

Enabling Social Innovation in Mauritania



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 Mauritania'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



No formal legal definition of "social innovation" has been identified in Mauritanian primary law. The concept is embedded through the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP) 2016–2030 and Mauritania's Vision 2030. Mauritania is notable for moving up the GII 2024 ranking — one of only eight Sub-Saharan African economies to improve their position — and for being among the five economies with an identified African S&T cluster (though not individually confirmed). ^{2 3}

Government Body for Social Innovation



- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development: Coordinates national development planning, SCAPP implementation and macroeconomic management. ³
- Ministry of Digital Transition and Innovation: Leads digital transformation, ICT policy and innovation ecosystem development. ⁴
- Agency for the Promotion of SMEs (APME): Supports small and medium enterprise development, access to finance and business skills training. ⁴
- Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Family: Oversees social protection, community development and welfare programmes targeting vulnerable populations. ⁴
- UNDP Mauritania: Primary UN partner for governance, SDG programming, social protection and enterprise development. ⁴

Government Strategy for Social Innovation



- Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP) 2016–2030: National development strategy embedding private sector development, social protection, digital transformation and environmental sustainability. ³
- Vision 2030: Long-term national vision targeting an inclusive and diversified economy by 2030. ³
- National Digital Policy: Promotes e-government, digital skills and ICT entrepreneurship as enablers of social and economic innovation. ⁴



Policies, Laws & Regulations

- SCAPP 2016–2030: Overarching policy framework embedding social transformation and inclusive growth.³
- Investment Code: Governs business registration and foreign investment, including for social enterprises.⁴
- NGO / CSO Regulatory Framework: Governs civil society organisations — primary vehicles for grassroots social innovation.⁴
- National Environment Code: Governs environmental and social management compliance for innovation projects.⁴



Official Statistics

126th/133 GII 2024 ranking — moved up the ranking in 2024, one of only 8 Sub-Saharan African economies to improve. Mauritania is performing at expectations for its income level.^{2 4}

Upward trend Mauritania is among 8 Sub-Saharan African economies that moved up the GII 2024 ranking, alongside Mauritius, Cabo Verde, Senegal, Kenya, Zambia, Benin and Burundi.²

~30% of the population lives in poverty; rural and nomadic communities face disproportionate access barriers to social innovation and enterprise support.⁵

~60% of the population has access to the internet (2023), reflecting growing digital infrastructure potential for social innovation.⁴



Government Programs

- Tekavoul Social Cash Transfer Programme: Mauritania's flagship social protection programme targeting the most vulnerable households with regular cash transfers; implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs with World Bank support.⁵
- Ansej and APME Enterprise Support: Government programmes providing financing, training and market access for youth and women-led MSMEs.⁴
- Digital Mauritania Initiative: Government digital transformation programme covering e-government services, digital skills and connectivity.⁴
- National Food Security Programme (PNSA): Addresses food security and agricultural innovation for vulnerable rural and nomadic communities.⁵

ECOSYSTEM



Stakeholders

- UNDP Mauritania Accelerator Lab: Community-driven innovation, foresight and SDG experimentation.⁴
- University of Nouakchott Al-Aasriya: Primary academic institution supporting research and human capital for innovation.⁴
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations: Primary vehicles for grassroots social innovation in health, education, women's empowerment and nomadic community development.⁴
- World Food Programme (WFP) Mauritania: Leads food security and nutrition innovation; supports climate-resilient livelihood programmes.⁵
- AFD (France) and EU: Major bilateral and multilateral partners funding social infrastructure, digital transformation and climate resilience.⁷



Support Initiatives

Support modalities include government APME enterprise support, Tekavoul social protection, UNDP Accelerator Lab experimentation, WFP food security innovation, and AFD/EU bilateral programming. The African Development Bank Country Strategy Paper provides a framework for infrastructure and private sector development.^{4 5 7}



Collaboration

Collaboration is primarily structured through the UN Cooperation Framework and bilateral development partnerships. ECOWAS regional frameworks and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) partnerships provide additional collaboration platforms. Government-civil society collaboration is improving under SCAPP 2016–2030. ^{3 4}

FINANCE



Financing Schemes

- World Bank IDA: Tekavoul social protection, food security and infrastructure financing. ⁵
- African Development Bank: Country Strategy Paper for infrastructure and private sector development. ⁷
- AFD (France) and EU: Social infrastructure, digital transformation and climate resilience grants and loans. ⁷
- UNDP: SDG programming and community innovation financing. ⁴



Financing Inclusivity

Tekavoul targets the most vulnerable households with cash transfers. The APME programme supports youth and women-led MSMEs with financing and training. However, rural, nomadic and remote communities face significant access barriers to formal enterprise financing. ^{4 5}

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public awareness of social innovation as a formal concept is limited but growing, particularly in Nouakchott where the emerging digital economy and enterprise ecosystem are building innovation culture. Discourse centres on "entrepreneurship", "social protection" and "digital transformation." ^{3 4}



Research

Research capacity is limited, led by University of Nouakchott Al-Aasriya and international partners. Applied research in food security, climate adaptation and digital services is the strongest area. Mauritania's GII 2024 upward trajectory reflects improving innovation infrastructure and data systems. ^{2 4}



Education & Human Capital

Mauritania is investing in digital skills and vocational training under the National Digital Policy and SCAPP. University of Nouakchott Al-Aasriya provides tertiary education. Access to quality education remains a challenge, particularly for nomadic and rural communities. Youth represent a significant potential human capital dividend for social innovation. ^{3 4}

Entrepreneurship



Business Environment



Innovation Capacity



Social entrepreneurship

126th/133 GII 2024 — moved up the ranking in 2024; performing at expectations for its income level; part of the positive SSA momentum trend.
^{2 6}

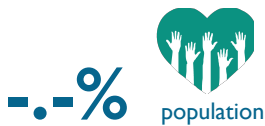
Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity



Political participation



Volunteering

Mauritania-specific data not separately reported in the 2024 index. Islamic traditions of Zakat and Sadaqah are deeply embedded in Mauritanian social culture, reflecting strong informal giving traditions.⁸

CAFWorld Giving Index 2024



Sustainability

Mauritania-specific EPI ranking not publicly available at time of publication. Mauritania faces severe environmental challenges including desertification, drought and climate vulnerability as a Sahel country — making climate adaptation a key social innovation priority.²

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024