

# Enabling Social Innovation in Eswatini

## Country Snapshot



POWERED BY 1Family Foundation

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

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



There is no legal or official definition of social innovation in Eswatini. Government discourse refers instead to *innovation, entrepreneurship, community development and inclusive growth*, mainly within national development and sectoral strategies, without explicit use of the term social innovation.

### Government Body for Social Innovation



No dedicated ministry or agency for social innovation. Relevant public actors include:

- Ministry of Economic Planning and Development: national development coordination and innovation priorities.
- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade: entrepreneurship and MSME development.
- Deputy Prime Minister's Office: social protection, community development and inclusion.

### Government Strategy for Social Innovation



No standalone social innovation strategy. Elements appear within:

- **National Development Plan 2023–2028:** inclusive growth, innovation, youth employment, digitalisation, sustainability.
- **National Youth Policy (2020):** youth entrepreneurship and innovation.

### Policies, Laws & Regulations



No policies or laws explicitly targeting social innovation. Relevant enabling frameworks include:

- **National Development Plan 2023–2028 (2023):** innovation, inclusion, sustainability.
- **MSME Policy (2018):** entrepreneurship and business development.
- **Companies Act (2009):** general business registration framework.
- No legal category or tax regime for social enterprises identified.

### Official Statistics



No dedicated official statistics on social innovation or social enterprises. Limited data exist on MSMEs, cooperatives and NGOs through the Central Statistical Office and administrative sources.

## Government Programs

Key programmes indirectly supporting social innovation include:

- Small Enterprises Development Company (SEDCO): incubation, advisory services and MSME finance.
- Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF): concessional loans for youth-led enterprises.
- Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP): incubation for innovation-driven startups (ICT, agri-innovation, services).

# ECOSYSTEM

## Stakeholders

Key ecosystem actors include: Royal Science and Technology Park, Innovators Association of Eswatini, Coordinating Assembly of NGOs (CANGO), Junior Achievement Eswatini, Enactus Eswatini, universities, and development partners.

## Networks

Active but fragmented networks include youth entrepreneurship groups, NGO coalitions, cooperative associations, and innovation hubs. No national social innovation network identified.

## Support Organisations (Non-financial)

Main types: incubators and hubs (RSTP, Innovation Hub Eswatini), NGO capacity-building organisations, youth entrepreneurship programmes, and donor-supported technical assistance.

## Support Initiatives

Common initiatives include incubation, business skills training, entrepreneurship competitions, mentoring and donor-funded pilot projects. Focus areas: youth employment, agriculture, digital inclusion, livelihoods.

## Collaboration

Partnerships mainly occur through donor-funded development projects rather than explicit social-innovation scaling.

## Events & Awards

Key events: Global Entrepreneurship Week activities; SEDCO Entrepreneur of the Year Awards. No dedicated national social innovation awards identified.

# FINANCE

## Financing Schemes

No consolidated national estimate of funding directed specifically to social innovation. Funding is fragmented and largely project-based.

## Key Types of Financing

- Public: SEDCO loans and grants; Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund.
- International/donor: UNDP, World Bank, IFAD, UNICEF project financing.
- Financial sector: microfinance institutions and commercial bank loans.
- Instruments: grants, concessional loans, microcredit.

No evidence of social impact bonds, dedicated impact funds, or social venture capital.



### Inclusiveness of Financing

Targeting for youth and women entrepreneurs is common. Rural, informal, disability-led and community-based innovators face significant access barriers.

## SOCIETY



### Public Awareness ✓

Social innovation is not widely used as a concept in public discourse. Media and policy narratives focus instead on entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, poverty reduction and sustainability.



### Research ✓ 🔗

No dedicated academic centres or journals on social innovation. Relevant research appears within development studies, public policy, agriculture and entrepreneurship at the University of Eswatini and in donor and multilateral reports.



### Education & Human Capital ✓ 🔗

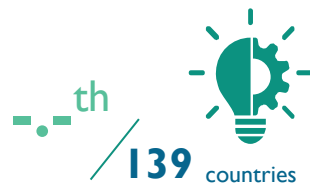
No formal degrees focused on social innovation. Entrepreneurship and innovation topics are embedded in tertiary curricula and non-formal training (e.g. youth programmes, incubators). No national graduate estimates available.



### Entrepreneurship



**EIU Business Environment:**  
lower-middle performer regionally



**Innovation capacity**  
low-income economy ranking.

Global Innovation Index 2026



**GEM:** entrepreneurial activity present but small-scale; limited evidence on social entrepreneurship specifically.



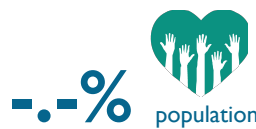
### Social & Environmental Consciousness



**Solidarity**  
limited World Values Survey data for Eswatini



**Political Participation:**  
constrained civic space (EIU).



**Volunteering**  
moderate regional participation

CAFWorld Giving Index 2024



**Sustainability**  
low-middle Environmental Performance Index ranking; high climate vulnerability

Environmental Performance Index 2024