

Study of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystems in South East and East Asian Countries

Case Study: Opendream, Thailand

The Japan Research Institute

Office of the Multilateral
Investment Fund

TECHNICAL
NOTE N°
IDB-TN-1221

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Cataloging-in-Publication data provided by the
Inter-American Development Bank

Felipe Herrera Library

Nihon Sōgō Kenkyūjo.

Study of social entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems in South East and East
Asian countries: case study: Opendream, Thailand / The Japan Research Institute.

p. cm. — (IDB Technical Note ; 1221)

1. Social entrepreneurship-Thailand. 2. Technological innovations-Social aspects-
Thailand. I. Inter-American Development Bank. Office of the Multilateral Investment
Fund. II. Title. III. Series.

IDB-TN-1221

JEL Codes: A130

Keywords: Social enterprise, Social entrepreneurship, Social innovation, Social
business, Social impact, Impact investment, Social entrepreneur

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CASE STUDY

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Acknowledgements

The authors **Tamako Watanabe, Akihisa Yahata** and **JRI members** would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contribution to this study, through participating in personal interviews and making comments on draft versions of this report. (In an alphabetical order)

- Patipat Susumpow, Co-founder of Opendream
- Patcharaporn Pansuwan, Co-founder of Opendream
- Sunit Shrestha, CEO of ChangeFusion
- Tomohiro Hamakawa, Co-founder & Managing Director of Earth Company

1. Introduction

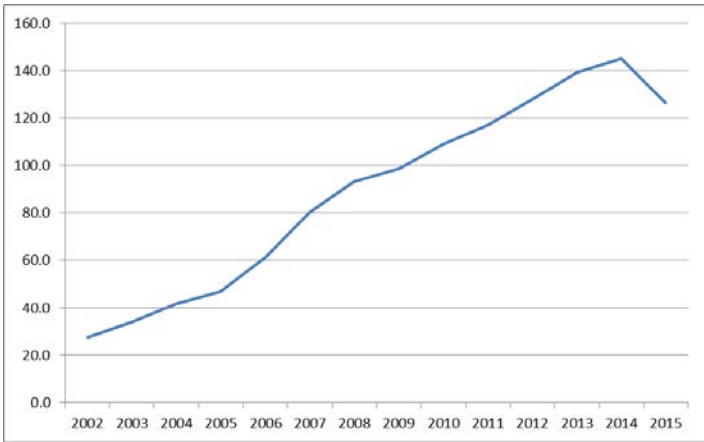
Name: Opendream	
Description	An IT developer with a social conscience, Opendream designs and develops digital, ICT solutions to help improve livelihood and aid in addressing social problems in healthcare and education.
Founded	2007
Legal format	Limited company
Num. employees/volunteers	25 full-time staff
Geographical reach	Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka
Certifications/ awards	Youth Social Enterprise Initiative award (2008)
Social innovation variables	
Innovation type	Supporting nonprofits to amplify their social impact with ICT technologies. Launched Thailand's first personal healthcare application and sex education game and disaster preparedness game for smartphones.
Social impact	As of October 2016, 810,000+ active users of its healthcare application, and 300,000+ downloads of its sex education and climate change games.
Financial sustainability	The majority of revenue (around 70%) derived from project-based contracts with nonprofits, multilateral agencies, and private companies.
Key Partners and Supporters	ChangeFusion, Thai Health Promotion Foundation, UNESCO, Oxfam, Skoll Global Threats Fund
Scalability and Replicability	Opendream faces a juncture in scaling its operations by shifting focus away from project-based contracts to developing partnership and its own products and services.
References	https://www.opendream.co.th/



2. Local Social Issues and the Challenge

In Thailand, information and communications technologies (ICT) have advanced to high levels and become a basic commodity for the entire country, since a comprehensive policy framework for ICT, the National ICT Master Plan, was developed in 2002. Relevant policies enacted under the Master Plan have achieved remarkable progress in ICT accessibility and development by 2015, such as establishing some 400,000 public Wi-Fi access points, mobile phone penetration reaching over 120%, and the number of internet users exceeding 50% of the population. In addition, digital literacy of the young generation has been enhanced, with almost every other youth accessing social networks, instant messaging, and online videos on a daily basis¹.

