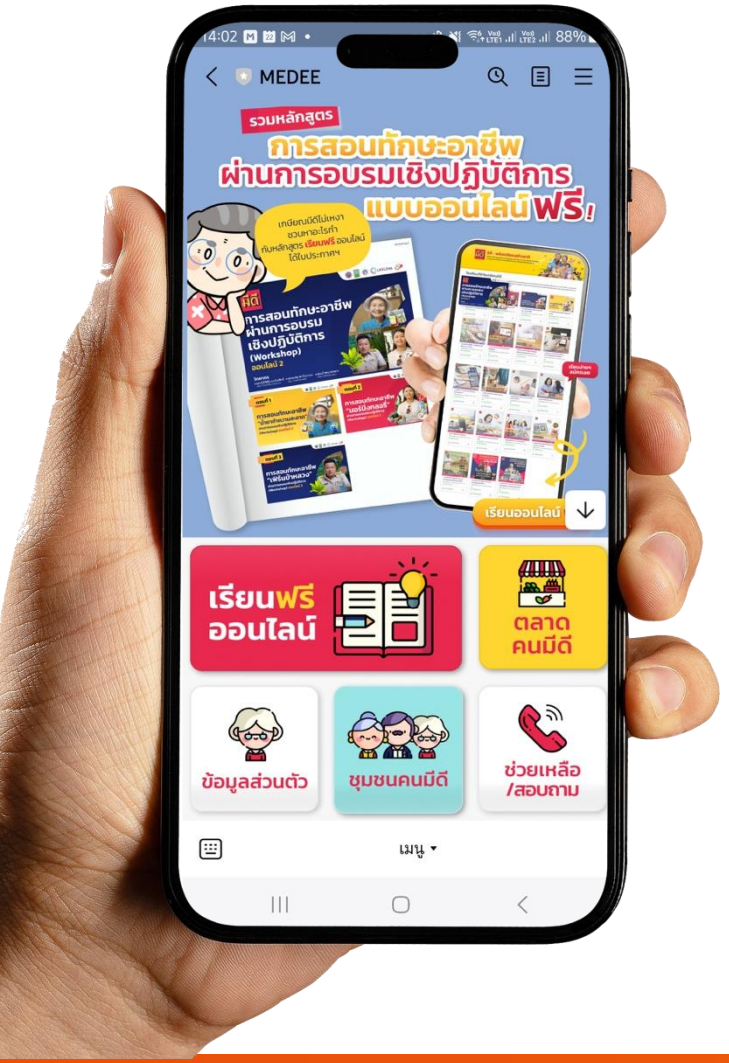
TRUST BEFORE TECHNOLOGY

Lifelong Learning, Intergenerational Design, and University-Community Partnership for Digital Inclusion in Thailand

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nuttee (Tom) Suree
Director, School of Lifelong Education, Chiang Mai University, THAILAND





The Context:

Most older Thais already own smartphones and use LINE daily

The Reality:

Yet, digital disconnect scored in the bottom three of the active ageing metrics (0.66-0.69)



The true gap isn’t hardware.
It is trust, relevance, and human support.

Design Decision 1: Meet Them on LINE

Watch short, accessible lessons

Chat directly with a live local coach



Take quizzes & earn certificates

Access the community marketplace

Rebuilding the entire learning journey inside the messaging app Thais use daily. Learning instantly becomes social.

Design Decision 2: The Curriculum

40 short online courses developed

- (Topics: Smartphone basics, TikTok live-streaming, fraud prevention)









