

Enabling Social Innovation in Gabon



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 Gabon’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 Gabon does not appear to have a standalone official definition of social innovation, public policy discourse increasingly incorporates related concepts such as économie sociale et solidaire, entrepreneuriat social, and innovation sociale. These terms are particularly visible in recent (2025) ministerial communications and policy discussions led by the Ministry of Commerce, SMEs-SMIs and Entrepreneurship of Youth, suggesting an emerging conceptual alignment with international social innovation frameworks.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



Rather than a single dedicated agency, responsibility for social innovation-related domains is concentrated within the Ministry of Commerce, SMEs-SMIs and Entrepreneurship of Youth. Its Direction Générale de l’Économie Sociale plays a central coordinating role, including programme design, support to cooperatives and associations, facilitation of financing mechanisms, and development of institutional databases. Its mandate also explicitly includes promoting inclusion of vulnerable populations and strengthening the social economy ecosystem.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



While a standalone national strategy has not been formally adopted, Gabon has taken steps toward a more structured policy approach. A 2025 draft triennial plan for the promotion of the social and solidarity economy outlines priorities such as strengthening social entrepreneurship, encouraging innovation-driven solutions to social challenges, and improving access to finance. This draft is aligned with the broader 2024–2026 Plan National de Développement de la Transition, indicating increasing policy integration of social innovation-related themes.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



The enabling environment is shaped through a collection of related policy instruments rather than a unified legal framework for social innovation. These include SME promotion policies, regulatory frameworks for support structures, simplified regimes for individual entrepreneurs (statut d’entrepreneur), and legal pathways for cooperatives and associations. Additionally, administrative mechanisms supporting income-generating activities and social protection actors provide indirect but important support for social innovation practices.

Official Statistics



Dedicated national statistics specifically tracking social innovation activities were not identified in publicly available sources. However, institutional developments suggest movement toward improved data systems. These include the creation of a national directory of associations, NGOs, and foundations in the social protection sector (2023), as well as plans within the ministry to develop a comprehensive social economy database. These efforts could provide a future basis for more systematic monitoring.

Government Programs



Recent government programmes reflect a growing emphasis on inclusive entrepreneurship and livelihood support:

- The 2025 AGR (Activités Génératrices de Revenus) framework provides integrated support including information services, project development assistance, formalisation, training, and access to credit, grants, or in-kind support, particularly targeting economically vulnerable populations.
- “Oser mon projet” (2025–2026) combines incubation, mentoring, and financial support, with grants ranging from CFA 2–5 million awarded to selected entrepreneurs.
- The “Jeune Ambassadeur Pizolub” initiative supports 90 young entrepreneurs (with gender parity) across all provinces, promoting youth engagement in entrepreneurial activity.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Gabon’s ecosystem is characterised by a mix of public institutions, emerging innovation actors, and international development partners. Key stakeholders include relevant ministries (Commerce, Digital Economy), the national incubator SING SA, and international organisations such as UNESCO (through its MOST programme) and UNDP. These actors contribute to capacity building, entrepreneurship promotion, and policy dialogue, although a fully structured social innovation ecosystem remains in development.

Support Initiatives



Support for social innovation is primarily embedded within broader entrepreneurship and innovation systems. SING SA provides incubation and acceleration programmes such as Pivot 4.0, Innovation 4.0, Visa Startup, and TechClinic, focusing on digital and tech-enabled ventures. Public programmes complement these by offering training, formalisation pathways, and financial support to entrepreneurs and cooperatives. However, dedicated social innovation pipelines or specialised support structures remain limited.

Collaboration



Collaboration across sectors is emerging through multi-stakeholder initiatives and development programmes. The 2025 ESS planning process involved coordination across ministries and municipalities, supported by UNESCO MOST. Additionally, SING implemented the YouthConnekt programme with UNDP funding, demonstrating partnerships between government, international organisations, and startup ecosystems. Entrepreneurial events, competitions, and forums further contribute to ecosystem connectivity.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



The financing landscape for socially oriented entrepreneurship remains at an early stage but shows increasing diversification:

- AGR schemes provide blended financial support (credit, grants, and in-kind assistance) targeted at vulnerable populations.
- “Oser mon projet” offers grant financing alongside incubation support, enhancing early-stage project viability.
- SING SA has mobilised funding through partnerships with UNDP, including an estimated CFA 110 million allocation for YouthConnekt startups.
- The “Gabon Digital” programme, financed by the World Bank, represents a large-scale investment (CFA 44 billion) in digital infrastructure, which indirectly supports innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship.

Inclusiveness of Financing



Inclusivity is a consistent feature of recent financing schemes. Programmes such as AGR explicitly target economically vulnerable populations, while youth-focused initiatives (e.g. Pizolub) ensure gender parity in participation. World Bank analysis further highlights women and youth as priority groups for economic inclusion policies. Despite these efforts, access to finance for smaller or informal actors may still face structural constraints.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



Public awareness of social innovation concepts is gradually increasing. Government communication in 2025 explicitly references social entrepreneurship and innovation, while earlier initiatives such as UNESCO’s “Tremplin Gabon” have contributed to introducing these ideas within cultural, social, and environmental sectors. However, awareness remains more implicit than formally institutionalised.

Research



A dedicated national research ecosystem focused specifically on social innovation was not identified. Nevertheless, analytical contributions from UNESCO (via the MOST programme) and the World Bank provide important insights into social inclusion, labour markets, and climate-related transitions. These studies indirectly support the development of evidence-based policy approaches.

Education



While no formal degree programmes dedicated exclusively to social innovation were identified, entrepreneurship and innovation skills are being strengthened through vocational training reforms and development programmes. The World Bank-supported Skills Development and Employability project has contributed to improving the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training, particularly in sectors aligned with economic diversification priorities.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship indicators suggest a challenging but evolving business environment:



169th
h / --



countries

Business Environment

The World Bank's B-READY 2024 assessment gives Gabon a Business Entry score of 46.6, indicating moderate barriers to starting a business.

The Doing Business 2020 ranking placed Gabon 169th out of 190 economies, reflecting structural constraints in the business environment.

--th
/

190

countries



Innovation Capacity



Social entrepreneurship

Public Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data for Gabon remain limited, suggesting low visibility in global entrepreneurship benchmarking systems.

Social & Environmental Consciousness

Available indicators point to moderate levels of civic and environmental engagement.



Solidarity



Political participation

Political participation was relatively high in the April 2025 presidential election, with turnout exceeding 70 percent.



Additionally, World Bank analysis highlights emerging opportunities for green jobs in sectors such as forestry, renewable energy, and climate-smart agriculture.

44th
/

180



countries

Sustainability

Gabon ranks 44th globally in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index, with particularly strong performance in ecosystem vitality. Additionally, World Bank analysis highlights emerging opportunities for green jobs in sectors such as forestry, renewable energy, and climate-smart agriculture.

