The Re-imagining Project

A new vision for the Suas Volunteer Programme

Working Group Presentation

September 2022

suas

Thrive School.

Overview

In March 2020 Suas's annual Volunteer Programme was paused due to the outbreak of Covid 19. The pause led to an opportunity to explore the re-invention of the programme, 20 years on from its initiation.

From February - May 2022, a working group was formed to engage in a Design Thinking process- a design structure for the project. The process included 'insight generation' through stakeholder mapping, conversations and interviews, a survey, problem mapping, ideation, which led onto prototype development. All of this was supported through a series of 7 online workshops with the working group, alongside asynchronous collaboration.

The following outlines the results of that process and presents two main programme ideas - prototypes- which have emerged, alongside some alternative ideas which could be included in part, or in full.

This report concludes with next steps to develop either one or more of the programme ideas.

Main Programme Prototypes Ideas:

Incorporating the above elements, the two main prototypes are:

- Partnership with Global South university/ universities- exchange programme
- Connecting students from different backgrounds on Irish Campuses (with a potential additional overseas element)
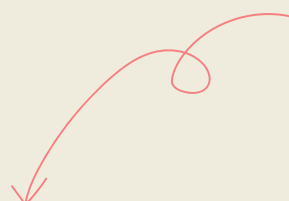
Alternative prototypes

The following alternative prototypes were also developed for future consideration:
- Student teachers exchange programme
- Recent graduates trainee programme
- GCE Educator programme
- Placement based programme for university students/ final year project programme
- Modular Based Programming

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Context

Until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 Suas's annual eight-month International Volunteer programme introduced students to a range of global justice issues and facilitated the experience of some of these issues first hand through teaching placements in partner NGOs in Zambia, Kenya, and India. The programme has been paused ever since the start of 2020 due the COVID-19 pandemic.

In November 2021, the Suas board decided that while the programme remains paused during 2022 we want to take the opportunity to explore the re-invention of a solidarity and justice focused international programme. This decision was not only made as a reaction to the travel restrictions but also as a reaction to the big shifts happening in the discourse around best practice in international volunteering, including the need to 'decolonise', and to re-explore the needs of a new generation that might have different needs and interests than the generation 20 years ago when the programme first started.

Building on this background Suas recruited a working group with 8-10 members that were guided through a design thinking process with 7 workshops by consultant Clare Mulvany, from Thrive school. Clare is a facilitator and lecturer in creativity and design thinking in UCD Innovation Academy, Trinity College and TUDublin, and is the founder of Thrive School, hosting innovative learning experiences. She was also a founding member of Suas and lead the Suas Volunteer programme from 2003-2006.

This process happened between February and May 2022 and with this document we are presenting the findings.

The Working Group

From Suas: Nina Sachau, Caitriona Rogerson, Rebecca Gant.
Members: Criomhthann Morrison (previous Stand participant), Paul Keating (TUS), Claire Faithorn (previous Suas Volunteer Programme Manager and Ideas Collective), Nedson Ng'oma (INAR)
Attended portion of meetings: Killian Stokes, Aishah Aorade, Fadzai Makokve, Maximiliana Eligi Mtenga.

The Design Thinking Process

The process was designed to help the working group explore the needs (and assumptions) for an international solidarity-based programme that is based on Global Citizenship Education, contributes to Suas overall vision and mission and speaks to our main audiences (third level students and recent graduates). As a result of the process we were seeking to find potential niches for Suas and build the general framework and idea for such a programme that is based on current best practice in the sector. These ideas would be presented as 2 or 3 prototypes to our board, with a view to getting the mandate to further developing one of the chosen options.

The Parameters

The parameters of the design thinking process, the non-negotiables within which any new programme should be situated in, were set out as:

- **Rooting the programme in Global Citizenship Education & our vision for shaping a more equal, sustainable and fair world.** The programme should include learning and action.

- **Connecting third-level students in Ireland with their peers in one (or more) countries in the Global South:** The programme should include equal peer learning and solidarity action, between third-level students in Ireland and one or more countries in the Global South.

- **Building on the Suas mission, & making sense as part of the STAND programme logic:** It can include drawing on the huge Suas alumni network and build on the respect for Suas as a provider of international volunteer programmes.

- **Ensuring this programme could be funded:** The programme has to be either attractive for corporate donors, institutional donors, and/or participants need to be willing to pay or fundraise for it. There could also be a partner for the programme that makes it possible.

