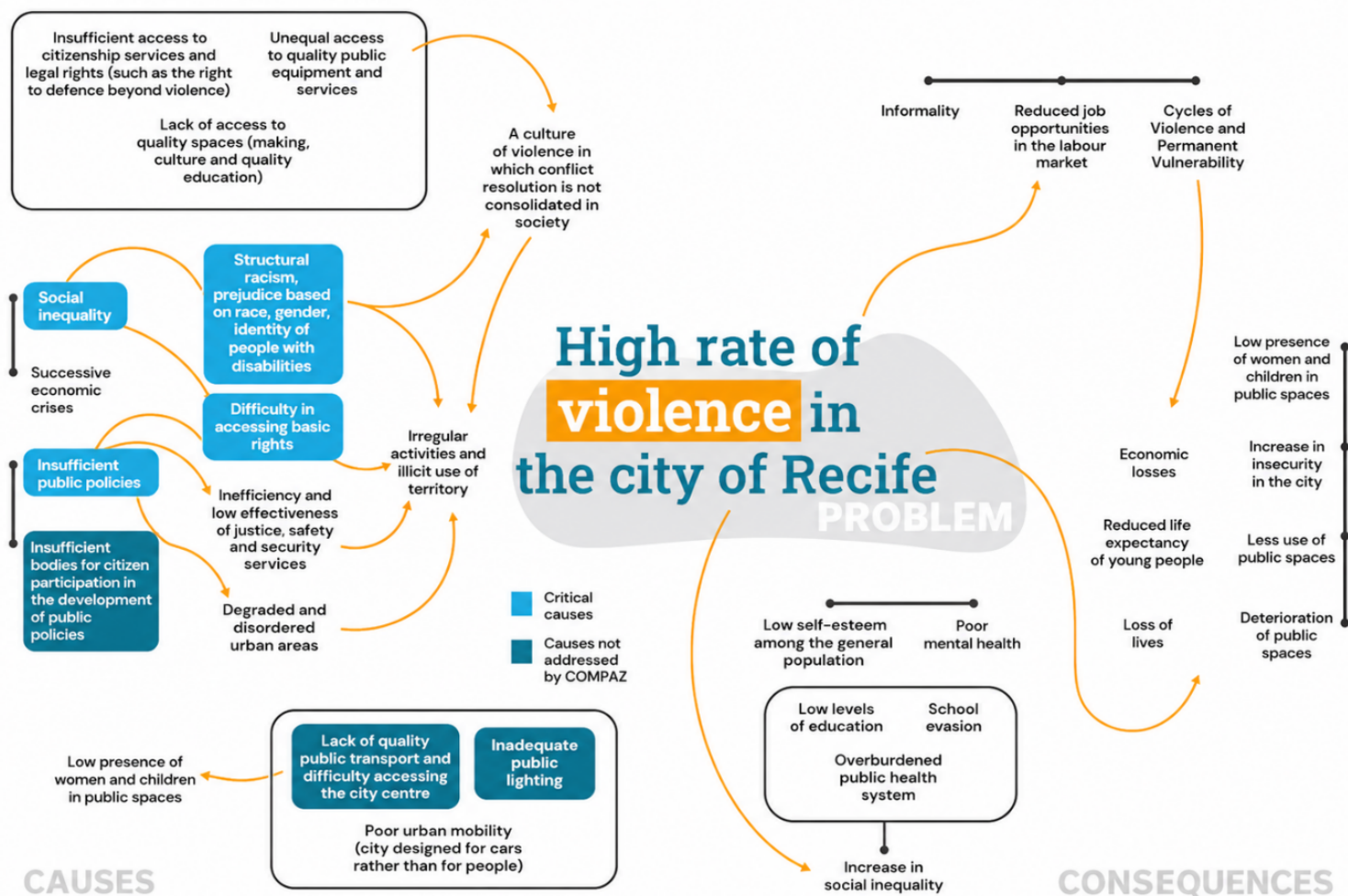


Figure 1. Problem Tree of the Compaz Network (Recife, Brazil)
Source: Participatory Rapid Evaluation of the Compaz Network (NAPCD), 2022.

The participatory process for defining the central problem that the policy addresses, its causes and consequences, constituted a rich exchange of perceptions among the various actors on the evaluation committee.

The presence of managers of the Compaz Network units, for example, made it possible to incorporate the perspectives of those who are implementing the policy and tackling the consequences of the problem in their daily work. On the other hand, the expertise of evaluation specialists and academics enabled scientific evidence to be taken into account in establishing the connections between the elements of the Problem Tree.

