

Enabling Social Innovation in Papua New Guinea



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 Papua New Guinea’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 there is no official legal definition of “social innovation” in Papua New Guinea’s laws and strategies reviewed, adjacent concepts are used in government and partner programming—most notably “SME development/entrepreneurship” and “social enterprise/impact enterprise” in ecosystem mapping work.
- UNDP’s landscape study uses “social enterprise/impact enterprise” framing for market-based solutions to development challenges and signals the concept as an emerging policy-adjacent approach (e.g., across sectors such as agriculture, clean energy, education, financial inclusion, healthcare, and WASH).

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

- Rather than a dedicated government body for social innovation, enabling responsibilities are distributed across sector mandates—particularly: SME and entrepreneurship policy (Ministry responsible for Trade, Commerce and Industry), cooperative sector governance (Registrar and regulatory functions under the cooperative regulatory framework), and climate governance (national climate policy framework).
- The cooperative law establishes a Registrar/Assistant Registrars and defines functions around co-operative societies, creating an institutional mechanism for community-based economic organisation often linked to inclusive service delivery and livelihoods.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

- While no standalone “social innovation strategy” was identified, the Government’s SME policy provides a national strategic framework for enterprise development, including strengthening the SME ecosystem and enabling participation in formal markets.
- In climate governance, the national climate policy framework explicitly positions sub-national actors and local leadership as central to implementation, including collaboration with NGOs and development partners—an enabling condition for locally-driven solutions.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓

- **Co-operatives:** The Co-operative Societies Act (1982) provides the legal foundation for establishing and regulating co-operatives, a common vehicle for community-based economic inclusion and service provision.
- **SMEs/entrepreneurship:** The Papua New Guinea Small and Medium Enterprise Policy (2016) sets out the government’s approach to SME development and the enabling ecosystem (policy-based enabler for mission-oriented enterprises where they operate as SMEs).
- **Climate and sustainable development (enabling for environmental social innovation):** The national climate policy framework assigns roles to provincial and local levels and highlights coordination with NGOs/CBOs and partners for environmental sustainability projects.



Official statistics

- While public evidence of official statistics explicitly labelled “social innovation” or “social enterprise” was not identified, ecosystem mapping has been done through partner-commissioned research (including a survey of 80 social enterprises/impact enterprises in PNG, used to describe sector distribution and constraints).
- Official statistics relevant to enabling conditions (e.g., demographic, social and economic indicators) are typically produced through the national statistical system; however, specific official series for the social economy/social enterprises were not evidenced in the sources reviewed.



Government Programs

- While a dedicated national “social innovation fund” was not identified, entrepreneurship-oriented programmes have operated with public-sector and partner support; for example, the UNDP GameChangers model targets “creative private sector-led solutions” and requires innovative solutions to environmental or social issues, combining selection with business training and mentoring.
- The Kumul GameChangers Initiative is documented as an initiative oriented to innovative social/environmental solutions and entrepreneurship capacity building, with large applicant intake and structured training phases.

ECOSYSTEM



Stakeholders

- A core set of ecosystem actors aligns around enterprise development, development cooperation, and business community convening; UNDP’s 2015 landscape report frames an “impact enterprise” ecosystem and explicitly identifies needs for incubator platforms, access to finance (including seed/crowdfunding), and governance improvements.
- Business ecosystem convenors also play a visible role: the Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Advantage International co-host Innovation PNG as a conference and awards platform bridging business and government engagement on innovation.



Support initiatives

- Entrepreneurship support initiatives documented in public sources include competitive selection and structured mentoring/training models (e.g., UNDP GameChangers/Kumul GameChangers), with explicit requirements to demonstrate solutions to environmental or social issues.
- UNDP’s ecosystem assessment highlights incubation infrastructure as a gap and positions initiatives such as Kumul GameChangers as part of the response to strengthening the enabling environment for impact enterprises.



Collaboration

- The country’s development ecosystem is characterised by partnership-based delivery across government priorities, with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2024–2028) setting a formal coordination framework for the UN system’s collaboration with government and stakeholders.
- At the ecosystem level, Innovation PNG is structured to convene business and government communities around innovation learning and showcasing, supporting cross-sector interaction relevant to social and environmental problem-solving narratives.



