

# Enabling Social Innovation in Cameroon

## Country Snapshot

Social innovation refers to "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet" (Rayner, Miner and Behsarov, 2025).

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

- **Law No. 2019/004 on the Social Economy (2019)** legally defines social innovation as *original initiatives co-developed with local actors to meet unmet social needs*, particularly in education, social action, health, culture and employment.

### Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

- **Ministry of SMEs, Social Economy and Handicrafts (MINPMEESA) – Directorate of Social Economy (DES)**: responsible for structuring, regulating and promoting the social and solidarity economy (SSE), including cooperatives, associations and social-economy enterprises that develop innovative community solutions.
- **Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MINTSS)**: oversees social protection and labour policy. The ministry plays a role in expanding social security coverage, including voluntary insurance schemes for workers in the informal economy.
- **Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MINEFOP)**: supports employment creation, skills development, and vocational training initiatives that can contribute to innovative employment and entrepreneurship solutions.

### Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

- No standalone social innovation strategy exists.
- Social innovation is integrated into:
  - **National Development Strategy 2020–2030 (NDS30)**, prioritising human capital development, local development, innovation systems and digital transformation.
  - **Law No. 2019/004**, which frames SSE actors as drivers of social innovation.

While discussions on further policy coordination for social innovation are ongoing within government institutions, no consolidated national policy has yet been formally adopted.

### Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗

- **Law No. 2019/004 on the Social Economy**: outlines governance and promotion of SSE units aimed at community-based innovation.
- **Law No. 2019/024 on Regional and Local Authorities (2019)**: empowers municipalities to promote territorial innovation, including community-led social solutions.
- **NDS30 (2020)**: identifies inclusive local development, climate resilience, and digital modernisation as pillars supporting social and community innovation.

## Official Statistics



- No official statistics exist on “social innovation”.
- Recent SSE mapping provides partial data on cooperatives, associations and social-economy units; it highlights SSE as an emerging institutional driver of social innovation but lacks full national coverage.

## Government Programs



- **Adaptive Social Protection and Social Safety Nets (2013–ongoing):** pilots innovation in economic inclusion and livelihood diversification for vulnerable households [6].
- **Youth entrepreneurship and local innovation initiatives:** government and municipal programmes providing training, incubation and micro-grants to youth social entrepreneurs [7].
- **Agricultural innovation funds (e.g., PADFA II):** co-finance cooperative or smallholder-led innovations in sustainable production, irrigation and value-chain resilience [8].
- **Social Security and Protection Systems:** Includes voluntary insurance for informal workers and social security administered by the CNPS. Social safety nets are managed by other government administrations.

# ECOSYSTEM

## Stakeholders



- Key public actors relevant to the ecosystem include **MINTSS, MINEFOP and MINPMEESA**, which respectively oversee labour and social protection, employment and vocational training, and the social economy.

## Networks



- **Non-governmental SSE networks:** coordinate community-driven initiatives, cooperative innovation, youth/women social entrepreneurship and local problem-solving.
- **Sectoral networks:** agricultural cooperatives, microfinance networks, and CSO coalitions working on education, health, livelihoods and peacebuilding through innovative community practices

## Support Organisations



- **Tech/innovation hubs** (e.g., ActivSpaces, Zixtech Hub): incubate community-impact digital, green and youth-led solutions [7].
- **Cooperative development intermediaries:** strengthen governance and market access for SSE units experimenting with local social innovations [5].
- **International organisations (UNDP, IFAD, World Bank, AfDB):** integrate innovation components into rural development, resilience, and service-delivery programmes

## Support Initiatives



- **Incubation & acceleration programmes** for early-stage social innovators in digital inclusion, agritech and social enterprise.
- **Capacity-building for SSE actors** focused on cooperative governance, financial literacy and community-led innovation models.
- **Non-formal innovation-skills training** for youth/women in entrepreneurship, digital solutions and community resilience.

## Collaboration



- **Government–donor social innovation pilots:** social protection and agricultural resilience projects testing new models (e.g., cash-plus services, climate-adaptive techniques, community micro-projects).
- **Municipal innovation partnerships:** local authorities, CSOs and donors collaborate on waste management, green spaces and inclusive service delivery.

## Events & Awards



- **Events & competitions:** digital innovation challenges, youth innovation competitions and SSE forums showcasing social-impact innovations.
- **Awards:** periodic entrepreneurship and innovation competitions recognising socially oriented ventures (not yet institutionalised).

# FINANCE

## Financing Schemes



- No consolidated estimate exists for total annual SI funding; financing is distributed across social protection, agriculture, youth employment and digital-innovation programmes.
- Major financing sources:
  - **Public and concessional funding** (World Bank, AfDB, IFAD, EU): grants, matching funds, innovation windows supporting community-led solutions .
    - Thematic innovation funds: PADFA II innovation fund; **EU PRICNAC** digital innovation grants for community solutions.
  - **Microfinance & cooperative finance:** key for youth, women and rural innovators but limited in scale.
  - **International NGO and foundation grants:** primary early-stage financing for social-impact pilots in education, livelihoods, climate and health.

## Financing Inclusivity



- Women, youth and rural communities are priority groups in innovation-related agriculture, entrepreneurship and safety-net programmes .
- However, community innovators still face barriers accessing flexible and early-stage capital. Inclusiveness is **partial and project-dependent**.

# SOCIETY

## Public Awareness of Social Innovation



- The term “social innovation” is rarely used publicly; discourse focuses on entrepreneurship, cooperatives, digital solutions, humanitarian initiatives and community-development projects.
- Media highlight innovative solutions for agriculture, education, digital finance, and peacebuilding

## Research



- **Academic research** examines entrepreneurship, SSE, decentralisation, community resilience and climate adaptation, with social innovation embedded implicitly in these fields.
- **Practitioner research**—particularly SSE mapping—analyses legal frameworks, actor networks and innovation gaps.
- **GEM** data emphasise strong early-stage entrepreneurship but low sustainability and limited ecosystem support for scaling social innovation.

## Education & Human Capital



- Social innovation is not yet a standalone academic discipline.
- Universities integrate entrepreneurship and innovation into business, ICT and development programmes; explicit SI courses remain rare.
- Non-formal programmes train youth/women in digital innovation, leadership and community entrepreneurship

## Entrepreneurship



### EIU Business Environment Ranking

Cameroon ranks among the lower global performers, reflecting structural constraints.

CAFWorld Giving Index 2024



### Innovation Capacity

Cameroon ranks 123/133, improving to 116/139 in 2025

Global Innovation Index 2024



### Social entrepreneurship prevalence

**GEM:** very high entrepreneurial intent; low firm survival; increasing interest in socially oriented ventures

## Social & Environmental Consciousness



### Solidarity

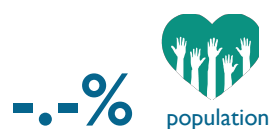
strong family/community solidarity; low generalised trust (WVS regional patterns).

CAFWorld Giving Index 2024



### Political participation

ranked 136/167 in the EIU Democracy Index 2024, with low civic freedoms and participation



### Volunteering

moderate, with Cameroon positioned mid-range in the CAFWorld Giving Index



### Sustainability

climate-change dimension 108/180

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024