

# Enabling Social Innovation in Kenya

## Country Snapshot



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**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 Kenya'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 🔗



Kenya does not appear to have a single, official legal definition of "social innovation" in primary law or a dedicated national policy definition used consistently across government.

- In practice, the term is used mainly through adjacent frames such as innovation, social enterprise/inclusive business, and social protection.

### Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



- Kenya does not have one consolidated government "social innovation" agency; responsibilities relevant to enabling social innovation are distributed across innovation and social-development institutions.

- Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA) (created under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013): develops and manages the national innovation system and coordinates/promotes innovation.
- State Department for Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs: leads national social protection policy and coordination, which can enable service-delivery innovations and inclusion-focused partnerships.

### Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Kenya does not have a single, named national "social innovation strategy," but several whole-of-government strategies create enabling conditions for social innovation.

- Kenya Vision 2030 (2007): long-term development plan organised around economic, social and political pillars, including broad commitments to human development and social welfare improvements.
- National STI framework: the Science, Technology and Innovation Act establishes core STI institutions (including KeNIA and the National Research Fund) intended to support innovation, research funding, and commercialisation pathways.

## Policies, Laws & Regulations

Kenya's enabling environment for social innovation is shaped mainly by innovation-system laws, social protection policy frameworks, and civil-society regulation.

- Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013: establishes national STI governance, including the Kenya National Innovation Agency and National Research Fund.
- Kenya Social Protection Policy (2023): sets a national framework for social protection (including shock-responsiveness and lifecycle approaches) and emphasises system coordination.
- Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) (launched 2013): implements the requirement to reserve 30% of government procurement for enterprises owned by women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
- Public Benefit Organisations (PBO) Act, 2013 (operationalised 2024): modernises the legal/regulatory framework for public benefit organisations and the wider civic space.


## Official Statistics

Kenya does not publish official "social innovation statistics" as a standalone category. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) produces national socio-economic data used to analyse social challenges and track development outcomes.

- No consolidated, official national statistical series for social enterprises or social innovation initiatives was identified in public sources.

## Government Programs

Public programs relevant to social innovation are most visible through innovation funding mechanisms and social protection system strengthening.

- National Research Fund (NRF): provides grant financing to support research and innovation as part of the national innovation system (established under the STI Act, 2013).
- Social protection system reforms : the 2023 policy frames social protection around multiple pillars (including income security and shock-responsive approaches), creating space for service-delivery innovation and partnerships.

# ECOSYSTEM

## Stakeholders

Kenya has a widely recognised innovation and social-enterprise ecosystem, with particularly strong activity in Nairobi and a growing set of hubs and intermediaries across the country.

- Social enterprises and inclusive businesses: active across sectors such as agriculture, health, education, and energy, with many organisations combining earned revenue with impact goals.
- Innovation hubs and intermediaries: support includes hubs, incubators/accelerators, and conveners providing training, mentorship, investor linkages, and market access support.
- Common support-organisation types include: incubators/accelerators; innovation hubs; impact investors and venture philanthropy; foundations; and university-based centres.

## Support Initiatives

Non-governmental support is often delivered through hub-based incubation and acceleration, challenge programs, mentorship networks, and ecosystem convenings.

- Ecosystem support frequently includes structured business support and accelerator-style programs for early-stage social enterprises.
- Programs often emphasise business model development, impact measurement basics, and investor readiness, but access is uneven outside major urban centres.

## Collaboration

Cross-sector partnerships are common in Kenya's ecosystem (often led by development partners, corporates, and hubs) but are not consistently branded as "social innovation" in government policy.

- Collaboration often takes the form of donor-funded pilots and challenge funds linking innovators to priority service-delivery and inclusion needs.
- A nationwide, government-led scale pathway explicitly labelled "social innovation" was not identified in the reviewed public sources.

# FINANCE

## Financing Schemes

No authoritative public estimate was identified for the total annual amount of funding directed specifically to "social innovation" in Kenya. Financing is visible through innovation-system funding, donor and foundation support, and impact investment into social enterprises.

- Public / quasi-public: innovation-system financing includes research and innovation grants through the National Research Fund.
- Development partners and philanthropy: ecosystem reports describe significant donor/foundation support, often channelled through hubs and programs.
- Impact investment / venture funding: Kenya is an established market for impact-oriented investment, though reporting is fragmented and not limited to "social innovation."

## Financing Inclusivity

Financing and market access mechanisms show explicit inclusion aims, but access can remain uneven for rural and under-resourced innovators.

- AGPO reserves 30% of public procurement opportunities for enterprises owned by women, youth and persons with disabilities, supporting inclusion through market access.
- Ecosystem evidence suggests recurring constraints for smaller organisations (e.g., limited affordable finance and support outside major cities).

# SOCIETY

## Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public discourse in Kenya more commonly references "innovation," "tech for development," and "social enterprise" than a single, standard "social innovation" label, with Nairobi often positioned as a regional innovation hub.

- Dominant themes include digital inclusion, livelihoods, agriculture value chains, health access, education and skills, and climate resilience (often framed through entrepreneurship and innovation).

## Research

Evidence on social innovation is visible through innovation-system reporting and ecosystem studies; a comprehensive national academic synthesis was not identified in one openly accessible source.

- Innovation performance reporting includes Kenya's GII results and priority areas for strengthening innovation outputs.
- Practitioner ecosystem research includes national-level mapping of social enterprises and support organisations.

## Education & Human Capital



Kenya has strong entrepreneurship and innovation activity (including hubs and university-linked initiatives), but no public estimate was identified for the proportion of graduates earning credentials explicitly focused on social innovation.

- National enabling conditions include Vision 2030 human-capital priorities and STI institutions supporting research and innovation.
- Quantitative national data on “social innovation” education pathways is not publicly consolidated.

## Entrepreneurship



75<sup>th</sup> / 82 countries 

### Enabling conditions for business

Kenya score 4.58/10 and rank 75/82 (as reported by Lloyds Bank International Trade Portal).

EIU Business Environment Rankings 2020–2024

96<sup>th</sup> / 133 countries 

### Innovation environment

Global Innovation Index 202



### Prevalence of social entrepreneurship (GEM):

recent Kenya-specific social-entrepreneurship prevalence figures were not identified in openly accessible GEM outputs; Kenya ecosystem evidence is therefore described qualitatively

## Social & Environmental Consciousness



### Solidarity

Kenya is included in WVS Wave 7; WVS provides indicators such as interpersonal trust and civic values, but does not publish a single “solidarity index.”

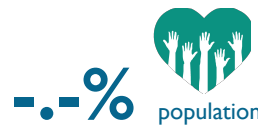
World Values Survey



### Political participation

Kenya overall score 5.05 (rank 89), with political participation 6.67/10.

EIU Democracy Index 2024



### Volunteerism and giving

Kenya is reported as ranked 2nd globally in the 2024 edition.

CAF World Giving Index 2024

145<sup>th</sup> / 180 countries 

### Commitment to sustainability

Kenya ranks 145/180 overall (score 36.9/100) and 161/180 on the Climate Change category.

Environmental Performance Index 2024