

Enabling Social Innovation in Thailand

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 Thailand'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 Ⓧ

Thailand does not have an official legal definition of social innovation at the national level. In public policy discourse, the concept is **primarily understood through social enterprise**, inclusive business, and community-based development models.

The **Social Enterprise Promotion Act B.E. 2562 (2019)** provides a formal definition of social enterprise, rather than social innovation. Under the Act, social enterprises are defined by:

- A clearly stated social purpose
- At least 50% of income generated through commercial activities
- At least 70% of profits reinvested for social objectives

In practice, social innovation in Thailand is closely associated with:

- The growth of certified and informal social enterprises
- The **Sufficiency Economy Philosophy**, which emphasises moderation, resilience, and community-driven development

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

Thailand has a dedicated government body for social enterprise promotion, which functions as the closest institutional anchor for social innovation.

Office of Social Enterprise Promotion (OSEP) (est. 2019)

- Located under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
- Mandate includes:
 - Registration and certification of social enterprises
 - Administration of incentives and funding mechanisms
 - Coordination of national SE promotion policy

OSEP operates under the oversight of the National Social Enterprise Promotion Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister.

Complementary bodies

- **National Innovation Agency (Public Organization) (NIA)**, under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand, has been entrusted by the Thai Government to serve as the core agency in promoting and facilitating the creation, development, management, and commercialization of innovation nationwide. NIA supports innovation across all sectors and administers funding mechanisms and strategic programs, including initiatives that explicitly promote social innovation.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

Thailand does not have a standalone national strategy dedicated exclusively to social innovation. Instead, social innovation objectives are embedded within broader innovation, social development, and economic strategies.

Key strategic reference points include:

- **Social Enterprise Promotion Master Plan (2010–2014)**, Thailand's first national framework supporting social enterprises and early ecosystem development
- **20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037)**, which highlights innovation, social capital, and inequality reduction as national priorities
- A **post-2019 Social Enterprise Promotion Plan**, currently under development, aligned with the Social Enterprise Promotion Act and Thailand's ambition to become an "innovation nation"

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗

Frameworks directly focused on social enterprise and social innovation

- **Social Enterprise Promotion Act B.E. 2562 (2019)**: establishes legal recognition, tax incentives, procurement preferences, and fundraising flexibility for certified social enterprises
- **Royal Decree No. 621 (2016)**: introduces tax incentives for social enterprises and for individuals or corporations supporting them
- **Prime Minister's Office Regulation (2011)**: earlier framework establishing governance structures for social enterprise promotion

Broader enabling frameworks

- **Pracharath Initiative (2016)**: public–private–community partnerships encouraging inclusive business and provincial social enterprises
- **Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) ESG frameworks**: ESG disclosure requirements and social impact platforms that indirectly support social innovation ventures

Official Statistics 🔗

Thailand does not collect official statistics on social innovation as a distinct category.

Related data include:

- **Office of Social Enterprise Promotion registry**: 141 certified social enterprises as of 2020
- Earlier national surveys (2014–2015) estimated over **120,000 community-based social enterprises**, most operating informally
- The National Statistical Office does not yet publish regular statistics on social enterprises or the broader social economy

Government Programs ✓ 🔗

Key government programs supporting social innovation and social enterprises include:

- **Social Enterprise Promotion Fund** (est. 2019): concessional loans and grants for registered social enterprises
- **NIA's Financial Support Mechanisms**:
 - *Regional Market Validation*: Matching grant of up to 75% of eligible expenses for market validation activities, with a maximum support of THB 1.5 million per project.
 - *Thematic Innovation*: Matching grant of up to 75% for market validation and product development under prioritized thematic areas, with a maximum of THB 5 million per project.
 - *MIIND*: Technical assistance covering up to 50% of consulting service fees, capped at THB 1 million per project.
 - *Standard Testing*: Grant support covering up to 50% of expenses for product testing, standards compliance, and certification processes, with a maximum of THB 1.5 million per project.
 - *Market Expansion*: Technical assistance covering up to 50% of costs related to product and service user testing, capped at THB 2 million per project.
 - *Working Capital Interest*: Matching grant covering up to 75% of interest and related financial fees, with a maximum support of THB 1.5 million per project.
 - *Corporate Co-Funding*: Recoverable grant of up to 50% of the total investment value, capped at THB 10 million per project.

