



KASHFI AHMED

WE WILL OVERCOME, 2020

Kashfi is studying on the [International Masters in Adult Education for Social Change, an Erasmus programme](#) in which participants study at the University of Glasgow, Maynooth University and Tallinn University in Estonia. Kashfi came to Maynooth for the spring semester of 2020. Due to COVID travel restrictions, she ended up staying in Ireland over the summer. Kashfi had ideas that she wanted to put into action, so she looked online for opportunities and came across the Ideas Collective.

Kashfi's project, We Will Overcome, addresses gender-based marginalisation among girls and women from refugee and migrant communities across Ireland by matching them with volunteer mentors. Kashfi notes, *"I've witnessed that as a refugee or as a recent migrant, you tend to isolate yourself, because you're going through so much, you're processing so much, you may have trauma or pressure from your family and community and it's really good if you can be paired up with somebody who understands your experiences."* The gender-specific element is very important to Kashfi, as she feels that this is not adequately covered by existing migrant support structures.

Kashfi came into the Ideas Collective with a great deal of prior knowledge and experience. She had worked with marginalised girls and women in Malaysia and Scotland. What was new to Kashfi in the Ideas Collective was learning how to design and launch her own project: *"I've always been busy working for other organisations, but STAND gave me the opportunity to create something that's my own."* She found it hard to get her head around design thinking, noting that *"it was very challenging and rewarding at the same time, and ultimately allowed me to be really creative."* Kashfi also appreciated the sense of community and personal support offered within the Ideas Collective during the uncertain context of the global pandemic.

Kashfi's Ideas Collective experience culminated in the pitching session in front of the panel of judges; she recalls how *"it forced me to pull all the ideas together into a three minute window."* She won seed money, which has really helped her to get the project off the ground. And beyond the financial element, there is huge value in knowing that the judges believed in what she wanted to do. Kashfi is now back in Glasgow for the final segment of her Masters programme. She has brought We Will Overcome with her, and she is adapting it to fit Scottish contexts and target groups. She also hopes to develop a prototype so that the project can be rolled out in multiple countries.

As well as providing Kashfi with the opportunity to create a project close to her heart, the Ideas Collective has influenced her academic and professional plans. She says, *"My master's dissertation will be based on an autoethnography of my experience on designing and launching the mentorship program for We Will Overcome and will closely document my experience. After that, I am looking at PhD programmes which would focus on increasing diversity in teachers in Wales, or at Muslim women in Higher Education in the UK. I am open to possibilities where I could continue to address these issues on a policy level. The Ideas Collective experience has changed my academic and personal journey in major ways!"*



AISLING BYRNE NUW, 2015

2013 was formative year for Trinity student Aisling, who had always loved fashion. The Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh in April 2013 opened her eyes to the stark reality that lay behind the glamorous façade of fashion. A few months later, while she was volunteering in India with Suas, she witnessed first-hand the poor working conditions and the environmental degradation caused by the fashion industry. She began to realise that as a fast-fashion consumer, she was complicit in the system. She recalls, *"I was heartbroken because I didn't feel I could enjoy fashion without contributing to the problem, but I didn't feel that I had any power to do anything about it."*

Participating in the STAND Global Issues course in 2014 increased Aisling's understanding of development and sustainability, and encouraged her to connect global justice issues to her own life. Aisling felt that although ethical and sustainable issues can seem overwhelming, she was determined to do something to encourage people to change their attitudes and behaviours.

Aisling and her friend Ali realised that the seed of a solution might lie in the clothes-sharing that they already did amongst their friend group. In 2015, Aisling and Ali joined the Ideas Collective to develop their idea of a clothes-sharing network. Their aims were to reduce the amount of first-hand fashion that is bought, increase awareness of the negative impacts of the fast fashion industry, and connect like-minded people in their local communities.

The Ideas Collective provided practical support and encouragement from mentors and peers. The original swap-shop idea evolved into a website and then into app. [Nuw](#) is now a thriving business spanning Ireland and the UK. When the Covid-19 crisis struck, Nuw pivoted its offering to take advantage of the increased online element in the fashion business, and to capitalise on the lockdown trend of closet-clearing; this enabled the business not just to survive the pandemic but to rapidly grow. 1,600 pieces of clothing were shared on Nuw in January 2021. Nuw has ambitious plans for the future, including expansion into European and US markets.

