

Enabling Social Innovation in Mali

Country Snapshot

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

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Mali'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 Ⓛ



Mali does not have a formal legal definition of social innovation. No official working definition used consistently across government could be identified in public policy documents. The concept is more commonly embedded implicitly within **development, social cohesion, and community-driven innovation** frameworks, often using terms such as *innovation sociale, développement communautaire, or solutions locales*

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



There is **no dedicated government agency or taskforce** with an explicit mandate for social innovation.

Relevant ministries that **indirectly support** social-innovation-type activities include:

- **Ministry of National Reconciliation, Peace and Social Cohesion**, which supports community-based initiatives addressing conflict, inclusion, and resilience.
- **Ministry of Entrepreneurship, Employment and Vocational Training**, which promotes youth entrepreneurship and cooperative development, including socially oriented enterprises.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Mali does not have a standalone national strategy for social innovation. However, social-innovation-relevant elements are embedded within:

- **National Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (CREDD 2019–2023)**, which emphasises inclusive growth, decentralisation, and local solutions to social challenges.
- **National Policy for Social Protection**, which promotes innovative community-based mechanisms for vulnerable populations.

Policies, Laws & Regulations

Frameworks indirectly enabling social innovation include:

- **Law on Cooperatives (2014):** Provides the legal basis for cooperatives and mutual organisations, which are key vehicles for community-led social innovation.
- **Decentralisation Laws:** Empower local authorities and communities to design locally adapted social solutions, particularly in health, education, and basic services.
- **NGO and Association Law:** Regulates civil-society organisations, which play a central role in Mali's social-innovation landscape.

No laws specifically regulating social enterprises or impact investment were identified.

Official Statistics

The Malian government does not publish official statistics specifically on social innovation. However:

- National statistics capture data on **associations, cooperatives, employment, poverty, and social protection**, which indirectly reflect social-innovation activity.
- International organisations (World Bank, UNDP) provide complementary data on social-economy-related sectors.

Government Programs

There are **no government programs explicitly labelled as social innovation programs**. Relevant public programs with indirect relevance include:

- **Youth employment and entrepreneurship programs**, supporting self-employment and cooperative initiatives.
- **Community-driven development programs**, often implemented with donor support, focusing on local problem-solving in fragile and rural contexts.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

Civil society and international organisations are the primary drivers of social innovation in Mali.

Key actors include:

- **Local NGOs and community-based organisations**, particularly active in health, education, food security, gender equality, and peacebuilding.
- **International NGOs** (e.g. Oxfam, CARE, Save the Children) piloting innovative service-delivery and resilience models .
- UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, WFP), which support experimentation in social protection, digital cash transfers, and community resilience.
- There is no national non-governmental umbrella body dedicated solely to social innovation.

Support Initiatives

Non-financial support for social-innovation-type activities mainly takes the form of:

- **Donor-funded pilot projects** testing new approaches to service delivery, peacebuilding, and livelihoods.
- **Entrepreneurship and innovation hubs**, small in number and largely donor- or NGO-supported, focusing on youth and digital solutions with social applications.

Collaboration

Collaboration is **project-based and donor-driven**, rather than institutionalised. Examples include:

- Partnerships between **local authorities, NGOs, and international donors** to scale community-driven development models.
- Multi-stakeholder initiatives in **peacebuilding and social cohesion**, combining civil society, customary leaders, and public institutions.

There are **no nationally recognised social-innovation-specific events or awards**.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

There is no consolidated estimate of annual funding dedicated specifically to social innovation in Mali.

Key financing sources include:

- **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** from bilateral and multilateral donors, which is the dominant source of funding for socially innovative initiatives.
- **International NGOs and foundations**, providing grants for pilot projects and community-based innovations.
- **Microfinance institutions**, which support small-scale entrepreneurship with social spillovers, particularly for women and rural populations.

There is **no evidence of domestic impact-investment funds or social impact bonds** operating at scale.

Financing Inclusivity

Financing is **strongly targeted at under-served groups**, including:

- Rural communities
- Women and youth
- Conflict-affected and displaced populations

However, access remains **highly dependent on donor priorities**, and locally led initiatives often face sustainability constraints once external funding ends.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

The term *social innovation* is **not widely used in public discourse** in Mali. Nonetheless:

- Innovative social practices are common at community level, particularly in mutual aid, informal solidarity mechanisms, and local problem-solving.
- Media and public debate focus more on **development, resilience, and humanitarian innovation** rather than social innovation as a distinct concept.

Research

There is **limited academic research** explicitly labelled as social-innovation research in Mali. Relevant knowledge is produced through:

- **Applied research and evaluations** by international organisations (World Bank, UNDP) on community-driven development and social protection.
- **NGO-led learning initiatives** documenting innovative practices in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Education & Human Capital



No formal higher-education programs dedicated specifically to social innovation were identified. However:

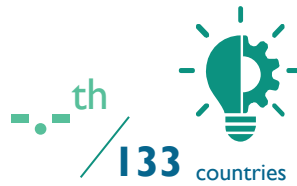
- Social-innovation-relevant topics (entrepreneurship, community development, social economy) are integrated into **vocational training and NGO-led capacity-building programs**.
- Estimating the proportion of graduates with social-innovation-related credentials is **not possible** with available data.

Entrepreneurship



EIU Business Environment

Mali ranks in the **lower tier globally**, reflecting institutional fragility and security constraints



Global Innovation Index

Mali is **not ranked**, due to data limitations



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

GEM data for Mali are limited; informal and necessity-driven entrepreneurship is widespread, often with social dimensions

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

High levels of informal solidarity and community mutual support are documented, though not quantified through recent World Values Survey data



Political participation

Constrained by political instability; Mali scores low on recent EIU democracy indicators



Volunteerism and giving

CAF World Giving Index data indicate strong informal helping behaviour, but limited formal volunteering structures



Environmental performance

Mali ranks low on the Environmental Performance Index, reflecting vulnerability to climate change and resource constraints