Mirroring the *Problem Tree*, the *Objectives Tree* of the policy is presented (Figure 2). Accordingly, the central objective is the *reduction in the rate of violence in the city of Recife*. Actions should seek appropriate and sufficient public policies, in the context of social inequalities, promoting greater access to basic rights and quality public services, increasingly occupying the territories, with civilised resolution of problems, closing down spaces for irregular and illicit activities. As a result, with the reduction in the rate of violence, there would be an improvement in social inequality indices, a break in the cycles of permanent violence and vulnerability, fewer lives lost, and the conservation and maintenance of public spaces.

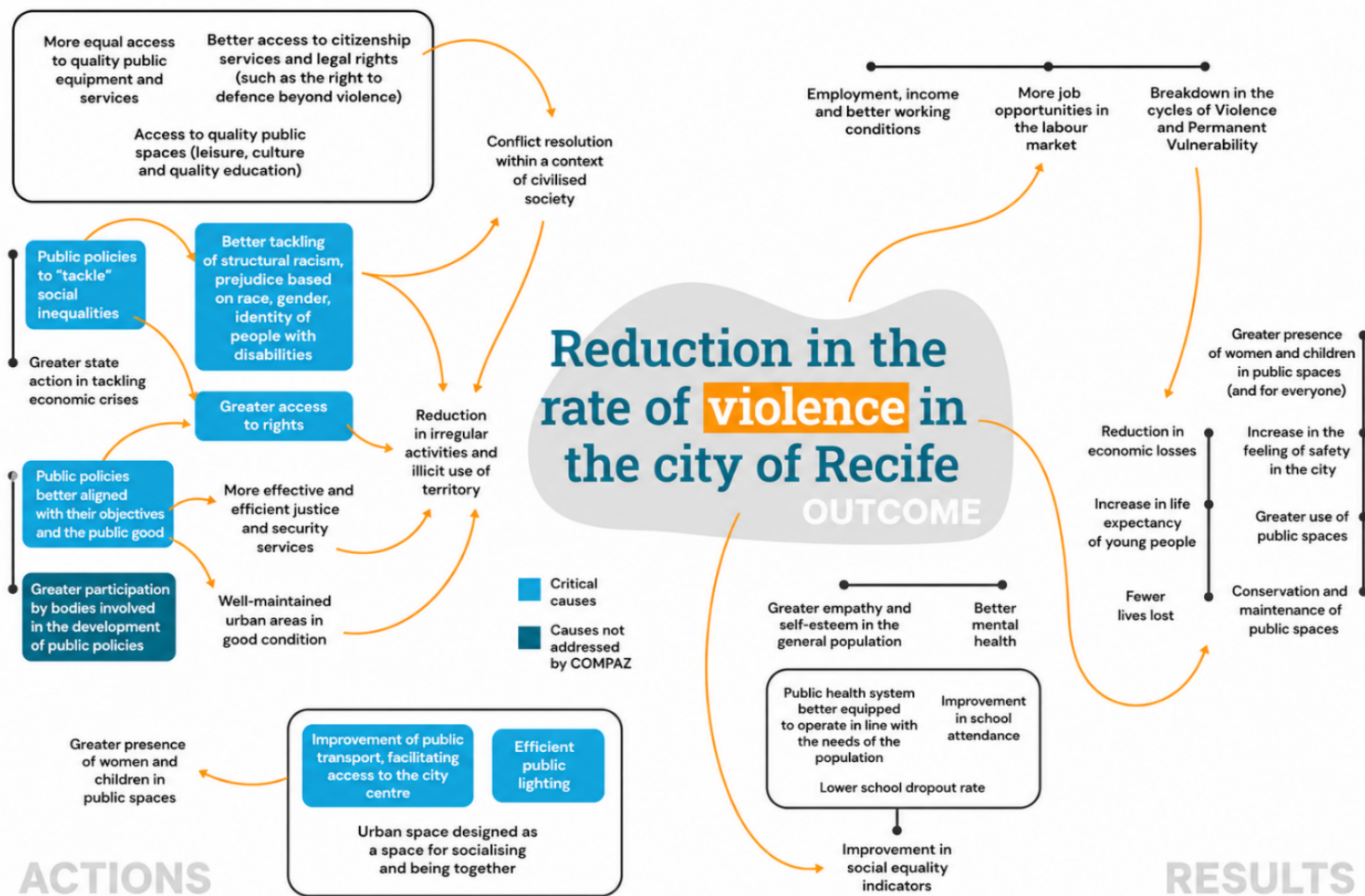


Figure 2. Objectives Tree of the Compaz Network (Recife, Brazil)
Source: Participatory Rapid Evaluation of the Compaz Network (NAPCD), 2022.

