

Enabling Social Innovation in Vanuatu



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 Vanuatu’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 🔗



Vanuatu does not appear to use a formal, standalone government definition of social innovation in the public sources reviewed. Public policy instead uses adjacent terms such as innovation, cooperatives, inclusive growth, MSMEs, and social entrepreneurship.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



- While there is no dedicated authority, responsibilities are distributed across institutions:
- Ministry of Trade and Commerce oversees trade and innovation-related functions.
 - Department of Industry leads industrial and innovation policy.
 - Office of the Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services supports cooperative development.
 - NGO Desk coordinates civil society engagement and provincial collaboration.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



- While no standalone strategy exists, several national frameworks contribute to an enabling environment:
- *Vanuatu 2030: The People’s Plan* sets the national development vision.
 - Department of Industry Business Plan (2017–2020) proposed innovation infrastructure and governance.
 - National Industrial Development Strategy (2018–2020) included an “Ignite Innovation” programme.
 - National Co-operative Policy (2024–2027) strengthens cooperative development.
 - National Employment Policy (2025–2030) links employment, entrepreneurship, and inclusion.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



- While no social innovation-specific law exists, relevant enabling instruments include:
- Charitable Associations (Incorporation) Act.
 - VAT Act provisions for non-profit entities.
 - AML/CTF Act covering charities and cooperatives.
 - National Regulatory Sandbox Guideline supporting financial innovation.

Official Statistics



Dedicated social innovation statistics are not collected; however, related data include:

- SDG platform tracking rural cooperatives (60 in 2023).
- Business registration statistics by entity type.
- NGO registry maintained by the NGO Desk.

Government Programs



Public support is mainly indirect, focused on MSMEs and sectoral recovery:

- Small Business Grant and Wage Subsidy Scheme supported enterprises (VT 62M and VT 187M reported disbursed).
- Special COVID-19 Banking Facility supported liquidity.
- Tourism Business Support Program provides sector-specific assistance.
- Co-operative Development Fund and planned Youth Employment Support Scheme support inclusive enterprise development.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



The ecosystem is relatively small but shows active cross-sector participation:

- V-Lab supports enterprise development and innovation.
- Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry provides business and green entrepreneurship support.
- Youth Challenge Vanuatu and the Ministry of Youth Development support youth entrepreneurship.
- UNDP and development partners play a key convening and programme role.

Support Initiatives



- UNDP and V-Lab Social Impact Incubator (2022) supported 20 social innovators across sectors.
- V-Lab GROW programme supports youth, agribusiness, and rural enterprises.
- VCCI–GGGI partnership promotes green entrepreneurship and incubation.
- Youth-focused training programmes complement government services.

Collaboration

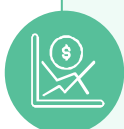


Collaboration appears to be a relative strength:

- Government–NGO coordination facilitated by the NGO Desk.
- Joint initiatives involving UNDP, V-Lab, VCCI, GGGI, and NGOs.
- RBV MSME Awards contribute to visibility for inclusive and innovation-driven enterprises.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



Financing is primarily indirect and MSME-focused:

- Government schemes include grants, wage subsidies, and concessional finance (SBG, WSS, SCBF).
- Co-operative Development Fund provides a dedicated channel for cooperatives.
- Tourism Business Support Program offers sector-specific support.
- ADB has proposed a \$10M grant targeting MSMEs, resilience, and women-led enterprises.

Financing Inclusivity



- Inclusivity is a notable feature of financing approaches:
- National Financial Inclusion Strategy targets informal MSMEs, women, and youth.
 - National Employment Policy prioritizes vulnerable groups.
 - Programmes such as GROW extend access to rural communities.
 - Donor initiatives reinforce support for women entrepreneurs.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



Public discourse tends to focus on related themes such as entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and development rather than a unified social innovation concept.

Research



- Research is emerging, with contributions from UNDP (2026) and Griffith University.
- No dedicated national social innovation research centre was identified.

Education & Human Capital



- National University of Vanuatu and Vanuatu Institute of Technology provide relevant education pathways. [28][29]
- V-Lab and youth programmes support entrepreneurship skills development.

Entrepreneurship

While comprehensive benchmarking is limited:



EIU Business Environment Ranking

B-READY Business Entry score: 44.1 (2024).



Innovation Capacity

No recent Global Innovation Index ranking identified in reviewed sources.



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

GEM data available but outdated (2010), limiting comparability.

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

ND-GAIN score: 40.5, highlighting climate vulnerability.



Political participation

Voter turnout: 69.09% (2025).



Volunteering

Volunteer activity exists but lacks standardized measurement.



Sustainability

Environmental Performance Index ranking: 93rd (2024).