

Enabling Social Innovation in Mauritius



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Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Mauritius's social innovation ecosystem.

- ✓ Direct focus on social innovation
- ⌘ Connected but indirect focus on social innovation
- ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation ⌘



No single formal legal definition of "social innovation" has been identified in Mauritian primary law. Innovation as a concept is referenced across government programmes, the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC) mandate, and university frameworks. The broader policy environment uses innovation, entrepreneurship and technology as the primary language. ²⁻³

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



Mauritius has a mature institutional ecosystem that indirectly supports social innovation through multiple bodies:

- Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC): Mandated to foster, promote and coordinate research, development and innovation aligned with economic, technological and social needs. Encourages commercial utilisation of innovation results and promotes science and technology. ⁴
- Economic Development Board (EDB): Leads investment promotion, business environment reform and private sector-driven innovation. ²
- Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation: Oversees digital transformation, e-government and ICT innovation. ²
- Small Enterprises and Handicraft Development Authority (SEHDA): Supports small enterprises, artisans and women entrepreneurs through training, financing and market access. ⁵
- National Empowerment Foundation (NEF): Coordinates social protection, poverty alleviation and community empowerment initiatives. ⁵
- Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD): Provides vocational, technical and entrepreneurship training. ⁵

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Mauritius's innovation and social development agendas are embedded within its national governance:

- Government Programme 2025–2029 ("A Bridge to the Future"): Commits to improving the legal framework for innovation and creativity, acceding to WIPO and ARIPO treaties, and adopting a transformative SDG-driven approach to development. Re-establishes the Ministry of Economic Planning. ⁶
- Government Programme 2020–2024 ("Toward an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius"): Directed the economy toward high-income status via technology and innovation, with a focus on Industry 4.0, green economy and social development. ²
- UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024–2028: Clusters programmes around People (health, social protection), Planet (ocean governance, climate) and Prosperity (entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, digital innovation). ⁷
- UNDP Country Programme 2024–2028: Focuses on socioeconomic transformation and environmental sustainability, using innovation, technology and digitalisation as cross-cutting tools. ⁷

Policies, Laws & Regulations

Directly or closely linked (innovation + enterprise):

- Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Act: Establishes MRIC's mandate to foster R&D and innovation aligned with national needs. ⁴
- National Digital Policy (ongoing revision): Governs digital transformation and innovation governance. ²
- Companies Act and SEHDA Act: Enable various enterprise and social enterprise models. ⁵

Broader enabling (social protection, environment):

- Social Aid Act and Welfare Fund Act: Govern social protection schemes and the National Empowerment Foundation's poverty alleviation work. ⁵
- Environment Protection Act: Provides for sustainable development and social and environmental management compliance. ⁸
- Mauritius Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and Blue Economy Framework: Align with EU-funded programmes on ocean governance and green innovation. ⁹

Official Statistics

No official aggregate statistics specific to "social innovation" were identified. Key available indicators:

55th/133 GII 2024 — Mauritius leads Sub-Saharan Africa in innovation performance with a score of 30.6; among the fastest climbers since 2019. ¹⁰

Top 5 GII 2024 regional leaders: Mauritius leads Sub-Saharan Africa. ¹⁰

Strong institutions, infrastructure, and market sophistication cited as Mauritius's GII strengths. ¹⁰

CAF World Giving Index 2024: Mauritius-specific data not separately reported in the 2024 index. ¹¹

Government Programs

- MRIC Research & Innovation Funding: Supports R&D projects aligned with national priority sectors (ocean economy, renewable energy, ICT, health). ⁴
- SEHDA Enterprise Support: Provides training, workshops, mentoring and access to finance for micro and small enterprises, with specific programmes for women and youth. ⁵
- National Empowerment Foundation (NEF): Delivers community-based poverty reduction, skilling and social enterprise support in underserved communities. ⁵
- "Path to Remission" Diabetes Programme (2025 Budget): An innovation in preventive health, offering a new model of non-communicable disease management. ⁶
- EU-funded Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (2021–2027): Supports ocean governance and climate resilience, including gender equality and GBV action plan. ⁹