The collaborative development of the *Objectives Tree* during the technical advisory sessions enabled participants to reflect on the mechanisms of change that permeated the functioning of the policy. However, unlike the discussion on the *Problem Tree*, there was a lower level of immediate agreement during the collective construction of the *Objectives Tree*. Initially, there were divergent views among committee members on the policy actions necessary to achieve the main objective and its potential results. Nevertheless, through the facilitation of the discussion by CLEAR-LAB during the technical advisory sessions, the different actors were able to consider various aspects of the policy's functioning, eventually converging on the final *Objectives Tree*.

Together, the two Trees are relevant diagnostic tools for the public problem and for the ex-post evaluation of the policy design which contributed to achieving alignment within the evaluation committee on the main aspects that should be investigated in the course of the participatory rapid evaluation.

Theory of Change and Evaluation Questions

With the problem diagnosis completed and the *Problem Tree* and *Objectives Tree* constructed, it was possible to trace the design of the Compaz Network on the Theory of Change. This tool makes it possible to express the logical functioning of a policy, setting out the necessary inputs, the activities carried out, and the outputs

delivered which, together, will generate outcomes — that is, changes in behaviour or skills in the population. Finally, the Theory of Change culminates in impacts on society, which are a consequence of the outcomes maturing and must contribute to the resolution or mitigation of the central problem identified in the Problem Tree. Therefore, the Theory of Change must describe the entire pathway that enables the outcomes to be achieved through the policy¹⁷.

The Theory of Change of the Compaz Network was developed in several stages. Initially, during the design and implementation of the policy between 2015 and 2020, no methodologically rigorous theory of change or logical framework was constructed. In 2021, prior to the start of CLEAR-LAB technical advisory sessions, the NAPCD team prepared a preliminary version of the tool, based on policy documents. However, during the participatory sessions with the full evaluation committee, the initial version was significantly improved, both in terms of the structure of the activities implemented in the policy and the outcomes expected to be achieved.

Therefore, the final version of the tool, illustrated in summary form in Figure 3, was obtained through the interaction of the committee, facilitated by CLEAR-LAB. In these workshop sessions, the different actors involved in the conception, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the policy were able to present their perceptions of the logical functioning of the Compaz

¹⁷ For more information on the Theory of Change, see Rogers (2014) and Funnell & Rogers (2011).

Network. In this regard, the participation of the Compaz Network unit managers was indispensable in ensuring that the description presented by the Theory of Change was fully faithful to what takes place in the field. It can therefore be assumed that, in this case, documentary

analysis alone, carried out by external evaluators, would not have been sufficient to produce a Theory of Change that expressed all aspects of the pathway to achieving the policy's outcomes — making the collaborative construction process with the different actors fundamental.



Figure 3. Theory of Change of the Compaz Network (Recife, Brazil)
Source: Participatory Rapid Evaluation of the Compaz Network (NAPCD), 2022.

The Theory of Change of the Compaz begins by listing the inputs necessary for the functioning of the policy, namely: (1) its staff, (2) the financial cost of the Compaz units, and (3) the physical land on which the units are located. With these inputs, it is possible to carry out the activities of the Compaz Network, which are classified through the service areas offered by the network, namely: (1) citizenship, promotion and defence of rights; (2) vocational training and income generation; (3) sports, recreation, and martial arts; (4) culture; (5) education and technology; and (6) health and wellbeing. In addition, the Theory of Change also sets out crosscutting activities, which are the management activities of the Compaz units.

Through these sets of activities and the outputs delivered by them, the outcomes and impacts proposed by the policy are expected to be achieved: through access to these activities, in addition to providing support to people in situations of social vulnerability, the population is equipped for the labour market, within a culture of peace. In the long term, this will have an impact both in terms of reducing social inequality in the territories occupied by the Compaz, and in terms of less violence and greater employment and income generation in the municipality of Recife. Based on the Theory of Change discussions, evaluation questions were specified that must be answered in the field research, relating to the perceptions of beneficiaries and people working in the Compaz Network regarding the implementation and results of the policy. At the time of formulating the evaluation questions, the role

of the committee —made up of actors familiar with the policy in their day-to-day work— was fundamental.