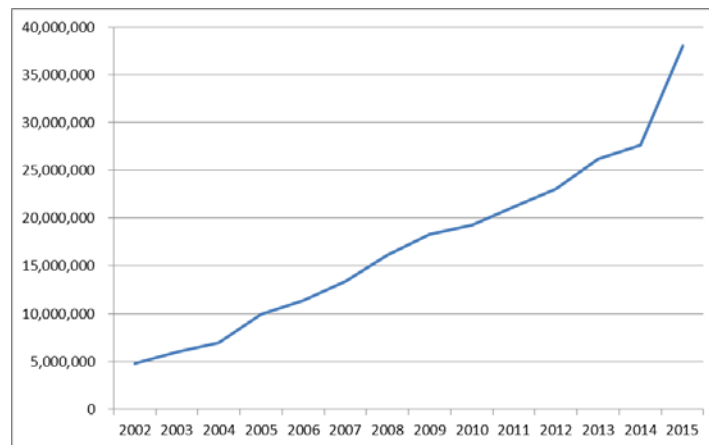
Figure 1 Mobile phone penetration (%)



(Source: Thai Telecom Industry Database)

¹ Ericsson Mobility Report “South East Asia And Oceania”, June 2016

Figure 2 Number of Internet Users (absolute number)



(Source: Thai Telecom Industry Database)

Despite this progress, many nonprofit organizations in Thailand do not fully take advantage of such technologies and platforms when implementing projects and launching services. According to some intermediaries in Thailand, most organizations cannot afford to allocate enough budget to cover the development and maintenance of digital tools; there is also a dearth of nonprofit staff who understand how to use ICT tools to address social issues and amplify social impact.

3. Solution and Social Impact

Opendream is an app developer with a social conscience. Beyond smartphone apps, it also designs and develops websites and softwares for nonprofits that aim to address issues in the fields of health, education, and living conditions. Since its founding, more than 20 digital solutions have been delivered including ones to track disease outbreaks in remote areas, improve disaster preparedness, and promote safe sex. Opendream serves a wide range of clients from Fortune Global 500 companies, large nonprofits, to multilateral agencies, including big names such as Google, Oxfam, Skoll Global Threats Fund, and UNESCO.

A prime example of Opendream's digital solution is the app DoctorMe, Thailand's first personal healthcare application for iOS and Android. DoctorMe provides an electronic health manual with contact details of over 1,000 hospitals and offers push notifications to warn

people about health crises. Users are also able to diagnose possible conditions based on symptoms through online questionnaires. The data is then sent anonymously to secured system that co-developed with Thai Health Promotion Foundation which analyses the symptoms and locations of the users² for experiment participatory digital disease detection, in the same time users can easily find the nearest hospitals or healthcare centers from their current locations. The app has been downloaded more than 810,000 times and has 45,000 active users.

Table 1 Opendream's portfolio of digital solutions

Category	Name of products	Partners	Description
Health	Disease surveillance system	Google.org, dtac ³ , InSTEDD ⁴ , ChangeFusion	A SMS-based disease surveillance system used in helping combat the 2009 flu (H1N1) outbreaks in Thailand and Laos. This project won the Thailand ICT Excellence Awards in 2011.
	DoctorMe	ChangeFusion, Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Folk Doctor Foundation, Skoll Global Threats Fund	DoctorMe is Thailand's first personal healthcare mobile application designed to empower users to focus on their personal healthcare and save cost and time on medical treatments.
Education	Love Not Yet	Individual movie producer	Love Not Yet is Thailand's first sex education game for mobile phones that aims to tackle unexpected pregnancy issues among teenagers.
Living conditions	Info Aid	ChangeFusion	InfoAid.org is a web application that provides flood related data for the Thai public, such as water level alerts and community needs for rescue materials.