- **Carbon footprint mitigation.** If travel is involved in such a programme we would consider how could we mitigate the environmental impact.
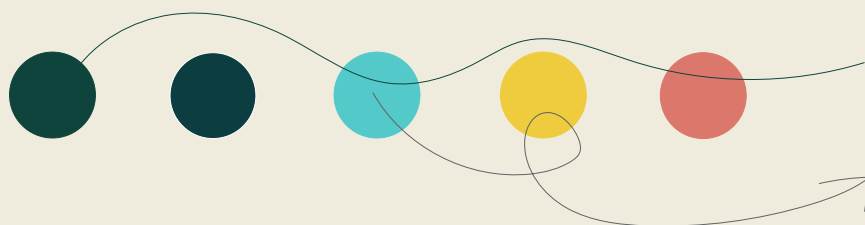
It was also important to note that this new programme would not HAVE to include Suas previous partners in India, Zambia and Kenya, but could if that was deemed appropriate. This previous partnership should not limit the new programme development. As part of the development we were also exploring potential for other partners to increase our impact. These partners could be in Ireland and in a country of the Global South. They could include other NGOS, Universities, activist-networks, Unions, etc. We are also suggesting how to take responsibility for potentially exiting those current partnerships.
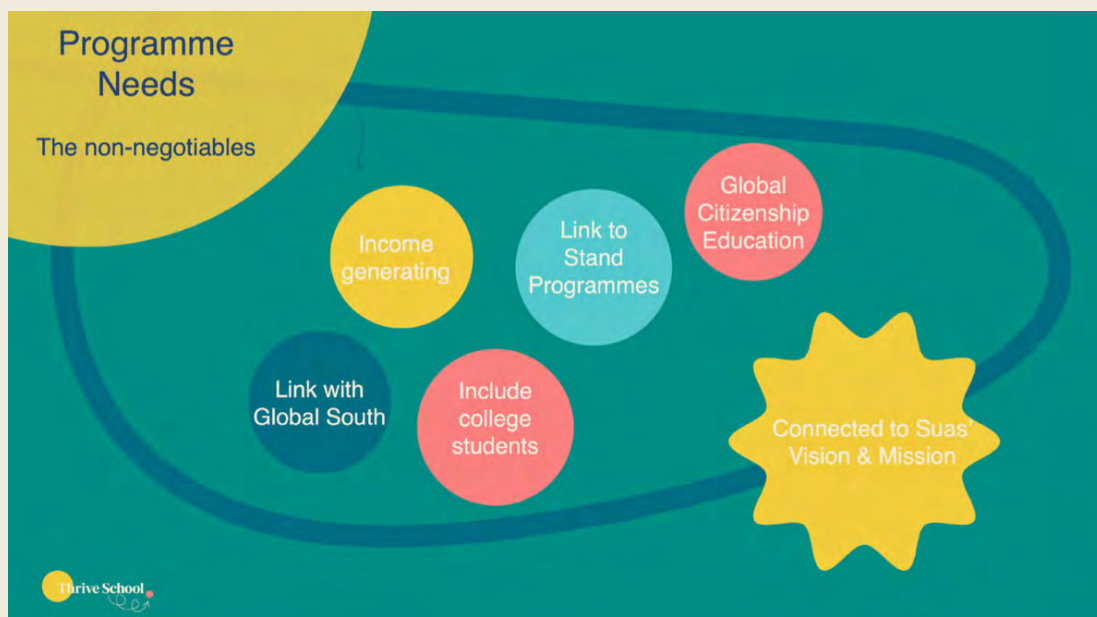
Our Process
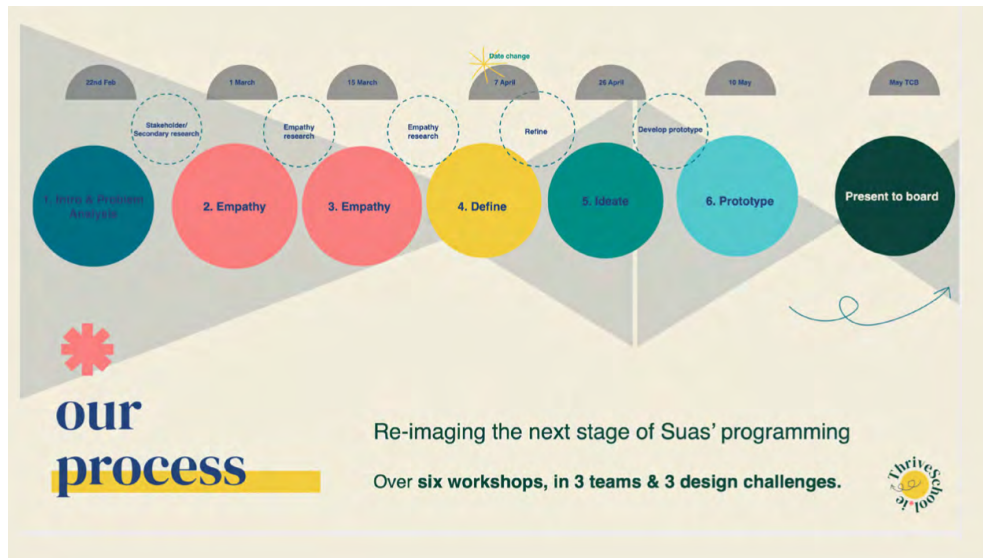
Human Centered Design thinking is a process to create innovative products, services or businesses based on human need, behaviour and desire. With its origins in the product design world, it has since been more widely used and adapted to social sector contexts, to provide a methodology for understanding trends, challenges, context and needs. It involves distinct phases of research and listening to stakeholders. From 'empathy' phase, patterns of 'insights' and themes are explored, which then lead to idea generation, from which prototypes are developed and later tested.
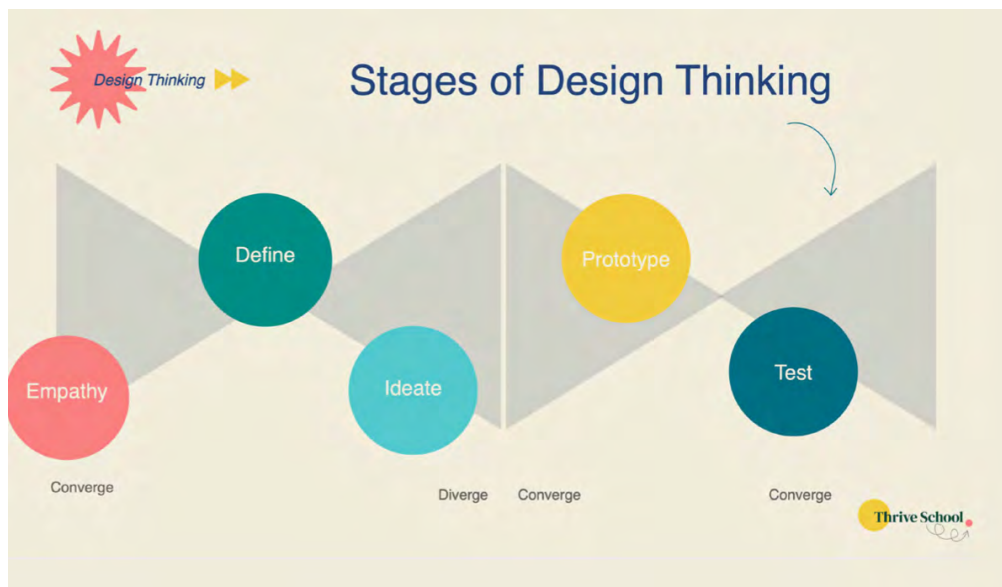
Empathy Phase