The collaborative and diverse environment of the committee benefited the process of formulating the evaluation questions, ensuring that the questions prioritised in the evaluation would be relevant for understanding the mechanisms of change of the policy and supporting decision-making. Ultimately, general questions were organised which assisted in the formulation of the data collection instruments for the progress of the evaluation, structured around five axes:

- **Axis 1** | *Perception of people working in the Compaz*: what is the perception of the staff team regarding the services and activities offered?
- **Axis 2** | *Perception of citizens*: what is the perception of the people who use or benefit from the facility regarding the services and activities offered?
- **Axis 3** | *Programme impact on violence prevention*: what is the impact of the Compaz on the reduction of crime and violence rates in the territories served by the facility?
- **Axis 4** | *Programme impact on health*: what is the impact of the Compaz on the health and wellbeing of beneficiaries?
- **Axis 5** | *Programme impact on education and citizens' vocational training*: what is the impact of the Compaz on the learning results of the school lives of children and adolescents living in the territories served by the facility?

Field Research and Target Population

During the evaluation process, primary data were collected through individual questionnaires and focus groups, conducted over six weeks between June and July 2022, at the four Compaz units, within each community centre and within a radius of up to 2 km from the unit. The choice of these interview locations was based on a study by the Citizen Security Secretariat and the NAPCD which, by geo-referencing the Compaz administrative database, indicated that around 80% of those registered at a Compaz unit live within 1 km of the facility. Within this collection radius, it would therefore be possible to reach people who reside or work near a Network unit, capturing the perceptions of those in the vicinity of each centre.

The management of the field research was carried out by Coletivo Massapé, which also selected and trained young researchers to carry out data collection in the field. A requirement for the selection of these researchers was that they be residents of the neighbourhoods served by the Compaz units, as will be explained in the next section. The selection of young community members, who were already familiar with the Compaz Network, constitutes another participatory dimension of the rapid evaluation.

The questionnaires included multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended questions to gather the opinions and accounts of those interviewed. Specific flows were structured for each audience, considering different groups of people, namely:

- People who use the Compaz;
- People who use the Compaz little or not at all;
- People who work at the Compaz;
- People who are not familiar with the Compaz.

Considering each audience interviewed, the questions formulated followed the evaluation questions agreed upon by the committee. The questionnaires addressed respondents' perceptions of the facility and the central themes of the evaluation: security, health and wellbeing, and education. The questionnaire target set was 600 per Compaz unit, totalling at least 2,400 questionnaires at the end of the data collection process — that is, the same number of people would be interviewed even though each unit had a different size, in order to standardise the information and observe the Compaz Network in a complete and unified manner.

For the focus groups, four groups were selected per Compaz from the established profiles, according to the characteristics and frequency of attendance of the people at each unit. In addition, to guide the groups, each profile was assigned a guiding question, through which further details regarding the operation of the centres were explored. It should be noted that the focus groups are grounded in the humanisation of the data collected, on the basis of the specific themes and evaluation guidelines for the Compaz. The interviews with focus groups were therefore considered important tools for investigating in greater depth the reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction among beneficiaries with regard to the activities or services offered by the policy.

In the end, the collection target was exceeded, totalling 3,551 individual questionnaires and 16 focus groups, distributed across the four units, with different profiles including age, use or non-use of the Compaz as a student, parent, or employee.

The Participatory Context of the Evaluation: Citizen Participation

As noted above, in addition to the participation of members of different municipal secretariats, the evaluation committee also included members of academia and non-governmental organisations, who played an important role in the development and application of the selected evaluation tools and methodologies. In this way, the evaluation managed to overcome the challenge of the limitations of secondary data. The ILVC rate was the main secondary data available, representing extreme violence events (homicides). That is to say, there was no data available regarding the delivery of outputs and intermediate results of the policy, which were necessary for understanding what was happening before the impact of the reduction in homicides was reached.

To overcome the secondary data constraint, a triangulation was carried out involving the NAPCD, COLAB —a GovTech platform for public consultations— and Coletivo Massapê, a social organisation with experience in participatory processes in the field. The development of the data collection tools (questionnaires

and focus group scripts for the general public and for Compaz Network employees) involved contributions from the evaluation committee, so that at this stage too there was a confluence of diverse perspectives. As a result of this joint creation, an innovative proposal emerged: new data would be collected in the field with the participation of Compaz users as researchers.

Consequently, this approach involved hiring researchers from the communities themselves, located close to the community centres, ensuring a more authentic research process and fostering a sense of ownership and participation among those involved. Essential for the quality of the evaluation, the researchers received intensive training facilitated by Coletivo Massapê, not only in use of the technological tools provided but also in questionnaire administration techniques, ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the data collection process. The premise of this evaluation design was that having community members as questionnaire administrators would facilitate communication and encourage the population to participate in data collection. Moreover, the participation and training of these young people as researchers constituted an initiative of investment in evaluation training and skills development, so that these young people, now with field research experience, can expand their work in the area.