(Source: Opendream website and Co-up.Com website)

4. The Social Entrepreneur

Patipat Susumpow is the co-founder of Opendream. With his degree in computer engineering, he began his career as a software developer. While working three years in various private

² <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/pandemic-hunter> [Accessed 22 April 2016]

³ DTAC is a total access communication public company limited, the second largest Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) provider in Thailand.

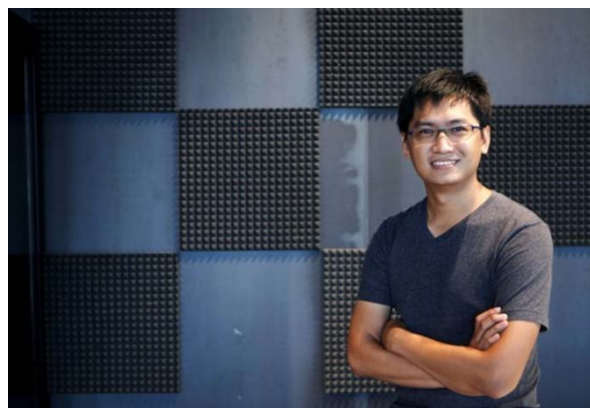
⁴ InSTEDD (Innovative Support to Emergencies Diseases and Disasters) is an international nonprofit organization based in Silicon Valley focusing on improving early detection, preparedness, and response capabilities for global health threats and humanitarian crises

corporations such as a telecommunication company and an automobile company, Susumpow gradually became more interested in creative works and decided to quit his job. As he free-lanced in the following six months to seek his own career path, he met Sunit Shrestha, the CEO of ChangeFusion and a leading social entrepreneur in Thailand. “Before meeting Sunit, I thought social issues were solved by volunteer workers or charity organizations. The idea that business can solve those issues deeply inspired me”, said Susumpow, commenting on the importance of this encounter.

After a series of discussions with Shrestha, Susumpow - together with his future wife - decided to establish an ICT-based social enterprise that empowers the social sector through ICT tools. He believed he could fulfill a unique role given his expertise: “At that time, there was no ICT technologies available for nonprofit organizations dedicated to solve social issues. As an ICT guy, I thought I can be the bridge between NGOs and the public by using technology”⁵.

As his main interests fell in ICT-based personal healthcare services, informal education and open-source software development, he soon became involved extensively in the implementation of mobile disease surveillance through SMS in the northeastern provinces in Thailand in 2009. He also worked on behavioral data analytics, e.g. analysis of Twitter tweets to identify emerging disease trends and of user browsing history to detect potential illnesses.

Figure 3 Patipat Susumpow, Co-Founder of Opendream



(Source: creativemove.com)

⁵ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/306576/>[Accessed 22 April 2016]

In order to pursue Opendream’s core mission to "make changes in the fundamentals of society", Susumpow and his team believe in adhering to the following three principles when working on projects;

- (a) Create digital technologies that solve social problems
- (b) Engineer with a social mind
- (c) Achieve financial sustainability

5. Business Model

Opendream designs and develops digital tools for its clients on contractual basis. Opendream refers to its clients as “client-partners” because it requires them to commit to the solution designing process to improve the quality of the tools and to ensure social impact. In its first few years of operations, Opendream focused on being a service provider engaged in contracted projects.

Although Opendream does not make active marketing and promotion efforts, it has served 300 clients to date, 90% from the nonprofit sector and 10% from the private sector, and receives new project offers from 50 to 100 organizations annually. Susumpow explains the fortunate situation the company found itself in: “In the beginning, most of the new projects came through word of mouth regarding our work designing a web-information platform for a foundation as well as the app DoctorMe”. As Opendream does not have enough capacity to take on all project offers, the team has established its own criteria to select clients, namely the following three questions:

