

# Enabling Social Innovation in Angola

## Country Snapshot

**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 Angola'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 formal legal definition of "social innovation" has been identified in Angolan primary law. Innovation is referenced through the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESCTI) mandate and the Angola 2050 and National Development Plan (NDP) 2023-2027 frameworks. Angola's innovation system is described as "still at an early stage" in a 2023 UNDP/UNCTAD study. <sup>3,6</sup>

### Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

- Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESCTI): Primary body for STI policy; implements policies and legal frameworks to support startups; co-created LISPA (a fintech incubator) with INAPEM. <sup>2,3</sup>
- Institute for the Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (INAPEM): Administers the Credit Access Project (PAC), MSME support programmes and entrepreneur training; administered UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Review. <sup>2</sup>
- Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP): Leads several entrepreneurship initiatives including PRODESI (Programme to Support Production, Export Diversification and Import Substitution) and NDP implementation. <sup>2</sup>
- National Institute of Innovation and Industrial Technologies (INIIT): Supports technical innovation and industrial R&D. <sup>2</sup>
- UNDP Angola Accelerator Lab: Collaborates with government and startups; shapes the Future of Work Portfolio and the Technology and Innovation Transfer Network (Inova.ao). <sup>3</sup>

### Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

- Angola 2050 Long-Term National Development Strategy: Sets Angola's long-term vision for a diversified, competitive and inclusive economy; embeds innovation as a core transformation enabler. <sup>5</sup>
- National Development Plan (NDP) 2023-2027: Covers peace and democratic rule, human capital development, entrepreneurship and innovation, social inequality reduction and economic diversification; approved by Cabinet September 2023. <sup>5</sup>
- EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola (Train for Trade II, 2017-present): A holistic, data-driven approach to economic diversification, supporting 15 national policies and training 3,300+ Angolans (33%+ women). <sup>8</sup>

## Policies, Laws & Regulations



- National Entrepreneurship Policy (in development): Being developed through the EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme and INAPEM consultation process. <sup>2</sup>
- Startup and Innovation Support Legal Framework: MESCTI is implementing policies and legal frameworks to support startups; legal architecture still in early stages. <sup>3</sup>
- UNSDCF 2024-2028: UN framework governing People, Peace and Prosperity programming across Angola with innovation as a cross-cutting enabler. <sup>4</sup>

## Official Statistics



**Early stage** Angola's innovation system is ranked among the weakest in Africa; was 132nd/132 in the 2021 GII. Angola is not currently included in the GII 2024 due to insufficient data coverage. <sup>3 10</sup>

**USD 107 billion** GDP in 2022 — Angola is the 8th largest economy in Africa; graduated from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2024. <sup>2</sup>

**3,300+** Angolans trained through EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme; including over 1/3 women, driving economic diversification capacity. <sup>8</sup>

**USD 3.2 billion** Investment committed by Government for Lobito corridor infrastructure through UNCTAD-supported PPP process, opening market access for remote farmers. <sup>8</sup>

## Government Programs



- PDAC and PDAC Jovem (Youth): Government innovation and technology promotion programmes; run through MESCTI and INAPEM. <sup>2</sup>
- Credit Access Project (PAC): INAPEM-administered credit lines for entrepreneurs aligned to government strategy; supported introduction of micro-entrepreneur legislation. <sup>2</sup>
- PRODESI: Programme to Support Production, Export Diversification and Import Substitution; a key enterprise and innovation vehicle for economic transformation. <sup>2</sup>
- LISPA Fintech Incubator: Angola's first fintech incubator, created by MESCTI and INAPEM in partnership; supports digital financial innovation. <sup>2</sup>
- Inova.ao — Technology and Innovation Transfer Network: Established by UNDP Angola; connects innovators, government and tech transfer resources. <sup>3</sup>