The empathy phase is about understanding more fully the 'problem' the programme or interventions are trying to address. It included an analysis or mapping of the stakeholders, and the current social, political and environmental context which might influence the design of the programme. The Empathy phase took place over an 8 week period. From the interviews, conversations, stakeholder analysis, problem mapping and survey, a pattern of insights and themes then emerged. Below are some of the findings from this phase of the process.

Stakeholder Mapping

As part of the empathy phase the working group members conducted at least 26 interviews with relevant **stakeholders**, including:

- Current students from Ireland and overseas, including Ireland Fellows, recent graduates and former VP participants
- Donors (e.g. Irish Aid)
- Relevant Networks, such as Comhlamh, the international Volunteering Network Forum
- Lecturers and staff across Ireland
- Other strategic partners to Irish Aid
- Organisations that offer similar programmes, including two outside of Ireland (USA and South Africa)
- Previous partners in Zambia and India

Survey

Based on initial interviews, a survey was designed and conducted to help fill in some of our gaps in understanding. It was designed to reach out to students networks and alumni, and was distributed through Stand networks and Suas social channels. Alongside gathering some demographic details, some of the main questions to explore needs were:

- *When you think about the next few years, what worries or pains you most about your own life?*
- *When you think about the next few years, what excites you and/or gives you hope about your own life?*
- *What kind of information, skills or activities/experiences do you need in order to engage more or better with local/global issues?*
- *What kind of information, skills or activities/experiences do you need in order to engage more or better with your personal worries, pains and hopes?*

You can view a more detailed breakdown of the survey results on Mural [here](#) **. Please enter as a visitor.**

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Context & Concerns emerging from Empathy Phase

The following context and concerns emerged from the Empathy Phase and survey and proved to be helpful when coming up with prototype ideas.

When reflecting on the next few years, almost every survey respondent mentioned concern for the climate crisis, with concerns for financial instability, the housing crisis, and lack of career prospects also shared widely. Less frequent but notable concerns also include political tensions and violence generally, and the invasion of Ukraine in particular, and the risks to respondents' families broadly.

On the other hand, respondents are more varied in what they are excited or hopeful for over the next few years, some looking to start families, to travel or relocate internationally, and to train and learn more. Some also hope to see increased social change and technological advancements (in sustainability or other areas of life).

Networking is a stand-out theme throughout what respondents are looking for in a Suas programme, as well as related areas and experiences such as community-building, co-creation of projects, student-exchange, and joint-learning. The apparent desire for career development and personal/leadership skills is also noteworthy, with several respondents suggesting life/career coaching and resilience-building.

It is especially important to note the reception to a suggested international experiential learning opportunity with individuals and/or organisations in the Global South. While positively received, several respondents expressed concern over 'white saviorism' and unequal reciprocity for involved/impacted communities in the Global South in such programmes. This aligns with feedback received by some Working Group members hosting direct interviews with stakeholders in the area, as well as the developments in the discourse of the International Development sector.

The survey results suggest that the impacts of the global pandemic are still widely felt, with students and recent graduates in Ireland facing increasing challenges over cost of living, housing, and career development. Further, there is prevailing concern over the climate crisis and its continued and worsening impacts on people's lives going into the future. All these factors together may explain the desire for coaching support and network- and community-building within the upcoming Suas programme for participants to feel more equipped to deal with increasing global and local changes in their work and personal lives, and the intersections of the two.

Themes Identified in Empathy Phase

Notes from the conversations/ interviews during the empathy phase were analysed, alongside the survey results. Where there was a cluster of similar or related points, this was deemed to be an emerging theme. The following were the themes identified.

- **A re-imagining of the Volunteer Programme is essential.** The old model of the volunteer programme was deemed no longer fit for purpose.
- **Establishing strong local and global links.** This is related to a re-balancing of power dynamics for partners and participants.
- **Student exchange / connection between students**. This was seen as a core element to the learning and network building aspects of the programme
- **Diversity and Inclusion, and accessibility for all.**
- **Rebalancing of power dynamics.** This is linked to a wider conversation about 'decolonising' the development sector, including the structure and ethos of volunteer programmes.
- **Mental health/ personal wellbeing.** Access and the need for therapy was consistently mentioned in the survey.
- **Career advice.** Many students felt they had inadequate career prospects, or were unsure of where to start, including careers in the development sector.
- **Mentoring/ coaching.** Both of these were seen as valuable additions to the supports students need and would enhance any programme.
- **Leadership coaching**. To include team skills, and life skills.
- **Co-created/Mutual exchange/ reciprocity.**
- **Learning content.** To include: climate issues, life planning, careers, global citizen issues, campaigning.
- **Networking**. This includes community outreach, peer to peer networking, and career building.
- **Project output.** The creation of a tangible outcome for the programme. This could be an exhibition/ event/ campaign.
- **Certificate of completion.** Validation of the programme was seen as important, and something that could be recognised on a CV.