Table 2 Three questions used to select projects

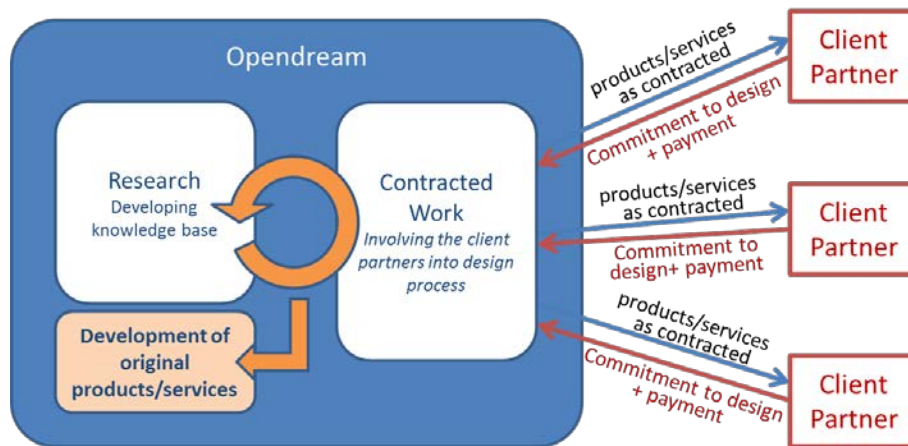
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Does the project have potential to generate reasonable amount of revenue for Opendream?b) Does the project have measurable social impact?c) Does the project provide Opendream non-financial profits such as improving their skills and enhancing their presence?
--

Opendream’s intention is to optimize profits, not maximize them. Thus, the project with “yes” from the three questions above as well as with the potential to make substantial social impact would be considered favorably. This is made possible through cross-subsidization; the costs of

taking on such projects are covered by profits generated from other more lucrative projects.

After engaging in contract-based projects for a few years, Susumpow observed that “only doing contract work does not motivate the team”. This is when the team decided to proactively conduct its own research on social issues and behavior analysis of the young generation in order to better design concepts, contents, and interfaces. In 2011-2012, Opendream officially established a consulting and research arm to its business.

Figure 4 Opendream’s main business structure



6. Social Impact and Financial Performance

6.1 Social Impact

6.1.1 Social Impact Achievements

For an IT company like Opendream, user volume such as the number of downloads or page views serves as the best proxy of social impact measurement.

Table 3 Opendream's Digital Achievements

Projects	User volume & rankings
Redesign of web platform for the Folk Doctor Foundation ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracted more than 300,000 visitors to the website monthly, 300-fold increase from the previous version.
DoctorMe (A smartphone app for personal healthcare)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 810,000 downloads by 2016 Ranked the No.1 health and fitness app in Apple App

⁶ Folk Doctor Foundation is an organization committed to raising awareness of health issues and their remedies among the general public.

	Store and Google Play in Thailand in 2012.
Love Not Yet (A sex education game application for smartphones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 300,000 downloads and 150,000 active players in 2014. • In April 2014, it ranked 11th in the free game app category in Apple App Store in Thailand.

6.1.2 Social Impact Measurement

Opendream recognizes itself as an intermediary or a B2B (business-to-business) service-provider that supports clients to tackle social problems. As such, Opendream does not directly measure the impact of its digital solutions on users.

6.2 Financial Performance

6.2.1 Revenue and Expense Trend

While Opendream does not publicize the details of its financial performance, piecing together different data points paint a financially robust social enterprise.

Opendream's revenue doubled year-on-year during its first three years of operations and exceeded the break-even point in the first year. Its annual revenue currently hovers around USD 0.8 million⁷ with about 70% coming from a few large NGO projects (20% of contracted work) according to Susumpow. He attributes his company's stability to this revenue structure. The profit margin varies in the range of 5-10% on an annual basis.

As for expenses, as much as 30% of profits is safeguarded for Opendream's focuses projects,, i.e. for projects with small budgets but huge potential. While 30% of total expenditure goes towards covering salaries, expanding the team, upgrading equipment, and another 30% for maintaining cash flow, around 10% is kept aside for year-end "bonus"⁸ for staff.⁹

6.2.2 Proportion of Income from Sales Trend

Opendream rarely receives grants and donations. In its eight-year history, the social enterprise has received only two grants: the Youth Social Enterprise Initiative (YSEI) award in 2008 (USD 10,000), and the Skoll Global Threats Fund award in 2014 (USD 195,000). Opendream operates like a traditional business, with more than 90% of total income derived from earned revenue.

