

Enabling Social Innovation in Oman



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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 Oman'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



Oman has no official legal definition of "social innovation," but the concept—understood as developing new approaches to address societal challenges—is gaining recognition. Recent national discussions, including a 2025 conference, highlighted the need for supportive policies and stronger private–youth partnerships ⁵.

Government Body for Social Innovation



There is no single agency dedicated to social innovation. Instead, the national innovation agenda is led by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI, created 2020) ³, while the Ministry of Social Development oversees social welfare and NGO affairs. Entrepreneurship development is also supported by bodies like the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (which champions corporate social responsibility) ^{10 5}.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation



Oman has no standalone social innovation strategy. Instead, Oman Vision 2040 embeds innovation and social development as national priorities ⁴, focusing on:

- A diversified, knowledge-based economy
- A target of ranking top 40 in the Global Innovation Index by 2030
- Human capital development, research, and innovation ecosystems ³

Policies, Laws & Regulations



While no law directly targets social innovation, several policies create an enabling environment, including:

- **Energy-sector CSR Foundation (2025):** Channels mandatory corporate contributions into community projects ⁷
- **Islamic finance tools:** The Ishraq Endowment Investment Fund (2024) supports charitable and community initiatives ⁸
- **Business reforms:** The Foreign Capital Investment Law 2020 improved conditions for entrepreneurship and social enterprises ⁴

Official Statistics



Oman does not publish official social innovation statistics. Instead, it relies on adjacent measurements such as global innovation indices and entrepreneurship research, including participation in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor since 2019.

Government Programs



There is no flagship social innovation program, but several initiatives align with its objectives:

- **MoHERI programs:** Research funding, innovation hubs, and competitions ³
- **Social Development initiatives:** Industry partnerships and community programs, including the energy-sector CSR Foundation ⁷

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Oman has no formal social innovation council, but multiple actors contribute indirectly:

- CSR-focused companies and business associations ⁵
- NGOs and charitable associations regulated by the Ministry of Social Development
- Recognition mechanisms such as the Sultan Qaboos Award for Voluntary Work ¹¹
- Regional and international organizations supporting capacity-building ⁵

Support Initiatives



Support for social innovators largely comes through general entrepreneurship platforms, including government and university incubators offering training, mentorship, and co-working space. Private-sector innovation labs have also supported start-ups and job creation. While not SI-specific, these platforms also benefit socially oriented ventures ¹³.

Collaboration



Cross-sector collaboration is gradually increasing through:

- The energy-sector CSR Foundation linking government and private companies ⁷
- Participation in international innovation forums ³
- National events such as the 2025 Social Innovation Conference ⁵
- Incentive mechanisms like the Sultan Qaboos Award for Voluntary Work ¹¹

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



There is no consolidated data on social innovation funding. Financing is drawn from multiple sources such as public funding (Ministry budgets and innovation grants) ⁶, corporate CSR (especially in the energy sector) ⁷ and philanthropy and Islamic finance (including the Ishraq Endowment Fund (OMR 10 million)) ⁸. Funding is generally project-based and ad hoc, though increasingly aligned with priorities such as youth skills, SMEs, and rural services ⁷. International partners also support education, digital innovation, and social protection under Vision 2040. ³

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

The term “social innovation” is not yet widespread, but related themes are increasingly visible through:

- Media coverage of social development, charity, and entrepreneurship ⁶
- CSR activities linked to Vision 2040 ³
- National events such as the 2025 Social Innovation Conference ⁵

Research

Research on social innovation is still emerging but growing, including studies on entrepreneurship and voluntary work and the GEM Oman National Report (2019), highlighting social impact motivations ¹⁰.

Education & Human Capital

Social innovation is not taught as a standalone discipline, but its elements are embedded in university courses on entrepreneurship, sustainability, and ethics, national youth upskilling programs focused on innovation and problem-solving and civil society and corporate-led workshops and competitions. Although no SI-specific degrees exist, growing emphasis on STEM and entrepreneurship supports relevant skills ⁴.

Entrepreneurship

Oman’s enabling environment shows mixed progress:



Business climate

Improved regulatory environment and openness to investment ⁴



Innovation Performance

Mid-tier global ranking, with stronger inputs than outputs ²



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Emerging modestly; many entrepreneurs report social motivations, but growth is constrained by the lack of a legal form for social enterprises

Social & Environmental Consciousness

Omani society demonstrates strong social and environmental values, reflected in:

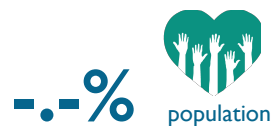


Solidarity

Deep-rooted traditions of charity, zakat, and waqf ²



Political participation



Volunteering

Rising volunteerism promoted through national initiatives and awards ¹¹



Sustainability

Major improvements in environmental performance and sustainability policies ^{7,12}

- Despite ongoing challenges, social responsibility and sustainability are becoming central to Oman’s development agenda under Vision 2040 ³.