



**GRAAM**  
Grassroots Research And Advocacy Movement



# G20 C20

## International Webinar Report

# DELIVERING DEMOCRACY

Strengthening Government and Civil Society Partnerships  
for Effective Civic Participation

Academic Partner:  
Chanakya University



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International Partner:  
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*change drivers*

On September 25, 2024, global leaders from India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, and the European Union gathered for a Webinar "Delivering Democracy: Strengthening Government and Civil Society Partnerships for Effective Civic Participation." This high-level discussion aimed to explore the vital interplay between government and civil society in fostering democratic engagement and enhancing civic participation. Key topics addressed included the importance of robust government-civil society partnerships, which serve as essential frameworks for implementing effective policies that reduce inequality and promote social justice. Additionally, participants examined strategies for expanding civic spaces to ensure that all voices, especially marginalized ones, can be heard and represented. The conversation also delved into participatory governance, emphasizing the need for inclusive decision-making processes that empower citizens at the grassroots level. By addressing these critical themes, the dialogue underscored the collaborative efforts necessary to deepen democracy and promote inclusive governance. The leaders recognized that strengthening partnerships between governments and civil society organizations is crucial for building resilient democratic systems. Furthermore, they acknowledged the importance of grassroots empowerment in driving change, as local communities often possess unique insights into their challenges and opportunities. The discussions from this summit not only shed light on the current state of democracy but also set a course for future actions aimed at reinforcing civic engagement and ensuring that democratic ideals are realized in practice. Ultimately, the gathering marked a significant step toward achieving a more equitable and participatory democratic framework globally.

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# Delivering Democracy: Strengthening Government and Civil Society Partnerships for Effective Civic Partnership

## Executive Summary

**Date: September 25, 2024**

**Mode: Online (webinar)**

This report summarizes the G20 C20 International Webinar, which brought together global union representatives and institutions to discuss innovative approaches to democracy and governance. The webinar was jointly hosted by the Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement (GRAAM), and Hans Siedel Foundation India with Chanakya University as the knowledge partner and ACTIVATE! Change Drivers as the international partner. The focus was on general outline rating inputs for enhancing democratic governance, with Brazil holding the G20 presidency. Topics discussed included government-civil society partnerships, systemic inequalities, participatory governance, and empowering grassroots communities. Speakers and participants from various countries shared their expertise, fostering an environment of knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

Some of the key points discussed by the panelists are,

- ***Innovative Approaches to Strengthening Government-Civil Society Partnerships for Inclusive Democracy:*** The session emphasized exploring new models of collaboration between governments and civil society to develop inclusive policies, with case studies showcasing successful partnerships. Speakers highlighted the role of such partnerships in enhancing democratic governance. They also emphasized the need for a structured framework, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP) that can provide a platform where civil society organizations can hold governments accountable and advocate for transparent, inclusive policies.
- ***Policy Action for Addressing Systemic Inequalities:*** Speakers addressed systemic inequalities through policy interventions, focusing on reducing inequality and promoting empowerment, particularly for marginalized communities and women. Emphasis on the need for fiscal policies aimed at redistribution, such as progressive taxation and social safety nets, were underscored as key tools for reducing economic disparities. Civil society is instrumental in advocating for such policies.

- ***Inclusive Policy Making through Participatory Governance:*** Speakers from Indonesia discussed how participatory governance models at the local and national levels can drive inclusive development, with an emphasis on strategies for including marginalized groups in policymaking processes.
- ***Expanding Civic Spaces for Greater Citizen Participation:*** The speaker from Brussels explored strategies to protect and expand civic spaces in the context of shrinking democratic freedoms. The discussion also highlighted the importance of civic education and the role of digital platforms in fostering citizen engagement. The Speakers highlighted that the expansion of digital platforms has opened new avenues for civil society to engage with the public and government. However, challenges such as surveillance and misinformation must be addressed through regulation.
- ***Empowering Grassroots Communities for Transparency and Accountability in Governance:*** South African representatives shared insights on empowering grassroots communities to enhance governance transparency and accountability, focusing on the impact of grassroots leadership in driving local development and reforms.