⁷ Interview with ChangeFusion on January 22nd, 2016

⁸ The scheme Opendream is currently taking is "revenue sharing among staff members", and the enterprise does not call it as "bonus".

⁹ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/306576/> [Accessed 22 April 2016]

7. Business Development and Ecosystem Evolution¹⁰

Opendream has achieved tremendously rapid growth for a social enterprise. Mapping its journey against a three-step process from start-up, early, to growth, Opendream has essentially skipped the early stage and jumped from start-up to growth, as the enterprise exceeded the break-even point from its first year of operation. This section delves into the milestones in the start-up and growth stages.

Table 4 A summary of Opendream's business development milestones from 2007 - present

Stage	Year	Event
Start-up	2007-2008	Susumpow and Patcharaporn Pansuwan met Sunit Shrestha, CEO of ChangeFusion, and became immersed in the social enterprise sector.
Early		<i>Skipped</i>
Growth	2008	Registered Opendream in 2008.
		Received the Youth Social Enterprise Initiative award (USD 10,000)
		Achieved financial break-even point
	2009	Developed a mobile-based disease surveillance system for helping combat the 2009 flu outbreaks in Thailand and Laos.
		Implemented digitalization of Folk Doctor Foundation's by-weekly healthcare magazine on its website
	2010	Branched out to consulting and research business
	2011	Launched the mobile app DoctorMe
		Developed a mobile-based disease surveillance system in 2009
	2012	DoctorMe ranked the top health & fitness application downloaded in Thailand.
	2014	Received the Skoll Global Threats Fund award (USD 195,000)
		Launched the sex education app, Love Not Yet
		Developed and launched the UNESCO-initiated mobile app Sai Fah (Flood Fighter), an educational tool that teach Southeast Asian children crucial survival skills involving floods
Received an investment of USD 150,000 from ChangeVenture		
2015	The app Love Not Yet ranked 11 th in the free game app category in Thailand in	

¹⁰ **Start-up stage:** a preparation period for setting up a business or an enterprise. An entrepreneur's team develops a business idea and a business model. In some cases, they have product/service prototypes which are not fully developed or tested. **Early stage:** A period from business initiation until business scale-up. An entrepreneur's team may first deliver its products/ services in a test market to examine its business model. Also, the team may file patents or obtain licenses, if necessary. Once the business model is consolidated, it starts its business. However, the business remains quite small due to lack of capacity and resources. It may reach a breakeven point at the end of this period. **Growth stage:** A period after scaling up the business. The business exceeds the breakeven point and increases its sales, number of beneficiaries, the market share etc. The team revises the business model in order to sustain and/or expand the business, if necessary. In some cases, the team starts to investigate new products/services.

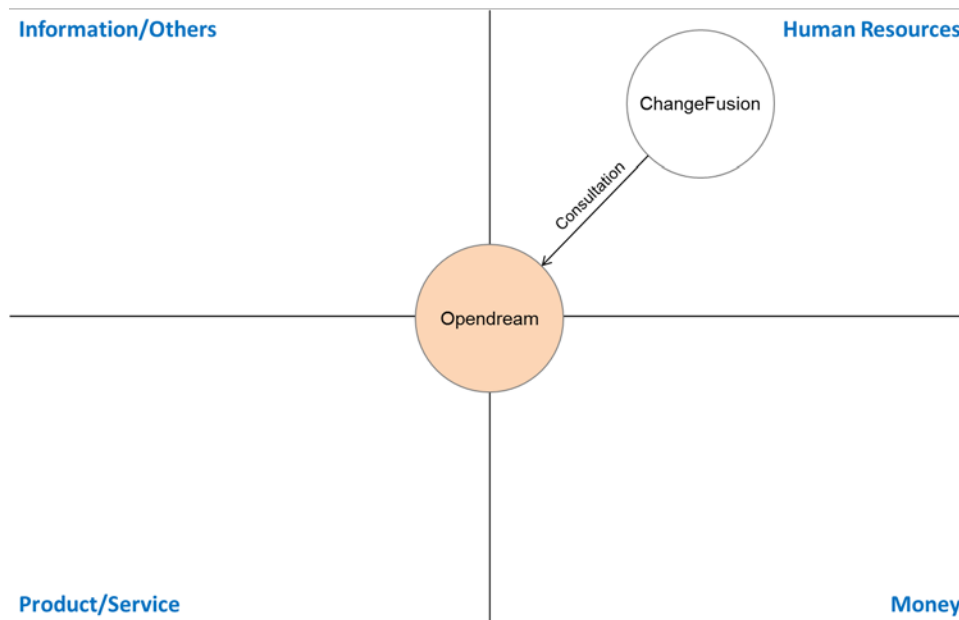
		<p>April (the highest in its history)</p> <p>Launched disaster preparedness game with UNESCO.</p> <p>Launched participatory one-health disease detection (PODD) for detecting emerging animal health disease outbreak with Chiang Mai university and Skoll Global Threats Fund.</p>
		<p>Started to develop its own products to diversify the business</p>