Intergenerational Design in Reverse



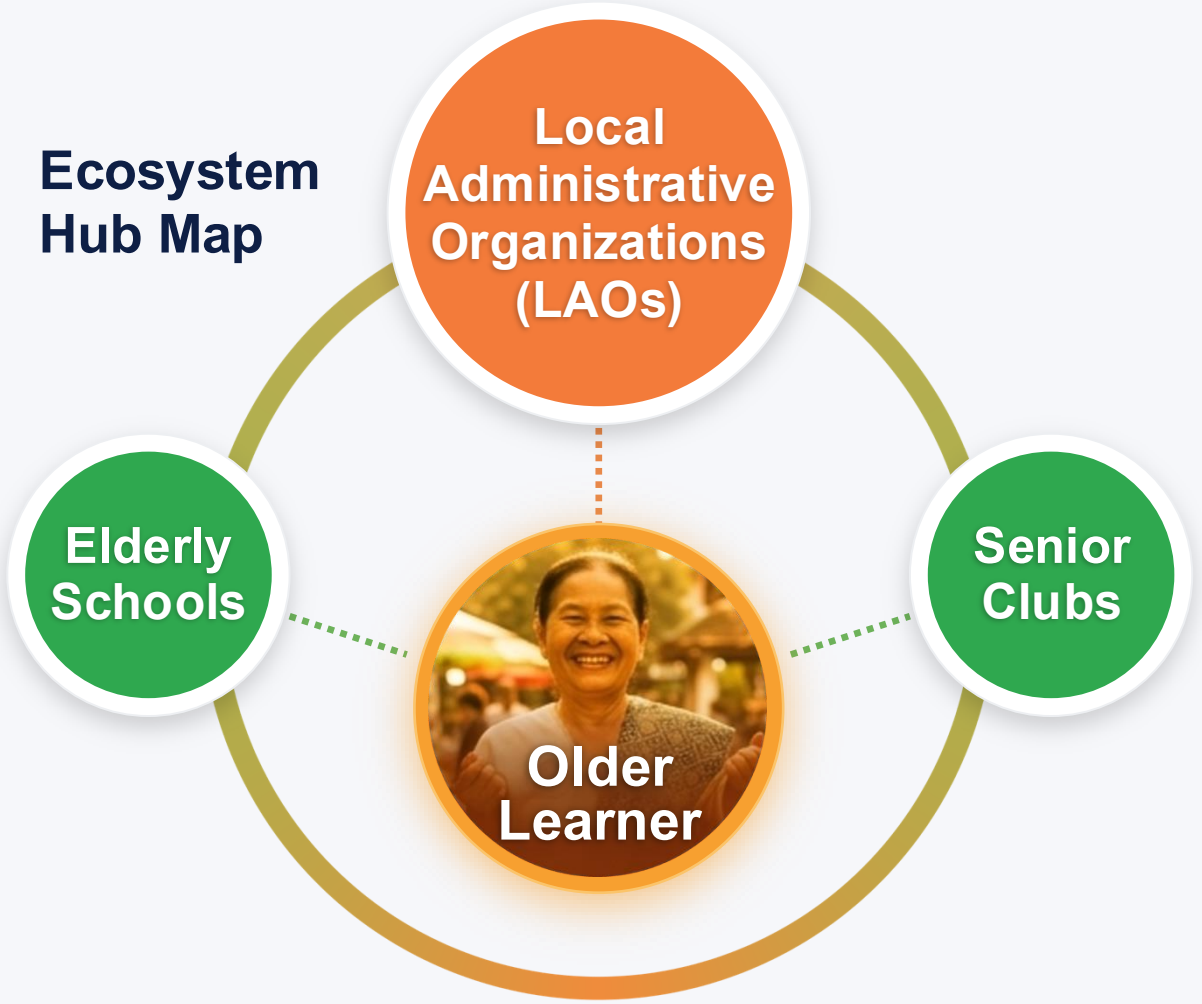
Design Decision 3: The Human Layer

1,150+

Certified MEDEE Trainers

ADVOCATE Program:

Equip community agents and local executives to lead locally.



We didn’t build new institutions; we trained the ones older adults already trust.











Scale & Reach: Five Years of Growth



39,400 Learners (including 25,566 older persons)

1,150+ Certified trainers Across communities

All 77 Provinces reached

11.88 SROI (Social Return on Investment)

70+ Institutional partners

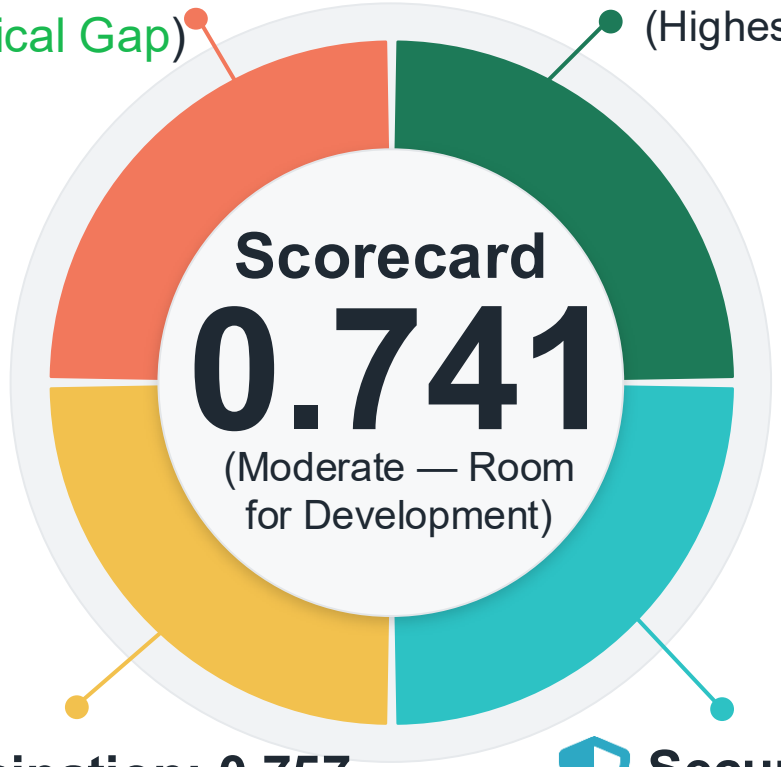




Active Ageing Index (AAI) *Baseline overview from 140,012 older persons*

Health: 0.649
(Lowest — Critical Gap)

Enabling Environment: 0.796
(Highest Strength)



Participation: 0.757
(Moderate)

Security: 0.758
(Nearing High)





Where are we falling behind?
(Lowest average scores)