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

Mauritius has a mature and diversified ecosystem:

- Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC): Coordinates R&D and innovation between government, industry and academia. ⁴
- University of Mauritius and University of Technology Mauritius (UTM): Lead tertiary-level research and entrepreneurship education, with ambitions to become a regional higher education hub. ⁶
- Business Mauritius: Private sector federation engaging in policy dialogue and innovation partnerships. ⁵
- UNDP Mauritius and Seychelles: Supports innovation for socioeconomic transformation and environmental sustainability. ⁷
- MCCI (Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry): Promotes enterprise development and private sector innovation alignment with government programme. ²
- African Philanthropy Forum: Regional CSO network recognising Mauritius's social giving culture. ¹¹



Support Initiatives



Support modalities include R&D funding, vocational training, SEHDA enterprise support, EU-funded environment and gender programmes, and UNDP accelerator activities. The UNDP Global Centre for Technology, Innovation and Sustainable Development in Singapore is a technical partner for digital innovation in Mauritius. ⁷

Collaboration



Collaboration between government, academia, private sector and international organisations is well-established, facilitated by the MRIC framework and bilateral development partnerships. The UN Cooperation Framework provides coordination across People, Planet and Prosperity pillars. ⁷

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



Mauritius benefits from a mix of domestic innovation investment and international development finance:

- Government R&D budget through MRIC and sectoral research funds. ⁴
- EU Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (2021–2027): Targeted at ocean governance and gender/GBV, with scope for innovation in sustainable development. ⁹
- UNDP country programme finance: Innovation, digital transformation and social protection. ⁷
- Private sector R&D investment: Growing but below the African Union's 1% of GDP innovation investment target. ¹⁰

Financing Inclusivity



Financing is targeted through NEF at underserved communities and through SEHDA at women and youth entrepreneurs. Mauritius's high-income status means some international grant mechanisms are less accessible. Access to capital for social enterprises is improving but uneven. ^{5 7}

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



Mauritius has a well-developed civil society and philanthropic culture. Social enterprise and CSR concepts are familiar in the business community, though "social innovation" as a specific framing is not yet widely used in public discourse. The government's commitment to "A New Social Order" in the 2025 Budget signals increasing public focus on social justice and inclusive innovation. ⁶

Research



Mauritius has the strongest research infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa relative to its size, led by MRIC, University of Mauritius and UTM. Scientific publications in STI fields have increased significantly. Sectors of R&D strength include ocean economy, renewable energy, ICT/BPO, medicine and mathematics. Research output still lags behind many African economies on some metrics, presenting room for growth. ^{4 10}

Education & Human Capital



Mauritius aspires to become a regional hub for higher education, research and innovation. The 2025 Budget allocates Rs 438 million for educational infrastructure improvements and establishes a National Education Council. A digital skills framework is being developed to address growing demand across sectors. School preferences favour business and economics over science subjects, indicating an ongoing need to build STEM culture. ⁶

Entrepreneurship



-th / -- countries

Enabling conditions for business

55th / 139 countries

55th GII 2024 — the highest-ranked Sub-Saharan African economy, one of the fastest climbers globally since 2019. ¹⁰ Global Innovation Index 2019.



Industry 4.0 and digital economy designated as core drivers of economic strategy under multiple Government Programmes. ²

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity



Participation



-% population

Volunteering

Mauritius-specific ranking not separately reported in the 2024 index. The 2025 World Giving Report does not separately cite Mauritius in its donor insights. ¹¹ CAF World Giving Index 2024



--th / 180 countries

Sustainability

Mauritius-specific EPI ranking was not publicly available at time of publication. ¹²

Environmental Performance Index (EPI)2024