

Enabling Social Innovation in Cuba

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 Cuba’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 🔗

There is no legal definition. Public actors (e.g., CITMA, universities) use working definitions emphasising community-led, territorial and problem-solving approaches to social challenges (2017–).

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

No dedicated ministry. Main bodies:

- **CITMA**: coordinates national science, technology and environment policy (1994–); involved in territorial innovation and community resilience.
- **National Innovation Council (2021–)**: high-level body linking government, universities and enterprises on STI strategy and innovation policy.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

No standalone strategy. Social-innovation principles appear in:

- **Tarea Vida** (2017–): national climate-resilience strategy emphasising community and territorial innovation.
- **Draft Science, Technology & Innovation Law** (2025–): seeks to strengthen innovation governance and research-to-policy links.
- **National STI planning processes** (2021–2025): highlight territorial development and integration of science into public services.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗

- **Tarea Vida** (2017–): national climate-adaptation plan with community-based and territorial innovation.
- **Draft STI Law** (2025–): under public consultation; introduces new governance and coordination rules for innovation.

No legal category for social enterprises; no explicit national tax incentives or social-procurement rules specific to social innovation located in public sources.

Official Statistics 🔗

No dedicated statistics on social innovation. National statistics focus on sectoral and SDG indicators; UNDP project reporting includes innovation-related performance data.



Government Programs

Key programmes embedding social-innovation practices:

- **Family Doctor & Nurse Programme** (1984–): community-based health model.
- **BioCubaFarma innovation programmes** (2012–): state R&D for public health technologies.
- **UNDP / Joint SDG Fund** projects (2020–2025): community resilience, food systems, coastal adaptation.
- **University incubators and territorial innovation labs** (various years): support local development and technology transfer.

ECOSYSTEM



Stakeholders

Main actors: CITMA, universities, research centres, BioCubaFarma, municipal development groups, UN agencies (UNDP), and international cooperation partners supporting community-focused innovation.



Networks

Active networks exist around universities, research institutes, cooperatives, agroecology groups and multilateral projects. No national social-innovation network comparable to regional peers identified in public sources.



Non-Financial Support Organisations

Key types: university incubators, research centres, UN technical-cooperation teams, state extension services, community organisations engaged in climate and local-development projects.



Support Initiatives

Common initiatives: territorial pilot programmes, problem-solving labs, resilience-focused training, UNDP capacity-building, and university innovation workshops.



Collaboration

Frequent cross-sector partnerships exist in climate adaptation, biotechnology and community development:

- Government–UNDP project implementation (SDGs, resilience)
- University–state enterprise cooperation (health / biotech)

Relevant events: STI forums and SDG community consultations. No major national social-innovation awards that are publicly documented.

FINANCE



Financing Schemes

No consolidated national estimate. Funding originates mainly from public R&D budgets, state-enterprise R&D, UNDP/SDGF/GCF grants and bilateral cooperation (EU, UN). Only part is explicitly directed to social innovation.

Key Types of Financing



- **Public:** state R&D budgets, sectoral innovation financing.
 - **International:** UNDP, Joint SDG Fund, GCF, EU bilateral cooperation.
 - **Philanthropy:** limited; generally channelled through international partners.
 - **Instruments:** grants, in-kind support, technical assistance, project contracting.
- Private impact-investment tools and social-impact bonds are not prominent in Cuba.

Financing Inclusivity



UNDP and GCF projects include targeted support for vulnerable coastal communities, women, and rural producers, but no comprehensive national system of inclusive social-innovation financing exists.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



Social-innovation themes appear in discussions on health breakthroughs, climate resilience and community development. Terms like “innovation social” appear mainly in academic and project documents rather than mass media.

Research



Cuban universities and research institutes produce significant work on STI, local development and biotech innovation; practitioner evidence comes mainly from UNDP project evaluations. Notable activity in biopharma and territorial innovation studies.

Education & Human Capital



Innovation-related training exists in universities (engineering, public policy, entrepreneurship) and in UNDP/community projects. No degrees explicitly labelled “social innovation” identified; no graduation statistics available.

Entrepreneurship



Business Environment

Country-level score is proprietary; no open-access ranking available.

EIU Business Environment Ranking



Innovation Capacity

Cuba appears in compiled international innovation trackers with mid-to-low placement.



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

GEM: no recent public GEM national report for Cuba located.



Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

National policy emphasises collective welfare; limited public comparative metrics.



Political participation

Formal participation channels exist but few internationally comparable open indicators.



Volunteering

No CAF index value publicly available.



Sustainability

Mid-range EPI 2024 performance with strengths in selected environmental indicators.