# Introduction

A functioning democracy doesn't just rely on the government alone. It is driven by civil society working in tandem with the government. The partnership between these 2 pillars is more crucial than ever. It's a partnership that amplifies civic participation, ensures accountability and paves the way for inclusive governance. With the incoming technology we are shaping our societies, we now have unprecedented opportunities for enhanced civic participation due to real-time digital feedback platforms. Participatory budgeting processes strengthen democracy. In this webinar, speakers focus on building these partnerships more effectively using tools, strategies and innovative collaborations, the depth of both government and citizens.

## Webinar Overview

In an increasingly interconnected world, fostering global dialogue and cooperation is critical for tackling shared challenges. The G20 C20 International Webinar was organized to harness the collective expertise of global unions and institutions to enhance democratic processes and governance structures. Given Brazil's G20 presidency, the webinar aimed at providing timely inputs that could influence global policy discussions.

## Objectives

The main objectives of the webinar were:

- **Promote Dialogue and Engagement:** Facilitating discussions on democracy-related issues among young people, civil society organizations, and policymakers from G20 countries.
- **Share Best Practices:** Providing a platform for international experts, academics, and practitioners to exchange ideas and experiences on democracy and governance.
- **Youth Involvement:** Ensuring active participation from young people to bring diverse perspectives and innovative solutions.
- **Institutional Collaboration:** Engaging academic institutions to foster participation and promote a knowledge-based approach to addressing global challenges.
- **Global Dialogue:** Encouraging discourse among representatives from global unions like the European Union and African Union.

# Esteemed Panelists | Countries Represented

Strengthening Government and Civil Society Partnerships for Effective Civic Participation

## MEET OUR ESTEEMED PANELISTS AND SPEAKERS



Former Member of Rajya Sabha and Vice Chairman of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini

Dr. Vinay Sahasrabudde



Former Indian Ambassador & Civil20 India Sherpa 2023

Amb. Vijay K. Nambiar



C20 Brazil Sherpa and General Coordinator, Gestos

Alessandra Nilo



Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation

Judith Weinberger-Singh



Executive Director, GRAAM G20 C20 National Co-ordinator - DD WG

Dr. Basavaraju R. Shreshtha



Associate, The Geledés Black Women Institute

Carolina Almeida



Chief Operations Officer, Moral Regeneration Movement

Seth Mazibuko



Advocacy & External Engagement Manager, Wahana Visi Indonesia (WVI)

Junito Drias



Managing Director, Alliance4Europe and Vice Chair, founding board member, DISARM Foundation

Omri Preiss



Moderated By Senior Consultant - GRAAM

Jayashree Krishna



Dean, School of Law, Governance, and Public Policy; Academic Lead: Chanakya University Chief Consultant and Convenor, Technical Secretariat, National Steering Committee, NCF

Dr. Chetan Basavaraj Singal



Wednesday  
25th September, 2024



Start At

17:30-19:30 (IST - UTC +05:30)

# Key Points Discussed by Panelists

- **Dr. Basavaraju R Shreshta (India):**

Dr. Basvaraju underscored the importance of civil society's involvement in ensuring a responsive democracy. He argued that for democracy to flourish, there must be an inclusive approach that addresses systemic inequalities and encourages grassroots participation. He called for collaborative efforts between government and civil society to create policies that reflect the needs of all citizens. He expressed deep concern about the deterioration of civic spaces and the overall health of democracies worldwide. He cited that over 30,000 individuals participated in various activities aimed at enhancing democratic engagement in India.

*"Effective civic participation is essential for ensuring that democracy remains vibrant, responsive, and resilient. If we take care of democracy, then only democracy will take care of us".*

- **Ms. Judith Weinberger-Singh (India):**

Judith welcomed participants from diverse backgrounds and outlined the goals of the webinar, which include facilitating discussions around the challenges democracies face globally. She stressed the need for ongoing dialogue to strengthen the global democratic framework and emphasized the importance of civil society's role in this process. In the previous webinar series of 2023, she noted the attendance of speakers from nearly all G20 countries, highlighting its global significance.