Ideation Phase

From these themes, alongside a series of 'problem' statements', and 'insights' the working group, over two sessions, started to generate ideas for programmes. Each programme included the 'non-negotiables', as below. In total 7 prototypes ideas were generated, which were shortlisted to two.

The following were deemed important to integrate into any version of the programme Suas decides to develop next:

- Global Citizenship education components (knowledge, skills, attitudes)
- Networking
- Life/career skills training/ 21st Century Skills
- Endorsement by employers/ universities
- Certificate of completion - ideally endorsed by more than one organisation/ institution
- Tangible output (like an exhibit/ campaign/ some sort of programme)
- Mentoring/Coaching, for example by alumni and university staff: This could include CPD (continuous professional development) for academic staff/ alumni (GCE educator training) to become Suas mentors to be able to support participants' development of skills for leadership, confidence, resilience, and career development. At the same time this would increase our networks of academic staff 'champions' across universities and build capacities of academic staff to embed GCE in their own course content. This could be a distinct sub-programme of the chosen prototypes
- Should have a particular focus on climate
- There could potentially be a language learning element
- The programme needs to focus on diversity and inclusion and fees need to be kept at minimum
- Suas could offer facilitation of internships/employment opportunities with Suas contacts for participants
- Links with Suas/STAND alumni.

Prototyping Phase

Based on the ideation phase, a number of initial prototypes of potential programmes were proposed. These were then shortlisted to two core prototypes, based on the themes and patterns in the insights.

Incorporating the above elements, the two main prototypes are:

- Partnership with Global South university/ universities- exchange programme
- Connecting students from different backgrounds on Irish Campuses (with a potential additional overseas element)

The reason the two prototypes presented were chosen as a recommendation to the board is that they seemed like the 'best fit' in terms of contributing to Suas's current purpose. They would be clearly linked with the STAND programme, offer GCE, invite all students to participate (and not just student teachers or students that are interested in working in development/humanitarian organisations, for example).

Alternative prototypes developed for future consideration:

- Student teachers exchange programme
- Recent graduates trainee programme
- GCE Educator programme
- Placement based programme for university students/ final year project programme
- Modular Based Programming

Prototype One: Partnership Between Universities for Cross-Campus Exchange

The base for this programme is a partnership between:

1 or more universities in Ireland, PLUS
1 or more universities in Global South countries (e.g. India, Kenya, Zambia), AND/OR
1 or more universities in other European countries.

Participants include a selection of students from each partner university.

Through a 7/8-month hybrid GCE training programme with online and residential components, participants benefit from their peers' diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and disciplines of study while
• exploring global justice issues of the 21st century,
• developing practical skills for solidarity, leadership, confidence, resilience, and
• developing friendships and networks for increased professional opportunities.
Over the programme, participants develop and implement an exhibition/campaign/other for a selected partner's campus/community close to one of the partners.

Potential Timeline:

January: First Residential in one participating country. Covers knowledge building, group-building, and the start of designing ideas for the exhibition/campaign/other to implement in a second participating country.

January - May: Online training to develop skills and the development of exhibitions or campaigns.

June/July/August: Second Residential in the second participating country. Final preparation/implementing/showcasing the exhibition/campaign/other as one group.

(Alternative option is to choose a 'third location' outside of most/all participants' countries to convene. This can help minimise especially long-distance travelling for only some and instead make sure everyone travels at least some distance to 'meet halfway'.)

Prototype One: SWOT

Strenghts	Weaknesses
• Sits neatly within STAND programme logic • Intercultural/ experiential learning by its international nature • Not too concentrated time commitment - extended over the course of months (eg not intense 8 months, more singular week stints) • Reciprocal - based on solidarity, tackle power imbalance - It walks the talk • People are likely to be incentivised to stay until the end of the programme due to the travel element • Taps into the appeal of international travel and immersive learning, both of which are hard to replicate online • Huge potential for building strong global network of Irish, European & Global South future leaders / advocates	• Requirement of significant time commitment for participants • Needs more funding than an Ireland-based program - and would that mean inclusion problems? • Longer lead in time required in order to develop Global South relationships • Will require multiple sources of funding, not just institutional funding. It will most likely need private contributions & fundraising. EU funding won't pay for travel for participants of the Global South or travel into a country in the Global South. It might however pay for a group of students in Ireland (including Ireland fellows who are residents) to go to another EU country • Dependency on reliable champions to get the programme established in universities
Opportunities	**Risks/ Concerns/ Threats**
• Great opportunity to build a deep relationship with Irish / EU / Global South universities and like-minded partner organisations - opens up more ideas • Leadership and Career Development skills • Real life Global Citizenship Education • Potential for EU funding if we partner with a third country - Erasmus+ • Potential for placement to follow the exchange (maybe with the partners of Suas)	• Primarily through English Language - challenge with communication across participants and partner organisations • Funding insecurity: Requirement of including EU HEIs, complexity of EU funding, costs for Suas, Partner Universities, and/or Participants • Clashing exam/deadline periods between partner universities (timelines in general). • Can it meet the needs and expectations of all partners / Funders / participants / stakeholders? Answerable to so many stakeholders. • Need to consider environmental impacts. • COVID-19 or future pandemic • High insurance costs - potentially even higher now 'post' Covid • Travel risks and duty of care for participants and communities people are interacting with. • For current Suas overseas partners- risk losing funding, support and partnership from Suas

Prototype Two: Connecting Students on Irish Campuses

Through a 8-month hybrid GCE training programme (November to June/July) with online and residential components, a diverse group of participants that study across Irish campuses benefit from their peers' diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and disciplines of study while:

- exploring global justice issues of the 21st century,
- developing practical skills for solidarity, leadership, confidence, resilience, and
- developing friendships and networks for increased professional opportunities.