7.1 Start-up stage (2007~2008)

The start-up stage of Opendream covers the period until the founding team registered Opendream as a limited corporation (for-profit corporation). In this stage, the co-founder Susumpow Susumpow first obtained the idea of social enterprises from ChangeFusion. Through several discussions with ChangeFusion, he developed Opendream's business model of designing and providing digital tools to nonprofit organizations.

As the business was established in Susumpow's home in Chiang Mai, a major city in northern Thailand, and used his own computers to develop the first set of digital solutions, Opendream did not need a substantial amount of initial investment such as purchasing equipment and office rent.

Figure 5 Key supporters in the start-up stage¹¹



7.2 Growth Stage (2008 until present)

7.2.1 Business milestones

As mentioned above, most social enterprises undergo a period between business initiation and scale-up when the company aims to solidify its operations, finances, and business model. This was not the case for Opendream however; it has managed to stay profitable and keep expanding ever since its first project that came through a past client of the co-founder. Since leaping into growth mode, Opendream has achieved two sets of milestones; one set around business operations and another related to products and services.

(a) Business operation milestones

The first milestone came in the form of registering as a limited corporation (for-profit corporation) in 2008. In the same year, Opendream already achieved the financial break-even point.

¹¹ How to look at this key supporter map:

- The name inside the circle represents the key supporters.
- Depending on the kind of support they provide (HR, Product/ services, money, information), the circles are located in respective zones.
- The brief descriptions of the support are written on the arrows.
- The size of the circle expresses the level of impact (high, medium, low).

Opendream gradually expanded its team as business scaled up. However, it soon discovered the necessity to modify its business model to stimulate staff motivation. Through consultations with ChangeFusion and discussions with staff, Opendream decided to focus its efforts to conduct research on social issues and behavior analysis. Susumpow describes this transition in the following way: “In order to motivate staff as well as attract talented persons, we needed to understand more deeply how to foster social impact through our products and services and also how to add value to improve profitability”. This eventually led to the establishment of its consulting and research arm in 2011 - 2012, with the objective to enhance both social mission and business profitability.

Another important transition for Opendream took place when Susumpow shifted gears to develop its own digital products and services, even at the sacrifice of profit margins. Up to that point, rich experiences working with clients from the nonprofit sector had brought innovative ideas of products and services to Opendream’s team. In 2014, Opendream decided to increase staff's working hours spent on research and development of new products; today around 50% of the working hours are invested into prototyping and discussing business models and marketing strategies. Based on this new focus, Opendream aims to generate 70% of total revenue from its original products and services in the future, slowly reducing its reliance on contractual work.

In 2014, Opendream received an equity investment from ChangeVENTRUES, an affiliated company of ChangeFusion to scale up its business. Up to the present, ChangeVENTURES is the only key financial supporter for Opendream. Before receiving this investment, Opendream discussed with another investor. However, the conditions offered were completely out of touch with Opendream's expectations, as the investor required around 40% of stakes for acquiring control of the enterprise, thus the founder rejected the offer in the end.