*"This webinar is a continuation of a joint initiative aimed at strengthening democracy through civil society engagement."*

- **Ms. Alessandra Nilo (Brazil):**

Alexandra stressed that G20 members must show political coherence in their commitments to democracy. She highlighted the essential role of civil society in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and called for urgent action to rectify the situation. Alexandra reiterated the importance of civil society's active role in SDG implementation, underscoring the need to address systemic discrimination that hinders progress. She called for a unified approach among G20 nations to support civil society. She reported that only 17% of SDG targets are currently on track for 2030, urging immediate and coordinated action.

*"Civil society must be recognized not just as vulnerable groups but as key players in implementing the SDGs."*

- **Ms. Carolina Almeida (Brazil):**

Carolina focused on the importance of expanding civic spaces for marginalized communities, particularly for black women. She asserted that democracy must prioritize human rights and equality. She emphasized the need for strategic partnerships to empower underrepresented voices within the democratic framework. She discussed the compounded discrimination faced by black women in public policy, highlighting the intersection of race and gender in civic engagement.

*"Expanding civic spaces is critical to ensure that diverse voices are heard in the democratic process."*

- **Mr. Seth Mazibuko (South Africa):**

Mazibuko shared insights on the significance of grassroots activism and community management in South Africa's democratic journey. He emphasized the historical context of the struggle for democracy and the importance of ethical leadership and accountability in government to foster citizen trust and participation. He referenced the Black Consciousness Movement as a historical example of grassroots activism that has shaped South Africa's approach to democracy.

*"We seek to build values-driven communities that encourage participation beyond mere consumption."*

- **Mr. Junito Drias (Indonesia):**

Junito highlighted the critical role of civic education, which is the backbone of democratic engagement in empowering citizens to engage with their government effectively. He criticized the tokenism often seen in public input processes in Indonesia, advocating for genuine collaboration and monitoring to ensure citizen feedback translates into actionable policy changes. He noted that public input mechanisms in Indonesia frequently lack meaningful implementation, leading to disillusionment among citizens and forming a disconnect between citizen aspirations and government responses in Indonesia. He reiterated the need for authentic engagement processes that reflect citizens' voices in governance.

*"Civic education is essential; it empowers citizens to advocate and monitor government actions."*

- **Mr. Omri Preiss (European Union):**

Omry discussed the intersection of democracy and technology, emphasizing the need for civil society organizations to collaborate in combating disinformation and promoting democratic values. He called for the establishment of ethical standards for tech platforms to ensure they support rather than undermine democratic processes. He noted the increasing prevalence of organized disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining democratic institutions.

*"In order for democracy to function, you need civic engagement and an all-of-society approach."*

- **Ambassador Vijay K Nambiar (India):**

Ambassador Nambiar concluded the session by reiterating the themes discussed and emphasizing the vital role of youth engagement and civil society in promoting democracy. He called for transparency, accountability, and the safeguarding of civil rights to build trust in democratic institutions. He mentioned that 2024 will see elections in over 70 countries, which constitute nearly half the world's population.

*"Democracy is not just about periodic elections, but ensuring systematic accountability to the people."*

- **Dr Vinay Sahasrabuddhe (India):**

Dr. Sahasrabuddhe highlighted the need for civil society organizations to cultivate a spirit of voluntarism and to clearly define their relationships with government entities to avoid conflicts of interest. He advocated for a code of conduct to guide CSOs in their engagements. He suggested that having clear guidelines helps maintain the focus and integrity of civil society's work.

*"The spirit of voluntarism is critical for effective civil society engagement in democracy."*

## **Key Suggestions and Recommendations by Panelists**

- **Strengthening Government-Civil Society Collaboration:** Governments should actively engage civil society in decision-making to foster more inclusive democratic processes.
- **Addressing Inequalities:** Policy actions should focus on ensuring equitable resource distribution and empowering marginalized groups, particularly women, to participate fully in governance.
- **Enhancing Participatory Governance:** Governments should adopt participatory models that enable citizen engagement in policy design, ensuring that marginalized voices are heard.
- **Expanding Civic Spaces:** Nations should work toward expanding civic spaces through supportive legal frameworks and leveraging digital platforms for citizen participation.
- **Supporting Grassroots Leadership:** Strengthening grassroots leadership and local communities is essential to driving governance reforms and enhancing accountability.

