



IDEMS International Annual Report 2022

1 January 2022 - 31 December 2022

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Directors' Forward

2022 was a breakthrough but difficult year for IDEMS. Our growth continued as we transitioned into a new phase with an expanding team. We started the year with a recruitment process for a Social Impact Enabler. This was a seminal moment as it cemented new skillsets within the IDEMS team. The team expanded substantially through the course of the year, but we also experienced real challenges with cash flow a constant struggle, health issues within the team and some contracts falling through at the last minute.

2022 saw the IDEMS team blossom, with a diversification of skillsets entering the team. By the full team meeting in November, the team had almost doubled within a year. The meeting identified the importance of the wider team engaging more deeply with the company principles so that decision making could become more distributed without losing coherence. The importance of bringing everyone together for face to face interactions given the remote nature of our work was highlighted by the fact that people came out of the meeting with a heightened appreciation of each other's strengths and a recognition of the complementarity of skills people bring to the team.

The vision behind IDEMS set out an aggressive growth agenda for a social organisation. Now at the end of our fifth year we continue to average over 60% growth while prioritising social impact. This growth in 2022 has come at the expense of our profitability in the sense that while our accounts are in profit due to R&D tax credits, we have invested substantially in transitioning towards more directed growth. We are proud that we have not had to compromise on our vision, quality or ethics in any way to achieve this continued growth. Our growth has so far come naturally, through word of mouth, where we regularly play a support role enabling others to achieve more impact in their respective areas of specialisation. We recognise that this means we are not able to control the directionality of our growth and we see our next big challenge being the shift towards playing a lead role alongside the continued support roles we play. As the tools we are building are proving their worth we recognise the importance of this shift so that we can accelerate their development towards scalable products.

The diversification of skills within the IDEMS team has enabled us as directors to rely on other team members to take over many roles. This has been essential due to Danny's ongoing health challenges but was our intention anyway as we look to spread out responsibilities within IDEMS.

Cashflow has been a continual problem through the course of 2022 and we are very grateful to individuals who have provided short term loans to IDEMS to enable us to navigate these challenges. David has spent much of 2022 embracing the idea of IDEMS seeking investment to enable us to continue our growth trajectory. This has been a slower process than we had hoped but at the end of 2022 we are delighted to have an IDEMS investment strategy in place which aligns to our principles, and our first investors secured, but we don't yet know how to tell our story as effectively as possible.

We enter 2023 stretched but in what we hope is a good position in our transition process. We are considering recruiting as there are clear opportunities particularly around our education work, but we need to consolidate first as without investment in case our cash flow will not enable us to seize them. Danny's long COVID is a serious concern, but we enter 2023 optimistic that we are well positioned for what the new year will bring.

Overview

About IDEMS

IDEMS International (IDEMS) is a not-for-profit company devoted to Innovations in Development, Education, and the Mathematical Sciences. Our mission is to work collaboratively with diverse partners to enable the evolution of innovations which can impact lives all over the world.

IDEMS International was founded in 2018, by mathematical scientists with long term experience working in education and development, looking to achieve wider impact beyond academia. We are passionate about projects related to development, education, and the mathematical sciences, and particularly work that can impact more than one of these areas. As a company we are motivated by our social mission, transparency in our accounting and guided by our principles.

IDEMS International is legally registered in the UK as a Community Interest Company. This structure enables us to be defined by the communities we serve while doing business commercially. Serving a community gives us a sense of purpose beyond our own self-interest as individuals, or even as a company.

IDEMS International supports and collaborates with INNODEMS, which was established by our partners in Kenya in 2019. INNODEMS follows a similar business model to IDEMS International as a route to creating sustainable opportunities for our Kenyan colleagues. We also support partners in West Africa, and GHAIDEMS is now registered in Ghana, we are excited to support it as it starts its activities in 2023.

Our Team

Our team exploded this year as we recruited an exciting and diverse set of exceptional individuals. Alongside recruiting into existing IDEMS role types, new hires include a social impact enabler, a social investment lead, an anthropologist, an asylum seeker (with the right to work and a PhD in metrology), and an African based mathematics educator. With our strong core of mathematical scientists and software developers the IDEMS team now feels ready for a transition towards more direct social impact alongside our existing support role.

Looking forward, we recognise the need to recruit into our technical team to enable us to take the open software products to the point where they are ready to be released at scale. However, we are holding back on this until we can bring in the investment which will enable us to continue growing without continual cash flow challenges.

Major activities

2022 was really defined by IDEMS' role as the innovation lead in the Global Parenting Initiative, led by the University of Oxford. This is our largest contract to date and over the next three years it combines our PLH (Parenting for Lifelong Health) app and chatbot work as part of an ambitious plan to build interventions that

support caregivers and children at scale in low-resource environments. This project is exciting in many ways but not least because INNODEMS has a central role enabling it to develop a growing ambitious young team.