# ECOSYSTEM

## Stakeholders



- UNDP Angola Accelerator Lab: Leads community-driven innovation, startup ecosystem mapping and future of work programming. <sup>3 7</sup>
- Bantu Makers: Private social enterprise accelerator providing mentorship, events, and investment to Angolan innovators; committed to strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem. <sup>2</sup>
- Angola Innovation Summit (AIS): Private-sector-initiated global knowledge network since 2020; promotes innovation and technology for economic and social development. <sup>3</sup>
- Entrepreneurs of Angola (National Association): Key civil society voice for entrepreneurs; participates in policy dialogue. <sup>2</sup>
- National Youth Business Council: Youth entrepreneurship advocacy and support body. <sup>2</sup>

## Support Initiatives



Support modalities include LISPA fintech incubation, INAPEM MSME training and credit access, UNDP Accelerator Lab experimentation, EU-UNCTAD capacity building, and private-sector hackathons and pitch competitions. Angola Innovation Summit 2023 (hybrid format) connected global experts, policymakers, investors and startups under the theme "The Role of Innovation for Economic Diversification". <sup>3 8</sup>



## Collaboration

Collaboration is government-led through INAPEM and MESCTI, with UNDP and UNCTAD as primary international partners. The EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme is the most structured collaboration mechanism. Civil society and private sector participation is growing through events and policy consultations. The UNSDCF 2024-2028 provides the UN system's coordination framework across People, Peace and Prosperity pillars. <sup>4 8</sup>

# FINANCE



## Financing Schemes

- Government: INAPEM credit lines (PAC), PRODESI enterprise support, government budget for MESCTI programmes. <sup>2</sup>
- EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme: Comprehensive capacity-building, policy and financing support for economic diversification. <sup>8</sup>
- UNDP Angola: Innovation programming, startup ecosystem support and future of work portfolio financing. <sup>3</sup>
- African Development Bank (AfDB): Infrastructure investment including Lobito corridor; USD 3.2 billion PPP framework. <sup>8</sup>
- Private sector: Growing VC and angel investor community; 109 non-bank financial institutions including 19 micro-credit companies. <sup>2</sup>



## Financing Inclusivity

Angola faces significant financing inclusivity challenges: over 25% of school-aged children are not enrolled in school; low Human Capital Index (0.36 in 2020); many citizens live on less than USD 1 per day. Financing gaps for women entrepreneurs, rural communities and youth are identified in INAPEM and UNDP assessments. INAPEM's PAC programme specifically targets micro-entrepreneurs with credit access. <sup>2 2</sup>

# SOCIETY



## Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public awareness of social innovation as a formal concept is limited but growing. The proliferation of startups, business incubators and innovation events (hackathons, pitch competitions, Angola Innovation Summit) is driving ecosystem visibility in Luanda. The UNDP's Inova.ao platform and the EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme are building a culture of evidence-based innovation. Discourse centres on "entrepreneurship", "startups" and "economic diversification". <sup>3 8</sup>



## Research

Research capacity is limited; Angola's innovation system was assessed as "relatively weak" in a 2023 UNDP/UNCTAD study. The UNCTAD STI Policy Review and the UNDP Startup Ecosystem Mapping Report are the most systematic evidence bases. MESCTI and university research are in early stages. The EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme has embedded evidence-based development planning, representing a shift toward data-driven innovation governance. <sup>3 7 6</sup>



## Education & Human Capital

Access to quality education remains a significant challenge: more than 25% of households have school-aged children not enrolled, indicating high risk of intergenerational poverty. The EU-UNCTAD programme trained 3,300+ Angolans (33%+ women) in entrepreneurship and innovation-related skills. MESCTI is embedding innovation in higher education institutions. CLESEs (TVET centres) provide technical and entrepreneurship training. <sup>5 8</sup>

## Entrepreneurship



Enabling conditions for business

**Early stage** Angola's startup ecosystem is described as embryonic (2023 Start Ecosystem Assessment); growth potential exists with improved access to financing, markets and training. Angola graduated from LDC status in 2024, signalling economic progress.<sup>23</sup>



Innovation capacity



## Social & Environmental Consciousness



**Solidarity**

Angola-specific data not reported in the 2024 index.<sup>11</sup>

CAF World Giving Index 2024



**Participation**



**Volunteering**



**Sustainability**

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024: Angola-specific EPI ranking not publicly available at time of publication. Angola faces significant environmental challenges including deforestation, land degradation and climate vulnerability.<sup>12</sup>

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024