Events & Awards

- Innovation PNG Awards are a flagship national platform for recognising innovation, run alongside the Innovation PNG conference.

FINANCE



Financing Schemes

- Public evidence of an “average annual amount” of national financing specifically earmarked for social innovation was not identified; available evidence points instead to blended financing across
 - i. enterprise development/SME policy, and
 - ii. development partner programmes supporting innovative solutions to social/environmental challenges.
- Documented partner-funded mechanisms include programme-level allocations for private sector development and innovation-linked initiatives (e.g., a DFAT factsheet references support packages and describes Kumul GameChangers as a platform for innovative solutions to social/environmental issues, combined with intensive business training/mentoring).



Financing Inclusivity

- Inclusivity is explicitly embedded in some innovation-linked partner programmes—for example, a DFAT-supported pilot described in the same factsheet supports rural women to utilise traditional knowledge and access new markets (bilum products), reflecting gender-focused and rural livelihood objectives.
- UNDP’s analysis highlights the structural inclusion challenge (e.g., large unbanked shares and infrastructure/service access constraints) and identifies financial inclusion as a key sector where impact enterprises can expand.

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of social innovation

- While “social innovation” is not consistently evidenced as a policy label in the sources reviewed, public discourse on “innovation” is visible through national business-government convening platforms (Innovation PNG) that position innovation as relevant to PNG’s future and showcase local solutions.
- UNDP’s social enterprise landscape report is explicitly framed to stimulate national discussion and ecosystem action to enable enterprises that address development challenges through market-based models.



Research on Social Innovation

- A key practitioner-research contribution is UNDP’s commissioned landscape study on “social enterprise/impact enterprise” in PNG, including survey findings and sector mapping to identify opportunities and constraints for impact-oriented business models.
- The UN cooperation framework (2024–2028) provides a recent evidence-based planning baseline for development priorities and joint programming, relevant to the societal challenge landscape that social innovation typically responds to.



Education & Human Capital

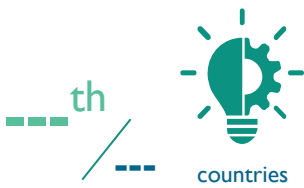
- Structured entrepreneurship capacity building appears within innovation-linked initiatives (e.g., Kumul GameChangers phases include intensive business training and mentoring for shortlisted innovators).
- A national estimate of the proportion of graduates gaining credentials in social innovation-related fields was not identified in public sources reviewed; available evidence instead documents programme-based training (mentoring/incubation) rather than credentialed graduate pipelines.

Entrepreneurship



EIU Business Environment Ranking

(GEM NECI): no publicly available GEM NECI score for Papua New Guinea was identified in the sources reviewed for this snapshot.



Innovation Capacity

(GII 2025): in the WIPO Global Innovation Index 2025 (which covers 139 ranked economies), Papua New Guinea does not appear in the ranked economy set.



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Ecosystem-level estimates and a baseline survey exist via UNDP (survey of 80 social enterprises/impact enterprises in 2015), but no official national prevalence statistic was identified in the reviewed sources.

Social & Environmental Consciousness

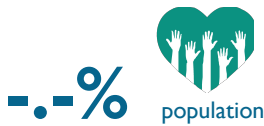


EU Climate Action Progress

Climate indicators (EPI sub-metrics): the EPI 2024 country profile reports multiple climate-change-related indicator ranks for PNG (e.g., adjusted emissions growth rates and land-cover-change carbon flux indicators), providing a comparable—though component-level—picture of climate performance.



Political participation



Volunteering

A Papua New Guinea-specific population volunteering percentage from CAF's World Giving Index/World Giving Report was not identified in accessible static sources reviewed (CAF's 2024 report is descriptive and does not list PNG country percentages).



Sustainability

Commitment to sustainability (EPI): Papua New Guinea ranked 145th (score 36.9) in the Environmental Performance Index 2024 overall ranking.