The success of this initiative was evidenced by the participation of over 3,500 people in approximately one month, demonstrating a strong community interest in contributing to the evaluation. Respondents

were distributed across the territories around the four Compaz facilities active during the year of the evaluation, prioritising a radius of 1 km from each centre and reaching up to 2 km. The map illustrated

in the figure below shows the location of the four facilities and of the respondents, according to the georeferenced data gathered during the interviews.

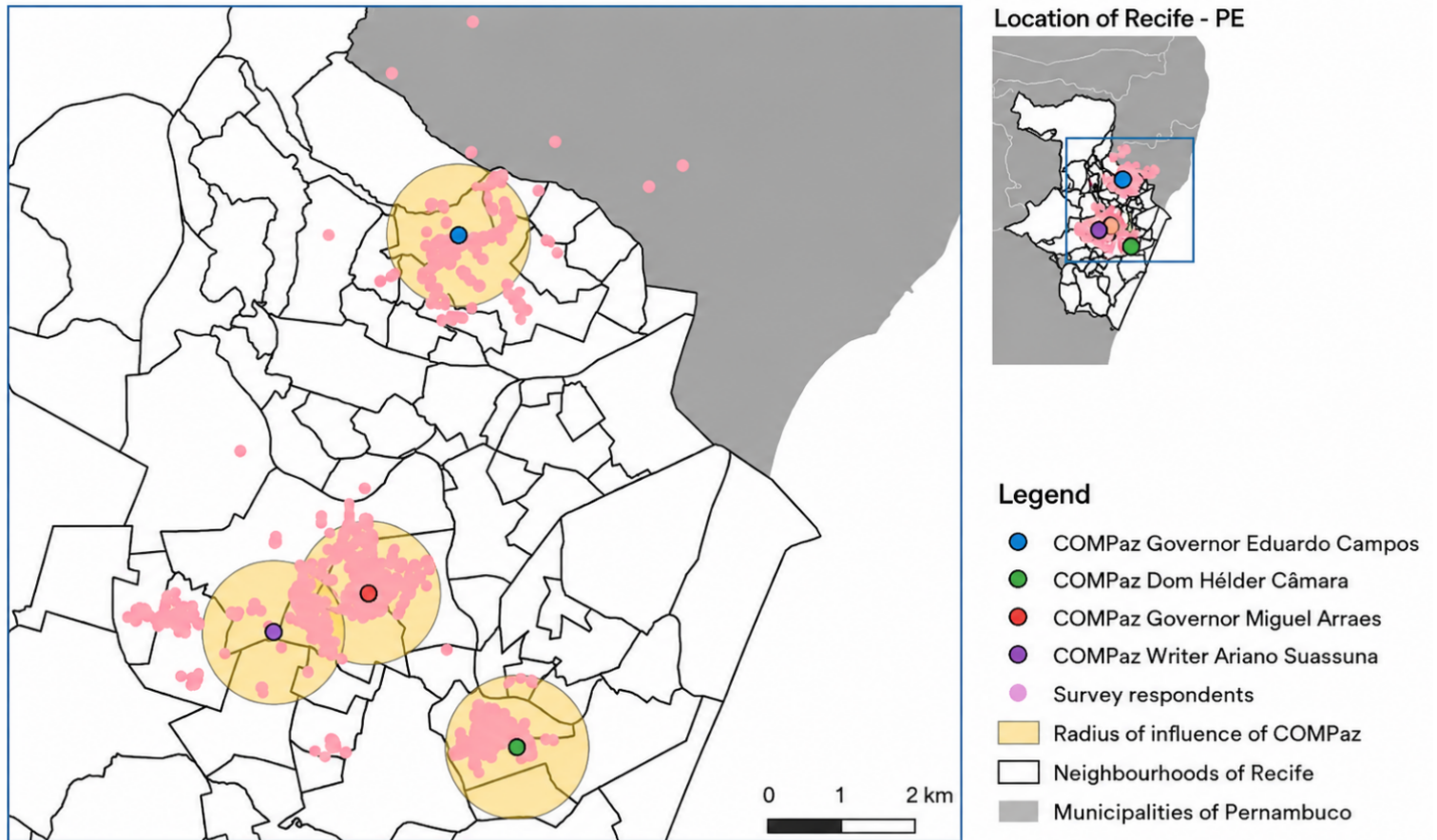


Figure 4. Location of questionnaire administration and areas of influence of the Compaz.
Source: Participatory Rapid Evaluation of the Compaz Network (NAPCD), 2022.