Aisling's experience with the Ideas Collective in 2015 enabled her to get Nuw up and running, and set her on the pathway to further development. In 2016, Aisling was selected for the [TCD Tangent 'LaunchBox'](#) programme, which provides student entrepreneurs with financial support and access to networks of investors and mentors. She has driven on with the business in good times and in challenging times alike. Her innate belief in herself and in the principles behind Nuw means that that she has never given up: *"It's actually just about getting up every day and turning up regardless...that's why it keeps going."*

Aisling believes that the Ideas Collective gave her the confidence and tools that she needed to build a business that makes it fun and easy for people to live more sustainably. She states, *"Through Suas I have seen how the way we live affects people across the globe, and have since been determined to create systematic change which I hope will lead to better respect for both people and the environment around the world."*



MEAGHAN CARMODY NO SNOWFLAKE, 2015

Meaghan initially engaged with Suas through the STAND Global Issues course at NUIG in 2012. She was studying psychology at the time and had no particular prior interest in issues of global justice; she definitely would not have considered herself an activist! She was shy and almost didn't attend the first session because it was so out of her comfort zone. If she hadn't however, she could be on a very different life path at present. The course provided a safe space to reflect and discuss, vastly different from college lectures which rarely encouraged discussion. Meaghan's mind was opened to interconnected global issues she had never before even considered: gender inequality, health inequality, trade justice, the impact of colonialism and environmental sustainability.

Upon finishing her degree in 2014 and finding herself unemployed and at a crossroads, Meaghan immersed herself in the interests piqued by the Global Issues course. She watched tens of documentaries with social, political and environmental themes. She became particularly interested in the relationship between the beef-dairy industry and climate change, but she couldn't think of what actions she could take besides changing her dietary habits. She recalls, *"I wanted to do something, but I felt I had no outlet, no platform to spread what I'd learnt."* Then at a writing workshop run by Suas, she heard about the Ideas Collective and applied, although she did not have a specific action project in mind.

Through the guidance of the facilitators and her fellow participants, Meaghan's idea for a project evolved from a website to a podcast to an article series and eventually, to a documentary film. The Ideas Collective provided valuable structure for Meaghan's ambitions, incorporating timelines, feedback sessions, strategising and problem-solving. She was also inspired by watching the projects of her peers grow and flourish. Meaghan's final product, [No Snowflake](#), is a 28 minute documentary film investigating Ireland's conflicting policies on beef and dairy growth and climate change mitigation, an issue live to this day.

At a practical level, making the documentary opened up a network of people who feature in the film and who became very helpful in her career; these include prominent academics, journalists and politicians. Meaghan's experience in the Ideas Collective helped her to secure an internship at Friends of the Earth. She moved on to a full-time job at FoE, where she progressed from Activism Officer to Head of Movement-Building over an almost five year period. During that time, Meaghan regularly delivered the Environmental Sustainability workshop for STAND Global Issues, the very same course which sowed the seed of activism in her. Meaghan is now working as Global Citizenship Coordinator at Financial Justice Ireland, a small NGO whose mission is to bring about a just and sustainable financial system in order to help manifest a world free from poverty and inequality.

Reflecting on the longer-term impact of the Ideas Collective programme, Meaghan believes that it has helped her to situate her own beliefs and actions in a wider global justice context. She says, *"My participation in the Ideas Collective led me to connect individual dietary choices to climate justice, which further encouraged me to explore the attendant issues of injustice, such as gender inequality, environmental racism, colonialism, and extractive and exploitative economic systems. This orientation has been pivotal in terms of determining my career choices as well as how I engage in activism personally."*



LORRAINE LALLY I LEAD, 2020

Lorraine has a long-term commitment to tackling the barriers that hold women back. She was lucky to have grown up in a family that always encouraged her, and to have been taught by nuns who believed that *“an educated woman is unstoppable.”* As a barrister, she has succeeded in a very male-dominated profession. Yet she has seen so many women who are not able to reach their potential.

Lorraine heard of the Ideas Collective through an activist friend at NUIG, where Lorraine did her Masters in International Human Rights Law. Lorraine really liked the idea of a collective of activists, as she believes that you need the support of like-minded people if you want to make change happen. Lorraine’s project for the Ideas Collective focused on female inclusion and empowerment within the community. She called the project I lead, as she wanted to tell women, *“you are important, you should be seen, you should lead.”* Drawing on her legal background, Lorraine planned a peer mentoring scheme that would empower women to be self-advocates who are aware that they have rights, and know how to use the tools that are out there to deal with issues of discrimination. She also wanted to run a Transition Year programme that would help young people to develop skills in communication, conflict resolution and social inclusion.