(b) Product and service milestones

Some products and services that Opendream developed with its client-partners have dramatically enhanced its presence and resulted in more business opportunities. Disease surveillance system developed in 2009 was a major undertaking in the beginning that helped raise the profile of the company.

The smartphone app DoctorMe launched in 2011 achieved stunning results not only in revenue growth but also in boosting visibility. Before launching the free iOS and Android apps, Opendream worked for Folk Doctor Foundation to digitalize their bi-weekly healthcare magazine in collaboration with ChangeFusion. In late 2011, this initiative developed into the DoctorMe app and was incorporated into the Folk Doctor Foundation website in 2012. The app is currently undergoing changes to integrate a participatory disease surveillance mechanism so that users can share symptoms of disease on an open mapping platform to help identify potential clusters of communicable diseases.¹²

Love Not Yet, the sex education game for mobile phones launched in 2014, made Opendream even more famous as it was downloaded more than 300,000 times, ranking 11th in the free game application category in Apple App Store store in Thailand.

In the same year, Opendream launched Sai Fah the Flood Fighter, a UNESCO-initiated gaming app targeting children to learn crucial survival skills during floods. “The biggest challenge for Opendream while designing the game was how to integrate learning lessons in a fun interactive way for the players”, Nathalie Sajda, a project manager answered in an interview by the newspaper the Guardian.¹³ The Thai language version of Sai Fah has been downloaded more than 20,000 times, and there are plans to promote the English, Korean and French version in flood-prone areas across the the world. Also, Tanah: Earthquake and Tsunami fighter, the spiritual sequel to Sai Fah have embed with knowledge evaluation mechanism demonstrates promising result that the player gain 9-15% more disaster preparedness knowledge after playing the game.

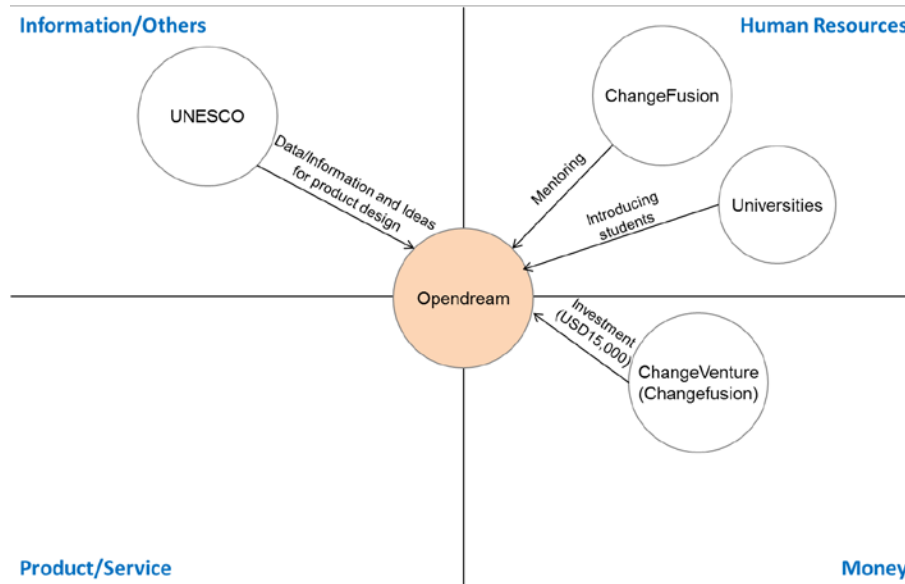
The success of these apps has generated evidence that gamification is indeed a powerful, effective, self-learning education tool for the young generation, which are quite different in nature from interactive videos and teaching materials for school teachers.

¹² <http://www.conference.org/proceedings/www2014/companion/p663.pdf> [Accessed 22 April 2016]

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/feb/14/game-thai-gaming-app-children-floods-child-play> [Accessed 22 April 2016]

7.2.2 Key supporters

Figure 6 Key supporters in the growth stage



In this stage, Opendream obtained substantial external support, such as human resources and financial assistance, to further expand its business. In particular, key supporters in this stage include (a) client-partners committed to the design process for social impact enhancement and (b) organizations that proactively supported the development of Opendream's original products and services.