The richness of the data gathered provided a solid basis for the analysis of the evaluation's guiding questions, enabling a deeper understanding of citizens' expectations, perceptions, and needs.

In addition to the users of the facilities and their employees, the population residing in the communities close to the Compaz units was also interviewed, even if they were not programme beneficiaries. This strategy made it possible to identify how beneficiaries define the Compaz, what changes in quality of life are observed, the perception of the programme, and the reasons that might lead to greater or lesser use of the facility. Consequently, with a broad and diverse set of findings, it was possible to draw up guidelines for improving the policy and for its continuous improvement, resulting in an evaluation report detailing all the information gathered and the proposals put forward¹⁸.

Results

The preliminary results of the summary evaluation showed that the inauguration of the first two units of the network was associated with a reduction in rates of intentional lethal violent crime (ILVC) in the territories served. Furthermore, the participatory rapid evaluation

provided a panoramic overview of the performance of the Compaz Network, at low cost due to the use of in-house resources and staff and the technical advisory support of CLEAR-LAB. In general, the findings show that the Compaz Network has a positive influence on the territorial dynamics of communities and on the lives of its beneficiaries.

Among all the data on community perception gathered in the field research, more than 96% of respondents stated that they would recommend the construction of new Compaz units in the city of Recife. This finding strengthens the administrative plan for the expansion of the network.

Furthermore, 9 out of 10 people surveyed stated that they were satisfied with the activities offered at the community centres. On the other hand, 8 out of 10 beneficiaries would like even more activities to be offered at each centre. This indicates signs of suppressed demand for the Compaz Network's services.

With regard to people's perceptions of the social impact of the Compaz Network's services and activities in the territory, both staff and users of the centres showed a positive view. Among users, 85% state that participating in Compaz activities has brought positive changes to their lives, and 80% perceive positive changes in their physical and mental health since beginning to attend Compaz activities. For staff, 87% believe that the Compaz contributes to the reduction of social inequality in the territory, and 97% state that the implementation of the Compaz has generated positive changes in society.

¹⁸ The evaluation report is available on request from the Recife City Council. (<https://compaz.recife.pe.gov.br/publicacoes-e-documentos>).

The evaluation report also highlights the need to carry out community listening sessions with the population in areas close to the new units to be built, in order to better adapt the activities to be offered. The need to conduct an impact evaluation of the Compaz Network was also mentioned, in order to identify the effects and causal relationships of the Compaz units on indicators of public security, health, education, and social inequality. Despite indications, according to the findings of the participatory rapid evaluation, that the Compaz may have contributed to the reduction of ILVC, only an impact evaluation could estimate this effect.

An essential aspect, arising primarily from the vision of the Compaz staff, was the consolidation of the programme beyond its physical structure, exemplified by the decision to advance the appointment of the management team for the fifth unit while it was still under construction in 2023, ensuring that the management was operational in the territory and aligned with the programme's objectives even before the physical space was inaugurated. Additionally, the need for a second participatory evaluation was recognised, this time with a specific focus on children and adolescents. This second initiative, carried out in collaboration with UNICEF and Coletivo Massapé, sought not only to better understand the needs of this demographic group but also to integrate their voices and perspectives into the development and implementation of actions relevant to them (UNICEF Brasil, 2024).

The evaluation report systematises the main findings classified by theme and suggests guidelines for

decision-making on the policy. Each guideline may fall within the remit of different bodies within the Recife City Council and therefore does not have a single responsible sector. The themes used include the continuity and expansion of the Compaz Network, user registration and enrolment in activities, attracting adolescent and young audiences, communication with society, and security.

In general, the Compaz Network was well evaluated by users, with particular recognition of the positive perception of the activities and timetables, as well as improvements in physical and mental health. To ensure the continuity of these results, the evaluation recommends maintaining the quality of services, diversifying activities and keeping the focus on the citizen. As for user registration, it needs to be updated periodically to ensure its effectiveness, and virtual enrolment should be enabled to increase accessibility. The expansion of services must address the lack of vacancies, offering more options in sports and vocational training courses, while also integrating with other municipal services and prioritising activities for people with disabilities.

To address issues of social inequality and structural racism, the evaluation indicates the need to offer diverse opportunities and to consolidate initiatives for tackling racism, in addition to promoting partnerships with civil society. Strengthening community ties by involving surrounding communities and broadening communication about the free-of-charge nature of services are key strategies.