Lorraine’s biggest learning in the Ideas Collective was in the area of programme design. In previous projects, she had tended to focus very much on outcomes and not on how the outcomes can be achieved. The Ideas Collective encouraged her think about how design choices could make her project more accessible, engaging and unique; for example, she was encouraged to develop a cartoon as part of her Transition Year module on conflict resolution. The Ideas Collective also provided valuable help in accessing funding, particularly in terms of honing funding applications to align them with aims of donors. This helped Lorraine to successfully access Department of Justice funding for her Transition Year module. She also has received funding from Galway and Roscommon County Councils for webinars on social inclusion.

An unexpected learning outcome relates to coping with the COVID-19 learning environment. Lorraine was impressed by how well the Ideas Collective adapted to the all-online format, and by the high level of engagement that was created and sustained despite the lack of face-to-face contact. This inspired her to aim for the same level of engagement in her TY modules, which now will have to be carried out online.

Overall, the Ideas Collective has given Lorraine energy and inspiration for more work on women’s empowerment. It has reaffirmed her belief that gender equality is at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it has demonstrated to her that we need to be very inclusive in our efforts to achieve it. We need more input from women from minority groups and women with disabilities. There is so much more to be done but she feels better equipped to create change. Lorraine says that the Ideas Collective *“increased my self-confidence and motivation to make the world a better place. I have always been aware that I had a voice, but I am more confident now in my actions and plans.”*



BRIAN MALLEN BRIDGE, 2019

Throughout his college career at DCU, Brian was heavily involved with Suas/STAND initiatives, including coordinating the STAND Global Issues course, chairing the college Suas Society, and volunteering in India in 2017. Brian says that when he went to India with Suas his life was “flipped upside down” by what he saw and experienced. Shortly after returning from India, he went to work in Los Angeles and felt overwhelmed by the contrast between the extreme poverty of Kolkata and the extreme wealth of LA, and also was disturbed by widespread homelessness within the affluent city of LA. Brian recalls, “*You think so much about injustices, but then you think, what can I do?*”

Brian returned to Ireland to do a Masters in International Relations. Just as he was completing his studies in 2019, he noticed that the Development Coordinator from his India Volunteering group was active in the Ideas Collective. So he found out more about the Ideas Collective and was intrigued. He hadn’t imagined himself in an entrepreneurial role but he thought, why not take a chance and try it?

Brian came into the Ideas Collective with the idea of harnessing Irish community spirit and making it work towards solving social problems. When the cohort of participants shared their initial concepts, it became clear that a few of them had similar ideas. Brian joined forces with two peers to form the BRIDGE project, which aimed to build connections and collaborations across the charity sector.

The BRIDGE group dispersed when the Ideas Collective programme drew to a close, but Brian has further developed the project on his own. He ran two on-campus events, which matched students interested in volunteering with local charities who were looking for help. In April 2020, Brian was accepted into UCC’s [IGNITE](#) programme, a 12 month full-time incubator programme that enables recent graduates to turn innovative ideas into sustainable, scalable businesses with commercial or social impact. Through IGNITE, Brian has re-oriented BRIDGE to focus on materialising formal Corporate Social Responsibility programmes for large organisations, as well as offering services to the charity sector.

Reflecting on his experience in the Ideas Collective, Brian believes that it fundamentally changed his perspective and understanding of how change and social value can be created through businesses, charities and voluntary organisations in Ireland and globally. As well as the practical skills that he learned, he benefitted from the energy generated by an incredible and unique group of people who were always willing to invest their time and energy into the ideas of others.

At a personal level, Brian comments that “*regardless of the outcome of my current business over the next number of years, I have become very proactive in terms of speaking up and engaging with key social issues in whatever ways I can conceptualise, whether individually or in a team.*” The Ideas Collective has shown him that a lot of people have ideas, but to make change, you need to fight through the fear and take action.



SORCHA MALLEN

ROOTED RESOLUTIONS, 2020

Sorcha came into the Ideas Collective with a clear idea of what she wanted to accomplish. Drawing on learning from her Masters in Mediation and Conflict Intervention, and inspired by her yoga practice, Sorcha knew that she wanted to create a wellness and conflict resolution service for young people. Sorcha's cousin had participated in the Ideas Collective in 2019. He was very enthusiastic about the programme and encouraged her to apply so that she could transform her concept into a functioning project.

From the outset, Sorcha was confident about the content of her project, [Rooted Resolutions](#). At the heart of Rooted Resolutions is Sorcha's understanding of conflict as very much grounded in individual experience, and her belief that we need to develop greater self-awareness to build better relationships. Her core values resonate with the global justice perspective of STAND; for example, the wellness element of Rooted Resolutions is based on [Capacitar](#), an inter-cultural programme that aims to "heal ourselves and heal our world".

