

Enabling Social Innovation in Congo



POWERED BY 1Family Foundation

Country Snapshot

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

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Congo’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🔗



While a standalone official definition of social innovation was not identified in the reviewed public laws and strategies, public policy language is increasingly framed around SME development, digital innovation, entrepreneurship, youth inclusion, and economic diversification. The clearest innovation-specific legal text is the 2022 law on digital and technological startups.

Government Body for Social Innovation✓



Rather than a dedicated social innovation authority, responsibility is spread across several institutions. Key public actors include the Ministry of SMEs and Handicrafts and its support bodies, notably ACPCE for business creation, ADPME for SME development, and FIGA for guarantees and support services.

The Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and the Digital Economy adds a second pillar through ADEN and the startup-label framework, while the higher-education system also carries an innovation mandate.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



While a standalone strategy for social innovation was not identified, relevant elements appear in the National Development Plan 2022–2026 and Congo Digital 2025.

These frameworks connect diversification, digital transformation, entrepreneurship, and inclusion, creating a growing policy base for socially oriented innovation.

Policies, Laws & Regulations✓🔗



The enabling environment is strongest around SME promotion, business formalization, financial guarantees, and digital innovation. Key texts include the SME framework law of 2014, the creation of ACPCE in 2017, FIGA in 2019, ADPME in 2020, and the 2022 digital-economy and startup laws.

Public evidence of a dedicated law on social innovation, social enterprise, or the social and solidarity economy was not identified in the reviewed material.

Official Statistics



Foundations for administrative reporting are present. The startup-label law calls for periodic startup statistics, and public reporting is more visible for enterprise creation and entrepreneurship support than for social innovation as a separate field.

Dedicated public statistics on social innovation, social enterprises, cooperatives, or nonprofits were not identified in the reviewed official sources.

Government Programs



Youth and entrepreneurship receive visible public backing. YouthConnekt Congo supports youth insertion, entrepreneurship, civic participation, and digital opportunity, with reported total contributions of US\$2.95 million.

Other relevant programs include UNDP's post-COVID support to small socio-economic actors with a revolving-credit component, the World Bank-backed Skills Development for Employability Project, and the Congo Digital Acceleration Project. Together, these expand the enabling environment for inclusive innovation.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



The ecosystem remains relatively state-led, with strong roles for public enterprise-support institutions and ministries.

International and knowledge actors are increasingly visible, especially UNDP, AUF, universities, and CARIA as a growing platform for technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship support.

Support Initiatives



UNDP's Accelerator Lab provides an important experimentation and solution-mapping space for local innovation.

Support initiatives also include the student-entrepreneur status promoted by AUF, university-linked entrepreneurship support, and CARIA Tech Village's incubation, skills, and coworking offers.

Collaboration



Collaboration is visible through entrepreneurship weeks, university–business dialogue, and multi-actor youth and digital initiatives.

The ecosystem benefits from growing links between government, development partners, and higher education, even if a dedicated national social innovation platform was not identified.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



FIGA is the clearest domestic public financing mechanism relevant to inclusive entrepreneurship, combining guarantee, support, and accompaniment functions for TPMEs and artisans.

The broader financing landscape is strengthened by development partners. Visible channels include YouthConnekt Congo, the post-COVID recovery project for small socio-economic actors, the Skills Development for Employability Project, and the US\$100 million Congo Digital Acceleration Project.



Inclusiveness of Financing

Funding and support are visibly targeted toward youth, especially through employability and entrepreneurship programs.

Women, underserved populations, and indigenous communities also appear in the support landscape through UNDP gender and recovery programming and digital inclusion initiatives.

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public discourse is stronger around entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and youth employability than around social innovation as a standalone label.

This nevertheless creates constructive narrative space for social innovation, especially where innovation is linked to jobs, services, inclusion, and resilience.



Research

Research and applied innovation capacity are becoming more visible through universities and CARIA's emerging role in technology and innovation support.

UNDP's Accelerator Lab also contributes to practical research through local-solution mapping and experimentation.



Education

Human-capital foundations are strengthening. Université Marien Ngouabi offers training in entrepreneurship and innovation, while public reforms promote entrepreneurship education and stronger links with the socio-economic sector.

The student-entrepreneur status is a promising bridge between education and venture creation.

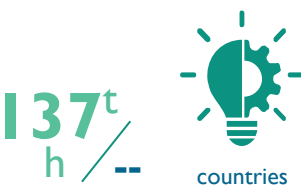


Entrepreneurship



Business Environment

As a legacy comparator, Doing Business 2020 ranked Congo, Rep. 180th out of 190 economies.



Innovation Capacity

On international benchmarks, the country ranked 137th in the Global Innovation Index 2025.



Social entrepreneurship

Recent public GEM country data were not identified in the reviewed sources.

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

Its updated NDC also includes emissions-reduction targets, reflecting an active climate-policy agenda.



Political participation

For civic participation, IFES reports an average turnout of 67.70% across 15 elections in its country profile.



Volunteering

Publicly accessible recent indicators on volunteerism and solidarity were not identified in this review.



Sustainability

On environmental indicators, the Republic of the Congo ranked 116th in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index and 171st on the ND-GAIN Country Index.