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- **Pracharath Rak Samakkee Companies** (2016–): 77 provincial social enterprises combining public, private and community actors
 - **Government Savings Bank Social Bank** (2020–):
 - Loans up to THB 10 million at preferential interest rates
 - COVID-19 SME relief measures extended to social enterprises

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders ✓

Thailand's social innovation ecosystem includes a diverse set of non-governmental and hybrid actors:

- **Social Enterprise Thailand Association**: national membership network and advocacy body
- **ChangeFusion**: early pioneer in social enterprise incubation and corporate-backed accelerators
- **School of Changemakers**: youth-focused education and leadership development for social innovation
- **Mae Fah Luang Foundation (Royal Patronage)**: flagship integrated social enterprise model (Doi Tung)
- **Cooperatives sector**: over 7,000 registered cooperatives delivering community-based solutions
- International and regional actors such as **AVPN, British Council, and UNDP**

Support Initiatives ✓

• Prominent non-financial support initiatives include:

- **Banpu Champions for Change** accelerator program
- **UNDP Youth Co:Lab / Thailand Social Innovation Platform**
- **SEED Awards** for eco-inclusive enterprises
- **SET Social Impact Platform** connecting social enterprises to markets and investors
- **Taejai** crowdfunding platform (THB 150m+ mobilised)
- University-based incubators, notably at **Chulalongkorn University**

Collaboration ✓

Cross-sector collaboration is increasingly common:

- **Public–private–academic partnerships**, including the National Social Enterprise Support Fund & Incubation Program (launched 2025)
- National convenings such as the **Social Enterprise Summit Thailand**
- Social innovation tracks at **Techsauc Global Summit**
- Media and recognition initiatives, including *Win Win WAR Thailand* (2018–2020) and NIA Social Innovation Awards

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

- Thailand's social innovation financing landscape combines public funding, CSR, impact investment, and community finance:
- **Public funding:**
 - Social Enterprise Promotion Fund (estimated THB 50–100m)
 - NIA grants and interest subsidies
- **State banks:**
 - Government Savings Bank Social Bank
- **Corporate and CSR funding:**
 - Foundations linked to ThaiBev, Singha, Banpu
- **Impact investment:**
 - BKIND ESG mutual fund and regional impact funds
- **Crowdfunding and donations:**
 - Taejai platform

Indicative combined SI/SE support (2016–2020): >THB 500 million.

Financing Inclusiveness

- Strong emphasis on:
 - Women-led enterprises
 - Youth entrepreneurs
 - Rural and community-based enterprises
- Collateral-free loans up to THB 3 million
- Access gaps persist for indigenous communities and conflict-affected southern provinces

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

- Media exposure through television, newspapers, and social media
- Social innovation commonly framed as:
 - Community self-reliance
 - Ethical and purpose-driven business
- Surveys suggest around **25%** of the population is familiar with the term “social enterprise”

Research

Academic and practitioner research is growing but remains fragmented.

- **Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI):** policy-oriented research
- **Chulalongkorn University Social Innovation Hub:** applied research and pilots
- **Chiang Mai University and Thammasat University:** rural development and sustainability studies
- **UNDP Thailand:** practitioner knowledge platform

Rigorous impact evaluation remains limited.

Education & Human Capital

Formal education:

- **Thammasat University** – **MA in Social Innovation & Sustainability** (since 2016)
- Social entrepreneurship modules at leading universities

Entrepreneurship

30th / **82** countries 

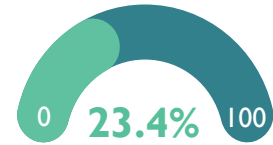
Enabling conditions for business

EIU Business Environment Ranking 2024

43rd / **133** countries 

Innovation Capacity

Global Innovation Index 2023



Entrepreneurship: among the highest globally

- Women slightly more active than men
- Social entrepreneurship prevalence: ~3–4% of adults

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2023/24

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity:

EIU Business Environment Ranking 2024



Political Participation

EIU Democracy Index 2024

12th / **142** countries 

volunteerism

Strong traditions of community support and informal mutual aid

CAF World Giving Index 2022

108th / **180** countries 

Sustainability

carbon neutrality target 2050

Environmental Performance Index 2022

Country Feature

NIA is a core component of Thailand's vision to become the "Innovation Nation." In pursuit of this vision, Thailand is actively building an ecosystem of support for **Social Enterprises and Community Enterprises** that leverage innovation to drive human, social, and economic development. Key sources of support from the NIA's Localized Innovation Department. Which include funding schemes such as "Social Innovation Village," the "City and Community Innovation Challenge," "Sectoral Social Innovation Funds," and "Impact Investment." NIA also works with Social Innovation Driving Units (SID) across the country to develop and diffuse technological solutions to community challenges and then explores how best practices developed through this work can inform policymaking. Moreover, NIA has developed a "social return on investment" (SROI) calculator helping social entrepreneurs measure, track, and grow the impact of their innovations.