Open source software development remains at the centre of much of our work and our activities have stabilised into four major areas of impact, namely social services, agroecology, climate and education. The last few months of 2022 have seen the education stream take shape with an education lead in place and specific efforts to grow our opportunities in this area.

We continued our commitment to community work, with travel opening up the potential to reconnect with partners on the ground across Africa again. The impact of the challenges faced through the COVID years are very visible with relationships needing to be rebuilt and needs more urgent than ever. In the African mathematics education space, we supported activities at every level from pre-primary through to PhD, including enabling the development of an Early Family Math app, co-creating a Maths ambassador programme, scaling up formative assessment in undergraduate mathematics and training PhD students in data science in data enabled problem solving.

Finances

IDEMS International ended year five with a small surplus after R&D tax rebate for the fifth consecutive year. Our turnover increased almost 50% to £950,000 with a surplus of over £25,000 after impact investments. Our full accounts are provided for transparency.

We used loans and investment to support cash flow, including a coronavirus 'Bounce Back' loan, short term personal loans and our first long term investment bonds. We are really pleased with our investment strategy which we believe if executed well could support not only our current continued growth but also serve our future needs.

We expanded our core team substantially leading to a doubling of our staff costs. Our subcontractor costs remained constant as we increased the proportion of work done by our core team. Travel costs increased to pre-pandemic levels with our team travelling for meetings, training and to interact with our African counterparts.

Cash in hand remains high as we are continuing to hold multi-year grant funds in a dedicated account. This is lower than before as the unspent funds due to Covid disruptions have now been spent.

We continued to invest in education activities, largely in Africa, the end of 2022 has seen a notable increase in this effort as we try to increase the impact of this work and look towards work in this area

Reflection points

We now have an incredible team.

Our second full team meeting highlighted that IDEMS has successfully brought in diverse skills in a group of people who recognise and value both the skills they bring and how these are complemented by the skills of

others. In contrast to a year ago we no longer feel there are big gaps of skills in the team. A big challenge facing the team at the end of 2022 is the dependence on the directors for decision making, particularly with Danny's health challenges, implying that David availability is increasingly a bottleneck occasionally blocking progress. It was agreed that the desirable approach is to empower more of the team members to feel confident to act on behalf of IDEMS. However, current experience is that the directors are consistently adding value when consulted.

IDEMS Principles are powerful but challenging and we're not ready for a theory of change.

The team meeting highlighted the challenge facing team members when trying to step up into decision making positions. Our efforts at building a theory of change together failed and efforts shifted to deepening understanding of the IDEMS principles. With hindsight many of the team members were being introduced to the IDEMS principles for the first time and did not yet have the experience within IDEMS to appreciate how these principles translate into our work. Without this common foundation we were not ready as a team to co-create a theory of change. The teams' deeper interactions with the principles highlighted that they had not initially been understood as there was consistently a second layer of meaning and complexity beyond peoples first interpretation. However, this experience highlighted the importance of our principles to enable people to build their confidence in representing IDEMS, as the additional layers of complexity brought clarity to some of IDEMS decision making practices. The expectation is that as the team deepens its understanding of the principles the directors' input will be able to reduce naturally without losing coherence.

PLH growth has transformed IDEMS but left us vulnerable.

We recognise that the incredible transformation IDEMS has gone through this year has only been possible because of the Global Parenting Initiative and other PLH work which accounts for over 40% of our turnover. However, we had a few months' funding gap at the beginning of the year which took us to the brink of our cash flow, and we have struggled to recover. This work is everything we want to be doing, directly impactful while also enabling us to build reusable open software tailored to low-resource environments with a wide range of potential application areas. There have been a few setbacks, with changes required by a funder meaning that at the last minute we had to be removed from a second large PLH grant, and other smaller applications also stalling. Such setbacks are normal, without them we would be entering 2023 with a more aggressive growth agenda, but that would also have further increased our dependence on this single stream of work. These challenges reinforce our belief in our diversification strategy while highlighting that at our current size we remain vulnerable to the fates of a single project.

Good health should never be taken for granted.

Some IDEMS staff have had health issues in 2022, including Danny's ongoing health challenges which affected his responsibilities as a director, involvement in projects and ability to travel. During the year, Danny took a pause on his PHD studies, and removed himself from most administrative responsibilities in order to give more priority to his health. We were pleased at the end of the year with the way Danny was able to attend and interact in the end of year meeting and various activities in December. Other members of the team also had

health issues. This includes COVID hitting the team harder than it had in previous years as travel opened up interactions. We recognise our responsibility as an organisation to put ourselves in a position to be able to support people through these challenges and difficulties of doing so when we are stretched thin.

Looking ahead

We finish the year amazed with the team we have managed to put in place and optimistic about our transition to a more driven enterprise. We enter 2023 cautiously postponing our further recruitment plans while recognising that our team is stretched.

We have accepted the need for investment to resolve our cash flow issues and enable further growth. Our investment strategy is in place, and we now need to execute it to take our next steps. It is as far outside our comfort zone as we have ever been, but we now have a team in place which means this is not something we are doing alone.