Enabling Social Innovation in Guinea-Bissau

Country Snapshot

Government Council for Social Innovation
Advancing Social Impact
POWERED BY 1Family Foundation

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 Guinea-Bissau's social innovation ecosystem.

Note: This snapshot is developed within the context of Guinea-Bissau's political fragility, limited institutional capacity and significant development challenges.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation — 🔗 Connected but indirect focus on social innovation — ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation 🔗

No formal legal definition of "social innovation" is established in Guinea-Bissau's primary law. Innovation is referenced indirectly through the TERRA RANKA National Development Plan 2015–2025 and donor-supported programming. Social innovation in Guinea-Bissau is primarily driven by community-based, civil society and diaspora-linked initiatives, with growing support from UN agencies and international development partners. [2] [3]

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

Social innovation is not attributed to a single agency; multiple bodies address it indirectly:

- Ministry of Finance and National Economy: Coordinates national development planning, fiscal policy and donor programme management under TERRA RANKA. [2]
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development: Leads agricultural innovation — the dominant social innovation sector in a country where 80%+ of the population depends on agriculture and cashew-export livelihoods. [2]
- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism: Supports MSME formalisation, private sector development and enterprise creation. [2]
- Ministry of Social Solidarity: Oversees social protection, community welfare and women's empowerment programmes. [3]
- UNDP Guinea-Bissau: Primary international partner supporting governance, SDG programming and enterprise development. [3]

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

- TERRA RANKA National Development Plan 2015–2025: Guinea-Bissau's strategic development framework covering six pillars — governance, infrastructure, food security, human capital, private sector and environment; innovation is a cross-cutting theme across all pillars. [2]
- UN Cooperation Framework 2022–2026: Structures UN programming across governance, social development, economic diversification and climate resilience. [3]
- ECOWAS and UEMOA Integration: Membership in ECOWAS and the West African CFA franc monetary zone creates regional frameworks for enterprise, trade and financial innovation. [2]

Policies, Laws & Regulation

Directly or closely linked:

- TERRA RANKA Plan 2015–2025: Overarching policy framework embedding social transformation across governance, food security and human capital. [2]
- EU / GCCA+ Guinea-Bissau: EU-supported climate resilience programme — Building Resilience to Climate Change through Enhanced Institutional and Mitigation Capacities; drives community-based adaptation innovation. [5]

Broader enabling:

- Investment Code: Governs business registration and investment, including for social enterprises. [2]
- NGO / CSO Regulatory Framework: Governs civil society organisations — primary vehicles for grassroots social innovation. [3]

Official statistics

Guinea-Bissau is not included in the GII 2024 due to insufficient data coverage. Key available development indicators include:

~69% of the population living below the international poverty line, driving urgent community-level social innovation needs in food security, health and livelihoods. [4]

~90%+ of export earnings derived from cashew nuts — extreme economic concentration that creates urgent need for enterprise and agricultural diversification innovation. [4]

~55% of population under age 25, representing a potential youth dividend requiring education and enterprise investment to unlock. [4]

Government Program

- Agricultural and Food Security Programmes: FAO and World Bank-supported programmes improving smallholder agricultural productivity, cashew value chain development and food security. [6]
- Social Protection Programme: World Bank-supported safety net providing cash transfers and livelihood support to the most vulnerable households. [4]
- GCCA+ Climate Resilience Programme: EU-supported community-based climate adaptation, strengthening institutional, community and mitigation capacities across vulnerable coastal and rural communities. [5]
- UNDP Governance and SDG Programming: Supports institutional reform, electoral processes, civil society engagement and SDG monitoring and reporting. [3]

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

- UNDP Guinea-Bissau: Primary SDG and governance programming partner; supports enterprise development, institutional innovation and civil society capacity. [3]
- World Bank: Social protection, agricultural productivity and infrastructure investment. [4]
- FAO Guinea-Bissau: Agricultural innovation, food security, fisheries sustainability and climate-smart agriculture programming. [4]
- Guinea-Bissau Diaspora networks: A critical informal social innovation actor; remittances from Portugal, France, Senegal and other diaspora communities supplement household income and fund community-level enterprise. [3]
- Civil society organisations and faith-based organisations: Primary vehicles for grassroots social innovation in health, education, women's empowerment, food security and environmental protection. [3]

