

Enabling Social Innovation in Cambodia

Country Snapshot

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

This snapshot provides a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key elements shaping Cambodia'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 🔗



Cambodia has no official legal or policy definition of "social innovation." Government strategies instead frame **innovation, inclusive growth, and private-sector solutions** as pathways to address social challenges ².

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



There is no dedicated social innovation authority. Responsibilities are distributed across bodies leading innovation, investment, and social protection—particularly the **economic and innovation policy architecture** described in Cambodia's national strategies ² and the STI roadmap implementation approach led by the national innovation ministry ³.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Cambodia does not have a standalone social innovation strategy. Relevant priorities are embedded in:

- **Rectangular Strategy Phase IV** (innovation + inclusive development as national priorities) ².
- **Pentagonal Strategy Phase I** (2023–2028) (growth with equity, efficiency, sustainability) ⁴.
- **National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019–2023** (policy actions across social sectors) ⁵.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



Key indirectly enabling frameworks include:

- **Law on Public–Private Partnerships (2021)** enabling structured collaboration for public infrastructure/service projects ⁶.
- **National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025**, promoting system development and coordinated delivery of assistance/security for vulnerable groups ⁷.
- **Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (2015)** governing civil society actors who implement many innovations in practice ⁸.

Official Statistics 🔗



Cambodia does not publish official statistics specifically on social innovation or social enterprises. Proxy data on poverty, households, and socio-economic conditions are available via the **Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey series** ².



Government Programs

No programs are explicitly labeled “social innovation,” but Cambodia has expanded **digital and targeted social assistance delivery** during shocks, using systems such as IDPoor and cash transfers ¹⁰.

ECOSYSTEM



Stakeholders

Key ecosystem enablers include:

- **Impact Hub Phnom Penh**, supporting impact ventures and ecosystem building ¹¹.
- **Social Enterprise Cambodia** (ecosystem directory initiative linked to Impact Hub Phnom Penh, documented via CCC/NGO database) ¹².
- A growing university-linked innovation base (e.g., **CamTech Center for Social Innovation**, SDG-linked innovation focus) ¹³.



Support Initiatives

Non-financial support is led by incubators/accelerators and partner programs:

- **EPIC** (Impact Hub Phnom Penh) described as Cambodia’s first one-year incubation program supporting social impact startups ¹⁴.
- UNDP mapping of incubator/accelerator support via its entrepreneurship support guidebook ¹⁵.



Collaboration

Cross-sector collaboration is common in social protection and service delivery, often coordinated with development partners ¹⁰. Cambodia does not currently have widely recognized national social innovation awards documented in official sources.

FINANCE



Financing Schemes

Cambodia does not publish aggregate social-innovation-specific financing totals. Key channels include:

- Donor and government financing for **social assistance delivery and system strengthening** ¹⁰.
- Regional impact investing activity and intermediaries ¹⁶
- Inclusive finance as a major pipeline for rural households and micro-entrepreneurs ¹⁷.



Financing Inclusivity

Financing is often targeted toward poor **and vulnerable households** through state/donor systems and toward **rural communities** through inclusive finance, but early-stage impact ventures still face gaps in patient capital and investment readiness ^{10 17}.

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

“Social innovation” is not widely used as a term, but **social entrepreneurship** is visible through ecosystem platforms and incubators ^{11 12}.



Research

Evidence and ecosystem analysis is emerging through national and regional research (e.g., UN ESCAP assessment of Cambodia's STI ecosystem) ¹⁸.



Education & Human Capital

Cambodia does not have widely documented SI-specific degrees, but innovation and entrepreneurship support is expanding via universities and support organizations ¹⁵.

Entrepreneurship



Business Environment



Innovation Capacity

Cambodia's Global Innovation Index profile (WIPO) ¹⁹.



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Social & Environmental Consciousness

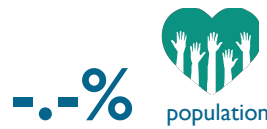


Solidarity

World Values Survey online data portal ²⁰.



Political participation



Volunteering

CAF World Giving Index 2023 ²¹.



Sustainability

Environmental Performance Index (Cambodia country page) ²².