

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Canadian Innovation Elevates Women's Leadership in Water Governance Through Água Delas in Northeastern Brazil

WINNIPEG, MB – What if strengthening women's voices could transform entire communities' access to safe water, sanitation, and dignity? Across the Charneca and Córrego do Morcego neighbourhoods of Cabo de Santo Agostinho, in Pernambuco, Northeastern Brazil, a Canadian innovation is doing exactly that.

Água Delas, which means Their Water, is a community-led initiative created by Waterlution, a Canadian non-profit that advances innovative water education, leadership development, and collaborative governance models. Waterlution partners with women in communities around the world to strengthen WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) conditions where they live. Through Canada's Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT), Waterlution received support to test an innovative leadership and WASH capacity building model, assessing its potential for scale.

The FIT-supported testing phase, delivered in partnership with Centro das Mulheres do Cabo, a Brazilian feminist organization, equipped women from the community with leadership training, practical WASH skills, and support to participate directly in local water governance. Women who once hesitated to speak publicly are now advocating confidently in municipal spaces, helping neighbours test water quality, and driving improvements in their communities.

For participants, the transformation is both personal and far-reaching. Claudiane, a WASH leader, affirmed *"We learned a lot that I will keep with me for the rest of my life. We can give a voice to our community and fight for our rights"* while her WASH leader colleague Amanda confirmed *"Knowledge is power, without knowledge, we are nothing. Everything that we learned we will pass forward."*

These individual experiences reflect the broader impact the innovation is having across the community.

*"This is exactly what Canadian international assistance can accomplish,"* said Janice Hamilton, Executive Director of FIT. *"By supporting the testing and refinement of locally rooted innovations like Água Delas, we help strengthen women's leadership, build community confidence, and create pathways for solutions that are both transformative and sustainable."*

Waterlution's Founder and President, Karen Kun, emphasized how the testing phase deepened and validated what the organization had witnessed for years. *"When we centre on lived experiences and test approaches designed with women, their leadership grows in ways that can reshape entire systems. This testing cycle showed that Água Delas can inform stronger public policies, strengthen community decision-making, and positively impact generations of families. It is unprecedented, deeply empowering, and highly scalable."*

Since the testing phase, women have presented their policy recommendations to local officials and continue to advocate for improvements such as safer public washrooms, stronger sanitation oversight, and more consistent water quality practices. Their growing leadership is already shifting expectations in their neighbourhoods and inspiring others to pursue safer and more dignified WASH conditions for families.

Moisés Xavier, Executive Secretary of Participatory Budgeting for Cabo de Santo Agostinho attests *"I was very happy to collaborate with the Água Delas Project. Through the women leaders of Charneca, we received a list of their recommendations, and through a public hearing on participatory budgeting, we were able to accredit the proposals to compose the actions that will be included in the 2026 to 2029 budget. We will do our best to carry out actions that will improve the lives not only of women, but of the entire Charneca community."*

Água Delas illustrates how far communities can go when women's voices are centred, supported, and equipped, and how targeted innovation testing can significantly amplify impact.

[Watch "Canadian Innovation Elevates Women's Leadership in Water Governance Through Água Delas in Northeastern Brazil" PSA here](#)

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**About FIT** The Fund for Innovation and Transformation is a 7-year, \$20.5 M initiative of the ICN, funded by Global Affairs Canada and administered by MCIC. FIT supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South. The program supports civil society organizations, social enterprises, post-secondary institutions and the private sector.

**About ICN** The Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils for International Cooperation is a coalition of the eight Provincial and Regional Councils for International Cooperation. These independent member-based Councils are committed to global social justice and social change and represent more than 350 diverse civil society organizations from across Canada.

**About MCIC** Manitoba Council for International Cooperation is a coalition of Manitoba-based organizations involved in international development. Its mission is to support, connect and amplify the work of its members and partners, while directly engaging and collaborating with Manitobans for global sustainability.

**About Global Affairs** Global Affairs Canada manages Canada's diplomatic relations, provides consular services to Canadians, promotes the country's international trade, and leads Canada's international development and humanitarian assistance.

**About Waterlution** Waterlution is a Canadian SMO and global pioneer since 2003 in curating experiential water learning techniques, diverse capacity and skill building workshops, and programs to address local water and climate challenges. Waterlution has successfully delivered two FIT funded projects, in Mozambique (2021) and Brazil (2025).

**About Centro das Mulheres do Cabo** Through 40 years of advocacy and action for the rights of local women, CMC is an established feminist organization with active dialogue channels to municipal and regional public entities. CMC's gender-focused projects include: arbovirus issues, menstrual dignity with adolescent girls, environmental racism, and combatting adolescent girl dropout.