# Key Suggestions and Recommendations to Brazil's G20 for Incorporating in the Policy Pack

1. ***Institutionalizing Government-CSO Partnerships:*** Establish legal frameworks that formalize regular dialogue between governments and civil society organizations (CSOs). Continuous collaboration will ensure CSOs' inclusion in governance processes and help prevent their marginalization or exclusion.
2. ***Promoting Civic Education and Awareness:*** Governments must prioritize civic education programs to empower citizens by raising awareness about their rights and responsibilities. An informed citizenry is more likely to actively participate in governance, contributing to a more vibrant and responsive democracy.
3. ***Strengthening Local Governance Structures:*** Encouraging the decentralization of governance to the local level is crucial. Brazil's G20 presidency should advocate for governance structures that engage civil society in local decision-making, ensuring policies are responsive to community-specific needs.
4. ***Addressing Digital Inequality:*** As digital platforms become integral to governance, the digital divide must be addressed. Governments should invest in digital literacy programs and infrastructure, especially in rural and marginalized areas, to ensure equitable access to and participation in digital governance.
5. ***Encouraging Participatory Budgeting:*** Participatory budgeting should be promoted as a tool for enhancing transparency and enabling citizens to have a direct say in the allocation of public funds. This process fosters government accountability and builds trust between the government and citizens.
6. ***Protecting Civic Spaces:*** Brazil's G20 presidency must prioritize the protection of civic spaces globally. This can be achieved through international agreements that guarantee the rights of civil society organizations to operate freely, without fear of repression, while promoting open dialogue.
7. ***Focus on Gender Inclusion in Governance:*** Ensuring gender equality in governance is vital. Brazil should emphasize policies that guarantee equal representation for women and marginalized groups in decision-making processes, addressing systemic barriers and fostering inclusive governance structures.
8. ***Prioritizing Investments in Peace and Human Well-being:*** Governments must shift focus from military spending to prioritizing investments in peace, human rights, health, education, and gender equality. Strong, capable democratic institutions that promote well-being are essential for sustainable and equitable development.

9. **Addressing Climate Change and Civic Space:** Urgent action on climate change must be coupled with the protection of civic spaces. Governance systems that include civil society in environmental decision-making processes are critical. The role of the private sector in undermining both democracy and environmental rights must be addressed through better regulation.
10. **Regulation of the Private Sector:** Governments must implement proper regulatory frameworks for the private sector. This includes addressing negative externalities that harm the public and the environment, particularly those stemming from corporate practices that undermine democratic processes. Such regulation must be carefully designed to avoid over-generalization and ensure effective governance of the digital space.
11. **Addressing Monopolies and Regulation of Digital Platforms:** Digital monopolies present a serious threat to democracy. Brazil's G20 presidency should champion the regulation of these platforms to foster free speech, promote democratic values, and combat harmful misinformation. A robust regulatory framework is essential for ensuring that digital platforms support democratic processes rather than undermining them.
12. **Fostering Democracy through Ethical Technology Standards:** There must be a push for the establishment of ethical standards for technology companies to ensure their platforms bolster rather than hinder democratic processes. Governments should advocate for global standards that prevent disinformation and encourage responsible use of digital technologies.

**Dr Chetan Singai (India)**

Acknowledged the insights shared by the panelists and delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the organizers and institutional partners.

## The way forward

The webinar highlighted that the strength of any democracy lies in its laws and the active participation of its citizens. Law serves as the foundation for the existence and preservation of society, ensuring that justice, equality, and rights are protected. A participatory society encourages engagement, fostering thoughtfulness and responsibility among its citizens, which in turn strengthens governance. By harnessing the full potential of democracy through inclusive policies and grassroots empowerment, we can drive positive change and build more resilient, transparent, and equitable societies. Ultimately, a democratic framework that involves diverse stakeholders—ranging from policymakers to grassroots communities—creates an environment where both governance and citizens thrive, ensuring long-term democratic stability.



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Creating a Culture of Good Governance



# G20 C20 International Webinar 2024!

Strengthening Government and Civil Society Partnerships  
for Effective Civic Participation



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Academic Partner: Chanakya University



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