Over the programme, participants develop and implement an exhibition/campaign/other, likely campus-based, which is showcased as part of the annual STAND student festival. Note the scope for additional overseas element e.g. partnership with 1 or more universities in Europe and/or the Global South (e.g India, Kenya and Zambia).

Potential participants include:

- Sanctuary students in universities in Ireland (refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Ireland)
- Ireland Fellows (international third-level students studying in Ireland)
- Other third-level students in universities in Ireland
- If relevant, third-level students in other EU universities.

Potential Timeline:

November: Residential weekend at the start of the programme. Covers knowledge- and relationship-building.

Throughout the programme- online component: skills-based learnings, and development of exhibition/campaign/other themes and outline.

January: Residential weekend/week. Covers skills-building and idea development for the exhibition/campaign/other (idea of a culture exchange house).

May - Final residential: Finalise exhibition/campaign/other design and test it on one campus/and in one community to do some outreach.

Potential additional element (to be further explored): Internship and work placement overseas or in Ireland, only accessible for those that completed the programme.

Prototype Two: SWOT

Strenghts	Weaknesses
• It is not dependent on international C-19 restrictions and could start right away • Funding more accessible eg- Irish Aid would potentially fund • Students are already here in Ireland • Building partnerships in Ireland is practical and Suas already has strong links established • Joining the dots between Suas' current programmes. Potential output: Co-developing the STAND festival exhibition • It acknowledges the huge diversity of students currently on Irish campuses	• Timeframe - potentially too long, building on our insights - is not obvious • Depending on partners, missing international (travel) experience • Do we need a carrot - do we need the extra placement at the end of this programme: internship/civil society organisations in Ireland and overseas and can we get contacts to line these up!
Opportunities	**Risks/ Concerns/ Threats**
• Weekend in Ireland - Cultural Exchange house • Gaeltacht - School • Decolonial space - looking at different background • Lots of intercultural learning • Exhibition is an opportunity for community outreach in Ireland, which is a desire from survey • Connecting the dots between organisations that are operating: Potential partnering with Uni-versities, including different departments, Universities Sanctuaries and ICOS, link with Comhlamh/NYCI - volunteering and outreach - Volunteering Ireland • There could be a placement element to this. • Highlight the necessary leadership skills learned through this intercultural programme to future employers • Involve students from Northern Ireland and run as North/South project - would also open up to other funding opportunities. Possible interest from British Council • Opportunity to find sponsors for this in Ireland (and rebuild unrestricted funding for Suas)	• Can we engage them long enough - the international programme is a real carrot - is this interesting enough to keep the attention without an international element • For current Suas overseas partners- risk losing funding, support and partnership from Suas.

Alternative Prototypes

As a result of the process the following additional potential Prototypes were identified, that might be interesting to target audiences and fulfil needs identified.

The following options might still be interesting for Suas to follow up and explore further. Elements of those core ideas might also be included in the final programme. Some of the below options could also be explored in the coming months to be offered as 'services' (for example placement based programmes for university departments, student teacher exchange programmes, or the recent graduate trainee programme for Irish development agencies).

Student teachers exchange programme: This programme could focus on facilitating exchanges between student teachers in Ireland and one other country. Given Suas contacts, this could be India. Some Suas partner organisations have identified the need for skilled volunteers to support curriculum development and teaching methodologies. Educators at teacher colleges were interested in such a programme for the students, and were encouraging reciprocal volunteering. This model would focus on a particular student group (teachers) and did not seem to be inclusive enough for the programmes that we offer as part of STAND to all students, but it could be very interesting to partner with the student teacher GCE networks DICE and UBUNTU to see if this can be a service that Suas facilitates for their students.

Recent graduates trainee programme: This programme idea evolved from a conversation with Irish Development sector staff, who indicated that there is a gap in terms of graduation programmes that facilitate entry into humanitarian/development organisations. Trainees could be recent graduates from all relevant disciplines, and also from all partner countries (where Irish development agencies have field offices). This programme would be delivered as a service to agencies and be very much focused on students that are looking for careers in the sector and the skills they need in this sector. It would not be a GCE programme, but could include elements of this. We recommend following interest up with all agencies and based on need and interest, develop this idea further as a service that Suas can provide.

GCE Educator Programme: This programme would be targeted at educators across Irish and international universities, encouraging integration of GCE practices into their teaching and connecting educators to exchange practices. This would indirectly benefit our target audience (youth and students). This new programme type seemed more appropriate for the new Strategic Partner of Irish Aid in the formal third-level space to deliver.

Placement based programme for university students/ final year project programme: This idea was developed based on the need of academic lecturers and students for placements and final year projects. It might be more about facilitating opportunities between students and Suas partners - like a linkedin or a platform where these opportunities can be posted. We could test as part of prototype 2 if those internships/placements are successful and if there is a demand and expand accordingly.

Modular Based Programming: The idea is that prototype 1 and 2 might not have to be linear programmes but that students can have the choice of joining elements that they are interested in across STAND and Suas and get certified for a certain number of participation across those programmes.

A note about year one of programme development

Year One of any future programme is considered a prototype, as participants co-create and co-design the content, which is then reviewed, for further iteration of the programme in year two, if considered feasible and successful.

Funding Model

Several funding models were explored during the design thinking process. The following list is not exhaustive in terms of the models available, there are more models to be explored. Some of the fundraising models mentioned were:

Social Enterprise model: This model was applicable to two of the organisations we talked to. Income was generated through exclusive partnerships with either commercial organisations or universities and the funds raised were then used for reciprocal, inclusive exchange programmes that had no participation fee.