The Ideas Collective provided Sorcha with the practical tools and skills needed to run a successful project. She was able to learn from experts about project design and implementation. Peer learning was important too; the group brainstorming sessions created a community that motivated and supported her as her ideas evolved. Setting small deadlines and goals within the group formed an accountability structure that really helped her to keep things on course.

Sorcha recalls, "I had always wanted to start creating and building my project, but I know that fear and a lack of confidence held me back. Joining the Ideas Collective didn't put an immediate end to any of that, but it gave me a hugely important support network and framework to guide me through the process. As a result, I can now deliver a service that aims to give young people a better sense of support, confidence and self-compassion in their own lives."

Receiving seed funding was a huge boost. Financially, it has enabled her to set up her website and to participate in a business catalyst course. Furthermore, the seed funding was a huge boost to Sorcha's confidence. She recalls, "It was somebody saying, we see what you are trying to do, we support it and we're behind it." The showcase event was also very valuable in that it opened up networks that she will continue to draw on as Rooted Resolutions grows.

Reflecting on her Ideas Collective experience, Sorcha comments: "The project has allowed me to take the first steps into building the career I really want. It's pushed me to do this in my first year of leaving college and I really think that without having the Ideas Collective, it still would have been a thought in the back of my mind. It's given me that space and support to build something I am really passionate about."



CRÍOMHTHANN MORRISON JAM JAR, 2019

Críomhthann's first involvement with Suas/STAND was through writing for STAND News. His experience on STAND News made him think more about the ways that we talk about global issues and what are the best ways to engage audiences. This led Críomhthann to the Ideas Collective. Críomhthann and a friend came to the Ideas Collective with the idea of setting up a platform that used videos and written articles to raise awareness of social issues and to promote local activism. They wanted to take a storytelling approach, as they believed that stories reveal how our lives are entwined with the problems people face across the globe, and that any one individual is enough to make an impact. Críomhthann and his friend joined forces with three other participants with similar ideas. Their group project, Jam Jar, aimed to create a media platform for discussing global issues in a human-centred way.

Críomhthann felt that doing a group project highlighted for all five participants how different people possess different skills and capacities to bring about social change. However, there were challenges around sustaining the group project, especially when the Ideas Collective programme drew to a close and the five members dispersed to their respective colleges and commitments. After completing the Ideas Collective, Críomhthann continued his learning journey by signing up for the STAND Global Issues course. This consolidated his knowledge base and also helped him to gain diverse, people-centred perspectives on critical global issues such as environment and health.

In 2020, Críomhthann joined [GOAL's Global Youth programme](#), working with a group of 30 young people from Ireland and from six countries in Africa to develop a creative Youth resource, [The Global Citizen's Journey](#). He is now working with some of his GOAL GYP co-participants on a social media platform, CoPerspectiv, which seeks to provide resources to empower people interested in activism, personal development, and sustainable living.

During his Masters of Public Policy, with a specialisation in Environmental Policy, Críomhthann undertook an internship with [TASC \(Think-tank for Action on Social Change\)](#), working in their [Just Transition Centre](#), which promotes a fair and equitable transition into a low carbon future. Críomhthann believes that as much decision-making as possible should take place at community level, and he is interested in how communities can be empowered to be part of identifying problems and solutions in as policy formation as well as lead the way in putting these solutions into practice. He is now at the initial stages of a video project about policy problems in Ireland.

Looking back at his experience in the Ideas Collective, Críomhthann notes the value of the practical project planning and management skills that he gained, particularly around *"what it really takes to get from idea to action, to move a project towards something that is self-sustaining."*

In addition to these practical tools, the Ideas Collective gave Críomhthann the confidence that he can make a difference. He says that the Ideas Collective *"helped me to prove to myself that I already have useful skills for social change, and the capacity to fill any gaps which come up either with my own learning or by bringing other people into a project."* He is hoping to build a career involving advocacy, social research and/or humanitarian action, and comments that *"STAND has contributed significantly to this path."*



AINE O'GORMAN

ALL IRELAND STUDENT ACTIVIST NETWORK, 2017

As a student at Trinity, Áine was a committed activist. She was chair of the Environmental Society and in 2016, she was very involved with [Fossil Free TCD](#), a student-led campaign that successfully pressured the college to divest from the fossil fuel industry. Their action sparked off similar campaigns in other colleges in Ireland, prompting Áine and her friends to think about the untapped potential of student activists working together across the country. Áine and her fellow activists often had relied on advice from UK campaigning networks. Why wasn't there a platform in Ireland for students to support each other in environmental and social justice campaigns? These thoughts led them to take the first steps in forming the All-Ireland Student Activist Network.