To attract adolescent and young audiences, it is crucial to expand the offering of vocational training courses, sports, and competitions, as well as to create a youth council and to coordinate with social organisations and universities. Physical accessibility must be guaranteed with access routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport, as well as adaptations for people with disabilities. In addition, communication with society needs to be improved through segmented strategies, using popular media and actively seeking out vulnerable audiences. As regards security, it is important to evaluate the impact of the Compaz Network on the reduction of crime, particularly against young people, and to investigate the dynamics affecting security. Finally, the evaluation recommendations emphasise that the expansion of the Compaz Network must prioritise vulnerable areas and listen to local communities.

Action Plan Based on the Results and Recommendations

After completing the evaluation and sharing the report with the SEPLAN and SESEC teams, a crucial moment was the collaborative construction of the action plan based on the findings and guidelines indicated by the evaluation. The development of the action plan was carried out in three collaborative workshops, facilitated by NAPCD members, with the participation of the four

managers of the Compaz Network units in the first two sessions and of the Citizen Security Secretary and the Executive Secretary for a Culture of Peace in the third meeting. The purpose of these meetings was twofold: to meticulously analyse the data gathered and to synthesise them into concrete strategies for improving and expanding Compaz activities.

During these sessions, the teams employed a variety of tools and methodologies designed to foster creativity, organise priorities, and plan actions. Firstly, *brainstorming* served as an idea generation technique, allowing participants to propose solutions freely, thereby ensuring a wide range of suggestions. Then, the *GUT Matrix* (*Gravity, Urgency, and Tendency*) (ENAP, 2024) helped prioritise the problems identified, while the *Eisenhower Matrix* (CRA-SP, 2024) helped distinguish between urgent and important tasks. Finally, the *5W2H methodology* (*What, Why, Where, When, Who, How, How Much*) provided a detailed structure for the implementation of the selected initiatives, setting out the governance and operational aspects required (Casa Civil da Presidência da República & Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2018).

Once this action plan was finalised, it was presented to the relevant stakeholders, providing a structured basis for decision-making and future interventions. Among the final steps, the Secretariat for Planning, Management and Digital Transformation (SEPLAGTD) and SESEC took on specific responsibilities, reflecting the collaborative and cross-departmental nature of the project. For example, SEPLAGTD took on the

development of a new management model, centred on expanding partnerships with social organisations for the delivery of Compaz activities —a measure aimed at broadening the reach and effectiveness of the programme—. It also took on the digitalisation of enrolments in facility activities, a priority demand indicated by users, implemented with the aim of improving the efficiency and accessibility of the services offered.

The participatory manner in which the evaluation was implemented —involving the management teams responsible for implementing the Compaz Network— was a crucial factor in ensuring that the evaluation findings were used for swift decision-making with regard to the policy. In a non-participatory process, the results of an evaluation might have taken longer to be adopted and incorporated into public policy.

Lessons Learned

From the participatory evaluation process of the Compaz Network, it is possible to draw lessons learned, both from a strategic perspective and from an operational point of view. The lessons are described here and summarised in Table 2 below, highlighting the context in which the evaluation was carried out, but in such a way that they can be incorporated into future similar evaluative processes.

Aspect	Lessons Learned
Strategic	- The participatory nature of the evaluation brought together managers and beneficiaries, providing a unique and comprehensive view of the policy, with detailed information from the Compaz Network; - The evaluation being carried out by the Municipality itself enabled the development of internal evaluation skills; - The involvement of the Compaz units' managers from the planning stage facilitated ownership of the results; - The commitment of different municipal sectors encouraged the use of the results in decision-making; - Citizen participation incorporated the beneficiaries' perspective on the policy; - The conduct of complementary external evaluations provides validation and additional perspectives.
Operational	- Operational issues are important to consider when planning the evaluation: deadlines and general bureaucratic procedures must be incorporated into the evaluation process; - The institutionalisation of the evaluation committee, with formalised roles and deadlines; - Communication of results in aggregate form, without highlighting sensitive issues in specific units.

Table 2. *Main lessons learned from the participatory evaluation process*

First and foremost, the participatory evaluation process of the Compaz Network—which involved the participation of a wide range of actors (Recife City Council officials, Compaz unit managers, civil society representatives, members of academia, and the community served by the social facility)—was essential to achieving the good results obtained. It is also worth highlighting that the fact that the evaluation was commissioned by the Municipality of Recife itself was also a relevant factor. In addition to the evaluation plan being prepared by municipal officials, with the support of a technical team from CLEAR-LAB, the evaluation process also enabled, together with the technical advisory support, the development of evaluation competencies within the municipal government.