Activities to fundraise for an inclusive exchange programme: This model was shared by one organisation that annually organises a big conference to generate income, with which inclusive programmes were funded and operations costs covered.

Integrate fundraising into the programme: One idea was to include fundraising, similar to the previous Suas VP, in the programme. This could be both used as skills building, and fundraising to ensure that all participants can afford travel for prototype 1. A solidarity fund model would be the idea, in that individuals don't raise for themselves, but all funds raised are available for all participants who need co-funding.

Corporate fundraising: Ideas shared with us included approaching Linkedin (if our new programme is about connecting people), Google, IBM etc. If we could get one of those employers to endorse the programme, this could include fundraising.

Erasmus Plus: E+ funding offers numerous funding grants with different criteria and application deadlines. None of them currently offers international travel to or from a country in the Global South. However, mobility grants are accessible for residents living in Ireland to travel to a third EU country, which would include students from the Global South temporarily living in Ireland/the EU. Also one programme grant, Key action 1: Youth participation, does not require a second EU country. This could be interesting for prototype 2. Also any 'plus' options mentioned in both prototypes could be potentially funded with E+ solidarity corps and Suas should apply for certification and to get the EU Quality label to be able to host and send volunteers/and groups within the EU.

Irish Aid: The new IA Global Citizenship strategy 2021-25 highlights interest in building links to institutions and youth groups in the Global South. As part of their review of the Volunteering Initiative, IA shared also 'that they will consider support to solidarity exchanges including online and virtual engagement, and diversity and inclusion in the Innovation Challenge Fund and new/updated Stategic Partnerships'.

HE-specific funding e.g. hosting applied PhDs in Suas: As part of one of the proto-types HEI funding could be explored.

Funding from humanitarian/development agencies: this might be a possibility as part of the recent-graduate programme idea outlined above (for students to enter the development sector) and/or any new programme idea can be pitched to big interna-tional agencies based in Ireland to seek co-funding.

Partnerships with universities to fund learning platform and/or study trips as part of their courses: For example, we talked to an American GCE organisation that operates through two streams, a) an education programme platform (EDGE), offering students online GCE programmes with an assigned mentor, custom made programmes are funded by university courses, and contributing to student credits, and b) a platform for partners from the Global South to apply to advertise opportunities on their website and ONLY the students that go through their education programme can apply DIRECTLY to part-ners for the opportunities (they see themselves more as LINKEDIN). They are interested in partners in Europe and open to collaboration. ALSO note Suas partners can apply to be partners on their platform. Also we talked to a South African study trip company that creates packages to offer to universities as part of modules, since C-19 a lot of them are hybrid models (workshops with students in Holland and workshops with students/stakeholders in Capetown) or all online. They have also made good experiences with VR. They think that while most companies and universities still want travel now, that this will get less and less with climate change increasing. Thinks that Suas could research universities that have study trips in their programmes that we can offer an immersive, virtual experience.

Previous Partners (India, Kenya, & Zambia

It is important to note that as part of this process, some of the previous Suas partners were interviewed. Some of them were not reached yet, but will be consulted, as both, part of this process and the organisational strategy process. While none of the previous partner organisations necessarily meet the needs that Suas has as part of developing this new type of programme, a considerate and solidarity-based approach should be taken to transition out of these long standing partnerships. Partner needs have changed as well, in particular in terms of the volunteer support needed, which seems to be more specific and skills based. However, fundraising needs have not changed.

Suas might take the decision to dedicate some staff time to support partners to find new funding sources as part of the transition process. As part of the 'plus' options of both suggested prototypes opportunities for work placements/internships could be offered with previous partners for the relevant skilled students or recent graduates.

Next Steps

This report was presented at the Suas May 2022 board meeting. The decision was taken to develop prototype 2 during 2022/2023 and pilot it with a group in 2023/ 24. An advisory group will oversee this process.

This prototype might include elements of other prototypes and also could be developed further over the years to include an international exchange element with a university in the Global South.

We will also continue to engage in conversation with our 'old' partners to seek potential synergies.

Reviewing the Design Thinking Process.

Following the Design Thinking Process, and after submission of prototypes to the Suas Board, core team members, Clare Mulvany and Nina Sachau met to review the process in August 2022.

The following was observed.

What went well?

Core team engagement: many of the core team gave many volunteer hours to the process, including meeting attendance and reaching out to contacts and network during the Empathy Phase of the process in particular. Core team member Criomhthann Morrison gave a lot of additional time in helping to design the survery and bringing together the final documentation.

Length and support for the process: The Design Thinking process was given time and resources- this was time needed to conduct the empathy phase.

Network and sectoral connection fostered through the process. Many contacts and conversastions were had with partners, potential partners and key stakeholders. The empathy conversations helped to strengthen trust and engagement with networks. New relationships were built throughout the process which can be followed up.

Distinct Prototypes developed. Based on the empathy process, distinct prototototypes were developed.

Validation. Overall, the process validated the understanding that the old model of the Volunteer Programme is no longer fit for purpose and requires a re-design.

What could have gone better?

Design Remit and Scope. The remit at the start of the design process was very broad. Had this been narrowed, more time could have been spent addressing the core questions of how best to reimagine the volunteer programme.

Some of the core group might have found the scope of the process confusing at the start, and it took a few weeks for the teams to really form.

Time Commitment. The Design Thinking progess takes a lot of time and commitment, and is heavily reliant on volunteer time. Some of the core team members were not able to give as much time as needed. The learning is that it is a considerable ask to require so much volunteer time for a demanding process.

Deisgn Thinking Format. We question whether the Design Thinking process goes deep enough. The design thinking process originates in the commercial design world, and is harder to capture the values and intentions of the social sector which operates outside of purely market values. More needed on undertanding the problem(s), and engaging with partners/ stakeholders.