Support initiatives

Support modalities are primarily UN-system, World Bank and EU-led: UNDP governance programming, World Bank safety nets and agricultural investment, FAO food systems support, EU GCCA+ climate resilience and bilateral donor project financing. The cashew value chain — from production to processing to export — represents the primary private sector social innovation opportunity: improving value addition, fair trade certification and market access for smallholder farming communities. [4] [5] [6]

Collaboration

Collaboration is structured through the UN Cooperation Framework 2022–2026 and bilateral donor coordination mechanisms. UNDP coordinates cross-government and civil society programming. Political instability has historically constrained effective cross-sector collaboration, but recent governance stabilisation creates improved conditions. ECOWAS regional frameworks provide additional platforms for trade and enterprise collaboration. [2] [3]

FINANCE

Financing schemes

- Government budget: Severely constrained domestic revenue; depends on external aid for most development and social innovation investment. [2]
- World Bank: Social protection, agricultural productivity and rural infrastructure financing. [4]
- EU: GCCA+ climate resilience programme and bilateral budget support. [5]
- UN agencies (UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, WFP): Governance, agricultural innovation, child protection, nutrition and food security financing. [3]
- AfDB: Infrastructure, agricultural and enterprise development investment. [6]
- Diaspora remittances: A critical informal financing source for livelihoods, enterprise and community development — particularly from the Portuguese-speaking diaspora. [3]

Financing Inclusivity

Safety net and agricultural development programmes explicitly target the most vulnerable households, including women and smallholder cashew farmers. Access to formal enterprise financing for social innovators is very limited; informal savings groups and diaspora remittances are the primary mechanisms. The cashew export economy creates some private sector financing opportunities but value addition remains captured overseas. [3] [4]

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public awareness of social innovation as a formal concept is very limited. Community-level innovation is embedded in agricultural practices, informal trade, mutual aid and diaspora-linked enterprise. International development partner programming is the primary driver of social innovation discourse at the national level. [3] [4]

Research

Research capacity is very limited. Guinea-Bissau has no significant domestic research institutions. UNDP, World Bank and FAO programme evaluations provide the primary evidence base for social innovation. Data systems are weak; Guinea-Bissau is not included in the GII 2024. Building national statistics and data capacity is identified as a foundational prerequisite for evidence-based social innovation governance. [3] [4]

Education & Human Capital

Guinea-Bissau faces significant human capital challenges: low literacy rates, constrained access to quality education, a weak tertiary education system and brain drain to diaspora communities in Portugal, France and Senegal. UNDP and UNICEF support education access and quality improvement. Vocational training linked to the cashew value chain and fisheries sector is the most practical human capital development priority for near-term social innovation impact. [3] [4]

Entrepreneurship

--th / -- countries

EIU Business Environment Ranking

---th / --- countries

Innovation Capacity

0 -% 100

Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Guinea-Bissau's entrepreneurial ecosystem is at the earliest stages of formal development. The cashew value chain offers the most concrete enterprise development opportunity — from improved processing and packaging to export market diversification and fair trade certification. The diaspora represents an underutilised entrepreneurship capital and skills resource. Governance stabilisation since 2023 creates improved conditions for private sector development and social enterprise growth.

Social & Environmental Consciousness

Solidarity

0 -.- 0

Political participation

-.-% population

Volunteering

Guinea-Bissau-specific data not reported in the 2024 index. Community solidarity and mutual aid are deeply embedded in culture across the country's diverse ethnic communities. [8]

CAF World Giving Index 2024

--th / 180 countries

Sustainability

Guinea-Bissau-specific EPI ranking not publicly available at time of publication. Guinea-Bissau faces significant climate vulnerabilities including coastal erosion, flooding and sea-level rise — the EU GCCA+ programme directly addresses these through community-based adaptation innovation. [9]

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024

This snapshot was developed, with the use of AI, for the Government Council for Social Innovation by One Family Foundation, and was reviewed for factual accuracy. Updated February 2025.
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