

Enabling Social Innovation in Suriname



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 Suriname’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 🔗

Suriname does not currently have an official legal or policy definition of social innovation. However, related concepts appear in government discourse on **innovation-driven economic development**, **sustainable development**, and **community resilience**, particularly in national development and environmental policy frameworks. ^{2 3}



Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

While there is no dedicated public authority responsible for social innovation, relevant responsibilities are distributed across several ministries:

- **Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation (EZOTI)** promotes innovation, entrepreneurship and SME development as part of sustainable economic growth. ²
- **Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing (SoZaVo)** oversees social welfare programs and support for vulnerable populations, including children, persons with disabilities, and low-income households. ⁴
- **Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment (ROM)** leads environmental governance and sustainability planning, including climate and green development initiatives. ³
- Together these institutions shape the policy environment for socially oriented innovation and inclusive development.



Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

Suriname does not yet have a standalone national strategy for social innovation. Relevant priorities appear across broader development strategies, including:

- **Multi-Annual Development Plan (2022–2026)**, the country’s central national development strategy outlining priorities for inclusive economic growth, social welfare, and environmental sustainability. ⁵
- **Green Development Strategy**, which sets a national vision for sustainable and climate-resilient development and environmental protection. ⁶
- **National Adaptation Plan (2020)** and **Second Nationally Determined Contribution (2020–2030)**, which frame long-term climate adaptation and mitigation priorities, often requiring innovative community-level solutions. ^{7 8}

These strategies collectively support experimentation and innovation in areas such as climate resilience, sustainable resource management and inclusive development.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓



Suriname does not currently have legislation specifically dedicated to social innovation or social enterprises. However, several regulatory frameworks indirectly support social innovation ecosystems:

- **Cooperative Associations Act** establishes the legal framework for cooperatives, which can serve as vehicles for community-driven economic initiatives. ²
- **Public Procurement Act (2023)** regulates government procurement and may enable socially or environmentally responsible procurement practices. ¹⁰
- **Trade Register Act (2024)** and the **Commercial Code** govern business registration and commercial activity, enabling formal entrepreneurship. ^{11 12}

These frameworks provide the legal infrastructure through which socially oriented enterprises and cooperatives can operate.

Official statistics 🔗



Public evidence of official statistics specifically tracking **social innovation**, **social enterprises**, or the **social and solidarity economy** has not been identified.

More general innovation-related indicators are available through international statistical systems, including intellectual property statistics and entrepreneurship indicators. ¹³

Government Programs ✓ 🔗



Several government initiatives indirectly support social innovation through entrepreneurship, social welfare, and sustainability programs.

Examples include:

- Social assistance and inclusion programs administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, including child allowances, disability benefits and vocational training initiatives. ⁴
- The **Suriname Business and Climate Innovation Program (SUBCIP)**, which has included project categories such as social innovation and environmental entrepreneurship. ¹⁴
- Government-supported dialogues and partnerships on sustainable development and environmental management. ¹⁵

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders ✓ 🔗



Suriname's social innovation ecosystem is still emerging, with collaboration among government, academia, development partners and civil society.

Key actors include:

- **Anton de Kom University of Suriname**, the country's main research university contributing expertise on development, governance and sustainability.
- **Stichting Silicon Dorp**, an innovation network promoting entrepreneurship and collaboration with government and universities. ¹⁶
- Government-linked innovation bodies such as the **Competitiveness Unit Suriname** and the **Bureau for Intellectual Property** under the Ministry of Economic Affairs. ²

International organisations also play a significant role in ecosystem development.

Support initiatives ✓ 🔗



Non-governmental support initiatives are often linked to development programmes and community-level innovation projects.

Examples include:

- The **GEF Small Grants Programme**, which provides funding to civil society organisations for community-based environmental and livelihood initiatives. ¹⁷
- Innovation and entrepreneurship activities supported by government and development partners under climate and economic diversification programs.

These initiatives often focus on sustainability, agriculture and community resilience.



Collaboration

Cross-sector partnerships are a key feature of Suriname's innovation ecosystem. Examples include:

- Cooperation agreements between government ministries and innovation organisations such as Silicon Dorp to promote entrepreneurship and technological innovation. ¹⁶
- Public-private partnerships on environmental issues, including initiatives to address plastic pollution and strengthen recycling systems. ¹⁸
- Multi-stakeholder dialogues on environmental governance, such as national consultations linked to the Global Environment Facility. ¹⁵

FINANCE



Financing Schemes

Dedicated financing for social innovation is limited domestically, but several development finance instruments support related initiatives.

Key sources include:

- The **World Bank Suriname Competitiveness and Sector Diversification Project**, which provides financing for private sector development and economic diversification. ¹⁹
- The **Joint SDG Fund programme in Suriname**, which supports initiatives improving livelihoods of Indigenous and tribal peoples. ²⁰
- The **Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme**, which funds grassroots environmental and community projects. ¹⁷
- Development cooperation programmes of institutions such as the **Caribbean Development Bank** aligned with national development priorities. ²¹
- These mechanisms provide grants, loans and technical assistance that may indirectly support social innovation initiatives.



Inclusiveness of Financing

Many development finance initiatives operating in Suriname explicitly target underrepresented or vulnerable communities.

Examples include:

- Programs focusing on **Indigenous and tribal peoples**, particularly in rural and forested regions. ²⁰
- Projects promoting **gender-inclusive participation** and community-based environmental management. ²²

However, dedicated financing instruments specifically designed for social enterprises remain limited.

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of social innovation

The concept of social innovation is not yet widely institutionalised in Suriname's public discourse. However, government initiatives promoting **innovation-driven economic development**, **green development**, and **inclusive entrepreneurship** increasingly reference innovation as a tool for addressing social and environmental challenges. ²⁴



Research ✓ 🔗

Research relevant to social innovation exists primarily in fields such as development economics, climate resilience and entrepreneurship.
Examples include:

- The **Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Suriname report**, which provides analysis of entrepreneurial activity and ecosystem conditions. ²³
- Research by organisations such as the **Inter-American Development Bank**, including the Suriname *Poverty and Equity Assessment*. ²⁴

These studies help identify societal challenges and opportunities for innovative solutions.



Education & Human Capital ✓ 🔗

While no degree programs dedicated specifically to social innovation have been identified, related topics appear within higher education and training programs.
Examples include:

- Academic programmes at Anton de Kom University covering entrepreneurship, sustainability and development studies.
- Vocational training initiatives administered through social welfare programmes. ⁴

Informal capacity-building also occurs through innovation networks and development programmes



Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship indicators illustrate the broader enabling environment for innovation in Suriname.

EIU Business Environment Ranking

Suriname ranked 162nd globally in the World Bank Doing Business 2020 assessment. ²⁵

Innovation Capacity

Suriname is not included in the most recent ranking table of the Global Innovation Index 2025. ²⁶

Global Innovation Index

Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor:
The most recent GEM data available for Suriname relates to surveys conducted in 2014. ²³

These indicators suggest an evolving but still developing entrepreneurial ecosystem.



Social & Environmental Consciousness

Suriname demonstrates relatively strong environmental performance compared with many countries.

Solidarity

The country's climate commitments are outlined in its Nationally Determined Contribution (2020–2030) and National Adaptation Plan (2020). ^{7 8}

Political participation

Volunteering

Sustainability

Suriname ranked 36th globally in the 2024 index. ²⁷

Environmental Performance Index