

Enabling Social Innovation in Ghana

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 Ghana's social innovation ecosystem.¹

✓ 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" is recognised in primary Ghanaian law. However, the concept is embedded in the operating frameworks of key agencies, most notably the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP), which links innovation explicitly to social and economic outcomes. Social Enterprise Ghana (SE Ghana), a civil society network, uses the term actively in its programming.^{2 3}

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

Social innovation is not attributed to a single public agency; multiple bodies provide indirect support:

- Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI): The primary government body responsible for STI policy; also runs entrepreneurship training programmes and seed funding initiatives.²
- National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP): A flagship government initiative providing skills training, incubation, access to finance and mentoring for startups and MSMEs, with a strong focus on youth, women, persons with disabilities and underserved communities.⁴
- Ghana Enterprise Agency (GEA): Manages the YouStart programme, distributing grants and business support to MSMEs.⁴
- National Information Technology Agency (NITA): Regulates ICT and has been approached to adopt the Digital Public Goods (DPG) Standard for government-procured open-source solutions.⁵
- Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection: Oversees social welfare; coordinates with UNICEF on the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS).⁵

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

Ghana's social innovation ecosystem is guided by interconnected strategies:⁶

- National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework (NMTDPF): Sets Ghana's development agenda, linking innovation to inclusive growth and SDG alignment.
- Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2017–2024): Designed to eliminate obstacles to private sector growth and create conditions for MSME and innovation ecosystems.⁴
- Ghana CARES "Obaatampa" Programme: A COVID-19 economic recovery intervention supporting MSMEs and social enterprises.⁴
- National Digital Economy Strategy: Supports Ghana's ambition to become a leading digital innovation hub in West Africa by 2030..^{6 1}

Policies, Laws & Regulations

Directly or closely linked:

- Startup and Innovation Bill (draft): A key pending piece of legislation being developed by a joint government-private sector working group to formalise support for startups and social innovators; passage is actively advocated by Ghana Hubs Network and NEIP ¹
- NEIP Act and Operational Framework: Establishes the mandate, funding and operations of NEIP's startup and innovation support. ⁴

Broader enabling (CSOs, environment):

- Companies Act and Incorporated Trustees framework: Social enterprises operate under these corporate law provisions; no dedicated social enterprise law exists. ²
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act: Enables environmental and social management compliance for innovation projects with community or environmental impact. ⁸

Official Statistics

No official cross-cutting statistics specific to "social innovation" were found. Key available indicators include:

- **100+** active innovation hubs operating across Ghana (80+ affiliated with the Ghana Hubs Network), which have collectively trained over 12,000 youth and women and supported 6,000+ startups ¹
- **USD 4 million** in funding mobilised by Ghana Hubs Network in 2024 alone from local and international partners. ¹
- **85%** of all enterprises in Ghana are MSMEs, contributing approximately 70% of GDP. ⁴
- **57%** of Ghana's population is under age 25, making youth-led social innovation a policy priority. ³

Government Programs

- NEIP Adwumawura Programme: Flagship initiative aiming to create at least 10,000 new businesses annually, targeting women, persons with disabilities and remote communities, with training, mentorship and capital support. ¹
- YouStart Programme: In 2023, USD 8.3 million was granted to SMEs under this initiative through the Ghana Enterprise Agency. ⁴
- Business Resource Centres: All 16 regions of Ghana have government-owned hubs providing business skills development, technical assistance and market access for innovators. ³
- UN Joint SDG Fund Digital Project (UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDP): Investing USD 3.6 million to catalyse USD 12 million in digital and MSME ecosystem support. ⁶

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

Ghana has one of West Africa's most developed social innovation ecosystems:¹

- Social Enterprise Ghana (SE Ghana): National network uniting high-impact social entrepreneurs; provides access to funding, investor readiness, markets, technology and information. ²
- Ghana Hubs Network (GHN): Unites 103+ innovation hubs; provides advocacy, capacity building, data analysis and access to investment. ¹
- MEST Africa (Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology): A leading tech incubator and seed fund with a Pan-African footprint, headquartered in Accra. ¹⁰
- Impact Hub Accra: Provides collaborative workspace, mentoring and networking for mission-driven entrepreneurs. ²
- Reach for Change Ghana: Supports social entrepreneurs through accelerator programmes, scaling readiness training and investment readiness. ³
- UNICEF StartUp Lab: An accelerator for early-stage tech-enabled social impact startups, with a focus on digital public goods. ⁵
- Ashesi University: A key academic partner for social innovation and entrepreneurship education. ¹



REACH FOR CHANGE

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Office of Innovation





Support Initiatives ✓

Common support modalities include incubation and acceleration, technical assistance, challenge funds, gender-responsive toolkits and applied research. GIZ (Germany) and Mastercard Foundation are major international partners supporting hub capacity.⁷



Collaboration ✓

Collaboration across sectors is active, with annual events such as the Ghana Digital and Innovation Week bringing together hubs, government, UN agencies and private sector partners. Ghana's innovation ecosystem is considered one of the most collaborative in West Africa, though significant gaps remain between Accra and rural regions.^{6 7}

FINANCE



Financing Schemes ✓

Ghana's social innovation ecosystem draws on a diverse funding mix:⁴

- Government: NEIP, YouStart and GEA grant programmes for MSMEs and startups.⁴
- International donors: GIZ, Mastercard Foundation, UKAID, UNCDF, EU, ITC fund hub capacity and digital transformation programmes.^{6 7}
- Private equity and venture capital: Impact investment platforms and VC-readiness programmes being developed through SE Ghana and ecosystem partners.²



Financing Inclusivity

Financing is increasingly targeting women, persons with disabilities and rural innovators. However, domestic borrowing rates above 30% and constrained international VC flows remain barriers to startup financing, particularly for first-generation entrepreneurs.^{4 10}

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public awareness has grown significantly since the early 2010s, when social entrepreneurship was barely known. Over 300 social entrepreneurs have been supported by Reach for Change alone, reaching over 800,000 children and youth. The Ghana Social Enterprise Forum and annual innovation events drive public discourse. Key terminology includes "social enterprise", "impact startup", and "innovation hub".^{3 7}



Research ✓

Research on social innovation is growing, led by Ashesi University, University of Ghana and international partners. Ghana hosts two top S&T clusters (Accra and Kumasi) identified in the GII 2024, driven by scientific publications. Applied research is strong in fintech, agtech, health-tech and digital inclusion.¹¹



Education & Human Capital ✓

No nationally standardised social innovation qualification exists, but entrepreneurship is increasingly embedded in university curricula. NEIP and innovation hubs offer practical training. The Adwumawura Programme and gender-responsive toolkits address inclusion in skills development.^{7 4}

Entrepreneurship



Enabling conditions for business



Innovation capacity

Ghana GII 2024 Ranked in the lower-middle-income group; two top African S&T clusters (Accra, Kumasi) identified; performing at expectations for its level of development.¹¹



USD 167 million in startup funding in 2021, a 144% increase year-on-year, placing Ghana 4th in West Africa for startup investments.⁴

Global Innovation Index 2026

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity



Participation



Volunteering

Ghana-specific ranking not separately reported in the 2024 index. The 2025 World Giving Report indicates people in Ghana donate an average of 2.19% of their personal income, among the highest in the lower-middle-income group.¹²



Sustainability

Ghana-specific climate ranking not publicly available at time of publication.¹³

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024

CAF World Giving Index 2024