Time. More time was required to further develop, research, test and iterate the prototypes so as to get them to a more advanced stage than where they were at the end of the initial process.

If we were to do it again...

Flow of Process. If doing a similiar process again, a small core team could conduct intial empathy, including a survey and some desk research, and develop initial prototype models. They could then draw on a wider team to research prototypes and test those prototypes with stakeholders.

Student Survey. While we did conduct a student survey, a more extenstive one would help strenghten the prototypes.

Potential Partners. Include more potential partners in the design stage.

Appendix One: Insights from Empathy Phase

Below is a more detailed breakdown of the insights, opinion, in different categories.

General
- A shift in discourse and conversations and moves towards decolonisation of VPs is happening across Europe (Forum Network) and with France, US and Australia and Norway being ahead of the game
- Online volunteering model surged during start of pandemic but might not survive on that scale (Forum Network)
- A shift towards recruiting local volunteers started when international volunteers were not available during the pandemic and is likely to remain and might even replace international volunteering (Forum Network). Question arose if the purpose of any programme and support was volunteering why local volunteers weren't prioritised
- There is a clear call to move towards reciprocity – which some countries get funded by their states (such as Norac in Norway). (Forum Network and many of the interviewees). However, also the financial and logistical barriers to non-EU participants travelling to Ireland eg flights, visas were mentioned a lot. One idea was to consider moving facilitators/experts to share knowledge, rather than entire cohorts or participants
- Broad consensus that a lot of learning happens through the immersive experiences across the programme (just navigating a different environment)
- A lot of questions came up from people we talked to around environmental impacts of transport and the need of weighing different benefits/value when making the decision for international travel. On the other hand it was noted was that students would travel regardless and might choose private providers if quality education programmes like Suas pull out of the market.
- A shift in needs of partners

Learnings from the old Volunteer Programme

- VP has affected and influenced participants lives, including career choices. However, more than one have said that it was the negative feelings around unequal power dynamics they experienced during volunteering that turned them into activists on their return
- Some participants/lecturers reported that while they loved the experience, they wondered about long term impact. And some people wondered if there was a mismatch between needs of the partners and what VP could do in terms of funding and that they need support from larger organisation – including resources and technical support
- General consensus that a reimagination is necessary and timely within the changing discourse, changing needs of a new generation and also the learning content not having been updated sufficiently in the last 20 years
- Proposal to keep some elements from the programme, for example the role of student 'coordinators' of teams seemed to be valued as extra career opportunity, and the VP GCE week (an education week during the placement) which students loved (Coordinator and previous staff)
- Opportunities to link with Suas VP partners on other projects they are offering, for example livelihoods, climate or gender projects, that could be tapped into also. There is also an opportunity to collaborate with Suas VP partners who might have contacts to students from India, Zambia and Kenya that could be connected to students living in Ireland

- The diversity of participants needs to be challenged, the VP was not inclusive enough.

Funding models

- Social enterprise (like the EIL model), where income is generated through exclusive partnerships with commercial organisations that organise study abroad programmes, to use raised funds to offer inclusive volunteer programmes
- Organising events to raise funds (pricing mechanism for universities)
- Integrate fundraising into the programme (learning skills and implementing)
- A lot of suggestions to reach out to corporates, including Linkedin (if our new programme is about connecting people), google, IBM. One of the interviewees flagged a note of caution in terms of Irish Aid not valuing links with private business. However this needs to be verified with Irish Aid.
- Erasmus Plus as an option mentioned a lot
- Irish Aid interested in new types of connections to global south
- HE-specific funding eg hosting applied PhDs in Suas, supervised/taught by UCD
- Other big humanitarian/development agencies might be interested in funding a recent graduate programme for students to enter the development sector
- University pays for learning platform: American VSA Omprakesh operates through two streams: An education programme platform (EDGE), offering students online GCE programmes with an assigned mentor and a platform for partners from the global south to apply to advertise opportunities on their website and ONLY the students that go through their education programme can apply DIRECTLY to partners for the opportunities. But they don't facilitate travel/insurance - they see themselves more as LINKEDIN. Not the students pay for the online education platform but universities. They also build custom EDGE programmes for them and the students can use participant for academic credits. They are interested in partners in Europe and open to collaboration. ALSO note Suas partners can apply to be partners on their platform.
- University pays for study trips: South African study trip company: They create packages to offer to universities as part of modules. Business schools mainly. Since covid a lot of them are hybrid models (workshops with students in Holland and workshops with students/stakeholders in Capetown) or all online. Have made good experiences with VR. They think that while most companies and universities still want travel now, that this will get less and less with climate change increasing. Thinks that Suas could research universities that have study trips in their programmes that we can offer an immersive, virtual experience for

Student specific:

- There was a clear push back against high fees from all students, some models for solidarity funding scales or sponsorships were proposed
- Certification or accreditation was considered a big strength and collaboration with widely known organisation/companies to have their names on the programme was seen as attractive
- Participative and student focused with the programme being genuinely interactive and engaging and positively enjoyable and with social/collaborative elements
- Also mentioned was the need be output focused, with practical application within the programme activities itself, practical project-based work and also outputs from the programme
- Networking is key thing people look for – friends and peers, people and organisations across the world, including lecturers, with other organisations in the International Development/GCE/etc spaces
- The programme can be online, however, overkill by zoom was mentioned and the value of residentials mentioned as well. In terms of residential one interviewee mentioned that residentials could even be a barrier for +25yrs in terms of having to share physical spaces with others. Others said an immersive intercultural house to bring lots of students with different backgrounds together was very exciting