Notably, the NAPCD was at the centre of the evaluative process, representing the institutionalisation of the use of evidence for decision-making and the improvement of public policies at the municipal level. However, the presence of the managers from the beginning to the end of the evaluation—encompassing its preparation and design, implementation, completion, discussion, and use of results—involved all the policy management agents and enabled rapid ownership of the findings. Consequently, the development of technical capacities and the dissemination of the monitoring and evaluation culture extended to the operational level of the implementation of the Compaz policy.

In this context, it is worth highlighting that the participation of people who are involved in the policy on a day-to-day basis provided valuable information

for the sound conduct of the evaluation, as well as for the formulation of evaluation questions that aligned with the Compaz implementation context and could offer useful answers for improving the network. It is important to note that, in order to enable the participation of the managers, the schedule of evaluation process meetings was adapted to the day-to-day routines and availability of the managers of each unit. Given the importance of the evaluation committee members and how their participation led to the results of this evaluation, a lesson learned is that, where feasible, the institutionalisation of the evaluation committee—as occurs in the CMAP at the federal level in Brazil—lends formality to the committee's roles, as does the recording of collectively agreed timelines.

Furthermore, the participation of different sectors and municipal bodies facilitated the use of the evaluation results to support decision-making, both for the existing Compaz Network and for the expansion units. Their involvement in the design of the evaluation, in addition to contributing to the process, also generated a sense of ownership and an understanding of the importance of evaluation, which in turn influenced the use and dissemination of its results. The generation of evidence was used as a basis for argumentation in political negotiations, indicating which aspects should be maintained and strengthened in the activities and services already offered by the Compaz, and which aspects should be adjusted for the new units. It was also agreed that the results would be communicated with reference to the Compaz Network as a whole,

without highlighting sensitive points of any particular unit, mitigating the feeling of an ‘audit’ and highlighting general concerns and solutions for the entire network. In this way, the management team of the facilities would not feel individually evaluated or that their work was being audited, as that was not the aim of the evaluation.

In addition to the important participation of municipal bodies and managers in the evaluation, citizen participation incorporated the perspective of the beneficiary population and residents of the Compaz territories. This concrete expression of the participatory character of the evaluation was unified and added to the other perspectives on the object of evaluation.

Even with the advantages of an internal view and a greater likelihood of the evaluation being used when it is conducted internally, an external evaluation also has its positive aspects and provides a different perspective on the policy. Therefore, after carrying out this participatory evaluation, further studies were undertaken, including the aforementioned collaboration with UNICEF, with a focus on children and adolescents served by the Compaz Network. In addition to the validation of an external seal of approval with regard to the Compaz policy, the characteristics of this collaboration resulted in good media coverage

and wider dissemination of its results¹⁹.

Finally, but no less important from an operational standpoint, a relevant lesson learned is highlighted: deadlines and general bureaucratic processes (applications, tenders, and approvals at the municipal level) must be broadly considered and absorbed when planning the evaluation. Understanding the time required for these processes is significant for good planning and a smooth evaluation flow without major delays.

The reflections of Paulo Moraes, Executive Secretary for Citizen Security at the Recife City Council and member of the evaluation committee, highlight the importance of the participatory rapid evaluation: the results of this process have come to guide the decisions of senior management, promoting adjustments in the existing units and serving as a model for the new ones under construction. Moreover, the emphasis on the use of evidence to support decisions has contributed to the international recognition of the Compaz, demonstrating its positive impact not only at the local level but also globally. Finally, he also highlights that the generation of evidence for decision-making has become established as a routine —a continuous practice that did not stop with the completion of the participatory rapid evaluation—.

¹⁹ Examples of media coverage can be found in two of the most important newspapers in the state of Pernambuco, at the following links: <https://www.diariodepernambuco.com.br/noticia/vida-urbana/2023/11/estudo-do-unicef-aponta-que-compaz-e-referencia-nacional-na-prevencao.html> and <https://www.folhade.com.br/noticias/unicef-e-prefeitura-do-recife-apresentam-estudo-com-dez-recomendacoes/304245/>.

The participatory evaluation of the Compaz Network, coordinated by the NAPCD with the technical support of CLEAR-LAB, stood out as an innovative project in the context of municipal public management. By incorporating the direct participation of citizens, public

officials, and members of the academic community and civil society, this process not only went beyond traditional data collection, but also created a sense of community engagement in the evaluation of public policies that had not previously existed in the region. Therefore, the journey of this evaluation reflects an important milestone in the field of municipal public management, demonstrating how inclusion, collaboration, and innovation can collectively shape more effective and meaningful policies for the community, ensuring that every voice is heard and every contribution valued in a process of continuous improvement.

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