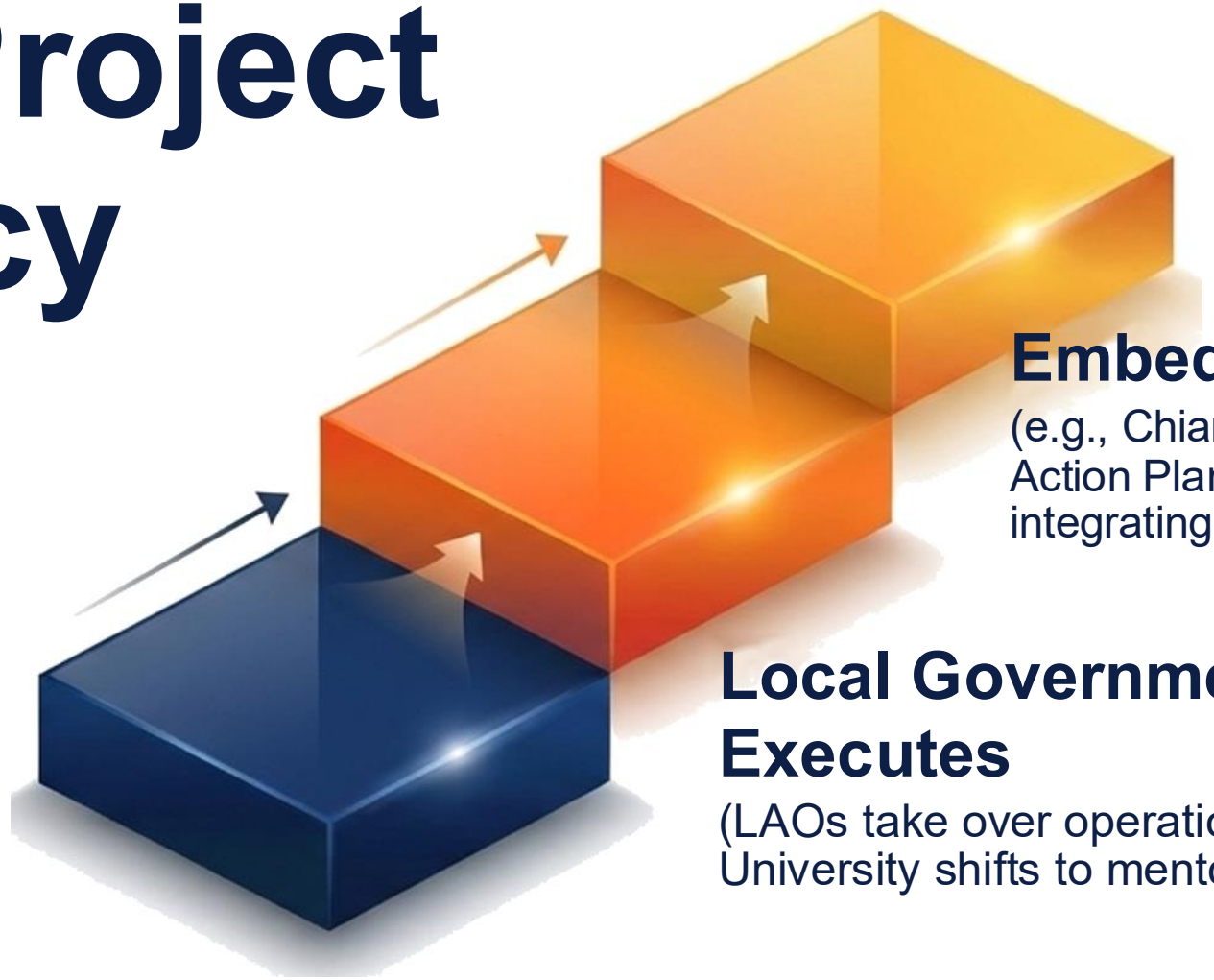
Physical Inactivity
(Scores: 0.40 - 0.65)
- Lack of continuous light exercise
- Lack of moderate and heavy physical activities

Digital & Information Disconnect
(Scores: 0.66 - 0.69)
- Low internet usage & access
- Low engagement for learning

Social Isolation
(Scores: 0.59 - 0.70)
- Low participation in clubs/groups
- Lack of community volunteer work
- Self-health assessment is also critically low

The main barrier is not access to public services;
it is daily behavior, physical activity, and digital disconnect

From Project to Policy



University Leads
(Develops baseline data, curriculum, and trainer systems).

Local Government Executes
(LAOs take over operations; University shifts to mentor/QA role)

Embedded in Policy
(e.g., Chiang Mai Provincial Elderly Action Plan, successfully integrating 22 separate agencies)

Customizable model ensures no community starts from zero, matching each location to its community readiness

Policy Implications

Fund the human layer: Dedicate budget to community trainer networks, not just digital platforms.

Use trusted institutions: Deliver through elderly schools, senior clubs, and local governments.

Repurpose universities: Utilize them for research, credentialing, and quality assurance, not for one-off training.

Build on existing apps: Do not build new systems. Piggyback on daily habits.



CMU CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY LIFELONG EDUCATION