Learning from peer organisations, and others in the study trip/volunteering space

- Artistic processes can work well to connect people and issues. For example Creativity and Change were connecting students from Ireland and Ghana to design murals online together and then print them and put them up at the different localities. Theatre and poetry could also work. (Creativity and Change, UCC)
- Considering the generational differences: When designing programme content we must remember the implications of us being a completely different generation - be humble in the knowledge that we really do not KNOW what the future of a 20 year old looks like, or necessarily know what they need to know now. - be mindful of not making assumptions about what they need or should know now. Highlighted the importance of supporting young people to be discerning without prescribing. (Comhlamh)
- Take a peer based approach: through the interaction with others students get to know myself. (Comhlamh)
- Using VR could be a good idea if no travel. This was used by two interviewees with great success. However costs were mentioned but potential collaborations with the likes of facebook and Google flagged
- Using AI and tech tools to help with collaboration online (tools that can process huge amounts of comments from participants)
- Opportunity: In 2022/23 190 Ireland fellows from the global south are expected to study across Irish campuses. A lot of them would be staff from government departments or NGOs in their home countries. Average length of stay is 10-16 months, coming from Vietnam. Palestine, SA Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania. Fellows get participation fee in STAND programmes paid by IA. ICOS is developing a programme where they want to offer fellows volunteer opportunities in Ireland, the collect credits and can get awards at the end of their year. Objective of this is to facilitate connections to the communities in Ireland and career certs for fellows. In addition to creating a new programme, there could also be the opportunity to develop a mentoring programme between Irish students and the arriving Ireland fellows. ICOS knows in July who is confirmed and could start connecting

Learnings from partners

- Need specialist volunteers for new pedagogies and learning tools in the post-covid school environment
- Need funding
- please note some conversations are outstanding

Learnings from universities and opportunities across universities

- Opportunities to link in with modules, for example Mary I's 'Alternative education experience' where students can get international volunteering as credits (however some of them might be phased out) or with UCD Module on SDGs, etc.
- There is real appetite amongst primary teacher-students to do overseas programmes - there might a place for student teachers teaching in a school overseas but why students of other areas of study, should they not connect with professions they will be working in in future? (Dice)
- Universities Sanctuary: Is a new network across campuses, a programme that supports refugees by waiving university fees and with a small stipend. Students do experience racism on the campuses, and outreach work to challenge this behaviour and stereotypes are urgently needed. Also this student group could be very interesting to connect to other Irish students in an intercultural programme
- Strong interest in the secondary school student teacher network also to think about Global South connections for the students they engage with a particular interest in creating a project that is not

based on a charity model but ensuring peer learning, reciprocal exchanges with other teachers possibly - with the objective of ensuring future teachers have a Global Citizen ethos and worldview that they can pass on to their students. (Ubuntu)

- Identified gap in students in terms of lack of political awareness for their particular social problems ie, the power, social, cultural dynamics surrounding/causing/restraining/embedded within the status quo, the broader systems, the potential processes of mediation and solutions-making, etc. Suas could help fill this gap. (lecturer)
- Students/graduates need 'brave spaces' where they can build resilience and capacity for deeply interrogating their own values and beliefs and having others do the same, and to mediate with others with radically different beliefs/POVs. See potential for linking with universities to provide training support for building technical research/analysis skills, and then link with grassroots/community groups for real-world problem identification and solution-making.
- Need to foster students resilience and anti-fragility skills
- Opportunity to partner with Department of Psychology around resilience and intercultural learning (UL) and also with University Sanctuaries
- Opportunity to facilitate staff training and/or swapping between Irish and 'Global South' HEIs to build relationships, immersion, expertise-building, etc.

Appendix Two: Some Resources

Particularly relevant to the ideas and prototypes

TCU Centre for international studies https://studyabroad.tcu.edu/programs/summer-programs/tcu-global-academy/ and Project Global Citizen https://www.projectglobalcitizen.com/ - more focused on skills for cultural competency and employability

Modular based.
For example, https://kayaconnect.org/ is an online learning platform comparable to Coursera, FutureLearn, EdX, etc., and provides a range of courses and programmes, largely self-paced online learning for the humanitarian sector. Suas may identify existing courses which participants may take and receive additional support or recognition from Suas as part of a Suas/STAND programme e.g.
• Introduction to International Humanitarian Law (IHL)
• Child Rights Programming
• An Introduction to Proposal and Report Writing
• Introduction to MEAL
• Introduction to the Core Humanitarian Standard
• Being Accountable to Affected People
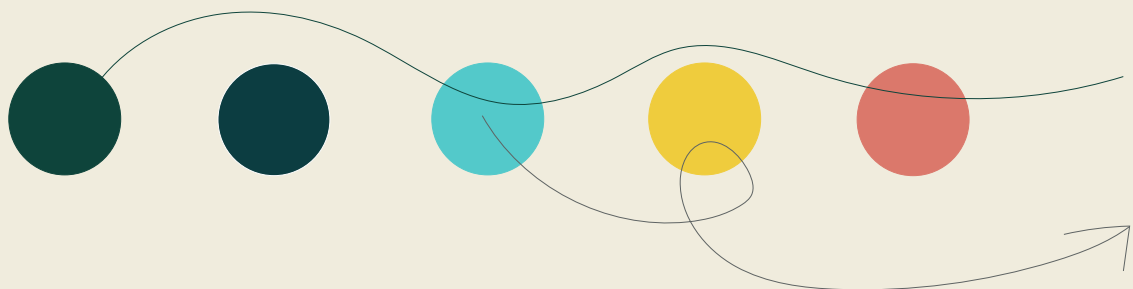
Thank you

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Thrive School

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