Looking to build some structure around their idea, Áine and three friends applied to the Ideas Collective. The programme was recommended to them by an acquaintance who had participated in the Ideas Collective in a previous year. Áine says that their ideas about the project's core purpose did not change very much during the Ideas Collective programme, but what did change was their approach to project development. The design thinking element was very useful. Áine remembers how refreshing it was to *"step back from all the action and enter a structured space to bounce ideas around together."*

Áine felt that the programme gave her tools to communicate about complex issues in creative, engaging and effective ways. She particularly enjoyed a day with [Creativity and Change](#). She recalls, *"It was very transformative in how it made us think about giving people the space and environment to play, which we really brought into the work that we were doing."* Áine has continued to use creative approaches to activism and currently is participating in a course with Creativity and Change to further develop her skills. The Ideas Collective helped Áine and her group to build a firm foundation for the All-Ireland Student Activist Network. The network served a range of purposes: It facilitated sharing of information and resources, it offered peer-to-peer training/skill sharing, and it hosted fun gatherings all around Ireland. The network ran very successfully for more than two years, but as the founding members moved on from college days and new leaders took over, the network lost momentum and now has only a minimal level of activity.

Áine believes that her experience in the Ideas Collective built her confidence and strengthened her ability to work collaboratively to pursue common goals. It also shaped her professional journey. Previously, she had assumed that she would have to move to the UK if she wanted a career in activism, but the Ideas Collective opened her eyes to all the innovative activism going on in Ireland. Upon graduating in 2019, Áine went straight into a job at [Friends of the Earth Ireland](#). She is now Activism Coordinator at Friends of the Earth, as well as serving as Mobilisation Coordinator for the [Stop Climate Chaos](#) coalition. She describes her current activism as operating at two levels; at one level, she aims to engage the middle-ground public with climate change issues, whilst at a deeper level, she advocates for system change.



JOANNA O'MALLEY PRESERVE IRELAND, 2019

When Joanna was an undergraduate at UCD, she had an incredibly busy life of studying full time, running college societies, and working. The year after she graduated, she had more time to reflect on what directions she wanted to take in life. She was doing some communications work with UCD Societies, and also doing an internship with Proudly Made in Africa, a non-profit organisation that promotes ethical trading of African goods. One day, Joanna had a fleeting “shower thought” about starting a project that would create a community for people to easily engage with the environmental issues that we face in Ireland. Joanna had come across STAND via her work at Proudly Made in Africa, and she knew some people who had been involved with the Ideas Collective. So she found out more and successfully applied to the programme.

Joanna’s project, [Preserve Ireland](#), is founded on a simple concept: If you introduce people to environmentalism in an inclusive way that doesn’t overburden them with depressing facts, but instead makes them feel that they can contribute in a positive and enjoyable way, then you’ve got them “in the door” and on the way to deeper engagement. By the time the Ideas Collective programme started, Joanna had a well-formed project plan. What she really needed from the Ideas Collective was validation and permission to get stuck in. She comments, *“Without the group of people being really encouraging and telling me to go for it, I could still be in my room writing notes about the project.”* Joanna set down some achievable steps and made sure that she carried them out. Despite torrential rain on the evening of her very first activity—a river clean-up—the project gained traction easily. Events held over the summer included an informal talk in a pub about how to make your garden more eco-friendly, and a beach clean followed by a sea-swim.

At the showcase event at the end of the programme, the judges responded very positively to Joanna’s pitch and she won seed funding. Preserve had a full slate of activities planned for 2020, including a ‘Carbon Neutral Lent’ series, but unfortunately COVID-19 has put all plans on pause. Joanna says that they are lucky in that they can keep the project visible on social media at no cost until restrictions are eased.

Beyond the immediate impact of getting Preserve up and running, the Ideas Collective has shaped Joanna’s academic and career choices. In the Ideas Collective, she learned for the first time about the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This knowledge helped her to get an internship at the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) which in turn helped her to get her current job as Education Officer with Global Action Plan, coming full circle and now teaching others about the SDGs. Joanna also has taken on a Masters in DCU on Climate Change: Policy, Media and Society. This is a really good fit for Joanna’s interest in the NGO sector and in Communications.

Reflecting on her experience, Joanna states, *“The Ideas Collective was an incredibly important stepping stone on my personal journey and I’m incredibly grateful!”*