

Enabling Social Innovation in Bolivia



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 Bolivia'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 legal definition exists. Social innovation is interpreted through Bolivia's plural economy and solidarity principles as set out in the 2009 Constitution. Government usage of the term is rare, though concepts such as community entrepreneurship and solidarity-driven development are embraced.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



There is no single agency, but the Ministry of Development Planning (MPD) hosted the Interventions Program for Social Innovation (PIU) in 2019. Other relevant actors include the Vice Presidency (Innovation Fund, 2014–2021) and various ministries implementing innovation-related projects.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



No dedicated national strategy exists. PDES 2021–2025 incorporates "social and productive innovation" as a development tool. The Vivir Bien philosophy underpins many government efforts, prioritising community well-being and sustainability.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



- Constitution (2009): Recognises solidarity economy and communal enterprise.
 - National Innovation System Law (2001): Encourages innovation, including social impact projects.
 - Cooperative laws: Support for co-ops, which function as social enterprises in many contexts.
 - Law for Micro and Small Business Promotion (2017): Facilitates entrepreneurship support.
- No legal form or fiscal incentives yet exist for social enterprises.

Official Statistics 🔗



No official statistics on social innovation. However, Bolivia has over 6,000 cooperatives with around 3 million members, reflecting a strong solidarity economy [9]. Approximately 80% of non-agricultural employment is informal, suggesting much innovation occurs outside formal channels.



Government Programs ✓ [link](#)

- PIU (2019): Bs.140M (~USD 20M) disbursed to 209 social/cultural/tech projects. Now inactive.
- Innovation Fund (2014–2021): Co-run by GIZ and VP's Office; supported governance and inclusion pilots.
- Various sector programs (e.g. health, education, rural livelihoods) include social innovation elements but lack a unified innovation focus.



Stakeholders ✓ [link](#)

- SOLYDES Foundation & Pista 8: Impact investing and acceleration for social startups.
- Innova UP: Private accelerator supporting high-impact innovation.
- CONCOBOL & cooperative federations: Strengthen co-ops addressing social needs.
- Ashoka Bolivia: Small presence, supports social entrepreneurs.
- Community organisations: Indigenous and women's groups lead bottom-up innovations.



Support Initiatives ✓ [link](#)

- Laboratorio de Tecnologías Sociales (Cochabamba): Civic tech and open-data solutions.
- SUMAMOS+ Labs: 2023 co-creation lab trained NGO teams; 5 projects funded.
- University incubators (UCBC, UPSA): Host student-led social ventures.
- Bolivia Emprende platform: Networking and mentorship including social ventures.



Collaboration ✓ [link](#)

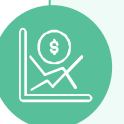
Multi-stakeholder partnerships exist, often facilitated by donors (e.g. UNDP hackathons, IDB Lab pilots). Government-municipal-NGO partnerships exist but are project-based. Participatory budgeting supports some grassroots innovations.



Events & Awards ✓ [link](#)

- Innovación para el Bien Común: University-led forums.
- Seedstars/Innovadores de América: Recognise social startups.
- Local tech/maker fairs: Showcase impact-driven student and grassroots innovation.
- No dedicated national social innovation award exists.

FINANCE



Financing Schemes ✓ [link](#)

- Public: PIU (now halted) and some municipal innovation grants.
- Donor funding: GIZ, IDB Lab, CAF, EU, UNDP finance pilot projects (e.g. Manq'a culinary schools).
- Impact investment: SOLYDES supports social startups; regional investors emerging.
- CSR/foundations: BancoSol, Viva telecom fund social projects.
- Crowdfunding: Rare but growing. Informal channels (remittances, co-op pooling) fill gaps.



Financing Inclusivity

Funding often targets vulnerable groups (indigenous, youth, rural women). Microfinance institutions have wide rural outreach. However, access remains uneven, with many grassroots innovators lacking access to capital beyond pilot stage.

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Social innovation lacks broad visibility. While the public values community initiatives, the term itself is little used outside practitioner circles. Projects like Manq'a generate positive media attention, but a mainstream narrative is absent.



Research

- UMSA, UMSS, and others research solidarity economy and community enterprise.
- Hillenkamp (2015): Pioneering research on social enterprises in high-informality settings.
- Think tanks (e.g. INESAD) and donor evaluations contribute applied research.



Education & Human Capital

- UCBC: Master's in social development with innovation modules.
- Technical schools (e.g. Manq'a): Train underprivileged youth in social enterprise models.
- NGOs (e.g. AVE, Emprendedoras Bolivia) offer informal training.
- Diaspora actors support capacity building.

Entrepreneurship



Business environment (EIU)

Among lowest in Latin America.



Innovation Capacity

Bolivia ranks 100/133 (score 20.2).

Global Innovation Index 2024



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

High early-stage entrepreneurship (~40%). Driven by necessity, but growing social awareness.

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

Strong traditions (ayni, mink'a) support social innovation culture.



Political participation

High civic engagement despite institutional weaknesses.



Volunteering

Low formal participation (~12%).



Sustainability

EPI 2024 rank 91/180 (score 45.3). Cultural respect for Pachamama drives grassroots sustainability efforts.