As mentioned above, ChangeFusion has closely supported the social enterprise as its mentor in the first few years as well as investor. Opendream relies on ChangeFusion as its business consultant and has regular meetings on a quarterly basis. Through its own network, ChangeFusion often introduces business opportunities to the social enterprise. However Opendream and ChangeFusion agree on building in-house business development capacity for Opendream by 2017 time frame.

As a fast-growing IT company, finding good talent continues to be a challenge. To address this issue, the leadership team has reached out to universities, particularly their alma maters, to introduce qualified graduates.

Amongst the client-partners Opendream has worked with, UNESCO and Skoll Global Threats Fund have proved to be the most committed. The UN agency has not only actively provided necessary information and data such as project areas, and knowledge, but also participated in the processes of designing products and services. In the same time, Skoll Global Threats Fund also provides necessary resources and network to empower participatory digital disease detection project. For Opendream, “UNESCO and Skoll Global Threats Fund are collaborative client-partners whom we can turn to in order to improve the quality of the solutions we develop”, Susumpow commented.

8. Scalability and Replicability

(a) Scalability

Opendream’s business model focusing on project-based contracts with nonprofits has been effective in growing the business, given there were few competitors with comparable knowledge of both social issues and ICT technologies. To achieve further expansion, the social enterprise needs to take the following measures:

(1) Develop human capacities and solid knowledge of social issues

As the ICT sector evolves at a remarkable pace, Opendream's digital solutions also need to develop. To do so, Opendream needs to continue investing in capacity development of staff and update their knowledge and skills. Similarly, social issues in the country have become more complex, with the advancement of the Thai economy. To stay on top and ahead, Opendream needs to continue studying the social problems and learn from other organizations in order to generate new, innovative ideas.

(2) Develop a network to access necessary human resources

Opendream should continue to find relevant organizations and people who could introduce Opendream to those qualified and interested in social enterprises. The incoming talent should be able to balance both the project-based contracts as well as the development of Opendream's own products and services.

(3) Potential for global expansion

Mobile apps and softwares that are effective in addressing social issues in specific geographies

have high replication potential in other contexts. Thus, business expansion to other countries would be possible if the already-developed apps can be modified to fit local contexts and add new language options, based on comprehensive market research.

(b) Replicability

Opendream's current business model is relatively replicable by other organizations that possess deep knowledge of social issues and technical skills to develop digital tools. Beyond the know-how and the capacity, what makes Opendream unique are the three principles of its business and the three questions to select projects:

9. Final Reflections

9.1 Key milestones for Opendream

A significant event for Opendream was the encounter with Sunit Shrestha, CEO of ChangeFusion, who has led the Thai social business development and supported many domestic social entrepreneurs. Shrestha's support ranged from providing insights to operating social enterprises, helping shape a financially sustainable business model, and introducing like-minded clients. It should be noted that, due to this generous support and the co-founder's untiring efforts, Opendream has consistently grown without deficit in its entire business history.

The launching of highly successful products such as DoctorMe and Love Not Yet also marks a substantial milestone for Opendream, raising its profile as a prominent social enterprise in Thailand and thus attracting clients among NGOs and international aid agencies.

9.2 Key challenges for growth

A key challenge for Opendream lies in transforming its revenue structure from reliance on project-base contracts to an emphasis on sales of own products and services. Opendream has yet to launch them; their release dates are also unclear. However, as Opendream has already invested almost half of human capital into the new product development, it needs a strategy to rapidly recover the investment. To earn adequate amount of revenue from the sales of original products, Opendream would need to engage in new activities such as sales and marketing to raise awareness and acquire users. Opendream should be prepared to continue releasing

updates and directly respond to user complaints and requests. All this requires not just greater technical bandwidth, but also managerial and marketing capacities to lead the social enterprise and navigate the increasingly complex landscape.