

# Enabling Social Innovation in Kuwait

## 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 provides a **descriptive, non-exhaustive overview** of key elements shaping Kuwait'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 🔗

Kuwait is continuously evolving its official understanding of social innovation. The government tends to frame innovative social efforts under broader social development and welfare agendas (e.g. highlighting creative solutions in social programs) <sup>2</sup>.



### Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

Institutional synergy in Kuwait is demonstrated through the integrated roles of national bodies; for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs oversees social welfare initiatives, and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) supports science and innovation for societal benefit <sup>3 4</sup>.



### Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

There is no standalone national strategy for social innovation. Social innovation goals are embedded in Kuwait's development plans (New Kuwait Vision 2035), which emphasize innovation, economic diversification, and inclusive social progress <sup>5</sup>.



### Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗

Kuwait general social-sector legislation provides an enabling environment:

- *Public Assistance Law 12/2011* — welfare programs for vulnerable groups <sup>6</sup>.
- *Cooperative society laws* have fostered a strong co-op movement <sup>7</sup>.
- Recent reforms have improved transparency for NGOs and charities to strengthen civil society engagement in development <sup>5</sup>.



### Official Statistics 🔗

There are no official government statistics on "social innovation." The state does track outcomes of social programs and the broader social economy. For example, by 2019 the Ministry of Social Affairs reported its assistance programs had supported over 2,000 local families (and 316,000 abroad) and facilitated employment for 14,500 youth <sup>8</sup>.

## Government Programs



- **National Fund for SME Development** (est. 2013) – A public fund to finance and support small and medium enterprises. It aims to spur entrepreneurship, diversify the economy, and create jobs, although not exclusive to social ventures <sup>8</sup>.
- **Public Authority for Manpower** (est. 2017) – Government body that supports entrepreneurs and labor market inclusion. It streamlines SME access to tenders and enforces policies, while also offering vocational training indirectly encouraging socially inclusive business practices <sup>6</sup>.

# ECOSYSTEM

## Stakeholders



- **Co-operative Societies:** Kuwait's Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies leads a nationwide co-op network serving local communities. Co-ops account for **60–70% of retail trade** and reinvest capped profits into social services and community projects, forming a key pillar of the social economy <sup>7</sup>.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations:** NGOs promote social innovation mainly through youth empowerment and civic engagement. **LOYAC** (est. 2002) and **INJAZ-Kuwait (Junior Achievement)** foster entrepreneurship and civic responsibility among young Kuwaitis <sup>5</sup>. Humanitarian NGOs (e.g. **Kuwait Red Crescent Society**) mobilize volunteers and resources for social causes, without the “social innovation” label.

## Support Initiatives



- Social innovators rely on general entrepreneurship and philanthropic support mechanisms.
- Business incubators, accelerators, grants, and skills workshops
  - **KFAS** funding and training for science, technology, and innovation with societal impact <sup>3</sup>
  - Hackathons, youth innovation contests, and incubator programs hosted by civil and academic institutions

## Collaboration



- Cross-sector collaboration is emerging but informal.
- Ministry of Social Affairs co-organized a GCC summit with UN partners on women-led social innovation <sup>2</sup>

# FINANCE

## Financing Schemes



- There is no consolidated funding stream for social innovation in Kuwait.
- Funding sources include SME loans and grants, zakat and endowments, CSR budgets, and private donations <sup>8,4</sup>
  - Strong charitable culture provides substantial resources
  - Funding programs increasingly target youth, women, and people with disabilities <sup>2,6</sup>.

# SOCIETY

## Public Awareness of Social Innovation



- “Social innovation” is not widely used in public discourse, with issues framed around charity or entrepreneurship.
- Public engagement is high through donations and volunteering <sup>4</sup>
  - Media and officials occasionally highlight innovative youth- and women-led initiatives <sup>2</sup>

## Research

Academic research on social innovation is limited but growing.

- OECD's 2021 review highlighted the need to harness innovation for societal challenges <sup>2</sup>
- Local legal and policy research addresses social enterprise governance and related themes <sup>10</sup>

## Education & Human Capital

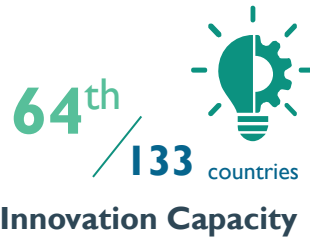
Kuwait has no formal degrees in social innovation.

- Topics appear sporadically in business curricula and extracurricular projects
- NGOs like **LOYAC** provide non-formal training in leadership, problem-solving, and social entrepreneurship <sup>5</sup>

## Entrepreneurship



Ease of Doing Business (2020)



Global Innovation Index (2023)



19.2% of adults engaged in early-stage entrepreneurship in 2020—highest in GCC

## Social & Environmental Consciousness



### Solidarity

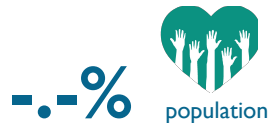
Ranked 7th globally

World Giving Index 2023<sup>4</sup>



### Political participation

Formal participation is limited, but consultative bodies (e.g. Kuwait Youth Council) and diwaniyas enable civic dialogue <sup>5</sup>



### Volunteering

Volunteerism is widespread, especially during Ramadan and crisis responses. Organizations like Kuwait Red Crescent mobilize large volunteer networks <sup>4</sup>



### Sustainability

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022 <sup>13</sup>